Properly Proleptic Blame*

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Crucially, blame can be addressed to its targets, as an implicit demand for recognition. But when we ask whether offenders would actually appreciate this demand, via a sound deliberative route from their existing motivations, we face a puzzle. If they would, their offense reflects a deliberative mistake, and blame's hostility seems unnecessary. If they wouldn't, addressing them is futile, and blame's emotional engagement seems unwarranted. To resolve this puzzle, I develop an account of blame as a proleptic response to indeterminacy in its target's reasons, yielding attractive accounts of blame's relation both to internal reasons claims and to free will.

Sometimes blame is as simple as attributing a bad outcome to a more general defect. I can blame the failure of the picnic on the weather, our misunderstanding on my poor hearing. However, moral psychologists have increasingly been drawn to the idea that a deeper and more interesting kind of blame—the kind of blame essentially directed at responsible agents, or paradigmatically expressed in attitudes like resentment—is in some sense communicative, or (as I will put it) *addressed*. Here blame expresses a "demand for reasonable regard," as Gary Watson writes, "a demand addressed to a moral agent, to one who is capable of understanding the demand."[1]

1. Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," in *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Ferdinand Schoeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 256–86, 264. For an insightful discussion of the versions of this proposal in the existing literature, see Coleen Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90 (2015): 546–69.

There are a number of reasons why this idea is attractive. For one, it opens the way for blame to serve a distinctive ethical function as a device for establishing and sustaining shared ethical understanding, rather than merely being an expression of retributive or retaliatory attitudes we would be better off without. For another, it promises a satisfying account of how blame can recognize a form of responsible agency—the capacity to understand and respond to normative demands—that is both characteristic of persons and intuitively important, and yet plausibly compatible with determinism. And consonantly with both of these considerations, it captures the importance we place on being blamed. When people we care about do not resent us after we wrong them, when they instead respond with gentle guidance or resigned acceptance, we tend to feel shut out or devalued, as though they did not respect us enough to address their demands to us.

However, there are also a number of reasons why the idea of addressed blame is puzzling. We often resent people when we know they will not or could not recognize and respond to our demands; more glaringly, blame is hostile in a way that other "incipient forms of communication" are not.[2] If this element of hostility is not justified in terms of blame's communicative role, how could it be justified at all, except by appeal to the problematic retributivism that the notion of address was supposed to help us avoid?

In short, the problem is to show how addressed blame can be justified without making the "blame" part incidental. In order to bring the problem into better focus, I'll begin by setting out a dilemma, which arises when we consider what I propose as addressed blame's distinctive elements of emotional engagement and hostility in relation to its target's attitudes. We can ask, is the offender what Bernard Williams called a "hard case," such that their attitudes do not support a "sound deliberative route" to the considerations they are blamed for neglecting?[3] Or did the offender have such a route and not take it, owing to ignorance, procedural irrationality, or a lack of self-governance? In the first case, I argue, addressed blame's element of emotional engagement is inappropriate; in the second, its element of hostility is.

So if addressed blame is to be appropriate at all, these can't be the only options. To show how they aren't, I'll draw on two central but underappreciated ideas from Williams's practical philosophy. The first is that what someone would—as opposed to could—conclude via sound deliberation can be indeterminate. This is because someone can have sound deliberative routes from their existing attitudes to any of a range

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2. The phrase is from Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil," 265.

3. Bernard Williams, "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame," in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 35–45.

of practical conclusions, each assigning different considerations different weights. In these cases, the extent to which the considerations a person is blamed for neglecting count as reasons for them, relative to their subjective values, may be indeterminate in turn. This is important, because it lets us see Williams's appeal to blame's "proleptic mechanism" in a new light.[4]

In general, blame is proleptic when the ability of its targets to recognize and respond to our demands may depend on our blame itself, and when the nature of our blame reflects this fact. While some of blame's proleptic mechanisms amount to little more than intimidation or peer pressure, addressed blame stands in a complex, dynamic, and ambivalent relation to its target's reasons. When we proleptically address blame to offenders, we presuppose that they have a sound deliberative route to the recognition we demand, but we do not presuppose that this is the only such route open to them. The former gives us reason to actively care about their recognition; the latter gives us reason to be hostile. We want the people we blame to be confronted with the considerations they've neglected as forcefully and vividly as possible, in the hope that they might be moved to accept them. But we are also ready to oppose these people should they ultimately refuse to do so.

This result has two important implications. First, it yields a broader understanding of rational appeal. It shows how claims about reasons can be constrained by the agent's attitudes—as opposed to being invocations of considerations whose supposed authority need not be accessible to the agent at all—without merely being predictions about what the agent would conclude under idealized deliberative conditions. Rather, they can be invitations, or demands, to deliberate in particular ways. Second, and not coincidentally, the essential connection between blame and indeterminacy may help us understand, and allay, certain deep but obscure sources of the suspicion that the freedom required for deep moral responsibility is incompatible with determinism.

I. BLAME, EMOTION, AND ADDRESS

It will help to begin with a paradigm case. The one I will use comes from a scene in the novel *Howards End* and requires a bit of background. But since the final act of *Howards End* is practically a study of blame, this is actually very convenient. Every major character blames someone at least once, each in his or her own way; collectively, they remind the philosophical reader that blame is heterogeneous. It comes in many species, with different characteristic presuppositions and aims; any theory of blame insensitive to this point would miss much of what makes the subject interesting. Thus, Helen Schlegel is indignant at her brother-in-law Henry

4. Ibid., 41.

Wilcox for his injustice toward a penniless clerk and resents her sister Margaret for tolerating it. Henry, a sensible man of business, responds by judiciously distancing himself from Helen in light of what he sees as her entirely improper anger, combined with her still more improper dalliance with the clerk himself. Of course, Henry blames the clerk too—who for his part is consumed by remorse—but that blame is old-fashioned retributivism: a man in his position, Henry judges, "must pay heavily for his misconduct, and be thrashed within an inch of his life." Even the third Schlegel sibling, the icily donnish Tibby, gives himself bad marks when he betrays his sister's confidence under pressure: having expected himself to do otherwise, he is "deeply vexed, not only for the harm he had done Helen, but for the flaw he had discovered in his own equipment."[5]

But Margaret's blame is special. It occurs when Henry refuses her a small but very important request: to allow the sisters to spend Helen's last night in England together, in his first wife's beloved ancestral cottage. This is not only heartless but also hypocritical of him: he had himself been unfaithful to the past Mrs. Wilcox (as it happens, with the woman who went on to marry Helen's clerk). Yet when Margaret begins to raise that point, Henry's reaction is insulting:

> "You have not been yourself all day," said Henry, and rose from his seat with face unmoved. Margaret rushed at him and seized both his hands. She was transfigured.
>   "Not any more of this!" she cried. "You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress—I forgave you. My sister has a lover—you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel—oh, contemptible!—a man who insults his wife when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he is not responsible. These men are you. You can't recognize them, because you cannot connect. I've had enough of your unweeded kindness. I've spoiled you long enough. All your life you have been spoiled. Mrs. Wilcox spoiled you. No one has ever told you what you are—muddled, criminally muddled. Men like you use repentance as a blind, so don't repent. Only say to yourself: 'What Helen has done, I've done.'"
>   "The two cases are different," Henry stammered. His real retort was not quite ready. His brain was still in a whirl, and he wanted a little longer.
>   "In what way different? You have betrayed Mrs. Wilcox, Henry, Helen only herself. You remain in society, Helen can't. You have had only pleasure; she may die. You have the insolence to talk to me of differences, Henry?"

5. E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. Paul Armstrong (New York: Norton, 1998), 217, 221.

Oh, the uselessness of it! Henry's retort came.

"I perceive you are attempting blackmail. It is scarcely a pretty weapon for a wife to use against her husband. My rule through life has been never to pay the least attention to threats, and I can only repeat what I said before: I do not give you and your sister leave to sleep at Howards End."

Margaret loosed his hands. He went into the house, wiping first one and then the other on his handkerchief. For a little she stood looking at the Six Hills, tombs of warriors, breasts of the spring. Then she passed out into what was now the evening.[6]

One of the most notable things about this scene is how different Margaret's blame at the beginning is from her blame at the end. The latter is cold rejection. It is a perfect example of blame as conceived by T. M. Scanlon: the revision in one's intentions and expectations toward a person warranted when they reveal attitudes that impair the relationships one has or could have to them.[7] Margaret lets go of Henry's hands; when she next sees him, it is to return his keys and announce her intention to leave him. His offense has revealed attitudes of his, she concludes, that make it impossible for her to love him as a husband. But when Margaret reaches this conclusion, she has stopped being angry. This suggests, as Scanlon's critics have insisted, that angry or emotional blame is appropriate under different conditions from its more detached counterparts and plays a different role.[8] Much of this difference, I suggest, consists in how Margaret's anger is addressed to Henry in a way her final rejection is not.

