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Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency

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<div style="text-align:center">SECTION I</div>

It is widely agreed that morally responsible agency of the kind that secures one's status as a full member of the moral community requires a kind of competence. There is, though, a lively debate as to whether the competence required is "mere rational competence," i.e., competence with reasons in general, or moral competence, a competence that includes the ability to appreciate the force and significance of the morally relevant features of one's environment.[1] Since psychopaths are generally taken to possess rational competence but to lack moral competence, this issue has been important in debates about the nature of psychopathic agency.[2]

One especially prominent class of arguments for the moral competence view draws on the idea that the nature of blame can tell us about the capacities needed for morally responsible agency. This class of arguments further presumes the widely endorsed reactive attitudes account of blame, according to which blame is, in the first instance,

[1] This gloss on moral competence is from Talbert (2012, 90–91).

[2] Advocates of the view that psychopaths are *not* morally responsible agents include Watson (2008, 2011), Darwall (2006), Wallace (1996), and Shoemaker (2007, 2011). Opponents include Scanlon (1998, 2008), Talbert (2008, 2012), and Smith (2013).

the emotional response of resentment or indignation. There are three distinct arguments within this class, each grounded in a different feature of blame: (1) that reactive attitudes are in part constituted by a disposition to sanction,[3] (2) that reactive attitudes represent another as having done wrong, where wrong is indexed to an actor's quality of will,[4] and (3) that reactive attitudes are communicative entities.[5]

This chapter will focus on the third sort of argument; call this the "argument from communication." This form of argument is endorsed by a number of important figures in the field. Gary Watson (2008) first forwarded the idea that reactive attitudes are forms of communication in "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil." In "The Trouble with Psychopaths" (2011), he more carefully developed the connection between the communicative nature of the reactive attitudes and the competence conditions for morally responsible agency. Watson is not alone: both David Shoemaker (2007) in "Moral Address, Moral Responsibility, and the Boundaries of the Moral Community," and Stephen Darwall (2006) in *The Second-Person Standpoint*, draw on the reactive attitudes' communicative nature to support the moral competence requirement.

The argument from communication always takes the same basic form. Morally responsible agents are eligible candidates for the role of blamee. Blame in the form of reactive attitudes is a communicative entity—specifically, one that takes the blamee as its addressee. To be eligible for the role of blamee, one then must be eligible for the role of addressee. Eligibility for this latter role requires the capacities necessary to give uptake to the distinctive form of communication that reactive attitudes constitute. Uptake of the reactive attitudes amounts to feeling guilt and expressing it via amends, and to respond to blame in this way requires moral competence.

The argument from communication is, of course, not immune to challenges. Indeed, we find in the work of T. M. Scanlon (1998, 2008), Angela Smith (2013), and Matthew Talbert (2008, 2012) what amounts to at least three challenges to this form of argument. The first two attack the argument's characterization of the reactive attitudes, and the third argues that it is committed to a false claim. In this chapter, I show that the argument from communication can meet these challenges.[6]

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[3] See, for example, Wallace (1996, 155, 178).

[4] See, for example, Shoemaker (2011), Watson (2002), and Levy (2007).

[5] There are also hybrid views. See, for example, McKenna (2012). McKenna uses the communicative nature of the reactive attitudes to show that blame directed at those who lack moral competence necessarily misrepresents the blamee as having shown the requisite kind of ill will. His view is a hybrid of two and three.

[6] My defense of the argument from communication assumes that the reactive attitudes account of blame is correct. While this account of blame is widely accepted, it is not universally so—prominent detractors include Scanlon (2008) and Smith (2013). A full defense of the argument from communication, then, would include a defense of its underlying account of blame. This project is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a defense of the reactive attitudes account of blame, see, for example, Wallace (1996, 2011) and Wolf (2011).

SECTION 2

Above I presented the argument from communication in its most general form. In this section, I fill in the details. The argument starts from the relatively uncontroversial idea that a morally responsible agent is an eligible candidate for the role of blamee. Theorists put this point in many ways: a morally responsible agent is one who is liable to blame (McKenna 2012); one who is in principle an appropriate or sensible target of blame (Smith 2013); one who is at least eligible for blame (Shoemaker 2007); one who is open to moral blame (Watson 2011).[7] All of these locutions are getting at the same intuitive idea: blaming is a two-party activity—there is a blamer and a blamee—morally responsible agents make up the class of entities that are suitable candidates for the latter role.[8]

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[7] Darwall, too, holds that a morally responsible agent is an eligible candidate for the role of blamee. For Darwall (2006), to be a moral agent is to be subject to moral obligations, which just is to be in principle an appropriate candidate for blame.

[8] The point here is not that X's being a morally responsible agent is sufficient for rendering X blameworthy in the sense that blaming X is *pro tanto* warranted. Nor is the point that morally responsible agency is sufficient for rendering blaming X all things considered appropriate. Someone who is a morally responsible agent but has done no wrong is an eligible candidate for the role of blamee but not blameworthy, and even the blameworthy are sometimes, all things considered, inappropriate targets of blame. If in a given instance the consequences of blaming a blameworthy individual are horrendous, blame is not recommended (see Shoemaker 2007, McKenna 2012, and Smith 2007). If one is a morally responsible agent, one has, as it were, met the minimum qualification for the job of blamee, but there is quite a bit of space between meeting the minimum qualification for this job and appropriately getting it.

   One cannot, then, infer from the fact that one is an eligible candidate for the role of blamee that blaming her is on a particular occasion all things considered appropriate, or again, that she is even *blameworthy*. We can, however, infer from the fact that X is *not* a morally responsible agent that blaming her is necessarily infelicitous. To so direct blame is to cast someone ineligible for the role of blamee in said role. In the terms favored by those who put forth the argument from communication, this is sufficient to render blame unintelligible or senseless (Watson 2011, Shoemaker 2007, and Darwall 2006).

   Relatedly, in their presentation of the argument from communication, proponents focus far more than I on the fact that blame directed toward someone who lacks moral competence is infelicitous/inappropriate/unintelligible. As I understand it, this is an *implication* of the argument, not a central premise. Placing too much emphasis on the infelicity/unintelligibility/inappropriateness point, to my mind, invites misinterpretation (see section 5).

   In particular, when this point is emphasized, one might be forgiven for thinking that the following is a core claim of the argument: a capacity is necessary for morally responsible agency if the wrongdoer's lacking that capacity necessarily renders blame an infelicitous response to the wrongdoer's conduct. But the principle of charity should lead us to conclude that this is not a core claim of the argument from communication, as this claim is plainly false. We can't infer from the fact that lacking a capacity renders blame infelicitous that said capacity is necessary for morally responsible agency because the range of factors that can render blame infelicitous is quite variegated—the blamee lacking moral agency is only one among many things that can render blame infelicitous. We cannot assume, then, that a capacity necessary for felicitous blame is also necessary for morally responsible agency. The capacity in question might be wholly unrelated to morally responsible agency.

