

Responsibility and the emotions

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To be morally responsible for an action is closely connected with being held responsible for that action. According to the Strawsonian tradition, which will be the focus of this chapter, a person is responsible for an action just in case it is appropriate to hold them responsible for that action. We can respond to a moral wrongdoing with a wide range of emotional reactions. We feel disappointment, anger, resentment, indignation, disgust, contempt, disdain, or experience hurt feelings. When we act wrongly ourselves, we often experience guilt, remorse, regret, disappointment, sadness or shame. On an inclusive view, all of these reactions are ways of holding ourselves or others morally responsible; on a restrictive view only some of them are. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the many connections between emotions and responsibility.

In section 1, I will highlight a couple of important methodological principles that have framed the debate about moral responsibility since the publication of PF Strawson's seminal paper, *Freedom and Resentment*. In section 2, I will present the standard account of the blaming emotions, according to which blame is understood in terms of resentment, indignation, and guilt. In section 3, I will canvas different ways in which these blaming emotions might be appropriate. Sections 4 and 5 critically discuss two common strategies of deriving the conditions of blameworthiness by considering whether and when blaming emotions are appropriate. Section 6 discusses other emotions that do not fit neatly into this picture but that nevertheless seem to be responsibility responses: disappointment, contempt, shame, and hurt feelings.

A common thread in the chapter will be a challenge for the Strawsonian tradition. Given that this tradition understands moral responsibility in terms of the appropriateness of blaming emotions, it must provide a realistic picture of these emotions and the practices that rely on

them. On the other hand, it also aims to develop a normatively plausible account of the conditions of responsibility. I will try to show that it is often difficult to strike a satisfactory balance between these two aspirations.

1 The connection

What is it to be morally responsible for an action, an attitude or an omission? We can approach this question from two different directions. On the one hand there are the conditions of responsibility. A seagull or a toddler might harm others in various ways, but we don't normally think of them as morally responsible for such harms. This is because seagulls and toddlers lack certain capacities. Because of this lack, they are exempted from responsibility. But even people who possess the general capacities required for moral responsibility might not be responsible for the actions they perform. On any occasion they might lack control, knowledge, be under duress, etc. In such cases, they might have an excuse. By systematizing what gives rise to exemptions and excuses, we might piece together the conditions of moral responsibility. But note that the way we discover what the conditions of responsibility are is by thinking about under which conditions it would be appropriate to hold someone responsible. This suggests another way of approaching the question of what it is to be morally responsible, namely by asking what it is to be held responsible for an action, attitude or omission. Responses to wrongdoing are multifaceted, and include punishment, sanctions, and differential distribution of resources. However, according to one very influential line of thought, the core of our responsibility practices is non-institutional and interpersonal. According to Strawson (1962), holding someone responsible is essentially a matter of responding to their actions, attitudes and omissions with reactive attitudes, such as resentment, indignation or gratitude. Such attitudes – “the non-detached attitudes and reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other” – presuppose participating in human relationships; they are emotional responses to the good or ill will of others. As such they differ from the objective attitude we take towards people when we see them as someone “to be managed or handled or cured or trained; perhaps simply to be avoided” (1962: 52). Focusing on the situations when we excuse or exempt people from the reactive attitudes will provide the conditions of moral responsibility. Strawson focuses on resentment. He asks us to think about the occasions in which an offended person

will “naturally or normally” experience resentment. He then asks us to “consider what sorts of special considerations might be expected to modify or mollify this feeling or remove it altogether” (1962: 79). Typical excusing considerations will be: ignorance (“she didn’t know”, “she didn’t mean to”), duress (“he was pushed”, “he had to do it”), lack of control (“she couldn’t help it”). Typical exempting consideration will involve more general features which make resentment inappropriate: “He’s only a child”, “His mind has been systematically perverted”, “That’s purely compulsive behaviour on his part” (1962: 79).¹

Given this interconnection between the conditions of responsibility and our practices of holding someone responsible, most participants in the responsibility literature accept something like the following biconditional:

Strawson’s principle: An agent S is responsible for an act, attitude or omission X if and only if it is appropriate to hold S responsible for X.²

The most familiar way of holding someone responsible is by blaming them. Of course, we are also morally responsible for good actions and attitudes. But in this chapter, I will focus on blame and blame-like responses rather than praise (see Telech, this volume).

