

Condemnatory Disappointment*

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Abstract

When blame is understood to be emotion-based or affective, its emotional tone is standardly identified as one of *anger*. We argue that this conception of affective blame is overly restrictive. By attending to cases of blame that emerge against a background of a particular kind of hope invested in others, we identify a blaming response characterized not by anger but sadness: *reactive disappointment*. We develop an account of reactive disappointment as affective blame, maintaining that while angry blame and disappointed blame are both condemnatory responses, they have distinct evaluative foci and occupy different but complementary roles in our accountability practices.

Introduction

Blame features in many contexts: we may have occasion to blame strangers, neighbors, colleagues, friends, family-members, politicians, etc., for their various failures (and they, in turn, may have occasion to blame us). The actions that we take to be blameworthy also form a large and variegated class. But even if the members of this broad class are all potentially worthy of *blame*, it is possible that importantly *different kinds* of blame are characteristically elicited by, and fittingly responsive to, distinct moral considerations. To illustrate the kind of difference we have in mind, consider the following example, for which we stipulate there to be no justifying or excusing conditions to undermine or alleviate the wrongdoer's blameworthiness:

Mr. Williams is in charge of calculating and recording students' school-administered SAT scores, where graduating students receiving the top three highest test scores receive a highly coveted college scholarship from the school. Mia, a student at the

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school, performs third-best in her class, but Mr. Williams adjusts the results so that his nephew, Bert, appears to have scored among the top three and receives the scholarship instead. [**CHEATED**]

Place yourself imaginatively into the position of Mia's parent in **CHEATED**. Mr. Williams, a functionary at the school to which you send your children, has cheated your daughter out of a scholarship she deserves, surreptitiously redirecting the award to an undeserving member of his family. Upon learning of Mr. Williams's nepotistic deceit, what kind of reaction might you have? If you're at all like us, you would be *angry at* Mr. Williams—incensed, even. And, if you're like us, this anger would strike you as appropriate, i.e. a fitting emotional response to Mr. Williams for his action.¹ Now consider a second case (where possible justifying and excusing conditions are also stipulated to be absent):

Aness is a longtime environmental advocate who takes Vera, a budding environmentalist under her wing. United by their shared commitment to environmental advocacy, they coauthor impactful exposés about their government's deforestation practices, collaborate with NGOs to persuade industries to shift toward use of renewable energy, etc. Recently, however, after receiving a sizable payment from Fossil Fuel Co., Vera published an op-ed endorsing the company's proposed fracking project, arguing, inter alia, that there is "inconclusive evidence" that fracking contaminates nearby groundwater. [**LET DOWN**]

¹ For an attitude to be fitting is roughly for it to correctly represent (/appraise) that which it is about, where the standard of correctness is specified by the nature of the attitude in question. For example, for fear to be fitting is for it to be felt in response to something that is *threatening*, as fear involves representing its object as threatening. It does not follow from an attitude's being fitting that it is appropriate relative to other norms, e.g. prudential, moral, aesthetic. See D'Arms, Justin and Daniel Jacobson "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (2000): 65-90.

Now, place yourself imaginatively in the position of Aness, in **LET DOWN**. Upon learning of Vera's betrayal, what kind of emotional reaction might you have? If you're at all like us, you would probably be *disappointed in* Vera—perhaps deeply so (even if anger would not be out of place—more on this later). And, if you're like us, this disappointment would strike you as appropriate, i.e. a fitting emotional response to Vera for her action.

It is possible, of course, that you are not much like us. Perhaps your imagined responses are emotionless. Perhaps, for instance, while you would judge Mr. Williams and Vera to have acted blameworthy, maybe also wishing that they had acted differently, you were left emotionally unexercised by their deeds.² *What's the use of being upset over what cannot be changed?* – you might offer, in support of your unaffected response. Although this kind of response to culpable moral failure is revisionary, and so, unlikely to reflect pre-theoretical intuitions about the above cases, we offer no argument against it. Rather, we help ourselves in what follows to the assumption reflected in our practices that blame standardly, and sometimes fittingly, finds psychological instantiation in negative affective responses. While this assumption lacks universal endorsement, it is widely accepted within the literature on blame. It is accepted most prominently by a broad cohort of theorists who follow Peter Strawson in thinking of our “reactive attitudes,” emotions like resentment and indignation, to be either constitutive of moral blame, or are at least the paradigmatic psychological vehicles of moral blame.³ Those who follow Strawson tend to see

² For “ledger” theories of blame, see Jonathan Glover, *Responsibility* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Michael J. Zimmerman *An Essay on Moral Responsibility* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988); Ishtiyaque Haji, *Moral Appraisability: Puzzles, Proposals, and Perplexities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For the view that blame consists of a certain belief-desire pair, see George Sher, *In Praise of Blame* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ Peter F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” in *Free Will* (2nd edition), ed. Gary Watson (Oxford University Press, 2003), 72–93. The idea that emotions like resentment are expressive of our caring about the moral meaning of agents' actions is one that enjoys a long history. See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. D.D. Raphael & A.L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1759/1976) and David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. P. Nidditch & L. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1739-40/1978). For their connections to the Strawsonian view, see Paul Russell, *Freedom and Moral Sentiment: Hume's Way of Naturalizing Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Stephen

these negative emotions as interpersonal responses to others' manifestations of poor (or insufficiently good) quality of regard, against a background of norms and expectations to which we hold one another. The argument that follows may have appeal for theorists who reject this kind of connection between blame and negative emotions, but it is primarily directed to those endorsing views on which negative emotional responses can count as instances of blame, especially those who take such attitudes to be either *the way* or *a paradigmatic way* in which blame, or at least the kind of interpersonal blame of interest to Strawson, is psychologically instantiated. Additionally, though there may be non-moral forms of affective blame,⁴ and forms of blame that merely appraise others' morally objectionable conduct,⁵ as our leading examples suggest, we are interested here in moral blame as a robustly interpersonal phenomenon: that which responds to the quality of regard others manifest in their actions, and which, in turn, calls for a response from its target, construed as an addressee, or moral interlocuter. Differently put, our topic is blame corresponding to moral responsibility in the "accountability" sense."⁶ For ease of reference, we

Darwall, "Sympathetic Liberalism: Recent Work on Adam Smith," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 28 (1999): 139-64; Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 84, 101.

⁴ Blame responsive to another's quality of judgment, like blame responsive to another's quality of character, is sometimes understood to be affective in nature but non-angry. See David Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) on blame in the answerability and attributability senses, respectively.

⁵ See fn. 2.

⁶ See Watson for the highly influential distinction between attributability and accountability, where the latter involves blame that is not only *about*, but addressed *to*, its target. Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility," in *Agency and Answerability*, Gary Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 260-88. Though Watson also states that accountability blame raises questions of "fairness," as one who is blameworthy in the accountability sense is liable to "sanctions," Watson understands both terms capaciously, maintaining that *attitudes* of blame can be unfair (suggesting that that the interests that can be set back by blame's sanctions extend beyond the narrow domain of welfare interests) (Ibid., 278-9). In any case, though blame in the accountability sense is sometimes understood to presuppose robust moral justification, e.g. fairness or (more commonly) desert (sometimes understood as "basic desert" (Derk Pereboom, *Living without Free Will* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 85-125; Derk Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)), especially where this type of blame is taken to be, or license responses that are, sanction-like, we do not assume this view of accountability. One's deservingness

call this variegated cluster of views—according to which this kind of interpersonal blame (henceforth, simply “blame”) finds at least paradigmatic expression in negatively valenced social emotions—*affective views of blame*.

Extant affective views of blame are generally ill-equipped to countenance the kind of blame we find fitting in **LET DOWN**, i.e. disappointed blame, of which we provide further examples below. This is because affective views tend to identify anger (or ‘angry emotions,’ like resentment) as *the* emotion of blame.⁷ The “standard approach” taken by proponents of affective views of blame is that affective blame is angry blame. While we think an affective view of blame should include angry blame in its conceptual repertoire, it is in our view a mistake to think that angry blame is *exhaustive* of affective blame. For, although the standard approach can capture our intuitive blaming response in **CHEATED**, to capture what is distinctive of our blaming intuitions concerning **LET DOWN**, affective views of blame require revision. What is needed, in particular, is the addition of a type of affective blame that is characterized by a kind of sadness (rather than anger), i.e. disappointed blame. Differently put, blame associated with responsibility in the accountability sense—that responsive to manifestations of others’ quality of regard—ought to

of accountability blaming responses can be understood in the thinner terms of being the *fitting* target of blaming emotions with particular contents (see e.g. Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 220–22).

