

To Blame or Not to Blame

Respect, Fittingness, and Standing

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*To Gran and Grandad,
who taught me to do philosophy without forgetting the world.*

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Abstract

Much of our moral life happens after things go wrong. When we wrong someone or are wronged ourselves, at least sometimes, it will be appropriate for us to blame and be blamed. Often, when asking whether we should blame someone, or whether our blame is appropriate, we only need to ask questions about the object of blame. That is, we only need to ask whether that person is blameworthy. However, there are some cases where this is not enough. For example, sometimes blame seems inappropriate because the *blamer* is hypocritical, even though the object of their blame *is* blameworthy. When this happens, we often say that the blamer lacks the standing to blame. However, it is hard to pin down what we mean by this. This is not helped by the fact that there are two further questions we can ask when talking about standing to blame. First, in which substantive cases does someone have or lack the standing to blame? Second, what is the property they possess when they have the standing to blame? Call the first the *Substantive Question* about standing to blame, and the second the *Property Question* about standing to blame.

In this thesis, I hope to provide a novel answer to both of these questions. To answer the Substantive Question, I argue that we lack standing to blame when we are hypocritical or not relevantly involved in the wrongdoing. To answer the Property Question, I argue that what goes wrong when someone lacks the standing to blame is that their blame is unfitting because of certain facts about them. There have been several attempts to capture this thought. However, none have been able to distinguish between the different ways blame can be inappropriate. I aim to give a plausible solution to this problem by appealing to recent work done on the fittingness relation. I argue that this relation holds between three relata: an object, a response, and a responder. Sometimes there is a restriction on who can occupy the responder-place. The relation between blamer, blame, and the blameworthy is clearly an instance of the fittingness relation. Therefore, we can claim that talk of standing to blame is just talk about whether someone can appropriately occupy the responder-place. When they can, we say that they have the standing to blame. When they cannot, we say that they lack it.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signature

Date

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Introduction

Much of our moral life is made up of what happens after things go wrong. We are bound to do wrong and have wrong things done to us. Therefore, it is only natural for us to ask questions about what we should do after a wrong occurs. Many of these questions concern our blaming practices. We want to know when we should blame others and when we should refrain from doing so. In this thesis, I hope to partly answer some of these questions. Namely, I hope to answer a question about when certain facts about us mean our blame is unfitting, and why this is the case. These are questions about what we call standing to blame.

At first, the thought that our blame can be unfitting because of certain facts about us might seem strange. However, reflection upon our everyday moral beliefs shows us that we often include such facts when deliberating about blame. One consideration that seems to clearly impact how we evaluate someone's blame is hypocrisy. Our political leaders are especially prone to hypocrisy undercutting their blame in this way. Consider Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison's implicit blame of China for failing to do their part to mitigate the effects of climate change. This seems largely undercut by both his previous action of bringing coal into parliament and his own government's inadequate response to the problem.¹ Importantly, Prime Minister Morrison is not wrong in attributing fault to China; they have failed to make meaningful contributions to worldwide efforts to mitigate the climate crisis. Instead, his blame seems objectionable because of his hypocrisy; he himself does not take the climate crisis seriously.

1. See, Melissa Clarke, "Scott Morrison plays down Australia's overall emissions compared to China's, but that's not the whole story," *ABC News Online*, November 2021, accessed, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-04/australia-china-emissions-climate-change-comparisons/100591994>; Clive Hamilton, "That Lump of Coal," *The Conversation*, February 2017, accessed, <https://theconversation.com/that-lump-of-coal-73046>; Ketan Joshi, "Scott Morrison's net zero modelling reveals a slow, lazy and shockingly irresponsible approach to 'climate action'," *The Guardian Online*, November 2021, accessed, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/13/scott-morrisons-net-zero-modelling-reveals-a-slow-lazy-and-shockingly-irresponsible-approach-to-climate-action>.

My primary aim in this thesis is to investigate why it is that certain facts about us can make our blame inappropriate in this way and to understand where they sit in relation to other claims about moral philosophy. I have already outlined two motivations for doing so. First, we are rightly concerned with how we should behave after moral wrongdoing. Second, our everyday beliefs suggest that sometimes blame can be inappropriate because of certain facts about the blamer. However, there is a third motivation I have yet to outline. We often want to know not just whether someone is blameworthy for performing some action, but whether *we* should blame them. And, if we are right to believe that certain facts might make someone's blame inappropriate we should also want to know when these facts make *our* blame inappropriate, and why they do.

My dissertation consists of four chapters, each of which contributes to this aim of answering some questions about standing to blame. I shall provide a brief outline of each chapter below.

Outline of Thesis

Chapter I: Blame, Sentiments, and Relationships

If we want to know why certain facts about us can make our blame inappropriate, we must first discuss blame itself. In this chapter, I consider three widely held accounts of blame: functionalist accounts, reactive sentiment accounts, and relational accounts. I first raise some doubts about functionalist accounts. These accounts suggest that the extension of 'blame' is at least partly set by its function. The crux of my objection is that these accounts seem to get things the wrong way around. I then consider reactive sentiment accounts. These take blame to consist of a subset of the reactive attitudes: resentment, indignation, and guilt. There are several attractive features of this view, most notably that it captures blame's apparent force. However, I argue that they struggle to address an extensional worry. Then I consider relational accounts. On the best version of these accounts, blame is constituted by a judgement that someone is blameworthy, in the sense that their actions express attitudes that impair the relationships others can appropriately have with them, and the taking of this seriously by the blamer such that they modify their relationship with the person they are blaming. However, this account also has its extensional challenges. It seems too permissive. That is, people seem to modify their relationships with others in light of a judgement of blameworthiness without blaming them. I argue that relational accounts can avoid these extensional worries if they appeal to reasons-construals. This seems intensionally and extensionally adequate. However, it still fails to explain why reactive sentiments play such a central role in our understanding of blame. I

argue that we can explain this fact by appealing to the propositional structure of reactive sentiments, as opposed to other ways that we might modify our relationship in response to impairment. In doing so, I sketch a plausible synthesis of relational and reactive attitude accounts. I call this the synthetic or extended relational account.

Chapter II: Substantive and Property Questions about Standing to Blame

In this chapter, I first distinguish between two questions we can ask about standing to blame. First, when do we have or lack it? Second, what property do we possess when we have it? I call the former the Substantive Question and the latter the Property Question. In the first part of the chapter, I critically survey the available answers to the Substantive Question. The first, proposed by G.A. Cohen, suggests there are four ways someone might lack standing to blame. The second, proposed by Patrick Todd and widely assumed within the literature, is that there is only one way someone might lack the standing to blame: by being hypocritical. Here I argue that although Todd is right to suggest that Cohen's account is too permissive, he is wrong to claim that there is only one way we can lack standing. There are clear examples where someone lacks standing to blame because they are not relevantly involved. This, I suggest, gives us reason to believe there are two ways someone might lack standing. I then critically survey the available answers to the Property Question. I give several reasons why we should be hesitant to adopt these accounts. Most importantly, I argue that these accounts are either subject to counterexamples, or fail to place the appropriate emphasis on attitudes. The failings of these accounts, I suggest, give us reason to pursue a novel view.

Chapter III: The Three-Place View

In this chapter, I argue for such an account. I first introduce the fittingness relation and argue that it is three- rather than two-place. Then, I claim that if the fittingness relation is three-place, then we can give a compelling explanation of standing to blame. We have standing to blame, I suggest, if the object of our blame is blameworthy-by-us. We lack it if they are not blameworthy-by-us, even though they are blameworthy-by-someone. We can explain why standingless blame is unfitting, I suggest, by claiming that fitting blame requires that we relate to others as accountable equals. When we blame without standing, we fail to relate to others in this way. Since relating to others as accountable equals is one way of treating them respectfully, I suggest that to blame without standing is one

way of failing to respect the person you are blaming. Finally, I suggest that we can plausibly apply the view to substantive judgements about when someone has or lacks standing to blame. To relate to someone as an accountable equal, you must, at least, accept that the norms which apply to them in virtue of their reason-responsiveness also apply to you, and accept that their decisions and responses have a certain amount of normative importance in your deliberation. Those who are hypocritical fail to do the first; those who are not relevantly involved fail to do the second. This gives us reason to believe my answers to the substantive and property questions.

Chapter IV: An Argument from Coherence

Here I give a final reason to believe the views I have put forward in my thesis: that they cohere. In this chapter, I first argue that coherence provides *some* epistemic support for a set of beliefs on both coherentist views of justification and sensible versions of foundationalism. Then, I claim that the views of blame and standing to blame I have suggested cohere with each other, and with several auxiliary views I have appealed to in arguing for them. This gives us a final reason to believe the three-place view.

CHAPTER I

Blame, Sentiments, and Relationships

I am sad to say it: we do not live in Kant's Kingdom of Ends. Therefore, at some point we will both do wrong and be wronged. When this happens, it will sometimes be appropriate for us to blame and be blamed. This seems natural enough. However, it is surprisingly difficult to capture what blame involves. On the one hand, there seems to be something punitive about blame. When we blame someone, we are often angry at them. This might lead us to think that by blaming them we are punishing or sanctioning them.¹ On the other hand, blame seems to involve a negative judgement of someone's character. When we blame someone, we think less of them.²

Although there is something to each of these thoughts, neither captures what is essential to blame. We can blame without sanctioning someone, even if 'sanction' is taken in a very broad sense. For example, we might blame someone without ever expressing it. It also seems that blame involves more than just making a negative evaluative judgement. If this were all there was to blame, it would be difficult to explain why it seems to have such a characteristic force. More importantly, we would be unable to explain why blaming seems to go further than judging someone blameworthy.³

In light of this, most writers claim that the truth lies somewhere between these views. I am interested in the views that occupy this middle ground. We

1. For an early account that hopes to capture this idea, see Mortitz Schlick, *Problems of Ethics*, ed. David Rynin (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1939), Chapter VII.

2. For an early articulation of this view, see David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press UK, 2007), T, 2.3.2.7/SB 412. For another, see J. J. C. Smart, "Free-Will, Praise, and Blame," *Mind* LXX, no. 279 (July 1961): 291–306, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LXX.279.291>. For a modern articulation of the view that blame consists only of an evaluative judgement, see Pamela Hieronymi, "The force and fairness of blame," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (2004): 115–148

3. Although for a contrasting view, see Hieronymi.

can separate them into three rough classes. The first are reactive sentiment or, more colloquially, emotion accounts. According to these accounts, blame is comprised of a set of emotions that partly make up the larger class of ‘reactive attitudes’. The second are relational accounts. According to these accounts, blame consists of a judgement that someone is blameworthy, and a modification of your relationship with that person. Finally, there are functional accounts of blame. According to these theories, the extension of ‘blame’ is at least partly set by its function.⁴

In this chapter, I have two aims. The first is to raise a worry for functional accounts of blame. This is that they seem to get things the wrong way around. In claiming that the extension of ‘blame’ is at least partly set by actions that play a certain functional role, or attitudes that are appropriately related to these actions, they suppose that expressed blame is explanatorily primary. However, we should instead believe that the blaming attitudes are explanatorily primary. The second is conciliatory. I shall present some motivations for an account that sits between relational and reactive sentiment views. This account is relational in the sense that it takes a relational modification to be essential to blame. However, it takes the reactive sentiments to be the typical way of making such a modification. This view avoids the intensional and extensional problems faced by other accounts of blame. It also satisfies several important desiderata we want from a theory of blame.

However, I should give fair warning. I shall only sketch this account of blame. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the best versions of reactive sentiment and relational accounts already overlap significantly. After the revisions I shall make, much of what they have to say is the same. Therefore, I only need to outline the way they overlap and to argue that the reactive sentiments are the paradigmatic way of blaming someone; much of the hard work will have already been done. Second, the theory of standing to blame I shall develop in the following chapters only requires a *plausible* account of blame, rather than a fully developed one.

The chapter will proceed as follows. In §1, I shall outline functional accounts

4. These are not the only views available, even if we only consider views that occupy the middle ground I refer to. For example, see Erasmus Mayr, “Blame for constitutivists: Kantian constitutivism and the victim’s special standing to complain,” *Philosophical Explorations* 22, no. 2 (2019): 117–129; Coleen Macnamara, “Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency,” in *The Nature of Moral Responsibility: New Essays*, ed. Randolph Clarke, Michael McKenna, and Angela Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 211–236; Coleen Macnamara, “Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90, no. 3 (2015): 546–569, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12075>; Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA, 2011); George Sher, *In praise of blame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). However, I believe the views I shall consider are the ones that have both been thought to be the most plausible, and are the most popular at the time of writing.

of blame. I shall then claim that the arguments given in favour of them only license the conclusion that they are a last resort. Then, in Section §2, I shall outline reactive sentiment accounts of blame. I shall suggest that while this view captures an important truth – that the reactive sentiments are important to our understanding of blame – it fails to plausibly respond to several counterexamples. In §3, I shall turn my attention to relational accounts of blame. I shall first outline relational accounts, focusing on T.M. Scanlon’s version of the view. I shall then consider a problem for Scanlon’s relational account: it seems too permissive. Namely, it seems to count positive modifications of one’s relationship with someone in response to wrongdoing as blame. To respond to this worry, I shall suggest that the relational theorist should appeal to reasons-construals. However, I shall argue that they still cannot explain why emotions are so central to blame. Finally, in §4, I shall argue that we can develop a promising synthesis of these accounts by appealing to their shared features and to the propositional structure of the reactive sentiments. On this view, we can preserve both the claim that blame consists of a relational modification and that the typical way of blaming is by taking up one of the reactive sentiments. Although this is only a sketch, I shall claim that this account has the potential to be both illuminating and intensionally and extensionally adequate.

1 Functional Blame

There are several functionalist accounts of blame.⁵ What unites these accounts is their shared claim that whether an act or attitude is an instance of blame depends, at least in part, on whether it plays a particular functional role or is appropriately related to some act or attitude that does. However, they diverge into two views: one stronger and the other weaker.

According to the

Strong Functionalist Thesis: Whether an act or attitude is an instance of blame depends on whether it plays a certain functional role, or is appropriately related to an act or attitude that plays this role.

5. See Miranda Fricker, “What’s the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation,” *Noûs* 50, no. 1 (2016): 165–183; Victoria McGeer, “Civilizing Blame,” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, ed. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 162–188; Angela M Smith, “Moral Blame and Moral Protest,” in *Blame*, ed. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27–48; David Shoemaker and Manuel Vargas, “Moral Torch Fishing: A Signaling Theory of Blame,” *Noûs* 55, no. 3 (2021): 581–602, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12316> Unfortunately, I lack the space to discuss the views of McGeer and Shoemaker and Vargas here. However, the general critiques also apply to their views. I have chosen to discuss the views of Fricker and Smith because they are the most widely held at the time of writing.

And, according to the

Weak Functionalist Thesis: whether an act or attitude is an instance of blame depends *partly* on whether it plays a certain functional role, and *partly* on whether it meets other conditions.

In this section, I shall begin by presenting an objection to both the Strong and Weak Functionalist theses. The crux of this objection shall be that functionalist theories depend on the truth of the claim that *expressed blame* is explanatorily basic. However, this gets things the wrong way around. The best explanation of blame puts the attitudes first, so to speak. This gives us reason to view functionalism as a kind of last resort. We should agree that if we cannot find a plausible analysis that appeals to the attitudes that underlie the blaming actions, then we should prefer a functionalist one. However, we should look for these accounts first.

There have been several attempts to carry out the functionalist project. One articulation of a strong functionalist view is put forward by Miranda Fricker. She begins by suggesting that blame is too internally diverse for us to provide an illuminating set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Instead, she claims, we should look for blame's *point* or *functional role*, find the kind of blame that paradigmatically achieves this point, and then explain other kinds of blame in terms of their relationship to this paradigm. She suggests the paradigmatic form of blame is I-Thou communicative blame. That is, emotionally flavoured blame from a second-person perspective that communicates a fault found by one person in another.⁶ She then explains how we might understand different kinds of blame, including a number of defective kinds of blame, in terms of their relation to communicative blame.⁷ Importantly, this is not a reductivist project. Instead, Fricker claims that our concept of blame encompasses an ordered pluralism. Each form of blame satisfies the concept, but each does so in a different way. What unites them is that they play a functional role. She calls the method used to uncover this ordered pluralism 'paradigm explanation'.⁸

6. Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation," p. 172.

7. In recent years, much work has been done on the communicative aspects of blame. For further discussion, see Macnamara, "Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency"; Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities"; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*.

8. For further discussion, see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ch.7; Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation"; Miranda Fricker, "Forgiveness—An Ordered Pluralism," *Australasian Philosophical Review* 3, no. 3 (2019): 241–260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2020.1859230>; Matthieu Queloz, "On Ordered Pluralism," *Australasian Philosophical Review* 3, no. 3 (2019): 305–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2020.1859234>

A second functionalist account weakens the importance of blame's functional role; playing a certain functional role is necessary but not sufficient for blame. For example, Angela Smith claims that to blame someone is to modify your relationship with them *as a form of protest against their act*. Protest, on Smith's account, is characterised as a way of challenging the moral claim implicit in the object of blame's conduct.⁹

Functionalist accounts take expressed blame to be explanatorily basic. Expressed blame is an action that in some way communicates one's blame to another person or a group of people. And something is explanatorily basic with respect to some domain, only if it explains other things within that domain and is not explained by anything else within that domain.¹⁰

This is clearly true of Fricker's view. She takes communicative blame to be the paradigmatic form of blaming someone. To communicate something to others, we must express it to them in some way. However, it is less clear whether this is true of Smith's view. We ordinarily understand 'protest' as something that is expressed. Yet, Smith claims that to protest some action or piece of conduct is to register a wrong and to challenge the moral claim that the wrong implies. As Smith rightly points out, we can do this without expressing it to others; we might only challenge this claim to ourselves. However, Smith tips her hand by articulating a related aim. On Smith's account, blame's secondary aim is to 'prompt moral recognition and acknowledgement of this fact on the part of the wrongdoer and/or others in the moral community'.¹¹ If this is part of blame's point, and we want to analyse blame partly in terms of its point, then it is natural to take expressed blame to be explanatorily primary.

There is a natural argument against views that take expressed blame as primary. It seems that some attitude can be an instance of blame without having any corresponding expression, but some act cannot be an instance of blame without having the right corresponding attitude. And, the blaming attitudes are importantly different from attitudes that have a necessary connection to a certain action-type. For example, vengeful attitudes. To hold a vengeful attitude is to be motivated to enact vengeance.

9. See Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest," p. 42-44.

10. Importantly, the relation that holds between what is explanatorily basic and what is not explanatorily basic is not a relation of causal dependence. Rather, it is one of explanatory dependence. Some call this grounding. However, I take grounding to be synonymous with explanation and so this should not cause too many problems for those who believe this. Others take grounding and explanation to be distinct. On these views, it seems that to say 'F grounds G' is to say something more than 'F explains G'. For those who believe these views, I use 'explanation' because I do not wish to imply that there is any other special relation between different forms of blame, even though it may be true that this is the case with other things that are explanatorily primary.

11. Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest," p.43.

The way we talk about blaming attitudes and vengeful attitudes gives us reason to doubt that they are explained in the same way. When we ask someone whether they have carried out vengeance on someone, we would not be content with the answer that they have taken up some vengeful attitude. We want to know, instead, whether they have acted. This is the right question to ask for an attitude that is characterised by the motivation to act in a certain way; we should not be satisfied with an answer that simply appeals to some attitude. However, when we ask a person whether they blame someone, we are satisfied by an answer that only contains a reference to an attitude. Furthermore, it seems that we are *only* satisfied with a response that contains such a reference. We can outwardly sanction someone in the way that is characteristic of blame without blaming them. Therefore, a satisfying answer to the question 'did you blame them?' must reference an attitude. This gives us reason to believe that what makes one of these actions an instance of blame is that it is a sincere *expression* of a blaming attitude. Therefore, it seems we should take attitudinal blame to be explanatorily primary.

Functionalists will respond that even if this is true, their accounts provide the best explanation of attitudinal blame. There are two steps to this argument. First, they will claim that all present non-functionalist analyses of blame fail to give a plausible explanation of the diverse set of blaming attitudes and actions. Second, they will claim that a functional account can give a plausible account of unexpressed blame.¹² However, we have at least two reasons to doubt this second claim. First, to accept functionalist accounts, we would have to substantially revise our everyday beliefs about blame. If expressed blame is not explanatorily basic, and the blaming attitudes are not necessarily connected to some action-type, then for a candidate function F, we can imagine some group that holds the same attitudes and performs the same characteristic actions we do when blaming, but who in doing this fail to achieve F. These people might be strange to us. However, it seems that we would still call their attitudes and actions instances of blame. This suggests that our concept of blame is distinct from its function. Therefore, to take up a functionalist account, we would have to substantially revise our beliefs about blame.¹³ Second, it seems that current functional explanations of attitudinal blame are implausible. Smith simply asserts that the blame is incipiently communicative and so explained in terms of its expression.¹⁴ Fricker claims that, on her view, we can naturally explain

12. For example, see Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation," p. 165-168.

13. For a similar argument, see Dana Kay Nelkin, "Blame," chap. 53 in *The Routledge Companion to Free Will*, ed. Kevin Tiempe, Meghan Griffith, and Neil Levy, Routledge Philosophy Companions (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 605.

14. Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest," p. 39-40.

attitudinal blame in terms of its expression. She suggests that we blame without expressing it when it would be apt but undesirable for us to express our blame. For example, if someone wrongs me in a way that is blameworthy, but I know that they are prone to violence when criticised. In this case, it seems apt for me to express my blame to them. However, I have good reason, all things considered to keep this blame to myself.¹⁵ This would be a good explanation if attitudinal blame was apt if and only if expressed blame was apt. However, this seems false. Consider cases of blame where a stranger is blameworthy for performing some very minor wrong – say, pushing past us on the street. Or consider cases of self-blame where I intend to wrong someone but fail to do so. Here, expressing our blame seems an overreaction or simply strange. However, attitudinal blame still seems apt.

This gives us some reason to reject functionalist accounts. However, they might still be the best we can do. Suppose the functionalist is right to claim that no non-functionalist account can account for blame's diversity while still being illuminating. This would mean all accounts of blame would require us to revise our ordinary beliefs to some extent. If so, we might be left with an account that appeals to blame's functional role to unify our concept. However, whether we should consider functionalist accounts depends on whether we can find a non-functionalist account. I am optimistic that we can find such an account. After all, it is my aim in the rest of this chapter to do so. In pursuit of this aim, I shall first examine reactive sentiment and relational accounts of blame and then suggest that we should adopt a synthesis of the two.

2 Reactive Sentiment Accounts

Reactive sentiment, or emotion, accounts suggest that blame consists of a subset of the reactive attitudes. These accounts begin with P.F. Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment*. Strawson claims that resentment, indignation, and guilt are the paradigmatic examples of the reactive attitudes, and that it would be apt to call them 'moral sentiments'.¹⁶ However, he also includes other attitudes like gratitude, love, forgiveness, and hurt feelings in this class.¹⁷ Reactive sentiment theorists claim that we cannot understand blame as comprised of this wide array of attitudes because they are too varied to form a class. Therefore, they narrow the set of blaming attitudes to resentment, indignation, and guilt. Importantly,

15. Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation," p. 179-180.

16. Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 79.

17. See Strawson, p. 62-63.

these are reactive *sentiments*. That is, emotions taken up in response to ill-will.¹⁸ In this section I shall first outline why reactive sentiment theorists believe that resentment, indignation, and guilt all count as ways of blaming someone. I shall then argue that these emotions are appropriate, in the relevant sense, when fitting. Then, I shall highlight the strengths of these accounts. Namely, that they best explain blame's force. Next, I shall present an objection: sometimes we blame appropriately when no reactive sentiment is appropriate. I shall suggest that the reactive sentiment theorist has no plausible response to this objection.

2.1 Emotions and Reasons

Proponents of reactive sentiment accounts agree that blame consists of resentment, indignation, and guilt. However, disagreement comes when explaining *why* these emotions fall into this distinctive class. This disagreement stems from a debate about what an emotion is. Therefore, to properly assess these accounts, we must first look to the emotions. It seems clear that emotions are intimately related to feelings. That is, at the very least, they involve some distinctive physiological experience. To give some crude examples, fear is intimately related to trembling, sadness to crying, and so on. However, typically, this is not all that they involve. They also have the *about-ness* characteristic of intentional attitudes. For example, we do not just feel resentment, we feel resentment toward someone for ϕ -ing.

