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COMMENT

Ignorance, Impairment and Quality of Will

Anna Hartford[1] · **Dan J. Stein**[2]

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Abstract

A variety of mental disorders—including ASD, ADHD, major depression, and anxiety disorder, among others—may directly impact what an agent notices or fails to notice. A recent debate has emphasised the potential significance of such "impairment-derived ignorance," and argued that failure to account for certain compelling cases would seriously undermine theories which intend to establish the conditions for blameworthy ignorance. In this comment we argue, contra a recent challenge, that Quality of Will (QW) accounts are able to explain the normative significance of impairment-derived ignorance. The plausible, ambivalent results QW accounts yield in difficult cases of impairment-derived ignorance further reveals the explanatory power of such accounts when it comes to blameworthy ignorance.

Keywords Epistemic condition · Culpable ignorance · Quality of will · Difficulty · Mental disorder

In many cases the fact of mental impairment or divergence seems relevant to questions of blame, including blame for ignorance. Consider the following case, taken from Gideon Rosen (2008):

> Keinbart and his wife are out to dinner with friends when Kleinbart launches into what is meant to be an amusing story about domestic life *chez* Kleinbart. The story is benign enough at first, but it becomes more and more "personal" as it goes on, and Mrs. Kleinbart becomes increasingly uneasy. The other guests soon notice this and are appalled at Kleinbart's boorishness. But Kleinbart rattles on, oblivious to his wife's mounting distress.

✉ Anna Hartford
annahartford@gmail.com

[1] Centre for Brain-Behaviour, Neuroscience Institute, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

[2] SAMRC Unit on Risk & Resilience in Mental Disorders, Department of Psychiatry & Neuroscience Institute, University of Capetown, Capetown, South Africa

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Let us stipulate that Kleinbart fails to notice his wife's distress for reasons related to autism spectrum disorder. For this reason, he often fails to notice social gestures and cues that are obvious to others.

Interpreted such, it seems quite plain that Kleinbart (ASD) is blameless (or at least considerably less blameworthy) for his failure to notice. This is one instance of what we might call impairment-derived ignorance. A variety of mental disorders—including ASD, ADHD, major depression, and anxiety disorder, among others—may directly impact what an agent notices or fails to notice. A recent debate has emphasised the potential significance of impairment-derived ignorance, and argued that failure to account for certain compelling cases would seriously undermine theories which intend to establish the conditions for blameworthy ignorance.

In particular, Dylon McChesney and Mathieu Doucet draw on impairment-derived ignorance to critique George Sher's account of blameworthy ignorance, and to support, instead, Quality of Will (QW) accounts.[1]

In his book *Who Knew: Responsibility Without Awareness* (as well as related papers), Sher sketches a neo-Humean account of blameworthiness for ignorance. "I want to consider the possibility that when an agent should, but does not, recognise that he is acting wrongly or foolishly, what connects him to the act's wrongness or foolishness in a way that allows us to hold him responsible is not just his failure to live up to whatever standard requires that those in his position recognise such acts as wrong or foolish, but is rather the whole collection of attitudes, dispositions, and traits whose interaction causes him not to recognize this."[2]

Thus, to the extent to which an act is genuinely expressive of oneself (including one's "whole collection of attitudes, dispositions, and traits"), one is appropriately responsible for the act. One can therefore be responsible for acts from ignorance that are not consciously controlled because of the way this ignorance was formed by the confluence of one's relevant attributes: a failure to notice something may be attributable to someone because it originated from aspects of an agent that "make him the person he is."[3]

As McChesney and Doucet point out, this account seems unable to account for impairment-derived ignorance, since in such cases it is often plausible that the ignorance *is* related to the person's "whole collection of attitudes, dispositions, and traits." Kleinbart's ignorance, in the ASD version introduced above, may well be connected to aspects of Kleinbart that "make him the person he is," and yet it nevertheless seems mistaken to consider this connection sufficient for his blameworthiness.