⁷ R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); R. Jay Wallace, “Dispassionate Opprobrium: On Blame and the Reactive Sentiments,” in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, eds. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 348–72; Susan Wolf, “Blame, Italian Style” *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T. M. Scanlon*, eds. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 332–47.; Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Macalester Bell, “The Standing to Blame,” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 263–81; Christopher Franklin, “Valuing Blame” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 207–23; Benjamin Bagley, “Properly Proleptic Blame,” *Ethics* 127 (2017): 852–82; Leonhard Menges, “The Emotion Account of Blame,” *Philosophical Studies* 174 (2017): 257–73.

be understood more capaciously, namely as admitting a blaming response in the register of sadness.⁸

The emotional response of sadness, or more particularly, disappointment, is not ignored in the blame and responsibility literature. It is sometimes identified as an alternative, *non-blaming*, response to moral failure, one that might replace our blaming responses, where the latter are presumed to be anger-involving. A “blame replacement” thesis of this sort finds prominent defense in the work of free will and responsibility skeptic, Derk Pereboom.⁹ On this kind of view, while blame is inappropriate given (what we know about) the kinds of agents we are and what blame presupposes about the agency of its targets, non-blaming responses like regret and disappointment are poised to serve as healthy alternatives to blame responses. This is not what we are after. Rather, granting that agents *are*, as they seem to be, sometimes genuinely blameworthy and appropriately blamed for their moral failures, we are interested in identifying a kind of disappointment that is a blaming response (and not a non-condemnatory alternative to blame).¹⁰

⁸ In what follows “blame” refers, unless otherwise specified, to blame in the accountability sense.

⁹ See Pereboom, *Living without Free Will*; Derk Pereboom, “Free Will Skepticism, Blame, and Obligation” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 189–206. More recently, however, Pereboom, (in Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, and in “Responsibility, Regret, and Protest,” in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* 4 (2017): 121–40), advances an account of blame (as protest) that is primarily forward-looking, but which also possesses a backward-looking aspect; “the immediate target of blame is typically a past action, and in this respect such blaming will have a backward-looking aspect: the badness of the past act is part of what makes the protest appropriate” (Pereboom, “Responsibility, Regret, and Protest,” 130; see also *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, 132–38). This type of blame, however, does not involve the notion of “basic desert” that Pereboom takes to be i) presupposed by angry blame, and ii) integral to the kind responsibility at issue in the traditional debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists.

¹⁰ Others who do not endorse the affective view (at least in its standard form)—and so are not beholden to an anger-centric view of blame—have expressed, in passing, sympathy for the idea that disappointment might be a vehicle of blame. E.g. T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 182; Angela Smith, “Moral Blame and Moral Protest,” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27–48, 41; Miranda Fricker, “What’s the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation,” *Noûs* 50 (2016): 165–83, 172; Paulina Sliwa, “The Power of Excuses,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 47 (2019): 37–71; Justin Coates, “The Ethics of Blame: A Primer,” in *The Ethics of Belief and Beyond: Understanding Mental Normativity*, eds. Sebastian Schmidt and Gerhard Ernst (New York: Routledge, 2020), 192–214;

More importantly for our purposes, a number of philosophers have raised the possibility of disappointed, or sadness-involving, *blame*.¹¹ These theorists, however, propose that disappointed blame can play the same functional role as the angry blame. Given their dialectical aims, what they offer is primarily a negative characterization of disappointed blame (as lacking some features of moral anger), along with a list of features taken to be shared by angry blame and some non-angry alternative. What these theorists do not do, is provide a *distinctive account* of the relevant kind of disappointment, which requires (we propose) an articulation of the nexus of attitudes and interpersonal relations that serve as the normative background for this distinctive way of responding to others for their moral failures.¹² We deny that disappointed blame and angry blame have the same functional profiles, and do not endorse the view that angry blame is

Douglas Portmore, “A Comprehensive Account of Blame: Self-Blame, Non-Moral Blame, and Blame for the Non-Voluntary,” in *Self-Blame and Moral Responsibility*, ed. Andreas Carlsson Brekke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 48–76. Further prima facie support for our proposal comes from the increasing prevalence of the claim that forgiveness may involve the forswearing/overcoming of disappointment. E.g. Norvin Richards, “Forgiveness,” *Ethics* 99 (1988): 77–97, 78, 79; Jeffrie Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 59; Lucy Allais, “Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36 (2008): 33–68, 58; Jeffrey Blustein, “Forgiveness and the Moral Psychology of Sadness” in *The Moral Psychology of Sadness*, ed. Anna Gotlib (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 117–52. Shoemaker (*Responsibility from the Margins*, 4) identifies disappointment as a blaming reactive attitude, though he holds that disappointment (qualified once as “moral disappointment”) is responsive to another’s poor quality of *judgment*—i.e. as associated with responsibility in the answerability sense. The disappointed blame of **LET DOWN**, however, does not on our view primarily target Vera’s quality of judgment, as we elaborate below.

¹¹ Menges, “The Emotion Account of Blame”; Leonhard Menges, “Blame it on Disappointment,” *Public Affairs Quarterly* 34 (2020): 169–84; Blustein, “Forgiveness and the Moral Psychology of Sadness”. The kind of disappointment (/sadness) outlined by these theorists, however, fails to differentiate disappointed blame from the non-blaming response of *propositional disappointment* that is *about* an agent’s moral failure (see 2.1). One might deny this to be a genuine failure, for one might take it to be sufficient for an instance of (propositional) disappointment to count as blame that it has the right kind of (agency-involving) content. This proposal, however, conflicts with the widely held assumption among (especially) Strawsonians that the reactive attitudes are personal attitudes in the sense that they are three-place relations, felt toward a person, for an action (and are not simply about an agent-involving state of affairs or proposition). More generally, while disappointment admits of a propositional variety, the ‘semantic deviance’ in describing an ordinary case of, say, the emotion of pity in terms of a person ‘pitying *that*’ (O.H. Green, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Theory* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1992), 39) helps to illustrate the awkwardness of the view that all social emotions are propositionally structured. We return to differences between our view and Menges’s below (especially fn. 50).

¹² We have Menges (“Blame it on Disappointment”) especially in mind here (though, following the blame-skeptics that are his target, Menges describes the disappointment of interest to him as an *alternative to* (angry) *blame* that fulfils the positive functions of the latter).

supplantable by some non-angry alternative.¹³ Our aim is to identify the distinctive qualities of disappointed blame, in a way that elucidates the unique contribution that this kind of affective blame makes to our blaming practices, *alongside* angry blame. Our aim, in other words, is a project of expanding the affective view of blame. Apart from furnishing a picture of blame that better reflects the diversity of our moral experience and interpersonal relations, our proposal provides novel resources for addressing several broader questions in the responsibility literature, as we illustrate below.

We proceed as follows. In section 1, we present the standard approach to affective blame, as extractable from the blame literature. In section 2, we first introduce the phenomenon of reactive disappointment via contrast with disappointment of a non-blaming variety: propositional disappointment, i.e. disappointment *that* something has transpired. Propositional disappointment is a response to perceived frustrations of predictive (or non-normative) hopes, hopes that some desired state of affairs obtains. While propositional disappointment *can* be about states of affairs involving moral failures, it does not, we maintain, amount to blame. Reactive disappointment, by contrast, is an essentially agent-directed response concerning moral failure *qua* moral failure.¹⁴ It is essentially agent-directed, a response of being *disappointed in an agent*, experienced against the background of a stance of normative hope invested in that agent. Reactive disappointment, further, evaluates the agent negatively, as manifesting poor quality of regard relative to the standards or ideals proper to the valuing relation obtaining between the disappointee and the disappointed. Over and above negative evaluation, reactive disappointment also expresses disapproval of an agent for the poor quality of regard manifested in their failure. As this disapproval is directed toward a co-participant in a valuing relation, it will call for a

¹³ David Goldman, "Modification of the Reactive Attitudes," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 95 (2014):1-22.

¹⁴ Hereafter we take this cumbersome qualification ("qua moral failure") to be assumed when discussing the disappointee's moral failure.

certain kind of uptake and response from its target, which will include acknowledging the way in which one let down a co-participant of a valuing relation. Accordingly, reactive disappointment will characteristically sting. Owing to these features, as we elaborate upon below, reactive disappointment is a condemnatory response. It is the condemnatory nature of such disappointment that secures its status as an emotion of blame, i.e. disappointed blame.¹⁵

Since our account of disappointed blame relies on the relatively novel philosophical concept of “normative hope”, after distinguishing propositional disappointment from reactive disappointment in section 2.1, we present in outline our “valuing relations conception” of normative hope (section 2.2).¹⁶ In section 3, we address the objection from the supposedly withdrawn nature of disappointment, paying special attention there to the motivational profile of, and agential capacities presupposed by, reactive disappointment. In section 4, we make explicit the respective domains of angry blame and disappointed blame, such that neither occupies the same role in our blaming practices. Before concluding, in section 5 we draw out some implications of our proposal for broader debates in the responsibility literature.

¹⁵ Why use multiple terms (reactive disappointment, disappointed blame) for the same phenomenon? Though we take ‘reactive disappointment’ and ‘disappointed blame’ to be extensionally equivalent, they are not intensionally equivalent. The proponent of the standard approach might grant that disappointment is a reactive attitude, but as there are negative reactive attitudes that are non-blaming responses—e.g. hurt feelings (Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” 75; Seth Shabo, “Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson’s Interpersonal Defense of Compatibilism,” *Philosophical Review* 12 (2012): 95–104, 99–100; David Shoemaker, “Hurt Feelings,” *Journal of Philosophy* 116 (2019): 125–48), a further step is required to establish that reactive disappointment is a form of blame (especially, accountability blame).