These everyday beliefs about emotions pull us in opposite directions. One toward a purely noncognitive view and another toward a purely cognitive view. According to the former, the emotions *just are* the physiological states and the sensations that go with them. According to the latter, emotions *just are* judgements.¹⁹ Yet, neither can capture the whole story. On one hand, pure non-cognitive accounts cannot explain why emotions are typically about something.

18. For examples of reactive sentiment accounts, see Zac Cogley, "The three-fold significance of the blaming emotions," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, ed. David Shoemaker, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 205–224; Allan Gibbard, *Wise choices, apt feelings: A theory of normative judgment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Peter A Graham, "A sketch of a theory of moral blameworthiness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 88, no. 2 (2014): 388–409; Leonhard Menges, "The emotion account of blame," *Philosophical Studies* 174, no. 1 (2017): 257–273; Susan Wolf, "Blame, Italian Style," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T.M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Richard Freeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 332–347; R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Harvard University Press, 1994); R. Jay Wallace, "Trust, Anger, Resentment, Forgiveness: On Blame and its Reasons," *European Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (2019): 537–551, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12485>

19. For examples, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert C Solomon, *The passions: Emotions and the meaning of life* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1993).

Further, they seem unable to properly distinguish between different kinds of emotions. On the other, pure cognitive accounts cannot capture the relation to the sets of sensations that seem partially characteristic of the emotions. Further, they will struggle to explain how we might irrationally feel an emotion – for example, feel guilt when we believe we have done nothing wrong.²⁰ However, a plausible way of preserving our initial beliefs about the emotions is to take them to be partly constituted by the construal of some feature of a situation as a reason. A helpful way of characterising construals is by employing an analogy with perception. Construing stands in the same relation to judging that seeing-as stands in to perception.²¹ Often, we see something in terms of another. For example, I might see a stranger’s face as my friend’s, my own shadow as that of another person’s, or an actor as their character without *perceiving* them as such. To construe an object as having a particular feature, similarly, involves ‘seeing it’ in terms of a sense perception, a thought, an image, a concept, or whatever.²² Importantly, on a construal-based account we can explain irrational emotions, emotions held toward fictional characters, and emotions that we would generally not endorse. Just as I can see a stranger’s face in terms of my friend’s face without believing that they look alike, I can construe something as dangerous without believing it is or otherwise endorsing it.

However, to feel an emotion requires more than simply construing an object as having certain features. It also requires that we have the right kind of *concern*. A plausible way of cashing this out is in terms of reasons.²³ For example, fear involves construing that something is something dangerous as a reason to avoid it and embarrassment involves construing that something is likely to be subject to disapproval or is too revealing as a reason to avoid continuing it.

Therefore, a concern-based construal account of this kind explains why emo-

20. For a more detailed articulation of this objection, see Hanna Pickard, “Irrational Blame,” *Analysis* 73, no. 4 (2013): 613–626, <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/ant075>; and Gibbard, *Wise choices, apt feelings: A theory of normative judgment*, p. 135-40

21. For further discussion of construals and their relation to emotions, see Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Ch. 2.

22. In saying this, we should note that construals are not strictly analogous with perceptual events nor states. For one, they do not require us to be in some physical proximity with the object we are construing in terms of something else. They also differ in the sense that there are no organs dedicated to our construal faculties as there are organs dedicated to our perceptual faculties. So, it is best to talk of them in terms of *perceptual- or perception-like* events or states.

23. See, in particular, Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, Ch. 2 and Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 46-49. For an application to sympathy, see Garrett Cullity, “Sympathy, discernment, and reasons,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68, no. 1 (2004): p. 43-47. We can interpret the talk of emotions being connected to quasi-evaluative stances to suggest a similar view in Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, p. 20-25

tions are *about* something while avoiding the problems faced by pure cognitive accounts. However, we must qualify this claim. First, we should only say that emotions are *typically* and *partly* constituted by reasons-construals. They are only *typically* constituted in this way because we can sometimes experience emotions that are only associated with physiological and sensational states. They are only *partly* constituted by reasons-construals because emotions are complex states that are also partly characterised by dispositions to experience certain physiological and sensory states.²⁴

My reason for characterising the emotions in this way is to unify the reactive sentiments as a class. On a construal-based account, these emotions form a class because of their shared propositional object. In the next section, I shall outline R. Jay Wallace's suggestion about what this is.

2.2 Blame and Reactive Sentiments

In his *Responsibility and the Reactive Sentiments*, Wallace argues that blame consists of a subset of the reactive attitudes: resentment, indignation, and guilt. He believes that they are naturally grouped together because they take normative reasons derived from deontic principles as their objects. On his account, then, the moral sentiments differ from sentiments *simpliciter* because they take as their object some flouted moral expectation or demand.²⁵ He then distinguishes them from moral sentiments *simpliciter* by appealing to two ways we can further specify what we mean by "moral". On the one hand, an expectation or demand can be justified by appealing to an evaluative principle. On the other hand, it might be a deontic principle. According to Wallace, the reactive sentiments are emotions whose propositional object is some expectation or demand that is ultimately justified by some deontic principle. Wallace takes this to whittle down the set of reactive attitudes to resentment, indignation, and guilt.

From this characterisation of reactive sentiments, he develops an account of blame. For Wallace, blame is unified by its connection to the reactive sentiments. To judge someone blameworthy is to believe that they have flouted an expectation or demand. To hold someone to these demands – that is, to blame them – is to be susceptible to feel one of the reactive sentiments toward them when that expectation or demand is breached, or to believe that it would be appropriate to

24. For a detailed discussion, see the contributions to Peter Goldie, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

25. An expectation or demand is moral only if it can be justified in terms of exclusively moral reasons. Wallace's reasoning proceeds as follows. Moral expectations and demands must appeal to some kind of moral principle to gain moral force. These moral principles provide reasons that count in favour of certain actions. Thus, to justify some demand is to provide reasons, derived from moral principles, that count in its favour.

do so.²⁶

Wallace argues blame is appropriate only if it is fair.²⁷ That is, we can appropriately feel resentment, indignation, or guilt only if it is fair to take up these emotions. He seems to take considerations of fairness to include facts about the well-being and moral interests of the person being blamed. However, if fairness is interpreted in this sense, blame seems to be responsive to considerations that concern its desirability rather than its fittingness. If fittingly blaming someone would be very bad for them, it seems unfair for me to do so. However, we are not concerned with this when we ask whether someone is blameworthy. We are concerned with whether our blame is *fitting*, or whether they *call for* blame. Therefore, instead of adopting Wallace's view, reactive sentiment theorists should instead turn to Peter A. Graham's revised account of moral blameworthiness. Graham gives similar reasons for rejecting a Wallace-style analysis.²⁸ Instead of appealing to fairness, he argues that we should limit our consideration of facts and reasons to those that bear on the *correctness* or *fittingness* of blame.

Here, Graham takes his cue from the work of Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson. They claim that emotions present objects to us as having certain evaluative features. Therefore, when we ask whether an emotion is appropriate, in the relevant sense, we are asking whether this attitude correctly presents its object as having these evaluative features. On this view, the facts that explain an emotion's fittingness are only those relevant to its evaluative properties.²⁹ Taken in conjunction with the concern-based construal account of the emotions

26. Initially, this seems to collapse the distinction between judging someone blameworthy and blaming them. However, we can judge that someone is blameworthy by believing that they violated a normative expectation but neither hold some blaming attitude toward them nor believe that holding one would be appropriate.

27. His reason for this is that he develops this account of blame with an eye to vindicating our practice of blaming other people. He claims that we should understand the question of whether it is appropriate to hold someone morally responsible as a normative question rather than a theoretical one. That is, we should take questions of moral responsibility to be questions about whether we have sufficient normative reasons to hold that person responsible. Since Wallace believes that the primary, if not the only, way we can hold someone responsible is by blaming them, he takes the question of moral responsibility to be equivalent to: are they the appropriate object of blame and praise? On this point, Wallace claims that incompatibilists appeal to fairness when they claim that determinism would undermine moral responsibility. The thought is that if our actions were not under our control, then it would be unfair to blame us for them. Wallace agrees that the norms of fairness ground the appropriateness of blame. However, he goes on to claim that on our best understanding of excuses and exemptions, the truth of determinism has no bearing on whether it is fair to blame or praise others. For further discussion, see Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, Ch. 4, 5, and 6.

28. See Graham, "A sketch of a theory of moral blameworthiness," p. 391-392.

29. See Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 1 (2000): p. 72, <https://doi.org/ppr200061171>.

that I outlined above, this implies that our blame is fitting only if we construe an agent's flouting of some obligation as giving us a reason to respond in a certain way *and* there is such a reason.³⁰

Reactive sentiment theories have several strengths. Most importantly, they naturally account for blame's force. There are two aspects of this force. The first is that felt by the person blamed. For example, it is more confronting to be blamed than it is to be criticised for having poor intonation during your performance of one of Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concertos*. Reactive sentiment accounts can easily explain why this is so. To be blamed must be an emotional affair; to be criticised for your musical performance need not be.

The second aspect is phenomenological. Much of the time, to blame someone is to undergo an acute phenomenological experience that is different from when we criticise someone. Often, when we blame someone, we get worked up. We might yell at them, or silently seethe with resentment. This is often lacking in cases of criticism. Those who favour reactive sentiment accounts have a plausible and natural explanation for this. To blame someone is to feel an emotion. Emotions are associated with feelings. And feelings characteristically have this phenomenological force. Criticism, on the other hand, need not involve taking up any emotion and so might lack it. Therefore, blame characteristically has this force where criticism often lacks it.

This characteristic force further captures what Wallace has called the 'oppositional character' of blame.³¹ To blame someone, Wallace claims, is to set yourself in opposition to them. And, generally, to be the object of someone's blame is unpleasant. The combination of these factors leads blame to create social friction between blamer and blamee. This friction often encourages the blamer to stand

30. Wallace objects that such accounts fail to do justice to the appeal of incompatibilism. According to this objection, if what makes a blaming attitude appropriate is just that it correctly represents its object, it makes the appeal of incompatibilism seem strange. Incompatibilists imply that blame without responsibility would make our lives go worse. However, considerations of fittingness seem not to take this into account. He then suggests that a stronger claim might be true. On fittingness theories of blameworthiness, it seems that incompatibilist theories must be clearly false. Yet it is not clear they are. And it seems implausible for a theory of blame to render an apparently tenable position about moral responsibility clearly false. Therefore, Wallace claims, we should prefer his fairness-based view. However, we can seemingly avoid this objection by claiming that blame is only fitting if someone expresses ill-will and it is their *fault*. The ambiguity of 'fault' – that is, whether we take it in the *strong* incompatibilist sense or the weaker compatibilist sense – allows us to partly explain why some find incompatibilism appealing. Therefore, we can seemingly avoid Wallace's objection. For further discussion of this issue, see Wallace, "Trust, Anger, Resentment, Forgiveness: On Blame and its Reasons," p. 538-540. For a view claims we should drop the condition that someone is blameworthy only if their action is their fault, see Nomy Arpaly, *Merit, meaning, and human bondage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), Ch. 1.

31. See Wallace, "Trust, Anger, Resentment, Forgiveness: On Blame and its Reasons," p. 541-2.

up to the person who has flouted their obligation to them.³² Additionally, it encourages the object of blame to recognise the moral claims others have on them. Importantly, if blame lacked its characteristic force, then it would not have this oppositional character. Since reactive sentiment theories naturally explain blame's force, they also naturally explain its oppositional character.

Finally, these accounts seem to capture the typical way of blaming others. When we blame people, we often experience the reactive sentiments. They take up a central place in our understanding of blame. Reactive sentiment accounts naturally capture this central part of the concept.

However, reactive sentiment accounts also face an important problem. This concerns their extensional and intensional accuracy. There are several cases which appear to be instances of blame but that reactive sentiment theorists must call something else. One kind are apparent cases of blame that do not involve any sentiment at all. Call this *Unfeeling Blame*. For example, it seems I could blame someone by simply cutting them out of my life. Further, I might do this without resenting them, or even without feeling saddened by the whole state of affairs. At least on the ordinary usage of the term, this seems quite an extreme instance of blame.³³ Another kind of case includes emotions but not the reactive sentiments. Consider a mother whose son is unfaithful to his partner, which in turn leads to his marriage breaking down. She might be indignant upon hearing about his infidelity. Or she might simply be saddened by it. However, in both cases she seems to blame her son. Call this *Plain sentiment blame*. For convenience, we can call the set comprised of Unfeeling and Plain Sentiment blame, *Non-Reactive blame*.³⁴

Sometimes, there are cases of minimal ill-will where only Non-Reactive blame seems fitting. Suppose,

Siobhan is walking down the street when a stranger pushes her so that she stumbles a little and nearly falls into another commuter.

Here it seems fitting for *Siobhan* to blame the stranger. By pushing her, they have flouted a standing expectation we have of each other. And, we can stipulate, she rightly believes they are accountable for this act. However, it seems unfitting for her to resent them because the ill-will expressed by the act is so minimal.

32. This helpfully captures Angela Smith's insight that blame is a way of protesting against someone's wrong action. See Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest," p. 41-48.

33. This is adapted from the example in Thomas M Scanlon, *Moral dimensions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 229 fn. 28.

34. Importantly, this does not imply that these kinds of blame are exclusively forward-facing. Instead, it is just a way to distinguish between blame comprised of the *reactive* sentiments and blame that is not.

Reactive sentiment theorists might respond to the problem of Non-Reactive blame in several ways. Wallace, for one, claims his disjunctive formulation of blame avoids the problem entirely. Recall Wallace claims that to blame someone is to be susceptible to the reactive attitudes if an expectation is violated *or to believe that it would be appropriate for one to feel the reactive sentiments if the expectation is violated*. He then argues that when we feel saddened by some event rather than resentful, and when we feel no emotion but still appear to blame someone, we still believe that it would be appropriate to take up one of the blaming attitudes.³⁵

For this reply to be plausible, whenever we blame without the reactive sentiments, we must believe they would be fitting. However, this is mistaken. Consider, again, Siobhan. It is fitting for her to non-reactively blame the stranger, but not to take up one of the reactive attitudes. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for her to believe that the reactive sentiments would be fitting. However, she could blame them: her blame would be fitting. There are also cases where a blamer might feel no reactive sentiment toward someone *and* hold some general belief that precludes them from believing a reactive sentiment would be appropriate. For example, consider a variant of Siobhan's case where she is a committed incompatibilist and does not feel resentment when bumped into. Here it would be inconsistent to say she believes one of the reactive sentiments would be appropriate. She holds a general belief that precludes her from doing so.³⁶ Therefore, Wallace's response requires revision.

Another response appeals to the distinction between emotional episodes and emotional stances. An emotional episode is what we experience when we feel an emotion in a particular moment. For example, when I feel joy upon seeing a friend after a year spent apart. To take up some emotional stance is to be disposed to experience these emotional episodes. Wallace's claims about fairness imply that for it to be appropriate to hold someone responsible (i.e., to blame them) is for it to be fair to take up a particular stance toward them. If so, then Wallace might claim that when we appear to blame someone without experiencing the emotional episodes that constitute blame, we are still taking up emotional stances that are constitutive of blame.

Leonard Menges develops this line of thought by explicitly appealing to the dispositional aspect of emotional stances.³⁷ He claims that taking up an emotional stance only requires a disposition to experience an emotional episode. For it to be true that we are disposed to experience some emotional episode, we need not always experience it. Instead, we only need to be generally reliable in doing so. Therefore, Menges claims, when we blame someone without having

35. See Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, p. 22-25.

36. See Sher, *In praise of blame*, p. 91.

37. See Menges, "The emotion account of blame," p. 265-266.

the phenomenological experience that is characteristic of the reactive sentiments, it is just a case where the response characteristic of the disposition has not been realised. Yet, we can still call them instances of blame because we are still in the stance required for holding someone responsible. If so, the reactive sentiment theorist can claim that when we non-reactively blame, we are still taking up the emotional stance constitutive of blame.

At first glance, this response seems plausible. Yet, it faces a significant problem. The reactive sentiment theorist must explain how emotional episodes and emotional dispositions are related. And, it seems they cannot plausibly do so while retaining the ground this response is supposed to gain.

The natural way to explain this connection is to say that emotional episodes explain emotional dispositions. On this approach, we could explain someone holding an emotional disposition toward someone by saying that when they experience certain stimuli (e.g., acts or objects that remind them of the blameworthy act), they reliably respond by experiencing some emotional episode. This still leaves room for instances of Non-reactive blame: sometimes dispositions are not realised. For example, a glass is fragile if it reliably breaks when knocked from a counter top, even if it only breaks nine of ten times. In the same way, someone might reliably respond to reminders of blame by undergoing an emotional episode most of the time, but every now and again fail to do so. In cases like these, we should still claim that they are disposed to blame. However, cases of Non-Reactive blame are not relevantly similar to the aforementioned cases. When we ask whether Anne is disposed to blame Ben for ϕ -ing, we hold fixed certain stimuli and ask whether Anne will reliably respond by experiencing an emotional episode. This would avoid the objection if cases of Non-Reactive blame occurred only in situations where most of the time the blamer responds with some reactive sentiment. However, as we have seen, there are both actual and possible instances of blame where it would not be appropriate for an agent to respond with a reactive sentiment. Therefore, we can plausibly assume that blamers would not ordinarily respond to these situations by experiencing an episode of one of the reactive sentiments. This gives us reason to believe that we are not disposed to blame people in these situations.³⁸

A final response is suggested by Wallace in *The Moral Nexus*. Here, as I have, he distinguishes between Reactive and Non-Reactive blame. Reactive blame includes resentment, indignation, and guilt. Non-reactive forms of blame will include Minimal, Plain Sentiment, and Unfeeling Blame.³⁹ Wallace is sceptical that Non-Reactive blame deserves the title. Yet, if we accept this distinction,

38. Some might want to respond that the disposition is general, in the sense that we are still generally disposed to blame people even though we do not do so in these situations. However, it is unclear how this might be used to explain why these seem to be instances of blame.

39. See R. Jay Wallace, *The Moral Nexus* (Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 102.

then he might plausibly claim that when he uses the term 'blame', he is only referring to reactive blame. This would exclude the counterexamples that I have presented. However, this still leaves the question: is there anything that unites these forms of blame? In other words, we might ask whether we are right to use a single term to talk about both reactive and nonreactive blame.

Reactive sentiment accounts have many advantages. Most importantly, they naturally capture blame's apparent force. Furthermore, they capture a central part of our concept. However, they face a significant problem: they do not seem to be extensionsally or intensionally accurate. There have been several attempts to respond to this problem. Yet, none have been wholly successful. Therefore, we have reason to pursue another account. I shall do this in the following section.

3 Relational Accounts

In the last section, I argued we should be hesitant to accept emotion accounts. At best, they capture one way of using the term 'blame'. Therefore, we should consider a different account.⁴⁰ One such strategy is taken up by Joanna North, Christine Korsgaard, and T.M. Scanlon.⁴¹ All three claim that what is essential to blame is not taking up an emotion, but a modification of our relationship with the person we are blaming. However, Korsgaard and North approach this task with an eye to other matters. Korsgaard hopes to develop a plausible Kantian view of moral responsibility and North hopes to develop an account of forgiveness. Therefore, I shall focus on Scanlon's account.

40. We might wish to take up the account George Sher takes up in his *In Praise of Blame*. He claims that blame consists of a single belief-desire pair. That is, the belief that someone has acted badly and the desire that they had not acted in that way. This belief-desire pair then grounds a set of potential dispositions to experience the attitudes we ordinarily take to make up blame. For this reason, Sher's theory is two-tiered. The first tier is made up of the core belief-desire pair and the second by the the set of dispositions. This theory has its advantages. It does especially well to explain the fact that the type of blame we can appropriately hold toward another agent varies according to both context and the relationship we stand in with them. The core belief-desire pair remains constant. But it will make different actions and attitudes appropriate depending on several features of the particular situation. However, ultimately Sher's belief-desire pair is neither necessary nor sufficient for blame. There are cases where we blame without desiring that the person had not performed the act, and cases where we believe that someone has done wrong, and desired that they did not perform an act without blaming them – e.g. when we pity someone. For further discussion, see Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest" and Pamela Hieronymi, "Sher's defense of blame," *Philosophical Studies* 137, no. 1 (2008): 19–30

41. See Joanna North, "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness," *Philosophy* 62, no. 242 (1987): 499–508, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003181910003905X>; Christine M. Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," in *Creating the kingdom of ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 188–224; Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*.

In this section, I shall first lay out the concepts required to properly grasp Scanlon's account of blame and blameworthiness. Then, I shall present his view and consider a problem: Scanlon's account seems too permissive. Finally, I shall suggest that we can respond to this problem by appealing to reasons-construals.

3.1 Permissibility, Meaning, and Blameworthiness

In his *Moral Dimensions*, 'Interpreting Blame', and 'Forms and Conditions of Responsibility' Scanlon presents a comprehensive and complex account of blame.⁴² However, the crux of his theory is simple: an act is blameworthy just when it expresses something about the person who performed that act which impairs the relationships others can appropriately have with them. To judge an act blameworthy is to form the belief that this is true of the act. To blame them is to both judge them blameworthy *and* to take this seriously such that you modify your relationship with them in the way this act makes appropriate.

Yet, to grasp the significance of Scanlon's account, we must make some important distinctions. First, the account depends upon a distinction between an act's permissibility and meaning. Whether an act is *permissible* depends on the normative reasons there *are* for performing that act. And, an act's *meaning* depends on the agent's motivating reasons.

The former concerns what the agent ought to do and the latter concerns their actual motivation for performing the act. Sometimes, our acts can be permissible but have a negative meaning. For example, if we were to refrain from harming someone because we were too lazy to do so. One way an act might have negative meaning is if it expresses something about an agent which impairs the relationships others can appropriately have with them. The 'something' in question might be the agent's motivating reasons, their disposition to take certain facts as normative reasons, or both. Scanlon contends that blame concerns this kind of negative meaning. Therefore, we can say that an act is

Blameworthy if, and only if, it expresses something about the agent's motivating reasons for that act, the way in which that particular act partly constitutes a disposition to take certain facts to be normative reasons, or both, which impairs the relationships others can appropriately have with them.⁴³

42. Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*, Ch. 4, Thomas M. Scanlon, "Interpreting Blame," in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, ed. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84–99; Thomas M. Scanlon, "Forms and Conditions of Responsibility," in *The Nature of Moral Responsibility*, ed. Randolph Clarke, Michael Mckenna, and Angela Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 90–112

43. This differs slightly from the way Scanlon puts it. According to Scanlon: "To claim that

To make this definition manageable, we can shorten ‘something about the agent’s motivating reasons, their disposition to take certain facts to be motivating reasons, or both’ to ‘something about the agent’.⁴⁴

This implies that to judge someone blameworthy or worthy of gratitude is to form a belief that their act shows something about the agent which impairs or strengthens the relationships others can appropriately have with them.

3.2 Blame and Relationships

Having defined blameworthiness thus, we can then ask: what is it to blame someone? Scanlon’s answer is that to

blame someone is to judge them blameworthy *and* to take your relationship with them to be impaired in a way their action and your relationship to the wrong makes appropriate.

a person is blameworthy for an action is to claim that the action shows something about the agent’s attitudes toward others that impairs the relations that others can have with him or her. 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 judgement of impaired relations holds to be appropriate" (See Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*, p. 128-9). I have added the qualification implicit in Scanlon’s definition to avoid counterexamples like the following:

James reads out a list of all of his terrible motivations for acts he has performed in the past. He notes exactly how these facts about his motivating reasons, by his lights, impair the relationships others can appropriately have with her.

Here, James is not blameworthy for reading out a list of his terrible motivations – his frankness is admirable. However, Scanlon’s way of articulating his account seems to imply that we should judge him blameworthy for performing it. This is because his action “shows something about the agent’s attitudes toward others that impairs the relationship that others can have with him or her.” Of course, in this example, this is because James is expressing his motivations for past acts, not because this act is the consequence of his malicious motivation.

44. Again, there is some difficulty with characterising the converse on Scanlon’s account. Acts with the converse positive meaning are often called acts that are ‘praiseworthy’. However, there is an important difference between blaming someone and praising them. Namely, to praise someone, you must act in a certain way: you must express to someone that the person’s act is admirable in some way. However, as I have already argued, we can blame someone without ever expressing it. For this reason, it seems we should characterise acts with the positive meaning in question as those which are worthy of gratitude. Scanlon claims that an object of choice is

worthy of gratitude if, and only if, it expresses something about the agent’s motivating reasons, their disposition to take certain facts to be normative reasons, or both, which strengthens the relationships others can appropriately have with them.