Adapting the previous schema to blameworthiness in particular rather than responsibility in general, we get:

An agent S is blameworthy for an act, attitude, or omission X if and only if it is appropriate to blame S for X.

This widely accepted generic schema raises two questions: What is blame? (see also Menges, this volume), and what do we mean by “appropriate”?

¹ Strawson’s further strategy was to argue that none of these familiar excuses and exemptions concerns determinism.

² There is a lively debate on whether the left side of this biconditional explains the right side or vice versa, i.e., whether someone is responsible in virtue of being appropriately held responsible or the other way around. See Brink and Nelkin (2011), McKenna (2012) Shoemaker (2017), Todd (2016), Menges (2021), and Clarke and Rawling (2023).

2 Emotions and blame

While there is disagreement concerning the exact nature of emotions, most philosophers agree upon three features that emotions share and which, taken together, set them apart from other mental states such as moods, beliefs, or desires (Menges 2017).

First, emotions typically have a characteristic phenomenology. It feels like something to be in the grip of an emotion. Anger, for example, is often accompanied by sensations of one's raised heart rate and muscular tension and a heated, aggressive feeling. Emotions also often have a hedonic tone. Guilt, for example, is a painful feeling, although the pain of course can be experienced in different strengths and shades.

Second, emotions also motivate different kind of actions; they have action tendencies. The action tendency of guilt is to express the emotion to the victim of one's wrongdoing and attempt to repair the relationship that has been damaged. Shame on the other hand motivates withdrawal or escape from the shame-inducing situation. The action tendency of anger is to confront the offender and lash out at him (D'Arms & Jacobson 2022: 193).

Finally, emotions have representational content. Fear represents its object as being dangerous or threatening. Envy portrays one's rival as, roughly, having something that one lacks, and casts this circumstance in a negative light. Regret represents one's action as a mistake. What exactly the blaming emotions resentment and guilt represent is a contested issue, which we will return to in the next section. It is important to note that the notion of representational content need not be understood as a thought or belief (Rosen 2015; Tappolet 2016). The content can also be understood as quasi-perceptual seeming, or what Gendler (2008) calls an alief. According to D'Arms and Jacobson (2022), the representational content of an emotion is not something that can be distinguished from the emotion's phenomenology and its action tendencies.

On a Strawsonian account, to blame someone is to target them with one of the reactive emotions. But which ones? The focus, at least since Wallace's influential *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (1994), has been on resentment, indignation and guilt.³ We feel

³ See for example: McKenna (2012); Graham (2014); Rosen (2015); Strabbing (2019).

resentment when the wrongdoing is directed towards ourselves and indignation when the wrongdoing is directed against others. When we feel guilt, we perceive ourselves as wrongdoers. Resentment and indignation are angry emotions, and the action tendency of anger – to confront and lash out – sets them apart from other hostile emotions such as contempt and disdain. Guilt on the other hand is characterized by a painful affect as well as the motivation to express one’s guilt and repair the relationship that has been damaged or threatened by one’s wrongdoing.

Despite these differences, resentment, indignation and guilt are often taken to be unified by a common representational content. This was Wallace’s motivation for focusing on this narrow class of reactive attitudes. It would be difficult to find a shared content for love, hurt feelings, resentment and forgiveness. But resentment, indignation and guilt, according to Wallace, all represent the wrongdoer as having violated a legitimate normative expectation. Several other competing suggestions have been made in the literature. These emotions may represent an agent as having acted with insufficiently good will (Graham 2014) and/or as having had the capacity to act better than she did (Strabbing 2019). We will return to this issue shortly. For now, it is sufficient to note that the assumption of a shared representational content provides resentment, indignation, and guilt with a unity which strengthens the case for thinking that just these emotions should be singled out as the blaming emotions and thus figure in our account of blameworthiness.

