Ethical Theory and Moral Practice
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-022-10352-2

Blameless Moral Criticism – the Case of Moral Disappointment

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Accepted: 30 November 2022
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Abstract
In discussing the ways in which we hold each other accountable for immoral conduct, philosophers have often focused on blame, aiming to specify adequate responses to wrongdoing. In contrast, theorizing about the ways we can appropriately respond to *minor moral mistakes* – i.e., criticizable conduct that is bad but not wrong – has largely been neglected. My first goal in this paper is, thus, to draw attention to this blind spot and argue that a separate account of blameless moral criticism is desirable. My second goal is to propose one way to explicate the contrast between blaming and blameless moral criticism in terms of the contrast between moral anger and moral disappointment: while moral anger, as many argue, is an appropriate response to moral wrongdoing, *moral disappointment*, but not moral anger, is an appropriate response to these minor moral mistakes.

Keywords Supererogation · Blame · Disappointment · Anger · Responsibility

1 Introduction

In discussing the ways in which we hold each other accountable for immoral conduct, philosophers have often focused on blame, aiming to specify adequate responses to wrongdoing. Moral criticism, however, does not require wrongdoing. In fact, many have argued that agents are sometimes morally criticizable for committing minor moral mistakes, e.g., for not doing what is morally good but not required when the prudential stakes to the agent are low. This is a view I share. Given that it is correct, we can ask: what kind of attitude, that would express that we hold the transgressor accountable for such minor moral mistakes, is appropriate to adopt in these cases? Some recognize that such failings are sometimes criticizable, but simply leave this further question unaddressed.[1] Others argue that the kind of attitude to adopt is *blame*, quite specifically.[2] Both approaches are unsatisfactory:

[1] See e.g., Archer (2018), Cohen (2015), Harman (2016, 383), Haji and McNamara (2010), Trianosky (1986).

[2] Mellema (1987).

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Published online: 23 December 2022

this question deserves to be addressed; and yet, as I will argue below, the type of criticism called for in these cases is not blame but, instead, a blameless form of moral criticism. One way to substantiate this contrast between blaming and blameless moral criticism is to draw on the resources of the emotional theory of blame: minor moral mistakes make *moral disappointment*, but never blaming emotions such as moral anger, appropriate. Morally wrong conduct, in contrast, makes moral anger, perhaps in addition to moral disappointment, appropriate. This is the view I shall defend in Sections 3 and 4.

To be clear, I will introduce and develop my argument by way of discussing prudentially low-stakes cases[3] in which someone fails to supererogate, i.e., cases in which someone fails to do what's morally good, but not morally required[4]:

> **Yuca or Cauliflower**. Jonas rents a small garden bed in New York City where he has been growing cauliflower for the past two seasons. Recently, he's been pondering whether to grow yuca for the first time in the upcoming season. Although he likes yuca, he has a slight gustatory preference for cauliflower. Jonas' garden bed is fortuitously located and always in pristine shape, which is why he has become an inspiration to his fellow urban gardeners who, in making their own gardening choices, often find themselves copying Jonas' choice of legumes. Thus, he knows that in growing yuca he would do his part to contribute to a valuable effort of mainstreaming foods in his community that are currently popular only among members of certain culturally marginalized minorities. In planting yuca, he would, thus, do his part in counteracting the cultural marginalization of these groups. He decides to plant cauliflower because of his taste preference.

On initial reflection, Jonas' decision not to plant yuca does not seem morally neutral. It merits moral criticism, especially because he is already aware of the pertinent moral reasons. But it also seems too harsh to blame him. In cases such as this one, as I shall argue, a person deserves to be the target of moral disappointment. We should be disappointed in Jonas, on moral grounds, for his decision not to plant yuca; but we should not blame him.

Now, I will explore the role of moral disappointment in the context of minor moral mistakes. This, one might worry, suggests a somewhat myopic perspective on what it is to hold someone morally responsible – i.e., to have certain emotions –, casting aside alternative views of blame that have been proposed in the philosophical literature and that could likewise be used as a blueprint after which to model a theory of blameless moral criticism. Here I'm thinking, for instance, of relationship impairment theories (e.g., Scanlon 2008), and desire-based theories (Sher 2006). What is more, my approach might seem somewhat tendentious in that it picks a theory of moral responsibility – i.e., an emotion-based theory – that has the resources to make fine-grained distinctions between blaming and blameless moral criticism. By way of contrast, if blaming meant simply to have a desire that a person not have performed some bad act, then this may suggest that responses both to minor moral mistakes, and wrong actions call for the same kind of response: a desire, perhaps of varying strength, for the action not to have occurred.

Let me use this introduction to answer these concerns. First, among the various accounts of blame, emotion-based theories are perhaps the most widely endorsed[5], which suggests a

[3] I.e., cases in which the protagonist does not stand to lose much.

[4] For brevity's sake, I will often refer to such conduct as 'good but not required'.

[5] E.g., Cogley (2013), Menges (2017, 2020), Shoemaker (2018), Strawson (1962), Tognazzini (2013), Wolf (2011).

natural starting point in explicating a theory of blameless moral criticism. Second, even those who deny that holding someone accountable *consists* in having some suitable emotion will likely agree that emotional reactions such as being resentful and being indignant are among the paradigmatic interpersonal responses to immoral conduct. That is, even those who espouse a different theory of blame would likely agree that an interpersonal theory of moral responsibility would be incomplete without a proper role for the moral emotions.

Lastly, the following two claims need to be distinguished: first, the claim that moral disappointment, but not moral anger, is a fitting response to minor moral mistakes; second, the claim that such disappointment is not *blame*. I shall expend most of my efforts arguing for the first claim. In fact, the second claim, which I will take from existing philosophical work and support mostly by appeal to intuition, is important to me insofar as it motivates the idea that there are important differences in the ways we may respond to minor moral mistakes and wrongdoing (i.e., the first claim). Now, some philosophers might accept the first claim and still object, on further theoretical grounds, that these responses, as different as they might be, both merit the title "blame". Michael McKenna, to give just one example, sympathizes with the idea that disappointment can be blame if it could be shown to have a communicative function (McKenna 2012, 148). In this paper, I won't, of course, have the space to address such theoretically motivated objections. Let me emphasize, however, that the resulting disagreement should not be overstated, especially because I do recognize that both moral disappointment and moral anger are ways of holding someone responsible for their moral failures.

In the next section, I shall argue that a theory of blameless moral criticism is desirable. In Section 3, I will introduce the idea of moral disappointment. In Section 4, I will discuss the role of moral disappointment in a theory of blameless moral criticism.