Again, we can shorten ‘something about the agent’s motivating reasons, their disposition to take certain facts to be motivating reasons, or both’ to ‘something about the agent’.

Importantly, there are a number of ways we might modify our relationship with someone. Therefore, on Scanlon's theory, we can blame someone without taking up any of the reactive attitudes. This means on his account we avoid the problems posed by Non-Reactive blame. According to Scanlon, the appropriate blaming response to an act is jointly determined by the relationship one stands in with the wrong and the action itself. The relationship one stands in to the wrong is itself partly determined by the relationship one stands in to the wrongdoer. If a stranger rudely tells me that they do not like me very much, a different response is appropriate than the one that is appropriate if my partner told me the same thing in the same way. This is an important advantage of Scanlon's account. If we adopt it, we can explain why we blame different people in vastly different ways.

However, it also leads to a problem. There appear to be relationships where we cannot modify our relationship in the way Scanlon claims we do when blaming. However, it seems we still blame people when we stand in these relationships with them. For instance, Scanlon's account easily explains blame within personal relationships. It is natural to claim that when friends treat us poorly, we sometimes blame them by distancing ourselves. However, it is less natural to make the same claims about more general, abstract relationships. This is, in part, because these relationships are not characterised by the reciprocal holding of certain attitudes. Instead, they are characterised by each party possessing certain properties. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask: how can we modify our relationship with someone when we stand in this relationship because of some property we possess? Unfortunately for Scanlon, the moral relationship seems to be the most general and abstract relationship of all. So long as we ourselves are moral agents, we cannot escape standing in such a relationship with all other moral agents. Therefore, some might worry that on Scanlon's account we will struggle to explain *moral blame*.

To address this worry, Scanlon separates relationships into two rough classes.⁴⁵ The first consists of relationships which are grounded in each party holding some attitude toward the other. The example *par excellence* of this class of attitudes is friendship as construed by Aristotle and Kant.⁴⁶ Two people are friends only

45. I say 'rough classes' here because I do not wish to imply that there is a strict difference in kind between the relationships in question. For an argument that there is not a difference in kind between these relationships, see Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," p.190-191

46. For this characterisation, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), IX.9 1169b2; Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 470-473. For an interpretation, see Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," p.190-191

if they have certain attitudes of goodwill toward each other, are disposed to be pleased at the other's successes, and so on. These attitudes, or some similar set, are *essential* to friendship in the sense that it would be a mistake to call two people friends without them. This implies that we only have the obligations that come with friendship when these attitudes are reciprocally held. Call these relationships *attitude-dependent*.

The second rough class of relationships consists of those we stand in because we possess some set of properties. The paradigmatic relationship of this class is the biological parent-child relationship. Someone is your biological child if, and only if, they possess the property of having been born to you, and *vice versa*. There are still normative ideals for these relationships, which consist of the attitudes each participant should hold toward each other. However, their relationship would still count as an instance of the parent-child relationship regardless of whether the parent or child actually hold these attitudes toward each other. A consequence of this is that the obligations parents and children have toward each other also hold regardless of the attitudes held by each participant.

Scanlon contends that the moral relationship is a member of the second class. We stand in this relationship just because we are reason-responsive agents. Just like other relationships in this class, there are normative standards that prescribe the attitudes and dispositions we ought to have toward other agents who stand in this relationship with us. An example is that we ought to have a standing disposition *not* to harm others for our own enjoyment. Yet, some attitudes are intimately linked to these relationships but are not obligatory. For example the disposition to be pleased when someone else experiences success and pained when they experience loss. These are what separate the minimum requirements of the moral relationship from *good* moral relationships. We might again appeal to the the analogy with the parent-child relationship. To be someone's biological parent, they must have been born to you. This comes with a set of obligatory attitudes and norms you *ought* to hold toward your child. However, to meet these norms does not make you a good parent. To be a good parent is to go further than these basic requirements. To put this another way, we can stand in such a relationship without relating well to others.⁴⁷

47. Although the analogy with the biological parent-child relationship is instructive, it is limited. There are at least two limitations. First, once someone is born to you, they shall always possess this property. However, it is possible for someone to at one time be a moral agent and then stop being a moral agent. Consider cases where by some tragic accident a person loses the ability to respond to the world around them and can only passively take in experiences. Now, this person's life clearly still has value, but they cannot be said to be a reason-responsive agent anymore. Therefore, they no longer stand in distinctly moral relationships with others. However, we must be careful here. When I claim that someone who is not responsive to reasons does not stand in moral relationships with other, I mean that they no longer stand in such relationships as

If Scanlon is right to claim that both attitude-dependent and property-dependent relationships come with attitudes that we must, or ought to have, and attitudes that make up a good relationship of this kind, then he can answer our initial worry – that we cannot blame others by modifying our moral relationship because we only stand in this relationship because of properties we possess. Scanlon can now respond that we can modify the attitudes that are not obligatory but constitute an excellent relationship. The basic story Scanlon can tell goes like this. We begin with a number of standing positive attitudes toward strangers. However, when we learn or experience an act that impairs the relationships others can appropriately have with that person, in many cases we blame them by relinquishing these positive attitudes. For example, suppose you learn a member of your community, whom you have had no previous interactions with, is running for the local council. It seems appropriate in this instance to wish that she does well in this pursuit. However, suppose you then learn that she has previously used positions of power for her own benefit, rather than that of the community. Here, one way of blaming her for this is to withdraw your standing disposition to wish her well in her pursuit of the council seat. The difference between the moral relationship and attitude-dependent relationships like friendship is that moral agents, so long as they are still reason-responsive, cannot be cut out of the moral community by an act of will. Yet, friends can stop being friends in this way.

We can supplement this basic story by noting that we can also take up certain con-attitudes toward someone as a way of modifying our relationship with them. For example, I might withdraw my standing disposition to wish the local candidate well, or I might actively hope that she *does not* get the council seat. Adding this avoids a potential problem for Scanlon's account. Sometimes it seems two people have no nonobligatory attitudes toward each other. However,

a *participant*. This need not exclude them from the moral community, nor need it preclude them from being objects of moral concern. The inverse happens when we are children. We begin our lives unable to respond to reason and so are not yet capable of moral relationships. Yet when we gather the requisite level of competency to respond to reasons we become able to stand in these relationships. Second, the parent-child relationship is asymmetrical in the duties each member has to the other. That is, a parent has a different set of duties to their child than their child has to them. However, the moral relationship is symmetrical. That is, if all the morally relevant facts are the same, what I owe to you is the same as what you owe to me. We should also note that although many property-dependent attitudes in one sense from attitude-dependent relationships, their normative ideals differ only in degree. For example, Korsgaard persuasively suggests the difference between the normative ideals of friendship and the moral relationship are not different in kind. Both require some form of reciprocal good will. It is just that friendship requires much more of us than morality does. For more discussion see Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," p. 193-196; Garrett Cullity, "Stupid goodness," in *The Many Moral Rationalisms*, ed. Karen Jones and Francois Schroeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 238

we still think it possible for them to blame each other.⁴⁸

This seems a reasonable response to the initial problem. However, there is another problem for Scanlon's account: it seems too permissive. That is, if we adopt this account, we must say that some responses to a blameworthy act that seem not to be instances of blame *are* instances of blame.

This problem is put forward by Angela Smith, who asks us to imagine a mother whose son is convicted of a horrible crime. Suppose that she judges him blameworthy in Scanlon's sense. Then suppose she modifies her attitudes, intentions, and expectations toward him by making an effort to show love and affection for him to compensate for the hatred he will receive, or by lowering her expectations of him being successful in his professional life.⁴⁹ On Scanlon's account this seems to be an instance of blame. The mother has judged her son blameworthy and modified her relationship with him in light of this. However, it is clear that this is not an instance of blame.

Smith suggests that Scanlon might respond by suggesting she has not taken seriously his claim that to blame someone is to judge them blameworthy and to modify your attitudes toward him or her *in a way that this judgement of impairment makes appropriate*. She replies that there *is* a sense in which the mother's response is appropriate. Therefore, according to Smith, we need a further way of marking out the blaming attitudes from other responses to blameworthy actions.⁵⁰

Smith is right to claim that there is a sense in which the mother's response is appropriate. Fortunately, once again, we can distinguish between all-things-considered appropriateness and fittingness to avoid this problem. The mother's responses seem, all things considered, appropriate responses to her son's crimes. However, they seem appropriate because of facts *other than* her son's impairment of the relationships others can appropriately have with him. Therefore, we can say that they are appropriate but not fitting.

The best explanation of the mother's relational modifications is that they are not responses to the relational impairment but rather to her son's well-being or her own high hopes for him. If the mother responds to her son's crimes by showing him extra love and affection, this seems to be because she hopes to mitigate his loss of potential well-being – either by virtue of criticism or the effects that his unreformed attitudes would have on his future relationships. Responding to her son's crimes by lowering her expectations of his professional

48. Attentive readers might note that this seems to make Scanlon's account importantly incomplete. That is, if he makes this claim, then he seems to require a compatible account of certain con-attitudes to make his theory of blame plausible. If so, then this is just grist to my mill: I want to revise his account. However, the charitable interpretation seems to be that he can permissibly assume some compatible theory of certain con-attitudes while developing a theory of blame.

49. Smith, "Moral Blame and Moral Protest."

50. See Smith, p. 38-39.

success also seems to respond not to the attitudes that impaired relationships others can appropriately have with him, but to her high hopes for him. Therefore, to revise Scanlon's account to avoid Smith's counterexamples, we need a way of excluding attitudes that respond to what might call the 'wrong' features of the situation.

Fortunately, we can do so by appealing to a notion we have already discussed – that of construing something as a reason. On behalf of Scanlon, we can claim that we blame someone when we judge them blameworthy and then *construe* the facts identified by this judgement as giving us a reason to modify our relationship with them. The content of the reasons is the same as the content of the judgement of blameworthiness but from the perspective of the blamer. Namely, that this person's action expresses attitudes that impair the relationships that *I* can appropriately have with them.

This avoids the counterexamples given by Smith. Both responses are modifications of her relationship with her son that take something other than the blameworthy act as her reason for doing so. Furthermore, it explains why Scanlon takes there to be a number of ways we might blame someone. A variety of attitudes are partly constituted by reasons-construals. And, a number of acts result from them. We have already seen that this is true of the emotions. However, we can also see them as partly constitutive of several other ways of modifying our relationships with others. For example, Scanlon claims that blame might involve withholding our trust, viewing the person as less eligible for personal relationships, a decreased tendency to be pleased when things go well for that person, and a decreased willingness to help that person with their personal projects, among other things.

On this version of Scanlon's account, these modifications of our relationships with others involve either a construal of the attitudes that impair the relationships the person being blamed can appropriately have with each other as a reason to modify one's own relationship with that person, a disposition, or a tendency to do so.⁵¹

Therefore, it seems that on the best version of Scanlon's relational account, to

51. We can look to Scanlon's account of desire in the directed-attention sense for guidance here. Scanlon claims that to desire something in this sense is to have a tendency to see this thing as a reason. Or, more precisely, Scanlon claims that '[a] person has a desire in the directed attention-sense that P if the thought of P keeps occurring to him in a favourable light, that is to say, if the person's attention is directed insistently toward considerations that present themselves in favour of P.' See Thomas M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 39. For a discussion of how this might help us formulate an account of blame, see Eugene Chislenko, "Scanlon's Theories of Blame," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 2019, 1–16. The version of Scanlon's view I have presented here is similar to Chislenko's account in taking inspiration from Scanlon's account of desire. However, it differs markedly in its use of reasons-construals.

judge that someone is *blameworthy* for performing a particular act is to take this act to express certain attitudes that impair the relationships others can appropriately have with them. To *blame* them is to take this seriously, in the sense that you construe this as a reason to modify your relationship with that person in a way made appropriate by the act and certain features of the relationship.

This construal might be fleeting, or it might be long-lasting such that we could reasonably say that the agent has a tendency or disposition to construe this impairment as a reason to respond in certain ways to the blamer. Furthermore, just as with the emotions, this implies that our blame is fitting just when we construe the action performed by the object of our blame as expressing attitudes that give us a reason to modify our relationship with them *and there is such a reason*.

This, I believe, is the best version of the relational account of blame. By appealing to reasons-construals we can avoid the most important problems for Scanlon's account while still retaining the diversity of blaming responses. This account seems intensionally and extensionally adequate. However, it fails to capture at least one important desideratum for a theory of blame: why reactive sentiments are so central to our concept of blame.⁵² In the rest of this chapter, I shall outline a potential synthesis of relational and reactive sentiment accounts that preserves the advantages of both.

4 A Synthetic Account

The appeal to reasons-construals in revising both emotion and relational accounts means they now greatly overlap. However, the best version of emotion-based accounts struggles to explain cases of Non-Reactive blame. And, the best version of relational accounts struggles to explain why reactive sentiments are central to our understanding of blame. In this final section, I aim to sketch a synthesis of these two accounts. To do so, I shall first spell out how both theories overlap. Then, I shall claim that we should begin this synthesis with the relational account because it is intensionally and extensionally adequate. I shall then suggest that we can incorporate the claim that the reactive sentiments are the typical way of blaming others by appealing to their propositional structure. I call this a *sketch* of a synthetic account because my reason for developing this view is to lay

52. See Wolf, "Blame, Italian Style" for further discussion. Scanlon seems to think that reactive sentiments are not as important to blame as we usually suppose. I disagree with this. Scanlon is right to claim that they are not essential. However, they are *important* features of this account. For Scanlon's view, see Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*, p. 127-128.

the groundwork for my account of standing to blame. To do so, I only need to develop an account that is plausible. Therefore, I shall consider few objections and instead focus on developing the view. This section will, for this reason, be shorter than the previous ones: much of the hard work has already been done.

4.1 The Account and Desiderata

In objecting to functionalist accounts and revising reactive sentiment and relational accounts, I have uncovered a set of desiderata for a theory of blame. A plausible theory of blame should

- (A) Be intensionally and extensionally adequate;
- (B) Explain why blame is so often taken as something that is 'meant to be expressed';
- (C) Explain why blame is constituted by a diverse set of responses;
- (D) Take the blaming attitudes to be explanatorily primary or basic;
- (E) Explain why blame has a characteristic force that is often lacking from other forms of judgement or criticism;
- (F) Explain why blame seems to set the blamer against the person blamed in a way that often causes social friction;
- (G) Explain why the reactive sentiments are central to our understanding of blame; and,
- (H) Explain why our relationships are central to our understanding of blame.

This list of desiderata is surely incomplete; there are several I cannot discuss here. For example, we want a theory of blame to cohere with our beliefs about moral luck, to explain how apology and forgiveness make further blame inappropriate, and why we should value blaming practices. In saying this, any theory that satisfies these desiderata will at least be plausible.

The account that I believe best satisfies these desiderata is what I shall call the *Synthetic* or *Extended Relational* Account. On this account:

- (i) To judge someone *blameworthy* for performing a particular act is to take this act to express certain attitudes that impair the relationships others can appropriately have with them.

-
- (ii) To *blame* them is to take this seriously, in the sense that you construe (i) as a reason to modify your relationship with that person in a way made appropriate by the act and certain features of the relationship. And,
- (iii) The typical way of doing so is by taking up one of the reactive sentiments.

In the next section, I shall argue that this account satisfies each of the desiderata I have listed. However, I must first explain how the three claims are compatible. (i) and (ii) are clearly compatible: they are what makes up the revised version of Scanlon's relational account. However, some might wonder whether (iii) is compatible with them. We can show that it is by first considering two common features shared by reactive sentiment and relational accounts.

The best versions of both reactive sentiment and relational accounts share two important features. First, both take blame to involve reasons-construals. Second, both accounts suggest blame tracks the flouting or violation of *relational* demands or expectations. This is obviously true of relational accounts – it's in the name. However, some might suggest that reactive sentiment accounts do not similarly track the violation of such demands. After all, resentment, indignation, and guilt seem to respond to a flouted demand or expectation that is ultimately justified by some moral norm. These moral norms need not have a relational character. However, we can distinguish between the norms themselves and the attitudes one holds toward these norms. The expectation or demand is not identical to the norm itself. Instead, it is comprised of an expectation or demand that others to hold certain attitudes toward this norm or principle. These demands and expectations *are* relational. *I* expect or demand that *you* hold a certain attitude toward moral norms, such that when you flout them this causes some kind of impairment to how it is appropriate to relate to you.⁵³ This, I take it, gives us reason to believe that reactive sentiment accounts also take blame to respond to *relational* requirements. This gives us good reason to believe that reactive sentiments might plausibly feature in an extended relational account. However, I have yet to argue that taking up the reactive attitudes are the typical way of blaming others on a relational account. We can do so by appealing to the way emotions are individuated on a construal-based account.

Since concern-based construal accounts of emotions accept that they have propositional content, we can distinguish between them in terms of these propositions.⁵⁴ For example, we can distinguish between fear, anxiety, and fright in

53. For a discussion of this thought in relation to a reactive sentiment view of blame, see R. Jay Wallace, "Emotions and Relationships: On a Theme from Strawson," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, ed. David Shoemaker and Neal A. Tognazzini, vol. 2: 'Freedom and Resentment' at 50 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 119–142.

54. Although, often this is only intended in a weak sense. Roberts, for example, claims that the

terms of how likely the event we fear, are frightened of, or anxious about is to occur.

If we can individuate the emotions by their propositional content, and resentment, indignation, and guilt are emotions, then we can also individuate these according to their propositional content. On the characterisation we developed in §2, to feel these emotions is to construe someone's flouted expectations as a reason. This means that to feel resentment, indignation, or guilt we *must* construe the flouting of a relational demand as a reason to modify our relationship with them. To do this just is to blame them. Therefore, to experience these emotions is *always* to blame. This is not true of the other ways we might blame someone; they are not distinguished by their propositional content, but instead by other distinctive features. Consider intending not to spend time with someone after a period of being close to them. This is a way of blaming them only if it involves construing their attitudes towards others as a reason to modify your relationship with them in this way. Therefore, the reactive sentiments are the typical way of blaming someone.

4.2 Satisfying the Desiderata

The synthetic theory takes blame to essentially consist in construing our judgement of someone as blameworthy as a reason to modify our relationship with them. However, it takes the typical way of doing so to be experiencing one of the reactive sentiments. This view satisfies (A): that a theory of blame should be intensionally and extensionally adequate. As I argued in §3.2, we can avoid the apparent counterexamples to Scanlon's relational account by appealing to reasons-construals. Since the synthetic account agrees with this revised Scanlonian account that this is essential to blame, it is also, without further argument, free from counterexamples. It also satisfies (B). Blame often seems incipiently communicative because it is the construal of some fact to be a reason. These reasons are often for performing some action that expresses our blame to someone. This account satisfies (C) because there are many ways we might modify our relationships with others. Which modification is called for will depend on the action, our relation with the wrong, and our relationship with the wrongdoer. It also naturally satisfies (D). To construe something as a reason is to take up some attitude. These attitudes are essential to blame, not their characteristic expressions. The synthetic account satisfies (E) – that blame has a characteristic force – because it can appeal to both the force that comes from experiencing or

emotions have propositional content in the sense that someone with the right kinds of conceptual capacity could reasonably claim that they are patterned responses to certain features of a situation that can be categorised in propositional form. For discussion, see Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, p. 106-111

being on the receiving end of the reactive sentiments and the force that comes from modifying your relationship with someone. In accounting for blame's force, the view also satisfies (F). Finally, the account naturally satisfies (G) and (H). Since it takes the construal of someone as blameworthy as a reason to modify your relationship with them as essential to blame, it naturally explains why our relationships with others are central to our understanding of the concept. However, it also explains why reactive sentiments are central to our understanding of blame: their propositional structure makes them, in a sense, the central way of blaming others. This, I believe, gives us reason to believe that the synthetic view of blame is at least plausible.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have aimed to cast some doubts on functionalist accounts and to sketch a synthesis of relational and reactive sentiment accounts. We should doubt functionalist accounts, in short, because they get things the wrong way around. We can blame without expressing it, but we cannot conceive of an instance of blame where we do not hold one of the blaming attitudes. Functionalists might hope to explain these attitudes in terms of a necessary connection to some action that plays a functional role. Or they might claim that these attitudes are best explained by their relation to actions that play a certain functional role. However, both seem mistaken. The first because there are significant differences in the way we talk about attitudes that have a necessary connection with certain action-types and blaming attitudes. The second because there seems to be no good functionalist explanation of the blaming attitudes, and because there is a presumptive reason to doubt such explanations in general. This, at least, gives us reason to view functionalism as a last resort. I then argued the best versions of reactive sentiment and relational accounts of blame each have several advantages but fail in at least one important respect. Reactive sentiment accounts naturally explain blame's force and oppositional character. However, they struggle to explain instances of blame that do not feature the reactive sentiments. Relational accounts are intensionally and extensionally adequate. However, they fail to explain why reactive sentiments are central to our understanding of blame. Finally, I suggested that a synthesis of these accounts could capture the important desiderata for a theory of blame. We can both claim that blame *essentially* involves construing some relational impairment as a reason to modify your relationship with someone and that the typical way of doing so is to take up one of the reactive sentiments.

In this chapter, I evaluated theories of blame and suggested that the Synthetic view best satisfies several important desiderata. This included talk of when

blame was fitting. However, there appear to be instances where someone is blameworthy but it seems unfitting for us to blame them. These are cases where we lack the *standing to blame*. In the next chapter, I shall hope to get a better grip on this phenomenon, and to evaluate some prominent explanations of why, when we lack standing to blame, our blame seems unfitting.

CHAPTER II

Substantive and Property Questions about Standing to Blame

Often, when we want to know whether we should blame someone, or whether someone's blame is appropriate, we only need to ask questions about the person blamed. So far, I have only considered this aspect of blame's appropriateness.¹ However, sometimes just considering the person blamed is not enough. Consider,

Joe and Alastair have a regular lunch meeting on Friday mornings. Joe consistently shows up late to the meeting, making Alastair wait. One day, Alastair himself shows up late for no good reason. Joe, who is uncharacteristically early, blames Alastair for this action.

Although Alastair is blameworthy, he can seemingly respond to Joe's blame with, "*who are you* to blame me for this, you hypocrite, you're always late for our meetings". In other words, Alastair can reasonably claim that Joe's blame is inappropriate in some way. We cannot give a *complete* explanation of this by appealing to Alastair, the object of Joe's blame. Instead, to explain why his blame is inappropriate, we must ask two other questions. These are about Joe, the blamer or *subject* of blame. Call these questions about whether Joe has the standing to blame Alastair. Or, to borrow Marilyn Friedman's term, whether Joe is *blamer-worthy*.² When theorising about standing, we can ask two questions.

1. I revert to using 'appropriate' rather than 'fitting' in this chapter because some accounts take standingless blame to be fitting but inappropriate. I take 'appropriate' to have several senses, one of which is equivalent to 'fitting'. Therefore, those who believe standingless blame is fitting but inappropriate can read my use of this term as having the sense that does not only concern fittingness; those who believe standingless blame is unfitting can read my use of the term as having the sense that *does*.

2. See Marilyn Friedman, "How to Blame People Responsibly," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 47 (2013): p. 272.

First, *when* does someone have the standing to blame and what conditions must they meet to have it? Since this question concerns our substantive judgements about standing, call it the *Substantive Question*. Second, what property do we possess when we have standing? Call this the *Property Question*.³

I have two aims in this chapter. The first is to propose a novel answer to the substantive question. In suggesting this view, I hope to walk a middle path between two available answers. Some argue that the only way we can lack standing is by being hypocritical.⁴ Others argue that there are four ways that someone might lack standing. For instance, G.A. Cohen suggests that we lack standing if our blame is hypocritical, if we are not relevantly involved in the wrongdoing, if we are not warranted in judging someone blameworthy, or if we are complicit in the act we are blaming someone for.⁵ I believe that both Todd's view that there is only one condition, and Cohen's view that there are four conditions are partly mistaken. Todd suggests too few conditions and Cohen suggests too many. Instead, I shall argue that we lack standing if our blame is hypocritical or if we are not relevantly involved in some wrongdoing.