If we understand blame in terms of these reactive attitudes, we get the following account of blameworthiness:

Blameworthiness: Agent S is blameworthy for X if and only if it is appropriate to respond to S’s X-ing with the reactive attitudes of resentment, indignation or guilt (in the reflexive case).

This leaves us with our second question. How should we understand the notion of appropriateness?

3 Blaming emotions and their justifications

Suppose Smith feels resentment towards Jones. This does not yet settle the question of whether Jones is blameworthy. For him to be blameworthy, Smith's resentment must be appropriate. There are three main ways of interpreting the notion of appropriateness in the current literature.

Forward-looking moral views: One possibility is to justify the expression of blaming emotions on broadly consequentialist grounds (Smart 1961). Recently, some sophisticated versions of this approach have been developed. Vargas (2013) argues that whereas our system of holding each other responsible should be justified by its beneficial consequences, our everyday blaming practices should be justified by what the agent has done. McGeer (2019) and Jefferson (2019) argue that blame is justified in virtue of fostering reason-responsiveness. Fricker (2016) holds that blame may function as a proleptic mechanism: If the wrongdoer did not recognize the reasons he had to act differently, one might nevertheless treat him as if he did recognize these reasons, thereby bringing him to recognize reasons he did not recognize at the time of action. Pereboom, drawing on Talbert (2012) and Smith (2013), has developed a protest view of blame on which blame is justified by largely forward-looking considerations. While forward-looking justifications often draw on a reactive attitude account of blame, they do not have to. In the remainder of the chapter, I will therefore focus on justifications that are more closely connected to emotions.

Backward-looking moral views: Another alternative is to understand appropriateness in terms of a backward-looking moral notion such as fairness (Wallace 1994; Watson 2004; Nelkin 2011) or desert (McKenna 2012; Pereboom 2014; Clarke 2016; Carlsson 2017). One way to motivate a moral notion of appropriateness is by considering the action tendencies of the other-directed blaming emotions. Resentment and indignation are forms of anger and the action tendency of anger is to confront and lash out. Watson (2004) and Wallace (1994) emphasize that reactive attitudes come with a disposition to sanctioning behavior. Watson claims that "blaming attitudes involve a readiness to adverse treatment" (2004: 275). Wallace argues that blame "involves a disposition to engage in a variety of sanctioning activities" (1994: 94). It makes sense to ask whether such sanctions are fair or deserved.⁴ Another

⁴ This view would be even more plausible if we take expressed blame to the fundamental notion in our analysis of blameworthiness (McKenna 2012).

motivation takes its starting point in the phenomenology of self-blame. Guilt has a negative hedonic tone; it is partly constituted by its painfulness. Given this, we might ask whether the painfulness of guilt is deserved (Clarke 2013; Carlsson 2017; Portmore 2019). Desert is often understood as a moral notion, which is a consideration of justice and entails non-instrumental goodness.⁵

Fittingness views: The final view prefers a non-moral kind of propriety. Fittingness is a non-moral normative relation that obtains between, e.g., shame and the shameful, admiration and the admirable, blame and the blameworthy, etc. For a response to be fitting is for its object to call for, or merit, or be worthy of that response. One way of understanding the fittingness relation, particularly popular in the literature on blame and emotions, is in terms of truth or correctness.⁶ As noted, emotions have representational content. An emotion, on this view, is fitting only if what the emotion represents is true. In this sense, the fittingness of an emotion is similar to the truth of a belief (D’Arms & Jacobson 2000). Rosen (2015) calls it the “Alethic view”.⁷ Fittingness in the alethic sense is not a moral kind of propriety. It can be fitting to feel envy towards one’s rival or to be amused by an immoral joke. Shame is fitting to what is shameful; amusement is fitting to what is amusing, etc. Fear of tigers is fitting; fear of kittens is not. It is not fitting to envy one’s rival for being wealthier than you when she is in fact approaching bankruptcy; and it is not fitting to regret something that was not a mistake. Blaming emotions will thus be fitting only when their representational content is correct. If resentment represents the wrongdoer as having violated a legitimate expectation, resentment is only fitting if the wrongdoer in fact has violated a legitimate expectation; if resentment represents the wrongdoer as having acted with ill will, resentment is only fitting when the wrongdoer acted with ill will.