2 Why a Theory of Blameless Moral Criticism is Desirable

In this section, I will side with those who believe that a person is sometimes morally criticizable for not doing what's best but not required.[6] However, as I will begin to argue in this section, the further specification that such criticism should take the shape of *blame*, quite specifically, is misguided. I shall start with a critical discussion of the relevant philosophical literature, aiming to show that a theory of blameless moral criticism is a natural extension and in some cases a correction of this literature. I will end this section with a theoretical consideration, arguing that we should expect the categorical deontic distinction between permissible and impermissible conduct to be mirrored by a likewise categorical distinction in the ways we hold one another responsible for such misdeeds.

It is common among philosophers, albeit not entirely uncontroversial, to think that some actions are supererogatory, that is, morally good to do, but not wrong not to do.[7]

[6] For the sake of accuracy, I should stress that the term "best but not required" is slightly inaccurate. In some cases, a person might be criticizable for not choosing a better available option. And yet, this better option might, in turn, be worse than some third, best, available option. In such cases, the agent might well be criticizable for not choosing the second-best option.

[7] This definition follows Dorsey (2013, 357). I purposely adopt a relatively wide, agreeable, characterization of "supererogation", as this paper is not concerned with the definition of supererogation. In the literature, many additional specifications have been proposed. It has, for instance, been suggested that supererogatory actions require praiseworthiness, that supererogation is to be characterized in purely evaluative terms, or that its scope is restricted to benevolent actions (see Heyd 2019 for a summary).

This philosophical sentiment certainly mirrors common sense morality according to which some actions are particularly praiseworthy or heroic, and in that sense morally good; yet not performing these actions would not be wrong.[8] For instance, it seems admirable to donate a kidney to a stranger, but it does not seem to be morally required that I do so. Going forward, I shall assume that there are supererogatory actions.

It is likewise common to assume that criticism for not supererogating would be misplaced in the context of high-stakes cases in which the action in question would produce a lot of good, but only at great cost or risk to the agent herself:[9]

> **Shark Tank.** Agata is walking by a shark tank when she suddenly sees two small children struggling to exit the tank. If Agata were to jump in, she'd attract the sharks' attention, giving the children just enough time to escape but rendering her own chance of survival minimal. If she doesn't jump in, the sharks will kill the children.

Jumping in the shark tank to save the children is supererogatory and indeed heroic, and yet, not jumping in is simply not criticizable.[10]

Not all cases of supererogation, however, fit this paradigm. In some cases, supererogating demands much less self-sacrifice to bring about a positive moral upshot (e.g., 'Yuca or Cauliflower'). Reflecting on the nature of these cases has led many philosophers to conclude that agents are criticizable for not choosing to supererogate when the prudential stakes to the agent are relatively low (see e.g., Archer 2018; Cohen 2015; Haji and McNamara 2010; Harman 2016, 383; Mellema 1987; Trianosky 1986). Going forward, I will assume that this prevalent assessment – that criticism is misplaced in high-stakes, but not always in low-stakes, cases – is correct. My concern will be the type of criticism that is appropriate in the latter, low-stakes, cases. Let me discuss Harman's, Trianosky's, Cohen's, and Mellema's approaches in some reasonable detail.

Harman (2016) points us to a class of omissions she calls "morally permissible moral mistakes," i.e., omissions that are morally permissible but both morally and all things considered suboptimal. In arguing her case, she mainly relies on intuitions concerning various case descriptions such as, in a central passage, this one:

> **Amanda** is a philosophy professor who has a two-year-old daughter. It is 11:00 p.m. Amanda receives an email from her undergraduate student Joe, with a third draft of the paper that is due tomorrow at noon. She has already commented on his first two drafts. Joe is struggling in the class, but she can tell that he is on the verge of some kind of breakthrough. If Joe fails the class, he will lose his scholarship and have to drop out of school. It would take half an hour to read the draft and write the comments, and Amanda is tired. Her daughter will wake her up early. Amanda realizes that she is not morally obligated to spend the thirty minutes to give Joe comments,

[8] To be clear, this is not meant to suggest either a necessary or a sufficient connection between praise and supererogation. Such claims would be controversial because, in some cases, agents perform the supererogatory act but they don't know that they do. In these cases, the agent seems less than praiseworthy, thereby undermining the sufficiency interpretation. In other cases, it is arguable that agents are praiseworthy for even performing their duty (McNamara 2011, Sect. 6). After all, sometimes one's obligations can be rather demanding, in which case an agent might deserve praise for performing it where most others would fail.

[9] See e.g., Horgan and Timmons (2010, 31), McNamara (2011), Mellema (1991, 17), Urmson (1958).

[10] There are several ways to explain this intuition. Famously, Wolf (1982) argues that moral and prudential reasons might sometimes be incommensurable in that an agent cannot be criticized for choosing either the morally or the prudentially superior option. Another way to explain the intuition is that the balance of reasons simply favors refraining from acting morally. This is suggested, for instance, in Harman (2016).

> but nevertheless she deliberates about whether to do it. Upon reflection, Amanda thinks, "I should do it!" She's right. She gives him the comments. (Harman 2016, 369)

Although Amanda is not morally required to read the essay, the moral reasons telling in favor of reading it outweigh her prudential concerns, which is why, all things considered, it is best to read the paper. Not reading the paper, in Harman's terminology, is a "morally permissible moral mistake." In cases such as this one, the agent is "criticizable" but not blameworthy for not supererogating (see Harman 2016, 382).[11]

Before analyzing Harman's view, let me add a clarificatory note on terminology. Harman argues that morally permissible moral mistakes occur when someone chooses not to do what she is "not morally obligated" to do but what she "should" do, all things considered, for moral reasons. In slight contrast, going forward, I will construe the relevant cases in terms of what an agent is not morally obligated to do, but what it would be *best* to do, all things considered, for moral reasons. The advantage, I reckon, is that it avoids using the word "should", which may have an unwanted deontic flavor. Moreover, I take "ought", "requirement" and "obligation" to be deontic notions, which are contrasted with purely evaluative assessments (e.g., what is *best, better*, or *worse*).

Now, suppose we share Harman's view that Amanda would become criticizable if she decided not to read the paper but that blaming her would be too strong. We might, then, ask "What attitude appropriately expresses our criticism and holds agents like Amanda morally responsible for their (in)action?".