Next, I shall consider some prominent answers to the Property Question. The first of these appeals to rights. These views claim that when we lack the standing to blame, we lack a right to blame. However, we have reason to believe that, without substantial revision, these views are implausible. First, current rights-based accounts give implausible explanations of standing. Second, it is unclear that blame is the appropriate subject of rights. Next, I shall consider accounts that explain standing in terms of speech-acts. On these accounts, to lack the standing to blame is to lack the ability to perform the speech-act associated with blame. On the best version of this view, this is because standing is a constitutive rule of blame. However, these accounts must claim that actions that express blame are explanatorily primary. As I argued in Chapter I, we have reason to doubt this claim. Therefore, without substantial revision, these views are implausible. Another kind of account appeals to normative powers to explain standing. On this view, to lack standing is to lack the ability to exercise the normative power we associate with blame. On the best version of this view, this is the authority to give others second-personal reasons. However, this view depends on an

3. Some might worry my reference to properties here comes too close to committing me to some form of realism about the blameworthy. However, here I want to trade on the neutrality of 'property' in its standard usage within meta-ethics. There are several kinds of properties a response can have that do not imply realism.

4. See Patrick Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame," *Nous*, 2017, 347–374, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12215>.

5. See G. A. Cohen, "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58 (2006): 113–136, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1358246106058061>.

implausible claim about the relation between blame and obligation. Therefore, without substantial revision, we should not believe this view. A final view is that to lack standing to blame is for one's blame to be inappropriate. Two versions of this view are provided by Scanlon and Wallace. Scanlon claims that when we lack standing, our blame is inappropriate because it supposes that our relationship was damaged by an act performed by the target of our blame, when it was instead damaged by our own past actions. Wallace claims that when we lack standing, our blame is unfair because it violates the equality of persons. I agree, in part, with both views. However, both admit counterexamples. Therefore, we should not believe them without revision. Yet, there is reason to believe that a similar account might succeed.

The chapter shall proceed as follows. In §6, I shall give an answer to the substantive question. My answer shall be that, to have standing, blamers must not be hypocritical and be relevantly involved in the wrongdoing. In §7, I shall evaluate several popular answers to the property question. I shall conclude that each requires substantial revision.

6 The Substantive Question

When we first consider someone who lacks the standing to blame, we are likely to think of someone whose blame is hypocritical. This, in part, has led some to claim that we only lack standing when hypocritical. However, others claim we can lack standing in several ways. For example, G.A. Cohen claims that there are a number of ways we might lack standing to blame. This disagreement concerns our substantive judgements about *when* someone lacks the standing to blame. Our aim in talking about these judgements is to formulate a set of conditions under which someone lacks the standing to blame.

The two most prominent answers to the substantive question are:

Cohen's Claim: A blamer lacks standing when they are hypocritical, complicit, not relevantly involved, or lack the warrant to believe that the target of their blame is blameworthy.⁶

and

Todd's Claim: A blamer lacks standing only if they are hypocritical.⁷

I believe that the truth lies somewhere between the claims made by Todd and Cohen. Todd is right to suppose that some of Cohen's conditions are either not

6. Cohen, "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?"

7. Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame"

about standing to blame or can be reduced to other conditions. However, Cohen is right to claim that there is more than one type of consideration that counts. We have good reason to believe that we lack standing when not relevantly involved. Therefore, I shall argue that a third claim is true:

A blamer lacks standing only if they are hypocritical or not relevantly involved.

Todd argues that considerations about whether someone is complicit, relevantly involved, and warranted in believing that the object of their blame is blameworthy are either about something other than standing to blame, or reduce to considerations about whether the blamer is hypocritical. Therefore, to defend my view, I must first argue that lack of warrant and complicity are either not about standing to blame, or are reducible to another condition. Then I must argue that hypocrisy and non-involvement are both about standing to blame and that neither is reducible to the other.

First, consider

Lack of Warrant: If someone is not warranted in believing that the target of their blame is blameworthy, then they lack standing.

It seems that questions about whether an agent is warranted in believing someone is blameworthy and whether they have the standing to blame are about different things. Therefore, we might reasonably ask whether this is the right kind of consideration to bear on standing. Todd answers in the negative. He argues that whether we lack standing to blame and whether we have warrant to believe someone is blameworthy are two different things. He gives two reasons to believe that our epistemic warrant does not bear on standing. First, situations where someone lacks standing and situations where someone lacks standing and warrant merit two different responses from the object of sincerely expressed blame. Second, that someone criticised for blaming without warrant could not respond to the charge that they lack standing by citing that they had good reason to believe that their target was blameworthy.⁸ Both claims rely on the assumption that there is only one way to lack standing to blame. If we did not make this assumption, then someone might lack standing because their belief that the

8. Todd does not seem to recognise the implications of the distinction between blaming attitudes and blaming actions. It is only the latter that can elicit responses like "who are you to blame me for this?". This raises the question of how we should take the blaming attitudes and actions to be related. Todd does not explicitly address this question. However, for now, we can suppose the actions that are eliciting the response "who are you to blame me for this" are sincere expressions of blaming attitudes and are performed for the right kind of reason. If we adopt this assumption, we can take the responses as evaluations of both attitude and action, even though this is not always the case. See Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame"

target of their blame is unwarranted *and* because they are hypocritical. In this case, they would be unable to regain standing by citing they had good reason to believe that their target merited blame. However, this would be because there was another reason they lacked standing. Todd makes no argument for the claim that there is only one way we might lack standing. Moreover, this is what he is arguing for. Therefore, we need some other reason to believe that our epistemic warrant is not what is at issue.

However, Todd *does* seem to reach the right conclusion. Our beliefs about standing suggest that our epistemic position and whether we have the standing to blame are two different things. Therefore, we need another reason to believe warrant and standing are distinct. Fortunately, there is such a reason. When we consider whether we have the standing to blame, we are considering whether certain facts about us make our *blame* inappropriate. However, when we consider whether we are in the epistemic position to know someone is blameworthy, we are asking if we should *believe* that the target of blame merits this response from anyone. This implies that our belief is unjustified in light of some fact about us: *we* do not have sufficient epistemic justification. However, this does not imply that whether our *blame* is inappropriate depends on some fact about us. If our blame is inappropriate, it will be because of facts about the target of our blame.⁹

Next, consider

Complicity: If an agent is complicit in the action they are blaming someone for performing, then they lack the standing to blame.

At first this seems true. However, on closer inspection there are cases where a blamer is complicit but intuitively retains standing. Consider cases with the following structure, adapted from Todd, where A and B are agents, and ϕ is some action:

9. However, we should note that our epistemic position *does* bear on whether we *possess* sufficient reason to blame. This explains why some people believe that our epistemic position bears on standing. Consider the following argument. Whether we ought to do something depends on the reasons we possess. To possess a reason we must be justified in believing that it is the case. So, when we blame without having sufficient evidence to believe that the object of our blame is blameworthy, we are blaming without sufficient reason to blame. Therefore, it is inappropriate to blame someone when you do not have sufficient evidence to believe that they are blameworthy. Note that this does not concern standing. Instead, it concerns the reasons the blamer possesses. Yet, the similarity between the two should now be clear. All else equal: if you do not have reason to blame someone, you should not blame them; and, if you do not have the standing to blame someone, you should not blame them. For further discussion of the condition of possession on whether we ought to do something, see Errol Lord, "Acting for the right reasons, abilities, and obligation," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau, vol. 10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 26–52; Jonathan Way and Daniel Whiting, "Perspectivism and the Argument From Guidance," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 20, no. 2 (2017): 361–374, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-016-9775-9>.

A is in a position where he secretly opposes ϕ -ing. However, A must order someone to ϕ to avoid some particularly bad outcome. Therefore, he orders B to ϕ because he believes that B will fail to ϕ . However, to A's surprise and disappointment, B successfully ϕ 's and does so for the very reasons that make it wrong.

From this more schematic structure, we can produce any number of counterexamples to Complicity. The reason A retains the standing to blame is that although he ordered the act for some circumstantial reason, he believed that the act should not have been performed and did everything that could be reasonably expected of him to ensure that it was not carried out.¹⁰ To exclude counterexamples with this structure, we should revise Complicity. The principle then becomes:

*Complicity*₁ If someone is complicit in the act they blame others for, and they believe that the act should have been performed, then they lack standing.

However, once we qualify the principle in this way, the fact that the agent is complicit in the act becomes redundant. When someone is complicit in this sense, they lack the standing to blame because they believe the act should have been performed. However, this is just an instance of hypocrisy. Any plausible characterisation of hypocrisy will call someone who believes an action should have been performed but blames others for doing so a hypocrite. Therefore, we can agree with Todd that Complicity reduces to hypocrisy.

Next, consider

Non-Involvement: If someone is not relevantly involved in the blameworthy action, they lack standing to blame.

Call someone who lacks standing when not relevantly involved a *meddler*. Todd denies that meddlers lack standing. He gives three reasons for this. First, he claims that blame by hypocrites and meddlers warrant different responses. Second, he claims that our ordinary beliefs suggest hypocrites cannot fittingly hold blaming attitudes whereas meddlers can. Finally, he claims that hypocrites lack standing *with morality* whereas meddlers lack standing only with *a person or group of people*.¹¹

The first of these reasons assumes that there could not be two different ways of standing. As I suggested when discussing the lack of warrant condition,

10. This excludes cases where A is akratic and orders the action even though they believe it to be wrong.

11. See, Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame," p. 349-351.

we have no reason to believe that this is the case. The second seems to be an inaccurate description of our ordinary beliefs about standing. In at least some cases, those who are not relevantly involved could be criticised for holding some blaming attitude.¹² Consider,

Anne promises Beth that she will meet her for lunch on Tuesday. However, she never arrives and has no good reason for failing to do so. Beth fittingly blames Anne for this and expresses her blame to her partner, Charlie. Charlie then also blames Anne for wronging Beth. The next day, Anne calls Beth and sincerely apologises. The next week, Anne and Beth get lunch together and Anne repays Beth by buying her lunch. However, Charlie continues to blame Anne for this.

Charlie seems to lack standing to both express a blaming attitude *and to hold a blaming attitude*. Further, we can highlight that his lack of involvement is the deciding factor by considering a case where Anne failed to meet Beth *and Charlie* for lunch. Here, Charlie seems to retain standing even after Beth's forgiveness. Finally, Todd claims that hypocrites lack standing with morality, but meddlers only lack standing with a person or group of people. His thought seems to be that hypocrites' loss of standing is general in the sense that they cannot blame *anyone* for performing a relevantly similar action. This is not true of meddlers. If they were appropriately related to the wrongdoer, they could blame them for performing the very same action. Although this is a fair distinction to make, it counts in favour of Todd's view only if we assume that there is just one way to lack standing. But Todd gives us no reason to make this assumption. Therefore, we should claim that we *do* lack standing when not relevantly involved.

However, our ordinary beliefs are unclear about *when* exactly someone is not relevantly involved. For example, it seems that bystanders *should* blame when wrongs are particularly severe, or when those who suffer those wrongs cannot stand up for themselves. In what follows, I shall suggest two kinds of cases where we are not relevantly involved. This, I hope, will give us a better grasp on the condition.

The first kind of case is where a bystander blames after a *wronging* where those directly involved have *rationaly* forgiven the person who wronged them. The above example is of this kind. An act is a *wronging* when it is wrong *and* directly affects a certain person or group of people. This is not always the case. Sometimes wrong acts do not directly affect anyone. Consider cases where someone pettily spoils a precious object or could easily aid one of a million

12. For a similar view, see Angela M. Smith, "On Being Responsible and Holding Responsible," *The Journal of Ethics* 11, no. 4 (2007): p. 478-479. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-005-7989-5>.

people but fails to aid anyone.¹³ When a blameworthy act is not a wronging, the blamer's relation with the wrongdoer plays no part in considerations about who can fittingly blame. Bystanders can also fittingly blame others when those directly affected by some wronging have forgiven those who wronged them but have not done so *rationally*. Suppose I forgive those who wrong me after three days, regardless of what happens. Since my forgiveness is not rational, it seems that bystanders can still fittingly blame those who have wronged me.¹⁴

The second kind of case occurs when someone flouts a strictly relational norm or expectation that concerns a private matter within a personal relationship. Suppose

Steve and Lucy live together. Steve continually leaves his dishes out and refuses to clean them up for no good reason, despite the fact that one of the expectations he and Lucy have set is that they shall both equally contribute to keeping their shared space clean. A bystander hears Lucy expressing that she blames Steve for doing this while walking past their house and also blames Steve.

Here it seems fitting for Lucy to blame Steve but unfitting for a bystander to do so. Yet, sometimes it *is* appropriate for bystanders to blame when things go on within a personal relationship's private sphere. Suppose instead of leaving the dishes out Steve verbally abused Lucy every time she entered a room. Here it seems anyone could blame him. Additionally, if someone is coerced into a relationship, it seems that there is no private sphere: our relationship to the coercer does not change whether we can blame them. Therefore, we must add further conditions. First, we can only lack standing in this kind of case when neither party is coerced into the relationship. Second, the expectation or norm that is flouted by those blamed is strictly relational. An expectation or norm that is strictly relational is one that holds *just* in virtue of the fact that people stand in a certain relationship. For example, the expectation Steve violates is strictly relational because it is only in force in virtue of their shared relationship. Not all relational expectations and norms are like this. Many are in force just because the other member of the relationship is a person. When the norm or expectation

13. For further discussion, see David Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Ch. 2.

14. This is also the case when people forgive others with no prospect of relational repair. Often, doing so is morally exemplary. Consider the cases of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, and Malala Yousazafi. All forgave people who committed horrendous acts of violence against them. However, part of what makes these acts so admirable is that these people forgave those who wronged them without any reason to believe that their relationship would be repaired. Instead, they performed this act for other morally admirable reasons.

flouted is not strictly relational, then bystanders do not lack standing. When they are *and* they fall within the relationship's private sphere, they do.

The qualifications I have suggested here avoid three problems we face when hoping to develop an account of the non-involvement condition. First, much of the time, personal relationships do not play a role in who can fittingly blame whom. On this description, there is a small but significant set of cases where blame is inappropriate because the blamer is not relevantly involved. Second, there are some cases where the severity of the wrong makes it such that anyone can blame a wrongdoer for their action. For example, we seem able to fittingly blame someone who beats their partner, regardless of whether we stand in a personal relationship with them. On the view I have suggested, we can explain this by appealing to the qualification that for bystanders to lack standing, the norm flouted by the potential object of their blame must be strictly relational and concern a private matter. Here, the norm that is being flouted holds just in virtue of the personhood of the person wronged. Thirdly, it makes sense of why it is appropriate to blame others who we need to stand up for by blaming people when they cannot. These include those who experience severe socioeconomic disadvantage, and those who lack the requisite self-respect to blame for themselves. Often, this leads to their relationships being ones they have not chosen, and wrongs done to them particularly severe.

This description of cases like that of Steve and Lucy is importantly incomplete. I have not given a comprehensive account of when something is a private matter within a relationship. Nor have I given us good reason to believe that these conditions are both necessary *and* sufficient. However, I *have* given us reason to believe that there are *some* cases of this kind where someone lacks standing to blame. Further, by arguing for these conditions, I have given us a better grasp on *when* we are not relevantly involved. This, it seems, is enough for our purposes here. Therefore, we have reason to believe that we lack standing when not relevantly involved.

Finally, we are left with hypocrisy. Although this is a paradigmatic example of when a blamer lacks standing, there are still some questions to address. Some of these questions are about what makes hypocrisy bad. Call these evaluative questions about hypocrisy. Other questions are about whether there is a common descriptive property that all hypocritical responses share. Call these descriptive questions about hypocrisy. I shall not discuss evaluative questions here. To address them here would emphasise the wrong area. I am hoping to characterise hypocrisy to explain why it is that it leads us to lack standing, not to give a full-fledged account of hypocrisy. Therefore, I shall assume that there is some evaluative property that all cases of hypocrisy share. This is a substantial assumption because there may be no such property. Instead, instances of hypocrisy

might only be related by family resemblance. However, I can concede this so long as there is some evaluative property held in common by all instances of hypocritical blame. I shall argue that this is the case in the next chapter. This leaves us with descriptive questions. I hope to partly answer these here. I add this qualification because I do not pretend that this is a full characterisation of hypocrisy. Instead, I want to outline a plausible set of conditions that capture at least one important way of using the term.

As Roger Crisp and Christopher Cowton point out, there are a number of different kinds of responses called ‘hypocritical’.¹⁵ These include acts that are inconsistent, complacent, or performed under some pretence. One way of codifying the descriptive properties all hypocritical acts have in common is

H1: An act is hypocritical only if there is a mismatch between how an agent responds, and how they judge others should respond in relevantly similar situations.

However, there might be cases where there is such a mismatch, but an agent’s response is not guided by the fact that conflicts with their judgement about how others should respond. And, there might be cases where someone endorses some response but does not actually respond to a situation in a way that is hypocritical.

Therefore, we should claim that:

H2: A response is hypocritical if

- (a) there is a mismatch between how an agent responds or is disposed to respond, and how they judge or are disposed to judge others should respond in relevantly similar cases, and
- (b) the response is guided by a consideration that is at odds with their judgement.

In light of this characterisation, we can claim that when someone’s blame is *hypocritical* there is a mismatch between how they respond (or are relevantly disposed to respond) and how they believe (or are disposed to believe) others should respond in relevantly similar situations, and that their hypocritical blame is guided by a consideration that is at odds with their judgement.

If what I have claimed in this section is correct, we should now have a better grasp of the phenomenon of standing to blame. And with it, a plausible answer to the Substantive Question. I shall now consider whether there are any adequate treatments of this phenomenon.

15. See Roger Crisp and Christopher Cowton, “Hypocrisy and moral seriousness,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1994): 343–349.

7 The Property Question

7.1 Rights

Those who endorse rights accounts claim that to have the standing to blame is to have the right to blame. This right is had merely in virtue of being a person and so is both fundamental and equally distributed between all persons. However, like all rights, it can be forfeited when we meet certain conditions. When we meet at least one of the conditions described in the previous section, rights theorists claim we forfeit our right to blame. Naturally, to act in a way that you do not have the right to perform is inappropriate.

Proponents of rights accounts agree on *what* the property of standing is. However, they disagree about *why* we lack it when we fail to meet certain conditions. On one version of this account, our right to blame is forfeited because standingless blame violated the equality of persons. This codifies the plausible thought that, *ceteris paribus*, morality requires us to treat everyone in the same way. According to this version of the account, this norm underpins our right to blame. Therefore, when we meet certain conditions that imply blaming someone would violate this norm, we forfeit the right to blame. And, to blame without a right is to blame without standing. Therefore, standingless blame is inappropriate.¹⁶

On the second version of this account, to lack standing is to forfeit our right to blame because to do so would imply we have failed to engage in critical self-scrutiny regarding the norms we blame others for. Failing to meet the standing conditions outlined in the previous section, these theorists claim, implies that we have not engaged in this critical self-scrutiny. Therefore, when we blame others without standing, we forfeit our right to blame.¹⁷

When we consider these views, we should ask two questions. First, are the explanations given by the current versions of these accounts plausible? Second, is it plausible to explain standing in terms of rights? I believe that, without further argument from the rights theorist, the answer to both questions is no.

Let us begin with the first question. On one version of this view, when we

16. See Kyle G Fritz and Daniel Miller, "Hypocrisy and the Standing to Blame," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (2018): 118–139; Kyle G Fritz and Daniel J Miller, "When hypocrisy undermines the standing to blame: a response to Rossi," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 22, no. 2 (2019): 379–384; Kyle G Fritz and Daniel Miller, "The unique badness of hypocritical blame," *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 6 (2019).

17. See Cristina Roadevin, "Hypocritical blame, fairness, and standing," *Metaphilosophy* 49, nos. 1-2 (2018): 137–152; cf. Antony Duff, "Blame, Moral Standing and the Legitimacy of the Criminal Trial," *Ratio* 23, no. 2 (2010): 123–140, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2010.00456.x>

lack standing, we have forfeited our right to blame because to do so would violate the equality of persons. One objection to this view, suggested by Todd, is that sometimes a blamer can violate the equality of persons without losing the standing to blame.¹⁸ Suppose I regularly blame one of my students, John, but not another, Sophie, for failing to show up to class on time. Furthermore, suppose that this happens regularly enough that we might plausibly say I have a disposition to blame John but not Sophie for showing up late to class. In being disposed to treat John and Sophie differently, I violate the equality of persons because I have different expectations of them without good reason. However, I do not seem to lack the standing to blame John for being late. If we can sometimes violate the equality of persons without losing the standing to blame, then there must be something else about standingless blame that makes it inappropriate.

This objection, it seems, gives us reason to revise the claims made by proponents of this version of rights accounts. To revise these claims, we can make a distinction between benign and repugnant inconsistency. Inconsistency is *benign* when the inconsistent response was not motivated by ill-will or misdirected good-will. Inconsistency is *repugnant* when the inconsistent response is motivated by ill-will or misdirected good-will. On this revision, only repugnant cases of inconsistent blame make us lack standing. This avoids Todd's counterexample while still fitting with our ordinary beliefs about hypocritical blame. When I blame hypocritically, I fail to subject myself to the same costs that come with flouting some norm that I am willing to impose on others. This seems to either be the result of misdirected goodwill toward myself or ill will toward others. However, nothing of the sort is implied in the case of John and Sophie. Although Sophie might benefit from not being blamed, *my blame is not guided by this consideration*. Or, at the very least, it is unclear whether it is. Therefore, we can say that I lack the standing to blame when my blame is hypocritical but not in the case of John and Sophie because my blame is only *repugnantly* inconsistent in the first case. This objection seems to avoid Todd's counterexample, and others like it.

However, equality of persons accounts must also revise their views to only be about moral blame. Some people might join clubs or be members of groups that require them to have certain inegalitarian beliefs about what we should do. Consider nationalists.¹⁹ To be a nationalist, I must believe that people of the same nationality should give greater priority to helping each other than helping those of a different nationality. To believe this is to violate the equality of persons. There is no morally relevant difference between someone who shares my nationality and someone who does not. We can also suppose that much of

18. See Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame," p. 368-371.

19. For a similar example, see Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, "Why the moral equality account of the hypocrite's lack of standing to blame fails," *Analysis* 80, no. 4 (2020): §3.

the time this belief is a consequence of another belief that my nationality is the best in some way. In these cases, this belief will doubly violate the equality of persons. Now, suppose I could either help someone who shares my nationality or someone who does not and that I choose to help the latter. Two other nationalists, Jim and Jean, blame me for this. However, yesterday, Jim performed a similar action. Here it seems Jim *lacks* the standing to blame, as a fellow nationalist, but Jean does not. Yet, both Jim and Jean have already violated the equality of persons by holding nationalist beliefs about what we should do. Therefore, it cannot *just* be the fact that we have violated the equality of persons that leads us to lack standing to blame. This gives us reason to revise these accounts. On the best version of this account, hypocrites only lack the *moral* standing to blame because they have violated the equality of persons. Therefore, if we adopt these accounts, then we must revise our beliefs about standing to blame. This gives us reason to believe that, without further argument from the rights theorist, we should look to other accounts.

Consider next rights accounts that suggest blaming without standing forfeits our right to blame because it expresses that we fail to take our moral obligations seriously but expect others to take theirs seriously. On one version of this view, to take our moral obligations seriously, we must engage in critical self-scrutiny. To engage in critical self-scrutiny, I must reflectively reason about my own intentional attitudes. According to these views, when I blame someone appropriately, I presuppose that I have engaged in this self-scrutiny. However, when I blame without standing, I have failed to meet this expectation. The right to blame someone is underpinned by this expectation of self-scrutiny. Therefore, on these views, when I blame without standing, I blame without a right to.²⁰

This view implies that we possess the right to blame others for violating some norm when we have engaged in critical self-scrutiny regarding that same norm. However, there are clear counterexamples to this claim. For example, to fully possess some virtues, we must not engage in self-scrutiny. One such virtue is modesty. A person who is characteristically modest does not engage in reflective reasoning about whether they are, or should be, modest. Instead, modesty has become second-nature. However, if I am a boastful person, then I should engage in self-scrutiny regarding modesty. On the view that the right to blame is forfeited when we fail to engage in self-scrutiny about some norm, a naturally modest person would lack the right to blame the boastful person for failing to be modest. This is clearly false. Therefore, without further argument, we should not believe this version of the rights account.²¹

20. See Roadevin, "Hypocritical blame, fairness, and standing."

21. For further discussion, see Julia Annas, *Intelligent virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. 1 and 2.

