

## I'll Show You: Spite as a Reactive Attitude

Krista K. Thomason\*

### ABSTRACT

Spite is typically considered a vicious emotion that causes us to engage in petty, vindictive, and sometimes self-destructive behavior. Even though it has this bad reputation, I will argue that spite is a reactive attitude. Spite is emotional defiance of another's command: to spite you, I will do something exactly because you told me not to. Our liability to feelings of spite presupposes that we recognize others as having practical authority, which is why it qualifies as a reactive attitude. I conclude by offering conditions under which spite can be justified and unjustified.

Chuck Jones, the Warner Brothers animator and creator of some of their most famous characters, such as Daffy Duck and Wile E. Coyote, frequently disagreed with his producer, Eddie Selzer.<sup>1</sup> Their conflict reached a point when Jones and the rest of the animators would immediately do whatever Selzer told them not to do. When Selzer told the animators that they were forbidden to write cartoons featuring camels, Friz Freleng responded by writing a Bugs Bunny short called “Sahara Hare,” which featured camels. Later, Selzer demanded—for no apparent reason—that there be no cartoons about bullfighting. Michael Maltese and Jones responded by writing “Bully for Bugs,” a Bugs Bunny short that featured Bugs as a bullfighter. Selzer told Jones not to write the character Pepé Le Pew, and not only did Jones and Maltese write the short “For Scent-imental Reasons” featuring Pepé Le Pew, it won an Oscar in 1950, which Selzer had to go on stage and accept. Jones explains the relationship between the producer and the cartoonists this way: “If Eddie said no, we had to do it!”<sup>2</sup>

The behavior of Jones and the other cartoonists looks like a typical case of spite. While the stories of the Warner Brothers animators may be funny, we typically think that spite is no laughing matter. At the very least, spite is immature or petty. Surely the adult thing to do would have been for Jones and the other cartoonists to talk to Selzer about their concerns and try to reason with him about his unhelpful creative input. Their spiteful behavior did nothing to improve their working relationship with Selzer and only made an already antagonistic situation worse. Beyond mere immaturity or pettiness, spite seems to involve a deliberate desire to irritate, annoy, or anger its target. Jones and the other animators were delighted when Selzer fumed at their

\*Swarthmore College

disobedience. Given this desire to deliberately irritate and mock its target, spite seems to be an attitude of disrespect.

Spite hasn't received much attention in the philosophical literature. When spite does appear, it is typically condemned. Here I suggest that a closer examination of spite might lead us to rethink this condemnation. This paper will proceed as follows. I will first describe the contours of spite—what it is, how it works, and when we feel it. I will then argue that spite is a reactive attitude because it is emotional defiance of someone's practical authority. We are liable to spite precisely because we recognize the standing of its target to make demands on us. Further, I will argue that there are cases when spite is justified.

Before I begin, let me make a few clarifications. As with many emotions, we can think of them as either episodic or as character traits. For example, I can experience envy on particular occasions without therefore being an envious person. For my purposes, I will leave aside spite as a character trait and focus on its episodes. Additionally, I am presuming that spite is an emotion. Spite is sometimes more closely associated with actions; we describe certain behaviors as spiteful and we talk of doing something "out of spite." Yet we also talk of doing something "out of jealousy" or "out of anger," so these sorts of locutions are compatible with spite being an emotion as well as a way of describing actions.

### 1. WHAT IS SPITE?

Philosophers who work on emotions are familiar with the term "nasty emotions."<sup>3</sup> Nasty emotions are typically thought to be vicious or harmful, and they are emotions that we should, to the best of our abilities, avoid. This category is disputed, but is often taken to include jealousy, envy, vengeance, hatred, and spite.<sup>4</sup> Although spite is usually included on the list, it has received few fully developed discussions in the literature.<sup>5</sup>

In this section, I will examine the core features of spite. I want to get a sense of what makes spite the emotion it is and what differentiates it from other emotions. My goal is to form a working definition that will allow us to make spite intelligible, but not to make any strong claims about the necessary or sufficient conditions for spite. Because there are few developed accounts of spite, most of the work in this section will be constructive. There are some skeletal remarks in the literature that we can start with.

