Beyond Blame and Anger; New Directions for Philosophy

Abstract

Despite the diversity of viewpoints throughout the history of philosophy on the subject of blame, one thing philosophers appear to agree on is that blame is an irreducible feature of experience. That is to say , no philosophical approach makes the claim to have entirely eliminated the need for anger and blame. On the contrary, a certain conception of blameful anger is at the very heart of both modern and postmodern philosophical foundations. As a careful analysis will show, this is true even for those philosophical arguments that pop up from time to time extolling the virtues of moving beyond blame and anger. In this paper, I assert that all forms of blame, including the cool, non-emotional, rational desire for accountability and justice and well as rageful craving for vengeance, are grounded in a spectrum of affective comportments that share core features. This affective spectrum includes irritation, annoyance, hostility, disapproval, condemnation, feeling insulted, taking umbrage, resentment, anger, exasperation, impatience, hatred, fury, ire, outrage, contempt, righteous indignation, 'adaptive' or rational anger, perceiving the other as deliberately thoughtless, rude, careless, negligent, complacent, lazy, self-indulgent, malevolent, dishonest, narcissistic, malicious, culpable, perverse, inconsiderate, intentionally oppressive, anti-social, hypocritical, repressive or unfair, disrespectful, disgraceful, greedy, evil, sinful, criminal, a miscreant. Blame is also implicated in cooly, calmly and rationally determining the other to have deliberately committed a moral transgression, a social injustice or injustice in general, or as committing a moral wrong.

I challenge the reader to recognize that every time you experience any of the blameful attitudes, emotions and assessments I mentioned above, you are displaying your own failure of understanding. I challenge you to do away with your need for concepts of blame, anger and punitive justice in any of their philosophical guises, and with them the equally unctuous discourses of forgiveness.

Anger is neither inherently immoral nor irrational and destructive, but represents a limited understanding of human behavior. To the extent that concepts of ethico-political justice imply appraisal of blameful, guilty intent, they also represent a failure of understanding and a form of violence and an impetus of conformity. There's no such thing as adaptive, moral or righteous blame or anger. Modern legal concepts of justice, to the extent they imply blame, depend on an inadequate grasp of motivation and intent.

Introduction

The subject of this paper is blame. I am going to take the liberty of beginning with an assertion and a direct challenge to the reader.

First the assertion:

All forms of blame, including the cool, non-emotional, rational desire for accountability and justice and well as rageful craving for vengeance, are grounded in a spectrum of affective comportments that share core features. This affective spectrum includes irritation, annoyance, hostility, disapproval, condemnation, feeling insulted, taking umbrage, resentment, anger, exasperation, impatience, hatred, fury, ire, outrage, contempt, righteous indignation, 'adaptive' or rational anger, perceiving the other as deliberately thoughtless, rude, careless, negligent, complacent, lazy, self-indulgent, malevolent, dishonest, narcissistic, malicious, culpable, perverse, inconsiderate, intentionally oppressive, repressive or unfair, disrespectful, anti-social, hypocritical, disgraceful, greedy, evil, sinful, criminal, a miscreant. Blame is also implicated in cooly, calmly and rationally determining the other to have deliberately committed a moral transgression, a social injustice or injustice in general, or as committing a moral wrong.

Now the challenge:

I challenge the reader to recognize that every time you experience any of the blameful attitudes, emotions and assessments I mentioned above, you are displaying your own failure of understanding. I challenge you to do away with your need for concepts of blame, anger and punitive justice in any of their philosophical guises, and with them the equally unctuous discourses of forgiveness.

Anger is neither inherently immoral nor irrational and destructive, but represents a limited understanding of human behavior. Because the concepts of blame, anger and morality are inextricably intertwined, to the extent that concepts of ethico-political justice imply appraisal of blameful, guilty intent, they also represent a failure of understanding and a form of violence and an impetus of conformity. There's no such thing as adaptive, moral or righteous blame or anger. Modern legal concepts of justice, to the extent they imply blame, depend on an inadequate grasp of motivation and intent.

What, you ask, would I have you replace these social practices with? Perhaps a Buddhist-styled generosity and benevolence? Hardly. There is no substitute for the extremely difficult work of uncovering the intimate and intricate order of the movement of experiencing invisible to blameful judgement.

In order to prepare the ground for the defense of my assertion and challenge, I want to offer a

brief deconstructive account of the modern philosophical history of blame. Despite the diversity of viewpoints throughout the history of philosophy on the subject of blame, one thing philosophers appear to agree on is that blame is an irreducible feature of experience. That is to say, no philosophical approach makes the claim to have entirely eliminated the need for anger and blame. On the contrary, a certain conception of blameful anger is at the very heart of both modern and postmodern philosophical foundations. As a careful analysis will show, this is true even for those philosophical arguments that pop up from time to time extolling the virtues of moving beyond blame and anger.

Modern Blame Skepticism

Modern attempts to defang concepts of blame and anger begin with moral responsibility, or blame, skepticism, which has historically been defended by Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Voltaire. Contemporary representatives of this group like Galen Strawson, Derk Pereboom and Martha Nussbaum argue that our blame practice is morally inappropriate because we lack free will or a certain kind of knowledge.

Within modernist discourses, a distinction is made between rational and irrational forms of anger and blame. For blame skeptics like Pereboom and Nussbaum, emotions are belief-based cognitive appraisals that are determinable as rational or irrational on the basis of their compatibility with an objective world.

Nussbaum (2016) argues that all emotions

> "involve intentional thought or perception directed at an object (as perceived or imagined by the person who has the emotion) and some type of evaluative appraisal of that object made from the agent's own personal viewpoint. This appraisal ascribes importance to the object in terms of the agent's scheme of goals and ends."

> "On the skeptical view, an expression of resentment or indignation will invoke doxastic irrationality when it is accompanied by the belief—as in my view it always is—that its target deserves in the basic sense to be its recipient." (Caruso(2014)

These approaches endeavor to take the sting out of anger and blame, resulting in a less violent understanding of moral action.

For instance, Pereboom rejects the idea of blame as moral responsibility because he claims that

> "what we do and the way we are is ultimately the result of factors beyond our control, whether that be determinism, chance, or luck, and because of this agents are never morally responsible in the sense needed to justify certain kinds of desert-based judgments, attitudes, or treatments—such as resentment, indignation, moral anger, backward-looking blame, and retributive punishment."

"In the basic form of desert, someone who has done wrong for bad reasons deserves to be blamed and perhaps punished just because he has done wrong for those reasons, and someone who has performed a morally exemplary action for good reasons deserves credit, praise, and perhaps reward just because she has performed that action for those reasons (Feinberg 1970; Pereboom 2001, 2014; Scanlon 2013). This backward-looking sense is closely linked with the reactive attitudes of indignation, moral resentment, and guilt, and on the positive side, with gratitude (Strawson 1962); arguably because these attitudes presuppose that their targets are morally responsible in the basic desert sense." (Caruso 2018)

"The more you believe in a person's free will, the more you will hold them morally responsible for their actions. ...and the amount that you hold a person responsible is related to how much they deserve to be praised or blamed, rewarded or punished, which, of course, affects the entire justice system."(Ed Gibney 2021)

Importantly, Pereboom has not claimed to have done away with blame here. He judges the other as 'mistreating', 'offensive', ' misbehaving'. It is only a more traditionalistic, desert-based approach to blame and punishment that he is rejecting. This allows him to advocate for a less condemning and more subdued form of blame. Pereboom's distinction between free will (the desert-based model) and deterministic blame illustrates how deconstructing the contentful basis of experiencing deprives blame and anger of its polarizing force and violence.