The argument next turns its focus to the nature of blame, i.e., the nature of the negative reactive attitudes. Blame is characterized as a communicative entity, but importantly, as a specific kind of communicative entity. The sort of communicative entity at issue is not, like a radio correspondent's broadcast, *for* just anyone able and willing to give it uptake. Rather blame is like my demand that my children clean their rooms. My demand is *for* my children in particular, in the sense that it seeks that *they* respond by cleaning their rooms because I said so. If my children's grandmother overhears my demand and cleans their rooms instead of the children, my demand has not achieved the response it sought.

On the picture presented by the argument from communication, then, reactive attitudes have a *specified recipient*—they are *for* the blamee, i.e., the wrongdoer in particular. It is the wrongdoer from whom they seek uptake. I take it that proponents of the argument from communication are making this point when they identify the reactive attitudes as "a form of moral address" (Shoemaker 2007, Watson 2008, Darwall 2006). A reactive attitude is a communicative entity with an *addressee*, and the addressee is the wrongdoer.

There are many types of address (demands, invitations, requests, and hails, to name a few) and there is disagreement as to which type the reactive attitudes constitute. Darwall and Watson maintain that reactive attitudes are moral demands. Shoemaker insists that in addition to being demands, they are also invitations to "feel what they [the addressers] feel in the way that they feel it" (2007, 99). However, we need not concern ourselves with this disagreement.[9] What is crucial is what is consensus: blame is a form of address directed toward the wrongdoer—*the blamee is an addressee.*

Since a blamee is an addressee, eligibility for the role of blamee requires eligibility for the role of addressee. What does such eligibility require? The above gloss on what it is to be an addressee points to an answer to this question. Whatever else she may be, an addressee, or a specified recipient, is the person from whom the address seeks uptake. Giving uptake to the address in question is an activity constitutive of the role of addressee. This suggests that said eligibility requires that one has the capacities to give uptake to the address in question. Let me explain.

It seems utterly intuitive that one is a felicitous candidate for a role only if she has the capacities necessary to perform the activities that are constitutive of the role. One of the activities defining of a groom is making a promise; one of the activities defining of a teacher is conveying information. Thus, one is eligible for the role of groom or teacher only if he has the capacities necessary to make a promise or to

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[9] Elsewhere (2013a, 2013b), I have argued that the demand account of blame is untenable. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I remain agnostic as to the type of address that the reactive attitudes constitute.

convey information, respectively. Likewise, one is eligible for the role of addressee only if she has the capacities necessary to give uptake to the specific form of address in question.[10]

To be eligible for the role of addressee of the reactive attitudes, then, one needs the capacities to give the reactive attitudes qua forms of address uptake. This idea is implicit in the work of Darwall and Watson and more explicitly put forth by Shoemaker.[11] In Shoemaker's words, "What we actually want in the case of moral membership is that our fellow agents be able to hear and understand our pleas in order to *appreciate and respond to those pleas. . .*" (2007, 97, italics mine).

On the topic of uptake, we again find consensus: uptake of the reactive attitudes is understood to involve sincere acknowledgment of one's fault—most paradigmatically, feeling guilt and expressing it via apology and amends. According to Shoemaker, an expression of one's resentment or indignation is meant to elicit "guilt or remorse" (2007, 91). Consider also the following passage from Darwall, keeping in mind that apologizing is plausibly understood as a way of "taking responsibility," and, that for him feeling guilt amounts to "acknowledgment of having wrongfully injured another" (2006, 71, 79, 112). "[W]hat resentment seeks is not getting back, but the other's acknowledgment of having wrongfully injured one and the other's taking responsibility for what he has done, for example, through compensation and, perhaps, punitive damages" (2011, 331).[12]

Proponents tend to emphasize different capacities as necessary for responding to the reactive attitudes in this way because they hold varied views on the specific type of address that these attitudes constitute (i.e., demand/invitation). Darwall (2006) and Watson (2011) focus on the capacity to recognize the authority of the blamer, or again, the capacity to respond to the second-personal reasons generated by blame. Shoemaker (2007) highlights the capacity for what he calls "identifying empathy."

These, though, are not the only capacities needed to respond to blame with sincere moral acknowledgment of fault. Just as uptake of the demand to fly requires the capacity to fly, uptake of the reactive attitudes requires the capacity to feel guilt. In other

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[10] Thanks to Joshua Hollowell for many fruitful conversations on these points.

[11] This idea is implicit in Darwall's and Watson's claims about the kinds of capacities one needs to be eligible for the role of addressee of the reactive attitudes (Watson 2011 and Darwall 2006). All of the capacities they mention are ones that are necessary for giving uptake to the specific form of address they think the reactive attitudes constitute (i.e., demands).

[12] See also Watson (2011, 313, 314, 316). In fact, this picture finds endorsement beyond proponents of the argument from communication. See, for example, Walker (2006, 25, 135, 138). Endorsers even include those *skeptical* of the communication argument. See, for example, Smith (2013, 44) and Talbert (2012, 105). As we will see, Talbert and Smith hold that reactive attitudes only sometimes seek uptake from the wrongdoer. On their views, though, when they do seek uptake from the wrongdoer, they seek sincere acknowledgement of fault. Finally, see Macnamara (2013a, 899–900) for more on the theoretical elegance and intuitive appeal of this view.

words, though Darwall, Watson, and Shoemaker do not emphasize this point, they are, in virtue of identifying guilt as a component of uptake, committed to the idea that uptake requires the capacity to feel moral guilt.

Questions about precisely which concatenation of capacities is necessary to give blame uptake can, however, be left aside. The argument from communication need not go beyond the consensus that uptake requires the capacity to feel guilt. These are, after all, ways of emotionally appreciating the force and significance of one's wrongdoing.[13] Uptake of the reactive attitudes thus requires moral competence. At this point, the argument from communication has secured its conclusion. If moral competence is required for uptake of the reactive attitudes, then moral competence is required for eligibility for the role of addressee, and thus for eligibility for the role of blamee, and thus finally for morally responsible agency.

SECTION 3

The above laid out the central structure and key claims of the argument from communication. We find in the extant literature what amounts to at least three challenges to this form of argument. The first two attack the argument's characterization of the reactive attitudes, and the third argues that it is committed to a false claim. In this section, I present and respond to the first challenge; the subsequent two sections deal with the latter two in turn.[14]

Our first challenge to the argument from communication targets its characterization of the reactive attitudes as communicative entities. Resentment and indignation are emotions, and emotions are first and foremost private mental states. How, it is objected, can a private mental state be essentially communicative? We sometimes express our reactive attitudes—"You Jerk!"—and this is a communicative act, but often we keep our resentment and indignation buried in our hearts. The claim that emotions, absent expression, are forms of communication seems nothing short of a paradox—a simple conflation of the reactive attitudes proper and their public expression (Scanlon 2008).[15]

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[13] For more on this point, see Hurley and Macnamara (2011).