As I will understand it, addressed blame is a particular mode of concern. When you address blame to a person, you care in a particular way about that person's recognition of the considerations the offender is blamed for neglecting as suitably weighty reasons.[9] Like any other mode of concern, this entails characteristic patterns of attention, emotion, and

6. Ibid., 219.

7. T. M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), chap. 4.

8. See, e.g., Michelle Mason, "Blame: Taking it Seriously," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83 (2011): 473–81; Susan Wolf, "Blame, Italian Style," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 332–47; R. Jay Wallace, "Dispassionate Opprobrium: On Blame and the Reactive Sentiments," in *Reasons and Recognition*, 348–72. All three self-consciously follow P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), 1–25.

9. For simplicity, I will mainly discuss blame for actions. However, this formulation of addressed blame (along with the puzzle it generates) extends to omissions, desires, and any other attitude that is responsive to normative assessment from the perspective of the agent's subjective values. Notably, this does not include beliefs, which seems to me to mark a deep asymmetry between practical and epistemic normativity.

motivation, though the nature of these responses depends on the relation between the blamer, the offense, and the addressee. Blame can be addressed by victims of a putative offense or, vicariously, by others; it can be addressed to offenders, to third parties, or (perhaps) to oneself alone.[10] In the last of these cases, blame may not involve more than a sense of self-assertion or defiance; in the second, it generally involves feelings of outrage. (Here the thought is something like, "Can you see what they did? Such effrontery must not be tolerated!") Blame addressed to offenders, however, is essentially confrontational. It consists in an active, emotionally vulnerable concern that the offender be presented with the considerations they are blamed for neglecting in a form they are in a position to appreciate—a concern to "get in [their] face," as Susan Wolf puts it, a concern for them "to *see* your anger and to *feel* your pain."[11] While I do not think that it is possible to give a full analysis of this concern prior to an account of when and why it is appropriate, cases like Margaret's illustrate what I assume are some of its basic essential features: in addressing blame to an offender, you are disposed to be specially interested in and attentive to their attitudes with respect to the offense, to be pained not only by the offense itself but also by the offender's continued failure suitably to regret it, and to be motivated to bring about this regret by expressing your blame to them.

It is thus part of the nature of addressed blame that the failure effectively to express it is frustrating. However, the two should not be confused. I want to allow that it can make sense to address blame to a person when you do not or could not have sufficient reason to express it to them—for instance, if the costs of expressing blame outweigh the benefits, or if the addressee is distant or dead. Though the person's recognition may be unavailable, you may still have reason to care about it. (This may be why blame of the dead can be so burdensome and involve nagging tendencies to fantasize about confronting the person or obsess about what their conduct might have meant.) Conversely, when you cease caring about an offender's recognition, you normally also cease addressing blame to them. As such, I will assume that addressed blame is appropriate (or "fitting") only if you actually have reason to care about its addressee's recognition, just as fear is appropriate only if you actually have reason to care about what the thing you're afraid of endangers.

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10. Taken together, the varieties of addressed blame seem to me at least roughly coextensive with the Strawsonian reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation, which raises the question how, if at all, guilt fits into the framework. While I do not think that the answer is obvious, the idea that guilt involves parallel attitudes strikes me as promising. In particular, insofar as guilt normally includes a desire to apologize or atone, it may consist in a concern to provide, and be recognized reciprocally by the victim as providing, the recognition at which addressed blame aims.

11. Wolf, "Blame, Italian Style," 338; emphasis in the original.

This is the key difference between addressed blame and other forms. When Margaret finally rejects Henry, she does so because she takes his conduct to reveal facts about his attitudes that give her reason no longer to care about his recognition. It would be different if, after loosing Henry's hands and passing out into the evening, Margaret continued to stew about what happened and silently resent him. That would suggest that she continued to address her blame to Henry while judging that it would be pointless to express it. But she doesn't. She is bitterly disappointed, but she moves on. Were she less materially independent and self-assured, her resentment might still call out to others for protection or confirmation; as it stands, there is nothing for it but to withdraw.

In my view, Margaret's reaction reflects a general condition on blame: it is appropriately addressed only to offenders whose attitudes give them a potential basis for appreciating the considerations at issue, via what Williams called a "sound deliberative route." This leads to the problem I want to explore. It can be natural to think that there is always a fact of the matter as to what someone would conclude via sound deliberation, so that if it's not the case that you wouldn't appreciate certain considerations were you to soundly deliberate from your existing attitudes, it must be the case that you would. But this would limit blame to cases of deliberative failure—like ignorance, confusion, or weakness of will—and this is implausible: Margaret's anger, at least, certainly doesn't seem to rest on the *presupposition* that some such factor is at work. So if we take Margaret's case at face value—and in the next sections, I'll argue that we should—it follows that blame addressed to offenders can only be appropriate if there's another option.

II. WHY BLAME IS INAPPROPRIATELY ADDRESSED TO HARD CASES

Let me first define some terms. Notoriously, Williams held that all of our reasons for action were constrained by, or "internal" to, our attitudes, such that "[an agent] *A* has a reason to φ only if there is a *sound deliberative route* from *A*'s subjective motivational set . . . to *A*'s φ-ing."[12] I will not assume this view here, however. While I am happy to allow that some or all genuine normative reasons may be external, this would not make blame less puzzling. Blame is puzzling because a natural conception of how an agent's failure to give weight to certain considerations may or may not reflect their underlying evaluative commitments seems to imply

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12. Bernard Williams, "Postscript: Some Further Notes on Internal and External Reasons," in *Varieties of Practical Reasoning*, ed. Elijah Millgram (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 91–97, 91; emphasis in the original.

that it can't appropriately be addressed to its targets. Whether or not these considerations correspond to external reasons is irrelevant.

To this end, it will be convenient to use "sound deliberative route" to refer to the way an agent's attitudes, suitably idealized, determine the contents of their underlying evaluative commitments (or, for short, "values"), and to understand "internal reasons" as the considerations that count as normative relative to them. Thus, extending Williams's formulation, we can say that a consideration (determinately) counts as an internal reason of a given weight for you just in case you have a sound deliberative route from your existing attitudes (only) to assigning it that weight in practical reasoning and evaluation.[13] (Since these are the only reasons I will be talking about, I will often leave the "internal" part implicit. Readers who object to calling internal reasons "reasons" are free to substitute another phrase.)

Importantly, Williams himself stressed that the concept of a sound deliberative route was meant to be very permissive and open-ended. As he understood it, sound deliberation includes the correction of logical errors and the addition of relevant information—if what you think is a chocolate chip cookie is actually full of raisins, you might be motivated to eat it but not have reason to—but it is not limited to this. To begin with, it can also involve things like exercises of imagination and critical reflection: you might have reason to take up bird-watching despite being totally unmotivated to, if you would see it as worthwhile were you more attentive to what it would involve and how it would complement your other interests. Somewhat more tendentiously, I will further assume that sound deliberation includes effective regulation by attitudes that (as various philosophers have put it) have "agential authority," or embody your "real self" or "practical identity."[14] These are the attitudes on whose basis people reason and act insofar as their conduct is fully representative of them and they are fully in control of it. For example, if you are a raisin cookie addict, no amount of informed, systematic, and imaginative deliberation may suffice for you to give them up and eat chocolate chip cookies instead. Nevertheless, this may still be what you have most reason to do.