To provide some context, it is common to distinguish between (1) a moral *status* such as blameworthiness, (2) a *judgment* that someone has this status (e.g., that someone is blameworthy), and (3) holding someone *accountable* by, say, blaming them (e.g., Wallace 1994, 76f). Thus, blame is a separate attitude (e.g., moral anger, a certain desire, or a demand) that is made appropriate by someone's being blameworthy. In blaming others, not simply by judging them blameworthy, we hold them accountable for their conduct. For instance, on one influential view – i.e., the emotion theory of blame (see Sections 3 and 4) –, blaming consists in adopting moral emotions (e.g., resentment) that are made appropriate by the transgressor's blameworthiness.

[11] In explaining why such omissions are criticizable, Harman crucially relies on the notion of *all things considered rationality*. The idea is this: Deontically speaking, Amanda has options. It is permissible for her either to read or decline to read the student's essay. The moral reasons in favor of reading the essay, however, are strong enough to outweigh her prudential concerns which is why, all things considered, reading the paper is best. Things, Harman argues, don't always have to go this way. Sometimes, what's morally best is not what is best all things considered. "The morally best thing I could do right now might be this: go to the local hospital and offer up a kidney and some of my liver, to save two lives. But that's not what I should do right now, all things considered" (Harman 2016, 380). Thus, morally permissible moral mistakes are grounded in a failure to choose what is, for moral reasons, all things considered best but not morally required. Now, it might be objected that not all theories of supererogation are compatible with the existence of morally permissible moral mistakes and, therefore, with the existence of criticizable failures to supererogate. For instance, Portmore (2003, 326ff) argues that supererogation occurs when nonmoral reasons make it all things considered rational not to choose what is morally best. Of course, no one could be criticized for defying one's moral reasons when doing so is favored by the balance of reasons. Interestingly, Portmore (2008) himself criticizes his earlier view precisely on the ground that it had "the implication that all supererogatory acts are objectively irrational" (Portmore 2008, footnote 21). Now, although some theories of supererogation (e.g., Portmore's earlier view) are incompatible with my arguments, many other theories of supererogation *are* compatible with my arguments. For instance, philosophers such as Dancy, Horgan, and Timmons believe that some moral reasons endorse an action, thereby favoring this action all things considered without also requiring the action (see Macnamara and Little 2020 for an excellent summary).

Now, in analyzing what it means to hold Amanda accountable for her inaction – i.e., in case she decides not to read the paper – we should likewise distinguish between a *judgment* that Amanda is criticizable (that she is critique-*worthy*, as it were) and actually holding her accountable. Notice that, on Harman's assessment, blame is not an appropriate response to her minor moral mistake: "[t]hese mere moral mistakes are not blameworthy" (Harman 2016, 392). On reflection, we should agree with her assessment: Amanda would be criticizable if she didn't read the paper but blaming her for not reading it would clearly be too drastic. Harman, however, does not elaborate on the nature of the attitude that is made appropriate by her being criticizable. But distinguishing between the judgment that someone is criticizable and actually holding her accountable suggests that there be some attitude to complement this judgment. In the next sections, I shall argue that *moral disappointment* can serve as such a complement.[12]

Next, a similar diagnosis is plausible with regard to Trianosky (1986) and Cohen (2015). Both authors present interesting philosophical analyses to account for the intuition that certain failures to supererogate – e.g., a failure to adopt orphan children (Cohen 2015, 1007), or to participate in valuable social movements (Trianosky 1986) – can be morally problematic. According to Trianosky, some such failures evince crucial character flaws. According to Cohen, some such failures are morally *wrong* but not blameworthy.[13] Surprisingly, however, neither of them addresses the question of which attitude would be appropriate to adopt in light of the recognition of such moral failures. Trianosky (1986, 26f), quite like Harman (2016, 392), explicitly states that this attitude is not blame.

Let me finish this literature review with exegetical remarks on Mellema (1987), who stands out in this discussion, because he argues that some morally problematic failures to supererogate are deserving of blame (Mellema 1987, 142). He coins the blameworthy type "quasi-supererogatory." Here, as above, we should ask why it is *blame*, quite specifically, that not supererogating makes appropriate. And here, as above, there is room for disagreement. First, Mellema's core examples, whose avowed purpose is to motivate intuitions attributing blameworthiness, don't seem like clear cases of failures to supererogate at all. Consider a rephrased version of his central case (Mellema 1987, 146):

> **Restaurant.** Jason and his wife Mia are out dining in a restaurant. Mia has a visible disability. While they're having dinner, a man sitting at the neighboring table audibly makes fun of the fact that Mia has a disability. Jason, furious with rage about the man's behavior, is very much tempted to walk over and empty his bowl of cold noodle soup onto the man's lap.

On Mellema's assessment, refraining from pouring the soup is supererogatory. "Refraining from resisting", then, marks a failure to supererogate. According to Mellema, "it is reasonable to judge that his refraining from resisting the temptation is deserving of blame. It is in his power to resist the temptation […], and he deliberately chooses not to do so, knowing full well the consequences which will result." (Mellema 1987, 146) Thus, the admirable thing to do would be to refrain from pouring the soup over the man's lap. Refraining from doing

[12] An interesting corollary of this view is that cases such as 'Amanda' and 'Yuca or cauliflower' do not seem to call for guilt on part of the actor. Instead, they seem to call for something milder, e.g., *regret* based on one's moral reasons. If Jonas is criticizable, on moral grounds, for not planting yuca on his garden patch, then these reasons likewise seem to give him reason to regret his choice.

[13] In a sense, Cohen presents the inverse of Mellema's position: whereas Mellema argued that certain failures to supererogate are not wrong, but nevertheless blameworthy, Cohen argues that such failures can be wrong, but not blameworthy.

this admirable thing, and thereby not choosing what's best, would be blameworthy; but, as Mellema stresses, this would not be wrong. I disagree. Judging purely based on intuition, Jason's action would be wrong. Most of us would think that he should either ask for another table or tell the man to shut it. Emptying his bowl onto the man's lap would make him blameworthy (and likely the subject of a criminal charge for assault), but it would also be wrong.

Now, supplementing this discussion, let me provide a theoretical consideration against the idea that moral criticism should take the shape of blame in the cases under discussion. The deontic difference between permissible and impermissible conduct is *fundamental* – i.e., it is tempting to think that it cannot be analyzed in more fundamental terms –, and it is *pronounced* – i.e., it seems to lie at the heart of many of our moral practices, concerning the justification of punishment, moral advice, and ultimately blame. Intuitively speaking, if I do what is permissible, I should not have to fear punishment or become the target of stern advice ("it's not wrong, but don't do it!" seems off). Similarly, an act's being permissible seems to provide adequate justification against becoming the target of blame for this act. Imagine Amanda's partner, who, after finding out that she decided not to read the third iteration of the student's paper, were to react with indignation. Intuitively, Amanda has a powerful excuse on her hands: she had no obligation to read the paper.