We find McChesney and Doucet's paper compelling, both in its negative argument (in raising an important challenge to Sher's account) and in its positive argument (in endorsing, instead, QW accounts of blameworthy ignorance).

On QW accounts, ignorance is blameworthy when it arises from insufficient moral concern. If, for instance, Kleinbart failed to notice his wife's distress precisely

[1] This refers to the account put forward in Sher (2009).

[2] Sher (2009).

[3] Sher (2009).

because he did not care for her (and therefore struggled to notice how she was faring or being affected by his behaviour), then his ignorance would plausibly be blameworthy, since it would be related, in the relevant sense, to his insufficient concern. Call this case Kleinbart (Uncaring). (This is in fact Rosen's own version of Kleinbart; we will return to his position shortly.)

In their positive argument, McChesney and Doucet point out that impairment-derived ignorance often disrupts the inference from failure-to-notice to insufficient concern. Where ignorance does not implicate moral concern, it is plausibly blameless on QW accounts. Such accounts would therefore be able to accommodate the cases of impairment-derived ignorance that McChesney and Doucet use to challenge Sher. They write: "The moral concern account of moral responsibility therefore offers a plausible explanation of the ways in which mental disorders can serve as genuine excuses for what would otherwise be blameworthy ignorance. Moreover, it does not do so by arguing that those with mental disorders lack full moral agency".[4]

Where we stipulate that Kleinbart's ignorance was attributable to his ASD, and his associated difficulty in simulating the mental states of others, it immediately complicates the relationship between his failure to notice and his failure to care.[5] The obstacles Kleinbart faces in noticing his wife's distress are plainly relevant to our assessment of his attitudes, and to our evaluation of the content of those attitudes. Rather than exempting or exculpating Kleinbart on the basis of diminished agency, Kleinbart's ignorance becomes blameless because it becomes clear that his failure to notice is not connected to the negative attitudes that would ground blameworthiness on this account.[6]

This positive argument, and with it the QW account of blameless ignorance, has recently been challenged. Matthew Lamb contends that certain compelling cases of impairment-derived ignorance are left unaccounted for on QW accounts. In particular he argues that impairments that affect moral concern itself (we will refer to these as "attitudinal impairments") are sometimes plausibly exculpatory, but that there is no recourse within a QW framework for accommodating mitigation or exculpation in these cases.

Attitudinal impairments are plausibly exculpatory, per Lamb, when: (1) the impairment is non-culpably derived and sustained (call this "no fault"); and (2) the impairment generates a degree of subjective difficulty that it would be unreasonable to expect someone to overcome (call this "excessive difficulty").

[4] McChesney and Doucet (2019, p. 244).

[5] Cf. Kennett (2002); also see Arpaly (2022).

[6] Note that this explanation is compatible with monism about moral responsibility, and can be distinguished from pluralist accounts of reduced blameworthiness on the basis of impairment or divergence, such as Shoemaker's (2015). With regard to the example of ASD, Shoemaker argues that someone with ASD might be ineligible for responsibility in the "accountability" sense (which is connected specifically with the capacity for regard), while still being eligible for responsibility in the "attributability" and "answerability" senses (see Smith (2012), Jeppsson (2022) for responses). We understand the dispute between McChesney and Doucet and Lamb to playing out with an assumption of monism, and our proposal will likewise not presuppose various kinds of moral responsibility.

Expressed through an example, we could consider the version of Kleinbart who has narcissistic personality disorder. Let us stipulate that this disorder developed when Kleinbart (NPD) was young, and emerged in part from the cruel and authoritarian nature of his family life.[7] Kleinbart (NPD) received no treatment, and eventually grew into an adult who, aside from general self-aggrandisement and self-centredness, finds it extremely difficult to recognise the needs and feelings of others. One evening he tells a mortifying story about his wife, and does not notice her distress. The reason he does not notice emerges essentially from his lack of empathy for her, and the excessive pleasure he was taking in holding the floor, both of which can be attributed to his personality disorder.