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13. For the importance of extending the formulation to evaluative attitudes other than practical conclusions, see n. 9; for an explanation of the parentheticals, see Sec. V. At the risk of digression, it may be worth adding that I think that the weights of internal reasons are best understood broadly on the model of intention, in terms of plans or policies for deliberation and evaluation. For a sophisticated and plausible account, see Michael Bratman, *Structures of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

14. See, respectively, Bratman, *Structures of Agency*; Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility," *Philosophical Topics* 24 (1996): 227–48; Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Now, these assumptions still only leave us with a vague conception of sound deliberation to go on.[15] But this is all we need. We only need to say that if someone is a hard case, the conclusion that they did not give enough weight to the considerations they are blamed for neglecting is not something they can be reasoned into, in any credible sense of the phrase. Expressing blame to them might get them to "consider matters aright," but only in the sense that hitting them on the head or giving them a pill could—as a form of brute causal manipulation, rather than interpersonal engagement.[16]

When we address blame to offenders, however, we see their conduct as calling specifically for interpersonal engagement. Margaret does not want to correct Henry; she wants to confront him. And even if she did want to correct him—even if she saw his offense as somehow giving her reason to take the burden of his moral education (or rather reeducation) upon herself—this in itself would not give her reason to react emotionally to him in the way I have claimed to be characteristic of addressed blame. It would not give her reason to want to express her blame to him as he is now, to view his present attitudes as worthy of special interest and attention, to experience his ongoing failure to regret his conduct as a source of pain. At most, it could give her reason to change him into someone with whom she could engage, and to express her blame—if at all—as a kind of pretense calculated toward accomplishing this.[17]

What reason could there be to address blame to a hard case, rather than respond with disappointment and rejection? Philosophical defenses of angry or emotional blame typically cast it as an expression of self-respect, or a healthy concern for morality (or, less narrowly, for the norms transgressed).[18] These things seem to me to support excellent explana-

15. As Williams recognized, this leaves open the possibility that sound deliberation could be somehow such that everyone's internal reasons significantly converge, so that, for instance, everyone might have conclusive internal reason to be moral. Many internal reasons theorists go to great lengths to defend this claim. Williams cited Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 5–25; she has been followed by Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1994); and Julia Markovits, *Moral Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), among others. Despite the focus of my discussion, I am happy to grant the possibility—provided that it is granted in exchange that it should make a difference to blame. As its religious defenders themselves tend to insist, if wrongdoers are never hard cases, we should blame them more gently: their offenses may warrant sadness, pity, or a willingness to offer guidance, but not hostility.

16. Compare John McDowell, "Might There Be External Reasons," in *Mind, Value and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 95–111, 101. Thanks to an editor at *Ethics* for pressing me to address this possibility.

17. That is, in the same manner as what Margaret Little calls our "proleptic engagement" with small children. See Margaret Little, "Abortion and the Margins of Personhood," *Rutgers Law Journal* 39 (2008): 331–48, 342.

18. Here Wallace is representative; see Wallace, "Dispassionate Opprobrium," 368.

tions of blame addressed to third parties or to oneself, but not blame addressed specifically to offenders. It is possible to be outraged by a show of disrespect without being personally hurt by it, and to express one's blame to an offender purely as an act of defiance rather than communication. There is a difference, as it were, between resentment and *ressentiment*. A healthy concern for a set of norms, or for your status with respect to them, may give you reason to seek reassurance from others—or at least others you respect—that contra some offender they accept these norms as well; as part of this, it may also give you reason to want the offense to be publicly repudiated or the offender shamed.[19] Correspondingly, self-respect may require you to forcefully confront an offender, but—following Bernard Boxill—this expression of protest may not be grounded in a concern for the offender's recognition so much as a need to confirm to oneself one's faith in it.[20]

Given the naturalness of these alternatives, what would it say about a person if he continued to address his blame to a known hard case, despite the manifest futility of doing so? Again, remember the patterns of attention, emotion, and motivation this would involve: it would mean continuing to attend to attitudes that could only embody indifference or opposition to you and your values, to be pained by the absence of a recognition that cannot be forthcoming, and to hold motivations that can only be frustrated. Taken together, these not only allow the harm inflicted by an offense to fester but also give the offender a kind of power. To endorse these attitudes as appropriate would be to submit to this power. It would be to treat the constitutional offensiveness of the agent's values as entitling them to it, in virtue of calling for engagement that persists regardless of its one-sidedness. I fail to see why anyone with a healthy confidence in his or her own values would do this.

19. Compare Margaret Urban Walker, "Resentment and Assurance," in *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 145–60, in which she proposes that resentment implicitly calls out for "*assurance of protection, defense, or membership* under norms brought in question by the exciting injury or affront" (156–57; emphasis in the original) but stresses that this need not and often should not be sought from offenders themselves.

20. Bernard Boxill, "Self-Respect and Protest," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6 (1976): 58–69. Interestingly, Margaret herself later affirms her blame along similar lines. "Her speech to [Henry] seemed perfect," Forster writes; "She would not have altered a word. It had to be uttered once in a life, to adjust the lopsidedness of the world. It was spoken not only to her husband, but to thousands of men like him—a protest against the inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age" (*Howards End*, 235). Nevertheless, the reader inclined to interpret Margaret's speech primarily as a general expression of protest should consider that it was hardly spoken to Henry in the same way that it was spoken to the thousands of men like him. It may have been a protest, but it was also a last desperate attempt to connect, and it could have been the first without having been the second. This illustrates the important point that blame can be addressed in multiple directions at once, in ways that need not be transparent to the subject.

In this respect, to care about a hard case's recognition would be disempowering, if not demeaning. I take this to be the most basic reason why blame addressed to hard cases is as such inappropriate, in a way underscored by the possibility of contempt. Contempt can embody a distinctive form of blame, one that represents its target precisely as someone whose conduct it would be demeaning to take personally. And it seems to be made appropriate, at least in a broad class of cases, precisely by the fact that the offender is a hard case. In her analysis of the emotion, Michelle Mason thus describes the playwright Paul and his wife Camille, "characters in a film by Jean-Luc Goddard titled, conveniently for my purposes, *Le mépris.*"[21] Paul is contemptible to Camille not only because he insultingly encourages her to accept the advances of a caddish American producer (thereby selling out what had been a happy marriage for career advancement) but also because while he does so he is "perplexed by his inability to comprehend what, if anything, he has done wrong."[22] Paul's incomprehension doesn't excuse his conduct, but it does make continued emotional engagement inappropriate. Why should Camille concern herself with a perspective fundamentally insensitive to her dignity? This explains her contempt: through its lens, what makes Paul unworthy of address makes him worthy of a yet more severe form of blame.[23]

III. WHY BLAME CAN'T ONLY BE ADDRESSED AS A RESPONSE TO DELIBERATIVE FAILURE

We can now turn to the second horn. In addition to the patterns of attention, emotion, and motivation I have discussed so far, blame addressed to offenders is hostile. This is what distinguishes it from mere distress at someone's insensitivity coupled with concern to see it corrected. But if such blame were only appropriate on condition that the offender

21. Michelle Mason, "Contempt as a Moral Attitude," *Ethics* 113 (2003): 234–72, 236. I follow Mason's portrayal of these characters, which she admits is less morally ambiguous than their portrayal in the film.

22. Ibid., 250 n. 38. Mason makes this observation while distinguishing contempt from resentment, which is undermined by ignorance to a greater extent; though she does not go so far as to argue this, I conjecture that contempt characteristically represents its objects as hard cases. For one thing, this would explain—as Mason's original analysis leaves obscure—why contempt tends to limit resentment. For another, it may account for the widespread Kantian belief that contempt is never justified, since on many reconstructions of Kant's practical philosophy, its appropriate objects are nonexistent. (See also n. 15.)

23. Much the same applies to other hard cases discussed in moral philosophy. Thus, Gary Watson notes that while the heartlessness of the murderer Robert Harris "makes him utterly unsuitable as a moral interlocutor, [it] intensifies rather than inhibits the reactive attitudes" ("Responsibility and the Limits of Evil," 271). But which ones? Watson mentions "moral outrage," but this may well be addressed to others; in the newspaper article he excerpts, Harris's fellow inmates seem mainly to respond with rejection or disgust. ("You don't want to deal with him out there, we don't want to deal with him in here," says one.)

would recognize the relevant considerations were they to soundly deliberate, its element of hostility would be mysterious. In that case, addressing blame to someone would entail seeing them as someone whose recognition could be secured simply by informing them of relevant facts or helping them get into better control of themselves. Apart from a special case I'll discuss in the next section—which turns out to be the exception that proves the rule—neither of these things is essentially hostile.

This point is underscored by the fact that viewing addressed blame predominantly as a response to deliberative failure would seem to get its emphasis backward. It would imply that the paradigm cases, where blame should be at its strongest and steadiest, are those in which it's clearest that an offense reflects bad deliberation rather than bad values. But this is not so. P. F. Strawson observed that the strength of resentment and indignation "is in general proportioned to what is felt to be the magnitude of the injury and to the degree to which the agent's will is identified with, or indifferent to, it."[24] While this claim needs to be qualified when it comes to hard cases, there is clearly something to it. If you break a significant promise to a friend when you're clearly just upset or exhausted, your offense may be relatively easy to write off. But if you do it deliberately, in a manner that really calls your commitment to the friendship into question, your friend's blame would presumably not become more tentative and less passionate. And while we do sometimes address blame to offenders whose conduct we know to result from deliberative failures, this is generally because we take these failures to raise questions of their own. If the people we blame really cared, we wonder, shouldn't they have been more thoughtful, or tried harder to keep control of themselves? But then the dilemma recurs. If an offender lacks a sound deliberative route to suitably regretting their failure—if they're a higher-order hard case, as it were, for whom being informed or reflective or resolute just wasn't worth the bother—then our blame for both it and the offense it led to appropriately cools into distrust or contempt. On the other hand, if the offender didn't prevent their deliberative failure only because of yet another deliberative failure at a still higher level, we face an obvious regress.[25]

This argument might be resisted by claiming that addressed blame's element of hostility is grounded in something other than a concern for the

24. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 21.