[14] With the argument from communication in full view, it is easy to see that one might challenge it by claiming that the reactive attitudes, rather than seeking sincere moral acknowledgment of fault, instead seek some form of uptake that does not require moral competence. I do not address this important press because it does not (yet) appear in the literature.

[15] Scanlon states, "In my view, however, blame itself—the revision of one's attitudes toward a person in response to attitudes expressed in his behavior—is not, even incipiently, a form of communication. Expressions of blame are forms of communication, and they may be pointless if the person cannot appreciate their force. But this does not, in my view, make blame itself inappropriate" (2008, fn. 54, 233–234). Though Scanlon rejects the reactive attitudes account of blame, it is clear that he thinks reactive attitudes are a form of blame. Thus, this quote amounts to a challenge to the claim that reactive attitudes, qua private mental states, are communicative entities.

Proponents of the argument from communication are, of course, aware that it is counterintuitive to characterize the reactive attitudes, qua private mental states, as communicative acts. Most respond that reactive attitudes are forms of communication merely in some qualified sense. Watson, for example, identifies the reactive attitudes as "incipient forms of communication," or again, as "incipiently communicative" (2008, 2011). Most in the literature follow his lead.

This response to the objection is weak at best. Without a clear and compelling account of what it means to be an "incipient form of communication," or again, to be "incipiently communicative," those who find the communication claim counterintuitive are likely to be unsatisfied with this move.[16] It seems to do more to mark the counterintuitiveness of identifying the reactive attitudes as communicative entities, than to explain it away.

Nonetheless, I want to argue, the objection does not go through. It conflates the activity of communicating—something that mental states kept private undeniably are not—and the idea of a communicative entity. Communicative *acts* are not the only paradigm form of communication. The term "communication" can refer to either the activity of communicating or to the thing that is communicated, that is, to the message itself.

To see this, it is helpful to bring to mind the key characteristics of communicative acts. Think, for example, of an NPR correspondent's announcement that John Brown is the new president of the United States, my colleague's email advertising the upcoming colloquium, and my neighbor's posting of a "No Trespassing" sign on his lawn. In each case, there is a message—spoken words, an email, and a sign. It is also true in these examples that the message is *sent*—transmitted over radio waves or the Internet, or placed where it is likely to be received. In each of these cases, sending amounts to doing something conducive to the message reaching a recipient. In cases where the message is constituted and sent in a single act (my calling out "hello"), it can be hard to see that communicative acts involve the two distinct elements of message and sending. The point is hard to miss, though, when we consider cases where the message exists prior to the sending, such as my colleague's email, or the "No Trespassing" sign when it is still in my neighbor's garage.

The key point for us is that the email itself, and not just the sending of it, or again, the "No Trespassing" sign itself, not just its posting, is a communicative entity. While it is clearly counterintuitive to characterize the reactive attitudes qua private mental states as communicative acts, it is not remotely counterintuitive to

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[16] For a defense of the claim that the literature lacks a clear and compelling account of the sense in which reactive attitudes are incipiently communicative, see Macnamara (2013c).

characterize them as messages. Elsewhere I have offered a full defense of this latter claim (2013c). In what follows, I lay out the key moves.

Begin with a closer consideration of messages.[17] Messages have representational content. The correspondent's words represent Brown as the new president, the email represents the colloquium as occurring at a certain time and place, and the sign represents passersby as respecting the borders of one's lawn. As these examples illustrate, some messages—the spoken words and email—represent the world as it is. Others—the sign—represent the world as it could, or perhaps, should be. Nonetheless, they are all in the business of representing the world.

Messages also have the feature of being intrinsically directed toward a specific end—the end of eliciting uptake of their representational content in a recipient. The sign represents passersby as staying off the lawn, and keeping strangers off the lawn is what the sign is supposed to do (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). The email represents the colloquium as occurring at a certain time and place, and it internally aims at inducing a belief with this content in recipients (Millikan 1984, chapter 2; Graham 2010).

As these examples illustrate, there are different ways of taking up representational content. Sometimes uptake amounts to enactment of the content—making that content true; other times, it consists in taking up the content as true—belief formation. Content can also be taken up emotionally—a point to which we will return. The appropriate mode of uptake will depend on the kind of message in question.

To say that messages are *intrinsically* directed toward a specific end is to say that they have a kind of *non-intentional* purposiveness. And to say the latter is to indicate that the purposiveness in question is not a function of the message writer's immediate personal intentions. For some, talk of non-intentional purposiveness may sound mysterious. Fortunately, though, there exists a rich literature devoted to demystifying this kind of teleology: the function literature. According to this literature, all functions of an item are effects of that item, but not all of an item's effects are among its functions. On the most widely accepted theory of function ascription, the etiological theory, an effect is a function of an item just in case (1) it was (often enough) an effect of past tokens of the type and (2) this fact in part explains why current tokens of the type exist.[18] Pumping blood is a function of hearts because past token hearts pumped blood, and this, at least in part, explains why current token hearts exist. New hearts exist because past hearts contributed to the reproductive success of their possessors by pumping blood.

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[17] My thoughts on communication have been heavily influenced by the work of Mitchell Green. See Green (2007). See also Kukla and Lance (2009), especially chapters 7 and 8.

[18] For literature on function ascription, see Buller (1998, 1999, 2002), Millikan (1984), Neander (1991a, 1991b), Wright (1973), McLaughlin (2001), and Graham (2010, 2012, 2014).

Given this account of what underwrites function ascription, we are right to attribute the function of evoking uptake to the kind of messages under consideration. Messages, often enough, and non-accidentally, evoke uptake of their representational content in a recipient. I myself have not yet defied a "No Trespassing" sign, and I surmise that others also show these signs due respect most of the time. What's more, this in part explains why we continue to create "No Trespassing" signs. If they did not often enough elicit respect for the borders of others' property, they would be a thing of the past.[19]

Messages, then, have the core characteristics of representational content and the function of eliciting a specified form of uptake of that representational content in a recipient. Reactive attitudes, I now want to urge, are sensibly characterized as messages in the sense that it is sensible to attribute these two characteristics to them.

It is widely agreed among philosophers who study emotions that emotions are intentional mental states—that they represent or are about the world (de Sousa 2013). In particular, theorists tend to agree that emotions represent a feature of the world in evaluative terms. Amanda's fear of the snake represents the snake as dangerous. Kelly's grief over the recent death of her mother represents her mother's death as a loss. So, too, for the species of emotions known as reactive attitudes. Resentment and indignation represent the actor as having done something morally untoward. The difference between resentment and indignation is that, in the former case, the one feeling the emotion is the victim of the wrongdoing and, in the latter, a third party.

Is it sensible to attribute the function defining of messages to the reactive attitudes? To be clear, the question here is *not*, "Is this the reactive attitudes' only function?" Items can have many functions. The tongue is both for eating and talking (Graham 2010), and your smartphone is for taking pictures, emailing, texting, and even making phone calls. I take it as a given that reactive emotions, like emotions more generally, have any number of *intra*personal functions—informing the emotion-bearer about, and preparing her to respond to, her environment, to name a few. Our question, then, is whether the reactive attitudes also have the *inter*personal function of evoking uptake of their representational content in a recipient.