¹⁶ Martin introduces the term “normative hope” (Adrienne Martin, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)), and subsequently presents a substantially revised view of the phenomenon under the narrower heading of “interpersonal hope” (Adrienne Martin, “Interpersonal Hope,” in *The Moral Psychology of Hope*, eds. Claudia Blöser and Titus Stahl (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 229–48. Our “valuing relations conception” of normative hope is an alternative to Martin’s (2020) view, which we take to pick out one important species of normative hope (see 2.2). In addition to our debt to Martin on normative hope, we are indebted in our approach to Mason’s “non-jural” conception of normative expectation, despite our employing different terminology. Michelle Mason, “Reactive attitudes and second-personal address,” in *Ethical sentimentalism*, eds. Remy Debes and Karsten Stueber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 153–70.

1. The Standard Approach to the Affective View of Blame

On the standard approach to the affective view of blame, affective blame is angry blame. Angry blame is sometimes designated by terms like ‘moral anger,’¹⁷ but following P.F. Strawson, one more commonly encounters semi-technical terms like, “resentment” and “indignation,” which designate angry emotions of blame. Proponents of the “affective view,” on our broad construal, need not hold that blame necessarily, or in every case, involves negative emotions. Michael McKenna, for instance, grants the possibility of non-affective instances of blame. Nonetheless, McKenna evinces commitment to the affective view—and the standard approach, at that—in writing that “*morally* reactive emotions...pertain to the stance of holding morally responsible. Central to the current topic are those morally reactive attitudes directly implicated in blaming. These particular reactive emotions are best understood as a species of moral anger, picked out by the terms of sentiment ‘resentment’ and ‘moral indignation’.”¹⁸ Similarly, Susan Wolf takes there to be a “fundamental connection between blame and anger-or, [...] righteous anger,” and suggests that considerations of ordinary language, too, “support identifying “blame” with angry blame.”¹⁹ The standard approach finds endorsement too in David Owens’s claim that “blame is a form of anger.”²⁰

Endorsement of the standard approach sometimes finds more forceful, contrastive, expression. For, in addition to identifying *only* angry blame when speaking of affective blame, proponents of the standard approach sometimes explicitly exclude disappointment and sadness-

¹⁷ See Jesse Prinz, “The Moral Emotions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 519–38; Pascale Sophie Russell and Roger Giner-Sorolla, “Moral Anger, but Not Moral Disgust, Responds to Intentionality,” *Emotion* 11 (2015): 233–40; Paul Hughes, “Moral Anger, Forgiving, and Condoning,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 26 (2015): 103–18.

¹⁸ Michael McKenna, “Directed Blame and Conversation,” in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, eds. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 119–40, 124–25.

¹⁹ Wolf, “Blame, Italian Style,” 335, 341.

²⁰ Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape*, 30. See also Bagley, “Properly Proleptic Blame,” 860 and Menges, “The Emotion Account of Blame,” for the identification of angry blame with emotional blame.

involving responses from candidacy to the ranks of blaming responses. Christopher Franklin, for example, writes that “[sadness] does not carry the condemnatory aspect embedded in blame. Sadness expresses our care and is a response to loss. Blame expresses the value of the object and is a response to free disvaluation.”²¹ Macalester Bell makes a similar point in defending her “Hostile Attitude Account of Blame,” on which “[t]o blame is to be liable to a range of negative emotions,” where this range includes resentment and indignation, but excludes responses of sadness.²² Jay Wallace also makes this exclusionary claim, writing that “[b]lame has a quality of opprobrium that is lacking when one feels mere sadness or melancholy, a quality that can be made sense of [...] only in terms of the distinctively reactive sentiments of resentment, indignation, and guilt.”²³ This point is made also by Antti Kauppinen, in a manner that is dialectically useful for our purposes:

anger is a way of caring about caring—holding others and ourselves to normative expectations. Other feelings offered as a substitute by critics, like sadness, do not in any way amount to appreciating that others have an insistent reason to act or refrain from acting in a certain way.... the burden of proof is on the critic to show that we can adopt an emotional stance of valuing something in a way that involves normative expectations without being susceptible to emotions from the anger family.²⁴

We accept that the burden of proof is on us. After all, the idea that affective blame is angry blame has roots in Aristotle, so there is a sense in which there’s a good explanation for why the standard

²¹ Franklin, “Valuing Blame,” 222.

²² Bell, “The Standing to Blame,” 265, 266. Bell holds a nuanced and non-standard version of the affective view (despite her approach being “standard” in our above-defined sense) in that, following Mason, she takes *contempt* to be a reactive attitude of blame, in addition to resentment and indignation. Macalester Bell, “The Standing to Blame;” Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michelle Mason, “Contempt as a Moral Attitude,” *Ethics* 113 (2003): 234–77. We return to contempt at the end of section 3.

²³ Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, 368.

²⁴ Antti Kauppinen, “Valuing Anger,” in *The Moral Psychology of Anger*, eds. Myisha Cherry and Owen Flanagan (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 31–48, 44.

approach to the affective view *is* the standard approach.²⁵ Nevertheless, the approach is myopic, and we endeavor to show it is. To foreshadow, we meet Kauppinen, Wallace, etc., halfway, for we grant that that *mere* disappointment isn't blame, and also that reactive disappointment *is not* expressive of the stance of normative expectation.²⁶ Nonetheless, *it is* a way of appreciating that another has acted contrary to a weighty moral reason, where this disappointment acquires condemnatory force from its grounding in the interpersonal stance of *normative hope*.

While our proposal is revisionary with respect to the standard approach to affective blame prevalent within the Strawsonian literature, it coheres with Strawson's methodologically non-revisionary approach of looking to our interpersonal practices as a way of understanding the nature and norms of our accountability responses.²⁷ That is, while it has been overlooked by theorists of blame, reactive disappointment is as much a feature of our responsibility practices—particularly, those corresponding to responsibility in the accountability sense—as are the angry blaming responses (e.g. resentment) to which Strawson and subsequent Strawsonians give pride of place.

2. Reactive Disappointment

We accept that anger plays an important role in our blaming practices and in many paradigmatic cases of blame. But it is myopic to think that to the extent that blame is affective or emotion-involving, the emotion involved must be one of anger.²⁸ We develop an account of a phenomenon of disappointment that possesses condemnatory force, and so, is a vehicle of affective blame.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378a31–33.

²⁶ At least not in the semi-technical sense of the term standardly invoked in the Strawsonian literature. See fn. 33. An exception here may be Mason's non-jural conception of normative expectation, which has more in common with what we call normative hope than what is standardly understood as normative expectation. Mason, "Reactive Attitudes and Second-Personal Address."

²⁷ Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 78.

²⁸ That guilt (or the self-reactive attitude of blame) intuitively lacks the phenomenology of anger (though see Patricia Greenspan, *Practical Guilt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)) may provide

2.1 Propositional Disappointment vs. Reactive Disappointment

To make headway in our proposal, we must distinguish reactive disappointment from a more run-of-the-mill kind of disappointment, i.e. propositional disappointment. Instances of propositional disappointment are impersonal in that they are directed toward states of affairs or propositions. In contrast to essentially interpersonal responses like, say, resentment or forgiveness—which are three-place relations, directed toward persons, for some transgression—propositional disappointment (*disappointment that*) is a two-place relation that takes some state of affairs (or proposition) as its object, e.g. *that it is raining*. If Gail had hoped to do some gardening in the sun at noon, she might be disappointed that it's raining at that time. The objects of propositional disappointment are not limited to non-agents, as agents can of course figure in states of affairs. Anticipating the arrival of a package, I might be disappointed *that the postal worker did not come today*. More importantly, propositional disappointment can be directed toward morally significant agent-involving states of affairs. Suppose Quinn hopes that knife-violence will continue to decrease in city X, where this hope is animated by a non-instrumental desire that persons not be harmed (and not e.g. by the desire of being correct in one's prediction). Upon learning that knife-violence has, contrary to hope, *risen* over the past year, Quinn will intelligibly be disappointed that this is so. While Quinn's disappointment is about agents and morally significant matters, as described, his is not an instance of reactive disappointment. To develop this point, we need to pause on the type of hope in light of which propositional disappointment and reactive disappointment are, respectively, felt.

proponents of the affective view with independent reason for openness to more expansive conceptions of affective blame. Thanks to Julia Markovits for this point.