My point is that it would be surprising if the deontic difference between acts that are and acts that aren't wrong were to be reflected by mere graded differences (i.e., more or less blame) in the ways we hold each other accountable for moral failures that differ along this dimension. De-coupling the justification of blaming-, admonishing-, and punishing-practices from the deontic status of actions has a somewhat revisionary flavor. Prescribing a different set of responses for actions that are wrong and those that are not wrong, in contrast, seems to respect the normative point of judgments of wrongness. To be clear, this suggests that there are responses that are made appropriate by wrongdoing but not by minor moral mistakes. It does not, however, suggest the reverse: that there are responses that are made appropriate by minor moral mistakes but not by wrongdoing. After all, minor moral mistakes are bad, and wrongdoing is also bad (in fact, it is even worse), which is why we should not be surprised if responses that are made appropriate by minor moral mistakes also to be made appropriate in response to wrongdoing. The current proposal respects this idea: Some failures to supererogate merit moral disappointment, not blame. Morally wrong conduct, in contrast, merits blame in addition, perhaps, to moral disappointment.[14]

3 Moral Disappointment and Moral Responsibility

The previous section cleared the ground, explaining why an account of blameless moral criticism is desirable. In the rest of this paper, I will provide one plausible version of this account. I shall argue that blameless moral criticism paradigmatically takes the form of

[14] The current proposal is built on the distinction between supererogation and deontic notions such as obligation, duty, or wrongness: Some failures to supererogate call for disappointment. Wrong actions (or actions contrary to duty), in turn, merit blaming reactions such as indignation. This perspective, it might be argued, does not naturally chime with a perspective according to which rightness and wrongness are *graded* notions (e.g., Peterson 2013). The idea would be that such a fine-grained graded analysis of wrongness provides the resources to re-describe failures to supererogate as being 'wrong to some degree'. Such a theory would indeed not be compatible with my approach. However, any account of graded wrongness that does not consume failures to supererogate, as it were, would be compatible with the present approach. A case in point is Peterson (2013, Sect. 2.4) who explicitly denies that supererogation can be analyzed in terms of degrees of rightness.

moral disappointment. In this section, I will introduce this idea and connect it to the relevant literature. In the next section, I will provide a defense.

Philosophical discussions of moral disappointment – and, relatedly, moral sadness (see below for discussion) – have pointed in opposing directions. On the one hand, there are those who argue that emotions such as sadness and disappointment can constitute a blaming response (e.g., Blustein 2017; Menges 2020; Pickard 2013, 621; Skorupski 2010, 294; Telech and Katz 2022). On the other hand, there are those who propose that disappointment can aptly replace blame in cases of *exculpated* wrongdoing (e.g., Fricker 2007, 2010; Pereboom 2014; Pereboom & Shoemaker 2017).[15] The position advocated in the present paper lends credibility to both parties' intuitions: Philosophers such as Menges and Blustein are correct in that the experience of moral disappointment presents a way of holding others responsible for their immoral conduct. Philosophers such as Fricker and Pereboom are correct in thinking that disappointment can serve as an alternative when blame seems too strong. Thus, my view – i.e., that moral disappointment is an appropriate response to minor moral mistakes – chimes with intuitions from both camps in that being disappointed *is* a way of holding others responsible which need not rise to the level of blame.

Let me be clear, while I shall argue that moral disappointment can be fitting when all-out blame is too strong, I leave open the possibility – I find it indeed plausible – that moral disappointment is (a) also fitting in response to blameworthy behavior, and that (b) particularly *strong* moral disappointment might *only* be fitting in response to blameworthy conduct. But this should be unsurprising. After all, fitting emotional responses need to be appropriate in magnitude and duration (see, e.g., Na'aman 2021). *Minor* moral mistakes, then, make *some* disappointment appropriate. Furthermore, morally wrong actions are also morally bad. Therefore, if disappointment is appropriate in response to mere badness (without wrongness), we should expect that it is also appropriate in response to wrong actions.

Derk Pereboom and Miranda Fricker have explored, each in their own way, whether *exculpated wrongdoing* can make disappointment appropriate. Pereboom (2014, 2017) has argued that blaming anger is never appropriate because no one is ever responsible for their conduct. For this reason, as he argues, our blaming practices require reform and ought to give way to ersatz practices that substitute paradigmatic blaming attitudes such as anger for non-blaming attitudes such as disappointment, sadness, or regret.

Fricker (2007, 2010) has argued that, in certain cases, past people are exculpated on the basis of their non-culpable ignorance of some morally relevant facts. She writes: "Blame is inappropriate if the relevant action or omission is owing to a structurally caused inability to form the requisite moral thought" (Fricker 2010, p. 167). And yet, although such ignorance can go a long way towards exculpating the agent, it may fall short of *full* exculpation. An agent may nevertheless become the proper target of "moral-epistemic disappointment".

[15] Some consequentialists (e.g., Parfit 1984, Chap. 1.14; Tannsjö 1995) have argued that some actions are blameless but wrong. This is the case when an action with bad consequences is part of a set of actions with the best overall consequences. For instance, it may be that a person who always chooses what is morally best (by consequentialist lights) would need to be endowed with a humanly impossible set of motivations. The best humanly possible set of motivations might inevitably lead to some bad actions. While it seems wrong to blame agents for their bad actions in these cases, one might wonder whether disappointment may nevertheless be fitting. On reflection, we should answer in the negative. After all, on a consequentialist outlook, the fact that a wrong action is a result of the best set of motives seems to fully exculpate the agent for performing the wrong act. This is not to say, however, that disappointment is not *psychologically* plausible in these cases. An unattainable, yet conceivable, ideal might be a cause for disappointment, but such disappointment could not be justified on moral grounds.

If the agent's cultural-historic situation was one of moral upheaval, in which the relevant moral facts were considered but not yet entrenched, an agent may have been in the position to make the relevant moral judgments and come to realize these facts. To see all this more vividly, Fricker has us imagine the case of a schoolmaster who, quite in line with the conventions of his time, regularly caned boys as punishment for their alleged misbehavior. To the schoolmaster, such violent reproach seemed appropriate. Suppose now that he teaches at a "transitional historical moment" such that he is *somewhat* aware of the brutal nature of his practice. In this case, Fricker argues, the schoolmaster is not blameworthy, but is nevertheless the appropriate target of moral disappointment.