25. This regress parallels the one Gideon Rosen defends in "Skepticism about Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (2004): 295–313, though the differences between them are instructive. Rosen argues that blame is appropriate only when an offender is, effectively, a higher-order hard case—i.e., if their offense ultimately derives a fully informed (and presumably agentially authoritative) refusal to respond to objective reasons; I argue that blame addressed to the offender is not appropriate even then. However, I see no reason why other kinds should be subject to this kind of regress at all.

offender's recognition. The problem is that it is notoriously obscure what that other thing could be.[26] While many kinds of negative reaction are both justified and understandable in response to deliberative failure—disappointment, frustration, a demand for redress—the hostility characteristic of Margaret's anger plainly transcends these. This can make it natural to hold—as many people have—that no substantive explanation is necessary; rather, blame's hostility is simply seen as deserved, as a matter of basic normative fact.[27] Now, I think that this view is seriously confused, and I'll explain why below. But at this point I will simply note that it plainly does not apply to Margaret. If the hostility characteristic of her anger were grounded in a concern that Henry get what he deserve, his recalcitrance should only have intensified it. People who seem to believe in desert tend to judge hardened wrongdoers more harshly than ambivalent ones: insofar as a decisive commitment to offensive values would make a difference to desert at all, it presumably would make the agent more deserving, not less.

IV. VARIETIES OF PROLEPTIC BLAME

Taken together, the arguments above demonstrate two of what Williams called "the ways in which the presence of deliberative reasons, or, again, the appropriateness of focussed blame, *fall off* in one or another direction."[28] In the first case, what falls off is the appropriateness of concern; in the second, the appropriateness of hostility. In order for these elements of blame to be jointly intelligible, there must be offenders who are neither hard cases nor, straightforwardly, victims of deliberative failure.

I say "straightforwardly" here because some cruder kinds of proleptic blame are a special case. As I said in the introduction, blame is proleptic when it reflects the fact that the existence or content of the agent's reasons against offending may depend on the blame itself. Often, there is nothing especially complicated about this: a lot of blame works proleptically simply because people have an interest in avoiding it.

To take my favorite example: in *The Big Lebowski*, Walter Sobchak destroys a car with the express purpose of showing a teenage antagonist "what happens when you [treat] a stranger [unjustly]." Walter isn't especially interested in moral education here: he just can't stand that someone should see him to be taken advantage of. After the kid (whose name is Larry) stonily ignores his reprimands, he turns to Plan B: this, at least, will make Larry understand that stealing from him and his friend was

a bad idea. Like most people, Walter sees himself as holding certain claims—for him, specified inter alia by the rules of bowling, the First Amendment, and the laws of the Sabbath—and wants others to see these claims as worth respecting. However, he is not especially concerned with the nature of their reasons for doing so. Even if they do not respect the authority of the claims as such, they might still respect them out of fear of him. His disposition to blame helps ensure this. Thus, when he destroys the car, he indeed presupposes that Larry made a deliberative failure—if Larry were fully sensitive to what the consequences of his theft would be like, he would not have committed it. But Walter recognizes that the truth of this presupposition may depend on the very fact that the perceived offense would motivate him to react as he did. ("You see what happens, Larry! You see what happens?! This is what happens when you [treat] a stranger [unjustly]! Here's what happens, Larry!") For this reason, Walter's blame could not have fulfilled its aim if being the target of its expression were not itself undesirable, in ways that go beyond any remorse it may or may not prompt. Far from being otiose, its hostility is essential to its function.

Walter's blame is notable in two respects. First, it helps explain why angry reactive attitudes are often interpreted as retributive—a point I'll return to at the end. Second, it illustrates a basic problem that applies (only slightly less obviously) to the proleptic mechanism that Williams emphasizes most. Observing that much blame appeals to "the ethically important disposition that consists in a desire to be respected by people whom, in turn, one respects," Williams writes,

> In [circumstances where this disposition is operative], blame consists of, as it were, a proleptic invocation of a reason to do or not do a certain thing, which applies in virtue of a disposition to have the respect of other people. To blame someone in this way is, roughly, to tell him he had a reason to act otherwise, and in a direct sense this may not have been true. Yet in a way it has now become true, in virtue of his having a disposition to do things that people he respects expect of him, and in virtue of this recognition, which it is hoped that the blame will bring to him, of what those people expect.[29]

Though Williams commended this disposition as a "deeper form [of motivation] than merely the desire to avoid hostility," both dispositions support fundamentally similar kinds of blame. If you value being the sort of person the varsity quarterback would esteem, you have reason not to do anything he would disapprove of. If you fear Walter's wrath, you likewise have reason not to do anything that would provoke it. In both cases, your reason depends on an interest in avoiding blame as such. It does not de-

29. Ibid., 41–42.

pend on whether you can see the other person's expectations of you as independently justifiable.

Margaret's blame is different. "Men like you use repentance as a blind," she tells Henry, "so don't repent." What she means is not that she doesn't want his repentance at all, but that she doesn't want it per se. She would only want it if it were based on the considerations she herself took to count against Henry's conduct, namely, that it was unfair and inhumane. If it were only based on a desire for domestic tranquility, it would be worthless. Nor is her attitude unreasonable. When people respond to our blame by saying things like "I didn't mean to *offend* you; I'm so sorry," or "if I knew it *bothered* you so much, I wouldn't have done it," we tend to feel insulted. This is because these people imply that our reasons for feeling offended are beside the point. Even if they are expressing the desire to conform to the expectations of others which Williams commended, they may not want to conform to our expectations because they think they are justified. They may just want to out of peer pressure, the way one might make sure to wear school colors on a game day because the varsity quarterback's imagined disappointment fills one with shame.[30] In this case, they would not recognize us as ethical co-deliberators of fundamentally equal standing, such that each aims to hold the other only to intersubjectively justifiable expectations.[31]

Thus, while Walter's and the imagined quarterback's blame both resemble Margaret's in seeking a kind of recognition from the offender, the recognition they aim at is shallower. To mark this difference, I'll call their kind of blame *punitive blame*, reserving "addressed blame" for Margaret's kind. This terminology registers the point that the full extent of addressed blame's ethical importance depends on its function as a form of specifically rational address—on the fact that it aims, again, at offenders recognizing specifically the considerations justifying our expectations from our own perspective. This importance is illustrated by the fact that merely punitive blame is intelligible when offenders cannot understand the considerations we take to justify our expectations of them, or when they would reject our expectations if they did understand the considerations, or when our expectations are so arbitrary that there is no question of their justification even for us. Addressed blame proper is intelligible in none of these cases.

30. This objection comes from Pamela Hieronymi's "Internal Reasons and the Integrity of Blame," 8–9, which she makes available in the "neither published nor in progress" section of her academic website; see http://hieronymi.bol.ucla.edu/Neither_Nor_files/Williams_article_final.pdf.

31. Here I echo Stephen Darwall's distinction between (moralized) resentment and the retaliatory or shaming responses to insult he associates with honor cultures. See Stephen Darwall, "Justice and Retaliation," in *Honor, History, and Relationship: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50–71.

When we distinguish addressed blame from its punitive cousin, the dilemma returns in force. Punitive blame is indeed appropriate in response to deliberative failure, but only because the offender's deliberative failure may have consisted in neglecting their reasons to avoid blame per se—reasons that punitive blame's element of hostility aims to provide. Since addressed blame proper makes no appeal to such reasons, its element of hostility remains puzzling. Nevertheless, punitive blame still has something to teach us. Since it avoids the dilemma specifically by functioning proleptically, it is natural to wonder whether there is a way for addressed blame to function proleptically too.[32] In the rest of the article, I will argue that there is, but it requires giving up the assumption that internal reasons are determinate.