As it is with many emotions, we can begin to develop an account of spite by turning back to Aristotle. Aristotle classifies spite (*epēreasmōs*) as a species of belittling (*oligōira*) and discusses it in the same section where he discusses anger.<sup>6</sup> He describes the spiteful person as:

an impediment to [another's] wishes, not to get anything for himself but so that the other does not. Since, then, there is no gain for himself, he belittles; for clearly he does not suppose [the other] will harm him (or he would be afraid and would not belittle) nor that [the other] might benefit [him] in any way worth mentioning (for then he would be taking thought so as to become a friend). (1991, 2.2, 1378b)

Aristotle's remarks are scant, but we can see that the spiteful person prevents someone else from doing or getting what she wishes. Yet, the spiteful person does not do this in order to gain from it; she does it just to frustrate or impede the other person. In addition, the spiteful person is not threatened by the one she spites. Nor does she see that person as someone who can do something beneficial for her. As a result, Aristotle thinks of spite as an "actualization" of a low opinion about the spited person (1991, 2.2., 1378b).

Although Aristotle discusses spite in its relation to anger, Solomon and other contemporary philosophers typically treat its closest relative as envy.<sup>7</sup> Solomon argues that spite is "malicious envy with a special wicked twist" (2007, 104). What do envy and spite have in common? First, spite and envy are both other-directed. We envy other people for what they have and we feel spite toward those who, like Selzer did to Jones, tell us what to do. Along with Aristotle, Solomon accepts that spite seeks damage to another without any gain for oneself. This feature is what leads Solomon to claim that spite is "self-destructive" (2007, 103). Envy has been thought of as self-destructive for similar reasons.<sup>8</sup> Envy sometimes leads us to destroy or disparage the object that we envy: if I envy my neighbor's baking ability, I might knock her pie off the windowsill when she sets it out to cool. Spoiling her pie doesn't make me a better baker, so in this sense, my envy gains me nothing. Spite can cause us to act destructively in a similar way. Think of the phrase "don't cut off your nose to spite your face." This adage is a warning about the self-destructive nature of spite.<sup>9</sup> Finally, although spite is primarily self-destructive, Solomon also argues that it often "carries with it a great deal of collateral damage" (2007, 104). Again, envy and spite are similar in this way. Envy can lead us to hurt the envied person.<sup>10</sup> As Solomon seems to suggest, envy can actually become spite if our destructive behavior aims to bring the envied person down just for the sake of bringing her down. Envying my neighbor's baking skills might lead me to sabotage her pie. If I sabotage her pie out of spite, I simply want to hurt her, see her upset, or make her angry. As Rawls puts it, the spiteful person denies to others "benefits that he does not need and cannot use himself" (2003, 467–68).

Let me draw together some of these remarks to form a more precise definition. Spite is a *nasty* emotion in at least three senses. First, spite tends to lead the person who feels it to do something wrong or vicious. In Aristotle's case, the person in the midst of spite will do something belittling toward the object of her spite. In Solomon's case, the spiteful person might try to hurt the object of her spite. This is in part true of Jones and the Warner Brothers animators. Their shorts were designed to defy Selzer and make him angry. Second, spite appears to have a negative valence.<sup>11</sup> Unlike emotions like joy or gratitude, emotions like spite, envy, or anger are typically thought to be unpleasant to feel. Third, spite is the sort of emotion we typically criticize people for feeling.<sup>12</sup> Doing something out of spite or being spiteful is seen as petty, vindictive, or vicious.

The second feature of spite is that it is generally *other-directed* (like resentment or gratitude) rather than *self-directed* (like guilt or shame).<sup>13</sup> We feel spite toward another person either (a) because of something that person has said or done, even if that thing is merely perceived or (b) because of the sort of person that the target of

spite is or is perceived to be. Again, the Warner Brothers case helps to explain this feature. The cartoonists made cartoons specifically to defy Selzer's orders. As Jones relates the story, it hadn't even occurred to them to write a cartoon about bullfights until Selzer brought it up (1989, 93–94). Additionally, Selzer was, by most accounts, a heavy-handed micromanager who didn't understand cartoons at all.<sup>14</sup> The cartoonists spited his specific orders, but they also spited him because of the sort of producer he was—joyless and authoritarian. Spite is thus other-directed in a specific way: if I want to spite you, I want to do something *because* you told me not to. Conversely, I can also spite you by *not* doing something *because* you told me to do it. I will do or not do some particular action precisely because it will upset you, irritate you, or simply show you that I won't take orders from you.

