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## HURT FEELINGS\*

In introducing the reactive attitudes “of people directly involved in transactions with each other,” P. F. Strawson lists “gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings.”<sup>1</sup> Because he decided to illustrate his larger points about responsibility by focusing on resentment (and its third- and first-person analogues, indignation and guilt), nearly everyone writing about responsibility in Strawson’s wake has done so as well.<sup>2</sup> But what of the remaining reactive attitudes? Exploration into the nature of gratitude and forgiveness as they pertain to responsibility has spiked in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Love has not received

\*This project originated as a keynote talk for a graduate student conference at Florida State University in October 2017. I am grateful to all who participated in the discussion there, as I was just getting my bearings on the phenomenon and the insights people offered in response were rich, insightful, and very helpful. I am also grateful to audiences at the October 2017 Bogota workshop on Agency and Responsibility, the March 2018 meeting of the New Orleans Invitational Seminar on Ethics, the August 2018 Oslo workshop on Being and Holding Responsible, the September 2018 Alabama Philosophical Society meeting, and the October 2018 philosophy department colloquium at the University of Virginia. For helpful conversations on these topics, I am grateful to Ben Bagley, Brie Gertler, Pamela Hieronymi, Dan Jacobson, Samuel Lundquist, Angela Smith, and Andras Sziget. For excellent comments and questions on earlier drafts, I am grateful to Santiago Amaya, Samantha Berthelette, Felipe de Brigard, Andreas Brekke Carlsson, Randy Clarke, Ian Cruise, Justin D’Arms, Julia Driver, Andrew Eshleman, Roderick Long, Elinor Mason, Simon May, Michael McKenna, Dana Nelkin, Shaun Nichols, Kate Norlock, Hanna Pickard, Doug Portmore, Hille Paakkunainen, Piers Rawling, Connie Rosati, David Sobel, Mike Valdman, and, last but not least, two anonymous referees for this JOURNAL.

<sup>1</sup>P. F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 72–93, at p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>It is easiest to note the main exceptions to this trend, namely, Michael J. Zimmerman, *An Essay on Moral Responsibility* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1988); Angela M. Smith, “Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life,” *Ethics*, cxv, 2 (January 2005): 236–71; and T. M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>There are nearly 400 articles on gratitude and 900 articles on forgiveness listed in PhilPapers.

as much love, although it has seen its share of philosophical suitors.<sup>4</sup> But the category of hurt feelings is a lonely outlier, with nary a single philosophical paper on it. This puzzling elision is made more puzzling by the fact that, as I intend to argue, considering it carefully has very significant implications for our theorizing about responsibility. Indeed, it may well reveal a stark methodological divide in the field. I begin with some background.

*Resentment and Responsibility.* One of Strawson's main aims was to remind us of how being susceptible to the reactive attitudes is a constitutive feature of interpersonal relationships. But in thinking about *close* personal relationships, our vulnerability to hurt feelings seems at the very least on an equal footing with—and may be even more thoroughgoing than—our vulnerability to resentment. Indeed, we sometimes deem resentment ineligible in our closest relationships—it corrodes them, after all—or we may view it as incompatible with the most fulfilling kind of love.<sup>5</sup> If Strawson meant to discuss the reactive attitude most relevant to interpersonal relationships, therefore, it is puzzling from the get-go why he focused on resentment over hurt feelings.

At any rate, his strategy was two-part: first, he considered occasions in which an “offended person might naturally or normally be expected to feel resentment,”<sup>6</sup> so as to get a feel for the ordinary range and targets of the emotion; second, he considered “what sorts of special considerations might be expected to modify or mollify this feeling or remove it altogether,”<sup>7</sup> so as to identify what we take to be its aptness conditions. He then examined whether these modifying considerations were consonant with those of determinism—having universal application, for instance—and he concluded that they were not. Instead, resentment and the practices built on it have their own internal logic and felicity conditions, and asking for an external justification of those feelings and practices just misses the point, for they form the assumed background of our shared humanity, constituting the very framing conditions of our interpersonal lives. It would be psychologically unrealistic, perhaps even impossible, that we could do without them. But these facts—about us,

<sup>4</sup>Kate Abramson and Adam Leite, “Love as a Reactive Emotion,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, LXI, 245 (2011): 673–99; Seth Shabo, “Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson’s Intrapersonal Defense of Compatibilism,” *The Philosophical Review*, CXXI, 1 (January 2012): 95–124; and Andrew Eshleman, “Ethical Pluralism, Moral Bricolage, and the Faces of Responsibility,” manuscript.

<sup>5</sup>See Derk Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Owen Flanagan, *The Geography of Morals: Varieties of Moral Possibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup>Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

our responses, and our interpersonal lives—are still sufficiently rich to capture *all* that we mean when talking about “desert, responsibility, guilt, condemnation, and justice.”<sup>8</sup> We may thus be optimists about the possibility of freedom and responsibility: We do not have to go beyond the facts as we know them (to, say, the metaphysical extravagances of libertarianism) to see how we can be free and responsible, as long as we heed the human restriction that our practices of responsibility must express our natures, not exploit them.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, a crucial step in this argument is showing that, from within our interpersonal framework, the apt suspension of resentment has nothing to do with theoretical truths about (in)determinism. To establish it, Strawson pointed out that in everyday life the reasons we suspend resentment in excusing injuries, say, are much more pedestrian, as when we realize that the injury was the result of an accident or the injurer was pushed. What these facts reveal is that the injuring agents lacked the *poor quality of will* we originally assumed them to have, not that their actions were a casualty of determinism. My resentment of you manifests my standing demand (what Gary Watson calls the “basic demand”<sup>10</sup>) that you show me sufficiently good will, which has roughly to do with your having a certain level of *regard or respect* for me.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, it looks like a good explanation of what we take to make our resentment apt is poor (or insufficiently good) quality of will.<sup>12</sup> Thus from Strawson’s labors have many *quality of will* theories of responsibility been born.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Gary Watson, *Agency and Answerability: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 222–25.

<sup>11</sup> Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *op. cit.*; R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 245; Watson, *Agency and Answerability*, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–59; Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapters 2–3. For discussion and more citations, see Coleen Macnamara, “Taking Demands Out of Blame,” in D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini, eds., *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 141–61.