In such a circumstance, Lamb contends that Mrs Kleinbart's resentful silence in the car on the drive home would be "unjustly harsh."[8] It would not be sufficiently empathetic with the (blameless) circumstances which formed Kleinbart's disorder, nor the difficulties which the disorder now generates in his meeting particular normative demands (in this case, the demand to have noticed her distress).

We agree with Lamb that these constitute complicated cases, but we disagree that QW accounts are unable to accommodate them. We suggest that we have appropriately ambivalent blame reactions to agents such as Kleinbart (NPD), and that this appropriate ambivalence is well captured and well explained on QW grounds.

From our perspective, we take the following reactions to be roughly intuitive:

Kleinbart (ASD) is the least blameworthy; Kleinbart (NPD) generates ambivalent feelings with regard to his blameworthiness; and Kleinbart (Uncaring) is the most blameworthy.

Insofar as these intuitions are shared, an account of blameworthy ignorance that rendered all three Kleinbarts equivalently blameworthy, or equivalently blameless, would be deficient, or would be arguing for a kind of revisionism.

As we noted, Rosen's original Kleinbart case was a version of Kleinbart (Uncaring). Rosen recognised that most people would consider Kleinbart (Uncaring) blameworthy, but he wanted to argue for a revisionist position: if we accepted that Kleinbart's ignorance was genuinely outside of his conscious control, we ought to consider him blameless, even if his ignorance ultimately arose from his lack of concern for his wife.

Rosen would of course also deem Kleinbart (NDP) blameless for the same reasons he deems Kleinbart (Uncaring) blameless: neither had conscious control over the formation of their natures; neither had conscious control over their lack of care for their wife; neither had conscious control over their failure to notice her distress; and both took themselves to be acting permissibly in telling the story which caused her such mortification. The justification for this revisionism is based in strict demands with regard to fairness in attributions of blameworthiness. (Rosen's

[7] This resembles Lamb's "Narcissistic Joe," whose "life contains multiple risk factors for developing narcissistic personality disorder, such as having a cruel, authoritarian, and neglectful family at home." (Lamb 2022, p. 417).

[8] At issue here is the fact that *resentment and blame* are inappropriate. This may be compatible with the appropriateness of other protesting or distancing reactions from Mrs. Kleinbart. (Thank you to a reviewer at *Res Publica* for pointing this out.)

radical position commits him to deeming agents blameless for their ignorance even if it arises from prejudice, ill will, bias, hatred, *et cetera,* provided these agents take themselves to be reasoning and behaving permissibly by their own lights.)

Lamb is not defending "searchlight views" such as Rosen's, so we take it that he would want to be able to deem Kleinbart (Uncaring) blameworthy even while exempting Kleinbart (NPD).

But on what basis would we distinguish these two cases on Lamb's framework?

First, we could use mental disorder per se. While Kleinbart (NPD) has been diagnosed with a mental disorder, Kleinbart (Uncaring) has not.

Importantly, no one within this debate is suggesting that the mere existence of mental disorder is exculpating *in and of itself*. There is no general inference from the fact of mental disorder to a particular assessment with regard to moral responsibility, and some have even argued that the features of certain disorders could be responsibility-enhancing in certain contexts.[9]

Any specific evaluation of the relevance of mental disorder to moral responsibility would instead need to turn on distinct features of the disorder and how they relate to responsibility assessments for particular wrongdoings. In the case of Kleinbart (NPD), his personality disorder is associated with his lack of empathy and in turn his failure to notice his wife's distress. But this feature is shared, in crucial respects, by Kleinbart (Uncaring), whose genuine failure to notice also stems from his genuine lack of concern for his wife.