⁵ Desert is also sometimes seen as species of fittingness. See McKenna (2022).

⁶ It is important to note that many philosophers working on fittingness explicitly reject the equation between fittingness and correctness. See for example Howard (2019) and Naar (2022).

⁷ Rosen (2015: 70–71) uses the term “alethic” rather than the term “fitting” view, because it takes fittingness to be a *sui generis* non-moral relation.

4 Fair and deserved emotions

The notion of appropriateness and the account of the nature of the blaming emotions one opts for will have important implications for how one thinks about the conditions of blameworthiness. Proponents of the backward-looking moral view have typically defended rather strict conditions of knowledge, control, reason–responsiveness and voluntariness. The thought is simple: if blame is harmful to its recipient, that harm will be unfair or undeserved, unless she satisfies certain stringent conditions. We can illustrate this with the following argument.⁸

The interpersonal argument for control

(1) An agent S is blameworthy for X only if S deserves to be targeted with the reactive attitudes resentment or indignation because of X.

(2) To be targeted with the reactive attitudes resentment or indignation is to suffer.

(3) S deserves to suffer for X only if X was under S's control.

Therefore

(4) S is blameworthy for X only if X was under S's control.

Is premise (2) true? That depends on how we understand the notion of blame. To “target” someone with resentment or indignation could be understood either as experiencing or expressing these emotions. Blame can be private or outwardly expressed. If blame is identified with the reactive attitudes, it seems natural to understand blameworthiness in terms of the appropriateness of experiencing these emotions. After all, there seem to be numerous instances of blame that are not expressed. We blame people from afar and we blame the dead. Even though experiencing the blaming emotions involves a disposition to treat the wrongdoer in a certain way, this disposition need not be manifested (Nelkin 2013: 124; Graham 2014: 391). Moreover, even when the blaming emotions are expressed, they will not always be experienced as sanctions. Sometimes we do not care about the disapproval of others. If this understanding of blame is correct, it is not obvious that blame entails suffering.

⁸ For versions of this argument, see Wallace (1994); Watson (2004); Nelkin (2011); and Pereboom (2014).

An alternative approach would be to focus on guilt, rather than resentment and indignation (Clarke 2013, 2016; Carlsson 2017, 2019; Portmore 2019, 2022). Guilt doesn't need to be expressed in order for the person at whom it's targeted to suffer, because suffering is necessarily part of experiencing guilt. This suffering comes in different degrees. It can vary from a mild discomfort to a prolonged state of agony (Clarke 2013: 155). But if the emotional state does not involve suffering at all, it is not guilt. This provides the material for another, intrapersonal, argument for why control is required for blameworthiness (Carlsson 2017; Portmore 2019):

The intrapersonal argument for control

- (1) An agent S is blameworthy for X only if S deserves to feel guilt for X.
- (2) To feel guilt is to suffer.
- (3) S deserves to suffer for X only if X was under S's control.

Therefore,

- (4) S is blameworthy for X only if X was under S's control.

This argument faces a different set of challenges. First, one might object to the claim that emotions can be deserved. According to Shoemaker (2015), questions of desert only arise when some kind of treatment is at issue. But experiencing a reactive attitude is not a treatment. Second, and relatedly, considerations of parsimony might favor the fittingness view. Consider the relation between emotion and value. Something is admirable if and only if it is fitting to admire, regrettable if and only if it is fitting to regret. These biconditionals are widely accepted (Howard 2018; Berker 2022).⁹ D'Arms and Jacobson (2022) ask why blameworthiness should be different in that it, alone among these values, requires desert and not just fittingness to be appropriate.

⁹ However, see Achs and Na'aman (forthcoming) for important qualifications.