<sup>12</sup> Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *op. cit.*, p. 83. See also T. M. Scanlon, “The Significance of Choice,” in Sterling M. McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 8 (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1988), pp. 151–216.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Scanlon, “The Significance of Choice,” *op. cit.*; Watson, *Agency and Answerability*, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–59; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*, *op. cit.*, chapter 3; Matthew Talbert, “Moral Competence, Moral Blame, and Protest,” *The Journal of Ethics*, xvi, 1 (March 2012): 89–109; David Shoemaker, “Qualities of Will,” *Social Philosophy and Policy*, xxx, 1–2 (January 2013): 95–120; David Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Nomy Arpaly and Timothy Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

But these are by no means the only theories arising out of an examination of resentment, and that is because resentment is taken to embody or implicate several pertinent responsibility-features beyond just quality of will. First, expressed resentment seems to *sanction* or *punish* those who have violated the basic demand.<sup>14</sup> But sanctioning people could be fair, just, or deserved only if the offender could have adhered to the basic demand in the first place (or otherwise had had fair opportunity to avoid the sanction).<sup>15</sup> Thus it is thought that the offender must have had and exercised a capacity for *control*, and the offender must also have been able to meet various *epistemic* conditions (for example, to have known the demand was in place and applied to her as well as known what various attitudes or actions would mean with respect to it). Emphasis on the desert or fairness of resentment's sanctioning feature is sometimes closely associated with *reasons-responsiveness* views, which lay out what is necessary (and achievable) for responsible agents to both recognize and respond to the relevant moral reasons.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes, though, emphasis on resentment's desert conditions is closely associated with *skeptical* views, according to which the metaphysical conditions necessary to deserve resentment likely cannot be met, and so we lack responsible agency.<sup>17</sup>

Second, given that resentment is a critical response to *agents*, it is sometimes thought that its apt form must be triggered by actions or

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Watson, *Agency and Answerability*, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–88; and McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*, *op. cit.*, chapters 6–7. For discussions of guilt as a kind of sanction, see Randolph Clarke, “Moral Responsibility, Guilt, and Retributivism,” *The Journal of Ethics*, xx, 1–3 (September 2016): 121–37; Andreas Brekke Carlsson, “Blameworthiness as Deserved Guilt,” *The Journal of Ethics*, xxi, 1 (March 2017): 89–115; and Douglas Portmore, “Control, Attitudes, and Accountability,” forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vi.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, *op. cit.*; Watson, *Agency and Answerability*, *op. cit.*, pp. 279–80; David O. Brink and Dana Nelkin, “Fairness and the Architecture of Responsibility,” *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, 1 (2013): 284–313; and Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Susan Wolf, *Freedom within Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, *op. cit.*; John Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Dana Kay Nelkin, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Michael McKenna, “Reasons-Responsiveness, Agents, and Mechanisms,” *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, 1 (2013): 151–83; Manuel Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, *op. cit.*; and Carolina Sartorio, *Causation and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> See Shaun Nichols, “After Incompatibilism: A Naturalistic Defense of the Reactive Attitudes,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, xxi, 1 (December 2007): 405–28; and Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, *op. cit.*

attitudes that actually disclose features representative of those agents. For example, it would be inapt to resent those with OCD who miss appointments, given that their obsessive behaviors do not reflect who they really are.<sup>18</sup> Emphasis on this feature is often closely associated with *deep self* views, according to which responsible agents are those whose actions or attitudes express an authoritative psychological subdomain.<sup>19</sup>

Third, resentment is sometimes taken to respond to bad answers to the question “Why did you do that?” and so presupposes the answering agent’s ability to make good *evaluative judgments* about the worth of various reasons in the first place. Theorists focusing on this feature of resentment (and other critical responses) tend toward *answerability* theories of responsibility, according to which responsible agents must have the capacity for evaluative judgments.<sup>20</sup>

Some of these theories overlap, of course, adopting or emphasizing more than one of resentment’s several associated features; for example, answerability theories have deep self elements to them, and quality of will theories are often explicated in terms of reasons-responsiveness. But there is surprisingly strong agreement in the literature that at least some of these particular features are necessary to responsible agency, that it requires in some form or combination the capacity to meet: (a) a quality of will condition (often put in terms of reasons-responsiveness), (b) a control condition, (c) an epistemic condition, (d) a deep self condition, and/or (e) an evaluative judgment condition. This is an impressive legacy of Strawson’s essay.

But what if Strawson himself had started, not with resentment, but with hurt feelings? Would we have the same list of theoretical data points? Not in the least. What I intend to show, once we get clear on the nature of hurt feelings, is that when we run the same two-part strategy on them that Strawson ran on resentment, what we find is

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Wolf, *Freedom within Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> For discussion and earlier citations, see Susan Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility,” in Ferdinand Schoeman, ed., *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 46–62. See also Chandra Sripada, “Moral Responsibility, Reasons, and the Self,” *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, III (2015): 242–64; Chandra Sripada, “Self-Expression: A Deep Self Theory of Moral Responsibility,” *Philosophical Studies*, CLXXIII, 5 (May 2016): 1203–32; and Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Smith, “Responsibility for Attitudes,” *op. cit.*; Pamela Hieronymi, “The Force and Fairness of Blame,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, XVIII, 1 (December 2004): 115–48; and Talbert, “Moral Competence, Moral Blame, and Protest,” *op. cit.*

that *none* of these data points—which play a crucial role in all of our extant theories of responsibility—play any necessary role in an account of hurt feelings. What an investigation into hurt feelings does, therefore, is force us to recognize the messy and difficult methodological position we are actually in. I begin with several subtly different cases in which someone might normally be expected to have hurt feelings.

## I. THE NATURE OF HURT FEELINGS

### I.1. A Whole Bunch of Cases.

*Schoolyard Pick:* To determine teams for a pick-up basketball game, two captains alternate picking players one by one. Radu is the last one chosen.

*Overheard:* Vincent overhears his friend Natasha at a party being asked what she thinks about Vincent's artwork. After pausing for a long while, she quietly says, "I'm afraid it's quite amateurish."

*Morning Announcements:* Sheila, the principal at a junior high school, makes an announcement over the school-wide public address system about last weekend's MVP of the football game, Zach. Sheila flips the P.A. switch to the "off" position, but the switch's internal connection is broken, so the system remains on. She then turns to her vice principal and says, "Good thing Zach has football, because he's a terrible student." The whole school, including Zach, hears it.

*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.

*Rhythmic Gymnastics:* Rodney hears about his grandson's rhythmic gymnastics victory for the first time from a friend on Facebook. When he asks his daughter Ashton why he had to hear it in this roundabout way, she replies, "I just assumed you'd think a boy doing rhythmic gymnastics is 'fruity,' so I didn't bother mentioning it to you." Rodney thinks nothing of the sort.

*Grandparents:* Patty and Labelle arrive at their daughter's house, excited to see their three-year-old grandson Javier again after several weeks away. When they arrive at the door, Javier runs to Patty and hugs her enthusiastically, but when Labelle asks him for a hug, he flings himself back into Patty's arms, saying to Patty (about Labelle), "No, I don't like her."

*Rejection:* Anita goes on a date with someone, and she has a great time and thinks her date does too. But then her date texts her the next day to tell her he didn't find her very attractive and so won't be contacting her again.

*Top Ten:* Wally lists his ten favorite contemporary political philosophers on Facebook. Wally's friend and fellow political philosopher Liz notices that her name isn't on it.

*Better Call 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."

*Celebrity Philosopher:* Marta is a very famous philosopher, and Jenna, a younger and much less famous philosopher, has hosted her for a talk at her own university and eaten dinner with her at two previous conferences. They are now on the program together at a conference, and when Jenna first sees Marta, she says, "So good to see you again!" Marta looks confused and haltingly replies, "Have we met before?"