So, on its own, (and especially insofar as we are resisting the inference from the fact of mental disorder to the fact of mitigation) the mere presence of mental disorder does not add much. Recognising that there are spectrums from mental health to mental illness, there is also no exact point at which someone's traits begin to constitute a personality disorder, prior to which they would merely have constituted a personality. This is not to deny the reality of mental disorders as a meaningful classification—although of course a massive literature in the philosophy of psychiatry is dedicated to the interrogation of this classification[10]— but rather to assert that the factors relevant for mitigation in certain cases of mental impairment may also be present (and similarly relevant) in agents who do not meet diagnostic criteria.[11]

If mental disorders are not exempting in and of themselves, we would need to know more about why Kleinbart's personality disorder was potentially relevant to exculpation in this particular circumstance.

In this particular case, the mental disorder seems to generate serious difficulty for Kleinbart (NPD) in recognising his wife's needs and feelings. But this could equally be the case for Kleinbart (Uncaring), even though he does not have a mental disorder. Part of the strength of revisionist "searchlight views" such as Rosen's is the plausibility of the claim that what one notices and fails to notice is

[9] Cf. King and May (2018, 2022).

[10] See Stein et al. (2024) for an overview of this debate.

[11] Furthermore, as Paul Emmelkamp and Jan Kamphuis (2013) write: "pathology is ubiquitous," estimating that 12 per cent of the "normal" population meet the criteria for one or more personality disorders. (This ubiquity is also part of what makes some of these diagnostic categories so contentious.)

in crucial respects beyond one's control. We may stipulate (as Rosen does) that Kleinbart (Uncaring)'s failure to notice was not the upshot of recklessness or negligence; perhaps he was so convinced by the hilarity of his story that, in conjunction with his fundamental lack of care for her, he kept misinterpreting his wife's signals of discomfort for signals of delight. Given the fact that he did not possess the requisite care for her, it may well have been excessively difficult for Kleinbart (Uncaring) to correctly perceive her mortification.

Perhaps we may instead take a step back, and argue that while Kleinbart (NPD) faced excessive difficulty in caring for his wife, given the features of his disorder, Kleinbart (Uncaring) did not. But again, it seems possible to equalise this feature between the two cases. When you do not care about someone, it is no easy matter to "make yourself" care about them, whether you have a disorder or not. On Kleinbart (Uncaring) Rosen writes:

> Let us suppose that Kleinbart's indifference […] has come on slowly over the years thanks to a local drop in serotonin levels in the vicinity of his neural representation of Mrs. Kleinbart, and it has persisted despite some effort to revive interest and concern. This can happen. We have little direct control over what we care about, and affective drift can be hard to manage by indirect means.

If we grant the struggle to effectively manage such "affective drift," even among "ordinary" agents, we may therefore plausibly imagine cases in which the "excessive difficulty" criterion obtains to both (NPD) and (Uncaring).

Now from our perspective, Mrs Kleinbart (Uncaring) is still entitled to her resentful silence on the drive home—to feel angry, and morally angry, towards her husband on account of his failure to notice her distress, which she accurately interprets as indicative of his failure to care about her; to *blame* him for this failure. And if he explained to her just how especially difficult he found it to care about her, rather than being tempered by his explanation, she might instead be entitled to be more resentful still.

Thus neither "mental disorder" itself, nor "excessive difficulty" seems to distinguish the two cases adequately. Finally, we can consider "no fault."

A separate feature of the Kleinbart (NPD) case is the description of Kleinbart's formative circumstances. The detail of the young Kleinbart's cruel and authoritarian father, in particular, leaves many of us feeling far more conflicted by the case, since it seems to clearly express the sense in which he was not at fault for the emergence of his disorder (especially since the fault is directed elsewhere: i.e., to his father). In contrast, let us imagine that Kleinbart (Uncaring) had a model childhood and adolescence: adequately cared for in comfort by two good-enough parents.

Intuitively, the strongest case for "no fault" seems to involve this bad history. But there are a few things to note with regard to "no fault" and formative circumstances:

First, there is no perfect relationship between difficult formative circumstances and the emergence of mental disorders. Although certain mental disorders (including certain personality disorders) are associated with traumatic or otherwise harmful life experiences, this is not always the case, and agents can have mental disorders that are not neatly explained by the nature of their upbringing.