This gives us reason to doubt that current versions of the rights account are true. However, we might still ask: could some rights account be true? If it is plausible to claim that standing to blame is a right to blame, then our answer should be yes. However, without further argument, we should not make this claim. There are three reasons for this. First, rights most naturally concern actions, not attitudes.²² However, as I argued in the previous chapter, blame is primarily attitudinal.

Second, it is unclear what kind of right the right to blame might be. Consider the four kinds of rights put forward in a Hohfeldian analysis. Each of these rights are distinguished by their second-party correlatives. *Claim rights* impose a certain duty on others. *Liberty or privilege rights* to ϕ , where ϕ is some act, consists in the absence of a duty for the agent to refrain from ϕ -ing and a corresponding lack of others' claims that the agent not ϕ . *Power rights* to ϕ afford the rights-holder the competence to ϕ , which will bring about certain consequences for a second party. Finally, an *immunity right* from ϕ ensures that no one holds a power to ϕ against the rights-holder.²³ The right to blame is unlikely to be an immunity right. If it were, the right to dismiss another person's blame would have to be a power. However, it seems clear that this is not so. To dismiss someone's blame is more likely a way of being immune to its consequences than having the ability to prevent it from having its ordinary effect. However, it might still be a *claim right*, a *power*, or a *privilege*. If it were a claim right, then the right to blame would impose a duty on the person we are blaming. One candidate duty is the duty to take the blame seriously. For example, we might say that if I have the right to blame you, then you have a duty to take my blame seriously. However, this need not be the case. You might have the right to blame me, and yet it still be the case that I need not take your blame seriously. Suppose I have already been thoroughly blamed for an action, so much so that any more blame would be unnecessary. If you were to then blame me for this, I need not take *your* blame seriously. At least, not in the sense that it would provide me with an additional obligation for me to make reparations, apologise, and so on. Therefore, we could have a right to blame without imposing a duty on others to take your blame seriously. This suggests that our right to blame would not be a claim right. Next,

22. Some argue that we can have rights to hold certain attitudes. However, it seems that these accounts rely on the view that to have a right to ϕ , where ϕ is some action or attitude, is just to have conclusive reason to ϕ . If so, it seems that rights accounts are just versions of the appropriateness accounts I discuss later in the chapter. And this seems to imply that rights are doing little explanatory work. We can, therefore, assume that rights theorists mean something different when they talk about rights. *These* seem to most naturally concern actions, not attitudes. For such a view about conduct and attitudinal rights, see Leif Wenar, "Epistemic Rights and Legal Rights," *Analysis* 63, no. 2 (2003): 142–146, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8284.00024>

23. See, Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, *Fundamental legal conceptions, as applied in judicial reasoning*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 36.

consider whether the right to blame could be a privilege or liberty to blame. If this were so, it would imply that there is an absence of any duty for us to refrain from blaming others, and a lack of claims against us to refrain from blaming others. However, we might still have a duty to refrain from blaming someone, even if we had a so-called 'right' to blame. Consider cases where we have a duty to refrain from blaming others, even though it seems fair to say that we have a right to. Suppose I borrowed your car without asking, even though I was aware that you had to use it to get to work that morning. However, later that morning, I had to use the car to rush my mother to hospital. In this case, it seems that I have a claim against you to refrain from blaming me for this – your grievance is not important anymore. However, you do not lack the right to blame me. This implies that having a right to blame someone does not entail that no one has a claim against us to refrain from blaming. If this is so, then we should hesitate to classify the right to blame as a liberty or privilege. Finally, we might ask whether the right to blame is a power. This would imply that the right to blame would confer on us the ability to bring about certain consequences for the blameworthy person. This is the most plausible class that the right to blame could fall under. However, if this were so, then rights accounts would no longer have any distinctive content. Instead, they would collapse into normative powers accounts. Further, as I argue in §7.3, we should be hesitant to take up these accounts.

Those who endorse rights accounts might give several responses. They might, for example, reject Hohfeldian analyses of rights. Or they might claim that our right to blame ensures that we have a *pro tanto* right – that is, one which might be overridden by other considerations.²⁴ However, without further argument, it is unclear that rights accounts can plausibly classify the right to blame using a Hohfeldian analysis without their view collapsing into another.

The third reason we should doubt rights accounts is that proposing a right to blame conflicts with the right to do wrong. The right to do wrong entails that the right holder has a liberty to ϕ even when ϕ -ing is wrong or inappropriate.²⁵ This naturally conflicts with a rights account of standing to blame. Suppose I blame without a right to, and you respond, "who are you to blame me for this, you have no right to do so". If I have a right to do wrong, I might respond "I have the right to blame hypocritically sometimes, don't I? Stop bothering me!" If, as rights theorists claim, the right to blame is a fundamental moral right, then it should not conflict with other moral rights. Therefore, we should not claim that there is a right to blame. Although it is open to the rights theorist to deny

24. In doing so, they would have to be careful that in making this claim they do not retreat into appropriateness accounts. For further discussion of these accounts, see §7.4.

25. For a recent defence of this right, see Ori J. Herstein, "Defending the Right To Do Wrong," *Law and Philosophy* 31, no. 3 (2012): 343–365, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-011-9126-x>.

that we should believe there is some right to do wrong, or to deny that these two views conflict, they must explain this if their view is to be plausible. This gives us sufficient reason to believe that, without additional argument, we should not believe that standing to blame is a right to blame. However, this is not to say that rights accounts bear no fruit, so to speak. The claim that blame provides us with the ability to impose certain consequences on the person we are blaming informs the next two theories I shall consider.

7.2 Speech-Acts

Appealing to speech-acts is one way of making sense of the thought that standing affords us with the ability to impose certain consequences on the object of our blame. A speech-act is an utterance that has a distinct illocutionary force. An utterance's illocutionary force is the reason that this provides the person whom it is directed to. For example, a mugger might emit the sound 'give me your wallet, or else'. These sounds, combined with their grammaticality and coherence, form a *locutionary act*. However, this does not account for what the mugger *does* by performing this utterance. What they do is threaten the person they are mugging. The threatening is the *illocutionary act*. When the illocutionary act is successfully performed, it affects the person it is directed at. This effect is the *perlocutionary act*. For example, when the mugger threatens someone, this may frighten them.²⁶

The best version of speech-act accounts begins with an implicit claim:

(A) We should conceive of 'speech-act blame' as explanatorily primary.

This claim is influenced by the work of Fricker, McKenna, and Macnamara. All these writers suggest that we should take communicative blame to be the explanatorily primary form of blame.²⁷ Communicative blame, in the sense interpreted by those who prefer speech-act accounts, is intimately linked to a corresponding speech-act. They then claim that to

(B) *have the standing to blame* is to be able to successfully perform this speech-act. To *lack the standing to blame* is to be unable to successfully perform this speech-act.²⁸

26. See John Langshaw Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 1975); Stefan Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is," *Dialectica* 73, nos. 1-2 (2019): 183–210, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-8361.12262>.

27. Cf. Fricker, "What's the point of blame? A paradigm based explanation"; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*; Macnamara, "Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency"; Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities."

28. For two versions of this account, see Cohen, "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?"; and Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is"

We might now ask: why do those who lack standing to blame lack the ability to successfully perform the associated speech-act? One answer to this question, given by Stefan Riedener, is that when we blame without standing, we break a constitutive rule that normatively governs blame.²⁹ Speech-acts are governed by several rules. We can uncover these rules by asking how we might criticise someone who performs the speech-act appropriately or inappropriately. Consider a standard example of a speech-act: assertion. We might criticise an assertion for being rude, unwarranted, nasty, superfluous, or unfair. For each kind of criticism, there is a corresponding rule. Some of these rules are more intimately related to the nature of that speech-act than others. Consider the criticism that an assertion was rude. This seems to have only a distant relation to assertion; the rule it expresses is conventional. However, the criticism that the assertion was made without knowledge of what was asserted, or that the assertion was false are more intimately related to the speech-act's nature. These are candidate constitutive rules.³⁰ They are called this because they partly constitute a speech-act. Some, like Timothy Williamson, believe there is only one rule that governs assertion: the Knowledge Rule.³¹ This implies that on Williamson's account, if you were to assert some proposition without knowing it, you would not be asserting anything at all. If by breaking a constitutive rule you fail to perform the speech-act at all, then this rule is essential to that speech-act. Call these *essential rules*. When speech-acts have only one constitutive rule, then all constitutive rules are essential. However, when they have more than one constitutive rule, only some might be essential.

Consider an analogy with cricket. Cricket has several essential rules. For example, if I were to play a game of cricket without wickets, then I would be breaking an essential rule. I might be playing some cricket-like game, but it would not be cricket. Yet cricket also has several nonessential constitutive rules. One such rule might be the no-ball rule. If no part of the bowler's foot is behind the crease when she releases the ball, then her delivery fails to have its ordinary force: if the bowler takes a wicket with a no-ball, it does not count. However, by bowling a no-ball, the bowler does not cease to play cricket.

We can now return to blame. If blame is primarily a speech-act, then it is governed by some set of constitutive rules. Those who favour this account argue that there is a constitutive standing rule. We can represent this as:

The Standing Rule: One must only blame A for ϕ -ing if one has standing.

29. See Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is."

30. See Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 238-244.

31. See Williamson, p. 249-255.

If one breaks the standing rule, their blame lacks its ordinary illocutionary force. It fails to provide the person it is directed towards with the reasons it would if the Standing Rule had not been broken. This explains why standingless blame appears to lack blame's ordinary force. It will also have a different effect on the person blamed. Whereas usually blame elicits guilt, apology, or something similar, standingless blame instead leads to criticism and dismissal.

Some people who favour these accounts make two further claims:

(C) Speech-acts have private counterparts.

(D) These private counterparts are governed by the same constitutive rules as speech-acts.³²

(C) follows from plausible claims about speech-acts. (D) follows from (A). If we take blame *qua* speech-act as explanatorily primary, then attitudinal blame will be governed by the same rules.

Speech-act accounts have several advantages. The most important of these is that they explain why standingless blame lacks the force blame normally has. However, without further argument, they seem to be implausible. This is because, as I argued in Chapter I, (A) is false: attitudinal blame is explanatorily primary.

This explains an important difference between blame and standard speech-acts like promising and ordering. When I promise you that I will take out the bins on Sunday evening, all else being equal, the promise will be binding so long as I utter it. Likewise, if a teacher utters 'I order you to leave the classroom' to their students, all else being equal, they make this order regardless of whether they hold some corresponding attitude. However, this is not the case with blame. If I were to say 'I blame you' without the corresponding attitude, I would not be blaming you. This, I believe, gives us reason to believe that (A) is mistaken.

If so, then what should we make of (D)? Some who prefer speech-act accounts seem to imply that neither attitudinal nor speech-act blame has explanatory primacy. For example, Riedener writes

"If [(C) and (D) are] correct, then there is no very sharp distinction between speech-acts and private mental acts or states: both are in a similar manner regulated by rules of authority."³³

If so, speech-act accounts might succeed. Both speech-act blame, and attitudinal blame would be governed by the same norms. And we might approach

32. See Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is," §6.

33. Riedener, p. 205.

these norms from either direction. Therefore, speech-act accounts would still be doing explanatory work.

However, this implies we should not prefer to explain these norms in terms of attitudes, rather than speech-acts. However, this is false. Blame is conceptually distinct from its expressions but not from the attitudes that comprise it. Furthermore, there is no necessary connection between the blaming attitudes and their characteristic expressions. Therefore, we should not claim that the blaming actions and attitudes have equal primacy. Instead, we should claim that the attitudes are explanatorily primary.

Some might revise speech-act accounts so that they only apply to actions which are expressions of standingless blame. Others might revise them to claim that the blaming attitudes are not affected by standing but only the actions which express these attitudes. However, these would be substantial revisions. Without these revisions, we should not believe these views.

7.3 Normative Powers

A second way to make sense of the idea that to lack the standing to blame is to lack the ability to impose certain consequences on the person we are blaming is to appeal to normative powers. On normative powers views, to have the standing to blame is to have the ability to exercise the normative power associated with blame. According to these theories, this requires us to have the authority to blame others.

We exercise a normative power when we create or repeal obligations at will. Consider promising. When I promise you that I shall take out the bins on Sunday night, I create an obligation to take out the bins. This is an obligation I did not have before I made the promise. In making it, to borrow David Owens' phrase, I shape the normative landscape.³⁴

Those who favour such accounts begin by claiming

- (E) When we blame someone, we create an obligation or reason for them to apologise, recognise their wrong, make reparations, or refrain from performing some similar action in the future.

Not anyone can exercise a normative power. *I* can create an obligation for myself by promising you that I will take the bins out. My mother might also be able to create such an obligation for me. However, a stranger could not. This implies that whether we can exercise a normative power depends on some fact, or some set of facts, about us. We can put this in terms of the *authority* to create an obligation.

34. See Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape*, Introduction.

Therefore,

- (F) When we blame someone, we create an obligation or reason for them to apologise, recognise their wrong, make reparations, and to refrain from performing similar actions in the future, *only if we have the authority to blame them*.³⁵

We might now reasonably ask: how can we explain ‘authority’ as it is used here? One way to answer this question, suggested by Adam Piovarchy, is to appeal to Stephen Darwall’s work in *The Second Person Standpoint*. Darwall claims that there is a distinction between ordinary and second-personal normative reasons. Ordinary normative reasons are ever present. Second-personal reasons are created when someone addresses a seemingly valid demand to another member of the moral community.³⁶ Consider a classic example: Hume’s man with a gouty toe. Suppose I came across a man on the side of the street whose toe is particularly gouty and step on it, ‘as on the hard flint and pavement’.³⁷ Suppose the man then blames me for this. The consideration that this would cause him pain gives me an ordinary reason to refrain from stepping on his toe. However, when he blames me for doing this, he gives me a further second-personal reason not to do so. Second-personal reasons differ from ordinary reasons, in part, because they are *created* when someone makes a demand and because they are *directed*.³⁸ That is, when I make a valid demand of you to ϕ , you then owe it to *me* that you shall ϕ . This all implies that when we blame someone, we make it so that they owe it to us to apologise, recognise their wrong, make reparations, and refrain from performing similar acts in the future. Our authority to blame others is determined by the accountability relations that hold between persons. My authority to blame you is grounded both in my dignity as an equal member of the moral community, and my presumption that you are also a member of the moral community. If I lack either ground, I lack the authority to blame you. If I lack the authority to blame, then I lack the ability to give you a second-personal reason to apologise, recognise your wrong, make reparations, and refrain from performing similar acts in the future.³⁹

Those who favour normative powers accounts then claim that

35. See Adam Piovarchy, “Hypocrisy, Standing to Blame and Second-Personal Authority,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2020): §3, <https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12318>.

36. See Stephen Darwall, *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 5-10.

37. See David Hume, *An enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, 2nd ed., Open Court classics ; P 46 (La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1966 - 1777), EM 5.39, SBN 225-6.

38. See Darwall, *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*, p. 5-10.

39. For further discussion, see Darwall, *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*; Piovarchy, “Hypocrisy, Standing to Blame and Second-Personal Authority.”

(G) When we blame someone without standing, we fail to treat the target of our blame as an equal.⁴⁰

Consider hypocrisy. When I blame someone hypocritically, I blame them for an act relevantly like one I have performed in the past. This implies that I believe they cannot blame me for the same things I blame them for. This fails to treat them as an equal member of the moral community. However, my authority to blame them is partly grounded in my presupposition that they are an equal member of the moral community. Therefore, those who favour normative powers accounts claim

(H) When we blame someone without standing, we blame them without the authority to blame.

Therefore,

(I) When we blame someone without standing, we fail to create an obligation or reason for them to apologise, recognise their wrong, make reparations, or refrain from performing some similar action in the future.

When those who argue for normative powers accounts make these claims, their emphasis is often on (G), (H), and (I). However, the most important steps in their argument are (E) and (F). If we do not create obligations for others by blaming them, we cannot fail to create these obligations when we lack standing. (E) and (F) constitute a volitional view of obligation. That is, they imply that obligations rely on someone *making a valid claim on, or demand of* someone else. There are two ways to interpret these theories: as placing emphasis on the making of the demand, or as placing emphasis on the validity of the demand.⁴¹ On the first interpretation, we can construct obligations for others *from nothing* simply through an act of will. There are clear problems with this view. According to this view, we can create obligations for others to perform acts that are clearly wrong, and we do not have the obligations we ordinarily would if no one makes them of us. Both implications are implausible.

On the second interpretation of the volitional view of obligation, we avoid the first implausible implication. Valid demands or claims, we can suppose, must meet several conditions. One of these conditions will have to be that there is sufficient reason to make them. Therefore, we shall only be able to create obligations for others that are in line with what they already have moral reason

40. Piovarchy, "Hypocrisy, Standing to Blame and Second-Personal Authority," p. 12.

41. For a similar thought, and an argument I draw on, see R Jay Wallace, "Reasons, relations, and commands: Reflections on Darwall," *Ethics* 118, no. 1 (2007): 24–36.

to do. However, there are still concerns about whether this version of the view avoids the second implication. Consider again Hume's example of the man with the gouty toe. The second version of the volitionalist account implies that were this man not to blame me, or if no one had the disposition to blame me for this, I would not have a second-personal obligation to apologise, recognise my wrong, make reparations, or refrain from performing similar actions in the future. This is hard to believe. We seem to owe it to others to make up for our wrong in these ways even if they do not blame us for it, even if no one blames us for it.

Importantly, this highlights an important difference between blame and paradigm cases of normative powers like promising and ordering. The fact that we create promissory obligations only when we *actually* promise someone that we shall ϕ does not have the same implausible consequence. Same goes for ordering. If a drill sergeant does not order soldiers to march, they have no obligation to march.

This suggests that (E) and (F) have at least one implausible implication. To avoid this implication, we might claim that the source of these obligations is, instead, the relationships we stand in with other moral agents. Since we always stand in these relationships, we have these obligations whenever we mistreat another moral agent. However, if so, we must revise normative powers accounts. If we do not construct second-personal reasons by blaming someone, we cannot fail to construct these reasons when we blame without standing. Although it is open to those who prefer these accounts to revise their views so that they are more plausible, this gives us reason to consider another account.

7.4 Inappropriate Blame

On the final widely held view, to have the standing to blame is for your blame to be appropriate. For example, Scanlon claims that we lack standing to blame when our action has impaired the relationship with the person we are blaming, not theirs. On a rough articulation of Scanlon's view, blame is appropriate when the object of blame's action expresses something about the agent that impairs the relationships others can appropriately have with them. Therefore, to blame without standing is inappropriate.⁴² To give another example, Wallace claims that when we blame without standing, we violate the equality of persons and so blame unfairly. On his view, blame is only appropriate when it is fair. Therefore, it is inappropriate to blame without standing.⁴³

We should ask two questions when considering these accounts. First, are the current versions of this view plausible? Second, might a view of this kind be

42. See Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*, p. 175-177.

43. See R. Jay Wallace, "Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2010): 307-341, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2010.01195.x>.

plausible? I believe the answer to the first question is no. However, the answer to the second is yes.

I shall first consider the two most popular versions of the view: those of Wallace and Scanlon. On Wallace's version of the view, blame requires a commitment to the equal standing of persons. However, when we blame without standing, we flout this commitment. When we blame others but not ourselves for relevantly similar actions, we treat them differently than we treat ourselves without good reason to do so. By treating others in this unequal way, we undermine the very thing that gives us the standing to blame. This inequality further implies that we are treating them unfairly. We are protecting ourselves from the discomfort that comes with being blamed but subjecting another person to it when we have performed relevantly similar acts. This makes our blame inappropriate.⁴⁴

We might hope to make the same objections to this account as we did to rights accounts that appealed to the equality of persons. Some of these objections are less forceful when we consider Wallace's view. This is, in part, because he is very cautious about the limits of his view. From the outset, he claims that only standingless moral blame is inappropriate because it is counter to the impartial viewpoint that is constitutive of morality. However, Wallace's account faces another problem. His claims about standingless blame rely on the view that whether we should blame someone depends on considerations of fairness.⁴⁵ However, I have already argued that we should reject this view. Therefore, we should not adopt Wallace's view without substantial revision.

Next, consider Scanlon's version of this account. On his view, our blame is inappropriate because it presupposes that another person's act has impaired our relationship. Yet, when we lack standing, it is *our* act that has done so. Thus, our blame is inappropriate because it does not fit the facts.⁴⁶ This implies that standingless blame is characterised by a presuppositional failure. However, this does not do justice to our everyday beliefs about standing to blame. On Scanlon's account, we struggle to explain the difference between cases where a person is, say, hypocritical and where their blame is inappropriate because of some innocent false belief. Consider a case where

Sam believes that Joe has broken his promise to meet her at the library after class on Tuesday. Sam has good reason to believe this. Joe is not at the library, it is after class, and for all that Sam knows, Joe made the promise under no duress. However, Sam is very intimidating despite intending to be friendly. Joe only made this promise because

44. Wallace, "Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons"

45. See Wallace, p. 328-330.

46. See Scanlon, *Moral dimensions*, p. 175-177.

he was afraid Sam would beat him up and did not show up to the library for fear of this happening.

Suppose Joe's belief is also reasonable. If Sam blames Joe for failing to show up to the library, her blame would be inappropriate because of some presuppositional failure. Joe's promise was not made freely and so is not binding. The promise is not binding because of one of Sam's past actions – she asked Joe in a way that intimidated him. Therefore, their relationship is impaired because of Sam's past actions. Yet Sam's blame is not hypocritical, and it is not clear she lacks standing. This is partly because Sam's failure is epistemic, and epistemic failures do not bear on one's standing to blame. Therefore, if we adopt Scanlon's version of the view, we must revise our beliefs about standing to blame.

Suppose we were willing to revise these beliefs. Then we would lack standing when our blame involved a presuppositional failure. However, this would lead to another revision of our beliefs about standing to blame. When we criticise someone for lacking standing, we seem to make a moral criticism of them. However, on Scanlon's account, this criticism is not distinctly moral. Therefore, Scanlon's account implies that we are wrong to believe that criticisms that concern standing are moral criticisms. This gives us reason to reject Scanlon's view, absent any further argument.

We might now ask whether *any* account that appeals to the inappropriateness of standingless blame might succeed. An initial argument that suggests they could not takes the form of a dilemma. Suppose that standingless blame is inappropriate in the way these appropriateness views claim. If so, then standingless blame must be *pro toto* inappropriate or *pro tanto* inappropriate. Something is *pro toto* inappropriate only if, when we lack standing, our blame cannot be appropriate. However, there are cases of standingless blame that are appropriate because they cause some desirable outcome. Therefore, standingless blame cannot be inappropriate in this sense. Something is *pro tanto* inappropriate only if it counts against some response. However, the lack of standing cannot just *be* blame's being inappropriate in this sense because this would not properly individuate standing from other ways blame might be *pro tanto* inappropriate.⁴⁷

Another related objection is that they do not fit with our ordinary locutions about standing to blame. Often, when considering whether we have the standing to blame, we say things like 'I know he is blameworthy, but I cannot blame them for that'. If accounts like these cannot explain these ordinary locutions, they run the risk of being unable to explain what is distinct about standing to blame as it features in our ordinary discourse.

47. See Piovarchy, "Hypocrisy, Standing to Blame and Second-Personal Authority," §2.2 and Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is," p. 189-190 for articulations of this critique.

One way we might respond is by distinguishing between fittingness and all-things-considered appropriateness. Sometimes expressions might be all-things-considered appropriate because they are desirable, even if the blaming attitudes are not fitting. If I had to blame a blameless person to stop a war, then it would be all-things-considered appropriate to do so. However, this would not make my blame fitting.

However, this does not address worries about how to distinguish standing from other fittingness conditions, nor does it address the second objection. To address these worries, we must first introduce some claims about the fittingness relation. Therefore, at present, we can take these two objections to provide a challenge for appropriateness accounts. In the next chapter, I hope to develop an account that meets this challenge.

8 Conclusion

When we consider whether blame is appropriate, we should first ask whether the person it is directed at is blameworthy. However, sometimes blame still seems inappropriate even though the answer to this question is 'yes'. When this is so, blame might be inappropriate because of certain facts about the blamer. That is, because the blamer lacks standing. In this chapter, I suggested that we should ask two questions when theorising about standing to blame. The first concerns our substantive judgements about *when* we have it. The second concerns the *property* we possess when we have it. I discussed answers to both questions. To the first I also suggested a novel answer: that we lack standing when we are hypocritical or not relevantly involved. In my discussion of the latter I argued we should not accept any available accounts without serious revision. However, the account that might be most plausibly revised is an account that appeals to the fittingness of blame. This gives us a reason to pursue a view of this kind. In the next chapter, I hope to develop such a view.