While attributing an interpersonal function of this sort to emotions is far from commonplace in philosophy, theorists in fields such as social psychology, behavioral ecology, and evolutionary biology often depict emotions as having a communicative function (for example, Keltner et al. 2006; Keltner and Haidt 1999; Keltner and Kring 1998).

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[19] Of course, the way that messages fulfill their function is by being sent. This, though, does not speak against the above function ascription. Many items need the involvement of an agent in order to fulfill their function. The function of a coffee maker is to make coffee; the function of a hammer is to pound in nails. However, absent the active intervention of an agent, there will be neither coffee to drink nor nails on which to hang pictures.

What's more, a strong case can be made that the reactive attitudes meet the etiological theory's two criteria for function ascription. Over the past thirty years, there has been an explosion of research documenting the non-intentional, expressive behaviors characteristic of and produced by emotions—in particular, facial expressions. Specifically, evidence suggests that there are facial signatures for at least six evolutionarily based, biologically determined emotions: disgust, sadness, happiness, anger, fear, and surprise (Ekman 2003).[20] The research on complex or higher order emotions—e.g., contempt, jealousy, disappointment, and, most relevant to us, the reactive attitudes—is neither so extensive nor so conclusive, but nonetheless exists (Parrott 2000).[21] The evidence suggests what we all intuitively know: we are hardwired to wear our emotions on our faces.[22]

The empirical evidence further suggests that such facial signatures tend to produce emotional responses in others (Keltner et al. 2006, 122, 125; Keltner and Haidt 1999, 511; Keltner and Kring 1998, 324; Wilda et al. 2001). Seeing an expression of distress often evokes sympathy (Eisenberg et al. 1989). Angry faces have been shown to elicit fear (Dimberg and Ohman 1996). And fearful faces produce fear in conspecifics (Hatfield et al. 1994).

Many emotions, then, via their facial signatures, evoke emotional responses in others. Crucially for our purposes, some of these responses constitute emotional uptake of the very representational content of the original emotion. Consider fear. If Devin's fear, which represents his environment, or some aspect of it, as dangerous or threatening, evokes fear in Andrew, then Devin's publically manifested fear has evoked in Andrew uptake of its representational content. That is, Andrew has given emotional uptake to the environment, or some aspect of it, as dangerous or threatening.

Noticeably absent from the above is specific empirical evidence that resentful and indignant faces elicit emotional uptake of their representational content. Alas,

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[20] For example, we express fear with raised upper eyelids, raised and drawn together brows, and lips stretched horizontally toward one's ears, while one's chin is pulled back (Ekman 2003, 162).

[21] The claim that more complex emotions also have facial signatures is supported by the theory that the complex emotions are built up out of the basic emotions. Nature endows us with the biological substrate of basic emotions, and culture steps in to shape the contours of our higher order emotions (Keltner and Haidt 2001). In particular, it has been suggested that the reactive attitudes are built up out of anger on the negative side and happiness on the positive. For example, Ekman identifies resentment as part of the anger family (1992, 190). This view seems to have purchase among philosophers as well. Walker explicitly states that resentment is "a kind of anger" (2004, 145).

[22] In literature, we often find descriptions of people wearing their reactive attitudes on their faces. See, for example, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: "Instantly, a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation" (2001, 8).

those doing empirical research are not as enthralled by the reactive emotions as we might hope. However, the fact that some emotions, via their facial expressions, elicit emotional uptake of their representational content certainly lends some credence to the idea that past token reactive emotions have done so.

Even so, we need not rely solely on the empirical evidence. Reflection on our own reactions also lends credence to the claim at issue. Expressions of resentment and indignation often evoke guilt. To be sure, not always. Resentment and indignation are often met with resentment, indignation, or straight-up anger in return. But when aptly felt and expressed, and the target keeps her defensive instincts in check, guilt does seem to emerge.[23]

Moreover, to feel guilt in response to publically manifested resentment or indignation is to give emotional uptake to the representational content of the latter emotions. After all, resentment and indignation on the one hand, and guilt on the other, have parallel representational contents. The former represent *another* as having done wrong; the latter represents *oneself* as having done wrong. Thus, if the wrongdoer responds to another's resentment or indignation with guilt, she has, in effect, given emotional uptake to the representational content of the eliciting resentment or indignation.

It is, then, plausible that reactive attitudes meet the first criterion for function ascription: these emotions via their facial expression have in the past elicited guilt in wrongdoers. We can also make a case that they meet the second criterion. These effects of past reactive attitudes, I want to urge, at least in part, explain why current tokens of these emotions exist.

Existing relationships are not immune to damage. Wrongdoing creates rifts in relationships, straining the bonds we have built. If the community is going to stay together, these rifts need to be repaired. Repair happens when wrongdoers inhabit their fault, i.e., feel guilt and give it its natural expression in apology and amends. Thus, insofar as resentment and indignation elicit guilt in wrongdoers, they catalyze the reparative work that is essential to keeping the moral community together and healthy.[24]

The fact that the moral community has been kept together over time in part explains why we continue to care about moral values. We come to care about moral values at least in part by being enculturated into the moral community. As children, we are taken into the fold and, in turn, take in and take up its values. Without

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[23] To be sure, a response in others is not the most proximal effect of a reactive emotion qua private mental state. The reactive emotions can only produce a response in a recipient *by* producing its facial signature or some other public manifestation of itself. But this is not a problem: a more distal effect of an item is as much fair game for function ascription as the most proximal. The function of an item may be something it does *by* doing something else. See, for example, Neander (1999) and Millikan (1999).

[24] See Walker (2006) for a thorough treatment of this idea. See also McKenna (2012, 169).

a moral community it is hard to see how we would come to care. But even if we did somehow stumble upon these values, it is hard to see how we would maintain this interest absent a robust community of like-minded others. It is, after all, hard enough to be one for whom moral values are salient even when one is situated in a thriving moral community.

Our susceptibility to feeling resentment and indignation is grounded in caring about moral values.[25] Absent such care, we might coolly note when moral values are thwarted, but this is a far cry from responding with resentment or indignation. It is one thing to ascribe to another the property of having done something of moral import and quite another to emotionally experience this import.[26] Without caring, then, it is unlikely that we would feel resentment and indignation in the face of moral wrongs.

There is, then, an explanatory line that runs from past instances of resentment and indignation to the existence of current tokens. The fact that past reactive attitudes have led to sincere moral acknowledgment of fault in part explains the health and strength of the moral community, which in turn partly explains moral agents' commitment to and care for moral values, which finally, in part, explains the existence of current tokens of resentment and indignation.[27]

SECTION 4

Though the main point of the above was to show that reactive attitudes can be sensibly characterized as communicative entities, it has accomplished more. Recall that the argument from communication requires that the reactive attitudes constitute a *specific kind* of communicative entity. In particular, it is a communicative entity that takes the wrongdoer as its addressee, i.e., the person from whom they seek uptake, where uptake amounts, at least in part, to sincerely acknowledging one's fault. In arguing for the claim that reactive attitudes have the etiological function of eliciting sincere acknowledgment of fault from the wrongdoer, I have argued that they are communicative entities of the requisite kind.