That is to say: it is perfectly possible to reverse the scenarios above, and to say instead that Kleinbart (NPD) had the model childhood and adolescence, while Kleinbart (Uncaring) had the cruel and authoritarian father. (Insisting that for every person with NPD there must be an authoritarian parent takes us uncomfortably close to “refrigerator mother” territory.)

But even if Kleinbart (NPD) was in this fortunate circumstance, in what respect does he become *at fault* for the emergence of his personality disorder? Certainly, it is plausible that the formation of the personality disorder—through whichever complex combinations of disposition and environment—could remain equally outside of Kleinbart’s control in either case. Control therefore does not seem to be a good contender for how we establish “at fault” in one case and “no fault” in the other.

Perhaps it could be insisted, instead, that Coddled Kleinbart (NPD)—who had privileged formative circumstances—had reasonable opportunity to avoid turning into such an inconsiderate man, whereas Cowed Kleinbart (NPD)—with his authoritarian father— did not, which grounds fault in one case but not the other.[12] But if not in terms of voluntariness, it is hard to see how this reasonable opportunity, and hence culpability, is cashed out without implicit or explicit recourse to the agent’s quality of will. I.e., Without at some point saying that Coddled Kleinbart must have had greater vices and greater deficiencies of moral concern to remain subjectively oblivious to opportunities for improvement which we deem objectively obvious and amply available. But where these deficiencies of moral concern are ultimately the dial on which our intuitions turn—where reasonable opportunity is aligned with reasonable regard, rather than with control or voluntariness—then this interpretation of the cases *dovetails* with QW views, rather than serving as a counterexample to them, as “no fault” intends (a point we will soon elaborate on).

How do we distinguish, then, between Coddled Kleinbart (NPD) and Cowed Kleinbart (NPD)? Or between Kleinbart (NPD) and Kleinbart (Uncaring)? Both “no fault,” as aligned with control and voluntariness, and “excessive difficulty” do not seem to make the necessary distinctions independently, nor together, since as we have seen both “no fault” and “excessive difficulty” could apply simultaneously in Kleinbart (NPD) and Kleinbart (Uncaring), as well as in Coddled Kleinbart (NPD) and the Cowed Kleinbart (NPD).

To close this comment, we will argue that QW accounts are able to navigate these complexities, and make the appropriate distinctions between these cases. We contend, therefore, that the complicated cases proposed by Lamb do not constitute counterexamples to QW accounts, and that the plausible results QW accounts yield

[12] The question of the relationship between “reasonable opportunity” and control and voluntariness has been considered at length in the culpable ignorance debate. Cf. Rosen (2008), FitzPatrick (2008), Levy (2009), FitzPatrick (2017), Robichaud (2014), Levy (2016). As this debate reveals, there is a lot of scope to resist the claim that we had reasonable opportunity—construed as consciously controlled and voluntary opportunity—to have different (better) traits and natures, particularly where we do not take ourselves and our natures to be morally inadequate by our own lights. If we construe “at fault” as requiring conscious control and opportunity, then reasonable opportunity accounts of the relevant fault face this resistance.

in such cases further reveal their explanatory power when it comes to blameworthy ignorance.

An ongoing debate within the philosophy of moral responsibility has explored the relevance of difficulty to (degrees of) mitigation.[13] One interpretation of the significance of difficulty for assessments of moral responsibility is offered by QW accounts. On such interpretations, while difficulty itself is irrelevant—and, in certain circumstances, can even compound blameworthiness—it can he highly revelatory of the moral concern (or lack of concern) which ultimately grounds appraisals of moral praise and blame.[14]

A fundamental feature of QW accounts is the idea that we are entitled to a certain degree of moral concern from other moral agents. Nevertheless, the account also allows that it is possible for us to be over-entitled, to expect *too much* from others. Facts regarding the difficulty that other agents faced can therefore be crucial to determining when a justified entitlement becomes an unjustified entitlement.