CHAPTER III

The Three-Place View

Other answers to the Property Question require substantial revision. However, accounts that appeal to blame's fittingness seem the most plausible. This, I believe, gives us reason to pursue a novel answer of this kind. In this chapter, I aim to develop such an answer. On what I shall call the three-place view, we lack standing to blame when the object of our blame is not blameworthy-by-us, even though they are blameworthy-by-someone. According to this view, the relation between blame and blameworthiness is one instance of what has been variably called the 'fittingness', 'calling-for', and 'fitness' relation. Many take the fittingness relation to be two-place. However, we have good reason to believe it is three-place. If the fittingness relation is three-place, it holds between an object, attitude, and responder. In the case of blame, the relata are the blamer, blame, and the blameworthy. Sometimes, there is a restriction on who can occupy the responder-place. Whether or not someone can occupy the responder-place in these cases depends on certain facts about them. Therefore, we can say that talk about whether we have the standing to blame is just talk about whether someone can fittingly occupy the responder-place. Or so I shall argue.

The chapter shall proceed as follows. In §9, I shall state the three-place view. In doing so, I shall appeal to the view that the fittingness relation is three-placed. In §10, I shall consider two objections that hope to challenge this claim. The first argues that there are two fittingness relations; the second that there is only one fittingness relation but that it is always two-placed. In response to the first, I shall argue that there is a strong theoretical presumption in favour of there being a single fittingness relation. Furthermore, there does not seem to be anything important we can explain with two relations but not with one. To the second, I shall respond that, at present, while so-called three-placers have a good explanation of cases where the fittingness relation seems two-placed, two-placers do not have a good explanation of cases where the fittingness relation seems three-placed. Then in §11, I shall then claim that there is another independent

source of attraction to viewing blame as one instance of a three-place fittingness relation: it fits with our belief that we are sometimes accountable to particular people or particular groups of people for our actions. In §12 I shall then argue that the three-place view satisfies several important desiderata of a theory of standing to blame, including *why* standingless blame is unfitting. I shall do so by arguing that blame involves relating to others as accountable equals, and that standingless blamers fail to do this in one of two ways: either they fail to take the norms they blame others for seriously, or they fail to take seriously the choices and decisions of others. Both these, I shall suggest, are ways of failing to relate to others as accountable equals. Furthermore, they are failures of respect. Finally, in §13 I shall consider how this view can be applied to substantive cases of standing to blame where the blamer is either hypocritical or not relevantly involved. Here I shall claim that hypocrites lack standing because they fail to take the norms they blame others for flouting seriously, and that those not relevantly involved fail to take the decisions and responses of others seriously.

9 What Makes Blame Fit?

When we evaluate something, we often use words that end in ‘-worthy’, ‘-some’, ‘-ful’, ‘-able’ or ‘-ing’. For example, we say that helping another at a cost to yourself is praiseworthy, Turner’s landscapes are awesome, poor behaviour is shameful, and good things are desirable.¹ According to one tradition of theorising about value, these words assert a relationship between the object of our evaluation and the response that comes before the suffixes. For example, when we call one of Turner’s landscapes awesome, we are asserting a relationship between an object, Turner’s landscape, and a response-type, awe. There is no name for this relation in ordinary language, but philosophers commonly call it the fittingness relation.² If we adopt this view, we can then say that good things are the fitting objects of favour responses and bad things the fitting objects of disfavour responses.³

1. For further discussion, see Göran Kjellmer, “Legible but not readable: On the semantics of english adjectives in-ble,” *Studia neophilologica* 58, no. 1 (1986): 11–38.

2. However, there are several other names that are also used. These include fitness, correctness, worthiness, worth, merit, appropriateness, suitability, requiredness, and aptness. I use fittingness because it is the most natural to my ear, and because it is common within the literature. However, nothing much turns on this terminological preference.

3. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Franz Clemens Brentano, *The origin of our knowledge of right and wrong* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009) (see also Roderick M Chisholm, *Brentano and intrinsic value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)), C. D. Broad, *Five types of ethical theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930), Alfred Ewing, *The Definition of Good* (London: Routledge, 1948), W. D. Ross, *The right and the good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002),

Many take this to be a two-place relation. On this view, there are two relata: the object and the response. There is some support for this in the earlier examples. When we say that Turner's landscape is awesome, we seem to be claiming that the object calls for a response-type. However, there are other times when this relation is clearly three-place. Consider desire and the desirable. Whether a bowl of custard is desirable depends on whether I enjoy the taste of custard. If I do, then desiring the bowl of custard is fitting for me. If I do not, then it will not be. In this case, the relation is between an object, a response, and the subject of that response. Therefore, we can say that custard is desirable-by-me but not desirable-by-you.⁴ Importantly, this does not imply that things are never desirable-by-everyone. One plausible candidate for universal desirability is long-term happiness. Instead, the claim is that *some* things are desirable-by-me but not by everyone.

The relation between blame and the blameworthy is clearly an instance of the fittingness relation. When we call someone blameworthy, we are claiming that they call for blame. Therefore, if the fittingness relation is three-place, to use the word 'blameworthy' is to assert a three-place relation between object, response, and the subject of that response. Just as with desire, then, facts about the subject of blame can influence whether the attitude is fitting. When these facts make it such that our blame does not fit, we can say the object of our blame is *not blameworthy-by-us*. If they, in combination with facts about the object and our attitude our blame fitting, we can say that the object of our blame *is* blameworthy-by-us.

This implies that there is sometimes a restriction on those who can appropriately occupy the place of the responder. In these cases, there are objects that are blameworthy, attitudes that constitute appropriate blame, and those for whom the object is blameworthy. However, this is not to say that there is *always* this restriction. Often, even *most* of the time, the third relatum, that of the responder, plays no role in our deliberation about whether blame would be fitting. This is reflected in the way we talk about blame. Since most of the time there is no need to highlight the third relatum, when we use the term 'blameworthy', we mean 'blameworthy-by-someone'.

Even though when we use the word 'blameworthy', we mean 'blameworthy-by-someone', we still need *some* way of talking about the responder-place when deliberating about blame. This, I believe, is what talk of standing to blame is about. Unfortunately, there is no natural word for 'blameworthy-by-me, -

D'Arms and Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," Garrett Cullity, "Neutral and Relative Value," in *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*, ed. Iwao Hirose and Jonas Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 96–115, Garrett Cullity, *Concern, respect, and cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

4. For a similar suggestion, see Cullity, "Neutral and Relative Value," §6.2

you, or -them' that is distinct from 'blameworthy-by-someone'. So, instead, we say things like 'She is blameworthy, but I cannot blame her', or 'I know I'm blameworthy but *who are you* to blame me'. What we mean when we say such things, is, where O refers to the object of our blame and B the blamer,

O is blameworthy-by-someone but not blameworthy-by-B.⁵

We can now state the view. On what I am calling the *three-place view*, someone

has the standing to blame when the target of their blame is blameworthy-by-them.

Conversely, someone

lacks the standing to blame when the target of their blame is not blameworthy-by-them.

This view, I shall argue, has several advantages over the other available views on standing to blame. Additionally, there are natural and plausible responses to several objections to the view. I shall consider two such objections in the next section.

10 Why Should We Pursue this View?

When deciding whether to adopt a view about some phenomenon, we should first ask whether there are any initial objections that give us reason to reject this view out of hand. Two such objections target the working assumptions I have made in presenting the view. The first objects that I am wrong to assume that there is only one fittingness relation. The second objects that I am wrong to assume that *the* fittingness relation is three-placed. These objections, if plausible, would undermine my view. The first objection would do so indirectly. If there is more than one fittingness relation, one two-place and one three-place, then 'blameworthy' might refer exclusively to the two-place relation. This would imply, at best, that I have to give a further argument as to why blameworthiness refers to the three- rather than the two-placed fittingness relation. This would make it more difficult to argue that the relation is three-placed. After all, received opinion and our ordinary usage gives us some reason to believe that blame's

5. Or, even more formally, where R refers to the relation of blameworthiness, o the object of blame, x 'someone', and b the blamer:

'oRx \wedge \sim oRb'.

fittingness depends only on the attitude and its object. The second objection would undermine the view directly. If the fittingness relation is two-placed, then there is no third-place to appeal to.

Each of these objections takes aim at a premise of the following argument:

- (A) There is only one fittingness relation.
- (B) There are some cases where this relation is obviously three-place. For example, the relation between desire and the desirable.
- (C) If it is sometimes three-place it is always three-place.

Therefore,

- (D) The fittingness relation is always three-place.
- (E) The relation between blame and the blameworthy is an instance of the fittingness relation.

Therefore

- (F) The relation between blame and the blameworthy is three-place.

The former hopes to undermine (A) and the latter (B). If they are true, then (C) and (D) follow naturally. (E) follows from the arguments I made in Chapter I about the explanatory primacy of the blaming attitudes. Finally, (F) follows from (D) and (E).

To respond to these objections, then, we must consider the reasons we have to believe (A) and (B). First, consider (A). There is a strong theoretical presumption in favour of there being only one fittingness relation. All else being equal, we should prefer a theory that explains some phenomenon with less. However, some might object that all else is not equal. This would be true if there was something important we could explain by positing two fittingness relations but not one. One argument for this claim appeals to our everyday beliefs. Sometimes our everyday beliefs point to the fittingness relation being two-place and other times three-place. Consider the examples of awe and desire. The relation of fit between awe and the awesome seems clearly two-place; the relation of fit between desire and the desirable is clearly three-place. This points to there being two fittingness relations. If we cannot explain the apparent instances of one of these relations in terms of the other, then we should believe there are two fittingness relations.

Consider this argument in premise form:

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- (G) Sometimes the fittingness relation seems to be obviously two-place and other times it seems to be obviously three-place.
- (H) If we cannot give a compelling explanation of one in terms of the other, then we should claim that there are two fittingness relations.
- (I) We cannot give a compelling explanation of one in terms of the other.

Therefore,

- (J) There are two fittingness relations.

However, we have good reason to reject (I). I have already argued that if we are to adopt the three-place view, we can explain locutions where ‘blameworthy’ appears to refer to a two-place relation. We can use the same strategy to explain other cases where the fittingness relation seems to be two-place. They appear this way because there is rarely or never a restriction on who can appropriately occupy the responder-place. Therefore, it rarely or never features in our deliberation about whether making the response would be fitting for us. The same is true of our ordinary beliefs about certain responses. Whether the relation seems clearly two-placed depends on how prominently this third place features in our deliberation. Therefore, we should reject the claim that there is something we can explain with two relations that we cannot explain with just one. We can explain instances where the relation seems two-place by claiming that in such cases the responder-place rarely or never features in our deliberation about whether the response is fitting. This, in conjunction with the strong theoretical presumption in favour of there being only one fittingness relation, gives us good reason to believe (A).

(B) is more controversial. Our ordinary beliefs, at least sometimes, suggest that the fittingness relation is two-place. Received opinion also suggests that it is two-place.⁶ Why, then, should we take the fittingness relation to be three- rather than two-placed? One reason to do so is that it allows us to give a plausible explanation of cases where the fittingness relation is clearly three-placed. If so, we have good reason to believe the three-place view. As we have seen, on the three-place view we can explain ordinary locutions that seem to refer to a two-place relation, and we can easily explain cases where it is three-placed. If we cannot give a plausible explanation of cases where the relation seems three-placed when we assume it has two, then we should maintain our assumption

6. For example, may seem to just assume that the relation is two-place. See D’Arms and Jacobson, “The Moralistic Fallacy: On the ‘Appropriateness’ of Emotions,” Graham, “A sketch of a theory of moral blameworthiness,” and Conor McHugh and Jonathan Way, “Fittingness first,” *Ethics* 126, no. 3 (2016): 575–606.

that it has three-places. Here, greater explanatory power outweighs received opinion.

One strategy those who favour the two-place relation might take is to explain away cases where the fittingness relation is three-place. To do this, they could claim that we should analyse fittingness in terms of another notion that only holds between two relata. There are several examples of this, but one popular view is that for some attitude to be fitting is for it to be permissible to hold it.⁷ Consider, again, desire. Those who give this explanation would hope to claim that it is fitting to desire something just when it is permissible to desire it. Proponents of the two-place view must claim that these views take 'permissible' to mean 'permissible-by-someone'. Otherwise, they would just be versions of the three-place view. On permissibility analyses of fittingness, we can say that custard is fittingly desired by everyone because it is permissibly desired by me. This view still implies that some things are undesirable. For example, it is not fitting to desire eternal suffering because no one could permissibly desire it.

However, there are independent reasons to be sceptical of analysing fittingness in terms of permissibility. One such reason is that on a natural interpretation of 'permissibility' the notions come apart in important cases. The natural way of understanding permissibility is in terms of reasons. That is, when we say ' ϕ is permissible', we mean 'there is sufficient reason to ϕ '. However, there are cases where we have sufficient reason to do something even though it is intuitively unfitting. Consider the following example, common in the literature on Wrong Kind of Reasons problems:

Evil Demon: You are confronted by an evil demon who threatens to torture your family if you do not praise them.⁸

Here, the consideration that an evil demon will torture your family if you do not praise them gives you sufficient reason to praise him. On the natural characterisation of permissibility, this means it is permissible to praise the demon. However, it does not seem fitting to praise the demon. In one sense, then, your reason to praise the demon is of the wrong kind. However, for our purposes, this is simply a counterexample to the view that it is fitting to ϕ just when it is permissible to ϕ . This gives us, at least, an initial reason to be sceptical of the permissibility analysis of fittingness.

7. See Nishi Shah and J. David Velleman, "Doxastic Deliberation," *Philosophical Review* 114, no. 4 (2005): 497–534, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-114-4-497>; Daniel Whiting, "Should I Believe the Truth?," *Dialectica* 64, no. 2 (2010): 213–224, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2009.01204.x> and McHugh and Way, "Fittingness first," p. 597–598 for discussion.

8. For an initial articulation of so-called evil demon examples, see Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-Attitudes and Value," *Ethics* 114, no. 3 (2004): p. 402, <https://doi.org/10.1086/381694>.

I concede that there might be other ways to analyse permissibility that avoid this problem. Furthermore, there might be other ways to analyse fittingness so that we can assume that the fittingness relation has two places and still explain the cases where it seems to have three. However, the arguments above seem to give us reason to believe, at present, that the fittingness relation is three-placed. Therefore, we can reject these two initial objections to my working assumptions that *the* fittingness relation is three-place. In doing so, I have provided one source of attraction to the view. If the three-place view about fittingness is independently plausible, we have some reason to take the three-place view of standing seriously. In the next section, I shall give another independent source of attraction: the three-place view about standing hangs together well with our beliefs about accountability.

11 Blame and Accountability

An independent source of attraction to the three-place view is that it coheres with plausible views about the relation between blame and accountability. At first glance, when our actions make someone's life go worse, we are primarily accountable to them. This implies that our accountability relations are structured as follows, where A and B stand for agents, and ϕ some act:

A is accountable to B for ϕ -ing.

Most articulate this by saying that blame takes the form of a request or demand. The implication is that some particular person or group of people make this demand of others. When we fail to meet this demand, we are the fitting objects of blame.⁹ There are several ways we might make sense of what this is a demand for. Strawson takes it to be a demand for a minimal amount of goodwill.¹⁰ However, there seems to be something more to the demands than this. After all, I can seemingly demand that young children show a minimal amount of goodwill toward me without taking them to be accountable. What is missing from the Strawsonian account is the justificatory element of accountability. This is nicely captured by Angela Smith, who argues that to be responsible for something is to be answerable for it. According to what we can call:

The Answerability Principle, an agent is responsible for a response only if they are the appropriate target of requests for justification

9. See Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"; Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*; Angela M. Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 2 (2015): 99–126, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2015.986851>.

10. See Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," p. 62-63.

regarding that response and are eligible, in principle, for a variety of moral responses depending on how well or poorly she meets this justificatory request.¹¹

However, we need not take up Smith's view that answerability is fundamental to our thoughts about responsibility. Instead, we should take answerability to derive from accountability. To treat yourself as answerable to others, in the sense that requires you to give reasons for your actions, is to treat yourself as accountable to them. By taking them to have the authority to demand you justify your actions, you take yourself to be the fitting object of their blame when you fail to meet this demand. To be the fitting object of blame is just what it is to be accountable. Therefore, answerability seems to derive from accountability.¹² Therefore, I will speak of privileged accountability relations, rather than privileged answerability relations from here on.

If we are primarily accountable to these particular people or groups in the sense that they are primarily whom we owe a justification to, then it is natural to say that we stand in a privileged accountability relation with them. This gives their reaction to our failed justification a special weight. The three-place view of standing seems in a particularly good position to capture this thought. We can restate this argument as follows:

- (K) Sometimes we wrong someone in particular, other times we do not.
- (L) When we wrong someone in particular, we are primarily accountable to them, in the sense that they are in a privileged place to blame us.
- (M) If we are primarily accountable to someone, there is a privileged accountability relation between us and them.
- (N) Our theory of blame and blameworthiness should be able to make sense of these privileged relations. (I.e., it should be able to distinguish between blame by those wronged and blame by those who are not).
- (O) The three-place account can best make sense of these relations.

Therefore,

- (P) We should prefer the three-place account.

11. Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability," p. 103; We should note the distinction between being answerable for our actions and being worthy of blame. On Smith's view, to be answerable is to be subject to a request or demand for justification. To be blameworthy is to be unable to meet this demand.

12. For a similar view, see Cullity, "Stupid goodness," p. 237-239.

This argument seems plausible. However, (K) and (L) are controversial. Therefore, we should consider the reasons we have to believe each of them. (K) claims that we sometimes wrong people but other times we do not. Recall that, often, wrong acts directly affect some person or group of people. We can call these *wrongings*.¹³ However, other times wrong acts do not directly affect anyone. Consider cases where someone spoils a precious object for no good reason. Or, when someone fails to give aid to one of a million people.¹⁴

(L) claims that when we wrong someone, they are in a privileged place to blame us. If we interpret this as the claim that the person wronged can blame us when others cannot, or that their blame has special weight, there seem to be obvious counterexamples. Consider:

Fainter: I have had a bad morning and, after being bumped into by a teenager, I yell at him to get out of my way. The teenager, shocked at my yelling, faints. His mother, who is walking next to me, blames me for this.

Here it seems like the teenager is not in a privileged place to blame me because his mother can take up the same attitude when he is incapable of doing so. We can take this thought further. Consider a variant of *Fainter*, where it is not the teenager's mother but a stranger behind him who takes up this attitude. Once again, the teenager seems not to be in a privileged place to blame me, even though I have wronged *him*.

Instead, we should interpret it as the claim that the person directly wronged can forgive in a way that makes blame inappropriate for bystanders. In both above cases, others are blaming on behalf of the person wronged. This implies that, were that person to rationally forgive me for yelling at them, others could no longer blame me on their behalf. This seems true even when the person is unable to *actually* forgive me. Consider cases where the victim of a wrong dies and so is unable to actually forgive someone for their act. In cases like these, others might permissibly forgive on their behalf. However, they can only appropriately do so if the person they are forgiving on behalf of, would rationally have forgiven them were they able to. This, it seems, gives us reason to believe (L).¹⁵

13. For further discussion of wrongings, see Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape*, Ch. 2.

14. Some views deny we ever wrong anyone in particular. On one version of this view, whether an act is wrong depends on whether it fails to bring about the best or equal best state of affairs. This implies we cannot wrong a particular person because people are not the right kind of entity to be the object of a wrong. If this view is right, then (K) would be false and my argument would fail. I cannot argue against this view in full here. Therefore, I shall merely note that this is an option someone might take to object to (K) and register my disagreement.

15. For further discussion, see Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape*, Ch. 2 and Julian Jonker, "Directed Duties and Moral Repair," *Philosophers' Imprint* 20, no. 23 (August 2020): 1–32

(M) naturally follows from (L), and the Answerability Principle. The Answerability principle implies that we are accountable for an action only if we are the appropriate target for justification regarding that action. If we flout this demand for justification, we are eligible in principle for a variety of moral responses. (L) states that in cases where someone is in a privileged position to blame us such that they are able to decide whether to forgive us, they are the person to whom we primarily owe a justification, and so they are the person whom we are primarily accountable to. (N) follows from the general claim that our views should cohere with each other.

However, some might doubt the truth of (O). If it were not true, then the argument would fail to motivate the three-place view of standing. The natural question for those who are sceptical about the truth of (O) is: how does the three-place view make sense of these privileged relations? The answer is that if the relation between blame and the blameworthy is three-place, we can straightforwardly claim that certain facts about a person might affect whether their blame is fitting. Standing in a more or less privileged accountability relation counts as one of these facts. Therefore, whether someone is in one of these relations might affect whether their blame is fitting.

I concede that there might be ways those who endorse the two-place view can make sense of this. For example, they might hope to omit reference to the blamer in the fittingness conditions of certain blaming attitudes. However, to make sense of this feature of accountability on the two-place view would require us to tell a much more complicated story than we would if we adopted the three-place view. Therefore, we have a presumptive reason to believe the three-place view explains our beliefs about privileged accountability relations *better* than the two-place view.

If what I have said is right, then this is another source of attraction to the three-place view. In the next section, I shall provide a third reason to adopt the view: if we do so, we can give a compelling explanation of standing to blame.

12 Explaining Standing to Blame

When considering the property question about standing to blame, there are several aspects of the phenomenon we wish to explain. A successful theory must say something plausible about all of them. Throughout Chapter II, I argued that no current theory of standing can do so without revision. One reason for this is that blame is primarily attitudinal, but none of these theories of standing capture this. Additionally, we also want a theory of blame to capture our ordinary locutions about standing, why standingless blame seems to lack *some* of its ordinary force, why recipients of standingless blame can at least partly dismiss

it, how we might know whether we have or lack standing, and an explanation of why we lack it when we do. In what follows, I shall argue that the three-place view can give a plausible explanation of all these features of standing to blame. I shall take them in order.

First, the three-place view correctly locates the problem of standing to blame at the level of attitudes rather than acts. To be blameworthy-by-me for φ -ing it must be the case that it is, or would be, fitting for me to hold some blaming attitude toward them in light of their φ -ing.

It also makes sense of our ordinary locutions about standing to blame. When we talk about standing to blame, we often say things like 'I know I'm blameworthy, but who are you to blame me, you hypocrite!' Or, 'I know she's blameworthy, but I can't blame her'. These can, at first, make it seem like the speaker is contradicting themselves. However, on the three-place view, we can appeal to the distinction between 'blameworthy-by-someone' and 'blameworthy-by-me' to explain why these are sensible things to say. If we adopt the three-place view, we can interpret these claims, respectively, as

"I know I'm *blameworthy-by-someone* but I'm not *blameworthy-by-you*, you hypocrite!"

And,

I know she's *blameworthy-by-someone* but she's not *blameworthy-by-me*.

On the three-place view, we can also give a compelling explanation of why standingless blame lacks its ordinary force and why the recipient of standingless blame can partly dismiss it. Standingless blame, on this view, is unfitting. If blame is unfitting, then it can be dismissed. Consider blame that is unfitting because it is directed at someone who is blameless. This blame both lacks force and can be dismissed by the person blamed. However, there is an important difference between blame that is unfitting because its object is not blameworthy and blame that is unfitting because the blamer lacks standing. When the object of blame is not blameworthy, blame lacks *all* its ordinary force and should be dismissed *entirely*. Any blame is completely off the mark because the recipient of blame is not *blameworthy-by-them* nor are they *blameworthy-by-someone*. However, in cases where blame is unfitting because the blamer lacks standing, it seems that the recipient of blame should only partly dismiss it and blame still retains part of its force. The blamer gets it wrong: the person they are blaming is not blameworthy-by-them. But they do get *something* right: the object of blame is blameworthy-by-someone.

We can further allay an epistemological worry about standing on this view. According to the three-place view, to know that I am blameworthy, I must

know that I am blameworthy-by-someone. However, we can imagine situations where the only people I interact with lack standing to blame, such that I am not blameworthy-by-them. In cases like this, someone might worry that I cannot know I am blameworthy. However, there is an easy answer: we need not restrict ourselves to actual people. If everyone I know steals from their greengrocer and I do the same, I can still know that I am blameworthy-by-someone by considering an agent who does not steal from their local greengrocer.

12.1 Why Standingless Blame Doesn't Fit

This, I believe, gives us an explanation of nearly all the important aspects of standing. However, there is still one more thing we need from the three-place account. We want to know *why* it is that standingless blame is unfitting. That is, what about the fittingness conditions of blame make it such that when we lack standing we fail to meet these conditions. In the rest of this section, I hope to offer such an explanation.