Martha Nussbaum is among contemporary philosophers claiming that anger involves a desire for revenge, payback and retribution. Nussbaum believes anger is a destructive, immoral and irrational emotion that we can and should transcend. But like Pereboom, she preserves the value of rational blame. Nussbaum, like Pereboom, distinguishes between blame and anger, advocating for a type of non-retributive, forward-looking blame that is devoid of angry appraisal. Nussbaum's capabilities approach to ethics is a form of moral universalism, which determines her cognitive appraisal model of emotion as rationalistic. That is to say, if emotions ground our moral values, then moral universalism considers our emotion-based appraisals in terms of correctness or incorrectness in relation to universal valuative norms.

The extent to which Nussbaum's blame skepticism continues to rely on a form of blame and , I argue , anger, is reflected in her distinction between good and bad behavior , and the need to punish wrongdoing. In the following, Nussbaum(2016) approvingly quotes Plato:

"Protagoras announces the following policy: One who undertakes to punish rationally does not do so for the sake of the wrongdoing which is now in the past—for what has been done cannot be undone—but for the sake of the future, that the wrongdoing shall not be repeated, either by him or by the others who see him punished.… One punishes for the sake of deterrence. (324A–B)"

Bad , wrongful acts require confrontation and 'reintegration' by embrace of virtuous , good acts:

"When a child commits a bad act, a good family will convey to the child a clear message about the unacceptability of the act, but in a spirit of love and generosity, encouraging the child to separate the child's basic ongoing self from the wrongful act and to think of him- or herself as

capable of good in the future. It helps if parents model the virtues themselves, and their delicate combination of confrontation and reintegration is made more effective by the child's own love and emulation." (Nussbaum 2016)

While one can certainly treat the concept of anger in the restrictive way that Pereboom and Nussbaum do as associated exclusively with a backward looking desire for payback and revenge, I believe that such a perspective arbitrarily walls off the feelings associated with such desires from those attitudes that justify forward looking blame. Although Nussbaum and Pereboom claim to reject anger and moral blame, they retain the fundamental phenomenological structure of anger in their notions of forward looking blame. A more expansive understanding of anger as a potentially productive and even moral emotion is expressed in the work of a variety of writers who share Nussbaum and Pereboom's rejection of desert and payback -based blame.

For instance, various feminist writers argue that anger aims at acknowledgment or recognition of an injustice and that it can thus be an adaptive and useful affect. Jesse Prinz(2014) has called anger a moral emotion that alerts us to injustice and violation of ethical norms. He says "Righteous rage is a cornerstone of women's liberation, civil rights, and battles against tyranny." Prinz's neo-sentimentalist model of emotion occupies a transitional position situated between moral realism and a postmodern moral relativism. He divides the realm of subjective emotional sentiment from rational objectivity, supporting an "evaluatively neutral" empirical naturalism at the same time that he claims to maintain a relativistic stance on moral values. The resulting position is a mixture of objective rationalism (Prinz(2011) suggests "Hitler's actions were partially based on false beliefs, rather than values") and subjective relativism.

"…we have strictures against killing innocent people; and we have strictures prescribing equal opportunity. These principles are grounded in reason and subject to rational debate. . But justice also requires passion. We don't coolly tabulate inequities—we feel outraged or indignant when they are discovered. Such angry feelings are essential; without anger, we would not be motivated to act....Rage can misdirect us when it comes unyoked from good reasoning, but together they are a potent pair. Reason is the rudder; rage propels us forward."(Prinz 2014).

Like Prinz, Robert Solomon (1977) argues that anger can be 'right'. Striking his own balance between subjective relativism and objective rationalism, he says

"Anger, for example, is not just a burst of venom, and it is not as such sinful, nor is it necessarily a "negative" emotion. It can be "righteous," and it can sometimes be right."

Existentialist philosopher John Russon(2020) offers:

"Anger can be unjustified, to be sure, and in that case it enacts a fundamentally distorted portrayal of the other. But anger can also be justified, and in that case it can be the only frame of mind in which the vicious and hateful reality of the other is truly recognized."

The social constructionist Ken Gergen(1997) writes that anger has a valid role to play in social co-ordination "There are certain times and places in which anger is the most effective move in

the dance."

Gendlin, a phenomenological psychologist and philosopher allied with Heidegger, considers anger to be potentially adaptive. He says that one must attempt to reassess, reinterpret, elaborate the angering experience via felt awareness not in order to eliminate the feeling of anger but so that one's anger becomes

> "fresh, expansive, active, constructive, and varies with changes in the situation".
> "Anger may help handle the situation because it may make the other change or back away. Anger can also help the situation because it may break it entirely and thus give you new circumstances."
> " Anger is healthy, while resentment and hate are detrimental to the organism."(Gendlin 1973)

Postmodernist Blame

The continued relevance for the above writers of the concept of anger indicates a distinction between forms of blame. The notion of moral blame that social constructionists, phenomenologists, embodied cognitive theorists and other approaches sympathetic to with what could be loosely called a postmodern philosophical sensibility is of a different sort from the traditional notions of moral responsibility that blame skeptics reject. Whereas Pereboom and Nussbaum argue that moral blame is 'irrational', postmodern approaches, defined in very broad terms, don't view blame in terms of a rational/irrational binary but rather in terms of pragmatic usefulness determined in relation to contextually changing inter-subjective practices.

Gergen(2001) says

> "In its critical moment, social constructionism is a means of bracketing or suspending any pronouncement of the real, the reasonable, or the right." " Constructionist thought militates against the claims to ethical foundations implicit in much identity politics - that higher ground from which others can so confidently be condemned as inhumane, self-serving, prejudiced, and unjust. Constructionist thought painfully reminds us that we have no transcendent rationale upon which to rest such accusations, and that our sense of moral indignation is itself a product of historically and culturally situated traditions. And the constructionist intones, is it not possible that those we excoriate are but living also within traditions that are, for them, suffused with a sense of ethical primacy."

 In post-modernist philosophical thinking , angry blame hasn't disappeared entirely but has had its power to affect diminished. Independent subjects are replaced by a network of reciprocally causal associations involving mind, body and world in an inseparable circle. Valuative meanings are contents with which we are jointly conditioned and shaped via our participation within cultural norms and practices.

> "... if moral deliberation is inherently cultural, then in what sense are we justified in holding individuals responsible for the humane society? Isn't individual blame thus a mystification of our condition of interdependence?""Blame and responsibility are thus distributed within the community, and indeed the culture."(Gergen 1997b)

What is to blame for blame from the perspectives of postmodern theorists? These accounts rest on an irreducible polarizing content inhering in bodily-discursive relationships. Content is power. It is the power to condition and shape. It is the power of polarity, and thus arbitrariness and capriciousness. As an actor in an always shifting social ensemble and affective embodiment I am always vulnerable to caprice and temptation, to being swayed in one direction or another semi-arbitrarily in what I care about . As this ambiguous being who is not fully conscious to myself, my potential for capriciously motivated behavior is what I would like to call my fundamental blamefulness.

Justice would be cruel, as Nietzsche says. To feel cruel is to feel blamefully responsible, culpable, guilty. If we inhabit different social worlds, if our own `individual' world is itself an endless iteration of differential cultures of self, then we must say that desire itself can only want to further one of an infinity of different realms, in asymmetric contradiction to the others. To think this way is to believe in the perversity of want.

Hagglund(2015) says:

> "There is no call for justice that does not call for the exclusion of others…" "…even when I do good—even when I devote myself to someone in a loving or generous way—I necessarily do evil, since my very act of devotion is also an act of exclusion and sacrifice."