But this is, of course, *my* picture of the reactive attitudes. In the literature we find two alternative pictures, both less friendly to the argument from communication. The first, from Talbert, has been formulated specifically to challenge the argument from

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[25] On the nature of caring, see Frankfurt (1999), Jaworska (2007), Seidman (2009), and Shoemaker (2003). On caring about moral values in specific, see Wallace (2011).

[26] For more on this point, see Hurley and Macnamara (2011).

[27] A number of the paragraphs in this section come from Macnamara (2013c).

communication. The second, from Smith, is meant to explicate the nature of blame but presents much the same hurdle as Talbert's picture nonetheless. On both pictures, the wrongdoer is only *sometimes* the addressee of the reactive attitudes. If this picture is correct, then it successfully derails the argument from communication. If blamees are not invariably addressees, then having the capacities to give uptake is not necessary for being eligible for the role of blamee and thus not necessary for morally responsible agency.

Talbert (2012) sets out his version of the challenge in "Moral Competence, Moral Blame and Moral Protest." He accepts that blame sometimes takes the form of "Watsonian demands." When agents engage in this form of blame, they are "seeking contrition or reform on the part of the blamed" (2012, 20). Other times, though, blame takes the form of "Du Boisian protest." Following Bernard Boxill (1976) in "Self-Respect and Protest," Talbert urges that the protestor's aim need not be to affect "conversion of those whose actions provoked the protest" (18). It is perfectly intelligible for someone to protest simply in order to affirm and reinforce her commitment to her moral standing (18–19).[28] Thus, for Talbert, the reactive attitudes are not invariably a form of address *to* the wrongdoer because in blaming, the agent need not aim at moral acknowledgment from the wrongdoer.

In "Moral Blame and Moral Protest," Smith argues that blame is a "*way of protesting* such false claims about our own moral status or the moral status of others" (2013, 43, italics mine). Furthermore, Smith urges that blame as a form of protest has a communicative aim—it "seeks some kind of moral reply" (39). For Smith, blame seeks uptake in that it "embodies a desire" for uptake (44).[29] Uptake amounts to moral acknowledgment of the wrong done. And while blame primarily seeks acknowledgment from the wrongdoer, she urges that it "can have as a secondary aim moral recognition on the part of the wider moral community" (56). Blame's primary and secondary aims are sometimes simultaneously operative, but not always so. Blame "seeks some kind of moral acknowledgment on the part of the blameworthy agent *and/or* on the part of others in the moral community" (43, italics mine).[30]

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[28] There are two reasons I read Talbert as making a point about agents' aims. First, he takes his view of protest from Boxill, and Boxill is clear that he is talking about an agent's aim in protesting. Second, much of Talbert's language suggests this reading and none of his language speaks against it.

   I characterize Talbert as holding that blame is a communicative entity. I do this because this is how he characterizes his view. At the end of the day, though, I think this is a mischaracterization. He holds that some instances of blame do not seek a reply of any kind. These instances of blame, I would argue, are not forms of communication.

[29] I am reading Smith as saying that the desire for acknowledgment is *constitutive* of the reactive attitudes and not as putting forth a view about the agent's aim in blaming. But it is not always clear that this is the correct reading (see 36–37, 40, 46).

[30] For Smith, as I read her, blame is a form of protest that has a communicative aim. She writes,

On Smith's view, then, reactive attitudes do not necessarily seek uptake from the wrongdoer. Sometimes they seek uptake *only* from the moral community (44). She explains that when we blame antebellum slaveholders, for instance, "we should say that the desire [embodied in blame] in this case is for a continued acknowledgement, on the part of the moral community, of the horrible wrongs that were committed against particular members of our community in the past" (45).[31]

Let's take stock. We have three distinct views of the sense in which the reactive attitudes seek uptake. On my view, they seek uptake insofar as they have a kind of non-intentional purposiveness—the etiological function of eliciting uptake from the wrongdoer. On Talbert's view, seeking is indexed to intentional purposiveness—blame seeks uptake when and from whom it does in virtue of the *agent's aim* in blaming. And thirdly, on Smith's view, the reactive attitudes seek uptake insofar as they embody a desire for uptake. What's more, on Talbert's and Smith's views, blamees are not invariably addressees. This is either because eliciting uptake from the wrongdoer need not be the agent's aim in blaming, or again, because the desire embodied in blame need not be for uptake from the wrongdoer in particular. On my view, blamees are necessarily addressees. This is necessarily so given that I have indexed seeking to the reactive attitudes' etiological function: etiological functions do not vary across tokens of types.

The first point I'd like to make is that it is not obvious that either Talbert's or Smith's picture is incompatible with mine. Start with Talbert. It is a familiar point in the etiological function literature that objects and activities can simultaneously seek in the sense indexed to an agent's aim and in the sense indexed to its etiological function. Staplers have the etiological function of fastening papers. When I use my stapler for this purpose, said stapler seeks to fasten papers in *two* senses: the first tied to my purpose, the second tied to its etiological function. What's more, while it is typical

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Moral Protest Account: To blame another is to judge that she is blameworthy (i.e., to judge that she has attitudes that impair her relations with others) and to modify one's own attitudes, intentions, and expectations toward that person as a way of protesting (i.e., registering and challenging) the moral claim implicit in her conduct, **where such protest** implicitly seeks some kind of moral acknowledgment on the part of the blameworthy agent and/or on the part of others in the moral community. (2013, 43, italics mine)

For other passages that support this reading, see 39, 44. There are two additional passages (43, 44) that can be read as suggesting that she holds that protest and blame's communicative aim are not integrated in the way I suggest above. Her considered view might be that blame has two separate aims: one aim of protest and another communicative aim.

Even if Smith's considered view is the second, my defense of the argument from communication stands. The crucial issue is whether or not blame has a communicative aim and on both readings this is the case. What's more, matters do not change even if the protest aim is primary and the communicative aim is secondary (43). If blame has a communicative aim at all, then the addressee's capacity for uptake is relevant.

[31] See footnote 36 for discussion of blaming the dead.

for an agent's aim in using an item to mirror its etiological function—typically, agents use staplers to fasten papers—an agent's aim and the etiological function of an item can come apart. Imagine I use my stapler to hold my door ajar. In this case, the stapler seeks, in the sense indexed to my aim, to hold the door ajar and seeks, in the sense indexed to its etiological function, to fasten papers. People often use objects and activities for purposes other than the one tied to their etiological functions.