V. INDETERMINATE REASONS AND UNDERSPECIFIED VALUES

We can begin by turning to Williams himself, who defended the possibility and importance of rational indeterminacy throughout his work.[33] "Practical reasoning is a heuristic process," he wrote, "and an imaginative one";[34] since "it is impossible that it should be fully determinate what imagination might contribute to deliberation," this is "one reason why

32. In Miranda Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation," *Noûs* 50 (2016): 165–83, Fricker likewise stresses addressed blame's proleptic mechanism but conceives it only in terms of a desire to conform to the expectations of others. If offenders "are thus susceptible to your admonitions at this baseline level," she suggests, "then the blame communicated may gain some psychological purchase. That is, the latter motive on their part has the result that your expression of blame affects them somewhat (perhaps they start to feel a little sorry, or at least question what they have done), so that in some measure they are brought nearer to recognizing the reason which formerly failed to weigh with them appropriately" (ibid., 176). But just what kind of psychological influence is this proleptic mechanism supposed to exert? If the offender has a sound deliberative route to recognizing the reasons at issue in the first place—and so to regretting their offense independently of the desire for esteem per se—then it can at best function as an incentive to deliberate soundly (just like a promise of ice cream). On the other hand, if the offender lacks such a route, then the influence would be purely causal (just like a bump on the head). In neither case would blame prompt the desired recognition qua communication, or even qua blame.

33. In addition to the passages I quote in the text, see Bernard Williams, "Values, Reasons, and the Theory of Persuasion," in *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. A. W. Moore (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 109–18, 110: "There is no naturalistic reason, based on considerations of psychology or the philosophy of mind, to suppose that indeterminacies [in an agent's values] are radically reducible, in particular to preference orderings that can be handled by Bayesian techniques. If there is a demand for such a reduction, it is of a normative, rather than an explanatory character, or, perhaps, the kind that is a fusion of the two, namely a demand that the phenomena should be such that a particular kind of explanation should be possible."

34. Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 101–13, 110.

it may be indeterminate what exactly an agent has reason to do."[35] But allowing for indeterminacy, he recognized, is no simple matter. It makes it harder to formulate conditions for when a reason is "internal" in the first place: "The internalist account is generous with what counts as a sound deliberative route. It rejects the picture by which a determinate and fixed set of preferences is expressed simply in terms of its decision-theoretic rational extensions, and deliberation is construed simply as a matter of discovering what those are. The difficulty is that if, in rejecting this false picture, we allow any extension whatsoever of the agent's *S* to count, we have lost hold of the notion of what the agent has reason to do in virtue of his *S*."[36] Michael Smith puts the problem starkly. Suppose you are somehow psychologically such that whenever you imagine what some arbitrary state of affairs would be like ("for there to be exactly 1,346,117 blades of grass on a particular lawn," Smith offers), you immediately desire that it obtain.[37] Surely the fact that you could acquire this desire as a result of imaginative deliberation from your existing attitudes does not make it one that, relative to those attitudes, you have any reason at all to satisfy. But then, what distinguishes this kind of influence from the kind imagination can properly exert?

For my purposes, it will be enough to recognize that it can take imagination to work out what your values are. Many of our values are vague; Henry's, in fact, are a good example. It's conceivable that, prior to his exchange with Margaret, Henry should have been decisively committed to values detailed and determinate enough to rule out everything but what he did. But his initial inarticulacy, the terms of Margaret's in-

35. Williams, "Internal Reasons," 38.

36. Williams, "Values, Reasons," 114–15. Williams's own proposal is characteristically inventive but perplexing: it is to "reverse the order of explanation" and appeal, at an analytically basic level, to the ethics of persuasion. Even when a deliberative conclusion is not mechanically derivable from an agent's (relevantly informed) prior motivations, Williams suggests, it may still count as an expression of one's internal reasons—rather than a modification of them—when it is a conclusion to which the agent could be led through the aid of a well-informed adviser operating transparently and sympathetically, such that the advice "is truthful and addresses the question from the adviser's best understanding of the wants and interests of the agent," and "is therefore not manipulative" (ibid., 117). Williams does not attempt to work out this proposal in detail, however, and I will not take up the task here.

37. Michael Smith, "A Puzzle about Internal Reasons," in *Luck, Value, and Commitment: Themes from the Ethics of Bernard Williams*, ed. Ulrike Heuer and Gerald Lang (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 195–218, 209. Though he presents his account as a reading of Williams, Smith does not mention "Values, Reasons, and the Theory of Persuasion" and seems to have been unaware that Williams considered the puzzle himself. The solution he proposes on the latter's behalf—that to desire that a state of affairs obtain is not only to be motivated to produce it but also to like that it obtains in circumstances in which you are vividly aware of its obtaining (such that imagination is necessary for discovering which desires whose satisfaction you would like to be vividly aware of)—is notable partly for its rigid adherence to the deterministic picture of rationality Williams forcefully opposed.

dictment, and common sense all suggest otherwise. Margaret does not love him foolishly—he is, in many ways, a thoughtful and humane person. However, he also has what Forster calls his "fortress"—a perspective defined roughly in terms of values related to dominance, self-sufficiency, and, at best, a vaguely patriarchal sense of honor. As such, he is committed to a cluster of general principles, ideals, and projects: some related to authority and tradition, others to his family, others to his humanism. But like most people, most of his commitments do not have especially detailed and precise content. They might credibly be interpreted and weighed against each other in any number of ways, supporting any number of possible responses to circumstances. What he has internal reason to do, therefore, depends on how his values are to be specified.

Here it is useful to compare Henry's reasons with the way supervaluationist philosophers of language construe the extensions of vague predicates, like "bald."[38] "Bald," they argue, admits of multiple interpretations, or "sharpenings," each entailing a precise set of necessary and sufficient conditions for when a person is bald. When a claim is true on each sharpening—like "Jean-Luc Picard is bald"—we can say it's determinately true, or "supertrue." When it's false on each sharpening—like "James T. Kirk is bald"—we can say it's determinately false, or "superfalse." When it's true on some and false on others—like "Joe Biden is bald"—we can say that its truth value is indeterminate. As extensions are to sharpenings of predicates, so internal reasons are to specifications of values. Thus, a consideration determinately counts as an internal reason of a certain weight for you if and only if it is to be assigned that weight on every admissible specification of your values.

Now, I take no position on the truth of supervaluationism. Perhaps for every predicate there is a uniquely correct sharpening, and the experience of vagueness is the experience of ignorance. Be that as it may, the corresponding position in the practical case strikes me as clearly false. Not all candidate specifications are admissible, of course. As Henry S. Richardson has argued, specificatory reasoning is indeed a form of reasoning. As such, it is characteristically governed by certain norms.[39] Leaving the details of these norms open, I assume that some candidate specifications of a given value are properly ruled out as introducing unsupported expansions or irrelevant qualifications, or properly preferred over others according to certain formal criteria, like coherence (hence the intuitive unacceptability of Smith's blades-of-grass desire, which would not be supported by an admissible specification of any realistic set of values). But in order for it always to be determinate what you have internal reason to do,

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38. See, e.g., Kit Fine, "Vagueness, Truth, and Logic," *Synthese* 30 (1975): 265–300.
39. See Henry S. Richardson, *Practical Reasoning about Final Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

these criteria would have to be demanding enough to exclude all but one specification (or set of mutually consistent ones) for every initial set of values. And I can't imagine any criteria so demanding that they would necessarily pertain to realistic agents like Henry Wilcox.

This raises the question how agents with vague values decide what to do. What would their ideal deliberation look like? At a certain level of abstraction—on which it is viewed analogously to planning a road trip between a given pair of cities or choosing between blueprints for finishing a house—it can look very strange. Are ideal deliberators to begin by representing their initial, partially specified values to themselves as fully as possible, then compare every candidate specification according to the relevant formal criteria, and—in the event that those criteria fail to determine a winner—finally select randomly among the remaining options, as if by flipping coins? When we act from vague values, we generally suppose ourselves to act authentically. If we are not mistakenly to believe there to be more truth about our reasons than there is, we must in some way specify our values as we go. But how? We certainly do not feel ourselves to be picking even implicitly between candidate specifications at random.

In fact, there's no reason to think that to act in accord with our strongest reasons, we must first specify our values at all. Often, practical reasoning goes in the opposite direction. We simply find ourselves responding to concrete situations in particular ways, and we specify our values only incrementally and in retrospect, in order to make sense of our conduct as embodying them. More precisely, we treat the responses we are actually moved to make in particular cases as default constraints on the specification of our ends. That is, if you are pursuing a vague end and find yourself moved to respond to a particular situation in a way that would count as appropriate on at least one specification of that end, you may perfectly sensibly proceed on the presumption that it is appropriate—such that any admissible specification of your end will have to account for that response as appropriate relative to it. As you repeat this process over multiple occasions, the set of responses to which you're committed increases, and the set of coherent specifications that can accommodate all of them narrows proportionately. The result is that your ends become increasingly determinate as you try to make sense of your activity in light of them.[40]

One example of this process might be improvisation in music or painting, where you might start with a very vague sense of what you want to express and clarify it as you go.[41] Here, treating your responses as de-

40. This supports Williams's suggestive discussion of *akrasia* in Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 44–46, in which he holds that whether an action is akratic may be only determinate retrospectively.