*Anniversary:* Georgina and Matt have been married for ten years, and every year on their anniversary Georgina holds out hope that Matt will give her a thoughtful and surprising gift, but she can't ask that of him because then the gift would be neither thoughtful nor surprising. But every year Matt instead gives her carnations, her least favorite flower.<sup>21</sup>

All of these are cases in which someone might well be expected to have hurt feelings in response to some event: Radu in response to being picked last, Vincent in response to hearing what Natasha really thinks about his art, Zach in response to the principal's announcement, Mitzy in response to Livia trashing her gift, Jenna in response to Marta's failure to recognize her, and so on.

Of course, some people might (also) respond in several of these cases with *resentment*.<sup>22</sup> What we need to do, therefore, is first try to understand the nature of hurt feelings and its elicitors in a pure form, prizing them apart from resentment, if we are to figure out what role hurt feelings might play, if any, in responsible agency.

*I.2. Pure Hurt.* It would be arrogant and presumptuous to try and articulate from the armchair the nature of hurt feelings. Fortunately, psychologists have been exploring this emotion in earnest for nearly twenty years, and they have offered both conceptual and empirical insights worth discussing.

Let us start with the conceptual work: What do they take hurt feelings to be? At the basic physiological level, they are thought to be distressing affective responses to an emotional injury, a response activating the same regions of the brain as those activated by physical

<sup>21</sup> Drawn from David Shoemaker, "Attributability, Answerability, and Accountability: Toward a Wider Theory of Moral Responsibility," *Ethics*, cxxi, 3 (April 2011): 602–32, at p. 620.

<sup>22</sup> My thanks to Shaun Nichols, Hanna Pickard, and Doug Portmore for urging me to address this point.

pain. At the phenomenological level, then, hurt feelings can sometimes feel just as unpleasant as some physical pains.<sup>23</sup>

What causes them? The earliest prototype had it that hurt feelings are painful emotional responses primarily to perceived relationship destruction or devaluation by someone the victim cares about,<sup>24</sup> where the intensity of the feeling corresponds to the degree to which the hurt agent felt rejected by the hurter,<sup>25</sup> and the goal of the hurt agent is “restoring a sense of acceptance and being valued.”<sup>26</sup> But work in recent years has revealed many more fine-grained elicitors of hurt feelings. The first, yes, is *relationship denigration*, which includes self-reported descriptions by the hurt parties such as the following: “It made me feel as if our relationship were less important to the other person than it was to me”; “It made me feel betrayed”; or “It showed I wasn’t important.” But additional causes include: *humiliation* (“It embarrassed me”; “It made me feel vulnerable”); *verbal aggression* (“It was said in a mean way”); *intrinsic flaw* (“It focused on something about me that I can’t change”; “It brought up something I wanted to forget”; “It was true”); *shock* (“It was something I was not prepared for”); *ill-conceived humor* (“It involved teasing that wasn’t funny”); *mistaken intent* (“It showed the other person misunderstood my intent”; “It questioned my judgment”; “It implied I had a poor character”); and *discouragement* (“It pointed out that something I had worked for didn’t matter”).<sup>27</sup>

It should be clear, though, that a lot of this behavior—humiliation, aggression, deliberate shock, and mean teasing—could just as likely

<sup>23</sup>Judith A. Feeney, “Hurt Feelings in Couple Relationships: Towards Integrative Models of the Negative Effects of Hurtful Events,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, xxi, 4 (August 2004): 487–508; Judith A. Feeney, “Hurt Feelings in Couple Relationships: Exploring the Role of Attachment and Perceptions of Personal Injury,” *Personal Relationships*, xii, 2 (June 2005): 253–71; Mark R. Leary et al., “The Causes, Phenomenology, and Consequences of Hurt Feelings,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, lxxiv, 5 (May 1998): 1225–37; Naomi I. Eisenberger, Matthew D. Lieberman, and Kipling D. Williams, “Does Rejection Hurt? An fMRI Study of Social Exclusion,” *Science*, cccii, 5603 (Oct. 10, 2003): 290–92; Anita L. Vangelisti et al., “Why Does It Hurt? The Perceived Causes of Hurt Feelings,” *Communication Research*, xxxii, 4 (August 2005): 443–77; G. Macdonald and M. R. Leary, “Why Does Social Exclusion Hurt? The Relationship between Social and Physical Pain,” *Psychological Bulletin*, cxxxi, 2 (2005): 202–23; and Z. Chen et al., “When Hurt Will Not Heal: Exploring the Capacity to Relieve Social and Physical Pain,” *Psychological Science*, xix, 8 (August 2008): 789–95.

<sup>24</sup>Leary et al., “The Causes, Phenomenology, and Consequences of Hurt Feelings,” *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup>Julie Fitness, “Betrayal, Rejection, Revenge, and Forgiveness: An Interpersonal Script Approach,” in Mark R. Leary, ed., *Interpersonal Rejection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 73–103.

<sup>26</sup>Edward Lemay, Nickola Overall, and Margaret S. Clark, “Experiences and Interpersonal Consequences of Hurt Feelings and Anger,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, ciii, 6 (December 2012): 982–1006, at p. 986.

<sup>27</sup>Vangelisti et al., “Why Does It Hurt? The Perceived Causes of Hurt Feelings,” *op. cit.*, pp. 459–60.



elicit resentment in its victims. And some of the other behaviors listed could too, as when I am negligent in trying to understand your intent (and so misunderstand it thereby), or I fail to take sufficiently seriously how hurt you got in the past in response to a certain kind of gentle teasing and so I do it again.

But perhaps resentment in these cases would not be *apt*? What makes emotions apt, or fitting, is a difficult normative question, one philosophers of emotion have struggled with for many years.<sup>28</sup> Many now take the aptness condition(s) of an emotion to fall out of its more general syndrome. An emotional syndrome includes an (a) affective (b) appraisal of some event, with a closely associated (c) action tendency or motivational impulse that aims at some goal.<sup>29</sup> The aptness or fittingness of an emotion is a function of what it appraises, or more precisely, what it is that makes its appraisal *accurate*.<sup>30</sup> For example, fear appraises some event as a threat. What makes fear apt, then, is just the presence of a threat.

So what does resentment aptly appraise? Fortunately, we have already seen widespread agreement on a normative gloss for the object of resentment's appraisal in our earlier data points, so I will just borrow from those. Put in terms of emotional syndromes, your resentment of me is thought to consist in your belief that my action or attitude wronged you, that is, violated your basic demand for goodwill. Your resentment, more succinctly, appraises me as having manifested a *poor*

<sup>28</sup> For citations and summary discussion, see Andrea Scarantino, "The Motivational Theory of Emotions," in Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, eds., *Moral Psychology and Human Agency: Philosophical Essays on the Science of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 156–85. See also Christine Tappolet, *Emotions, Values, and Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, *Rational Sentimentalism*, forthcoming, Oxford University Press.