This feature of spite is connected to the next: spite is typically *imprudent*. The adage about cutting off your nose to spite your face makes this clear. Jones and the other cartoonists would probably have been better served to have an amicable relationship with their producer. Defying his orders, even if those orders were misguided and stupid, was not wise, even if doing so led to great cartoons. Even when spite leads to good consequences, this fact is often secondary to the reasons that we do the spiteful thing. Jones and the rest of the cartoonists wrote the cartoons primarily to make Selzer angry. The better the cartoon was, the more they could spite him.

More could be said about the nature of spite, and as the paper proceeds, I will expand on some of these remarks. The three features I have outlined hopefully provide enough of a sketch to move forward. I will now turn to the question of spite's role in our emotional lives. To explain this role, I will argue that spite is, in Strawsonian language, a "reactive attitude" (2003, 76).

## 2. WHAT IS A REACTIVE ATTITUDE?

In the famous paper "Freedom and Resentment," Strawson uses "reactive attitudes" to refer to emotions like resentment and gratitude that are central to our practices of blaming and holding people responsible (2003, 76). Reactive attitudes have now become a staple in philosophy of emotion. Much of the literature focuses on the reactive attitudes and their relationship to responsibility.<sup>15</sup> As Macnamara points out, however, these emotions are not exhaustive of reactive attitudes (2015, 546 n. 1).<sup>16</sup> I will argue that spite meets the criteria for a reactive attitude even though it is not related to our practices of responsibility. First, we need to know what makes an emotion a reactive attitude.

Strawson's discussion of reactive attitudes is by now well-worn territory, but the relationship between reactive attitudes and moral emotions is not as straightforward as one might think. One widely accepted position is that reactive attitudes are moral emotions, but not all moral emotions are reactive attitudes. Wallace, for example, writes that reactive attitudes are "often moral sentiments, in that the evaluative beliefs that give rise to them are often beliefs that some moral transgression has been committed" (1994, 33). For McGeer, reactive attitudes are "an important subset of our moral emotions" that we direct toward those who are not just the objects of moral regard, but "who are capable of moral regard in return" (2012, 300). Likewise, Darwall claims that reactive attitudes are those we direct toward others with "the

capacity to take moral demands as conclusive reasons for action” (2006, 78). On views like these, reactive attitudes are moral emotions with a more specific focus: they are intimately related to demands, obligations, and expectations to which responsible moral agents can hold themselves and others.

Deigh and Mason, however, have argued that this conception of Strawson’s account is overly narrow and not in keeping with Strawson’s original discussion. According to Deigh, the core claim of Strawson’s account is that reactive attitudes involve the discernment of intentional displays of good or ill will rather than the capacity to reciprocate expectations (2011, 208). Mason points out that if we interpret reactive attitudes too narrowly, two of Strawson’s own examples—anger and gratitude—would not be reactive attitudes (2003, 244–45). Even if we accept that reactive attitudes are a subset of moral emotions, there is disagreement about what makes a moral emotion reactive or not.

Returning to the original text helps shed some light. Strawson’s own description allows for a wide range of emotions that might fall into the category of reactive attitudes:

In general, we demand some degree of goodwill or regard on the part of those who stand in . . . relationships to us, though the forms we require it to take vary widely in different connections. The range and intensity of our *reactive* attitudes towards goodwill, its absence or its opposite vary no less widely. (2003, 76, emphasis original)

Reactive attitudes arise in us because of, what Strawson calls, our “participation” in relationships (2003, 79). What exactly does it mean to be a participant in a relationship? For Strawson, the best explanation lies in the contrast between the participant attitude and what he calls the “objective attitude” (*ibid.*). Although Strawson uses the term “attitude,” I will instead use “perspective” or “stance” to help differentiate these two attitudes from more specific reactive attitudes. Examples of the objective stance include seeing another person as “an object of social policy” or as someone to be “managed or handled or cured or trained” (*ibid.*). Take, for example, the sort of perspective one finds in pickup artists.<sup>17</sup> Pickup artists are heterosexual men who see women as objects of manipulation, deception, and coercion. They do “basic training workshops” that present men with strategies for seducing and sleeping with as many women as possible (Strauss 2005, 15). We can call the stance of the pickup artist “strategic.” From within this stance, women are puzzles to be solved or games to be won, but not people with whom the pickup artist reasons or shares expectations.