41. Compare Benjamin Bagley, "Loving Someone in Particular," *Ethics* 125 (2015): 477–507.

fault constraints in specifying your end means treating the ways you're spontaneously moved to paint or play as partial expressions of some larger idea or theme, which you define by progressively fitting your responses into a coherent whole. Another example is Henry. The concerns Margaret expresses in her anger immediately repulse him—he experiences them as things to be rejected, as somehow illegitimate—but his initial attitude is inchoate. ("His real retort was not quite ready. His brain was still in a whirl, and he wanted a little longer.") Again, there is no reason to think that his inarticulacy is just epistemic—that there's some underlying fact of the matter about how he should respond, relative to his values, and he just doesn't know it yet. Crucially—for my argument and, I think, for Forster's narrative—it is very easy to imagine how things might have gone differently. In a nearby possible world (*Howards End* as rewritten by Iris Murdoch, maybe) some fortuitous causal factor might have allowed Margaret to break through Henry's reserve (the evening light might have struck her just so, compelling Henry to really look at his wife for the first time); his ensuing response might have been equally true to his values as they stood, supported by an equally admissible specification of them.[42]

Nevertheless, Henry is not ambivalent. He does not regard his actual reaction as embodying his values only to the same indeterminate extent that an opposite counterfactual one would be. He regards it as reflecting what he has most reason to do, and he settles on a partial specification of his values that entails this. Thus, Margaret challenges him to identify a morally relevant difference between her sister's case and his own, and at first he's at a loss because he can't. But he then makes sense of his reaction by concluding that the comparative moral status of his and Helen's actions is not the point. The fact remains that Howards End is his property, and he may permit or refuse guests as he pleases, and Helen's

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42. Interestingly, Forster is careful to show that Henry was feeling combative even before his exchange with Margaret (he'd just had a tiff with his driver); since the scene takes place in the early evening, he was probably hungry, too. In the absence of these factors, Margaret may well have reached him. (Importantly, these factors should not be assumed to constitute distorting influences on Henry's reasons; in certain contexts, many people can and do reasonably regard such things as liberating.)

Note that such incidental factors recommend caution about counterfactual formulations of internalism. For example, Michael Smith writes that an agent's internal reasons are "fixed by what he would desire after correct deliberation, where this is in turn . . . a matter of what the agent himself desires in the nearest possible world in which his beliefs and desires conform to all the norms of reasons that govern them" ("Puzzle about Internal Reasons," 198–99). Since there may be many possible worlds that meet this condition, the nearest one to an agent at a given time will presumably depend on the agent's overall causal makeup. But it's silly to think that an agent's internal reasons should shift radically from moment to moment, depending on whether the agent has had his dinner yet or on how the evening light is currently striking the agent's wife.

transgression against respectable society would make continued association shameful. His own transgression, while embarrassing, was not directly against Margaret; having been confessed and forgiven, it leaves his rightful authority as a husband intact. Therefore, Margaret's effort to oppose that authority by bringing it up has the normative status of a blackmail attempt.

Henry's response is likely to strike the reader as a rationalization. But rationalization is a form of misrepresentation, and there need be no independent truth for Henry's response to misrepresent. To the extent that it resolves an indeterminacy, it rather constitutes what Williams called "a creative step in deliberation,"[43] representing Henry's authentic effort to settle where he stands with respect to his past decision. What Margaret's blame does is force him to do this: to commit one way or the other to the rational status for him not only of his refusal but also of the perspective on that refusal her blame expresses.

VI. PROPERLY PROLEPTIC BLAME

Williams put his finger on the relationship between blame and indeterminacy when he wrote that "when we say that [someone] ought to have acted otherwise, we may imply, in such a case, that he did indeed have a reason to act otherwise; but it would be rash of us to imply, simply given his S as it then was, that he had more reason to act in this way than to do anything else."[44] By this, he did not mean that some internal reasons are only pro tanto (which would have been a non sequitur), but that to present someone with reasons for them to have acted otherwise is only to imply that they could have reached that decision via sound deliberation, not necessarily that they would have. Thus, William writes,

> What we are blaming him for may not be a failure to recognize what he then had most reason to do; even in cases in which there is a directly appropriate motivation in the agent's S, not every failure to act appropriately is simply the product of deliberative failure. Our thought may rather be this: if he were to deliberate again and take into consideration all the reasons that might now come more vividly before him, we hope that he would come to a different conclusion; and it is important that the reasons that might now come more vividly before him include this very blame and the concerns expressed in it. This kind of thought helps us to understand a sense in which focussed blame asks for acknowledgment.[45]

43. Williams, "Values, Reasons," 116.
44. Williams, "Internal Reasons," 42.
45. Ibid.

From this Williams concludes that proleptic blame "involves treating the person who is blamed as someone who had a reason to do the right thing but did not do it."[46] Here, however, he misrepresented a key implication of his view. We may hope that the person who is blamed would come to a different conclusion, but we also fear that they won't. Addressed blame combines concern and hostility because it registers both possibilities. It involves treating the offender as occupying an unstable, liminal position, partway between that of a victim of deliberative failure and that of a hard case—or, in Margaret's now strikingly apt phrase, as "muddled, criminally muddled."[47] That is, it involves treating them as someone who may or may not turn out to have had a reason to do the right thing, depending on how they respond to one's blame itself.

More precisely, blame is appropriately addressed to an offender just in case their failure to give weight to certain considerations threatens to impair some relationship you have with them, in virtue of raising questions about their values that may reasonably be treated as unanswerable until the agent definitively commits to either affirming or rejecting the considerations in question. In general, this will be the case whenever offenders fall between two extremes: they neither are hard cases nor offend under conditions of ignorance or handicap that would make it unreasonable for anyone to regard their conduct as even indirectly expressive of their values.[48] (Tellingly, these will include more or less the received range of excusing and exempting conditions.)

To see what it is for an offense to threaten an impairment in this way, we can draw on Scanlon's view of blame, of which we saw Margaret's final rejection of Henry to be a paradigm case. Recall that for Scanlon, blame is warranted when a person's conduct reveals attitudes that impair the relationships one has or could have toward them. While the kinds of attitudes that can impair relationships are not limited to an agent's values, they certainly include them. Thus, in rejecting Henry, Margaret takes his offense to reveal facts about his values that make him someone she can't love as a husband, and she revises her intentions and expectations accordingly. But it should now be apparent that the reason why Scanlon's view fits so neatly here is that Henry's values with respect to his conduct had become basically determinate. While Margaret is angry, however, these values aren't—or, at least, she has no reason to treat them

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46. Ibid.

47. Nate Sharadin reminds me that in Forster's *A Room with a View*, the term "muddle" is used repeatedly and prominently enough to constitute a theme; it consistently refers to cases where a character's priorities are vague and unsettled.

48. To be clear, I am not claiming that addressing blame to offenders presupposes that their relevant values are indeterminate. This, I think, would overintellectualize the facts. Rather, I am claiming that doing so is appropriate whenever the possibility of indeterminacy is neither irrelevant nor reasonably ruled out.

as such. Rather, she treats the relation between Henry's conduct and his values as an open question, to be answered only after he has committed to either accepting or rejecting her blame. His conduct does not as yet embody values that would impair her relationship with him—it does not as yet show him to be someone she can no longer love as a husband—but it threatens to.[49]

Now, as we've seen, conduct that embodies relationship-impairing values normally does not provide reason to care about the offender's recognition. However, conduct that threatens to embody them does. To the extent that we specify our values in response to particular cases, it will only be by way of an offender's affirmation of the considerations they are blamed for neglecting that the threat posed by their offense can be negated. Since reason to care about a thing implies reason to care about the negation of threats to it, your reason for caring about an offender's recognition derives from your reason for caring about your relationship with them. And insofar as an offender's actual attitudes still provide them with at least a potential basis for having the values your relationship with them requires, whatever reason you have for caring about that relationship persists. Because their conduct doesn't determinately embody their values, the offender can't be written off as a hard case.