<sup>29</sup> Among those theorists who would accept this rather neutral characterization are Richard S. Lazarus, "On the Primacy of Cognition," *American Psychologist*, xxxix, 2 (February 1984): 124–29; Nico H. Frijda, *The Laws of Emotion* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2007); Nico Frijda, "The Psychologists' Point of View," in Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa F. Barrett, eds., *Handbook of Emotions*, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), pp. 68–87; Scarantino, "The Motivational Theory of Emotions," *op. cit.*; Tappolet, *Emotions, Values, and Agency*, *op. cit.*; and D'Arms and Jacobson, *Rational Sentimentalism*, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Again, I am trying to be as ecumenical as possible, as some emotion theorists (for example, Martha Nussbaum, "Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance," in P. Bilimoria and J. N. Mohanty, eds., *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997)) believe the appraisal consists in an evaluative judgment, and so its accuracy will consist in that judgment's *truth*, whereas others think of the appraisal as a discernment or perception lacking propositional content that is nevertheless evaluable in terms of *correctness*. (See, for example, Tappolet, *Emotions, Values, and Agency*, *op. cit.*; as well as Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, lxi, 1 (July 2000): 65–90; and Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Significance of Recalcitrant Emotions (or, Anti-quasijudgmentalism)," in Anthony Hatzimoyis, ed., *Philosophy and the Emotions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 127–46.

*quality of will* toward you. It is thus apt to the extent that my quality of will toward you was insufficiently good.

And what does resentment motivate? Emotions are often defined and differentiated in terms of their action tendencies.<sup>31</sup> These motivational impulses have a kind of “control precedence,” where the emotion “seizes control of the emoter with respect to his or her mental and physical actions.”<sup>32</sup> Fear, for example, urgently motivates *avoidance* of the appraised threat. Resentment’s action tendency has often been thought to be toward some kind of retaliation against the offender, but I have argued elsewhere that it is actually broader than that, better glossed instead as a tendency toward angry *confrontation*, its aim being the expression of some kind of demand: for goodwill, acknowledgment, apology, or guilt.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, we can think of the emotional syndrome of resentment as being, roughly, a heated appraisal of someone’s poor quality of will toward you that readies you to confront that person.

My aim here is to provide an analogous account of the emotional syndrome—and the aptness condition(s)—of pure cases of hurt feelings, and then compare and contrast them with resentment’s. I will start with their action tendency, as doing so will help us understand their object of appraisal.

So what do hurt feelings ready us to do? This is a matter of some dispute in the psychological literature. For some, it involves activities aimed at relationship *repair*.<sup>34</sup> For others, it involves activities aimed at relational *avoidance* or *distancing*, attempts to contain or reduce one’s emotional vulnerability to the hurter.<sup>35</sup> We may gloss these both as aiming at *relationship damage control*. This already reveals a crucial difference between the emotional syndromes of hurt feelings and

<sup>31</sup> N. H. Frijda, P. Kuipers, and E. ter Schure, “Relations among Emotion, Appraisal, and Emotional Action Readiness,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, LVII, 2 (1989): 212–28; Frijda, *The Laws of Emotion*, *op. cit.*; and Scarantino, “The Motivational Theory of Emotions,” *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Scarantino, “The Motivational Theory of Emotions,” *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>33</sup> Detailed discussion and defense of this characterization of the angry component of resentment may be found in Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, *op. cit.*, chapter 3, as well as David Shoemaker, “You Oughta Know! Defending Angry Blame,” in Myisha Cherry and Owen Flanagan, eds., *The Moral Psychology of Anger* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), pp. 67–88. It should also be emphasized that an action tendency is just that, a *tendency*, and it may of course be—and often is—overruled by other sorts of practical reasons.

<sup>34</sup> Lemay, Overall, and Clark, “Experiences and Interpersonal Consequences of Hurt Feelings and Anger,” *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Anita L. Vangelisti and Stacy L. Young, “When Words Hurt: The Effects of Perceived Intentionality on Interpersonal Relationships,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, XVII, 3 (June 2000): 393–424.

resentment. Aiming to repair a relationship or avoid its hurtful elements is just not what resentment aims at, which is instead, as we have just seen, a confrontational expression of various demands.

In terms of action tendency alone, then, none of the cases I started with necessarily render resentment apt. Angry confrontation seems the wrong response to team captains who pick you last, to those who tell you hard truths, to those who offer you gifts (however disappointing), or to famous people who do not recognize you. Still, it might seem like resentment-worthy actions or attitudes still lurk in the vicinity. Vincent might want to confront Natasha just for talking behind his back.<sup>36</sup> Or perhaps some of the hard-truth-tellers should have more tactfully delivered the truth to avoid hurting feelings in the process.<sup>37</sup> And so perhaps those who were hurt may still be moved to angrily confront their hurters for this sort of poor treatment.

We thus need to fill in details of the cases to avoid even a whiff of resentment's confrontational action tendency. The lurking resentment here attaches to the injurious way people are *treated*, which typically implicates poor quality of will and motivates confrontation. But sometimes it does not. What we need to do, then, to get clear on the nature of hurt feelings alone, is figure out how to avoid the occasionally misleading evidence of how people are treated.

We can make this all explicit with just a dash of innocent science fiction. Suppose that Apple introduces iMind, a device that can read and reveal the relevant content of other people's minds when it pertains to us: their reasons, motives, and attitudes. We can now use this device to fill in our cases in a resentment-free way.

Suppose that after Mitzy gives the gift to Livia, Mitzy's iMind picks up the message of a pained Livia thinking, "Oh no, I really dislike this gift!" Mitzy's feelings would, I submit, be just as hurt as when she sees the gift in the trash, although her resenting Livia (being moved to angrily confront her) would be quite out of place. Had Angie been able to read her date's distressed mind at the end of the night, and he was thinking "Damn, I wish I found her attractive, but I just don't," she would have been just as hurt (without resentment). Had Vincent been able to read Natasha's mind when she first saw his artwork and she thought "Oh my, I can't believe how amateurish all this is," he would

<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to Doug Portmore for this suggestion.

<sup>37</sup> Thanks to Shaun Nichols and an anonymous referee for discussion.

have been just as hurt.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the iMind thought experiment can most easily help us fill in versions of all my cases in a way that we can isolate hurt feelings in the absence of resentment, and we may call these versions “pure” as a result.

The object of pure hurt feelings’ appraisal should start to come into focus now, obviously having something to do with *what people think or feel about us*. However, these thoughts or feelings can produce hurt in two different ways.<sup>39</sup> For one, what you think or feel about me might hurt insofar as the content of your thought tips me off about my actual worth, namely, that I am not as good as I thought I was in some domain. Here what hurts me is simply the *message* you deliver. But what you think or feel about me might hurt in a different way, insofar as *you* are the one thinking or feeling it of me (regardless of its accuracy). Here what hurts me is the *messenger*.

This distinction can be illustrated by some of our cases. In *Schoolyard Pick*, Radu’s feelings are hurt by being picked last. Suppose, as is likely, that the captains judge Radu to be the worst player on the field, and he in fact is. His hurt could then come from his receipt of that message, in which case it would not have mattered who the messengers were.<sup>40</sup> In *Rhythmic Gymnastics*, by contrast, Rodney’s daughter Ashton simply assumes he has some kind of bigoted generational attitude that in fact he does not have, so the message received is *not* true. Nevertheless, the fact that Ashton assumes it of him hurts his feelings, as he had hoped she would know him better than that. Finally, there are plenty of mixed cases, as when, in *Overheard*, Vincent hears his friend Natasha reveal the hard truth about his amateurish art. The fact (if it is a fact) about his objective worth as an artist may hurt of course, but it also may well hurt that his *friend* thinks so poorly of his art in the first place. Here there are two distinct elicitors of hurt mixed together.