Propositional disappointment (even when felt in response to morally important agent-involving states of affairs) is rationalized by what might be called “predictive hopes.” When some hoped-for state of affairs fails to obtain, the hoping agent will intelligibly be disappointed. For her hope was constituted in part by the belief that the hoped-for state of affairs was possible (but not guaranteed) and by the desire that that state of affairs obtain.²⁹ While such hopes may be for states of affairs involving various moral or non-moral goods, they differ essentially from the kind of hope that rationalizes reactive disappointment, namely normative hope. Normative hope is hope *invested in* an agent; it is essentially agent-directed, as it is for some agent to meet, or aspire toward, the attainment of some normative standard or ideal. When Aness is disappointed in Vera in **LET DOWN**, Aness’s disappointment is naturally understood as a response to Vera’s failure to live up to the shared ideal of environmental advocacy.³⁰

The standard approach’s opposition to the idea of disappointed or sadness-involving blame overlooks the distinction between propositional disappointment (responsive to perceived frustration of predictive hope, i.e. *hope that*) and reactive disappointment (responsive to perceived frustration of normative hope, i.e. *hope in*). Proponents of the standard approach often claim that *mere* disappointment (or sadness) about some agent’s wrongdoing cannot constitute blame. But

²⁹ In contemporary philosophical discussions of hope, it is generally thought that this “orthodox” view of hope (defended by Day and Downie, and found too in Hobbes) requires the addition of some further ingredient, lest hope be indistinguishable from despair, which too seems to involve beliefs and desires of this sort. John P. Day, “Hope,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969): 89–102; Robin S. Downie, “Hope,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24 (1963): 248–51; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. John C.A. Gaskin (Oxford University Press, 1651/1998), 36, I.VI.14. But see Michael Milona, “Finding Hope,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 49 (2019): 710–29. For several proposals for further such ingredients, see Luc Bovens, “The Value of Hope,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59 (1999): 667–81; Victoria McGeer, “The Art of Good Hope,” *The Annals the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592 (2004): 100–27; Ariel Meirav, “The Nature of Hope,” *Ratio* 22 (2009): 216–33; Martin, *How We Hope*; Philip Pettit, “Hope and Its Place in Mind,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592 (2004): 152–65.

³⁰ Support for this distinction in disappointment is found in the distinction sometimes drawn by social psychologists between “outcome-related disappointment” and “person-related disappointment.” Wilco van Dijk and Marcel Zeelenberg, “What Do We Talk about When we Talk About Disappointment?,” *Cognition & Emotion* 16 (2002): 787–807.

mere disappointment is naturally understood as propositional disappointment, which, we readily grant (indeed, insist), is not a blaming response. Reactive disappointment, by contrast, refers to a type of disappointment that is essentially agent-directed and which evaluates an agent as failing to live up to a worthwhile standard or ideal, against the background of the disappointed's *hope in* the disappointee. Proponents of the standard approach, then, need not be hostile to the idea of reactive disappointment as a type of affective blame, for our approach excludes "mere disappointment" from the range of responses that might count as blaming.

Furthermore, the distinction between essentially agent-directed responses and their propositional counterparts is one to which proponents of the standard approach are *already committed*. After all, anger is recognized to admit of a propositional variety, e.g. *anger that* one's car won't start, *anger that* there's so much injustice in the world, and so on. This kind of anger—propositional anger—is a response to states of affairs that are taken to obstruct one's goals or desires, and does not presuppose ascribing agency to its target. As such, propositional anger does not qualify as blame.³¹ Indeed, in **CHEATED**, being *angry that* one's daughter was deprived from receiving a scholarship is compatible with failing to morally blame anyone for this deprivation. The deprivation may be represented as an obstruction to one's ends regardless of whether it is also viewed as a culpable expression of agency. Now, the possibility of responding to moral failure with non-blaming anger does not undermine the idea that some kinds of anger are essentially agent-directed responses of blame. By parity of reasoning, the existence of propositional

³¹ See Nico H. Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 88-89, for the view that anger's aim is to remove an obstruction to one's ends, thereby regaining control. To distinguish between the broader phenomenon of non-blaming (i.e. goal frustration, or propositional) anger, and one of its species, Shoemaker employs the term "agential anger," which is about frustrations to one's goals perceived as *slights*. Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*. But see David Shoemaker, "You Oughta Know: Defending Angry Blame," in *The Moral Psychology of Anger*, eds. Myisha Cherry and Owen Flanagan (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 67-88, 73.

disappointment does nothing to discount the proposal that some kinds of disappointment are essentially agent-directed responses of blame.

2.2 *The Valuing Relations Conception of Normative Hope*

We have characterized reactive disappointment as a response to the frustration of normative hope. But, what exactly do we mean by “normative hope”? To start, we follow Adrienne Martin in understanding normative hope as specifying an interpersonal stance toward agents capable of acting on normative reasons, a stance contrastable with the more familiar stance of normative *expectation*.³² Normative expectation— as understood within the Strawsonian tradition³³—is not to be identified with “predictive expectation,” or the subjective presumption that something is more likely than not to happen. For, normative expectation is expectation as against normative demand; it is an agent-directed stance that reflects, when well-calibrated, not what our evidence suggests will occur, but rather what we are *entitled* to expect and demand of others—and correlatively, what we *owe* to one another—as morally responsible agents.³⁴ Thus, I might have

³² Martin, *How We Hope*.

³³ E.g. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”; Watson, “Two Faces”; Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*; Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*; Martin, *How We Hope*; Victoria McGeer, “P.F. Strawson’s Consequentialism,” *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* 2 (2014): 64–92; Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*.

³⁴ Normative expectations and demands are standardly understood deontically, as “equivalent ways of expressing the notion of a practical requirement or prohibition” (Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, 22) (though see section 5). As Watson (“Two Faces,” 274) similarly writes, “holding responsible is a three-term relationship in which one individual or group is held by another to certain expectations or demands or requirements.” We take no stand here on the question of whether we properly hold others to normative expectations in this semi-technical sense only where directed duties (owed to us or to others) are at issue (though we see no reason to endorse such restriction. See fn. 37 and the further text accompanying fn. 61–62 on whether duties need be involved at all). For now, we simply rely on the Strawsonian constructions of the idea of normative expectation to usefully contrast the stance against that of normative hope. See fn. 33. While one might be inclined to view our articulation of normative hope as better described as a *form* of normative expectation that requires the expansion of the Strawsonian category (as understood, e.g. by Wallace, Darwall), and so as appropriately understood as a way of ‘normatively expecting’ of others, we are less interested in the question of terminology and more interested in demonstrating the different content, phenomenology and tendency to motivate involved in the latter, whereby one addresses another against a background of investment and thick evaluative

a normative expectation that you respect my privacy given your moral obligation to do so, even if, considering your past behavior, I think it likely (and so, in the predictive sense, expect) that you will *not* act as required. It is this sense of normative expectation that is at play when Strawsonians understand our disposition to respond to others with reactive attitudes as based in, and reflective of, our normative expectations of others as moral agents. To blame someone on this view is, in part, to view them as having violated a normative expectation.

Importantly, we relate to some agents without holding them to normative expectations. Consider the 3-year-old who knocks the sandwich out of my hands and into a puddle. I do not view the 3-year-old (at least upon consideration) as having violated some mutually recognized norm. I may be annoyed that my sandwich is ruined, but blaming responses (like resentment) are out of place here. For, toddlers, like other agents who lack the cognitive and motivational competencies to hold, and be held, to normative expectations, are non-members of the community of accountable agents (where this community is narrower than the ‘moral community,’ i.e. beings with moral interests). Rather than relating to these as we do to ordinary mature agents, susceptible to a full range of interpersonal reactions, we regard to them through an “objective” perspective, as agents whose behaviors are to be managed, predicted, explained, viewed with curiosity, liked or disliked, etc.³⁵ For an agent to be regarded objectively, owing to their cognitive and motivational incapacities, is for that agent to be exempt from our ordinary practices of holding accountable.³⁶

relations. That x is *owed* or that I am *entitled* simply is not the central point when I address another from this latter stance, even if this is in fact the case.

³⁵ Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” 79.

³⁶ In addition to agents’ being exempt from our responsibility practices, agents with diminished capacities may be *marginal* members of those practices (appropriately susceptible to some, but not others, of a range of responsibility responses, and perhaps to a more limited degree than ordinary members); see Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*. See also Strawson’s comments on children, “creatures who are potentially and increasingly capable both of holding, and being objects of, the full range of human and moral attitudes, but are not yet truly capable of either.” Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” 88.

Our default way of regarding agents, however, is not from the objective perspective, but from the *participant* perspective, wherein we see others as to-be-reasoned-with participants in our various practical engagements, and as such, subject to reciprocally held normative expectations. These expectations structure our moral responses to accountable agents. Replacing the above sandwich-knocking toddler with a sandwich-swiping (adult) stranger on a train, and barring exceptional circumstances, my response will be one of *resentment* toward the stranger, a blaming response that presupposes my holding the stranger to normative expectations (for, e.g. a certain level of respect). An antecedent psychological state of expectation is not implied in such a case. My resentment, rather, is intelligible against a background disposition of normative expectation that will include the normative expectation that strangers treat one another with some (difficult-to-specify-in-general-terms) level of respect. When we view a person to have treated another in a way that violates a normative expectation—i.e. a demand to which we hold one another as morally accountable agents—we view, and are disposed to treat, that agent as having committed a moral offense, or to have *wronged* another.³⁷

Like normative expectation, normative hope is an interpersonal stance had within the participant perspective; it is a way of relating to others as to-be-reasoned-with participants in our practical engagements. While normative expectations reflect demands to which we hold one another in virtue of being moral agents, normative hopes reflect our relating to others through thicker relations (paradigmatically, those of personal relationships and group-memberships), which presuppose shared values and a shared history, though not necessarily face-to-face experiences.³⁸ The stance of normative expectation is one that *any* accountable agent can

³⁷ ‘Wronging’ here can be understood capaciously (encompassing what Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 90-91, calls ‘slighting’), and does not imply violation of an *obligation* (at least not a right-based form of obligation. See Adrienne Martin, “Personal Bonds: Directed Obligations Without Rights,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 102 (2021): 65–86).