On the other hand, because their conduct also doesn't determinately not embody their values, it can't be written off as a deliberative mistake. This is what explains addressed blame's element of hostility. While you do not have reason to revise your attitudes toward the offender in the ways a defect in their values would warrant, you also do not have reason to respond favorably toward them in the ways you would if their underlying values were in good shape. In effect, the relationship remains in place, but parts of it become unnavigable. The more salient these parts become, the more your relationship's normal concerns are put on hold until the matter of your blame is dealt with. What would otherwise be reasons to be loving or friendly or polite are trumped by reasons to confront offenders, to show them what their conduct means to you as forcefully and vividly as possible, and to let them make of it what they will. This is why addressed blame essentially involves what Strawson called

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49. Note that this is not a counterexample to Scanlon's view: conduct warranting addressed blame certainly reveals relationship-impairing attitudes, just not relationship-impairing values. As such, I follow Miranda Fricker in viewing Williams's and Scanlon's accounts as complementary: each focuses on different but related aspects of a single complex phenomenon; see Miranda Fricker, "The Relativism of Blame and Williams's Relativism of Distance," *Supplement to the Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society* 84 (2010): 151–77, esp. 170–71. One notable locus of support is that the proleptic case explains how blame can be specially focused on particular acts or omissions, thereby avoiding what Scanlon admits to be a revisionary consequence of his view (see Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 157–59).

an "at least partial and temporary withdrawal of good will,"[50] but it is also why this withdrawal is emotionally engaged and confrontational in ways that mere uncertainty about an impairment couldn't account for on its own.

It is probably worth stressing at this point that most cases of addressed blame are neither as drastic nor as intimate as Margaret's. Suppose you and I are colleagues, and I promise to water your plant while you're away. But I forget, and it dies. Clearly, my omission would not raise any question whether I in fact had most reason to keep my promise—of course I did. Nevertheless, if you got angry with me for this—and if your anger consisted in blame addressed to me, rather than just frustration at the situation—it would mean that you could not write off my omission as entirely uncharacteristic. Rather, you would see it as raising certain questions about just how important promises of that kind (or plants, for that matter) actually were to me. Until these questions were settled, you would be unable to fully make sense of my conduct and its meaning for our relationship.

Naturally, sometimes these questions can never be settled. In Section I, I allowed that blame may sometimes appropriately be addressed to offenders when one should not or cannot express it to them, as with the distant and the dead; when we address blame in these cases, it is because we are left unable fully to make sense of an offense's meaning for a relationship we nevertheless retain reason to care about. But I also said that it is part of the nature of addressed blame that the failure to express it is frustrating, and I doubt that its emotional and motivational structure can be fully understood independently of the role it characteristically plays when it is expressed. In this it constitutes an invitation and a warning at once, in a way that itself prefigures and partly determines one's ongoing relationship to the offender. On the one hand, because offenders are presumed to have some evaluative basis for affirming the neglected considerations, addressing blame to them invites them to do so in the manner of an opening move in a musical improvisation or a spontaneous game of make-believe—where you play something you hope others will be moved to complement, or pretend that something is true ("this cardboard box is a spaceship!") in the hope that others will be moved to play along. On the other hand, because offenders are not presumed to have an evaluative basis only for such affirmation, addressed blame also functions as a warning about what will happen if they don't. As such, its element of emotional vulnerability expresses a willingness, should the invitation be accepted, to treat the neglected considerations as if they were the offender's reasons—which consists, among other things, in be-

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50. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 21.

ing open to forgiveness.[51] Correspondingly, its element of hostility expresses a willingness, should the invitation be rejected, to reject the offender in turn. In fact, the expression of a willingness to do each of these things grounds a significant dimension of the influence addressed blame may be hoped to exert. As Williams recognized, there is a difference between merely wanting to meet the expectations of certain others and caring about relating to them according to mutually recognized standards.[52] Someone whose reasons against offending are indeterminate in themselves, but who determinately values the latter, will be reliably (albeit indirectly) inclined to take up the invitation on offer.

In these and similar cases, the proleptic mechanisms of punitive and addressed blame can feed into one another. This is important to both the phenomenology and function of blame, and more generally as an illustration of what Williams called the "intelligible mystery or obscurity of blame's operations."[53] Blame can be, and often is, many things at once. It can be both addressed to offenders and addressed to others, both a sincere communication of reasons and an implicit application of power—of shame or fear—to make its addressees more receptive to those reasons than they might otherwise have been. The fact that we typically don't know exactly what our blame is doing, or perhaps even what we want it to do, reflects the "vagueness or indeterminacy of our practice and experience" that Williams upheld as "an advantage of the internalist account."[54]

VII. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROLEPTIC BLAME

I want to finish by discussing two implications of my view that strike me as noteworthy. One concerns blame's connection to rationality; the other, its connection to freedom.

A. Blame and Reasons

In a section of *On What Matters* entitled "The Unimportance of Internal Reasons," Derek Parfit argues that internalism implies, implausibly, that the claim that someone has most reason to do something only amounts to a psychological prediction: it is to imply that "this act *would* best fulfil that person's fully informed telic desires, or is what, after fully informed and procedurally rational deliberation, this person *would* be most strongly

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51. Interestingly, forgiveness can itself function as a proleptic response to indeterminacy, as Andrea Westlund argues in "Anger, Faith, and Forgiveness," *Monist* 92 (2009): 507–36. This leads to familiar and difficult questions about the "elective" character of forgiveness that I won't attempt to answer here.

52. This is an important theme in Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, chap. 4.

53. Williams, "Internal Reasons," 44.

54. Ibid., 43.

motivated to do, or *would* choose to do."[55] I agree that if this is what internalism implied, internal reasons would not be important. But it isn't, and Williams didn't think it was. Blame shows how much turns on the difference.

However, the importance of this point generalizes. Williams writes,

> A rather similar structure can apply to advice . . . for even when we are advising in the "if I were you" mode, our claim that the agent has most reason to φ does not necessarily mean that simply given his S as it is, it already determines that φ-ing has priority over anything else. We are saying that the conclusion to φ, rather than to do something else, can be reached from his S by a sound deliberative route, and that is something that involves such things as the exercise of his imagination and the effective direction of his attention. But among the things that will affect his imagination and his attention, we hope, is our advice itself and how it represents things.[56]

So many everyday internal reasons claims—I suspect the vast majority of them—are not implicit psychological predictions at all. They presuppose a basis in the subject's values but by no means presuppose that the subject's values already determine the response they recommend. This yields a general picture of shared practical reasoning I find salutary. In particular, it offers an account of how we can acquire genuinely new reasons through deliberating with one another that avoids familiar problems with both standard versions of internalism and their externalist rivals. On the former, it is unclear how reasoning with others can effect changes to their fundamental ends, rather than just to their conceptions of the means to them; on the latter, it is controversial whether these changes can be effected without appealing to a sui generis faculty of intuition whose operation outwardly resembles brute conversion. But if, as I believe, rational indeterminacy is more the rule than the exception, then people who draw your attention to certain considerations—whether in blame or through friendly advice—can be doing more than merely informing you of means to your ends, without thereby invoking considerations which need have no basis in them at all. They may rather be inviting you to affirm considerations that either could or could not count as reasons relative to your subjective values—and thus to bring your respective reasons into closer alignment. This possibility is particularly important in

55. Derek Parfit, *On What Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2:276; my emphasis. As Stephen Finlay and Mark Schroeder's encyclopedia article on the subject attests, formulations like Parfit's are standard; see Stephen Finlay and Mark Schroeder, "Reasons for Action: Internal vs. External," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2012 edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/reasons-internal-external.

56. Williams, "Internal Reasons," 42.

the ethical case, where it enables people to collaboratively construct, re-vise, and sustain expectations whose subjective authority need neither sim-ply express their prior interests nor depend on nonrational mechanisms of conversion or correction.[57]

Admittedly, this doesn't touch Parfit's main objection, which is that internalism doesn't let us claim that there are some reasons people have regardless of their attitudes. As I said, my aim has not been to defend internalism, and I will not try to defeat the objection here. Nevertheless, I think that a proper appreciation of the flexibility and power of internal reason claims—and of the moral psychology of blame—should at least raise suspicions about it. For example, on one influential version of the objection, the problem is that internalism can't account for the universal-ity of specifically moral reasons, which is in turn implied by (moralized) resentment: resenting a wrong presupposes that the agent had reason not to do it, yet it can be appropriate regardless of whether the agent is a hard case.[58] In my view, there are both phenomenological and ethical considerations that count strongly against conceiving resentment in these terms. Phenomenologically, it takes the plausible point that resentment always consists in addressed blame and oversimplifies it, ignoring the dif-ference between the blame we address to offenders and the comparatively impersonal, condemnatory blame we address to third parties or to our-selves. Ethically, it ignores the value of the rich intersubjective relations that the difference between these forms of blame reflects. So why not say that insofar as hard cases merit resentment, this is precisely because they lack the reasons that, from the perspective to which our resentment is addressed, they ought to have?[59]

B. Blame and Freedom

More speculatively, it seems to me that the special but complicated sig-nificance of addressed blame is also reflected in blame's intuitive con-nection to the free will problem. Notoriously, it can be natural to think

57. Compare Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 193: "[Blame's proleptic function] is specially important in helping to mediate between two possibilities in people's relations. One is that of shared deliberative practices, where to a considerable extent people have the same dispositions and are helping each other to arrive at practical conclusions. The other is that in which one group applies force or threats to constrain another. The fiction underlying the blame system helps at its best to make a bridge between these possibilities, by a process of contin-uous recruitment into a deliberative community. At its worst, it can do many bad things, such as encouraging people to misunderstand their own fear and resentment—sentiments they may quite appropriately feel—as the voice of the Law."