Now, whether exculpated wrongdoing can make disappointment appropriate is not my topic. Instead, the present paper asks whether (and affirms that) disappointment can be an appropriate response to minor moral mistakes. Although the focus is different, one might suspect that criticisms that have been levelled against Pereboom (see Menges 2020) and Fricker (see Brady 2010) may apply with equal strength to my arguments, which is why I will, in due course, attend to the most trenchant objections raised by Brady and Menges.

Let me briefly compare Fricker's and my use of disappointment. This will help reinforce a positive feature of my approach. Blame comes in degrees. Epistemic access to the facts relevant for making morally informed decisions is likewise a graded phenomenon. We can be more or less acquainted with these facts. It, therefore, seems natural to ask: If the schoolmaster, who was *somewhat* acquainted with the morally relevant facts, is partially exculpated for his caning the children, why doesn't this simply lead us to blame him *less* than, say, a present-day teacher who canes students, but who is *fully* aware of these facts? Thus, it seems attractive to map degreed differences in our moral evaluations onto degreed differences in the ways we hold each other responsible; and it seems likewise attractive to map categorical difference in our evaluations onto categorical differences in the ways we hold each other responsible. The use of disappointment in the present context lives up to this expectation, pairing categorically different attitudes – blame and disappointment – with categorically different evaluations of conduct – wrong and not wrong (but bad) conduct. This is a positive feature of the proposal under discussion.

The second brand of philosophers listed above takes moral disappointment to be a form of blame proper: an emotion that responds to wrongdoing. Let me discuss this family of views to the extent to which it serves two presently relevant purposes: First, to illustrate how disappointment can, in principle, constitute a way of holding others morally responsible. Second, to show that *moral disappointment* and *moral sadness* are near identical notions, thereby clarifying the scope of the thesis advocated here.

The idea that being disappointed is a way of holding others morally responsible is not at all self-evident. After all, disappointment is paradigmatically experienced, not because someone is perceived to have acted immorally, but rather because someone is perceived to have acted contrary to one's expectations.[16] What's more, it is possible to be disappointed, not by someone's (in)action, but simply by the (non)occurrence of events (e.g., cloudy weather).

[16] "Ordinarily, it is reasonable […] to feel disappointed when a substantial benefit that one reasonably expected to receive is snatched away by some unlikely turn of events" (Draper 1999, 392). "If disappointment is only appropriate when legitimate expectations are violated, therefore, then disappointment will not be appropriate in the case of subjects whose bad behavior reflects routine moral thinking and judgment. Judgments of […] disappointment will thus be equally inappropriate with respect to such subjects". (Brady 2010, 183)

Provided that there are salient non-moral applications, those who take emotions such as disappointment and sadness to constitute proper blaming responses (e.g., Blustein 2017, Brady 2010, Telech and Katz 2022) construct a "cognitively sharpened" (D'Arms and Jacobson 2003, 143) emotion – called *moral* disappointment or *moral* sadness – that suitable embeds a moral component.[17]

To see how this process of cognitive sharpening works, let's first consider non-moral disappointment, which is a cool, negative emotion that is associated with the feeling of emptiness, abandonment, and powerlessness resulting from the frustration of one's expectations (see Menges 2020, 173; van Dijk and Zeelenberg 2002, 800; Martinez et al. 2011, 352). Moreover, disappointment gives rise to a "tendency to get away from the situation, to ignore and to avoid the other person" (van Dijk and Zeelenberg 2002, 800). Mengers aptly summarizes this as a tendency to "withdraw" (Menges 2020, 174).

Moral disappointment enriches this characterization in two important ways. First, it is said to respond not to the frustration of one's *actual* expectations, but instead to the frustration of one's *moral*, or *normative*, expectations (Brady 2010; Telech and Katz 2022).[18] These normative expectations are judgments about an agent's moral conduct that merely presume that the agent *can*, but not that they most likely *will*, live up to these expectations. An agent, however, can be held to a moral standard whether or not they can be expected to live up to it.[19]

As a result, cognitively sharpened moral disappointment is negatively valenced in two ways. On the one hand, mere disappointment is negatively valenced in its own right, and yet, this negative valence is not a form of *moral* appraisal.[20] Cognitively sharpened, moral disappointment on the other hand embeds additional *moral appraisal*.

The second amendment concerning moral disappointment is that it targets *an agent*. Being morally disappointed means being disappointed *in* someone for doing something (in contrast to be being disappointed *that* someone did something).[21] This way of describing things integrates the analysis of moral disappointment with a broadly Strawsonian perspective on blame according to which blaming consists in having reactive attitudes (e.g., resentment) towards an *agent*. We can summarize this discussion in the following characterization:

> **Moral Disappointment**
> Moral disappointment is a cool, negative, agent-directed emotion that embeds, when fittingly deployed, a moral evaluation. As a result, paradigmatic instances of moral disappointment give rise to a disposition to withdraw.

In this characterization, I have strategically used the expression "embeds […] a moral evaluation" to remain non-committal, at least for now, about the kind of moral evaluation involved in moral disappointment: whether it is concerned exclusively with *wrongness* or also *mere badness*.

17 See also Hughes (1995), Russell and Fehr (1994), Schönherr (2019), Shoemaker (2015, 89).

18 This conception of "normative expectations" is more familiar from philosophical debates about trust (e.g., Darwall 2017, Dormandy 2020, Holton 1994).

19 Similarly, Telech and Katz (2022) argue for a moral type of disappointment which contrasts with a non-moral "run of the mill" type of disappointment. Moral disappointment, as they construe it, is a response to one's frustrated "normative hope". Such normative hope is, again, grounded in normative expectations, i.e., beliefs about what someone *ought to do*.

20 On a popular view, this valence is best described as the "seeming badness" (Carruthers 2018, 663).

21 See Menges (2020, 173), Shoemaker (2015), and Telech and Katz (2022).

It is easy to miss the fact that embedded moral evaluations may simply amount to embedding a judgment about an action's *mere badness*, and thus may not involve a judgment about an action's wrongness. Brady (2010), in a discussion of Fricker (2010), considers whether, in cases of exculpated wrongdoing, moral disappointment can replace resentment as an adequate response. He dismisses this option, arguing that the violation of normative expectations would make blame appropriate. Moral disappointment could, therefore, not serve as a substitute when blame is shown to be inappropriate:

> [I]t is very difficult to see how someone can fail to live up to the standards that she ought to live up to, and as such violate normative expectations, without thereby being an appropriate target of blame. (Brady 2010, 184)

Brady's worry can be resisted. It is possible for someone to violate normative expectations while also living "up to the standards that she ought to live up to". This would be true when these normative expectations are grounded in supererogation. When an agent commits a minor moral mistake, she violates legitimate normative expectations. But this does not mean that she does what she ought not to do. At least conceptually speaking, this is a possibility.