³⁸ This is not to say that we cannot (or do not) hold participants in valuing relations to normative expectations (nor that valuing relations cannot have implications for the content of our normative

legitimately bear toward any other accountable agent for violations of a normative demand.³⁹ Accordingly, to blame someone from the stance of normative expectation is to view their moral failure in a normatively thin way. *We can*, as Strawsonians sometimes do, describe the totality of accountable agents as a *moral community* of agents disposed to mutually hold one another to account, but that should not obscure the fact that this “accountability community” is highly diffuse and lacking in the properties that could obviously ground thicker valuing relations.

Cases like **LET DOWN** reveal the participant perspective to be considerably richer than the stance of normative expectation. In addition to relating to others “merely” as accountable agents (i.e. members of the diffuse group of agents capable of recognizing what they mutually owe to one another), we also relate to others more intimately, as fellow members of groups and personal relationships. To see why this more intimate way of relating may provide a basis for a distinctive form of holding accountable, consider that our personal relationships and group-memberships provide us with reasons that are relationship- and membership-dependent.⁴⁰ The fact that, say, that’s *my* niece who is missing, or *my* team-member who needs help, seems to generate special (or especially strong) reasons *for me*. While there are difficult questions about

expectations). But rather, to understand what is distinctive of our responsibility responses in this arena, recourse to the stance of normative hope is necessary. Important questions remain about the ways in which responses reflective of normative expectation and normative hope, respectively, may affect (and possibly provide grounds for) one another. While these are beyond our scope, we discuss in section 4 the way in which the same agent can respond to a given moral failure from either stance.

³⁹ One might, however, take there to be certain cultural/historical boundaries to the (nonetheless expansive and cross-generational) community of accountable agents of which one is a part. For one version of this idea, see Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*, 26. Additionally, even if it’s true that any member of the community of accountable agents is, *in principle*, in a position to blame any other such member, this entitlement might be locally forfeited, e.g. where the would-be hypocritical nature one’s blame undermines his *standing* to blame. See e.g. Gerald A. Cohen, “Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can’t, Condemn the Terrorists?,” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58: 113–36; Angela Smith, “On Being Responsible and Holding Responsible,” *The Journal of Ethics* 11 (2007): 465–84; R. Jay Wallace, “Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38 (2010): 307–41.

⁴⁰ See Samuel Scheffler, “Relationships and Responsibilities,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26 (1997): 189–209; Samuel Scheffler, “Morality and Reasonable Partiality,” in *Equality and Tradition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41–75.

how to square these reasons of partiality with (what we might have thought to be) the impartial demands of morality, here we simply take for granted that there *are*, whatever the details may be, relationship-dependent and membership-dependent reasons. In valuing our relationships and group-memberships, we have reasons to act, attend, deliberate, etc. relative to those relationships and group-memberships, at least where these relationships and memberships are valuable, i.e. worth valuing. These reasons of partiality might of course be outweighed by impartial considerations of justice (norms against nepotism reflect our recognition of this), but reasons they remain. For simplicity's sake, we refer to the kind of normative relation in which we stand to participants of personal relationships and co-members of groups as "valuing relations."

Attention to our valuing relations reveals that we hold others not only to normative expectations. We also hold agents *up* to the evaluative standards and ideals governing our valuing relations. To hold others up in this way is to invest normative hope in them, hope for them to live up to values and ideals proper to our various valuing relations. 'Investment' here should not be thought of in volitional terms; we can invest hope in others in virtue of regarding them under various social descriptions, e.g. friend, colleague, team member, fellow environmentalist. In so regarding another, one views her actions as governed by the standards internal to the particular valuing relation in question. When we are disappointed in another, then, we are disappointed against this background of normative hope for them to live up to some value or ideal that conditions our valuing relation. Reactive disappointment is the disappointment we feel when *our* candidate for the presidency reveals his absence of intention to follow through with his campaign promises; when *our* religious leader is discovered to have put his own monetary interests before the interests of his congregants; when *my* teammate is revealed to have taken performance enhancers, etc. The stance of normative hope, then, specifies a way of relating to

agents in a normatively thick way, i.e. qua co-members of a valuing relation.⁴¹ We invest hope in one another as co-participants in a range of valuing relations, and when those hopes are frustrated, the agent responsible has acted in a way that lets one down qua participant in the valuing relation.⁴²

To help illustrate, imagine a father who takes special care to educate his child to behave honestly, and who discovers that his son has been regularly lying about where he spends his evenings. The father's reaction *might* be responsive to the violation of a norm against dishonesty, and thus take the form of moral anger. Yet, a parent may feel disappointed in their child for failing them on a more personal level, where the failure is dependent on the thick relation that exists between the two; apart from demanding honesty of his son, the father's parenting relationship is one in which he plausibly invests hope in his son to, inter alia, become an honest person. This hope is frustrated when the son behaves in ways that manifest inconsistency with the relevant

⁴¹ Might one not, however, invest normative hope in, say, *all of humanity* to act in accordance with certain standards or ideals? The person who supposes we can—the humanity-directed hoper—may deny that theirs is simply a propositional hope *that* everyone (/all of humanity) act in accord with some standard or ideal. Since valuing relations are special relations, we deny that one can stand in what *we mean* by a 'valuing relation' with all of humanity, *but* perhaps one might aspire toward a kind of moral community with all of humanity, and in that way, be disposed to regard others (including those we ordinarily call *complete strangers*) as something like co-members of an all-inclusive community. Perhaps this is a valuable extension of normative hope to adopt. Still, given that reactive disappointment presupposes an *actual* valuing relation (and not merely an aspirational one), to direct reactive disappointment in response to a stranger's moral failure will, in presupposing a thickness of relation that fails to obtain, be unfitting. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer and an associate editor for *Ethics* for raising this question.

⁴² Our *valuing relations* conception of normative hope contrasts with Martin's "socially extended agency view," according to which, "investing hope in a person is hoping to extend one's agency through theirs." Martin, "Interpersonal Hope," 230. What Martin describes seems to apply straightforwardly only to a subset of cases in which hope is invested in another, e.g. in cases like the parent-child, or mentor-mentee relation. Martin, herself, takes the parent-child relationship as her paradigm. In cases like these, it may be that investing hope in another includes the hoping agent's "provid[ing] agential resources for use by the investee...the father provides material resources to create opportunities for his child. He also provides educational labor and support in an effort to both make her capable of making good use of her opportunities and shape her values and goals so that she will see the point in pursuing these opportunities" Ibid., 235. Martin acknowledges that agents invest hope even where their doing so is not obviously a way of extending *their own* agency (e.g. in investing in a sports team), but when she describes fans feeling "let down" by their team in terms of the team's perceived failure to "uphold *values the fans felt they had in common*" (Ibid., 236, italics added) Martin seems to be giving voice to the intuitive merits of something like the valuing relations view.

ideal. The father might be merely disappointed *that* the son has been dishonest. But believing that he has given his son the tools to act well and that the son was in a position to respond to the relevant value, he might also be disappointed *in* his son for failing to live up to the standard his father holds him up to. “I’m really disappointed *in you*,” the father might say to his son beseechingly, though without hostility. Anger-toned though this reaction is not, it nonetheless intuitively possesses condemnatory force. It is expressive of disapproval of the son for the quality of regard manifested in his action, where the standard for quality of regard is that specified by the valuing relation between the two.

Valuing relations exist beyond those of the family or similar intimate relations. As in the case of Aness and Vera, one might also address others from the stance of normative hope against a background of co-membership in some group united by shared values—what we here refer to as an “evaluative community.” To be a member of an evaluative community is in part to be disposed to expend motivational and other psychological resources in furtherance of that value. Community-members are those who share the relevant evaluative commitments and who take themselves to be mutually committed to such shared values. In describing members of evaluative communities as *mutually* committed, part of what we mean is that their shared evaluative commitment relates them in normative hope, as agents for whom another is *to be counted on* when it comes to the promoting (or living up to) the community’s ideals.⁴³

Vera and Aness are in this sense members of a community of valuers united in their commitment to the ideals of environmental advocacy. It is as a co-member of this evaluative community that Aness responds to Vera with reactive disappointment. This point can be better illustrated by considering a contrast case. Suppose that prior to learning that the op-ed was

⁴³ As this thought suggests, a fuller discussion of normative hope would do justice to the way in which normative hope provides grounds for interpersonal trust. See McGeer, “Trust, Hope and Empowerment,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86 (2008): 237–54.

authored by Vera, Aness falsely believed that Clive, the CEO of Fossil Fuel Co., was the op-ed's author. Here, Aness will presumably be disappointed *that p* (i.e. that an op-ed of the kind was published). After all, it is easy to imagine that among Aness's hopes is the propositional hope that 'public discourse exclude environmentally reckless and scientifically dubious pieces' (as she might put it). But, as Aness does not view Clive as member of the environmental community—i.e. the evaluative community of which she is part and whose members mutually invest hope in one another to live up to the ideals of environmental advocacy—Aness will not see Clive as having *let her down*; the relevant preconditions are lacking. But, when Aness learns that the op-ed was not in fact written by Clive, but rather by her environmental ally, Vera, Aness's disappointment *that p* may remain, but owing to the normative hope invested in the author of the piece, Aness will have a new response, one of being *disappointed in Vera*. This is reactive disappointment.