In post-structuralist accounts such as that of Foucault emancipation is no longer naively thought as a correction of error, progress toward the good, a dialectical teleology fulfilling itself in the unification of differences. It is instead the movement, incessantly occurring in any span of culture, from one to another region of temporary stability, an island of relative coherence with no moral justification outside of this tentative, historically contingent belonging to local practices of language. Desire is no more that a pole of attraction belonging to the intersection of forces of domination. Knowing my `self' as a mere strategy or role in social language interchange, I can know longer locate a `correct' value to embrace, or a righteous cause to throw my vehemence behind. The only ethics that is left for me to support is the play between contingent senses of coherence and incoherence as I am launched from one local linguistic-cultural hegemony to another. To the extent that I know what such a thing as guilt or anger is beyond the bounds of local practices, these affectivities would have resonance as my experience of relative belonging or marginalization in relation to conventionalities that I engage with in discourse. I am always guilty, blameful in the extent to which I am a stranger in respect to one convention or another, including those that I recall belonging to in the past. I am always guilty in existing as a dislodgement from my history.

> "For every relationship of which I am a part, I am also part of another relationship for whom my present actions may be misbegotten. Because we are immersed in multiple goods we are potentially alienated from any activity in which we engage. We carry into any relationship—even those of great importance to us—the capacity to find its conventions empty or even repulsive. At every moment, the voice of a disapproving judge hovers over the shoulders." (Gergen 2009)

Even in my ensconsement within a community of language, my moment to moment interchange pulls and twists me away from myself, making me guilty with respect to myself (my

`remembered' self) and my interlocutor. Similarly, I am always hostile in my engagements with others in the sense that I coerce (not willfully but prior to volition) another into my orbit in interchange. Because moment to moment interchange implies a mutual subversion of language, this is true in some small fashion even when we move within shared commitments.

Complementing the emphasis on social conditioning of anger that feminist and social cosntructionist writers like Gergen and Butler emphasize, postmodern enactive, embodied approaches within cognitive science depict cognitive-affective functioning as global interactive schemes composed of reciprocally causal innate and learned associations between perceptions and body states. Affect, including feeling, moods and emotions, is a complex interplay among expression, behavior, cognitive appraisal, bodily feedback and sociocultural interactions. Phenomenologically informed embodied approaches in cognitive science consider the embeddedness of the embodied subject in a world of linguistic cultural practices to be of fundamental importance to the understanding of behavior.

> "…intersubjective (social and cultural) factors already have an effect on our perception and understanding of the world, even in the immediacy of our embodied and instrumental copings with the environment."(Gallagher 2012)

Enactivist writers such as Evan Thompson and Francisco Varela emphasize the beneficial ethical implications of the decentering of the Cartesian subject. They assert that a thoroughgoing understanding of the groundlessness of personhood reveals the mutual co-determination of subject and world. This realization can in turn lead, through the use of contemplative practice of mindfulness, to the awareness of universal empathy, compassion and benevolence.

> 'In Buddhism, we have a case study showing that when groundlessness is embraced and followed through to its ultimate conclusions, the outcome is an unconditional sense of intrinsic goodness that manifests itself in the world as spontaneous compassion."(Thompson 2008).

But other writers (See Soffer 2019) point out that the semi-arbitrary way that intentional meaning is shaped by bodily and social influences implies not only an interpenetrative interrelatedness and co-determinacy between subject and world, but an irreducible violence at the heart of subject-world interaction. As Merleau-Ponty(1962) explains:

> " In all uses of the word sens, we find the same fundamental notion of a being orientated or polarized in the direction of what he is not, and thus we are always brought back to a conception of the subject as ek-stase, and to a relationship of active transcendence between the subject and the world."(p.499).

> "Action is, by definition, the violent transition from what I have to what I aim to have, from what I am to what I intend to be.", "When I say that I know and like someone, I aim, beyond his qualities, at an inexhaustible ground which may one day shatter the image that I have formed of him. This is the price for there being things and 'other people' for us, not as the result of some illusion, but as the result of a violent act which is perception itself. " (p.444).

In concluding this brief discussion of postmodern approaches to blame, I want to call attention to the role that postmodern thought plays in deconstructing assumptions concerning the irreducible

substantiality of the contentful basis of experiencing. In decentering concepts like subjectivity and rationality, postmodern discourses don't just re-situate blame and anger , but deprive them of some of their polarizing force and violence relative to modernist philosophical orientations.

In its own right , modern blame skepticism deconstructs a certain traditional notion of free will. How does it do this? If blame is a function of a belief in the arbitrariness, randomness and capriciousness of motive, then what makes Cartesian desert-based approaches , which are assumed to arise from the deliberately willed actions of an autonomous, morally responsible subject, harsher and more 'blameful' in their views of justice than deterministic , non-desert based modernist approaches and postmodern accounts, which rest on shaping influences (bodily-affective and social) outside of an agent's control? Aren't the latter accounts more 'arbitrary' interpretations of behavior than the former? On the contrary, the very autonomy of the Cartesian subject presupposes a profound arbitrariness to free will. We say that the subject who has free will wills of their own accord, chooses what they want to choose , and as such has autonomy with respect to 'foreign' social and internal bodily influences. The machinations of the free will amount to a self-enclosed system.

This solipsist self functions via an internal logic of values that, while rational within the internal bounds of its own subjectivity, is walled off from the wider community of selves and therefore can choose value in a profoundly irrational or immoral manner with respect to social consensus. Therefore, the very autonomy of the Cartesian subject presupposes a profound potential laxity and arbitrariness to individual free will in relation to the moral norms of a wider social community.

Modernist deterministic moral arguments of those like Pereboom and Nussbaum surrender the absolute solipsist rationalism of free will-based models of the self in favor of a view of the self as belonging to and determined by a wider causal empirical social and natural order .If we ask why the agent endowed with free will chose to perform a certain action , the only explanation we can give is that it made sense to them given their own desires and whims. If we instead inquire why the individual ensconced within a modernist deterministic or postmodern relativist world performed the same action, we would be able to make use of the wider explanatory framework of the natural or discursive order in situating the causes of behavior.

Radically Temporal Blame

A handful of postmodern approaches , which I refer to elsewhere (Soffer 2022) as radically temporal , posit an implicatory motivational rather than a reciprocally causal account of being in the world. In Heidegger , Derrida and Gendlin, a radically intimate pragmatic self - belonging imparts to experiencing a strong , intimate sense of pragmatic relevance and significance , in contrast with the weak, alienated relevance of other postmodern accounts.

Rather than an abdication of a thoroughgoing thinking of sociality, the radically temporal relevanting Gendlin's model shares with Heidegger and Derrida re-situates the site of the social patterns of human belonging which postmodern intercorporeal approaches discern in terms of joint activities and cultural language practices as a more desubstantialized   'grounding' than that

of the over-determined abstractions represented by discursive intersubjectivities. For instance, Heidegger's being-in -the world is always characterized by a pragmatic self-belongingness that he articulates as a heedful circumspective relevance that events always have for Dasein in its world. Dasein's self-belonging is not a retreat from the immediate contingency of world-exposure, not the choosing of an idealist self-actualization at the expense of robust being with others. While our experience as individuals is characterized by stable relations of relative belonging or alienation with respect to other individuals and groups, the site of this interactivity, whether we find ourselves in greater or lesser agreement with a world within which we are enmeshed, has a character of peculiar within-person continuity. It also has a character of relentless creative activity that undermines and overflows attempts to understand human action based on reciprocally causal between-person configurations.

From a radically temporal perspective, the within-person dynamic is already a between-person in that it is a thoroughgoing exposure to , and continuous self-transformation via, an outside, an alterity, an otherness. The radically inseparable interaffecting between my history and new experience exposes me to the world, and modifies who I am, in an immediate, constant and thoroughgoing manner, producing every moment a global reshaping of my sense of myself and others outpacing the transformative impetus realized via inter-causal notions of primary intersubjectivity. My sense of my own identity is relentlessly, but subtly, formed and reformed through direct and indirect social engagement, in a manner which presupposes and is made possible by the self's 'continuing to repeat itself "the same differently or otherwise", as Derrida (1978) says. Derridean differance would be an "imperceptible difference. This exit from the identical into the same remains very slight, weighs nothing itself...(p.373)". The repetition of this very slight difference dividing self -identity from itself produces an ongoing singular self that returns to itself the same differently.