By contrast, reactive attitudes take place in the participant stance where we do see others as people with whom we share reasons and expectations. Rather than seeing someone as a puzzle to be solved, we see that person as having “practical authority” (Darwall 2006, 9). If we see another person as having practical authority, we see them as having the ability or standing to “address” us (2006, 40–43). This form of address involves our practices of justification, reasoning together, and holding each other accountable. Recognizing that another person has this practical authority is supposed to rule out the behavior like that of the pickup artist. The pickup artist will

see a woman's concerns or desires as things to be managed or overcome rather than concerns or desires that are addressed to him. A woman who discovered that a pickup artist was treating her as a puzzle to be solved would appeal to her own practical authority when she objected to such treatment. The objection to being treated like a puzzle arises from within the participant perspective: she has the right to demand from the pickup artist a form of regard that his behavior violates. Reactive attitudes of the kind Strawson has in mind are emotions to which we are prone from within the participant stance rather than the objective stance. They are emotions that we address to others because we recognize them as having practical authority.

### 3. HOW IS SPITE A REACTIVE ATTITUDE?

Given these criteria, spite qualifies as a reactive attitude. It is, as I will argue shortly, a form of emotional defiance to the exercise of someone else's practical authority. Before I argue for this claim, let me address some of the reasons why spite's status as a reactive attitude might seem implausible. The first worry is that spite is a nasty emotion. Of course, reactive attitudes are not always positive attitudes; resentment and guilt are both negative. As Strawson makes clear, reactive attitudes involve the perception of good or ill will. If someone responds to me with ill will, surely I will not feel positively toward her. The problem with spite, however, is not that it is negative, but that it is *nasty*. Nasty emotions by their very nature are immoral.<sup>18</sup> To see this, recall D'Arms and Jacobson's distinction between "fit" and "appropriateness" (2000, 68–70). An emotion's fit is what makes it intelligible and an emotion's appropriateness is what makes it justifiable. D'Arms and Jacobson use the example of envy. Envy can make sense to feel (it can fit), but it is never morally appropriate to feel because it can never be morally justified. Unlike negative emotions like anger and resentment, nasty emotions have no appropriateness conditions. There is never a right time or place to feel them. If spite is a nasty emotion, then it is difficult to see how it could be a reactive attitude. Reactive attitudes are supposed to be a subset of moral emotions. If spite is never morally justified, then how could it be a moral emotion?

Let me begin by raising some questions about the claim that spite is never appropriate. Why would this be the case? One possibility is that spite is always immature or petty. Is immaturity or pettiness always inappropriate? Return to the example of the Warner Brothers cartoonists. Suppose that making cartoons they were told not to make is indeed immature. Nonetheless, the immaturity was meant to prove a point: from Jones' perspective, Selzer was being arbitrary and unreasonable with his demands. There were no deeper reasons behind Selzer's edict of "no camels" other than his idiosyncratic preferences. Selzer's peculiar demands seemed to be petty bureaucracy without any reason or justification. So, the cartoonists responded to arbitrary pettiness with arbitrary pettiness: tell me, "no camels" and I'll show you camels. In this way, the immaturity of the cartoonists was meant to call attention to Selzer's own immaturity. One might object here that payback in kind is itself always immature, but we would then need to see an argument that it is always better to be the "bigger person" in situations like this. Being the bigger person might be evidence of more advanced or developed virtue, but this claim does not entail that paying back

immaturity with immaturity is never appropriate. It simply may not be the most optimally virtuous thing to do.

That said, the worry about spite's nastiness likely points to a deeper concern. If reactive attitudes are supposed to be those that arise within the participant stance where we recognize others as having practical authority, it appears as though that stance would rule out emotions that are disrespectful. Isn't the point, so this objection goes, of Strawson's participant stance that it presupposes that we see other people as members of the moral community? This is why the strategic attitude that I described earlier is ruled out. It seems as though the participant stance likewise rules out emotions that fail to recognize the practical authority of others.<sup>19</sup> After all, feeling spite means that I want to defy your commands. Isn't this inherently disrespectful?

There is some ambiguity here about the relationship between respect and recognizing or acknowledging someone's practical authority. It seems intuitive that recognizing practical authority means that we would always respect that authority. Recall, however, that we can mean respect in two different ways: what Darwall calls "recognition respect" and "appraisal respect" (2006, 122–25). While appraisal respect is a kind of positive esteem, recognition respect is the kind that we owe to all persons whether we esteem them positively or not. Feelings of spite seem to be incompatible with appraisal respect, but are they incompatible with recognition respect? The answer depends on how we interpret recognition respect.