5 Fitting emotions

Another way of linking emotions and blameworthiness is the following:

The Alethic Account of Blameworthiness: An agent S is blameworthy for X if and only if S is a fitting target of a blaming emotion (Hieronymi 2004; Graham 2014; Rosen 2015; Shoemaker 2015; Strabbing 2018; Portmore 2022).

The alethic view is not merely an account of what it is to be blameworthy. It also aims to provide an explanation of the conditions of blameworthiness. For any condition of blameworthiness, such as freedom, control, bad quality of will, knowledge, etc., there must be a corresponding thought or representation present in the blaming emotion. If any such thought is not present in the blaming emotion, it is not a condition on blameworthiness. This follows from the claim that an agent is blameworthy if and only if the thoughts or representation involved or constitutive of the blaming emotions are true of her.

There will be some constraints on any plausible alethic account. First, the account should be informative. Suppose that the representational content of blaming emotions is simply that the person being blamed is blameworthy. This would be phenomenologically plausible, but would not yield an informative account of moral blameworthiness. After all, the alethic account seeks to illuminate the conditions of blameworthiness by considering what blaming emotions represent.

Second, the representational content of the blaming emotions should not entail any clear conflicts with our considered judgments about the conditions of blameworthiness. Suppose that the content of the blaming emotions were simply that the agent acted wrongly and with a bad or insufficient quality of will. This will result in a lot of false positives. It seems that small children for example can act wrongly, and with a bad quality of will. Yet many would be reluctant to say that they are blameworthy in virtue of these features of their act. Their bad quality of will does not make it fitting for us to resent them. The natural explanation for why small children are not blameworthy is that they lack some capacity or form of competence necessary for being blameworthy. More generally, commonsense morality recognizes a wide variety of excuses and exemptions: ignorance, lack of control, compulsion, etc. One challenge

for the alethic account is to identify a representational content of blaming emotions that can capture these conditions.

Third, the account should provide a psychologically plausible account of what blaming emotions represent. For this reason, it seems clear that the representational content cannot be that the agent acted wrongly with an insufficient quality of will and did not act under compulsion, with sufficient control, with sufficient knowledge, etc. This would be an implausibly complex representation. One possibility would be to say that the blaming emotions represent the wrongdoer as having committed an unexcused wrongdoing. While solving the problem of how to make sense of excuses, this suggestion gives rise to other problems. As Owens (2012: 33) has pointed out, excused wrongdoing is just another name for inappropriate blame. The previous suggestion would thus be uninformative.

A better proposal comes from Strabbing (2019) who argues that the representational content of blaming emotions is that 1) the agent acted from an insufficiently good will and 2) that she could have done better. This would account for why we often think that children, psychopaths, and manipulated agents are not blameworthy even though they can manifest a bad quality of will: they lack the capacity to act better than they did.

However, it is not obvious that this account is psychologically plausible. We often feel guilty when we cause other people harm, even though we could not have acted differently (more on this shortly). Or consider being mistreated by someone who lacks the capacity to act better. Resentment may seem, even on reflection, a natural reaction. However, if guilt or resentment represent the agent as having the capacity to act better, it seems that guilt and resentment should evaporate once we become aware that these agents do not have the capacity to act better. But it is not clear that they do.

One way to amend this problem would be to postulate that desert is part of the representational content of blame. According to Rosen (2015) resentment is partly constituted by the thought that the wrongdoer deserves to suffer for what she has done. According to Portmore (2019), guilt is partly constituted by the representation that the wrongdoer deserves the unpleasantness of her guilt. For both Rosen and Portmore, blame is therefore only fitting if either suffering in general or the unpleasantness of guilt is deserved. This leaves room for ethical theorizing about