> "…there is singularity but it does not collect itself, it "consists" in not collecting itself. Perhaps you will say that there is a way of not collecting oneself that is consistently recognizable, what used to be called a `style' "(Derrida 1995, p.354)

Before there is a personal 'I' or interpersonal 'we', there is already within what would be considered THE person a fully social site of simultaneously subjective-objective process overtaking attempts to understand human action based on either within-person constancies or between-person shapings.

The work of Heidegger, Derrida and Gendlin doesn't eliminate blame, guilt and anger , but profoundly reduces their arbitrary force and substantial content. While they deconstruct a metaphysics of objective presence, they are unable to unravel the metaphysics of qualitative content that keeps their own thinking within the circle of blame and violence.

Deconstruction shares the need for anger with other postmodern positions. Anger is alive and well in Derrida's work. Derrida's diatribe against his critics in `Biodegradables'(B812-873) evinces the use of deconstruction as a weapon of blame and anger. It admits to being bitter, resentful, angry, shocked (as it accuses its accusers of being abusive, arrogant, murderous, indecent, dishonest, aberrant, obscene, venomous). Deconstruction sees these moody othernesses in the texts it unravels because, most fundamentally, it sees them in itself, as an irreducible

feature of experiencing in general. Derrida like other postmodern thinkers, identifies stagnation, the impoverishment of relational transformation, for alienated experience. This not-knowing is not in and of itself a source of blame. But there is an aspect of the not-knowing , the not wanting to know, that he faults.

Similarly, Heidegger's falling prey is a gesture which alienates and confuses Dasein, particularly in the mode of the present to hand, because understanding the world in terms of objectively present objects fragments and closes off ones experience from the larger totality of relevance. He says in authenticity, Dasein 'pulls itself together' from its dispersion in the world.. Inauthenticity is a kind of temporal stagnation. The term 'falling prey' implies the blaming of the content of experience for contributing to the alienation of stagnation. The content (beings) that Dasein falls prey to exerts a self-conserving and tranquilizing force , and a complacency that prompts it to resist its own change. Desire is linked to self-preservation, and in this sense determines all change as a vector of violence.

> "Thus the kind of being of Da-sein requires of an ontological interpretation that has set as its goal the primordiality of the phenomenal demonstration that it be in charge of the being of this being in spite of this being's own tendency to cover things over. Thus the existential analytic constantly has the character of doing violence, whether for the claims of the everyday interpretation or for its complacency and its tranquillized obviousness."(Being and Time)

Derrida(1995) also sees significant experiential movement as necessarily violent. He writes:

> "...a philosophical discourse that would not be provoked or interrupted by the violence of an appeal from the other, from an experience that cannot be dominated, would not be a very questioning, very interesting philosophical discourse (p.381)

> "All of history has shown that each time an event has been produced, for example in philosophy or in poetry, it took the form of the unacceptable, or even of the intolerable, of the incomprehensible, that is, of a certain monstrosity. When it is alive in some way, when it is not sclerotically enclosed in its mechanics, the philosophical discourse goes from jolt to jolt, from traumatism to traumatism". (p.381).

Derrida and Heidegger contrast a greater and lesser violence. The greater violence is instantiates by the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism. Heidegger depicts the various forms of inauthentic thinking as distorted, flattened, complacent, fragmented, tranquillized, dispersed, blind to itself, led astray, confused, closed off, obscuring, forgetful, deficient. Derrida characterizes the tendency toward resistance to change as paralyzed, sclerotic , programmatic, redundant, irresponsible. Meanwhile, the experience of an absolute other is heralded by affects of shock, surprise, trauma, strangeness, monstrosity and risk for Derrida, and uncanniness, wonder, anxiety, terror, astonishment, bliss, joy, melancholy and rapture for Heidegger.

For Derrida and Heidegger , feelings of traumatic, disturbing displacement (the lesser violence) are synonymous with the experience of change, movement and transformation. The lesser violence of shock, surprise, uncanniness, strangeness, monstrosity, which they directly associate

with the experience of change, movement and the absolute other is a guilty, angry , blameful violence to the extent that it believes that the complacency of desire belongs to the irreducible basis of experience, and as a consequence that ethically significant change is change of direction of qualitative content (i.e. Derrida's 'other heading', and Heidegger's authentic anxiety).

In Gendlin, Heidegger and Derrida, the thinking of objective presence is a form of self-alienation. Heidegger describes the movement within a given frame of intelligibility as inauthentic because a failure to understand, self-alienating and cut off from the wider context of relevance, just as Nietzsche's ascetic ideal associates the thinking of static self-identity with nihilism. The presumed self-identity of objective presence is an impoverishment of movement , a stagnation, that is more violent and alienated than the violence of authentic movement.
These thinkers don't believe there is ever a complete absence of experiential movement. Rather, the complacent, self-preserving change-resistant power of content is the force of a vector of movement. Content imparts a qualitative direction of change that excludes other directions. There is only ever experience of contextual transformation, so the distinction between complacent redundancy and inventive alterity is the difference between two types or momenta of novelty. Experiences of unintelligibility and meaninglessness represent a type of movement characterized by apparent paralysis and fragmentation. Sameness and Otherness are two forms of movement , one disconnected, alienated and thus deprived of meaning, and the other less violent because more integrated.

Derrida locates within differance "an indestructible desire for full presence, for non-difference:", a desire for a center, for the origin. Concepts such as non-difference, center, origin and full presence imply a self-sameness of content. Deconstructive movement divides the self-sameness of identity from within itself by determining a self to be dependent on an absolute alterity at its core. Identity and otherness mutually determine each other within the 'I', . But notice also that both ipseity and otherness imply qualitative content. Desiring full presence is wishing not just that there be presence rather than absence, but wishing for a particular kind of presence. And the otherness that haunts presence in the deconstructive trace is a particular kind of absencing. Quality, kind, and direction are attributes of both sides of the equivocal trace.

Beyond Blame: Deconstructing Qualitatively Polarizing Content

I have argued that deconstructive inventions of difference as otherness or `alterity', as effective as they are at subverting foundational claims to justice and truth, are still in their own subtle manner doomed to see in the world a certain irreducible blamefulness, anger and violence. This lingering subtle harshness necessarily permeates their languages of justice and the ethical.

I have instead challenged the reader, and the philosophical community , to transcend the need for blame and anger. Having now located the irreducible basis of blame for postmodern and radically temporal philosophies in the qualitatively polarizing core of experiencing , it would appear that the only way to eliminate blame and anger is to challenge the idea that qualitative directionality is intrinsic to meaning. But could there be meaning, sense, experience without qualitative direction at its core?

This is precisely my claim (See Soffer 2002 for a fuller exposition of my philosophical position). Put in uncompromising terms, desire prefers presence over absence , but it doesn't care what sort of content is involved. More precisely, what presents itself contains no intrinsic content to distinguish it from any other presence outside of a minimal placemarker. Therefore, desire can never be the preference for a unique quality, kind, direction or heading of presence. We prefer presence over absence, and prefer the richest, densest , most accelerative flow of presencing we can achieve.

Content plays no role in either alienated sameness or mobile otherness. When we are caught in stagnation, the content of our experience does not have the power to stubbornly resist change as it does for Derrida et al. And mobile otherness does not have the power to arbitrarily and violently impose itself as it does for the above writers. Content   of meaning produces only momentum, the experience of acceleration or apparent deceleration of change of sense. Deceleration is the experience of loss of sense, stagnation , alienation, anxiety, pain and confusion. Acceleration is the experience of pleasure, joy, enrichment of intelligibility.