What exactly does recognition respect require? Does it require some minimal form of regard and basic goodwill or does it require seeing a person as a person? As Mason has argued, taking the latter interpretation has often been thought to then entail the former (2003, 265–69). That is, if I see a person as a person, doing so commits me to having some minimal regard for her. Yet a great deal hangs on what 'minimal regard' turns out to be. For example, recognizing someone's practical authority might rule out or "oppose" (to use Strawson's term) the objective or strategic stance toward that person (2003, 79). Yet the fact that the participant stance opposes the objective stance doesn't get us very far in determining exactly which emotions we will be liable to. As Strawson argues, the reactive attitudes I am prone to will depend on the kind of relationships and forms of regard that go along with them. I can occupy the participant perspective with regard to my spouse and with regard to my hated rival. I can see them both as people, and doing so will rule out certain attitudes in both cases. I wouldn't, for example, hear their words as mere noise or interact with them as I would pieces of furniture. This form of regard, however, seems too minimal; intuitively, seeing someone as a person should engender more regard than this.

Trouble arises when we try to spell out more maximal regard. The problem is that we have to explain recognition respect in a way that does not entail appraisal respect. Put simply, just because I interact with you as a person, it doesn't follow that I will be nice to you. As Manne has argued, recognizing that someone is a person is compatible with behaving badly toward her. She writes, "[A] fellow human being is not just an intelligible spouse, parent, child, sibling, friend, colleague, and so on . . . She is also an intelligible rival, enemy, usurper, insubordinate, betrayer . . . she is also someone who could coerce, manipulate, humiliate, or undermine you"

(2016, 399). If we think of Strawson's participant stance as a proxy for recognition respect, we see that a wide range of emotions can be compatible with recognition respect. Being in a loving, intimate relationship, for example, makes us prone to tenderness and compassion, but also humiliation and jealousy. In experiencing these dark emotions, we are still treating each other as participants and acknowledging each other's practical authority. Thus, vicious emotions can still be compatible with recognizing another's practical authority. Both Mason and Bell have argued, for example, that contempt has this status.<sup>20</sup> Feeling contempt toward another person does not mean that we no longer occupy the participant stance with her.

I suggest that spite is like contempt in this way. First, spite is addressed to another person: like the other reactive attitudes, it communicates something. Macnamara's (2013, 2015) arguments explain how reactive attitudes communicate. On Macnamara's view, reactive attitudes involve "emotional uptake of representational content" (2015, 559). Resentment, for example, represents the resented behavior as offensive or insulting. Expressing my resentment to the person who has exhibited such behavior sends the message that I represented her behavior in this way. As Macnamara points out, this is what I am communicating in saying "screw you" to the target of my resentment (2013, 906–908). Saying "screw you" is to communicate, "I know what you did and you are a jerk for doing it." Return to my earlier example of the woman who discovers that she is the target of the pickup artist. She may be rightly appalled by his treatment, call him a pig, and throw a drink in his face. It is precisely because she recognizes his practical authority that she does this. She expected him to treat her like a person rather than a conquest because she presumes he occupies the participant perspective with her.

On my view, spite is a modified version of "screw you." Spite is an emotion of defiance. Consider the contexts where spite normally arises. Spite typically follows someone's attempted exercise of authority over us. Jones and the cartoonists became spiteful toward Selzer when he told them what not to draw. Crucially, spite is not a response to the particular content of the order or demand. It wouldn't have mattered if Selzer had told Jones not to draw train cars rather than camels or fox hunting rather than bullfighting. Whatever Selzer prohibited, Jones would have drawn it. Rather, spite arises as a response to the demand or command as such. It is a response to the other person's exercise of authority *qua* exercise of authority. Jones wants to draw whatever Selzer tells him not to draw *because* Selzer tells him not to draw it. Notice that Jones doesn't simply ignore Selzer's demands. He hears them, knows they are demands, and then specifically, intentionally acts contrary to them. Moreover, Jones wants Selzer to know that he is intentionally defying his commands. Jones draws the cartoon specifically for this reason.