Crucially, however, QW accounts distinguish between difficulty that arises from *within* one's moral attitudes and concerns (internal difficulty), and difficulty that arises from *without* one's moral attitudes and concerns (external difficulty): since difficulty is only mitigating on such accounts insofar as it complicates the inference from wrongful conduct to insufficient concern, it does *not* mitigate (or not in any straightforward way) when it arises from insufficient concern itself.[15]

With this distinction in mind, and its relationship to QW accounts, we can revisit our inventory of Kleinbarts. Kleinbart (ASD) faced external difficulty in noticing his wife's distress (related to the general difficulty he experiences in simulating the mental states of others). This difficulty clearly complicates the inference from his failure to notice his wife's distress to his failure to care sufficiently for her, and in this sense it is powerfully mitigating. On the other hand, Kleinbart (Uncaring) faced internal difficulty in noticing his wife's distress (related to his lack of care for her). Although (as we saw in Rosen's reasoning above) it was very difficult for Kleinbart to notice what he did not notice, and to care where he did not care, this difficulty does not complicate the inference from his failure to notice to his failure to care sufficiently, and it is therefore not mitigating.

Now Kleinbart (NPD) presents a more complex case, particularly in the case of Cowed Kleinbart (NPD).[16] This case, in particular, generates feelings of ambivalence with regard to Kleinbart's blameworthiness for his failure to notice his wife's distress.

One interpretation of this ambivalence is that the story of Cowed Kleinbart elicits empathy for the young Kleinbart, who was once a victim. These feelings of empathy

[13] Cf. Nelkin (2016), Ferrin (2022).

[14] Cf. Hartford (2022), Hartford and Stein (2024).

[15] One can potentially withhold blame on the basis of internal difficulty on QW grounds, but such mitigation intrinsically involves the abandonment of the basic demand towards another agent, and therefore the abandonment of symmetrical moral relations. The question of the interpersonal costs of adopting such asymmetrical stances, especially in close relationships, is the subject of ongoing debate (Shoemaker 2022; Glover 2014; Hartford and Stein 2024).

[16] Which more closely resembles Lamb's counterexample.

conflict with the feelings of blame we have for the present-day Kleinbart, who is a perpetrator, leading to an experience of conflict and ambivalence in our full assessment of Kleinbart (who we feel both angry with and sorry for). This experience of ambivalence is nevertheless compatible with Kleinbart being fully blameworthy in the present.[17]

Another interpretation involves the tacit invocation of the counterfactual Kleinbart; the one who did not have these experiences of cruelty and oppression, and who, we imagine, therefore emerged as a more gentle and thoughtful man. There is a kind of tragedy to this imagining, as we reflect on the morally disfiguring power of certain formative circumstances. And if we situate our imaginings in the past, where the counterfactual Kleinbart seems especially proximate, there can even be a sense in which we feel that Cowed Kleinbart (NPD) is "not himself" in some sense. We are all sometimes "not ourselves," and we do sometimes try and distance ourselves from our regrettable behaviour and attitudes by explaining that it was, in the broader scheme, unrepresentative of ourselves (this practice is perfectly compatible with QW accounts). But ultimately Cowed Kleinbart (NPD) *was* acting in ways that represent who he is, and who he has been for many decades. The idea that he is "not himself" therefore becomes implausible; at the end of the day, there is no one else there.

On the other hand, perhaps it can be argued that while he is himself, he is not responsible for who he is. There is something compelling about this reasoning, but it is hard to hold it apart from a more general incompatibilism, in which none of us are responsible for who we are.[18] (After all, there are presumably boundless counterfactual versions of ourselves, some of whom are total mensches.) But it is also compelling to feel that at some point, despite who we might have been, we are also responsible for ourselves *as we are*, and in turn that we are responsible for the way we treat other people.