So-called wearingly redundant or vacuous experience evinces a pathology that is related to the shocking and disturbing because these two types of events are variants of the same condition; an ongoing dearth of coherence or comprehensibility. The confusion, incoherence and mourning at the heart of experiences of monotony and exhaustion as well as shock and surprise manifest a referential-differential chain of barely registerable elements, a strange territory barren of recognizable landmarks. The `too same' and the `too other' are related forms of experience; they indicate the terrifying mobility of the near-senseless, the impoverishment, moment to moment, of the meaning of each new event. It is AS IF the pace of novelty has been decelerated during experiences of crisis. We know that we are no longer what we were in such states, but we cannot fathom who or what we, and our world, are now; we are gripped by a fog of inarticulation. While still representing transit, such a destitution or breakdown of sense seems like an ongoing redundancy, a death of sense.

 If the affectivities of disturbance, uncanniness, anxiety and incomprehensibility Derrida, Heidegger and others associate with significant novelty are in fact symptoms of apparent stagnation and paralysis, which sorts of affects are indications of effective novelty? The unknown, the absolutely novel, may be most intensely available to us to the degree that we anticipate it, which is to say that a certain intimacy, continuity and gentleness pervade our most effective movement through novelty.

Affectivities of the shocking, the surprising , the uncanny and the strange which for Heidegger and Derrida inaugurate our escape from the monotony and complacency of perceived authoritarian stagnation are incomplete transcendences; the latter are species of the former. It is affectivities of joyful, interested engagement which express an acceleratively mobile engagement with otherness. The most stimulatingly fresh pathways imaginable are direct measures not of the confused incomprehension of disturbance, trauma, terror , violence and uncanniness, but of the intimacy of familiar anticipation, a familiarity whose satisfied pleasure comes not from a mere repetition of itself but from a deepening of the self-intimacy of its temporalization.

Activities associated with the predictable and the familiar cannot exclusively be correlated with either of the above two types of movement. Whether such an activity is deemed an impoverishment or an acceleration of novelty depends on the particular affectivities associated with that activity determining its shifting purpose and sense, and not on the presumed self-evident fact of the experience of the so-called calculative order itself.

Shocking, threatening and even boring events manifest a seemingly paralyzed trudge through the chaos and confusion of the unintelligible, while interesting and enjoyable situations express a (non-countably) denser rhythm of change. Desire is always the desire to make sense, to make sense is always to make new sense, and to make new sense is always to make denser, more accelerated sense. . Narcissism is not the love of redundancy but the love of novelty in its guise as presence. The impetus of narcissism is toward otherness itself in its most accelerative manifestations. It is important to question the necessity for a language requiring the forceful or resistant intervening in supposedly entrenched regions of power when a radical, subliminal weave of continuity-novelty already functions from within those communities to keep experience mobile.

Even within the most supposedly foundational, fundamentalist community of belief or institution of power, each singular individual, in reaffirming the so-called norms and programmatics of that community, is doing this transformatively each moment of experience, finding their own intention subtly exceeding itself from within in the instant of its affirmation. Given this intricately, constantly mobile relationship of individuals to a particular cultural institution, and more importantly, to themselves moment to moment, one could not in fact locate any aspect of institutional practice, regardless of (and in fact because of) how rigidly rule governed it intends its programmatics to be, which would not avail itself to continual, if subtle, re-formulation (or, more precisely, elaborative enrichment) for each individual each instant. A foundational choice, rule, mechanics, is always, for every individual and at every moment, reaffirmed freshly and transformatively, as the transit or carrying forward of something that in each iteration is more than a mechanics. Programmatics, mechanics, institutional repetitions and norms never actually mean anything except as terms of language favored by individuals who nevertheless, in their use of these terms, immediately and unknowingly multiply and accelerate the terms' senses. This ongoing transformation of the sense of a norm, standard or rule in its moment to moment usage may simultaneously ensure its continuity and reintroduce it to itself as a new philosophy of itself. This stability, when it is not thrown into crisis, is the reliability of innovation, not the stricture of redundancy.

Whether one embraces what would be called repression, a status quo or revolution, one finds oneself preferring the most enriching navigation through experience that is available in one's situation. The most restrictive conservatism (not regardless of what a so-called dogmatist says, but inherent in what he means) wishes, precisely via the imposition of rules, conventions and contracts, to protect the intimacy of transitivity from the stultifying fog of disorientation as he sees it. Belief in pure conceptual repetition, and even the brief stasis of scheme, is seen by those who subscribe to such notions in relation to less mobile possibilities. It is not that they perceive at some unconscious level and then reject a fresh thinking, , but that such an alternative does not yet exist for them. What is attacked or opposed, often violently, is not

novelty-alterity but the perceived threat of a return to a stultifying, meaningless past.
A radical intimacy and empathy is unavailable to such a thinking when it determines the basis of experience as an irreducibly violent, subversive and traumatic transit between events Deconstruction, having no choice but to plunge the other into a chaotic transformation, stunts the fluidity of the other's self-transformative efforts. Rather than coaxing the other into crisis by `resisting' and subverting the rhythm of their supposedly intransigent, complacent, stagnant, irresponsible thematics, we may instead recognize a subliminal mobility in the other's motives and plans unacknowledged by deconstructive thinking. Rather than forcing the other to another heading after assuming their supposed desire for complacency , we may gently move with and from their already subliminally self-transforming heading.

We must further radicalize the work of the radically temporal philosophers by recognizing that the sense of meaning and value that subjects and objects harbor contain no substantial, self-inhering qualitative content other than the absolute minimum required to differentiate them from other meanings. The way that we interpret events according to dimensions of likeness and difference produces senses of meaning so minimal that it has no patterned or configured internality, no properties, or textures within itself. It has no essential internal valuative content beyond what is necessary to distinguish it from other meanings.

In my use of such terms as multiplication of sense, difference and self-transformation to depict the movement of experiencing, I can't emphasize enough the central importance of process, and the near irrelevance of valuative content, in the organization of meaning for the experiencer. The direction of motivation is driven by the anticipatory integrity of the relationships between near-meaningless-in-themselves contents, not by the supposed value-substance of the contents themselves, whether perceived as motivational entities like incentives, needs, drives or reinforcements, or as discursive power relations. Everything that we associate with affectively and cognitively relevant and significant meaning is dependent on process, on how intimately, multidimensionally and assimilatively we embrace new experience, and none of it on content. It is true that a 'way' of sense acts as a unique node of relational possibilities and constraints, otherwise there would be no benefit to re-construing meanings. But it is the organizational integrity and coherence of the relations that moments of meaning afford that give us our passions, our loves and hates and ambitions, not the valuative content of their internal sense.

To say that pleasure is what motivates us in our choices is as much as to say that improvement in anticipatory efficacy motivates our behavior. In my process approach, all behavior is oriented toward making our world more intimately understandable. Pleasure, pain and all other variants of affective valuation, are not properties of internal, external, nor socially shared value contents, but are a function of how intimately, and how multi-dimensionally, we relate events to each other. All feeling and emotion expresses an awareness of the relative ongoing success or failure in relating new events to one's outlook.

Affective valences are contractions and expansions, coherences and incoherences, accelerations and regressions, consonances and dissonances, expressing how intimately and harmoniously we

are able to anticipate and relate to, and thus how densely, richly, intensely, acceleratively we are able to move through, new experience. The content-free, process-based nature of sense-making guarantees that the behavior that one later feels guilty about was the best one could do at the time to elaborate one's system. The direction of this temporal flow is always either toward increased understanding, or at least preservation of one's current level of understanding.