While Aness and Vera may be particularly close members of the evaluative community, it is plausible that more distant members of this community may respond with reactive disappointment as well. Take the budding environmentalist, who looks up to agents like Aness and Vera. Though he has never met Vera, he may be licensed to feel not only disappointed *that p*, but *disappointment in Vera*. (This is so regardless of whether he, at some earlier time, had a psychological episode of hoping for Vera to act in accordance with the ideals of environmental advocacy).⁴⁴ The feeling of being let down by, or disappointed in, an agent who fails to live up to the standards and ideals one legitimately holds them to as a co-participant in a valuing relation is the feeling we are after. While it would stretch the ordinary meaning of 'betrayal' to understand every case of reactive disappointment as one wherein the failure is viewed as a betrayal, like

⁴⁴ For this reason, it will not be true of reactive disappointment that "the appropriateness of [this kind of] disappointment will depend on whether one had (or would have) a rationally-optional attitude of hoping...". Michael Brady, "Disappointment," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 84 (2010): 179–98, 188.

betrayal, actions that frustrate normative hopes are objects of condemnation that presuppose a kind of intimacy or thickness of relation.

Demand, we have seen, is the form of moral address associated with normative expectation. To respond to another's violation of a normative expectation with reactive anger is, on this view, to make a demand of the wrongdoer (e.g. to provide acknowledgment, apology, redress).⁴⁵ We propose that reactive disappointment is similarly communicative, but that it is characterized by a more personal form of address than is reactive anger. Consider how Aness might address Vera: 'You really let me down' or 'I'm disappointed in you.' Like expressions of reactive anger, expressions of reactive disappointment like these intuitively call for a response from their target; they contain something like an "implicit RSVP," as Darwall puts it.⁴⁶ Given the shared valuational background involved in the context of normative hope, we suggest that reactive disappointment *urges* its addressee. In relating to another through the stance of normative hope, we may prospectively urge the participant in a valuing relation to attain or aspire toward the relevant standard or ideal. And, when one has frustrated a normative hope invested in them, our reactive disappointment will urge her in a backward-looking manner, to e.g. regain what they have lost in their moral failure. To urge is to direct another, but it is to direct in a manner that presupposes the intimacy of a shared valuing relation. Against the background of the relation that unites them, for example, the parent may urge her adult son to amend his wayward ways. Regardless of whether she is also in a position to demand this of him, it will be in virtue of the valuing relation and against a background of normative hope invested in her son

⁴⁵ Recall that we direct demands to one another (prospectively) to comply with normative expectations, and that others are subject (retrospectively) to blame's demands should they violate such expectations. Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," in *Agency and Answerability*, Gary Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 219–59; Gary Watson, "Two Faces;" Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*; Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*; McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*; Bennett Helm, *Communities of Respect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*.

⁴⁶ Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*, 145.

that she is licensed to direct him in more personal terms than those afforded by normative expectation. Aness and Vera, too, being related as evaluative allies, are positioned to direct one another in thicker terms than those of demand. They share commitment to a common set of values, and against the background of intimacy implied by this sharing of value, are positioned to direct one another to do better, *from within* the evaluative community. Thus, they are positioned to urge one another to abide by and uphold their shared ideals.⁴⁷

Our goal so far was to distinguish reactive disappointment from disappointment of the propositional variety, which we have done via reference to the stance of normative hope that we inhabit with those to whom we stand in valuing relations. While reactive anger is felt from the interpersonal stance that presents another's action as a matter of normative entitlement (normative expectation), reactive disappointment is had from a stance that treats the values and ideals of the valuing relation as worth attaining or aspiring toward (normative hope).

3. *But is It Blame?*

One might grant that in addition to propositional disappointment, we sometimes feel reactive disappointment (or, *disappointment in* another), but remain skeptical that reactive disappointment is a type of *blame* (by which we mean, again, moral blame in the accountability sense).⁴⁸ In this

⁴⁷ Martin identifies urging as the prospective form of address applicable to agents whom we fear may let us down. Martin, "Interpersonal Hope," 233. See also Adrienne Martin, "Obligations of Gratitude: Directedness without Rights," in *The Moral Psychology of Gratitude*, eds. Robert Roberts and Daniel Telech (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 59–82, 70–74. *Entreaty* and *appeal* might also be suitable terms for the kind of address we have in mind. On reactive attitudes as "*appeals* to comport oneself in the manner befitting of the ideals at issue," see Mason, "Reactive Attitudes and Second-Personal Address," 156.

⁴⁸ One might wonder why it matters whether reactive disappointment is a kind of (accountability) blame. A central reason is that we care about our interpersonal relationships, and to the extent that we do, it will matter to us whether our relationships are impaired owing to culpable expressions of agency. A related reason is that, if reactive disappointment is a type of moral blame, it will bear important conceptual and practical connections to apology, forgiveness, and other reparative practices. The possible implications for the responsibility literature of reactive disappointment being a form blame are further explored in section 5.

section we allay this skepticism by addressing the objection from the *cool* nature of disappointment. Though reactive disappointment is a non-hostile reaction, it is far from being a withdrawn response to moral failure. Rather, it is an agent-directed attitude of disapproval that calls for its target's acknowledgment of the meaning of that failure for the disappointed party of the valuing relation. Articulation of this point provides an opportunity for describing the self-blaming response sought by reactive disappointment.

We have stated that reactive disappointment has condemnatory force, but proponents of the standard approach to the affective view may doubt this for the following reason. When they consider affective blame, which they identify with angry blame, they have in mind a *hot* response. Angry blame is a response that, as it were, 'works one up,' and as such, motivates one to hostilely confront the offender, with eye toward (something like) retaliation. If this hot aspect of angry blame is essential to affective blame, one might doubt that disappointment can amount to affective blame. For, not only is it 'not hot,' it might be viewed as *cool* in a decidedly non-condemnatory way. That is, disappointment seems to motivate *withdrawal*, a kind of slinking away from a loss. So, even if one accepts that this kind attitude is an agent-directed reaction responsive to failures to live up to a normative hope, one might nonetheless deny that this response is one of blame.

In reply, we maintain that although reactive disappointment is a non-hostile response, withdrawn it is not. We suspect that when proponents of the standard approach describe disappointment as withdrawn they are attending to the action-tendencies of propositional disappointment. With the latter, there is no one in whom one is disappointed, and so, no one who is necessarily represented as at fault. What one is left with in cases of propositional disappointment, then, is a loss—the frustration of some propositional hope. Reactive disappointment, by contrast, involves viewing another as culpable for some moral failure, where the culpability is intelligible relative to the standards of the valuing relation obtaining between

the disappointed and the dissembler. In this way, reactive disappointment is directed *to* another *for* her culpable failure exhibited relative to a standard or ideal that the related agents hold one another to. Accordingly, reactive disappointment expresses disapproval of its target's failure to properly regard the standards to which one is legitimately held within the valuing relation. Reactive disappointment is for this reason a way of *standing for* relevant moral standards; in standing for these, it *stands against* (i.e. condemns) the culpable failure it targets.⁴⁹

Recall the way in which Aness might express her reactive disappointment Vera: 'You really let me down,' or 'I'm disappointed in you.' While these expressions might lack the heat of angry rebuke, they express opprobrium. Given that Vera is evaluatively committed to environmental advocacy, and as such takes seriously the ideals to which Aness holds her, being the addressee of reactive disappointment will characteristically sting.⁵⁰ Further, if Vera can offer an exculpatory explanation of why her action in fact did not manifest the alleged inadequate regard for the relevant ideals or values, this would be reason to withdraw the response, though propositional disappointment could still be fitting.

⁴⁹ See Blustein, "Forgiveness and the Moral Psychology of Sadness," 50-1, for the related idea that, "non-retributive emotions [“like sadness and hurt”] can constitute the emotional dimension of blaming in certain situations, ways of affectively regarding the other as blameworthy and taking a stand against what he did." Blustein, however, takes sadness, in the instances in which it plays this role, to be responsive to the very same features an angry response would (equally) have been responsive to.

⁵⁰ Menges makes a similar claim in the context of raising an objection to the blame skeptic's contention that non-blaming responses such as disappointment can play the positive role that blame does in interpersonal relations. Menges, "Blame it on Disappointment," 174-75. Menges proposes that "agential disappointment," a response to "agents, their lack of goodwill, their disrespect for moral values, or their violation of moral norms," could plausibly provide such alternative, but points out that it too would hurt, thus challenging the blame skeptic's contention that there are functional alternatives that are not vulnerable to the blame skeptic's objections. That is, Menges identifies agential disappointment as a phenomenon that could play the *same* functional role as angry blame (given his specific aim of posing an objection to the blame skeptic). Our goal, by contrast, is to develop an account of disappointed blame's distinctive role in our responsibility practices. Our projects can be understood as complimentary if we understand Menges to be operating at a higher level of generality, in which case 'agential disappointment' functions as a place-holder for a to-be-provided account of the relevant kind of response, which it is our goal to provide. We do so by making use of a framework of normative hope, which allows for a substantive distinction between propositional disappointment (which, recall, *may* be about states of affairs involving agents) and a kind of disappointment proper to the participant stance, namely reactive disappointment.