when suffering is deserved. Rosen's and Portmore's accounts can thus incorporate the ethical arguments we encountered in the previous section. One can argue that people do not deserve harm or unpleasantness unless certain conditions – control and knowledge, say – are satisfied. At the same time, they can maintain that blaming emotions are fundamentally experienced rather than expressed, and that the relevant norm of propriety for all emotions is fittingness rather than desert. The reason for this is that desert enters the picture as the emotion's representational content rather than its norm of propriety. It is a neat package. However, its plausibility relies on the claim that desert in fact is part of the representational content of the blaming emotions. This is not obvious. Desert, on most accounts, entails non-instrumental goodness. But it might be possible to resent a family member or a co-worker without having the thought that it is non-instrumentally good that they suffer. Portmore's desert claim is more specific, since it is restricted to the unpleasantness of guilt, but faces another problem. In general, it is unusual that emotions are constituted by a thought or representation concerning their own justification. Emotions do not tend to be self-referential in this way: The representation content of regret, for example, seems to be that I made a mistake, but not that I made a mistake and that it is appropriate that I pained by this mistake. In addition, it's crucial to Portmore's project of deriving the conditions of blameworthiness from the representational content of guilt that desert is part of what guilt represents. But even if guilt is self-referential in this way, it is hard to establish that the relevant notion is desert, rather than some other normative notion.¹⁰

Alethic accounts face a challenge. On the one hand, they need to capture at least some of the commonly accepted conditions on blameworthiness and the corresponding excuses and exemptions. On the other, they need to give a psychologically realistic picture of the reactive attitudes. That this might be difficult to achieve is nicely illustrated by some recent work on guilt and resentment. Standard accounts of guilt take guilt to represent the agent as having violated a legitimate expectation, acted with ill will or acted wrongly and betrayed a personal relationship. What these views have in common is that they all presume that the agent has acted objectionably. Zhao (2020) points to common experiences of guilt that do not fit this pattern.

¹⁰ See Achs (2022) for a view on which emotions are self-referential, and the relevant normative notion is not desert

Survivors of atrocities often feel guilty because they survived and others did not. Moreover, we often feel guilty in cases where we are merely causally responsible for bad outcomes.

A natural response would be to insist that while these cases may be instances of guilt, this guilt is not fitting. When we encounter people in the grip of guilt for actions for which they are not responsible, we will typically point out that they are not responsible for them, it wasn't their fault, they couldn't have acted differently, etc. The presumption seems to be that these considerations undermine the appropriateness of the emotion. However, if these emotional experiences are in fact instances of unfitting guilt, people in the grip of them must represent themselves as having violated a legitimate expectation or acted with ill will or having betrayed a personal relationship. Zhao argues that such interpretations are implausible. Instead, he proposes the following representational content of guilt: "Guilt represents some part of the self as being implicated in a bad state of affairs" (Zhao 2020: 23).

Next consider resentment. Reis-Dennis (2021) notes that it is typically considered unfitting for adults to resent children when they act wrongly. Strawson, as we noted previously, took childhood to be a prime example of something that would exempt someone from resentment. Children, however, do resent each other and this resentment often seems fitting: "We know from observing children, from consuming literature and film, and from our own memories of growing up, that a child's full-blooded resentment in response to being bullied is often intelligible and apt" (2021: 5). Reis-Dennis' explanation is that children are typically too socially weak to be fittingly resented by adults. He argues that a psychologically realistic account will show that resentment is sensitive to relative social power. As a consequence, some adults might for example fulfill all the traditional conditions of moral responsibility (knowledge, control, bad quality of will) and nevertheless not be fittingly resented if their social status is too low. Children, on the other hand, might fittingly resent each other even though they would lack some of the conditions normally taken as necessary for fitting resentment (knowledge, control, or reason-responsiveness).

These revisionary accounts of guilt and resentment raise two issues. First, if Zhao and Reis-Dennis are correct, this will create difficulties for the alethic account by leading to the following dilemma: We could maintain that agents are blameworthy if and only if resentment and guilt are fitting. But this would seem to give us the unwelcome result that agents can be

blameworthy for merely being implicated in a bad state of affairs, or that people can fail to be blameworthy although they fulfill the traditional criteria for blameworthiness, if their perceived social status is sufficiently low. Alternatively, we might try to avoid these results by distinguishing between different kinds of guilt and resentment.¹¹ One might allow that there are kinds of guilt and resentment that do not seem to track culpable wrongdoing, but insist that there are other forms of guilt and resentment that do. One problem for this approach is that it may seem ad hoc. After all, the guilt and resentment described by Zhao and Reis-Dennis share both the phenomenology and action tendencies with guilt and resentment as these emotions are normally conceived.