Anger and guilt are the failure to understand what is in principle understandable without recourse to blame. This is because processes of sense making are inherently too integral to be capable of the arbitrariness and capriciousness implied by blame. This is an unwavering statement about the fundamental order driving psychological functioning. If assimilating this fundamental lesson means I need never be angry or blameful, it is not because I can guarantee I will be always be able to flawlessly reconstrue another's action such that I no longer see them as irrational, deviant or arbitrary. Rather, in principle, the organization of psychological processes is too integral to justify the abyss of blame. As long as I am able to take this as a matter of faith, that is, as an ongoing hypothesis, and as long as I don't find this supposition invalidated, then it is irrelevant whether or not in any specific instance I am able to come up with precise reasons why the other person's waywardness of intent was not culpable for my disappointment.

The consequences of a starting point in the arbitrariness of blameful sense is that it masks a more fundamental, intricate and intimate notion of movement and relationality beneath a dynamic that is at the same time too fat with content, and too resistant to change, and on the other hand too polarizing in its transitions. The 'overstuffed' content inserted into the relation between subject and object makes blameful models beholden to pushes and pulls from inner and outer demons. Beneath the apparent chaos and whim of blame (being at the mercy of otherness) lies a radically temporal order in psychological movement that proves why neither my own nor another's processes are capable of the content-driven arbitrariness that could lead to the 'thoughtlessness' of anger-producing culpability.

Why can one's own processes never be 'thoughtless' enough to produce culpability in oneself and justify anger on the part of another? Because the moments of my experiencing do not harbor enough substance, force, power within themselves to arbitrarily polarize, disrupt, condition and repress. Polarization, force, capriciousness, repression are required as irreducible in experiencing in order for the blamefulness of anger to be primordially justified.

What makes my critique of the concept of blame radical is that it implies that ALL situations that I interpret as apparent capriciousness NECESSARILY represent an inadequate construal of the situation on my part, and that, even if I am unable to arrive at a crisp construction that instantly dispels the justification for my hostility, there is such an explanation OF NECESSITY. Blame is an inadequate construct that must be abandoned once it is understood that intention could never be arbitrary or capricious. Every time I blame someone or some community for something, I am expressing my own ignorance.

An Illustration of Anger

In the following illustration , we may see the ways in which the thinking of arbitrary, polarizing qualitative content manifests as angry blame for the philosophical perspectives I have discussed. Let us say that I have been hurt and disappointed by someone I care deeply about, and as a result I become angry with them. What form might this anger take? If I believe in free will and desert-based conceptions of blame, then depending on the severity of the perceived offense, my anger may include the desire for retribution, payback and revenge(P.F.Strawson). If I eschew a free will perspective in favor of a deterministic moral universalism (Nussbaum), my anger will not include the desire for retribution but instead will seek to coax the wrongdoer to conform to the universal norm.

In embodied and social constructionist postmodern accounts, no ultimate moral or empirical telos is assumed to constrain individual motivation and valuative choices. Constraints impose themselves in the form of pragmatic and contingent reciprocally causal bodily-social practices. I don't blame in the name of a divine, free-will based moral order, or in the name of an empirical objective order of truth. I blame in the name of temporary discursive practices, which by their changing nature hold all of us guilty. Blame is contingent for Derrida and Heidegger also but their deconstruction of reciprocal causality situates blame within a more radically temporal and intricate site than postmodern accounts, and is therefore of a lesser violence.

The other I angrily accuse now approaches me and says " I know I let you down. I was wrong and I'm sorry" (regardless of whether I prompted them or not). One could say that the other's sense of their guilt and culpability is the mirror image of my anger. The essence of the anger-culpability binary here is the two parties coping , as victim and perpetrator, with their perception of an arbitrary lapse or slide in values, a drift in commitment to the relationship on the part of the one , and the recognition of this caprice by the other.

 The perceived violent waywardness of this drift or lapse in values will be a function, of course, of the metaphysics of blame through which each participant of the relationship interprets the situation. Whichever metaphysics of blame is in play, we can assume that the hurt party believes that the always present possibility of the other's straying, succumbing to, being overcome by alienating valuative motives, is an expression of human motivation in general as dependent on subversive , decentering bodily and inter-social determinants.

This being the case , it would not be unreasonable for the hurt individual to formulate the hopeful notion that the blameful, that is, capricious, behavior of the other can be coaxed back to something close to its original alignment, so that the relationship's intimacy can be restored. The hopeful quality of the anger, then , is driven by a belief in the semi-arbitrary malleability of human motives. I am going to call this hopeful intervention 'adaptive anger'. Adaptive anger begins with an experience of invalidation (hurt and disappointment) and ends with the consequent hopeful intervention. The angered party makes use of their perception of the substantial capriciousness in the shaping of human motives in order to attempt to reshape matters in a more favorable direction from their vantage, and this attempt may very well be successful in eliciting the other's contrition and maybe even a plea for forgiveness of their deviation.

More precisely, the angered person's belief that behavior is capricious will make it appear to

them that their view of the wayward other as susceptible to alienating influences has been vindicated regardless of whether their interventionist attempts succeed in getting the other to apologize, express remorse, mend their ways.   As in the scenario I described of the hopeful interventionist impulse of 'adaptive' anger, I interpret the impulse of anger as rooted in the hopeful desire to influence the other back where I think they should have been, even when there is no communication with another, either verbal, gestural or physical. The positive impetus of anger begins with the hopeful thought that my attempt at influencing the other may be effective. Even the most subtle variants of anger are inconceivable without my sense that the person who disappointed me can be coaxed by me, whether gently or not so gently, back to where we believe they should have been.

At the heart of angry, blameful feeling is an unanswered question. What is the rationale behind the perpetrator's unfathomable behavior? Unable to come up with any workable justifiable explanation of the other's seemingly perverse shift in motive, the offended person attempts to coerce the other into feeling self-blame, to 'knock some sense back into them'. But since we don't know why they violated our expectation of them, why and how they failed to do what our blameful anger tells us they `should have' according to our prior estimation of their relation to us, this guilt-inducing process is tentative, unsure, and inherently violent in its attempt to rectify a violation. Of course , we say we do know why the other failed us , surprised us, disappointed us. We ascribe their behavior to the fundamental , irreducible 'truth' that all human action contains a kernel of inherent violence, arbitrariness, polarization. But this 'knowledge' is a kind of ignorance, a question.

 The accuser wonders:`Why does the perpetrator's hostility put the victim's thinking into question when it is the perpetrator's assessment of their relationship to the victim which needs to be interrogated and forced to a more empathetic space? `Why does the perpetrator not feel guilty?' According to the indignant person's original axes of understanding, the very contemplation of the sort of nasty behavior they are presently witnessing should have produced a sufficiently amount of guilt in the perpetrator as to have prevented the translation of those vindictive plans into action. After all, thinks the angered party, "I've been tempted by that sort of indulgent acting out, too, but I've controlled myself."

Unable to come up with any workable alternative explanation of the nonconformist's actions, the offended person attempts to inculcate the other with the feeling of remorse that the indignant one initially assumed the offender should feel, but inexplicably fell short of. The goal of anger's punishing intent is not to destroy but to return the other closer to ourselves, to save them and us from his decadence, their falling short of a thinking which would allow him to see our behavior not as an obstacle to their movement but as a precipitation of it. Our anger wants to prompt them to an indication of insightful empathy with the pain they know we feel and know they were responsible for in their need to punish us. The other's destruction will not satisfy anger's urge for the perpetrator to bridge the taunting abyss between what they did and what they `knew better than to do'. Our anger only begins to dissipate to the extent that we believe the other directly identifies the `retaliatory' teaching we inflict on them with the suffering they were responsible for in us, and more fundamentally with our thinking they failed to embrace. It is not their suffering we want for its own sake but their understanding, their contrition, the movement of their thinking

toward what we deem they should have thought and felt in the first place (what feminist writers like Sarah Ahmed and Judith Butler call recognition of our suffering).