Given this distinction, and to the extent that we are ultimately interested in responsible *agency*, therefore, we must focus our attention exclusively on the *messenger* cases of hurt feelings going forward, where it is a particular agent who hurts us simply in virtue of what she thinks or feels about us, and set aside cases where the hurt is a product of our learning some damaging information about our objective worth, as well as cases in which the hurt has mixed sources (so as to avoid muddy

<sup>38</sup> Note that we do not need iMind for some of these cases. We could just imagine Vincent watching Natasha’s pained reactions through a secret camera as she walks through his gallery for the first time.

<sup>39</sup> I am very grateful to Justin D’Arms for raising, and for extended discussion on, this point.

<sup>40</sup> The fact that the captains are competent judges matters, of course, but only insofar as their competence in these matters is what provides good evidence for the truth of the hurtful message.

waters). We thus need to drop *Schoolyard Pick*, *Overheard*, and *Morning Announcements*, our first three cases, from further consideration. While they were helpful in getting us to learn about the general nature of hurt feelings, we can no longer rely on them to learn anything clear about the relation between hurt feelings and responsible agency.

We are, recall, following the general Strawsonian strategy. Our aim in section I has been to try to get a clear view of the nature of hurt feelings, as distinct from resentment, by exploring several cases in which people might be naturally expected to have hurt feelings in response to other agents. Once we remove the first three, my cases now do just that, filled in if need be with the help of the iMind thought experiment. In section II, we will explore instances in which these feelings may be *dissolved* by looking at familiar excusing and exempting pleas, and we will attempt to draw from this a precise account of hurt feelings' apt appraisal conditions. I will then make the case for how and why hurt feelings reveal something quite important and confounding about responsible agency.

## II. HURT FEELINGS AND RESPONSIBILITY

*II.1. Excuses.* In exploring the reasons resentment might typically be suspended, Strawson discusses two very general types of pleas, what are popularly labeled *excuses* and *exemptions*. Excuses provide reasons an otherwise responsible agent should not be resented (held responsible) for some specific action or attitude, whereas exemptions provide reasons why an agent does not have the capacities or standing to be resented (held responsible) in general. My aim in section II is to explore whether there are excusing and exempting pleas to dissolve hurt feelings, and, if there are, to see whether their grounds have anything in common with the grounds of resentment's suspending pleas. After all, while I have spent some time in the previous section showing that there are pure cases of hurt feelings that are independent of resentment, they might both still have the same or similar appropriateness conditions. (Spoiler alert: they don't.)

We start with the types of pleas that Strawson says "invite us to view the *injury*"—and not the agent generally—"as one in respect of which [resentment] is inappropriate."<sup>41</sup> These include pleas such as "‘He didn't mean to', ‘He hadn't realized', ‘He didn't know'; and also all those which might give occasion for the use of the phrase ‘He couldn't help it' . . ."<sup>42</sup> Excusing pleas are typically categorized as appealing to accidents/ignorance, coercion/duress, or justifications. Of course,

<sup>41</sup> Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," *op. cit.*, p. 77; emphasis in original.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

what unites and grounds these pleas, according to Strawson (and many others), is that they all invite us to suspend resentment in virtue of the fact that the injury did not actually manifest a poor quality of will, despite initial appearances.<sup>43</sup>

Do similar considerations tend to dissolve hurt feelings?<sup>44</sup> They might seem to. Consider first accidents. In *Top Ten*, suppose Wally had indeed typed out Liz's name as one of his favorite political philosophers, but as he was resting his fingers on the keyboard thinking of other names to write, his pinky rested too hard on the "delete" key and Liz's name was removed. Were Liz to find this out, her hurt feelings should dissolve.

Consider next coercion/duress ("They left him no alternative!"). Suppose that in *Rejected* Anita's date was actually told the next day by a blackmailer that if he did not text Anita to tell her he wasn't attracted to her, the blackmailer would publicly reveal all his most embarrassing photos and emails. Were Anita to find out that her date did not actually believe what he said and had only said it because he had been coerced, her hurt feelings should dissolve.

Finally, consider justifications. Perhaps Livia, in *Trashed Gift*, had broken the gift quickly through her overzealous use of it. Insofar as it was indeed no longer functional and could not be returned, she could be justified in throwing it away, and Mitzy's hurt feelings should dissolve, once she finds this out.

On its face, then, it seems as if dissolution of hurt feelings perfectly shadows the excusing suspension of resentment, aptly disappearing as well in cases of accident, coercion, and/or justification. But unlike with resentment, the absence of poor quality of will cannot be the correct unifying gloss on what aptly dissolves pure agential hurt feelings.

Start with accidents. Suppose Livia (in *Trashed Gift*) did not like the gift and had every good reason to believe that Mitzy was unsentimental about gifts, though this was false. Epistemic gaps like this tell us, according to Strawson and Strawsonians, that Livia bore no ill will toward Mitzy when she threw the gift away. Nevertheless, this "excuse" does not give Mitzy any reason for her hurt feelings to dissolve, insofar as Livia still did not *like* the gift she spent time picking out for her. Relatedly, when accidents do aptly dissolve hurt feelings, they do not do so for quality of will reasons. Perhaps Liz knows full well that Wally, in *Top Ten*, has high regard for her, even though he does not write her

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 80, 83; Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, *op. cit.*; Watson, *Agency and Answerability*, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> The language of "excuses" fits more naturally with attempts to get people "off the hook." As hurt feelings do not really put people "on the hook," I will mostly here talk in terms of what tends to "dissolve" hurt feelings, rather than about what "excuses" their targets.

name on his list. When she finds out that he had accidentally deleted her name from his list, her knowledge of his good will will not be altered at all when her hurt feelings (aptly) dissolve.

Turn to coercion (“They gave her no choice!”). Again, it may seem as if Anita’s finding out her date had been blackmailed into telling her that he was not attracted to her provides sufficient reason for her hurt feelings to dissolve. If so, the best explanation might seem to be that the coercion revealed that her date did not have a poor quality of will toward Anita after all. But there is a better explanation, brought out by a variation. Suppose the blackmailer threatens to expose her date’s emails and so on unless he *genuinely hurts her feelings*. And so in submitting to the threat, he gives voice to the sincere thought he had in fact been having (and which Anita finds out via iMind): “I just don’t find you very attractive.” Now suppose Anita found out that her date had “been left no alternative” about hurting her feelings and that he was sincere in thinking what he did about her. In that case, I think, *her hurt feelings will remain firmly in place*. To buttress this claim, we can imagine that upon first seeing his text she might feel *both* resentment and hurt: It may be rude (resentment-worthy) to say such a hurtful thing so bluntly to someone. Once she finds out about the blackmail, though, she will know why he had to text her the hurtful thing, and so she will indeed have been given reason for her resentment to dissolve, as he had no malicious motive, no poor quality of will after all. But his motive for saying what he did is irrelevant to Anita’s being hurt by what he texted, as there was a fact of the matter of what he actually felt about her—that she was unattractive—and that feeling was still hurtful.<sup>45</sup>