That reactive disappointment is a blaming response can be further appreciated by attending to the self-blaming response it seeks from its target. Owing to its being an essentially agent-directed response that characteristically finds expression in forms of moral address like those mentioned above, reactive disappointment calls for uptake on the part of the blamee. When Aness expresses her reactive disappointment in Vera, to Vera, this disappointment calls for Vera's recognition that she failed in some morally important way, and that she *failed Aness*, exhibiting defective regard for the values Aness holds her up to as a member of the evaluative community. Reactive disappointment directs the addressee to acknowledge the failure through a reflexive attitude of self-reproach that mirrors the disappointment of the addressor, i.e. in the disappointee's guilt or self-disappointment, for letting down the evaluative community (or co-participant a valuing relation). Indeed, person-directed disappointment (of the sort that views that target to be at fault) does tend to elicit guilt—or so social psychologists tell us.⁵¹ But if reactive disappointment seeks uptake in a kind of self-disappointed guilt, given that guilt motivates reparative action on the offender's part, it would appear that, despite its non-hostile nature, reactive disappointment *is* a morally engaging response. It is a contribution in a moral exchange that calls for acknowledgment and repair, in a register that is cool but non-detached, based as it is on valuing relations between the parties involved.

Since reactive disappointment calls for this kind of first-personal uptake, it is an attitude that presupposes its target's possession of the capacity to see as reason-giving the standard below which they have fallen. We typically think that for blame to be merited, the blamee must be

⁵¹ See Gerben A. Van Kleef, Carsten K.W. De Dreu, and Antony S.R. Manstead, "Supplication and Appeasement in Conflict and Negotiation: The interpersonal Effects of Disappointment, Worry, Guilt, and Regret," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91 (2006): 124–42; Gert-Jan Lelieveld, Eric Van Dijk, Ilja Van Beest, Wolfgang Steinel, and Gerben A. Van Kleef, "Disappointed in You, Angry About Your Offer: Distinct Negative Emotions Induce Concessions via Different Mechanisms," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 47 (2011): 635–41; Genevieve Johnson and Shane Connelly, "Negative Emotions in Informal Feedback: The Benefits of Disappointment and Drawbacks of Anger," *Human Relations* 67 (2014): 1265–290.

capable of recognizing and being motivated by the normative considerations that they have failed with respect to. Reactive disappointment similarly presupposes the capacity of the addressee to perceive and be guided by the standard or ideal by reference to which he is the target of disappointment. It is presumably in virtue of this very capacity that the target of reactive disappointment may be motivated to make amends for his inadequate regard. That is, being committed to the standards and ideals relative to which others are disappointed in him, the blamee will ordinarily possess grounds (motivational and normative) to do their part in regaining what was lost through their culpable failure (e.g. the trust of the evaluative community or other participants in the relevant valuing relation).⁵²

The above discussion enables us to specify how reactive disappointment differs from other non-angry responses of moral disapproval, such that the former is, and the latter are not, blaming responses by which we hold others to account. Recall that on the broadly Strawsonian picture we here adopt, blame theorists see certain negative emotions as interpersonal responses to others' manifestations of poor (or insufficiently good) quality of regard, against a background of norms and calling for a certain level of regard to which we hold one another. Affective blame, as we have referred to it, is a robustly interpersonal phenomenon. It responds to the quality of regard others manifest in their actions, and in turn, calls for a response from its target, construed as an addressee, or moral interlocuter. Like reactive anger, reactive disappointment fits the bill.

To better appreciate the contrast between blaming responses (like reactive disappointment and reactive anger) and *non-blaming* responses of disapproval, consider, by contrast, contempt.⁵³ Though contempt is an attitude of disapproval that construes another to

⁵² Of course, this does not guarantee that the blamee will in fact endeavor to do so, or that they will be successful if they do so endeavor.

⁵³ We thank an anonymous referee for *Ethics* for raising the question to which this paragraph is a response.

fall short of some standard, it is not a form of blame.⁵⁴ For while reactive disappointment (like reactive anger) regards its target as a fellow participant in the moral community (and some narrower relation or community therein)—though as a participant who has *offended* against the community’s norms—contempt is a hierarchical attitude that regards a person as lower than oneself and unworthy of inclusion in one’s interactions.⁵⁵ So, while reactive disappointment (like reactive anger) treats its target as an *addressee*, calling for the target to account for the offense, contempt is more like disgust in being a negative attitude *about* its object rather than addressed *to* its target. Ira Roseman makes this kind of point in contrasting anger with contempt, writing that, “In anger, we are more likely to say negative things *to* the target of the emotion, whereas in contempt we are more likely to say negative things *about* the target (e.g., to third parties), to get others to join in rejecting the person.”⁵⁶ Though reactive disappointment does not involve the tendency to confront its object hostilely, as anger does, it also does not—as contempt does—involve the tendency to *exclude* its target. Far from calling for a response from its object, contempt, as it were, ‘looks down upon another, then looks away,’ characteristically prompting the object of contempt not to respond, but rather to ‘hide oneself in shame.’⁵⁷ While this does not mean that contempt presupposes its object to be irredeemable (or ‘beyond repair’) it does mean

⁵⁴ We remind the reader that by “blame” we mean blame in the *accountability sense*. This leaves open the possibility that contempt is a vehicle of attributability blame, targeting another’s quality of character. See Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 39.

⁵⁵ See e.g. William I. Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 214; Agneta H. Fischer and Ira J. Roseman, “Beat Them or Ban Them,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93 (2007): 103–15.

⁵⁶ Ira Roseman “Rejecting the Unworthy: The Causes, Components, and Consequences of Contempt,” in *The Moral Psychology of Contempt*, ed. Michelle Mason (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 107–130, 110.

⁵⁷ That is, when internalized by the object of contempt, contempt gives rise not to the reparative response of guilt, but rather, shame. See e.g. Michelle Mason, “On Shamelessness,” *Philosophical Papers* 39 (2010): 401–25; Brendan Dill and Stephen Darwall, “Moral Psychology as Accountability,” in *Moral Psychology and Human Agency: Philosophical Essays on the Science of Ethics*, eds. Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 40–83, 70; Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 187.

that—unlike reactive disappointment (and reactive anger)—contempt is not characterized by the kind of moral address associated with accountability blame.⁵⁸

Having outlined the range of characteristics that reactive disappointment shares with reactive anger, the burden is now on those who reject the contention that reactive disappointment is blame to specify what is missing from this phenomenon for it to count as blame. Taken together, the features outlined above plausibly place reactive disappointment squarely in the camp of affective blame. (Accordingly, in the following section, we refer interchangeably to disappointed blame and reactive disappointment.) To review, reactive disappointment is: a) an agent-directed response of b) disapproval, c) felt toward an agent in response to some culpable failure, d) *for* such culpable failure, e) relative to a standard or ideal of the valuing relation (and as such, from the stance of normative hope) obtaining between the disappointed and the disappointee, which f) addresses (particularly, *urges*) the target to acknowledge the impact of their failure for the disappointed party, via (in part) g) giving the disappointment first-personal uptake in self-disappointed guilt (and as such, typically stings) and to personally make amends.

4. Disappointed Blame and Angry Blame: Their Respective Domains

As the above discussion indicates, we take disappointed blame and angry blame to have distinct domains: they are sensitive to different kinds of moral considerations, and have distinct functions. Neither is an adequate substitute for the other.

How strong is this ‘distinct domains’ claim? Does the fittingness of one kind of blaming response *preclude* the fittingness of another? Are we committed, for instance, to the claim that resentment (or angry blame) is *unfitting* in cases like **LET DOWN**? We are not. Though angry

⁵⁸ There are further dimensions along which contempt and accountability blame differ. For example, accountability blame targets poor quality of regard, while contempt has as its evaluative focus quality of character. (Indeed, this is why shame, rather than guilt, is the first-personal analogue of contempt).

blame and disappointed blame are fittingly responsive to distinct sets of features, a single action might display both sets of features.⁵⁹ Recall that proponents of the standard approach hold that angry blame is a response to a moral failure viewed as a violation of a normative expectation to which accountable agents hold one another. If Vera's action in **LET DOWN** counts as this kind of failure, she might be the fitting target of angry blame. For all we have said, it is open to Aness to respond with angry blame to Vera's failure. But if you, like us, took the difference between **LET DOWN** and **CHEATED** to reside in an intuitive difference in the blaming responses they (fittingly) elicit, the standard approach will be dissatisfying. For, on the standard approach, affective blame *is* angry blame. On this view, if Vera is blameworthy for her failure of regard, the blame she merits is limited to angry blame, blame that does not differ in kind from that merited by Mr. Williams in **CHEATED** (or for that matter, by Clive, in the world in which he authors the op-ed). But, against the standard approach, it seems that even if Vera is also the fitting target of angry blame, she is intuitively the fitting target of a more intimate blaming response, namely the disappointed blame of those who invest hope in her. If Mia's mother, on the other hand, addressed Mr. Williams, the school functionary, saying "I'm truly disappointed in you," or "you let me down," this response would appear to misfire. In the absence of any valuing relation that licenses a stance of normative hope, although Mia's mother may be angry at Mr. Williams, it seems not inapt for Mr. Williams to wonder (though he may be in no position to retort) "who are you to be disappointed in me?" as disappointed blame presupposes a level of intimacy that does not exist between the parties.