The second worry is methodological. Even if Zhao's and Reis-Dennis' analyses of guilt and resentment turn out to be incorrect, it seems possible that they, or something like them, could have been correct. Indeed, given that psychological states are the product of our cultural and evolutionary history, it seems to me that we should not be too surprised if resentment and guilt fail to match up perfectly with our considered judgement about the conditions of blameworthiness. The representational contents of our blaming emotions seem contingent in a way the conditions of blameworthiness arguably are not. The question, given the Strawsonian methodology, is what to do with such a divergence.

6 Other ways of holding responsible: disappointment, contempt, shame, and hurt feelings

Although the main focus of Strawson's essay is on resentment, he understands the reactive attitudes as a big and diverse family, including attitudes like "gratitude, resentment, love, and hurt feelings". Recently there has been a resurgence of work on the broader class of reactive attitudes. First, consider disappointment. Some forms of disappointment are impersonal. I can be disappointed that it rains or that I was rejected. But I can also be disappointed in a person for something they did. Let us call the latter reactive disappointment (Telech & Katz 2022).¹² Disappointment is often viewed as a non-retributive alternative to blame, as an emotional response that would be justified even if we lacked the kind of control necessary to deserve to

¹¹ For the view that there are two distinct kinds of guilt, see Nichols and Prinz (2010: 134).

¹² As opposed to "propositional disappointment". See Menges (2020) for a similar distinction.

be objects of angry emotions like resentment and indignation (Pereboom 2014; Milam 2016: for discussion, see Menges 2020). Telech and Katz (2022), however, argue that we should see reactive disappointment as form of blame, rather than as an alternative. They note that disappointment, although not an angry emotion, certainly has condemnatory force. When you say: “I’m disappointed in you!” you address me and expect an uptake in the form of acknowledgement and repair. Indeed, a common response to reactive disappointment is the feeling of guilt.

Consider next contempt and shame. These emotions differ from resentment and guilt in several important respects. First, they are not merely responses to moral failures. We can feel contempt towards the moral failings of others and shame for our own moral shortcomings. But we can also feel contempt towards someone for being bad at sports or choosing a safe but boring occupation. We can feel ashamed of our cowardice, but also of our bodies, or our parents. Second, contempt and shame are globalist attitudes: they target what we are, rather than what we do (Mason 2003; Bell 2013; Deonna et al. 2012). Third, they have different action tendencies. Whereas guilt and resentment, as we have seen, come with a disposition to engage with the victim or wrongdoer, the characteristic action tendency of both contempt and shame is withdrawal.

Nevertheless, it seems plausible that at least some instances of contempt and shame are forms of blame. As hostile, affective evaluations of agential features they are ways of holding each other responsible. Just like resentment and indignation, they fall between mere grading and sanctioning.

For our purposes there are two things to note about disappointment, contempt and shame. First, they are all harmful. Contempt and disappointment have a sting, or condemnatory force. It is painful to be on the receiving end of them. It is by no means obvious that it is better to be the object of these emotions rather than resentment and indignation (Menges 2020). Shame on the other hand is intrinsically painful, just as guilt.

Nevertheless, it also seems clear that the conditions for when it is appropriate to feel disappointment, contempt and shame are less strict than conditions for resentment, indignation and guilt. Telech and Katz note that disappointment is a response to failing to live up to a

normative hope. But what we can hope for is different from what we can demand or reasonably expect. It seems that I can be disappointed in a friend for not meeting me, even though I know that his depression makes it unreasonable to expect this from him. We feel contempt for aspects of people's personality over which they do not have control. It is controversial whether it would be appropriate to feel guilt for unwitting omissions, actions done from moral ignorance, and our involuntary emotional reactions. But it does seem appropriate to feel ashamed for these things if they reflected our character.