Consider, finally, justifications. Had Livia broken the gift, she would be justified in throwing it away, and Mitzy’s hurt feelings should dissolve upon hearing that justification. But should they dissolve in virtue of its revealing *no poor quality of will*? No. Suppose instead that Livia thinks of Mitzy as a mere acquaintance, not a close friend, and she throws out the gift simply because she has no use or room for it. This seems a perfectly adequate justification for doing so between mere acquaintances, and so reveals that she had no ill will toward Mitzy. But were *this* the justification, yet Mitzy thought of Livia as a close friend, Mitzy’s hurt feelings likely would not dissolve. That is because what has been revealed is that Mitzy does not stand in the close relationship she assumed that she did with Livia. Similarly, in *Better Call Saul*, Chuck may be perfectly justified in telling Jimmy that he never really

<sup>45</sup> And I am thinking here of an agential version of the case, where what matters is that *he* found her unattractive, and not that he merely delivered the message that she was unattractive.

mattered to him (as it is the only thing that will get Jimmy to move on with his life), and he may say it (and think it!) with perfectly good will (as it is what will be best for Jimmy). Nevertheless, Jimmy may be hurt. Hard truths can be both justified *and* hurtful.

From these and earlier considerations, I am finally in a position to set forth a gloss on the emotional syndrome of hurt feelings, including a more precise characterization of the object of their appraisal. In their paradigm agential (messenger) form:

*Hurt feelings are a pained emotional response to (one's realization of) the fact that those who matter to one think or feel about one in a worse way than one had hoped, expected, or believed. These thoughts or feelings may be about one's cared-for qualities, relative status, or relationship. The action tendencies of hurt feelings aim at relationship damage control.*

Hurt feelings do not appraise quality of will (construed by Strawsonians, recall, as one's degree of regard or respect for others). One can hurt another's feelings with the purest of intentions and motives, the highest regard for them, and with perfect justification. This also means a hurter may violate no demands whatsoever not to think or feel about the hurt agent as he or she does. Moreover, there is no (apt) action tendency to angry confrontation on the hurt agent's part; instead, the relevant action tendency aims at repairing, containing, or protecting the hurt agent from damage to a relationship caused by the thought or feeling. Finally, what the hurter thinks or feels about the hurt agent may go to his or her qualities, relative standing, or relationship, where these things matter. Illustrating this last point, respectively, Rodney (in *Rhythmic Gymnastics*) finds out that his daughter thinks he is a kind of bigot; Jenna (in *Celebrity Philosopher*) finds out that she made no real impression on Marta; and Georgina (in *Anniversary*) finds out that she and Matt are not in the more ideal relationship she had hoped they were in.

Consequently, reasons for dissolving hurt feelings for specific injuries are just *different* from Strawsonian reasons for excusing resentment. The latter are facts revealing that the resenter's initial appraisal of the agent's quality of will as poor (or insufficiently good) was mistaken. The former are facts revealing that the hurt agent's initial perception or assumption of what the "hurter" thought or felt about him or her was mistaken. It is in virtue of this realization—and not mistaken beliefs about quality of will—that accidents, coercion, and justifications have dissolving power over hurt feelings when they do. But if this is true, then the contradictory of this dissolving reason plausibly constitutes a reason for *having* hurt feelings. In other words, if in fact people who matter to you do think or feel about you in a worse way than you had hoped, expected, or thought



they did (where it is the *messenger* that matters), then you have a reason for having hurt feelings.

*II.2. Exemptions.* The second type of Strawsonian plea for suspending resentment appeals to what people refer to as *exempting* conditions. Such pleas invite us to see the *agent* as someone for whom resentment is generally inapt, in virtue of the fact that the agent is “psychologically abnormal,” “morally undeveloped,” “peculiarly unfortunate in . . . formative circumstances,” or “warped or deranged, neurotic or just a child.”<sup>46</sup> Exempted agents lack the capacity for normal interpersonal relationships, and so the attitude we tend to take toward them (and ought to take toward them if we are “civilized,” says Strawson) instead is “objective.”<sup>47</sup>

It is unclear whether or not Strawson thinks of these exempting facts as ultimately being grounded in the incapacity for quality of will.<sup>48</sup> But what is abundantly clear is that these are *not* the sorts of facts exempting people from the domain of potentially hurtful agents. That is because agents exempted from being resentment-worthy still have the capacity to hurt people’s feelings. I can illustrate this point quickly.

Those who are psychologically abnormal—and thus exempt from (apt) resentment—can clearly hurt our feelings. Perhaps the hard truth told from brother to brother in *Better Call Saul* comes from a “hopeless schizophrenic.” Or consider a psychological “abnormality” Strawson was not aware of, autism, which is a social communication disorder. Those on the autism spectrum sometimes say insensitive or tactless things, as they can have difficulty reading people’s sensitivities. Sometimes these may be hard truths, perhaps revealing how the autistic person really feels about one.<sup>49</sup> Hearing such things may give one genuine reason for hurt feelings, despite the psychological “abnormality” (and perfectly good will) of the person who revealed it.

Similar remarks go for other categories. Strawson notes that children are among those who are morally undeveloped, but they can clearly hurt our feelings by honestly revealing how they feel, as Javier does about Labelle in *Grandparents*. Psychopaths can obviously do the same, as can those coming from poor formative circumstances. For example, someone raised in a racist household can hurt your feelings by thinking that because you share her race you share her racism, even

<sup>46</sup> Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, *op. cit.*, “Introduction.”

<sup>49</sup> See a fascinating thread on the “rudeness” of those with Asperger’s syndrome—“Aspies”—here: <https://www.quora.com/How-do-you-know-if-someone-is-being-rude-rather-than-having-Aspergers-or-autism>.

if you suspend any resentment about her racist comments given her morally deprived upbringing.

The capacities necessary for being susceptible to apt resentment are thus just different from the capacities necessary for being susceptible to apt hurt feelings. So what *are* the capacities necessary for the latter? Most simply, one must be able to *have* the relevant thoughts or feelings about others, where the having of the hurtful thoughts or feelings alone entails the existence of the relevant agential capacities. These capacities may run the gamut, depending on the nature of the hurt in question. For example, not only may children and the psychologically abnormal hurt our feelings, but also some non-human animals may do so in some limited domains. A dog might hurt your feelings by showing more affection to your partner than you, say. The dog's capacity for being a "hurter" will thus be a function of fairly unsophisticated capacities, such as simply being able to differentiate between humans and to have affectionate attitudes toward them.<sup>50</sup> But sometimes hurters will need much more sophisticated capacities. For example, were my philosophical mentor to think worse of me as a philosopher in light of this poor essay, it would hurt my feelings. But to do so he must have (at least somewhat) sophisticated intellectual, aesthetic, and philosophical capacities.

*II.3. Lessons for Responsibility and Methodology.* So why should we care about all this talk of hurt feelings? Strawson's aim was for us to be able to account for all we mean when talking about "desert, responsibility, guilt, condemnation, and justice,"<sup>51</sup> without going beyond the facts as we know them, by appealing primarily to our attitudes and the practices expressing them. But, I will now argue, we *cannot* account for all we mean by these things without appealing to hurt feelings, and yet when we do so we get dramatically different theoretical results than when we focus exclusively on resentment and its ilk.