We deem that the target of our indignation should have known what they failed to act on; we insist that they used to acknowledge the importance for us of what they now apparently disregard in their thoughtlessness. Our anger wants to rekindle this spark, to move them to a recollection of the consideration we believe they once had for us or our concerns. But why would we want to inflict punishment if we assume they already know of our distress, already empathize but choose to ignore or forget this empathy? Our indignation wants us to reinstate for the other the emotional pain we believe they didn't feel keenly enough originally.

The angered wants to teach the guilty party a lesson, remind them, shame them, make them feel the guilt they inexplicably failed to feel as a result of their regressive actions. Why do we say the criminal should suffer what the victim suffered, get a `taste of their own medicine'? If they really know the ethical rigor of what was lost to us in our disappointed suffering, we think, then they may see the error of their ways and return to what we believe they knew all along. Our hostility wants to provoke the other's pain only in order to gain the opportunity to ask "How do YOU like it?" and hear them empathetically link their pain with ours by linking their thinking more intimately with ours.

But since we don't know why they violated our expectation of them, why and how they failed to do what our blameful anger tells us they `should have' according to our prior estimation of their relation to us, this guilt-inducing process is tentative, unsure. It is precisely the interruptiveness and intermittency of the `knowing what to do' of anger which is potentially manifested as explosiveness, violence and destructiveness because the behaviors associated with these terms represent the limited repertoire of responses which mark the incipience of angry insight. Anger's impulsive, potentially explosive character would mark it as a delicate confidence, an ambivalent insight. Anger would be ambivalent in its force; a composition of vulnerability, tentativeness, questioning.

The conflictual relationship scenario I sketched above was intended to capture what I believe to be a fundamental tenet of any philosophical or psychological approach that is founded on the belief in the irreducibility of blame. I began this paper by challenging the reader to transcend the need for blame , which I identified in relation to a spectrum of affective comportments sharing core phenomenological features.

I included within the structure of blame the following: irritation, annoyance, hostility, disapproval, condemnation, feeling insulted, taking umbrage, resentment, anger, exasperation, impatience, hatred, fury, ire, outrage, contempt, righteous indignation, 'adaptive' or rational anger, perceiving the other as deliberately thoughtless, rude, careless, lazy, malevolent, dishonest, narcissistic, malicious, culpable, perverse, inconsiderate, intentionally oppressive, negligent, repressive or unfair, disrespectful, hypocritical, disgraceful, greedy, evil, sinful, anti-social, criminal, a miscreant. Blame is also implicated in cooly, calmly and rationally determining the other to have deliberately committed a moral transgression, a social injustice or injustice in general, or as committing a moral wrong.

I want to make it clear now that the core phenomenological features this diverse list of blameful attitudes has in common belong to the general structure of anger, in its various manifestations, as I have described it. As manifestations of anger, all of the above listed attitudes of blame share these features:

 1)I believe that motivated behavior is potentially capricious and arbitrary.

 2)Another's motives significantly disappoint me, alienate them from me, violate my assessment of what they 'should have known better than to do'.

3)I adopt the hopeful belief that the other's apparently wayward and capricious motivational drift can potentially be influenced back to the vicinity of where I originally expected them to be.

Since I claim that blame is considered as a necessary and irreducible assumption in almost all philosophical approaches, the idea of a moral or 'adaptive' anger or related blameful response to invalidation is absolutely vital to such perspectives. Any theory asserting that motive can be hostage to, conditioned by, arbitrary deviations in interest and caring, especially the valuing of another person, is a theory which depends on the concept of blame to explain motivation. If , for any psychology, the arbitrariness of blame is irreducible in direct proportion to the belief that the in-itself valuative content of our experiencing contributes to a shaping of our motives and behavior in capricious ways then we can get beyond the need for the concept of blame in the political, judicial , ethical and interpersonal realms only by unravelling this assumption.

We can see precisely what is left of the substantial, inhering content of meaning for a philosophy by observing the role and force it assigns to blame, its power to arbitrarily disrupt, cause and condition. Valuation, what makes us care for someone, is subject to arbitrary dislocation for most philosophies, because valuation and motivation for them are contents that exert a restrictive , conservative pull. As sedimentations, they act as poles of inertia.

Change in valuation is a function of change in the organization of meaning , not the pull of a recalcitrant 'demonological' content. Construction can only change via elaboration, articulation, enrichment, acceleration.. I could define my understanding in response to what I view as a puzzling act by another, in which case I may be responding to their attack on me. Usually when we blame someone for thoughtlessness or selfishness we don't see them as angry. We believe they stop caring.
'Caring-about' acts as a powerful content that can be out-competed by rival 'caring-abouts'. We try with our anger to re-infuse the other with 'caring-about-me'. But 'caring-about' is not a content , it is a 'knowing-well'. If something the other does causes me to know them less well I will care less about them. This could be the result of elaborating my understanding and discovering that I initially formed an idealized, superficial picture of who they are, and as I get to know them further I realize there is less there than meets the eye.
Maybe I come to realize they care about me less than I thought, or we share fewer interests than I thought. Through elaboration and articulation of my understanding,I can also come to outgrow

them. In this case it is not that I no longer see their qualities, that is , the ones I originally saw, but that those qualities, that shares at of interest and understandings, is no longer enough for me because I have grown more than they have. In this case, I am not failing to see what I originally 'cared-about' in them, it is no longer enough for me. I am still likely to empathize with them, to feel their pain from their perspective. From their vantage, though, I may appear to be acting thoughtlessly, selfishly. The bond of trust has been severed because my inattention is inexplicable. They may believe my 'caring-for-them' content has been replaced by a rival 'caring-for' bias reacted toward me or another friend. This leads them to doubt their ability to induce 'caring-about' in others. Maybe I never really cared about them in the first place and it was all an act. Maybe I've fallen under nefarious and corrupting influences. If they could believe instead that my caring for them is intact and I simply need to expand my 'caring-base' it would not appear to invalidate their core sense of themselves as worthy of love.

Although this is just one of many possible scenarios triggering hurt feelings and associated hostility and guilt, all situations of anger by their very nature are flailing, and failing, attempts to understanding why the other has deviated from what was expected of them. All ethical -political contexts in which judgements of moral culpability , guilt and blame are presumed to apply involve issues of caring for and caring about in which another individual or group's collective behavior and thinking is fathomed inadequately in terms of a blameful , violent and arbitrary shift in the direction of their caring for and caring about, rather than as their knowing more richly or more poorly along the 'same' heading as we(because knowing more or less richly, densely, acceleratively, intimately is the only heading).

The effective answer to this question is via the structure of elaborative anticipation. Construing is conserving of what it already understands at the same time that it is always in the process of enriching its powers of anticipatory understanding. Reorganization of ones total understanding of another who initially prompts the puzzlements of anger and blame resolves the anger not by altering the content-related specifics of ones prior outlook, but by increasing the depth of one's understanding and in that important sense it improves on the knowledge that made one care about another in the first place.

Even if we succeed in getting the blameful other to atone and re-establish their previous intimacy with us, we understand them no better than we did prior to their hostility-generating action, and thus our hostility provides an inadequate solution to our puzzlement and anxiety. All we have learned from the episode is that they other is potentially untrustworthy, unpredictable. The ineffectiveness of this approach can be seen in the fact that even if contempt succeeds in getting the perpetrator to mend their ways, an adequate understanding of his or her puzzling motives has not been achieved. The very success of the contempt delays the pursuit of a thinking within which the other's apparently arbitrary disappointing deviation from what one expected of them can be seen as a necessary, adaptive elaboration of their way of construing their role in the relationship.