⁵⁹ Consider, by analogy shame and guilt. On some views, an agent might fittingly feel either guilt or shame in response to some action. Both responses are self-directed negative evaluations, but even when they are about the same action, their evaluative foci will be distinct. On the general idea that "something may be among the particular objects of an emotion without being evaluated by it" and its application to guilt and shame in particular, see Fabrice Teroni and Julien Deonna, "Differentiating Shame from Guilt," *Consciousness and Cognition* 17 (2008): 725–40, 735.

Disappointed blame and angry blame respond to different moral considerations, and when these kinds of considerations are both present in a single moral failure, either response will be fitting. Nevertheless, it would not surprise us if Aness's response to Vera was (primarily) one of reactive disappointment. For, Aness's membership in the environmental evaluative community will presumably be more central to her practical identity than her merely being an accountable agent. Accordingly, even if she takes Vera to have committed a moral wrong, the especially salient features of Vera's failure will be those involving Vera's falling short of an ideal to which Vera and Aness are evaluatively committed as members of a common evaluative community.

More remains to be said about the respective features of angry and disappointed blame, but the above should suffice to secure the claim that angry blame and disappointed blame are blaming responses occupying distinct roles in our moral psychologies and blaming practices.

5. Implications for Blameworthiness and Moral Responsibility

While we take the phenomenon of reactive disappointment to be of interest in its own right, and worth identifying from the perspective of an interest in the reactive attitudes and in the moral psychology of blame, the significance of identifying reactive disappointment as a distinctive species of blame does not end there. Several implications for other important questions in the blame and responsibility literature follow from injecting reactive disappointment into the debate. We briefly identify a few of them in this section.

First, while it is customary to hold that blame is a response to wrongdoing, i.e. the violation of a normative requirement or obligation,⁶⁰ some theorists propose that we can

⁶⁰ Wallace, for example, takes blame to be situated "within a distinctive nexus of moral concepts, namely those of moral obligations, moral right and moral wrong." Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, 64. See also Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*; Douglas Portmore, *Commonsense Consequentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

appropriately be blamed, in the accountability sense, not only for actions that are wrong, but also those that are bad but morally permissible (and so, not wrong).⁶¹ Coleen Macnamara, for instance, denies the “restrictive” view of blame’s scope, on which blame is properly responsive only to violations of obligations: “Responsible agents are, after all, just as responsible for their bad actions as they are for those that are wrong. It thus seems odd that we hold others responsible for the latter but not the former.”⁶² Expanding our moral repertoire to include the phenomenon of disappointed blame may allow for progress in this debate. First, in identifying a species of blame directed at agents whose failures plausibly need not be captured in deontic terms, we clear the way for a conception of blameworthiness capable of accommodating our moral responses to a broader range of moral failures. Further, it has reconciliatory potential for those who presently disagree about the possibility of ‘axiological blame,’ i.e. blame for bad but permissible actions. For, our proposal can allow proponents of the customary view, which rejects axiological blame, to preserve commitment to the claim that angry blame—the species of blame encompassing the reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation—requires for its fittingness its target’s having done wrong, *without* rejecting the possibility that the participant stance affords a distinct set of blaming responses to morally sub-par (though permissible) behavior.

Next, disappointed blame has implications for some forms of skepticism about blame’s warrant. In addition to free will skeptical challenges to our accountability practices (and to those of accountability blame, by extension), it is sometimes held that something about the nature of moral blame gives us *special reason* to refrain from blaming others. For example, Gideon Rosen holds that, owing to the difficulty of knowing in each particular case whether some putatively

⁶¹ Influential here is Driver’s discussion of blameworthy but permissible (i.e. suberogatory) actions. Julia Driver, “The Suberogatory,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1992): 286–95. See also Chesire Calhoun, “Common Decency,” in *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers*, ed. Chesire Calhoun (Oxford University Press, 2004), 128–42.

⁶² Coleen Macnamara, “Holding Others Responsible,” *Philosophical Studies* 152 (2011): 81–102, 88. See also McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility*, 182–83; Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 94–96.

blameworthy agent did not act from excusing conditions, coupled with the burdensome nature of resentment and other blaming responses (in contrast to those of praise), we typically lack epistemic warrant for blame.⁶³ While this kind of skeptical argument purports to impugn affective moral blame *tout court*, it is not clear whether reactive disappointment, being a kind of affective moral blame, is subject to the same kind of skepticism. We mean this literally: given the focus on angry blame in the literature, it is difficult to ascertain whether skeptical arguments like these target a) the *condemnatory force* (or “sting”) of moral blame, or b) some more determinate feature of *angry blame*’s particular way of being condemnatory, perhaps something like its hostile or retaliatory nature.⁶⁴ If b), acceptance of the skeptics’ arguments will, *pace* their ambitions, impugn only a subset of our moral blame responses, leaving intact disappointed blame. Regardless, the phenomenon of disappointed blame calls on these skeptics to precisify the target of their criticism.

A further example of disappointed blame’s theoretical implications: in the literature on forgiveness it is often held that, to the extent that forgiveness involves overcoming negative emotion, to forgive is in part to forswear anger (or resentment).⁶⁵ Yet if reactive disappointment is a blaming response, this would mean that emotion-overcoming forgiveness either does not

⁶³ Gideon Rosen, “Skepticism about Moral Responsibility,” *Philosophical Perspectives* (2004) 18: 295–313. See also Nicola Lacey and Hanna Pickard, “From the Consulting Room to the Court Room?,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 33 (2013): 1–29; John Gardner, “Why Blame?,” <https://johngardnerathome.info/pdfs/blame.pdf> (2019). On the assumption within popular culture that blame, understood as an affective phenomenon, is “ugly,” “destructive,” “toxic,” see Sher, *In Praise of Blame*, vii–viii. (Sher, to be clear, does not share this assumption; his book is one *in praise of blame*, where blame is not essentially affective/emotion-involving).

⁶⁴ It won’t do here to simply say that i) moral anger involves *sanctions* (*therefore* raising questions about its warrant), and then ii) place the burden on us to say whether reactive disappointment, too, involves sanction. For, and this is in effect a different way of putting our point, it is not entirely clear what (and in virtue of what) it is for the relevant kind of blame to be sanctioning. To help illustrate, note that Rosen takes the sanctioning nature of blame to be independent of its expression: “moral blame is a sort of sanction. Even when it is not expressed, it is a form of adverse treatment: a form of psychic punishment.” Gideon Rosen, “Culpability and Ignorance,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103 (2003): 61–84.

⁶⁵ Noteworthy exceptions are Richards, “Forgiveness,” 76; Allais, “Wiping the Slate Clean,” 58; Murphy, *Getting Even*, 59; Blustein, “Forgiveness and Remembrance.”

entail forswearing blame, or, more plausibly, that the centrality of angry blame in the literature has led to a constricted view of emotion-overcoming forgiveness. Martha Nussbaum for example claims that ‘forgiveness’ that involves the overcoming of disappointment can only be “forgiveness in quotes;” the genuine article requires the “waiving of angry emotion.”⁶⁶ For all we’ve said, this *could* be right. But, it cannot be right in virtue of disappointment blame necessarily being a non-condemnatory response. For, reactive disappointment is a condemnatory response by which we hold others accountable. At the very least, given that something like reactive disappointment seems to be operative in our accountability practices, we acquire reason to give philosophical attention to the possibility of a form of emotion-overcoming forgiveness that does not consist in the overcoming of hostile attitudes like anger.

As illustrated above, the introduction of reactive disappointment has a range of implications for important questions concerning blame, moral responsibility, and related phenomena, like forgiveness.⁶⁷

Conclusion

To accept reactive disappointment into our repertoire of blaming concepts is to accept a richer picture of our blame practices. In addition to being morally angered by others’ offenses, we sometimes respond to failures more personally, being let down or morally disappointed in others

⁶⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 105-06.

⁶⁷ A further implication may concern the “control condition” that, as some responsibility theorists maintain, must be met for moral responsibility. See John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David O. Brink and Dana Nelkin, “Fairness and the Architecture of Responsibility,” *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* 1 (2013): 283–313; Dana Nelkin, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For example, if the condemnatory force of disappointed blame is weaker than that of angry blame, it may be that less robust ‘opportunities to refrain’ will be required for desert of disappointed blame than angry blame. Or, if it turns out that disappointed blame is responsive to axiological rather than deontic considerations, it may be that distinct normative competencies are required to satisfy the respective control conditions for disappointed and angry blame.

for failing to live up to the standards and ideals to which we hold them. While there is a sense in which we are advocating for the recognition of *more blame*, given the significance for our lives of the various valuing relations to which we may belong, our susceptibility to reactive disappointment is not itself something to be disappointed about.