I have spent most of my time building the case for this latter point: Reasons for dissolution of individual cases of (pure) hurt feelings, as well as for exemption from the domain of hurtful agents, are very different from those pertaining to resentment, so the two responses aptly appraise different objects. But what of the former point? That is, why do we have to appeal to hurt feelings to account for all we mean when talking about desert, responsibility, guilt, condemnation, and/or justice? It is because at least two of these features—guilt and responsibility—are implicated by hurt feelings in a wide range of cases where resentment is either inapt or irrelevant.

<sup>50</sup> Thanks to Randy Clarke and Julia Driver for this example.

<sup>51</sup> Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," *op. cit.*, p. 91.

Start with guilt. While many of us naturally feel guilt for exercising poor quality of will, many of us may also naturally feel guilt for causing hurt feelings with a perfectly acceptable quality of will. Suppose Livia really does take herself to be a close friend of Mitzy's in *Trashed Gift*, for instance, and she witnesses Mitzy's hurt reaction to seeing her gift in the trash. She is very likely to experience guilt, even if she was justified in throwing it out or had no reason to think Mitzy would ever drop by and see it. And Marta, the *Celebrity Philosopher*, may also feel guilty once she finally makes the connection and realizes who Jenna is. And were Matt to find out why Georgina was hurt in response to seeing the carnations he gave her in *Anniversary*, he is likely to feel guilt as well.<sup>52</sup>

This guilty response makes perfect sense, though, in light of guilt's action tendencies and goal. Guilt motivates one to apologize, confess, and/or attempt to make amends and compensate. But all of these action tendencies have the unifying aim of relationship damage control.<sup>53</sup> This suggests that guilt does double duty: Because one can damage a relationship through *both* manifesting ill will *and* hurting someone's feelings, guilt is apt for either form of damage alone (or both together). So because one can damage relationships with bad *or* good will in a way that seems to ground apt guilt, the story of guilt cannot wholly be captured by an exclusive quality-of-will/resentment story.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> There are complicating questions. Perhaps, for instance, guilt in these cases is just inapt? Or perhaps what is felt is a different type of guilt, or it is not even guilt at all but is more like regret? (Thanks to Shaun Nichols and an anonymous referee for raising such worries.) Answering these questions would require a much fuller account of the nature of emotions and aptness than I can give here, but my initial (and too-brief) reply is that I think we feel guilt—a guilt that feels just like wronging-guilt—in so many cases where we cause pure hurt feelings that the burden of proof is actually on those who would ask these complicating questions to make the contrary cases.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Brian Parkinson and Sarah Illingworth, "Guilt in Response to Blame from Others," *Cognition and Emotion*, xxiii, 8 (2009): 1589–614.

<sup>54</sup> Again, there are complications. Sometimes we counsel someone who is hurt by hearing a hard truth, say, to reconsider matters, and to realize that other people are sometimes simply *not* obligated to apologize for or alter their considered judgments, even when thinking or expressing those things may hurt someone's feelings. And we may counsel this precisely because the hurter did not *wrong* the hurt agent by thinking or expressing the hard truth. (I am grateful to two anonymous referees for raising a concern in this ballpark.) However, hard-truth cases are tricky because they are often "impure," in that sometimes what hurts is merely the message, sometimes what hurts is that the messenger feels this way, and sometimes it is both. I suspect that some cases in which we counsel hurt agents to reconsider and not view the hurter as obligated to feel bad are *message* cases, which I have excluded from consideration here. But even if there are some *messenger* cases of hurt feelings that fit this bill, surely it is not true that *every one of* guilt's action tendencies must be deployed with every experience of it. Guilt's action tendencies aim at relationship damage control. Ways to achieve this aim include apology, recompense, acknowledgment, and more. Which action tendencies arise likely depends on the cause of the hurt, though, just like which one of the action tendencies of fear—fight,

The story about responsibility is more complex. Let us start with the fact that hurt feelings at least involve *agential attribution*; that is, they seem clearly to attribute the hurt to a feature of someone's agency, to either a *thought* or a *feeling*. These are different than non-agential features like eye color and height, as they are things agents *do*: Agents think things and feel things.<sup>55</sup>

Second, hurt feelings sometimes have a *blaming* edge to them. Were the hurt Jenna to say to an unrecognizing Marta, "You don't remember me?!" it will have a blame-like cast, even though she may know full well that Marta bears her no ill will. Were the hurt Georgina to lament to Matt, "Carnations again?!" it will also feel (to both) like blame, even though they may both be clear that Matt had no ill will at all.

Third, when someone who is hurt makes a blaming charge like this, that person is inviting the sort of response typically invited by blame: apology, acknowledgment, guilt, remorse, recompense, and/or relationship-repair.<sup>56</sup> As we saw above, Livia, Marta, and Matt are all expected to respond to the hurt they caused with guilt, for example.

These all seem clearly to be facts about responsibility; indeed, *what else could they be?* In each case someone manifested (a) an agential feature, that is (b) attributable to that agent, which (c) caused a fitting reactive attitude (hurt feelings), and that (d) called for a raft of apt responses—including acknowledgment, apology, and guilt—on the part of the hurtful agent. What items could be missing, then, items without which we couldn't *really* be talking about responsibility?

Well, according to the theorists discussed at the beginning, there will be a *lot* of missing items! Recall the data set brought out by a focus on resentment, a list of five conditions at least some of which are almost universally thought to be necessary for any plausible theory of

flight, or freeze—arise depends on the nature of the threat. For hurt feelings in messenger hard-truth cases, then, the hurter's mere *acknowledgment* of what she caused may indeed be sufficient to discharge guilt's action tendency, and for the hurt agent to call for anything more would be a mistake.

<sup>55</sup> Given that many theorists have started to come around to the view that attitudes are agential, my claim here should not require a hard sell. See, for example, Robert Merrihew Adams, "Involuntary Sins," *The Philosophical Review*, xciv, 1 (January 1985): 3–31; Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, *op. cit.*; Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes," *op. cit.*; Pamela Hieronymi, "Responsibility for Believing," *Synthese*, clxi, 3 (April 2008): 357–73; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*, *op. cit.*; and Talbert, "Moral Competence, Moral Blame, and Protest," *op. cit.*; among others.

<sup>56</sup> See Machamara, "Taking Demands Out of Blame," *op. cit.*; see also Parkinson and Illingworth, "Guilt in Response to Blame from Others," *op. cit.*

responsible agency: quality of will (often put in terms of reasons-responsiveness), control, knowledge, deep self, and/or evaluative judgment. As it turns out, *all* of these conditions are missing from the story of hurt feelings.

First, as I have already argued at length, *quality of will* is irrelevant to the aptness of hurt feelings. Whether your regard for me is good, bad, or indifferent, what you think or feel about me may nevertheless hurt my feelings. And insofar as *reasons-responsiveness* is a specification of quality of will some theorists favor, it too is missing. My hurt feelings at your uttering the hard truth have nothing to do with your responsiveness to reasons to do or say anything else, nor does it require that capacity, as sometimes you have perfectly sufficient reason to think or feel the thing in question (witness *Better Call Saul*, *Rejection*, and *Top Ten*).