Now, a skeptical reader might wonder why moral *disappointment* – and not, as Blustein (2017) has suggested, moral *sadness* – is recruited to play a crucial role in our practice of holding people accountable for their conduct. On reflection, *moral* sadness and *moral* disappointment are very close cousins. Let me explain. Sadness and disappointment are similar in that both are cool, negative, and associated with passivity and withdrawal. Their most salient difference, however, concerns their causes and objects: In paradigmatic instances, the experience of disappointment is caused by the frustration of one's hopeful expectations, and it is about certain events' (non)occurrence. The (more) basic emotion of sadness, in contrast,[22] is not restricted in these ways. Interestingly, in the context of moral disappointment and moral sadness, this difference is missing: moral sadness, just like moral disappointment, is construed as targeting an agent in response to their perceived moral failings (see, e.g., Blustein 2017, 128).[23] Cognitively sharpening these emotions, thus, removes their most significant differences.

4 Blameless Moral Criticism

In this section, I will defend the claim that moral disappointment is an appropriate attitude to adopt in response to minor moral mistakes. More precisely, minor moral mistakes make moral disappointment, but never paradigmatic blaming attitudes such as resentment and indignation, appropriate. Blameworthy conduct, on the other hand, might make blaming attitudes such resentment *and* moral disappointment appropriate.

Some of my arguments will draw on differences between moral anger and moral disappointment, which is why it is useful to start with a juxtaposition of both:

> **Moral Anger**
> Moral anger is a hot, negative, agent-directed emotion that embeds, when fittingly deployed, a judgment about the agent's morally wrong conduct. As a result, paradigmatic instances of moral anger give rise to a disposition to retaliate.

[22] E.g., Ekman (2003, Chap. 5).

[23] A case in point is Telech and Katz (2022), who categorize disappointment as a kind of sadness. See also Ekman (2003, 101) for a similar point.

Moral Disappointment
Moral disappointment is a cool, negative, agent-directed emotion that embeds, when fittingly deployed, a moral evaluation. As a result, paradigmatic instances of moral disappointment give rise to a disposition to withdraw.

In the previous section, I commented extensively on the nature of moral disappointment. Let me provide a somewhat abbreviated discussion of moral anger. Mere anger is felt as a *hot, negative* emotion[24] that is caused, in part, by bodily states such as an increased heart rate and increased skin conductance. The central action tendency of anger, almost everybody agrees, is *retaliation* (Izard 1997; Keltner et al. 1993; Nichols 2007; Shaver et al. 1987).

Here, as in the case of disappointment, we must account for the moral component of *moral* anger. After all, someone who hits their feet on a rock might well get angry at the rock. But they will, at least in normal cases, not blame the rock for being in their way. In the case of moral anger, a judgment about the wrongness of its object's conduct is embedded. Such moralized anger (i.e., angry blame) is experienced as indignation (when directed at others who wronged yet others), resentment (when directed at others who wronged us), or guilt (when self-directed).[25] This, in very rough outline, is the anger theory of blame.

The rest of this paper will be dedicated to defending the claim that minor moral mistakes make moral disappointment, but never moral anger, appropriate. Let me start by pointing to this thesis' intuitive appeal.

Reconsider the two examples discussed in the introduction ('Yuca or cauliflower') and Section 2 ('Amanda'). It is simply intuitive that, say, Amanda's partner could rightly be disappointed, on moral grounds, if she declines to read the paper. It is likewise intuitive that Jonas' friends could rightly be disappointed, on moral grounds, that he decided to plant cauliflower. Attempts to elicit intuitions of justified anger would arguably have to make the relevant (in)action *worse*. Imagine that Amanda declined to read even a single draft a week before it was due, thus, making her inaction morally wrong. Given such a modification, we can intuitively empathize with her partner's indignation.

The same intuitive point can be made with regard to Telech and Katz's (2022) central pair of examples which are meant to provide an illustration of cases that make disappointment, but not angry blame, appropriate. In the first case, we are told about a teacher, Mr. Williams, who fraudulently adjusts a student's SAT score. He plans to make his undeserving nephew the recipient of a prestigious scholarship to the detriment of Mia, who would have been the rightful recipient of the scholarship. In the second case, we are told about Vera who betrays her prior commitment to environmental advocacy by publishing an op-ed in which she endorses a fracking project of a company that she works for and in which she argues that there is "inconclusive evidence" that fracking contaminates nearby groundwater. In presenting these cases, Telech and Katz aim to elicit the intuition that Vera's friend Aness is entitled to disappointment, while Mia's parents are entitled to feel resentment.

I agree with this assessment, but I want to offer my own straight forward explanation of this intuitive difference: Mr. Williams' SAT fraud is much *worse* than Vera's writing an op-ed article. On a plausible elaboration of this case, it seems that Vera has moral reasons

24 On a popular view, this valence is best described as the "seeming badness" (Carruthers 2018, 663) of its object. This description will be agreeable to most theorists. Perception theories of emotions have explicitly defended the idea that an emotion's valence is a perception-like seeming (see e.g., Döring 2007; Tappolet 2016). Cognitivists about emotions argue that these seemings are, in fact, beliefs.

25 These emotions might not all be equally as fundamental. Skorupski (2010) argues that indignation is a more fundamental blaming attitude because it is "patient-neutral: it is occasioned by what is taken to be wrongdoing, whether or not it involves injury to oneself". (Skorupski 2010, 294)

against writing the article, but it does not seem morally *wrong* for her to write it. Manipulating SAT scores to the detriment of a deserving student, on the other hand, is a serious wrong. For instance, Mr. Williams should at least lose his job over the incident. Vera, in contrast, does not deserve such punishment.

Next, recall that those who take moral disappointment to be a way of blaming others argue that moral disappointment is grounded in the frustration of 'normative expectations' or 'normative hope.' It seems unmotivated to restrict normative hope to what someone *ought* to do. Why might one not hope that someone live up to all of their moral reasons, especially when the agent doesn't stand to lose much from acting in accordance with their moral reasons? Normative expectations, it seems, do not need to stop at moral obligations. Another way to put the same point is that we might have expectations, grounded in moral reasons, that someone live up to an ideal, while being fully aware that this is not something that grounds an obligation. When the agent stands to lose much from acting morally, they might have an adequate excuse for acting immorally. But when those stakes are low, we might reasonably expect her to honor her moral reasons and do what is best. In these cases, failing to live up to a moral ideal can open the agent up to moral disappointment.