58. See, e.g., R. Jay Wallace, "The Argument from Resentment," *Supplement to the Pro-ceedings of The Aristotelian Society* 107 (2007): 295–318.

59. Compare Kate Manne, "Internalism about Reasons: Sad But True?," *Philosophical Studies* 167 (2014): 89–117.

that you can really be morally responsible for your conduct only if it is free, or "up to you," in some robust sense—a sense that can seem, at least prima facie, to be incompatible with determinism. Also notoriously, many philosophers have offered accounts of the freedom in question meant to dispel this appearance of incompatibility, but which have seemed to many of those most anxious about the problem to completely miss the point.

Now, I think that anxiety about freedom and determinism comes from many sources, and I don't think that it is either possible or desirable to give an account that would satisfy everyone. However, I suggest that a major source of the trouble is that moral responsibility in the richest sense really does require a kind of indeterminism, but an indeterminism at the level of reasons rather than the level of causes. It is very easy to mix the two up, however, and blame's dark side makes it even easier.

What I mean by "blame's dark side" is the increasingly popular idea that the blame "at issue in the free will debate," as Derk Pereboom puts it, "is set aside by the notion of *basic desert*." Explaining the notion, Pereboom claims that "the attitudes of moral resentment and indignation include the following two components: anger targeted at an agent because of what he's done or failed to do, and a belief that the agent deserves to be the target of that very anger just because of what he's done or failed to do," though he says surprisingly little about what these things supposedly involve.[60] But because Pereboom thinks that desert imposes metaphysical requirements on agency so demanding that we couldn't possibly satisfy them, he must have something more in mind than the trivial but everyday condition (applied, e.g., when we say that a dangerous animal deserves to be feared) that our emotions fit their objects. Perhaps he thinks, as many people have, that moral anger involves a primitive desire that its target be harmed or punished.[61] In that case, I could at least see the beginning of an argument for incompatibilism: insofar as desert concerns the distribution of benefits and harms, there is reason to think that any kind of responsibility associated with it must be at least largely a causal matter.[62] But as we've seen, Margaret's anger involves a desire for nothing of the kind. For Henry to deserve to be the target of her anger is for his recognition to be worthy of her concern, given what it or its refusal would mean for his underlying values and, consequently, for their relationship. The truth or falsity of determinism is irrelevant.

60. Pereboom, *Free Will*, 2, 128.

61. See, e.g., Martha Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015): 41–56.

62. While the details vary with particular conceptions of desert and the moral views undergirding them, I take it that a connection between desert and causal responsibility is supportable by a requirement of a fair opportunity to avoid harm or by broadly juridical notions of ownership and compensation.

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However, the intelligible obscurity of blame does suggest a broadly Nietzschean explanation why one might see things differently. Addressed and punitive blame are dangerously easy to conflate, and the inclination to the latter is all too human. When people offend against you, it is very understandable to want, as Walter Sobchak wants, to be someone they had reason—any reason—to treat better. Even if you can't be someone your antagonists respect, you can at least be someone they shouldn't mess with. The problem is that this impulse tends not to hold up to reflection. Thus, the idea that offenders *deserve* to suffer, as a matter of basic normative fact, constitutes an enormously convenient rationalization—a rationalization plausibly sustained by many moral, legal, and religious attitudes and practices concerning responsibility.[63]

To be fair, Pereboom is not very enthusiastic about desert, and he might well respond by arguing that rebarbative though the notion may be, it nevertheless best represents the main concerns driving the historical debate. However, this would be a mistake. It would confine the free will problem to a narrow and controversial family of views, and the problem is bigger than that. It is one of the oldest and most gripping problems in philosophy, and its appeal is wide and deep. Thus, Robert Nozick writes,

> Philosophers often treat the topic of free will as a problem about punishment and responsibility: how can we punish someone or hold him responsible for an action if his doing it was causally determined, eventually by factors originating before his birth, and hence outside his control? However, my interest in the question of free will does not stem from wanting to be able legitimately to punish others, to hold them responsible, or even to be held responsible myself. Without free will, we seem diminished, merely the playthings of external forces. How, then, can we maintain an exalted view of ourselves? Determinism seems to undercut human dignity, it seems to undermine our value.[64]

Nozick's attitude is not idiosyncratic. "Free will has been traditionally conceived as a kind of creativity," Robert Kane writes, "akin to artistic creativity, but in which the work of art created is one's own self. As ultimate creators of some of our own ends and purposes, we are the designers of

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63. Compare Williams on *ressentiment*, as expressing—when the offender "is not disposed to give compensation or reparation, and the victim has no power to extract any such thing from him"—the "fantasized, magical" idea "that I, now, might change the agent from one who did not acknowledge me to one who did" (Williams, "Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology," in *Making Sense of Humanity*, 65–76, 73).

64. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 291.

our own lives, self-governing, self-legislating—masters, to some degree, of our own moral destinies."[65]

But while the responsibility required by conceptions of basic desert may well be causal, the special dignity afforded by self-creation is a different story. It seems to me that this dignity would only be cheapened if it were involved in a point of view of people defined by an interest in what they cause and are caused by: this would be too much like the point of view we take toward things we want to predict and control. Rather, it seems more at home in a point of view of people defined by an interest in the reasons on which they act and in the selves they express through doing so. To be a self-creator, recognized from this point of view, is to be the creator not of the states that cause your conduct, but of the values your conduct embodies.

Self-creation at the causal level is often, and I think correctly, argued to be unintelligible: in order for an act of self-creation to be something you are responsible for, rather than a mere random occurrence, it must itself be suitably caused by certain facts about you. But in order for you to be responsible for these further facts, they too must be so caused, and since nothing can be *causa sui*, the result is a regress.[66] But at the rational level, the parallel argument does not apply: one can, as it were, be *ratio sui*. And this, I have argued, is exactly what addressed blame requires. For offenders to be appropriate addressees of blame, it is not necessary that they could have done otherwise consistently with the laws of nature and all the antecedent facts about their bodies and environments. However, it is necessary that they could have done otherwise consistently with the laws of rationality and all the reasons entailed by their antecedent values and circumstances.[67] Moreover, it is necessary that they could have done otherwise in a way fully attributable to them—as expressing what turned out to be their strongest reasons relative to their values. And finally, because these values are determined retrospectively by the agents themselves, through their processes of specifying them, it is necessary that the selves to which their actions are attributable be selves of their own creation.[68]

Standardly, compatibilists conceive moral responsibility in terms of some capacity to respond to antecedently given reasons, fixed either by

65. Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 81.

66. See, e.g., Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 75 (1994): 5–24.

67. Compare Susan Wolf, *Freedom within Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), who defends a psychological version of the requirement on which "it would have been equally compatible with their psychological histories in conjunction with the psychological laws applying to them that [agents] had chosen something else" (103).

68. In my "Loving Someone in Particular," I suggest that much the same is true of interpersonal love.

the agent's prior psychological states or by independent normative facts. Like others, I find this view unsatisfying. At most, it artificially upholds "bondage to the highest" as "identical with true freedom."[69] So I think that incompatibilists are right that any account of responsibility that denies a place for indeterminacy or self-creation is missing something vital. No such account can capture the drama of responsible agency, the sense of uncertainty and tension that blame distinctively registers. But the incompatibilists are wrong, I've suggested, about the source of the problem. Blame in the richest sense requires more than the capacity to respond to antecedently given reasons, but not because we must have the causal freedom to determine whether or not we exercise this capacity or because we must be causally responsible for its existence. Rather, we must have the normative freedom to determine what count as reasons for us in the first place and so be normatively responsible for the selves we create in doing so.

69. William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in *The Will to Believe* (London: Longmans, Green, 1896), 145–83, 149.