Finally, we can analyse this experience of ambivalence via the two forms of difficulty just introduced. In the case of Cowed Kleinbart (NPD), both internal and external difficulty are involved in the causal story of Kleinbart's obliviousness. It is potentially this complexity, we suggest, that contributes to the appropriate feelings of ambivalence with regard to his blameworthiness. Although this analysis can co-exist with the sources of ambivalence described above—in the co-existence of sympathy and antipathy towards Cowed Kleinbart (NPD), and in the sense of loss for who Cowed Kleinbart (NPD) might have been, given a different history—it also constitutes a separate basis for the feelings of conflict in the case.[19]

Sometimes, indeed often, (exculpating) external difficulty exists in a complex relation with (inculpating) internal difficulty. An entrenched and interwoven version of this dynamic is in play with Cowed Kleinbart (NPD). Exculpatory external difficulty contributed to the formation of his personality disorder—in the form of his cruel and authoritarian father—which in turn contributed to the inculpatory internal difficulty he faced in caring about his wife's distress. Without the inclusion of this

[17] Cf. Watson (2004), Shoemaker (2015). (Both Watson and Shoemaker recommend pluralist interpretations of the relevant ambivalence, drawing on different forms of moral responsibility.)

[18] Cf. Pereboom (2001, 2014), Agule (2021).

[19] And a basis which, unlike Shoemaker and Watson's pluralist accounts, is compatible with moral responsibility monism.

external difficulty, as in the case of Coddled Kleinbart (NPD), we experience far less ambivalence, irrespective of the fact that Coddled Kleinbart (NPD) also meets the same criteria with regard to “disorder,” “no fault,” and “excessive difficulty.”

The complex interplay of external and internal difficulty grounds our feelings of greater ambivalence in the case of Cowed Kleinbart (NPD). We are simultaneously drawn to mitigate blameworthiness, on account of the immense external difficulty he faced in his childhood, and also to assert blameworthiness, on account of the present internal difficulty which underwrites his failure to notice his wife’s distress. Related to the points above: the fact of this external difficulty both magnifies our sense of sympathy for the young Cowed Kleinbart (NPD), and also our sense of tragedy for the counterfactual Cowed Kleinbart (NPD). Despite this ambivalence, his present internal difficulty is not itself mitigating, and the fact that Kleinbart fails to notice his wife’s distress because it is especially difficult for him to care about her feelings remain grounds for blameworthiness, rather than grounds for exculpation.

Relatedly, if someone tried to talk Mrs Kleinbart out of her resentment by explaining that while he comes across as arrogant and uncaring “he’s actually just deeply insecure, and deeply afraid of being unloved,” what this person would be asking Mrs Kleinbart to do is reconsider the content of Kleinbart’s attitudes. Again, this is a tempering explanation that makes the most sense on a QW framework. Although—in the invocation of deeper and more superficial attitudes—this explanation opens up complicated discussions about the depth at which the morally relevant attitudes reside. In such a case, insofar as we respond to both the (superficial) lack of concern and the (deeper) insecurity simultaneously, this might also ground an appropriate ambivalence in the case of agents such as Kleinbart (NPD).[20]

In short: Cowed Kleinbart (NPD), whose case involves *both* internal and external difficulty, inevitably generates more ambivalent blame reactions than Kleinbart (ASD), whose difficulty was predominantly external, or Kleinbart (Uncaring), whose difficulty was predominantly internal.

We think that this ambivalence is the appropriate response, and we also think that it is essential for a theory of blameworthiness to be able to distinguish these various cases. Insofar as QW accounts manage these distinctions, they again seem capable of navigating various cases of impairment-derived ignorance, and offering a compelling explanation of blameworthy ignorance.

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[20] This “insecurity” explanation is also discussed by Nomy Arpaly (2022) who writes: “Severe insecurity is unpleasant, and can be an *extenuating* circumstance for some actions, but there is a limit to how much one can deal with emotional displeasure at the expense of others without counting as a case of significant moral indifference.”

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