A third consideration can be gleaned from the various action tendencies that anger and disappointment give rise to. While anger, on the standard view, gives rise to retaliatory tendencies, disappointment gives rise to the non-retaliatory tendency to withdraw (see above). Only an angry person *seeks* to cause harm. This chimes nicely with our intuitions about the severity of wrong acts, and the relative lenience of bad, but deontically optional forms of conduct.[26] Let's remind ourselves of the example provided at the outset ('Yuca or Cauliflower'). It seems blatantly false that Jonas' decision to plant cauliflower makes him the appropriate target of retaliatory inclinations.

An opponent may respond that disengagement can likewise be retaliatory and harmful. Consider the following case: Lessie found the remote control and chewed it to pieces which makes her owner Meredith very angry. Knowing that it causes Lessie great pain to feel ignored, Meredith ignores her all afternoon. Withdrawing, as this example demonstrates, can be a sharp form of retaliation. Sometimes, disengagement is what hurts the most. In fact, it seems plausible that the actual pain caused by retaliatory withdrawal and non-retaliatory withdrawal is often the same. Consider the following case: Lessie found the remote control and chewed it to pieces which makes her owner Meredith very disappointed. Lessie had just come back from a 3-month long dog training program which doesn't seem to have helped alleviate her naughty behavior. Seemingly out of options, Meredith gives up and stops interacting with Lessie for a day out of sheer disappointment. This causes Lessie great pain.

The difference between both cases lies in Meredith's intentions. Only anger *aims* at causing harm. Disappointment causes harm merely as a side-effect. When Meredith withdraws attention from Lessie in disappointment, she does not *aim* to harm her dog by withdrawing. In assessing the *fittingness* – as opposed to the all-things-considered rationality – of an emotion, we shouldn't count side-effects. Joy, for instance, can have harmful side-effects, say, when it makes the joyful person act obnoxiously. And yet, joy continues to be a fitting emotion in response to wonderful things happening. Joy's harmful side-effects merely count against it being all things considered rational to feel joy. If joy were to *aim* at causing harm, it would indeed be difficult to maintain that it is a fitting response to wonderful events. Similarly, the fact that disappointed withdrawal causes harm as a side-effect

[26] The idea that wrong acts make retaliation appropriate should be read with a "pro tanto" clause writ large. After all, if you wrong me, this does not entail that I have a de facto right to punish and harm you. Severe punishment (that goes beyond dirty looks, etc.) is standardly taken to be monopolized by the state.

should not count against it being a fitting response to minor moral mistakes; it should merely count against it being rational all things considered.

Apart from the action tendencies to which anger and disappointment give rise, there is a second type of harm associated with these emotions that is often called their typical "force" or "sting" (see e.g., Hieronymi 2004; Menges 2020; McKenna 2012, Chap. 4):

> We typically care about whether or not our friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors angrily blame us or our loved ones. We hope that they do not feel and think this way, we fear that they do, and we feel bad when we learn that they do. We typically have good reason to avoid being the target of these attitudes, and to explain, excuse, or justify ourselves when we are blamed. […] It is natural to think that the harm of blame explains why it is morally inappropriate in the sense of unfair, undeserved, or unjust to stingingly blame random people. (Menges 2020, 121)

However, this "sting", Menges continues to argue, is not only associated with blame, but also, in some cases even more so, with disappointment:

> Disappointed withdrawal has the flavor of writing someone off that is not part of anger. The former seems to express that the target is a hopeless case. This is a very stinging response. And, therefore, it seems easier to cool down hot anger than to heat up cold disappointment. (Menges 2020, 121)

If Menges is right about this, then it might seem implausible that disappointment should be an appropriate response to permissible but bad conduct, and that angry blame should be an appropriate response to impermissible conduct. After all, morally wrong conduct is worse than merely bad conduct. Menges' objection can be answered. First, we should note that impermissible conduct often makes *both* emotions appropriate. Surely, it is often appropriate to be both angry and disappointed, on moral grounds, about someone's impermissible behavior. It might be objected that both emotions cannot coexist because anger is hot and disappointment is cool. But the conflict is merely apparent. "Hot" and "cool" are descriptions of emotional *episodes*, i.e., temporally circumscribed manifestations of an underlying dispositional emotion. When people are both disappointed and angry, they sometimes feel a hot bout of anger and, at *other times*, they feel a cool shower of disappointment.[27]

[27] The fact that a single event can make several negative emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment, disgust, negative surprise) appropriate raises delicate questions about the norms that guide their co-occurrence. In particular, co-occurring negative emotions might unjustly cause compounded harm to their target, for if each of these emotions cause some harm individually, then they will likely cause greater harm in concert. For instance, if it stings to be the target of anger, and if it stings to be the target of disappointment, then it likely stings more to be the target of anger and disappointment. Furthermore, if disappointment prompts disengagement, and anger prompts retaliation, both of which are perceived as bad, then it will typically be worse to be the target of *both* emotions. Thus, although someone's conduct might make both anger and disappointment appropriate, there might be further reasons, grounded in justice, calling for their moderation. Let me provide two responses. First, the fact that reasons of justice might call for emotional moderation in the cases just described leaves their fittingness untouched. The fact that it is angering that my friend humiliated me does not obviously make it less disappointing. Second, although in typical cases, the action tendencies of disappointment and anger are both perceived as negative, they are negative for very different reasons: retaliation and withdrawal both hurt, but they hurt in different ways. Suppose N steals my life savings which, in turn, makes me angry and disappointed. Consequently, I withdraw from the friendship and file a lawsuit against N. Of course, here I don't have to start weighing whether withdrawing from the friendship is too drastic given that my lawsuit is likely to be successful. If the action tendencies associated with both emotions were the same, then the case for moderation for reasons of unjust compounding would be stronger.