Turn now to Smith. Just as there is nothing suspect in claiming that reactive attitudes simultaneously seek in both a non-intentional and intentional sense, so, too, there is nothing suspect in claiming that they simultaneously seek in the sense indexed to their embodied desires and to their etiological function. To be sure, claims about the nature of an entity can constrain claims about its function. Function claims are grounded in part on the past effects of tokens of the type. Were all hammers made of smoke, then no hammer could have ever pounded in a nail, and thus pounding nails could not be the function of hammers. But to say that the desire embodied in blame is to elicit uptake in the wrongdoer *and/or* the moral community is not to show that past reactive attitudes could not have elicited uptake in the wrongdoer but rather to show how they could have done so.

All the argument from communication needs to succeed is that there is *one* sense—the etiological function sense—in which the reactive attitudes invariably seek uptake from the wrongdoer. Insofar as Smith's and Talbert's views are compatible with mine, they have not challenged the truth of the above.

But even if they were incompatible, there are independent reasons to doubt their pictures. Start with Talbert. When it comes to *expressed* blame, it makes perfect sense to index seeking to the intentions of the blamer. However, the argument from communication is not in the first instance about *expressed* blame, but about blame qua emotion. With respect to emotions, Talbert's picture is flatly untenable. This is not because agents always decide to feel resentment or indignation for the sake of moral acknowledgment; rather, it is because, in a manner of speaking, they don't make such decisions at all. Emotions are not under our direct voluntary control: they are not something we decide to do. Thus, they are not the kind of thing that can feature in the sort of means-ends reasoning essential to Talbert's picture.

With respect to Smith, I want to start by saying that she is exactly right that reactive attitudes seek uptake from the community as well as the wrongdoer.[32] Indeed, on my own view, reactive attitudes have both the function of eliciting

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[32] Margaret Urban Walker also urges that the reactive attitudes not only seek moral acknowledgment from wrongdoers but also "invite confirmation from others that we have competently judged a normative violation, and that others share our interest in affirming the norms we hold, in showing disapproval of the conduct out of bounds, and perhaps in seeking redress of violations" (2006, 26). See also Helm (2011) and Bell (2013).

acknowledgment from the wrongdoer and of prompting the moral community to join in the chorus of condemnation.[33] Reactive attitudes are, then, not only forms of address but also what we might call a broadcast: they are both *for* a specified recipient and *for* anyone willing and able to give them uptake. In this sense, they are akin to open letters. Standard letters are written to someone (say, a politician whose views one endorses), and an *open* letter is a standard letter with an added layer of complexity. It is addressed to a person but for the general public to see.

My view and Smith's, however, come apart. I urge that blamees are invariably addressees in virtue of the fact that the reactive attitudes have the function of eliciting uptake from the wrongdoer in specific. Smith denies that blamees are invariably addressees. She claims that there are cases in which the desire constitutive of blame is only for uptake from the community.

Smith's picture, like Talbert's, is worrisome. Given that the desire in question is, for her, constitutive of blame itself, and not just a matter of the blamer's intentions, it is difficult to see why it should vary in this way. After all, reactive attitudes are emotions, and we tend to think of the motivational elements *embedded within* emotions as relatively stable, or at least not especially responsive to (the availability of) whom the emotion is directed. Anger motivates us to lash out; fear to run for safety. We do not always act on these motivational elements: lashing out is often imprudent or immoral, and sometimes running—when a gorilla is charging—is precisely the wrong thing to do. But in these instances, our *desires* don't change or disappear; we simply don't act on them. Why is the same not true with resentment and indignation? Why isn't it the case that the desire embodied in blame is for acknowledgment from the wrongdoer *and* from the community, but that sometimes we do not act on both aspects of the desire?[34]

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[33] We can make a case that reactive attitudes have this second communicative function. The reasoning is familiar from above. Just as evoking guilt in wrongdoers contributes to the health of the moral community, so, too, with respect to the evocation of indignation in third parties. As Wallace points out, a reaction of indignation from community members serves "to articulate and thereby to affirm and deepen our commitment to a set of common moral obligations" (1996, 69). Moreover, as Walker eloquently puts it, this is one of the ways "that communities bring themselves into existence, sustain themselves, and define and refine their identities" (2006, 33). Insofar as resentment and indignation have prompted members of the moral community to join in the chorus of condemnation, they have played a crucial role in creating the conditions necessary for the continued existence of current tokens of resentment and indignation. As I argued above, absent a moral community, it is hard to see how we would come to care about moral values in the way that underwrites our susceptibility to resentment and indignation. Thus, absent a moral community, it is unlikely that resentment and indignation would exist.

[34] It is not clear that a view like Smith's would fare any better if it jettisoned the sense of seeking indexed to desires for the one I have been urging on proponents of the argument from communication: the sense indexed to etiological functions. A view like Smith's transposed into the language functions would attribute to the reactive attitudes one complex communicative function, perhaps the function of eliciting uptake from the wrongdoer OR the moral community OR the wrongdoer and the moral community. Or again, it

Thus far, I have urged that it is not clear that Talbert's and Smith's pictures offer a real challenge to the argument from communication and that even if they do, there is reason to doubt them. Talbert does not offer a tenable account of the sense in which the reactive attitudes qua emotions seek uptake and it is not clear that Smith's picture of blame's shifting nature can be redeemed.

My last point abstracts away from the details of Talbert's and Smith's pictures. I want to urge that we should be skeptical of any account of blame's communicative nature that denies that blame is invariably *to* the wrongdoer. Were one not familiar with her explicitly developed account of blame, one might, in virtue of Smith's critique of Scanlonian blame, think that Smith herself concurs. According to Smith, Scanlonian blame is flawed insofar as it lacks "any even implicit attempt to communicate *to the blameworthy agent* one's repudiation of her conduct" (2013, 40, italics mine). Or again, it is problematic that Scanlonian blame is not "an invitation to the other party in the relationship to take steps to repair (or, more hopefully, to head off) that damage" (40).

But whether Smith falls on her own sword is not the point. At issue is whether blame should be characterized as necessarily *from* the blamer *to* the wrongdoer. The integral relationship between blame and holding responsible provides strong reason to think that this is the case. If there is one thing that theorists who discuss blame agree upon, it is that blame is a paradigmatic way of *holding the wrongdoer responsible*. In Smith's words, "When we say that we 'hold' someone morally responsible for something she has done, for example, what we usually mean is that we blame her for it" (Smith 2007, 468). As McKenna puts the point, moral emotions such as resentment, "are vehicles whereby we hold morally responsible" (2012, 2). And Watson

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might claim for the reactive attitudes a function that better captures the sense in which eliciting uptake from the wrongdoer is primary, perhaps the function of evoking moral acknowledgment from the wrongdoer or the wrongdoer and the moral community, unless the wrongdoer cannot give it uptake, in which case just the community. Exactly how this hypothetical function is characterized is not important. The important point is that any skeptic of the argument from communication could urge that reactive attitudes do not have two distinct communicative functions, but one more complex function that implies that the reactive attitudes are not invariably forms of address to the wrongdoer.