It is tempting to think that the kind of authority that is operative here is what we might call social authority.<sup>21</sup> That is, we are tempted to spite people who occupy roles where they have some power over us. For example, employees will spite bosses or children will spite parents. Typical cases of spite do involve these kinds of relations, but I suggest that it is because these also happen to be relationships where commands are frequently issued. Feelings of spite arise in the context of commands, but commands can be issued between equals. Friends, colleagues, and spouses will



spite each other even though there is no social hierarchy between them. Spite is intelligible as an emotional response only if we presuppose that the person who feels it recognizes the practical authority of the target. Normally, acknowledging someone's practical authority involves deferring to it. If people make requests and demands, we usually acquiesce. We give directions, do favors, and follow orders. Even if the demands seem excessive, we will usually negotiate with the person making them. We take requests and demands seriously in part because they are requests and demands from our fellow humans. We can explain our actions in terms of the practical authority behind the requests and demands. If someone asks, "Why did you give that person directions?" I can reasonably respond "Well, because she asked."

Cases of spite work the same way, except they are backwards. In a typical case, the fact that you will be angry or upset if I don't follow your orders is reason for me to follow them. In cases of spite, the fact that you will be angry or upset if I don't follow your orders is reason for me *not* to follow them. Jones had no plans to write a cartoon about bullfighting until Selzer told him not to. Indeed, Jones may not have even wanted to write about bullfighting, and he might have gone the rest of his career not writing about it. His reason for writing "Bully for Bugs" was because Selzer told him not to. Spite, like our other reactive attitudes, is a way of communicating something. What it communicates is a thumb to the nose toward the person who is its target.

One might object that to defy a demand is not to properly acknowledge or recognize the demand. Yet, as Macnamara explains, replies like 'screw you' are only intelligible if we suppose that defiance is one of the possible ways of responding to demands even if it is not the response expected by the person who issues it (2013, 897). A demand that is defied is still a demand. Further, the person who defies the demand responds the way she does precisely *because* she recognizes the utterance as a demand. Why does it occur to us to defy others in this way? Typical cases of spite involve an exercise of authority that is misplaced. That is, we often feel spiteful toward people who boss us around or butt into our business. Being ordered about in this way is an encroachment on our own practical authority. It is because I value my own practical authority that I don't always take it well when other people demand things of me. If I tell someone, "You're not the boss of me," it is my way of reasserting my own practical authority in a case where I think it is not being properly acknowledged. In cases like this, spite has the cognitive structure Macnamara describes (2013, 906–908). I do something spiteful toward you as a way of communicating that I don't appreciate your demands. Once you see my spiteful behavior, you recognize that I am intentionally defying you. I am, so to speak, loudly displaying to you my own practical authority.

The defiant aspect of spite explains its imprudent characteristic. Spite will motivate me to do whatever you tell me not to do. You might be giving me excellent and well-meaning suggestions that are good for me. This is not clear from the Warner Brothers case, so imagine a different one. Suppose I am out to dinner with my mother. I had planned to skip dessert because I am trying to eat healthier. The end of the meal comes along and my mother orders me not to eat dessert because I need to eat healthier. Out of spite, I order dessert. I have now acted against my own

interests and contrary to my own desires. If you were to tell me that such behavior was imprudent, I'd likely agree. Unfortunately, that doesn't count for me as a reason not to do it. The whole point of ordering dessert is to defy my mother's order. It has nothing to do with the fact that I think eating dessert is a good thing to do. We can see why people acting out of spite will engage in behavior that is unwise or even harmful to themselves.<sup>22</sup> My willingness to act against my own interests drives home to the target of my spite that I am acting just to defy her. I am so committed to doing what you told me not to that I am willing to do stupid and harmful things to myself just to buck your authority.

To summarize, spite is a reactive attitude because it takes place within the participant perspective. We are liable to spite because we see others as being able to exercise practical authority over us and we don't always like it. Spite's internal aim is defiance of that authority. The only way I can thumb my nose at you is if I acknowledge that you're trying to command me in the first place. To be clear, the fact that spite is a reactive attitude does not entail that it is always justified. Just as resentment can be justified and unjustified depending on the context, spite may be justified under some circumstances and not others. In the Warner Brothers case, spite seems to be a response to Selzer's heavy-handed managerial style and his apparent presumption that he knew better than the cartoonists. He failed to recognize their expertise and deferred instead to his own (misinformed, nonexpert) judgment. In addition, in ordering them to refrain from drawing camels or bullfighting, he was simply trying to throw his weight around and be the 'tough guy' manager who wants everyone to know he's in charge. If we think of Selzer as exercising his practical authority in excessive or arbitrary ways, then the animators' spite was a justified response. Their spiteful cartoons were in defiance of being bossed around and having their expertise dismissed. In this case, spite would send the message, "You have no right to order me around this way." Spite can be justified if someone tries to exercise arbitrary, misplaced, or excessive authority over us.