One way to deal with this issue is to make a distinction between different kinds of responsibility (Watson 2004; Shoemaker 2015). According to Watson (2004) we should distinguish between responsibility as attributability and responsibility as accountability. To be responsible in the attributability sense means that a certain kind of evaluation, what Watson calls aretaic appraisal, is appropriate. This evaluation concerns how well or poorly an agent's actions, omissions or attitudes reflect on her character, on what she cares about or stands for: she might be kind, cowardly, brave, or selfish. To be blameworthy in the accountability sense means that some more robust kind of blame than mere aretaic appraisal would be licensed. One could then argue that contempt, disappointment and shame, as global evaluations of one's character and cares, are blame in the attributability sense, whereas resentment and indignation are blame in the accountability sense (Shoemaker 2015; Carlsson 2019).¹³ One could also argue that the relevant norm of propriety for accountability is desert, whereas the relevant norm of propriety for attributability is fittingness (Carlsson 2019; Portmore 2019). This solution is not entirely satisfactory, though. We still need a plausible explanation of why guilt, but not shame, disappointment and contempt should be governed by desert.¹⁴

Contempt, shame and disappointment differ from resentment and guilt both in their objects, and in the conditions that make them appropriate. Yet all of them can plausibly be viewed as kinds of blame, and all of them require some of the traditional conditions of responsibility in order to be appropriate. Now consider the following cases from Shoemaker (2019: 130):

¹³ However, Wang (2021) argues that shame or a subcategory of shame is a reactive attitude tied to accountability, and Telech and Katz (2022) argue that reactive disappointment is a form of accountability blame.

¹⁴ Portmore's explanation is that guilt but not shame has desert as part of its representational content. This solution, though, is open to the worries mentioned in the previous section.

Trashed gift: Mitzy drops by her close friend Livia's house unannounced only to see a birthday gift she had given Livia last week in the trash.

Better caul Saul: After a lot of bad blood between them, an older brother, Chuck, tells his younger brother Jimmy (who has idolized Chuck) that it's time to move on, saying, "The truth is, you never really mattered that much to me".

When faced with these events, Shoemaker points out that it would be natural for Mitzy and Jimmy to experience hurt feelings: distressing affective responses to emotional injury. These painful emotional states are typically caused by perceived relationship denigration, but can also result from for example betrayal, humiliation, verbal aggression, shock, ill-conceived humor, or discouragement. There are many situations in which hurt feelings would be appropriate, but resentment would not.

Hurt feelings, Shoemaker notes, pose a methodological conundrum for the Strawsonian tradition. On the one hand, Shoemaker makes a strong case for the claim that interactions involving hurt feelings are an integral part of our responsibility practices. We experience hurt feelings as responses to an agential feature that is attributable to the one that hurts us, namely, what they think and feel about us. This agential feature can cause a fitting reactive attitude (hurt feelings). When hurt feelings are expressed, they often have a blaming edge to them. Moreover, the response one seeks from someone who hurt our feelings are those characteristic of our responsibility practices: apologies, acknowledgement, and guilt (Shoemaker 2019, 2022). On the other hand, Shoemaker argues, hurt feelings seem fitting in absence of any of the commonly accepted conditions of responsibility. Given that hurt feelings are reactions to what other think and feel about us, they do not require knowledge, control, reason - responsiveness, or a bad quality will. We can hurt others' feelings while being ignorant, coerced, and with the very best of intentions. A small child can hurt its grandmother's feelings by saying he doesn't like her, and a cat might hurt its owner's feelings by preferring someone else's lap. Because of these considerations we might be tempted to discard hurt feelings when theorizing about responsibility. But this seems to entail a break with the Strawsonian methodology of taking our practices of holding each other responsible seriously.

7 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have highlighted the challenge of making sense of the conditions of responsibility while at the same time remaining faithful to the ways we hold each other responsible by experiencing and expressing emotions. This is not an easy task once we take an inclusive view of the emotions involved in holding each other responsible, as exemplified by disappointment, shame, or hurt feelings. But even if we take a restrictive view and focus on resentment and guilt, the challenge remains difficult.¹⁵

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