It is not clear that this sort of move is defensible. In the standard case, when an item has two different effects, each of which can in part explain why current tokens of the type exist, we posit two functions. For example, we say that a claw hammer has two functions: the function of pounding in nails and the function of jimmying them out. This is not to say that it never makes sense to posit a more complex function. We might say that an item has the function of doing A and B as opposed to positing separate functions, if neither A nor B alone could in part explain the persistence of the type. Rather, I am urging that there needs to be a reason to posit a complex function of the kind at issue. What's more, not just any reason will do. We earn the right to identify an effect of an item as an etiological function of that item because the effect explains why current tokens exist. Thus, the only reason to posit a complex function is that it is explanatory in a way that separate functions would not be. Now there may or may not be such reasons in the case of the reactive attitudes, but the onus is on those who want to forward the more complex picture to provide them if they exist.

tells us, "All traditional theories of moral responsibility acknowledge connections between these attitudes [resentment, indignation, etc.] and holding one another responsible" (2008, 116). Indeed, it is precisely because blame is a paradigmatic way of holding responsible that it is widely agreed that its nature can tell us about the capacities necessary for morally responsible agency.

What's more, it is a core tenet of the literature that holding another responsible has two essential relata: the holder and the wrongdoer. It is an engagement between these two parties (for example, see Watson 1996; Darwall 2006; McKenna 2012). More than that, holding responsible is deeply relational in the sense that it is "ineliminably second-personal" (Darwall 2006, 69; see also Shoemaker 2007, 70–71). It is directional: essentially *from* the holder *to* the wrongdoer.

But if blame is invariably a way of holding responsible, and holding responsible is, at its core, relational in the sense that it is not just *about* the wrongdoer's conduct but also *to* the wrongdoer, then shouldn't we expect blame's communicative nature to also invariably exhibit this particular kind of relationality? If it doesn't, then there can be cases where blame is holding the *wrongdoer* responsible even when it is communicating only with those in the community who have done no wrong. This is odd indeed. The fact that blame is invariably a way of holding responsible, and holding responsible is invariably *from* the holder *to* the wrongdoer, speaks strongly in favor of blame's communicative nature being relational in just the same sense.[35]

SECTION 5

Though the argument from communication is, in the first instance, about who is and is not eligible for the role of blamee and not about when blame is and is not appropriate, one of its implications is that blame is necessarily infelicitous when directed toward those who lack the capacities for uptake. When so directed, blame casts someone who is ineligible for the role of blamee into said role and has therefore gone wrong. The third challenge to the argument from communication urges that those who lack the capacities for uptake *can* be appropriately blamed. Thus, this challenge—unlike the others—grants the argument's characterization of the reactive attitudes but aims to show that the argument has a false implication.

Talbert launches what amounts to this challenge in "Blame and Responsiveness to Moral Reasons: Are Psychopaths Blameworthy?" (2008) and again in "Moral Competence, Moral Blame, and Protest" (2012). In the former, he writes,

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[35] Thanks to Monique Wonderly for helping me see the force of this point.

Imagine the way prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp surely blamed and condemned their murderers. Certainly, the prisoners' condemnation expressed the conviction that their treatment was impermissible and the demand for recognition of their moral standing as human beings. However, I do not think that these demands and claims lost their point when they failed to move hardened concentration camp executioners. Of course, it may be true that the executioners in question could have been brought to recognize their crimes for what they were, but it is strange to suppose that it is only the psychologically improbable possibility of a last-moment conversion that makes blame appropriate here. (532)

And in his later piece, he continues in the same vein,

But if the propriety of expressing blame depends on the chance that it will facilitate certain outcomes, what do we say about those cases in which these outcomes are not realized? If blame aims at moral reformation, is it inappropriate to blame even morally competent agents who fail to become appropriately contrite as a result of our blame? Of course, prior to actually blaming a person, it may be impossible to know whether doing so will inspire contrition, so the fact that blame might achieve this goal is perhaps enough to make it reasonable. But if contrition and moral understanding are the point of blame, then perhaps when this goal is not achieved, we should conclude (after the fact) that we should not have blamed after all.

   Or suppose that we firmly believe that a morally competent wrongdoer will in fact not respond appropriately to blame. If the point of blame were to make moral contact with a wrongdoer, would blaming this person be wrong? I find this conclusion implausible. It seems to me that blame is not without a point just because it fails to initiate moral dialogue and reform. Such outcomes can be an important goal and result of blame, but we need not say that blame is inapt when these outcomes are unachieved or unachievable. (105–106)

Talbert employs the same pattern of reasoning in both of these passages. He aims to show that blame can be felicitous when directed toward those who lack the capacity for uptake by arguing that blame can fail to achieve uptake and yet be felicitous. Talbert presents cases in which it is apparent that blame is appropriate even though uptake is not achieved and concludes from this that blame can be appropriate when the target lacks the capacities for uptake. After all, in both cases uptake is not achieved. If failure to achieve uptake does not render blame inappropriate in Talbert's cases, then it should not do so when the target lacks the capacity for uptake.

For example, in the first passage, Talbert urges that blame directed by prisoners toward concentration camp guards is appropriate even though it won't be given uptake. He further reasons that blame directed toward those who lack the capacity to give it uptake is not necessarily inappropriate. To his mind, the only difference between the two—that in the former there exists the "psychologically improbable possibility of a last-moment conversion" (532)—is irrelevant. In neither case will blame receive uptake.

In "The Trouble with Psychopaths," Watson (2011) responds by urging that the difference between those who, like the guards, *won't* give uptake and those who, lacking the capacities, *can't* amounts to far more than the mere "psychologically improbable possibility of a last-moment conversion" (Talbert 2008, 532). Both are "unreachable," but the kinds of unreachability at issue are "categorically different" (Watson 2011, 318). Watson writes,

> Occasionally a Nazi or a Mafioso or white supremacist makes a genuine return to the moral point of view. I say "return" because the moral changes in question depend upon suppressed or partial or partitioned moral sensibilities that are somehow reengaged or extended—sensibilities involving an at least selective concern for some moral values, virtues and for some individuals. In contrast, I am supposing there is nothing to which to return in psychopaths. (Recall the prevailing view that psychopathy involves a moral developmental defect.) (318)

Were this the entirety of Watson's response, it would be unsatisfying: he has said nothing about *why* this categorical difference matters for the appropriateness of blame. There is, though, another element to Watson's response. Directly following the above passage, Watson says, "The significance of this is not that there is no chance that they will change, but (again) that it makes no sense to address moral demands to them. . ." (318). Elsewhere, too, he emphasizes that the problem with blame directed at a morally incapacitated wrongdoer is not that it has "no desirable effects. . ." (2008, 123). For Watson, the relevant infelicity is *conceptual* and not practical (2008, 124; 2011, 314).