Spite may be unjustified if we defy someone else's practical authority for the sheer desire to be defiant. In this case, spite starts to resemble malice. For example, suppose my roommate has spent a lot of time working on a complicated jigsaw puzzle and asks me not to disturb it. Out of spite, I dump it on the floor. Her request was not troublesome to me nor does it occur in the context of a history of unreasonable requests on her part. My defiance in this case seems merely to delight in refusing her; I defy her simply because I can.<sup>23</sup> My refusal to do what she asks just because she asks it now sends a different message than Jones and the cartoonists send to Selzer. The animators are attempting to reassert their own practical authority after it has been encroached upon. When I toss my roommate's puzzle on the floor, I send the message that I get to choose when I take seriously her standing to make demands. I show her that she can't expect me to acknowledge her practical authority, and that I might decide to or not depending on my own whims. Justified spite is a way of reminding the spited person what the boundaries are when they are overstepped. Unjustified spite treats someone's practical authority as contingent upon our choice to acknowledge it.

Spite can be petty, but it would be a mistake to think that reactive attitudes must be mature and virtuous. In keeping with Strawson's original point, our relationships are varied and complex. Sometimes they will be petty and vindictive, and our emotional lives will reflect this. As such, spite is just as much at home in the participant stance as resentment.<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES

1. The history of their relationship is discussed in both Jones (1989) and Sito (2006).
2. Quoted in Sito (2006, 42).
3. Both Solomon (2007) and de Sousa (1987) use the term "nasty."
4. For lists like this, see de Sousa (1987), Solomon (2007), and Tappolet (2018).
5. For example, although spite is in the title of Konstan and Rutter's (2003) edited volume, it makes few appearances in the text and is often elided with *Schadenfreude* (see n. 11 for further detail). One of the most recent volumes on negative emotions edited by Tappolet, Teroni, and Ziv includes no entries on spite (2018). Philosophers are not alone on this front: Marcus et. al. point out that spite is also understudied in psychological literature on emotions (2014, 563).
6. There is controversy in the literature regarding which emotion counts as spite for Aristotle. Here I am following Kristjánsson in treating *epēreasmós* as spite rather than *epichairekakia*, which is better understood as *Schadenfreude* (2007, 55–57). For example, both Gill (2003) and Ben-Ze'ev (2003) take *epichairekakia* to be spite. Yet, they both describe this emotion as taking pleasure in another's misfortune (Gill 2003, 35; Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 116). While this is characteristic of *Schadenfreude*, it is not an apt description of spite.
7. See Gill (2003), Ben-Ze'ev (2003), Rawls (2003), and Protasi (2016).
8. For examples of this explanation, see Roberts (1991, 15–16), Taylor (2006, 43–44), Thomason (2015, 39–40), and Protasi (2016, 543–544).
9. Marcus et. al. (2014) argue that self-harm is a necessary feature of spite, but I am not defending this stronger claim here.
10. See Roberts (1991, 15–18) and Taylor (2006, 45–49).
11. The discussion around what 'negative valence' means is complex. Here I am describing spite as negative in hedonic terms—that is, negative emotions are unpleasant to experience. In spite's case, I think this description is not quite accurate, but arguing for this conclusion is tangential to my main aims here. For difficulties with the hedonic account and controversy over negative valence, see Teroni (2018).
12. For discussions of the ways in which emotions can be evaluated, see Adams (1985), Greenspan (1991), Ben-Ze'ev (1997), Sherman (1999), D'Arms and Jacobson (2000), Smith (2005), and Solomon (2007).
13. I am taking this distinction from Macnamara, though she uses the term "other-regarding" (2013, 899).
14. Both Sito (2006) and Jones (1989) portray him this way.
15. For a small sample, see Wallace (1994), Darwall (2006), Watson (2004), Macnamara (2013, 2015), and McGeer (2012, 2018).
16. In this footnote, Macnamara is primarily concerned with pointing out that there are self-regarding reactive attitudes whereas resentment and indignation are other-regarding reactive attitudes.
17. Strauss (2005) provides an in-depth look at the mindset and strategies of pickup artists.
18. For this explanation of what makes an emotion immoral, see Thomason (2015).
19. This is the objection that Mason (2003) thinks people make against contempt.