When confronted with behavior of another that is comprehensively different from our own, a mystery to us, and especially when it disturbs us, we need to bridge the gap between ourselves

and the other not by attributing the problem to the other's being at the mercy of capriciously wayward motives which we may hope to re-shape, but by striving to subsume the other's outlook within an enriched and accelerated elaboration of our own thinking.

Beyond Forgiveness and Blameful Guilt:

When one is convinced that an insult did indeed take place and can never be undone or denied, when one pleads with, cajoles and threatens the other to reconsider their actions and apologize, when one succeeds in eliciting the other's remorse, and when one forgives the other's transgression and prepares themself to start afresh in the relationship, all these changes in construing amount to no more than a retrenchment of the original inadequate outlook .
The intensity of our feeling of contempt is in direct proportion to the unwillingness of the other to display guilt. Thus, the essential quality of contempt is the need to make the other feel guilty. Transcending anger by revising one's construction of the event means arriving at an explanation that does not require the other's contrition, which only serves to appease the blaming person rather than enlighten them. Forgiveness and turning the other cheek only make sense in the context of blame, which implies a belief in the potential arbitrariness and capriciousness of human motives. Seeking the other's atonement does not reflect an effective understanding of the original insult.

From this vantage, if, rather than getting angry or condemning another who wrongs me, I respond with loving forgiveness, my absolution of the other presupposes my hostility toward them. I can only forgive the other's trespass to the extent that I recognize a sign of contrition or confession on their part. Buddhist perspectives talk of substituting compassion for anger. Others say we move beyond anger by forgiving those who wrong us. Traditional religious ideals of unconditional forgiveness, of turning the other cheek, loving one's oppressor need to be seen as conditional in various ways. In the absence of the other's willingness to atone, I may forgive evil when I believe that there are special or extenuating circumstances which will allow me to view the perpetrator as less culpable (the sinner knows not what they do). I can say the other was blinded or deluded, led astray. My offer of grace is then subtly hostile, both an embrace and a slap. I hold forth the carrot of my love as a lure, hoping thereby to uncloud the other's conscience so as to enable them to discover their culpability. In opening my arms, I hope the prodigal son or daughter will return chastised, suddenly aware of a need to be forgiven. Even when there is held little chance that the sinner will openly acknowledge their sin, I may hope that my outrage connects with a seed of regret and contrition buried deep within the other, as if my `unconditional' forgiveness is an acknowledgment of God's or the subliminal conscience of the other's apologizing in the name of the sinner.

This kind of unconditional forgiveness forgives in the name of a divine or natural moral order that the guilty party is in some sense answerable to, thereby linking this thinking to the normalizing, conformist impetus of conditional forgiveness. Heidegger (2010) explains that this kind of guilt is "defined as a lack, when something which ought to be and can be is missing."

 By contrast , postmodernist approaches , as I have characterized them in general terms, decenter the normative basis of ethical values. Grounding situational guilt is an unconditional, primordial

form of guilt. Primordial guilt "does not occur occasionally in Dasein, attached to it as a dark quality that it could get rid of if it made sufficient progress."(Heidegger 2010). Instead, "Da-sein is guilty in the ground of its being." The underlying supposition here is that guilt and the unjust are not lapses or failures of justice and the ethical but their condition of possibility.

As Derrida(2015) puts it:

"I must ask forgiveness for (the fact of) being just. Because it is unjust to be just. I always betray someone to be just…"
This acknowledgment serves to affirm the irreducible basis of angry blame as I have defined it, the belief that all human action contains a kernel of inherent violence, arbitrariness, alterity, qualitative otherness, polarization. This kernel is the condition of possibility of evil. I forgive the other just as I forgive myself and ask others to forgive me, because I am always guilty, I always "mean (to say) something that is (already, always, also) other than what I mean (to say)" (Derrida 1988, p.61). The condition of possibility of evil is existence itself.

"...existence, or consciousness, or the ''I,'' before any determined fault is at fault and in the process, consequently, of asking at least implicitly for forgiveness for the simple fact, finally, of being there."

"It is not simply a moral, ethical, or religious experience, but simply in order to go on and to produce the synthesis that you need to be yourself, and to identify yourself through time, you have to forgive yourself constantly. Forgiveness then is part of the temporal constitution of the ego, self-forgiveness. So from that point of view, yes and no, I forgive myself, I never forgive myself; it depends. We are a scene of multiple egos, persons. There is in me someone who is always ready to forgive and another who is absolutely merciless, and we are constantly fighting. Sometimes I can sleep, sometimes I cannot."(Derrida 2015).

Drawing on his understanding of the nature of self-identity as internally divided by guilty alterity, interminably demanding self-forgiveness, Derrida(2001) posits that we forgive others 'purely' only when we forgive them unconditionally on this same basis. He explains that in 'ordinary' , conditional forgiveness,

"I forgive on the condition that the guilty one repents, mends his ways, asks forgiveness, and thus would be changed by a new obligation, and that from then on he would no longer be exactly the same as the one who was found to be culpable.... As soon as the victim 'understands' the criminal, as soon as she exchanges, speaks, agrees with him, the scene of reconciliation has commenced, and with it this ordinary forgiveness which is anything but forgiveness."

By contrast, pure forgiveness for Derrida is not an acknowledgment of apology and reconciliation, and is not in the name of redeeming the wrongdoer by welcoming their return to a normative rational order. It is instead an acknowledgment of the structural condition of possibility of the 'evil' act itself. Rather than an acceptance of the contrite other , pure forgiveness would be an acceptance of the necessary role of absolute alterity in the constitution of justice, honesty and intentional meaning in general. Forgiveness, in both its conditional normalizing and pure unconditional guises, is driven by my inadequate construal of intent as polarizingly transgressive. As a derivative of blame, it is motivated by, and looks for further

confirmation of, my pre-existing belief that the people I care about are susceptible to behaving in recalcitrant, capricious and dangerous ways. In one sense, this is a valid assessment, given the starting premise of the polarizing alterity of human motives. But because that starting premise is an ineffective guide for subsuming others' behavior, it leaves the person who relies on it vulnerable to all manner of future traumatic surprises. In this sense it is a failure as an anticipatory device, and the postmodern institutionalizing of blameful guilt as the irreducible ground of experience, and the angry extorting of the other's contrition and apology, only reaffirm this failure.

To no longer believe in the blamefulness of anger is to no longer believe in a self-blaming form of guilt. This doesn't mean we don't experience the pain of knowing our actions were related to another's potential or actual suffering, or our own. In situational guilt, our falling away from another we care for could be spoken of as an alienation of oneself from oneself. When we feel we have failed another, we mourn our mysterious dislocation from a competence or value which we associated ourselves with. One feels as if having fallen below the standards one has erected for themself. It follows from this that any thinking of guilt as a `should have, could have' blamefulness deals in a notion of dislocation and distance, of a mysterious discrepancy within intended meaning, separating who we were from who we are in its teasing gnawing abyss. But to transcend the thinking of blame is to perceive one's guilt as a paired-down suffering because it is a responsibility without self-blame.

What's the difference between a blameful and a non-blameful awareness that one's construction of one's role with respect to another has lost a former intimacy and coherence? It is the flip side of blameful anger at the other's changed construction of their role in relation to me. In both cases, the philosophies of blame attribute transgressive value to the intrinsic content of an element of meaning, so one can be conditioned to arbitrarily lose or lessen one's ability to care about another. My anger then tries to recondition that feeling of caring back into the other person (knock some sense back into them). But value and caring is never an attribute or property of a content of meaning, but is instead a function of the assimilative intricacy and permeability of the movement from one moment of experience to the next. If the content of sense is too simple to harbor polarizing, transgressive directionality, I can no more guiltily blame myself for complacently settling into one transgressive heading rather than another than I can angrily blame another for doing so. And I certainly can no longer ground situational, conditional guilt and forgiveness in a primordial being-at-fault.

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