Now, in comparing the stings of anger and disappointment, we should resist comparing *severe* disappointment to *mild* blaming anger. Instead, we should compare *severe* anger to *severe* disappointment and *mild* anger to *mild* disappointment. Menges observes that it can sting much worse to be written off by a disappointed person than to be the subject of her anger. Menges is right, I think. However, "writing someone off" is a manifestation of severe disappointment that targets the person as a whole. Being disappointed in Jonas for not planting yuca this season, we're decidedly not writing him off. In the emotion literature, severe anger, whose focus is the person as a whole, rather than one of her actions, is more readily associated with "hate" (see e.g., Doorn 2018). Concomitantly, the sting of severe disappointment that writes a person off should be compared to severe anger that targets a person as a whole; anger that we might more readily associate with hate. Compared this way, anger's sting seems more severe than disappointment's sting.

Lastly, angry blame as I have construed it, in line with a popular view, aims (among other things) to harm in a broadly retaliatory fashion. In seeming contrast, it has been increasingly popular to construe blaming emotions as essentially *communicative* (see e.g., Darwall 2010, Chap. 1.3; McKenna 2012, Chap. 6; Shoemaker 2018). Here, we should distinguish (a) the claim that moral anger aims at both communication *and* harm, and (b) the claim that moral anger aims *only* at communication. I sympathize with interpretation (a) which is not in tension with what I have said: that it is partly in virtue of the disposition to harm that blaming anger is not a fitting response to minor moral mistakes, regardless of additional (possibly communicative) tendencies it might give rise to.

Interpretation (b) is arguably put forth, as a theory of blame, by McKenna (2012). Blame, on this view, aims at communication – i.e., at starting a dialogue – with the wrongdoer, and it is this communicative aim that constitutes resentment's status as a blaming emotion. Note that the claim that moral anger, when considered as a blaming attitude, does not seek to harm, is compatible with the view that moral anger *simpliciter* does, in fact, aim at harming. After all, its tendency to cause harm might simply not be constitutive of its status as a blaming emotion. Indeed, this is what McKenna should say. First, McKenna recognizes various blaming emotions such as hatred, sadness, and jealousy (McKenna 2012, 65 and 148). Surely, although these emotions may share certain (e.g., communicative) action tendencies, they undoubtedly differ with regard to some of their tendencies. Construed this way, the view weds a communicative theory of blame with the bulk of psychological findings (reviewed above) that broadly confirm that a disposition to harm is inherent in anger. Furthermore, moral emotions are standardly taken to be cognitively sharpened forms of more basic emotions. Cognitive sharpening, however, leaves the cognitive architecture of their more basic counterparts (e.g., their tendency to prompt various action types) intact: moral anger is still anger, albeit with added components (e.g., a communicative aim, an embedded moral judgment).

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that moral disappointment is a blameless type of moral criticism that is, in some cases, made appropriate by someone not doing what is morally good, but not required. Let me conclude this paper with a reflection on the importance of this claim.

In recent years – inaugurated perhaps by the publication of Miranda Fricker's milestone *Epistemic Injustice* (2007) – philosophers have been exploring various structural

and epistemic dimensions of morality such as microaggressions,[28] systemic injustice,[29] and doxastic morality.[30] Arguably, one consequence of these efforts has been the broadening of the perceived scope of morality. Many actions, utterances, and even thoughts that had previously, by some margin of agreement, been conceptualized as morally neutral, have been forcefully argued to be the proper subject of negative moral appraisal. If we are sympathetic to the general idea that morality does have important epistemic and structural dimensions, we may naturally wonder which attitudes are appropriate to adopt in holding people morally responsible for transgressing along these dimensions. Here, as always, our verdicts need to be subtle and sensitive to the details of the cases at hand; and yet, in thinking about some cases of, say, systemic morality, I find that we need to consider whether a blaming response would be inappropriately punitive and, therefore, whether there are alternative forms of blameless moral criticism that are made appropriate by some such transgressions. In this paper, I have suggested that *moral disappointment* represents a way to blamelessly criticize someone for their minor moral mistakes.

Fine-tuning our responses to moral failures is also important not least because blaming without proper justification can itself be a wrong. After all, being blamed "stings", that is, it harms as Menges (2020, 171) observes: "It is natural to think that the harm of blame explains why it is morally inappropriate in the sense of unfair, undeserved, or unjust to stingingly blame random people". Consequently, wrongful blame can rightfully inspire blame on part of the blamee. Overall, then, it is crucially important that the ways in which we hold each other accountable for our misconduct be well-calibrated and that blame not be overused. My suggestion concerning the role of moral disappointment is designed to fine-tune the ways in which we hold each other responsible to fit cases where blame seems too harsh, and neutrality seems too forgiving.

Finally, while this paper has focused on the importance of moral disappointment and sadness in the context of minor moral mistakes, it is worth asking whether other negative emotions – e.g., pity, contempt, fear, negative surprise, disgust – may do some of the same work. While any in-depth treatment of this question is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, let me here point to some obstacles and prospects: in pitying or having contempt for someone, many believe, we view them as lacking basic moral worth which is why these emotions may fail to uphold one important presupposition to hold others morally responsible. Contempt "looks down" on its object (see, e.g., Bell 2013, 38; Mason 2003, 240). Emotions such as negative surprise and fear are patient-centered in that the former presupposes frustrated actual expectations and the latter presupposes an actual threat to the agent. Of course, a rich philosophical analysis might reveal that these emotions, just like disappointment and sadness, have cognitively sharpened counterparts that avoid these problems. But at least *prima facie*, these obstacles seem severe. It is, for instance, doubtful whether surprise could meaningfully be re-imagined without a 'violation of actual expectation' requirement.

Most interesting perhaps is the analysis of disgust, which is a negative emotion that gives rise to dispositions to withdraw. Evidence indicates that disgust is strongest in response to revolting *moral* transgressions (see Ekman 2003, 192), an insight which has been used to argue that disgust can be a genuinely moral emotion (e.g., Fileva 2021; Plakias 2018). It therefore seems *prima facie* plausible that mild forms of disgust, such as

[28] E.g., Friedlaender (2018), McTernan (2018), O'Dowd (2018) Perez Gomez (2021a, b).

[29] E.g., Dotson (2014), Fricker (2007).

[30] E.g., Basu (2019), Bollinger (2020), Coady (2010), Moss (2018), Schönherr and Perez Gomez (2022).

being fed-up (e.g., Ekman 2003, 180f), have their place in a complete theory explicating the range of emotions that fittingly respond to minor moral mistakes. This analysis, however, will have to wait for another day.

Acknowledgements I am grateful to Peter Carruthers, Dan Moller, Javiera Perez Gomez, Arthur Schipper, Aiden Woodcock and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on drafts of this paper. I am moreover grateful to Noemi Swierski for her help editing this paper.

Declarations

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals The author further declares that this project involved no research involving human participants and/or animals.

Conflict of Interest The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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