Darwall echoes this point. As he puts it, blame's infelicity is not grounded in the fact that it is "unlikely to be effective" (2006, 74). And given that for Darwall, blame (even unexpressed blame) is an implicit demand and compliance constitutes uptake of a demand, he makes essentially the same point when he says, "A putatively authoritative demand whose validity someone cannot possibly recognize and act on is guaranteed to be infelicitous. The point is not, again, that such a demand cannot achieve compliance" (76). Both Watson and Darwall, then, emphasize that the inappropriateness of blame directed toward those incapable of uptake is *not* grounded in failure to achieve uptake.

But if this is not what renders blame infelicitous, what does? The argument from communication in fact provides a clear answer: Someone ineligible for the role of blamee has been cast in that role. We can follow Darwall and put this point in terms that

J. L. Austin might favor. In *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), Austin colorfully paints a picture of the many ways a speech act can go wrong, forwarding what he calls a "doctrine of infelicities" (Austin Lectures II–IV). To use an example from Austin, when one promises a donkey to give it a carrot with no intention of doing so, two sorts of infelicities are in play: an insincerity and a misinvocation (23). An insincerity occurs when a procedure designed for use by persons with a certain mental state is invoked by someone who lacks said mental state. Promising is designed for persons who intend to fulfill the promise. A misinvocation occurs when the particular persons and circumstances in a given case are not "appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked" (26). Donkeys are not appropriate promisees.

Blaming someone incapable of giving uptake to blame is like making a promise to a donkey, a misinvocation. The "procedure of blaming" involves a blamer and a blamee. One is eligible for the role of blamee only if one has the capacities to give blame uptake. Thus when we blame someone who lacks these capacities, the blamee is not "appropriate to the invocation" of the procedure.

It should now be apparent why Talbert's challenge fails. Recall that Talbert aims to show that blame can be felicitous when directed toward those who lack the capacity for uptake by arguing that blame can be felicitous even when it fails to achieve uptake. For this line of reasoning to succeed, however, it must be the case that the argument from communication locates the infelicity of blame directed at those who lack the capacity for uptake in the failure to achieve uptake. If they locate the infelicity elsewhere, then the fact that blame may fail to achieve uptake and yet be felicitous, does not show that blame directed at an incapacitated target is not necessarily infelicitous. In other words, Talbert's argument is vulnerable because the ground of the relevant infelicity need not be the failure to achieve uptake.

As I have just painstakingly shown, the argument from communication does locate the infelicity elsewhere. The failure to achieve uptake is not, according to the argument from communication, the reason that blame directed at those incapable of uptake is infelicitous. The infelicity at issue is a misinvocation: blame directed at those incapable of uptake is infelicitous because blame so directed has cast someone ineligible for the role of blamee in said role.[36] Certainly a failure to achieve uptake is

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[36] The argument from communication implies that the dead are ineligible for the role of blamee, and thus that blame directed at the dead is infelicitous—in specific, a misinvocation. This might worry some because we often blame the dead and think there is nothing inappropriate in doing so.

    The argument from communication first and foremost uses the nature of blame to elucidate the capacities necessary for morally responsible agency. Thus, its main implication with respect to the dead is that the dead are not morally responsible agents. Put this way, the argument from communication gives us the *correct* answer: the dead lack the capacities required for morally responsible agency.

    Notice also that proponents of the argument from communication can explain our pre-theoretical intuition that blaming the dead is wholly felicitous. Those who endorse a communicative view of blame can insist that blame has not just a forward-looking dimension (eliciting uptake) but also, and just as important, a backward-looking

a *symptom* of this sort of misinvocation, but there is a difference between a problem and its symptoms.[37]

The above has urged that the argument from communication can meet the objections found in the extant literature. To be sure, I have not mounted a full or conclusive defense; I have, however, significantly strengthened the argument where one might have thought it weakest.[38]

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dimension. The reactive attitudes, after all, don't just seek uptake from the blamee but represent the blamee as having shown ill will. One of the threshold conditions for appropriate blame, then, is that the blamee has in fact expressed the appropriate sort of ill will. The cases in which blaming the dead are most likely to be deemed appropriate are cases in which we are blaming someone for something she did while alive—that is, when she *was* a morally responsible agent and capable of expressing the kind of ill will that the reactive attitude represents her as having shown. What this means is that when we blame the dead, there is a dimension along which blame *is* appropriate—the backward-looking dimension. The blame accurately represents the once live person as having done wrong. It is likely that our pre-theoretical intuition that blaming the dead is appropriate is tracking this: blame seems appropriate in these cases because we are picking up on the appropriateness of its backward-looking dimension.

It is also worth adding that we should be skeptical of our pre-theoretical intuitions in blaming-the-dead cases because these are non-paradigmatic cases. In standard cases, those who are capable of showing the requisite ill will are also capable of giving blame uptake. Only in nonstandard cases will someone meet the conditions that render appropriate the backward-looking aspect of blame, but not the forward-looking.

[37] At this point, Talbert could try to redeploy the concentration camp example to press on whether those who lack the capacities for uptake are in fact ineligible for the role of blamee. He might, in other words, switch tactics and go after one of the central premises of the argument from communication. The concentration camp guards are clearly eligible for the role of blamee; blame, after all, is felicitous when directed at them. But if the guards are eligible, so too are those who lack the capacities for uptake. Both the former and the latter are, to use Watson's term, unreachable and if unreachability does not render the guards ineligible, it should not render those who lack the capacities for uptake ineligible.

The question of what makes someone eligible/ineligible for a role is a deep and difficult one, and a full defense of the argument from communication needs to provide a theory of eligibility. At this point, I am only in a position to make a few preliminary points. First, when presenting the argument from communication in section 2, I used examples to render persuasive the idea that one is an eligible candidate for a role only if she has the capacities necessary to perform the activities that are constitutive of the role. For instance, one of the activities defining of a groom is making a promise; thus, one is eligible for the role of groom only if he has the capacities necessary to make a promise. Since giving uptake is a defining role of a blamee, we have some reason to think that those who lack the capacities for uptake are ineligible for the role of blamee.

What's more, it is possible to maintain that lacking the capacities for uptake renders one ineligible without implying that those who, like concentration camp guards, have the capacities for uptake but fail to exercise them are also ineligible. It is perfectly reasonable to think that while the guards are eligible for the role of blamee, those that lack the capacities for uptake are not. After all, there is a distinction between one who is ineligible for a role and one who performs said role badly. And this arguably mirrors the distinction between one who lacks the capacities for the role and one who has said capacities but fails to exercise them. In other words, Watson's distinction between categorically different forms of unreachability *is* deeply important. Those who are unreachable in the sense that they lack the capacities for uptake are ineligible for the role of blamee, while those who are unreachable in the sense that they will not exercise their capacities for uptake are suitably cast in the role of blamee. Thus blame directed toward those who lack the capacities for uptake is necessarily infelicitous, while blame directed at those who possess but do not exercise said capacities can be appropriate. It is only in the former case that a misinvocation occurs.

[38] See footnote 14. There I briefly describe what I take to be one of the most promising remaining lines of objection for an opponent of the argument from communication.

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