20. See Mason (2003) and Bell (2013).
21. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this terminology and for raising this objection.
22. Obviously, there are limits to the harm we will endure to satisfy our spite. In normal instances, it is unlikely that we would seriously harm ourselves just to spite someone.
23. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on examples like these.
24. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers and to Andreas Elpidorou for their very helpful feedback on this paper. Many thanks also to Brandon Polite, Aaron Harper, Laura Papish, Mavis Biss, Scott Thomason, and Shelly DeAntonio for talking through many of these ideas with me while I was writing this paper.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, Robert 1985. "Involuntary Sins," *The Philosophical Review* 94: 3–31.
- Aristotle 1991. *On Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, Macalester 2013. *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ben-Ze'ev, Aaron 1997. "Emotions and Morality," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 31: 195–212.
- . 2003. "Aristotle on Emotions Towards the Fortune of Others" in Kostan and Rutter, eds. (2003, 99–122).
- D'Arms, Justin and Daniel Jacobson 2000. "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61(1): 65–90.
- de Sousa, Ronald 1987. *The Rationality of Emotion*, Boston, MA: MIT University Press.
- Darwall, Stephen 2006. *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Deigh, John 2011. "Revisiting Reactive Attitudes" in *Morality and the Emotions*, ed. Carla Bagnoli, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gill, Christopher 2003. "Is Rivalry a Virtue or a Vice?" in Kostan and Rutter, eds. (2003, 29–52).
- Greenspan, Patricia 1991. "Subjective Guilt and Responsibility," *Mind* 101(402): 287–303.
- Jones, Chuck 1989. *Chuck Amuck: The Life and Times of an Animated Cartoonist*, New York: Macmillan.
- Konstan, David and N. Keith Rutter, eds. 2003. *Envy, Spite, and Jealousy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kristjánsson, Kristján 2007. *Aristotle, Emotions, and Education*, New York: Routledge.
- Macnamara, Colleen 2013. "'Screw You!' & 'Thank You'," *Philosophical Studies* 165: 893–914.
- . 2015. "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90(3): 546–69.
- Manne, Kate 2016. "Humanism: A Critique," *Social Theory and Practice* 42(2): 389–415.
- Marcus, David, Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Sterett Mercer, and Alyssa Norris 2014. "The Psychology of Spite and the Measurement of Spitefulness," *Psychological Assessment* 26(2): 563–74.
- Mason, Michelle 2003. "Contempt as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 113: 234–72.
- McGeer, Victoria 2012. "Co-Reactive Attitudes and the Making of Moral Community" in *Emotions, Imagination, and Moral Reasoning*, ed. Robyn Langdon and Catriona Mackenzie, New York: Psychology Press, Taylor and Francis.
- . 2018. "Scaffolding Agency: A Proleptic Account of the Reactive Attitudes," *European Journal of Philosophy* 26: 1–23.
- Protasi, Sara 2016 "Varieties of Envy," *Philosophical Psychology* 29(4): 535–49.
- Rawls, John 2003. *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roberts, Robert C. 1991. "What Is Wrong with Wicked Feelings?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28(1): 13–24.
- Sherman, Nancy 1999. "Taking Responsibility for Our Emotions," *Social Philosophy and Policy Foundation* 16: 294–323.
- Sito, Tom 2006. *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson*, Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- Smith, Angela 2005. "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," *Ethics* 115: 236–71.
- Solomon, Robert 2007. *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, Neil 2005. *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*, New York: Harper Collins.
- Strawson, P.F. 2003. "Freedom and Resentment" in *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Tappolet, Christine, Fabrice Teroni, and Anita Konzelmann Ziv, eds. 2018. *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions*, New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, Gabriele 2006. *Deadly Vices*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teroni, Fabrice 2018. "Emotionally Charged—The Puzzle of Affective Valence" in Tappolet, Teroni, and Ziv (2018, 10–19).
- Thomason, Krista K. 2015. "The Moral Value of Envy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 53(1): 36–53.
- Wallace, R. Jay 1994. *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Watson, Gary 2004. *Agency and Answerability: Selected Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press.