As I argued in chapter I, when we fittingly blame others, it is because:

- (i) we correctly judge them to be blameworthy-by-someone because their actions impair the relationships others can have with them, and
- (ii) we take this judgement seriously, in the sense that we construe this as a reason to modify our relationship with that person in a way made appropriate by the act and certain features of the relationship.

(i) implies that this person failed to appropriately respond to the available reasons specified by some norm or expectation. Call this the *availability condition*. This condition holds in both a local and global sense. In the local sense, we cannot fittingly blame people when they did not know, and could not have reasonably known, what they were doing. For example, I could not fittingly blame you for failing to sell a priceless painting to pay for my life-saving surgery if you did not know it was valuable. In the global sense, we cannot fittingly blame those who lack the general competencies to be aware of certain norms. For example, it would be unfitting to blame very young children or those with severe cognitive deficiencies because they do not have the relevant capacity to respond to reasons. On the synthetic view, blame of those who do not meet the availability condition in the local or global sense is unfitting because their actions do not show anything about their attitudes toward us. This means their actions do not impair the relationships others can appropriately have with them. I shall set aside the local aspect of the availability condition throughout the rest of this discussion. Although it is important in its own right, it is not relevant for our purposes here.

If there is a global availability condition, then fitting objects of blame can recognise and respond to reasons. This takes us part of the way to a further claim: that they can blame us just as we can blame them. This follows from their reason-responsiveness, and the claim that reason-responsive agents can fittingly blame others. To blame someone is one way of holding them accountable. Therefore, when two people are both the appropriate kind of agents to hold each other accountable, we can say that they stand in an accountability relation. This implies that to fittingly blame someone, we must presuppose that we stand in such a relation with them. This, in turn, grounds our relationship of accountability with them.

Here it is important to distinguish between the two things we track when talking about accountability relationships. The first is a general relation that holds between two agents who possess some property. The second is a patterned history of the actions each agent performs, their interactions, and the norms and expectations that hold between them. The relation cannot change so long as both agents possess this property. However, the latter can and often does. Call the first an accountability *relation* and the second a *relationship* of accountability. When we stand in a property-based relationship like this, the relation grounds the relationship.

Accountability relationships have an ideal: that of mutual accountability. A relationship of mutual accountability is one in which we are jointly committed to treating each other as beings with dignity through giving, asking for, and accepting reasons. This relationship of mutual accountability is one way of articulating the ideal embodied in Kant's Kingdom of Ends, where we all stand in such relationships.¹⁶ For this reason, it also constitutes an important part of our relationships of respect. That is, by treating ourselves as accountable to others, we relate to them as respect-worthy equals.¹⁷ Mutual accountability is the ideal form these relationships can take. However, our actual accountability relationships can, and often do, deviate from this ideal. When this is the case, we stand in an impaired accountability relationship.

Two expectations that partly constitute the ideal accountability relationship are important to our discussion here. First, that the norms that apply to other agents in virtue of their reason-responsiveness also apply to us. Second, that the choices and responses of others have importance for ours. The first follows from

16. See Kant, *Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4:439.

17. For further discussion of the relationship between blame, accountability, and respect, see Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," §IV; Darwall, *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*, Ch. 3; and Cullity, "Stupid goodness," p. 237-238

the conjunction of the claims that both members of accountability relationships are reason-responsive and that the norms we are discussing apply to us in virtue of our reason-responsiveness. The second follows from the claim that the agents we blame must be reason-responsive and a further argument to establish that those who have this property also have a certain dignity. I do not have space to argue for this here. However, I take it to be a plausible claim to make.¹⁸ This dignity grounds the further claim that their choices have importance for ours.

This all concerns our judgements of blameworthiness. When we judge someone blameworthy-by-someone, we must presuppose that we stand in such a relationship with them. Yet, this is not to blame them. To blame them is to take seriously our judgement that they are blameworthy, in the sense that we construe this as a reason to modify *our* relationship with that person in a way made appropriate by the act and certain features of the relationship. This requires us to go further than just believing that we stand in some accountability relationship with someone. One way of making this distinction is between standing in a certain relationship with someone, and *relating* to them in a certain way.¹⁹ This distinction is important. Our relationships to others are things we build *with* them. Subsequently, the character of our relationships is at least partly determined by something external to us. The way in which we *relate* to someone depends only on us. That is, it depends upon how we structure our attitudes toward that person and the norms that hold in virtue of the relationship between us.²⁰ To fittingly blame someone, we must *relate* to them in a certain way. That is, we must take both the judgement that they are reason-responsive agents and that we stand in accountability relations with them seriously.

Just as with our accountability relationships, the ideal way to relate to others with whom we stand in accountability relations with is as an equally accountable agent. This involves both *accepting* that the norms which apply to them just in

18. Some arguments for this, from several theoretical perspectives, are found in Thomas E Hill, *Respect, pluralism, and justice: Kantian perspectives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), Pt. II, Derek Parfit, *On What Matters: Two-Volume Set* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. 10, Philip Pettit, "Consequentialism and respect for persons," *Ethics*. (Chicago, Ill.) 100, no. 1 (1989), ISSN: 0014-1704, Joseph Raz et al., *Value, respect, and attachment*, 4 (Cambridge University Press, 2001)[Ch. 4], and Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Ch. 4.

19. The distinction between relations, relationships, and relating to others is one way of cashing out much of what Scanlon talks about in his theory of blame. Consider property-based relationship. When we stand in such a relationship, this is grounded by the relation we stand in with other members of the relationship. But the *relationship* we stand contains norms and expectations that are partly dependent on our patterned history of actions and interactions. These relationships have certain certain ideals which specify norms and expectations for its members. Part of these require us to *relate* to others in a certain way.

20. For a similar distinction, see R. Jay Wallace, "Recognition and the moral nexus," *European Journal of Philosophy* 29, no. 3 (2021): 634–645, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12677>.

virtue of their reason-responsive agency also apply to us and that their decisions have normative weight for ours. The first is a natural criterion for relating to someone as an accountable equal. It is implied by the thought that if a norm applies to others in virtue of their reason-responsiveness, and we are also reason-responsive, then that norm must also apply to us. The second is less straightforward. When we relate to someone as an accountable equal, we are committed to accepting that they are reason-responsive. This, further, commits us to accept that their choices have normative importance for us as outlined above. Crucially, to meet these criteria we must not only *believe* that others are accountable equals but we must *accept* or be sufficiently *committed* to this. When we are not, our blame is unfitting. This failure of *relating* is what makes standingless blame inappropriate.

The distinction between standing in a certain relationship with someone, and *relating* to them in a certain way is especially important here. We lack standing because we fail to relate to someone as an equally accountable agent, not because we stand in an impaired accountability relation with them. Relating to someone involves going further than a judgement, and taking seriously the relationship you stand in with someone involves relating to them in a certain way. This avoids an important problem. If we appeal to the impaired accountability relationship of the blamer and object of blame to explain why standingless blame is unfitting, we also preclude the object of standingless blame from being able to blame the person who lacks standing. This is because our accountability relationships are impaired when they are asymmetrical. That is, when at least one person fails to view the other as an equal. However, if the relationship is asymmetrical for one person, it is asymmetrical for both. This implies not only that the person who lacks standing cannot fittingly blame others, but that others cannot fittingly blame them. Yet, we avoid this when we explain the problem in terms of *relating* rather than *relationships*. This is because how we relate to others only concerns the way *we* structure our attitudes towards them in relation to certain norms. The problem with the appeal to relationships is that they are partly determined by something external to us: the behaviour of other members of the relationship. Since how others act does not determine how we relate to them (although it might give us a reason to relate to them differently), we can avoid the problem of symmetry.²¹

21. Some might wonder whether this distinction is plausible. However, we can support it by considering the two ways in which relationships of mutual accountability appear to be valuable. The first is as a *relationship*. It is good for us when we stand in these relationships. The second is as a way of relating to others. It is valuable to relate to others as accountable equals even when we stand in an impaired accountability relationship with them. It shows that *you* are committed to structuring your relationship with them as one between mutually accountable equals, even if they are not. This, it seems, gives us good reason to make this distinction. For more on this, see

Suppose this is right. Even so, someone might reasonably claim that I have not yet explained what makes our blame *unfitting*. That is, they might claim I have not given an explanation of what it is about the fittingness relation that grounds the unfittingness of standingless blame. I have refrained from this so far because there is controversy over how, or if, we can give a further explanation of the fittingness relation. Therefore, any view about standingless blame that appeals to one of these views will inherit the surrounding controversy. And it seems to give an explanation that would satisfy someone making this claim, we will have to appeal to one of them.

In saying this, one seemingly plausible way of analysing the fittingness relation is in terms of correct representation.²² On this analysis, an attitude is fitting just when it correctly represents its object. Conversely, an attitude is unfitting when it fails to correctly represent its object. We can argue for this analysis of ‘fittingness’ by considering, again, the Wrong Kind of Reasons problem. One plausible way of distinguishing between facts that lead to reasons of the right and wrong kinds is by asking whether a given fact counts in favour of some evaluative attitude because it is an evaluative property of its object, or if it is in some way external to the object. If the former, then it is a reason of the right kind; if the latter, it is a reason of the wrong kind. If this is a plausible analysis, then it is natural to claim that an attitude is fitting when it correctly represents the evaluative properties of its object.

This analysis is controversial because it seems to imply that non-representational attitudes cannot be fitting and that even if we grant that all fitting attitudes are representational, that their fittingness turns on their content. Some take this to make the account implausible.²³ Perhaps this gives us reason to be sceptical of this as a general analysis of fittingness. However, the account will suit our purposes here so long as it is possible to show that the blaming attitudes are representational. On the account of blame I suggested in Ch. I, the blaming attitudes involve construing our impaired relationship with the person we are blaming as a reason to modify our relationship with them. Construing something in terms of another is one way of representing it. Therefore, the blaming attitudes are representational. Furthermore, it is implied by the account of blame I prefer that we *should* take the fittingness of blaming attitudes to turn on their content. Therefore, whether or not the general critique is right, we can adopt this analysis of the fittingness relation for our limited purposes. However, I have

Wallace, “Recognition and the moral nexus” and Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, p. 110.

22. See D’Arms and Jacobson, “The Moralistic Fallacy: On the ‘Appropriateness’ of Emotions.” For criticism, see McHugh and Way, “Fittingness first,” p. 597, Christopher Howard, “Fittingness,” *Philosophy Compass* 13, no. 11 (2018): e12542, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12542>[§5]

23. See, again, McHugh and Way, “Fittingness first,” p. 597, Howard, “Fittingness,” §5

not yet made it clear how it is that standingless blame misrepresents its object. When we fittingly blame someone, we represent ourselves as being committed to relating to others as accountable equals. However, as I have argued, when we lack standing, we do not relate to them in this way. Therefore, if we accept this analysis of fittingness, we can claim that standingless blame is unfitting because of a misrepresentation.

We can further claim that those who blame without standing display an important failure of respect to the person they blame. As I suggested earlier, when we blame without standing, we fail to relate to others as accountable equals. Relating to others in this way makes up an important part of the morality of respect. In doing so, we express our commitment to the ideal embodied in Kant's realm of Ends. Standingless blamers fail to live up to this ideal in an important way. Therefore, their failure is a failure to respect the object of their blame.²⁴

13 Applying the View

In the previous chapter, I argued that there are two ways we might lack standing: by being hypocritical or by not being relevantly involved. This was my answer to what I called the Substantive Question about standing. In this section, I shall argue that my answer to what I have called the Property Question about standing to blame allows us to explain why we can lack standing in these ways. In doing so, I hope to provide a connection between my answer to each question. This, subsequently, will give us reason to accept the two answers as constituting a complete theory of standing to blame.

For someone to lack the standing to blame on the three-place view, they must fail to relate to others as accountable equals. When we fittingly blame others, we represent ourselves as committed to relating to them as equals, and when we lack standing we are not so committed. How might hypocrites and those not relevantly involved fail to be committed in this way? In this section, I shall argue that the hypocrite fails to take norms that have force for others to have force for them, and that those not relevantly involved fail to take the decisions and responses of others to have sufficient weight for theirs. I shall take each in turn.

24. Once again, see Korsgaard, "Creating the kingdom of ends: Reciprocity and responsibility in personal relations," §IV; Darwall, *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*, Ch. 3; and Cullity, "Stupid goodness," p. 237-238

13.1 Hypocritical Blame

Consider first the hypocritical blamer. As I argued earlier, we should call blame hypocritical when (i) there is a mismatch between how a blamer responds (or is disposed to respond), and how they believe (or are disposed to believe) others should respond in relevantly similar situations, and (ii) that the blamer is guided by the consideration that is at odds with their judgement. This gives us an answer to a descriptive question about hypocritical blame – that is, it tells us what counts as an instance of hypocritical blame. However, it does not tell us why hypocritical blame is inappropriate. That is, it does not give us an answer to an evaluative question about hypocrisy. One plausible answer to this question is that the hypocritical blamer does not take the norm seriously that they blame others for.²⁵ One way of taking a norm seriously is to accept it, or to be relevantly committed to it in some way. Therefore, we can say that hypocritical blamers fail to accept the norm they blame others for flouting.

The answer to the descriptive questions appears to give us three kinds of hypocritical blamers. We can distinguish, like Macalester Bell, between three kinds of hypocritical blamers: clear-eyed hypocrites, exception seeking hypocrites, and akratic hypocrites.²⁶ Clear-eyed hypocrites do not take moral norms seriously for either themselves or for others, but blame in an inverted comma sense. That is, they act like they blame others, without blaming them. Exception seeking hypocrites take moral norms to apply to others but not themselves, and so blame others for flouting these norms but fail to take themselves to be the fitting objects of others' blame when they flout them. Finally, akratic hypocrites take the norm they blame others for somewhat seriously, but still act hypocritically in the sense that they fail to act in accordance with the norm through their weakness of will.

According to our answer to the evaluative question about hypocrisy, the hypocritical blamer does not take the norm sufficiently seriously that they blame others for.²⁷ One way of taking a norm sufficiently seriously is to accept it, or to be relevantly committed to it. Therefore, we can say that hypocritical blamers fail to accept the norm they blame others for flouting. The clear-eyed hypocrite and the exception seeking hypocrite both clearly fail to take the norm they are blaming others for seriously. The former self-consciously rejects the norm's importance. The latter mistakenly believes that the norm applies to others but

25. See Crisp and Cowton, "Hypocrisy and moral seriousness."

26. Bell calls them 'weak-willed' but the distinction is the same. See Macalester Bell, "The Standing To Blame: A Critique," in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, ed. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 263–281.

27. See Crisp and Cowton, "Hypocrisy and moral seriousness"; Riedener, "The Standing To Blame, or Why Moral Disapproval Is What It Is"; Lippert-Rasmussen, "Why the moral equality account of the hypocrite's lack of standing to blame fails."

not them. However, some might doubt that the akratic hypocrite fails to take the norms that they blame others for seriously.

This is partly right, sometimes it is at best unclear whether akratic hypocrites lack the standing to blame. However, often akratic hypocrites still evince the same faults as other hypocrites. We can explain this by reflecting upon our notion of an akratic hypocrite, and what it is to take a norm sufficiently seriously. When someone is an akratic hypocrite, at least in the sense related to blame, we can say that they have performed some blameworthy action in the past, felt guilty for performing it, and then later blamed someone else for performing a relevantly similar act. This seems to imply that they take the norm seriously.

However, we can further suppose that they have not apologised or otherwise repaired their relationship with the person or people they have wronged. If the akratic hypocrite has apologised for their action and thus repaired their relationship with the person they have wronged, they would no longer be a hypocrite. This is because by apologising and otherwise repairing their relationship, they would have taken the norm sufficiently seriously. Since the akratic hypocrite has not apologised, we can still rightly call them a hypocrite. This is because part of being committed to relating to others as accountable equals is to take one's fitting guilt as calling for an apology or reparation. Here we can distinguish between two kinds of akratic hypocrites.²⁸ The first takes guilt to call for apology and reparations from others but not from themselves. Call this kind of akratic hypocrite the *Singly Akratic, Exception Seeking Hypocrite*. The Singly Akratic, Exception Seeking Hypocrite lacks the standing to blame because, *ceteris paribus*, they fail to take their guilt to give them reason to apologise but do take it to give others a reason to apologise. The second kind of akratic hypocrite suffers *another* akratic break: they believe they should apologise but do not act on this belief. Call these *Doubly Akratic Hypocrites*. On the three-place view, the Doubly Akratic Hypocrite has the standing to blame. Some might claim that this is a weakness of the view. However, the Doubly Akratic hypocrite has a strange enough moral psychology that this is not a substantial objection. By my lights, we have no everyday beliefs about them – they are suffering a kind of normative paralysis. Yet, we can at least say that Singly Akratic, Exception Seeking Hypocrites fail to take the norm seriously that they blame others for. This implies that hypocritical blamers almost always lack the standing to blame. When they do, it is because they fail to take the norm seriously that they blame others for. To give a definitive statement of this, we can claim that:

Hypocrites lack the standing to blame just when and because they fail to accept or be sufficiently committed to the norm that they blame

28. Since the akratic hypocrite feels guilty for violating some norm, they cannot be singly akratic, clear eyed hypocrites. Their guilt implies they take the norm somewhat seriously.

others for. In doing so, they fail to relate to others as accountable equals.

Someone might object that this view mistakenly commits us to the claim that hyper-crites also lack standing to blame. Hyper-crite's are the inverse of hypocrites. Rather than blaming others but not themselves, they blame themselves but not others. Stefan Riedener and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen give the following argument in support of this objection:

- (Q) On this view, hypocrites lack standing to blame because they fail to relate to others as accountable equals.
- (R) Hyper-crites also fail to relate to others as accountable equals.
- (S) Therefore, on this view, hyper-crites also lack standing to blame.
- (T) However, at least according to our everyday beliefs, hyper-crites do not lack the standing to blame.
- (U) Therefore, this view is extensionally inadequate. It implies that people who have the standing to blame lack it.

This argument relies on a view of hypocrisy that treats anyone who blames themselves less than others as a hypocrite. However, this is not true of the view I have suggested. On this view, we are hypocrites when we fail to take a norm sufficiently seriously. The hyper-crite, it seems, *does* take this norm seriously. After all, they blame themselves. This is not to say that the hyper-crite's blame is fitting, just that it is unfitting for another reason. If we blame ourselves more severely than we blame others for relevantly similar acts, then our blame is unfitting because it is disproportionate to its object, not because it is hyper-critical. In the same way, if we blame others more severely than ourselves for relevantly similar acts, then our blame is unfitting because it is disproportionate, not because it is hypocritical. For example, suppose I have performed a blameworthy act and feel a mild level of guilt for performing it. This implies I believe I have not met the demands of justification we might reasonably demand of a morally accountable agent. When I blame someone else severely for the same action, I give the same answer to blame's guiding question. In both cases, the answer is: you did not have sufficient reason to treat someone in that way. Therefore, there is not a mismatch of judgements and, with it, no hypocrisy. Yet, in these cases, I take up an attitude that is not proportionate to its object. The same is true when my blame of others is proportionate, but I let myself off too easily. My blame is unfitting because it is disproportionate to its object, not because the person in question is not blameworthy-by-me.

We can explain common cases of hyper-crisy in the same way. Consider Lippert-Rasmussen's example of Beth and Adrian:

Adrian severely blames himself for, say, stealing \$10 from a rich person, while at the same time expressing mild disapproval of Beth's theft of all the possessions of a poor person.²⁹

In this case, both Adrian's blame of himself and his blame of Beth is unfitting because it is disproportional. Lippert-Rasmussen is right to claim that he has the standing to blame Beth. However, he is wrong to claim that the so-called hypocrite would lack the standing to blame in a relevantly similar case. Suppose Beth severely blamed Adrian for stealing \$10 from a rich person but only mildly blames herself for stealing the possessions of a poor person. We might think that she lacks standing because her blame is unfitting. However, this would be to mistakenly infer that any time someone's blame is unfitting, they lack standing. Rather, her blame is unfitting because it is disproportionate. This gives us reason to believe that hyper-critical blame cannot be other-directed.

Some might object that we should characterise hypocrisy and hyper-crisy as dispositions of people rather than as properties of responses. They would claim that someone is hypocritical only if they are disposed to blame others for some act and not themselves for acts that are relevantly similar. One might have a certain disposition without always acting in this way. This implies that we might reasonably call someone a hypocrite if they display the right kind of pattern of blaming others but not themselves over some period. So too with the hyper-crite. If so, someone might be a hyper-crite when they blame others, even though this instance of blame is not hyper-critical. However, this response is unconvincing. The claim I am making is a modal one. If I am right, hyper-crite's *cannot* blame others. If we cannot do something, we cannot be disposed to do it. Therefore, we can avoid this response.³⁰

This still leaves cases where hyper-critical blame is self-directed. That is, when the hyper-crite blames herself for a certain act but does not blame others for a

29. Lippert-Rasmussen, "Why the moral equality account of the hypocrite's lack of standing to blame fails," p. 668.

30. Some might obstinately claim that this relies on a counterfactual analysis of dispositions. They then might go on to argue that this analysis is mistaken. There are several kinds of counterexamples to this view. A disposition's realising conditions might be finked, masked, or mimicked. These would make the counterfactual associated with the disposition false but do not seem to imply that it lacks the disposition. However, this is only true of a simple conditional analysis of blame. I take Lewis's defence of a modified version of this account to see off these standard objections (See David K. Lewis, "Finkish Dispositions," *Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 187 (1997): 143–158, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9213.00052>). If this account is plausible, then we can reject this argument and continue to believe that hyper-crites cannot blame others while still rightly being called such.

relevantly similar act. If hyper-critical blame is self-directed, then to lack standing the hyper-crite must fail to relate to herself as an accountable equal. However, it is difficult to believe that this is possible. A better explanation is that they are extreme cases of disproportionate blame. On this explanation, when we blame ourselves but not others, either our blame of ourselves is disproportionately severe or our blame of others is disproportionately mild.³¹

These considerations give us reason to disregard this objection. Therefore, we have reason to believe that hypocrites lack the standing to blame because they fail to relate to others as accountable equals.

13.2 Non-Involvement

Suppose this is a plausible application of the three-place view to cases where we lack standing when hypocritical. I must now apply it to cases where we lack standing when not relevantly involved. In what follows, I shall suggest that *meddlers* lack standing because they fail to accept that the choices and decisions of the object of their blame have normative importance.

The difference between relating to people *equally* and relating to people *as accountable equals* is especially important here. In one sense, when we relate to others equally, we treat them in the same way. If this were important in determining whether someone was blameworthy-by-us, then *meddlers* would not lack standing. However, when we ask whether someone is *blameworthy-by-us*, we must instead ask if we, as blamer, relate to that person *as* an accountable equal. To do so requires us to accept that they have a certain level of normative competence. And this competence grounds norms and expectations about how we should relate to them. One such norm is that we must take their decisions and choices to have normative importance for us. Sometimes these make it such that this person is not accountable to *us*. To blame when this is the case is to fail to take the decisions that make this so to have the normative importance that they do. This is one way of failing to relate to someone as an accountable equal. However, as I have argued, our blame is fitting only when we relate to others as accountable equals. Therefore, *meddlers* lack standing.

As I argued in §6, there are two kinds of cases where we lack standing when not relevantly involved. First, cases where we blame on behalf of someone who

31. This is not to say that hyper-crisy is not a kind of vice that we should pay careful attention to. Nor that we should ignore that the hyper-crite seems to lack a certain kind of self-respect: to blame yourself disproportionately indicates some kind of fault. My claim is, instead, that the hyper-crite does not relate to themselves in a way that leads them to lack standing to blame. For a discussion of issues around self-respect, see Thomas E. Hill, *Autonomy and Self-Respect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 'Servility and Self-Respect' and 'Self-Respect Reconsidered'

has rationally forgiven the person who has wronged them. Second, cases where the norm flouted is strictly relational and concerns a private matter within the relationship.

First, consider cases where bystanders lack standing because the object of blame has been rationally forgiven by those they wronged. This follows from claims in §11 about privileged accountability relations. When we wrong someone, we are primarily accountable to them such that they can forgive us where others cannot. However, as I noted in §6, their forgiveness only makes further blame unfitting if it is *rational*. For forgiveness to be rational, the person forgiven must have apologised or otherwise repaired their relationship with the person who forgives them. When we blame this person after those directly wronged have rationally forgiven them, we fail to take their decisions and choices to repair this relationship to have the normative force that they do. This is one way of failing to relate to them as an accountable equal. Therefore, when we are not relevantly involved in this way, we lack standing.