Control more generally is also unnecessary for apt hurt feelings. Yes, in many cases, agents do or say *something* that causes hurt feelings, and presumably they had some kind of control over that expression. But their control over the expression is irrelevant to the aptness of the hurt feelings in response, and that is because it is the *thought or feeling* being expressed that is the source of the hurt, and not the expression itself. This was the point of the iMind thought experiment. But thoughts or feelings are very often, if not always, beyond our control.<sup>57</sup> And regardless, it is not that you could have felt differently about me that renders my hurt in response to you apt; it is instead simply *that you felt it about me*.

There is a deeper reason, I think, that control is irrelevant to attributions of hurt feelings, namely, harsh treatments are not intrinsic to hurt feelings (at least in the “pure” variety). What tends to motivate worries about control in the free will and responsibility debate, recall, are worries about the fairness or desert of resentment’s so-called sanctions (as well as other accountability practices). But there is no ground for such worries about hurt feelings, given that they do not “treat” their causative agents in any way at all. Of course, some people with hurt feelings *do* treat their hurters in a harsh fashion *as a result of* being hurt, for example, with a sulking silent treatment, or with other more serious sanctions. But the hurt feelings themselves do not call for

<sup>57</sup> There is obviously much more to say here. I am speaking in the text only about *volitional* control, which governs only actions (including mental actions). But there may be other types of control, including evaluative or rational control over attitudes, and empathic control over various perceptions. I lack space to discuss them here, although I say something about the former in point five below, about evaluative judgment. See my unpublished manuscript “Empathic Control?” for detailed discussion.

such treatment, so the worries about fairness or desert that tend to motivate a control condition are moot here.

Third, a knowledge condition is unnecessary to an account of apt hurt feelings. For my resentment of you to be apt, you must have known that how you treated me violated the basic demand, and you must have known what that basic demand was. But knowing that what one thinks or feels will hurt another's feelings is unnecessary for that person's feelings to be aptly hurt by what one thinks or feels. People with social communicative disorders, recall, may lack such knowledge and still hurt feelings. And pure hurt feelings are unlikely to be the response we have to any sort of violated *demand*: We do not (or at least should not) demand that others not tell us hard truths, for instance, or that our grandkids like us (!), or that our dates be attracted to us, or that famous people not blank on who we are.

Fourth, an account of apt hurt feelings will not have to include any reference to a deep self, as having a deep self is not required to hurt people's feelings. Young children (as in *Grandparents*), wantons, and psychopaths can do so. And even when agents who hurt feelings do have deep selves, the depth of the self is irrelevant to the aptness of the hurt. Perhaps Marta the *Celebrity Philosopher* cares about and is normally quite good at recognizing people she has had dinner with in the past, but today Jenna just does not ring any bells. Her hurtful failure of recognition is not a manifestation of some "deep" or "true" feature of her character, but even if it were (in a version of Marta where she does not care about and never really pays attention to the peons she has dinner with at conferences), it would be irrelevant to the aptness of Jenna's hurt.

Finally, an account of apt hurt feelings will not need to include reference to evaluative judgment. True, some hurt feelings are caused by the evaluative judgments others make of us. But sometimes hurt feelings are caused simply by how others *feel* about us, and people's feelings about us are not always a function of evaluative judgments. This is true in particular of young children (as in *Grandparents*): They can clearly hurt our feelings, despite not being capable of evaluative judgments. So can those who are mentally disturbed or have intellectual disabilities. Indeed, as I have noted, so can dogs.

These five features represent crucial components of one or the other of every major theory of responsibility on offer. But if *none* of these features is necessary for the aptness of hurt feelings, how could their attribution count as a *responsibility*-attribution?

Here we are at a methodological crossroads. We have a range of attitudes and practices surrounding hurt feelings: agential attributions, apologies, acknowledgments, guilt, relationship repair, blame,

and more. These attitudes and practices are crucial components of most theories of responsibility. But the five missing features just discussed—quality of will, control, knowledge, deep selves, and/or evaluative judgment—are *also* crucial components of most theories of responsibility. So how do we proceed, as theorists? Which features get priority? Do we start with the entire range of reactive attitudes and account for *all* of them in our theorizing, or do we take seriously as data only those responses and practices that have been filtered through antecedent theoretical and conceptual constraints, such as the requirements of control, knowledge, or fault?

This, I think, is the most pressing question in contemporary theorizing about responsibility. Strawson's answer is clear. He was a response-dependent theorist about responsibility, taking the conditions of responsible agency to be wholly a function of the more metaphysically basic conditions of being aptly *regarded* as a responsible agent.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, his stated aim was to capture all we mean when talking about responsibility and so on solely by appealing to the entire range of our reactive attitudes, as their aptness conditions would determine the conditions of responsible agency. If this is our aim too, then we have to include hurt feelings in the mix; we would have no principled reason not to. But if Strawson himself had focused exclusively on hurt feelings instead of resentment, and had theorists followed him in doing so (in the way they have with resentment), we would have on our hands, as already discussed, a very different "standard view" of responsibility than we currently do.

Of course, to truly capture all we mean, we would have to include both hurt feelings *and* resentment as part of our data set of reactive attitudes. But then as their aptness conditions are so very different, it is hard to see how we could preserve a unified concept of responsibility that would pay due homage to both.

On this line of thinking, then, it might be better simply to give up on theorizing about *responsibility* per se, as it is too fractured a notion to merit unified investigation. But that is not to say that we should give up on theorizing about the aptness conditions of our individual reactive attitudes. Perhaps the facts about responsibility just consist in more particular facts about the aptness of resentment, indignation, guilt, forgiveness, love, and, yes, hurt feelings, and so our theoretical focus going forward should simply be on those more particular facts, and not

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Gary Watson, "Peter Strawson on Responsibility and Sociality," *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, II (2014): 15–32; and David Shoemaker, "Response-Dependent Responsibility; or, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Blame," *The Philosophical Review*, cxxvi, 4 (October 2017): 481–527.

on responsibility as such. This strikes me as a plausible approach, although I suspect it will be shared only by those who are already on board with Strawson's response-dependent approach and theoretical aims.<sup>59</sup> But response-dependence about responsibility is viewed with great suspicion by most theorists, and anyway there are many other theoretical aims one might reasonably have instead, for example, to engage with the traditional puzzle about free will, to maintain theoretical unity and consistency, to abide by various antecedent conceptual commitments, or simply to justify blame, punishment, or sanctions. And if we take any (or any other) of these aims as methodologically primary, we are likely to arrive at very different conclusions about the nature of "responsibility."

I do not know how to resolve this methodological morass. But I think it well worth our attention. Hurt feelings highlight the morass in dramatic fashion. They too are worth more of our attention, not only to enable us to see this hard methodological conundrum, but also to help us appreciate just how vulnerable we are to them in our daily lives.

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<sup>59</sup> As I am on record as being. See Shoemaker, "Response-Dependent Responsibility," *op. cit.*