Some might object that in these cases the blamer does not lack standing to blame because *no-one* can fittingly blame the wrongdoer. And, I have claimed that we lack standing when the object of our blame is not blameworthy-by-us but is blameworthy-by-someone. This objection has some intuitive appeal. However, we can respond by saying that in these cases, there is an implicit temporal qualification to blameworthy-by-someone. In these cases, when we say that someone lacks standing, we mean: the object of our blame is not blameworthy-by-us at time t' but is blameworthy-by-someone at time t . The someone in question is the person wronged prior to forgiveness. We will have to add further qualifications and restrictions to make this qualification plausible. However, it gives us a way to respond to this objection.

In the second kind of case, bystanders lack standing when someone flouts a strictly relational norm that concerns a private matter of a personal relationship. Here, we can make the same argument that we did when explaining why bystanders lack standing after those directly wronged have rationally forgiven. When we enter personal relationships, we open certain parts of our lives to others that it would otherwise be inappropriate for them to be concerned about. These are the private matters within a relationship. Yet, there are still norms and expectations that govern things that fall within these boundaries. When one of these norms or expectations is flouted, in part because it concerns something private, the object of blame is only accountable to others in this relationship. Here, bystanders lack standing to blame when they are not a member of this relationship would be to fail to take the decision of the person blamed to enter and continue this relationship to have the normative importance it does. In doing so, they fail to relate to the object of their blame as an accountable equal.

Therefore, they lack standing.

Some might worry about my talk of privacy here. They might claim that this commits me to saying that *meddlers* lack a right to blame. If so, I would be committed to saying that sometimes standing to blame is a right. However, I rejected this view in §7.1. Therefore, I cannot make this claim. To successfully apply the three-place view to these cases, then, I must explain how privacy figures in these cases without claiming that *meddlers* violate a right by blaming.

One way to do this is to suggest that privacy enters our considerations at the level of relationships rather than at the level of blame. Consider again the example from §6.

Steve and Lucy live together. Steve continually leaves his dishes out and refuses to clean them up for no good reason, despite the fact that one of the expectations he and Lucy have set is that they shall both equally contribute to keeping their shared space clean. A bystander hears Lucy expressing that she blames Steve for doing this while walking past their house and also blames Steve.

Here, the blamer's violation of privacy does not occur when he blames Steve. Instead, it occurs when he listens in to Lucy expressing her blame. His blame of Steve is unfitting for some further reason. This is that he takes Steve's violation of a strictly relational norm within the private boundaries of Steve and Lucy's relationship impairs the relationship *he* can appropriately have with Steve when it does not. This, it seems, gives us a way of avoiding the worry about rights.

If what I have said in this section is correct, the three-place view can be plausibly applied to cases when we lack standing. This gives us another reason to believe the view. Furthermore, it means that my answers to the substantive and property questions constitute a theory of standing to blame.

14 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have proposed and defended a novel theory of standing to blame. According to this theory, we lack standing to blame when someone is blameworthy-by-someone but not blameworthy-by-us. This is the case when we fail to relate to others as equally accountable agents. We do so by either failing to accept that the norms which apply to others in virtue of their reason-responsiveness also apply to us or by failing to accept that the decisions and responses of others have a certain weight in our deliberation. Hypocritical blamers almost always fail to accept the first; *meddlers* fail to accept the second. This means that both lack standing to blame.

The three-place view of standing improves on available accounts of standing. It correctly locates the problem of standing at the level of attitudes, it explains our ordinary locutions, it explains why standingless blame partly lacks its ordinary force, it leads to a compelling explanation of why standingless blame does not fit, and it hangs together with a plausible answer to the substantive question. Some other answers to the property question share some of these advantages. However, none of them share all these advantages. This, I believe, gives us good reason to prefer this account. When we lack standing, it is because the person we are blaming *is* blameworthy-by-someone, just not blameworthy-by-us.

In the first chapter, I argued that we should prefer a view that walks a middle path between relational and reactive sentiment accounts. In the second and third chapter, I have argued for the three-place view of standing to blame. In the final chapter, I shall aim to give us a final reason to adopt the views I have argued for here: they cohere. I have already started this project in §13 by arguing that my answers to the substantive and property questions complement each other. In the next chapter, I shall complete this project by arguing that the three views I have put forward for cohere, and claim that this gives all three further epistemic support.

CHAPTER IV

An Argument From Coherence

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that we have good reason to adopt three views. The first is a synthesis of two widely held views about blame. The second is my answer to the substantive question: that we lack standing when hypocritical or not relevantly involved. The third is the three-place view of standing to blame. In arguing for these views, I have appealed to several auxiliary views. These include, most importantly, the view that the blaming attitudes are fitting just when they correctly represent their objects and that a three-place relation uniquely satisfies 'the fittingness relation'. In this chapter, I hope to say something about the epistemology of the theory comprised by these three views. That is, how we might justify our belief in, or acceptance of, some theory. Much of this discussion will centre on the claim that a theory's coherence provides at least some epistemic support for that theory.

Immediately, some might wonder whether this is only true if I adopt coherentism about epistemic justification. However, I shall argue that this is not the case. Sensible foundationalists, coherentists, and those who hold mixed views can all claim that coherence provides *some* epistemic support for a set of views. To argue for this, I shall suggest that foundationalists can appeal to coherence as a *mark* of justification, even if it does not have any justificatory power in itself. This means the foundationalist can assent to the claim that coherence provides *indirect epistemic support* for the views I have put forward.

Suppose I am right to believe that coherence provides at least *some* positive epistemic support for a set of beliefs. I must then show that the views I have argued for hang together in this way. For two views to cohere, their propositional content must stand in one of several positive epistemic relations to each other. One such relation is that of explanatory coherence. If one view explains another, then we can say that they cohere. I shall argue that the extended relational view of blame I have presented in Ch. I *best* explains the three-place view of standing and that the three-place view explains our substantive judgements

about standingless blame.

I shall then suggest that the auxiliary views I have appealed to cohere with the primary views and that we have at least some reason to believe they cohere with each other. Since I have appealed to these views in arguing for the primary views, I have already put forward a case for their coherence. Furthermore, on at least some views that appeal to explanatory coherence, this suggests that they cohere with each other. If so, we have a *pro tanto* case for their coherence. However, some might object that this cannot be so because they are inconsistent. If two views are inconsistent then they clearly cannot cohere. Therefore, I must argue that they are consistent. This is not immediately clear. There is a potential tension between the view that the fittingness relation is three-place and the view that an attitude is fitting when it correctly represents its object. However, I shall contend that this tension is merely apparent. The objection relies on the claim that the object of our attitude does not partly depend on facts about us. In the case of blame, this concerns our relationship with those involved in the wrong. Yet, our relationships depend on facts about us. Therefore, certain facts about us partly ground fitting blame.

Importantly, I do not want to claim that this constitutes a complete theory of the epistemology of moral theory or of normative judgements. Rather, what follows should be taken as providing the theory of standing to blame I have argued for in this thesis with further epistemic support. In doing so, I shall suggest something about my methodology. However, this is in service of the views I have already argued for.

The chapter will proceed as follows. In §15, I shall argue that both sensible foundationalists and coherentists about epistemic justification can assent to the claim that coherence provides *some* positive epistemic support for a set of beliefs. In §16, I shall then give a brief summary of the views I have argued for or appealed to in this thesis. Then, in §17, I shall argue that the two main views cohere both with themselves and the auxiliary views. Finally, I shall argue that the auxiliary views are consistent with each other.

15 Coherence and Epistemic Justification

A view consists of a set of claims. If we are to believe some view, then we must be justified in believing the claims it makes. One way we can be justified in believing a set of claims is if they stand in the right relation to foundational beliefs. Another is if they cohere. Regarding an account of some phenomena, we can ask two questions. First, are the propositional content of these claims appropriately related to the foundational sources of knowledge? Second, do the set of claims that make up this account cohere? Depending on the weight

we give to the answers to each question, we might then take up one of three views. The first is foundationalism. Foundationalists give our answers to the first question pride of place. They will claim, to some extent, that our beliefs are justified just when they are appropriately related to foundational sources.¹ The second is coherentism. Coherentists claim that our beliefs are justified just when they cohere.² The third, mixed, view claims that the answers to both questions have some weight. That is, our beliefs can be justified either because they cohere or because they are appropriately related to foundational sources of knowledge.³ Here, I wish to claim that coherence gives *some* epistemic support to a set of beliefs. This is distinct from the claim that coherence *justifies* these beliefs. To make this claim, I would have to argue against foundationalism. As I have already stated, I do not wish to do this. Instead, I shall argue that all three can accept a weaker claim.

To do so, we must first get a better grip on what it is to claim that a set of beliefs cohere. Unfortunately, there is no widely accepted characterisation of 'coherence'. However, here we can make do with a minimal account. For a set of beliefs to cohere, their propositional content must stand in some relation of mutual support and they must be psychologically related in the mind of the believer. When we are considering a theory, these beliefs will, in ordinary cases, be psychologically related. Therefore, we can focus exclusively on the first conjunct. Although accounts differ on which of several propositional relations might ground coherence between beliefs, we can at the very least claim that this relation is not mere consistency. This is because there are cases where beliefs are consistent but clearly not coherent. Consider a set of two beliefs that are logically and semantically unrelated to each other, 'that it will be sunny today' and 'that α is a Greek letter'. These beliefs are consistent but not coherent. The coherentist, foundationalist, and those who hold mixed views can accept the claim that consistency is a necessary but not sufficient condition for belief. However, all three can also make a stronger claim: that incoherence can defeat justification.

This is because incoherence seems to have a definite negative character; it is not just the absence of coherence. Consider the two consistent but not coherent views above. We should not call these coherent; they are logically

1. For example, see Robert Audi, *The Architecture of Reason: The Structure and Substance of Rationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Ch. 1.

2. For some examples of Coherentist views, see Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); William G. Lycan, *Judgement and Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Paul Thagard, *Coherence in Thought and Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

3. For examples of these mixed theories, see Roderick Milton Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Susan Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993); Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

and semantically unrelated to each other. However, it would also be wrong to call them incoherent. Instead, we should say that they are neither coherent nor incoherent. If so, then the foundationalist can claim that incoherence can defeat justification without being committed to the claim that coherence confers justification. The question of epistemic justification is constructive, but claims about incoherence are not. Therefore, the foundationalist need not worry about claiming that incoherence defeats justification.⁴

All three theories can accept the claim that incoherence defeats epistemic justification. Can we find any more common ground? I believe we can. To carve out this territory, we can first observe that when two beliefs cohere, this appears to give both some epistemic support. Coherentists and those who endorse mixed views will take this at face value. However, any foundationalist theory worth its salt will also hope to explain this. One way of doing so, proposed by Robert Audi, is to claim that coherence is often a *mark* of justification, even though it does not have the power to impart justification itself.⁵ That is, for the foundationalist, coherence often gives us a reason to form the second-order belief that our first-order beliefs are justified in virtue of their relations to the basic sources of epistemic justification. Once again, we should remember that the foundationalist *will not* say that coherence is what does the justifying. If you told them your belief was justified because it cohered with your other beliefs, they would still want to know where this belief came from. However, they can claim that, often, coherence provides what we can call *indirect positive epistemic support* for a set of beliefs. This contrasts with the coherentist and those who hold mixed views. Both will claim that coherence provides *direct positive epistemic support* for a set of beliefs. This gives us reason to believe that whichever view we endorse, we can accept the view that coherence provides either *direct* or *indirect* epistemic support for some set of beliefs.

Some foundationalists might object that this *does* commit us to a form of coherentism, even if it is in a qualified form. They might suggest that rephrasing the claim that ‘coherence often gives us a reason to believe that there is some relation between our derived beliefs and the basic sources of epistemic justification’ to ‘coherence provides *indirect epistemic support* for some set of beliefs’ relies on some hidden premise. This premise would establish some equivalency between epistemic support and epistemic justification. However, this is mistaken. The relation of support is much weaker than the justification relation. To provide epistemic support is simply to rationally increase our credence in the proposition that some belief is justified. Indirect epistemic support occurs when the support

4. For a particularly good articulation of this, see Audi, *The Architecture of Reason: The Structure and Substance of Rationality*, p. 24-28.

5. See Audi, p. 24-28.

relation is not between a source of justification and some derived belief but instead gives us reason to believe that there is such a relation. In other words, all the foundationalist need be committed to when accepting this claim is that it is often the case that when some set of beliefs cohere, there is a reason to believe that they stand in the right relation with the appropriate sources of epistemic justification, whatever these may be.

This gives us good reason to believe that if I can show that the views presented in the previous chapters cohere, this will give sensible foundationalists, coherentists, and those who hold mixed views *some* further epistemic support for the account I have put forward. For the latter two, it will provide *direct* epistemic support for the set of claims we must believe to believe the account. For the former, it will provide indirect support for this set.

16 Summary of Views Presented

So far, I have argued for an account of blame and standing to blame that is comprised of three distinctive claims. These are:

- (A) The best account of blame is a synthesis of relational and reactive sentiment accounts.
- (B) When someone lacks the standing to blame, it is because the object of their blame is not blameworthy-by-them, even though they are blameworthy by someone.
- (C) We lack standing to blame when we are hypocritical or not relevantly involved.

In arguing for these views, I have relied on two key auxiliary views. These are:

- (D) There is just one fittingness relation; this relation has three terms.
- (E) An attitude is fitting just when it correctly represents its object.

I believe these views form a consistent set that, together, provide a plausible theory of blame and standing to blame. Furthermore, I believe that (A), (B), and (C) cohere with each other and with (D), (E), and (F). However, some might object to this last claim. Therefore, in the following section I shall give my reasons for believing they do.

17 How Do These Views Cohere?

17.1 The Primary Views

Let us begin with the three distinctive views I have argued for. The first of these is that blame consists of the blamer construing the attitudes of someone as a reason to modify their relationship with them. The paradigmatic way of doing this is by experiencing one of the reactive sentiments toward them. To fittingly blame someone, we must relate to them as accountable equals. There are at least two ways we might fail to do this. The first is by failing to take norms that apply to them in virtue of their reason-responsiveness to also apply to you. The second is by failing to take their choices and decisions to have sufficient importance in your decision making. When we fail to relate to others as accountable equals, this makes them not blameworthy-by-us, even though they are blameworthy-by-someone. The hypocrite, unless they are Doubly Akratic, fails to relate to others as accountable equals in the first way. The meddler fails to relate to others as accountable equals in the second way. Therefore, the objects of their blame are not blameworthy-by-them, even though they are blameworthy-by-someone.

These three views are either naturally consistent with each other, or their consistency has already been argued for in previous chapters. However, we might ask whether there is any further positive epistemic relation between them. There are several plausible relations that might partly ground coherence. One such relation is explanatory coherence. If one belief explains another, we can plausibly say that these two beliefs cohere.⁶ If what I have argued earlier is right, then we can also say that this gives us some support for both beliefs. Consider the following set of beliefs I might form upon seeing two birds in front of me. Of each bird, I might believe: (i) that this bird is a pelican, (ii) that this pelican has an extensible throat pouch, (iii) that all pelicans have extensible throat pouches, and (iv) that all birds with extensible throat pouches are pelicans. Although this is too small a set of beliefs to be highly coherent, they *are still* coherent. This is especially true when we compare them to the set of consistent but incoherent beliefs I outlined in the previous section. One reason to think this is that there are explanatory relations that run between them. (i) and (ii) provide some *inductive* support for (iii) and (iv), and (i) and (iii) provide some *deductive* support for (ii).⁷

6. For two influential articulations and defences of explanatory coherence see Lycan, *Judgement and Justification*, and Thagard, *Coherence in Thought and Action*; for a detailed discussion of explanation and its role in reasoning see Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004)

7. For further discussion, see Laurence Bonjour, *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), p. 158, and Thagard, *Coherence in Thought and Action*, Ch. 3; We must be careful about the strength of the latter conjunct.

This gives us some reason to believe that when one belief explains another, they cohere, and so provide mutual epistemic support. Therefore, if I can successfully argue that these views have such explanatory relations, we have reason to believe that they provide each other with epistemic support.

Let us begin with the synthetic theory of blame suggested in Ch. I and the three-place view of standing to blame I argued for in Ch. III. There are two important features of the former that allow us to explain the latter. The first is that blame involves our relationships with others. This partly determines the expectations about how we should relate to others, and so how we might lack standing on the three-place view. The second is that appropriate blame requires us to *construe* a person's actions or attitudes as giving us a reason to modify our relationship with them. This involves taking seriously the norms that we are blaming them for, and accepting that their choices and decisions have normative importance for us. Therefore, when we fail to do this, our blame is inappropriate. And, it is for this reason the object of our standingless blame is not blameworthy-by-us.

These two features of the synthetic account of blame explain standingless blame and its unfittingness. Therefore, we can say that the synthetic view of blame explains the three-place view of standing to blame cohere. The synthetic view provides support for the relational view by giving us reason to believe that the unfittingness of standingless blame holds in virtue of general features about blame's fittingness, and the three-place view provides the synthetic view of blame with a way to explain standing.

Furthermore, the three-place view of blame naturally explains substantive cases where someone lacks the standing to blame: when they are hypocritical and when they are not relevantly involved. The three-place view claims that we lack standing to blame because we fail to relate to others as equals. And, I have suggested that both the meddler and the hypocrite lack the standing to blame just when and because they fail to relate to others in this way. This, it seems, gives us good reason to believe that these views cohere.

17.2 The Auxiliary Views

We have reason to believe that the primary views I have argued for cohere, and thus a further reason to accept these views as a set. However, someone might now ask whether this is also true of the auxiliary views I have put forward. Recall

I only wish to claim that there is *some* deductive support that general principles lend to their instances. This, by my lights, is both plausible and intuitive. However, I acknowledge that some might reasonably disagree. I cannot argue for this here. So, I shall take it as a working assumption.

that these are, most importantly: that there is just one three-place fittingness relation and that an attitude is fitting when it correctly represents its object.

When considering whether these auxiliary views cohere, there are two questions we can ask. Do these views cohere with each other? And, do they cohere with the primary views I have argued for. I take the work I have done in previous chapters to have made an initial case for an affirmative answer to both these questions. The auxiliary views partly explain the primary ones. Since explanatory coherence is one way of cashing out the relation of mutual support necessary for coherence, we can say that absent further argument, the auxiliary views cohere with the primary ones. Furthermore, we can argue that because, together, these auxiliary views at least partly explain the primary ones, they *prima facie* cohere with each other.⁸

At first glance, then, we should say that these views cohere with each other and the primary views. However, whether this claim is plausible depends on whether there are any substantial objections. We currently only have an initial case, not a thorough argument. One such objection is that the auxiliary views are inconsistent. If true, this would defeat my claim. And it would cast doubt on much of my earlier work. After all, if the views I have appealed to in justifying the primary views are inconsistent with each other, there is something going wrong in my account. Therefore, I must see off this potential objection.

The objection is all the more worrying because it is not clear that the auxiliary views *are* consistent. The most pressing doubt here concerns whether we can both claim that fittingness involves correct representation *and* that the fittingness relation is three-placed. The worry is that if the fittingness relation is three-placed, then we must take into account certain facts about the agent who is holding some attitude to determine whether it is fitting. However, someone might claim, we seem to ignore these facts when considering an attitude's object. On this objection, representation concerns the world, not the agent. To level this worry directly at the views we are considering here, someone might claim that other-regarding blame is only fitting when it represents the normative properties of our relationships with others. They might contend that this relationship, when considered as the object of an attitude, does not depend on the people who are participating in it. Rather, it depends on the normative features of that relationship at a certain time and within a certain context. Therefore, an attitude correctly represents this relationship only if they capture its normative properties.

We can respond that the correctness of our representation of our relationships with others, the object of our blame, partly depends on its members. That is, the character of our relationships is made up, at least in part, by the attitudes

8. For further discussion, see Thagard, *Coherence in Thought and Action*, Ch. 3.

each person holds toward the other and the attitudes each person holds toward certain norms set by the ideal of that relationship-type. Therefore, to accurately represent your relationship with someone, you must accurately represent the attitudes you yourself hold toward that person and the attitudes that the other person holds toward you. This, it seems, is enough to dispel worries about the representational view of fittingness and the view that the fittingness relation is three-place.

If what I have said is correct, we can now make three claims. The first is that both foundationalists and coherentists can reasonably believe that coherence provides some epistemic support for a set of beliefs. The second is that the two primary claims I have put forward in this work cohere. The final is that the auxiliary views I have presented cohere with the primary claims I have made and are consistent with each other.

18 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have hoped to give us a final reason to prefer the three-place view about standing to blame and the synthetic view of blame: they cohere. In doing so, I first argued that both foundationalists and coherentists can accept that the fact that some set of beliefs cohere provides *some* epistemic support for those beliefs. Then, I argued that the primary views I have suggested cohere because the synthetic view of blame explains the three-place view of standing to blame. And, the three-place view explains cases where we judge someone to lack the standing to blame. Finally, I argued that the auxiliary views I have appealed to throughout the thesis cohere with the primary views I have argued for, and that they are consistent with each other.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Throughout this work, I have hoped to present a novel theory of standing to blame. To develop such a theory, I first discussed what it is to blame someone. In Chapter I, I suggested we adopt the Synthetic or Extended Relational view of blame. On this view, to

judge someone blameworthy is to take their act to express certain attitudes that impair the relationships others can appropriately have with them. To *blame* them is to take this seriously, in the sense that you construe this as a reason to modify your relationship with them in a way made appropriate by the act and certain features of the relationship. The *typical* way of doing this is by taking up one of the reactive sentiments.

We have several reasons to believe this view is plausible. Most importantly, it seems to satisfy several important desiderata of a theory of blame.

In Chapters II and III, I argued for answers to both the substantive and property questions about standing to blame. My answer to the former was that we lack standing when either hypocritical or not relevantly involved. This view carves a middle path between the views of Todd and Cohen. My answer to the latter was that we lack standing to blame because the object of our blame is blameworthy-by-someone but not blameworthy-by-us. We have reason to believe this view because

- (A) Others answers to the property question are implausible without substantial revision.
- (B) There are two independent sources of attraction to the view.
- (C) If we adopt the three-place view we can give a compelling answer to the property question about standing to blame. And,

(D) This view best coheres with the synthetic view about blame, my answer to the substantive question, and the auxiliary views I have presented in this thesis.

Finally, in Ch. IV, I argued that these views cohere, and that this provides some further epistemic support for each of them – regardless of which side of the coherentism/foundationalism debate we take.

Although I take my arguments give us good reason to believe these views, I do not take this thesis to contain full developments of the views put forward in chapters I and IV. My arguments for these views are self-consciously limited and in service of my primary aim: to develop a plausible theory of standing to blame. Furthermore, I do not take myself to have fully established that we should take the fittingness relation to be three-placed. Instead, I have justified taking it as a working assumption.

This leads naturally to areas for further research. First, there is much important work to be done on the exact nature of the fittingness relation. I have attempted to partly contribute to this work here. Most importantly, this further work would involve giving a detailed argument in favour of the three-place account and considering the implications of this account for our other beliefs about value and normative reasons. Second, further research might be done to fully develop the synthetic account of blame. This would involve, at the very least, considering whether it fits with our beliefs about responsibility, moral luck, how (and when) forgiveness makes further blame inappropriate, and why we should value blaming practices. There are also several areas for further research on standing to blame. If we adopt the three-place account, we will still need to do more work to determine exactly when someone is hypocritical or not relevantly involved. There are also several questions about how standing to blame might relate to other areas of inquiry. For example, some have hoped to extend claims about standing to blame to political philosophy¹ and the philosophy of religion.² These are both fruitful areas of research.

In this thesis, I have hoped to contribute to the literature on standing to blame by proposing answers to both the substantive and property questions about standing to blame. In doing so, I have taken sides on several related issues: blame, accountability, fittingness, and the emotions. I doubt I will have convinced the reader of all these views. However, I hope that the view of standing to blame I have suggested is a plausible one. At the very least, I hope that it will help further progress the discussion about standing to blame.

1. See, Gustavo A Beade, "Who can blame whom? Moral standing to blame and punish deprived citizens," *Criminal Law and Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (2019): 271–281.

2. See, Patrick Todd, "Does God Have the Moral Standing to Blame?," *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2018): 33–55, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil201811796>.

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