

THE ROUTLEDGE
COMPANION TO
FREE WILL

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BLAME

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Varieties of Blame and Free Will

One of the most important sets of phenomena thought to be at stake in the debate over whether we have free will are our practices of holding each other, and ourselves, responsible. Of these, our practice of blaming often takes center stage, and justifiably so. If we do not have free will, would we be justified in blaming anyone? Many have taken the answer to be 'no,' and for this very reason, the question of whether we are free agents has been especially pressing. But there are many who disagree with this answer, and to adjudicate the debate over whether blame is indeed at stake in the free will debate, we need to begin by getting clearer on the nature of blame itself.

Now there are some uses of the word 'blame' and applications of the associated concept of blame that are clearly not relevant to the free will debate. For example, there is what is sometimes called 'causal blame,' as when someone blames high wind for a power outage. The high wind is not even an agent, and so not a candidate for the kind of blame thought to have any relevance to the free will debate. But even in cases involving the blame of agents, and even in cases involving *moral* blame of agents, it is possible to distinguish different senses of blame. For example, following Gary Watson, we can distinguish between two notions of responsibility, and two corresponding notions of blame. Blame in the 'attributability' sense is attributing a moral fault of some sort to a person that is exhibited in a faulty action, such as cruelty or heartlessness, and blame in the 'accountability' sense is holding someone to account for a wrong done (Watson 1996/2004). It seems that merely blaming in the attributability sense is not the same thing as blaming in the sense of holding someone accountable. Although there is controversy over whether being *blameworthy* in the sense of appropriately having such a moral fault attributed to one is sufficient for being blameworthy in the sense of appropriately being held accountable, it seems possible for both parties to this disagreement to agree that whether or not the sufficiency claim is true, it is a substantive claim, and also that the corresponding kinds of blame are distinct. In what follows, I will assume unless noted that we can clearly distinguish between these two kinds of blame, and I will focus here on blame in the accountability sense. The reason for doing so is that the question about whether we have free will arises most obviously when it comes to this sort of blame. It is natural to think that someone could lack free will for any number of reasons (physical determinism, mental illness, coercion), but nevertheless be appropriately judged to manifest cruelty or heartlessness in acting in a certain way. A moral fault is attributed, but one is not thereby rightly held accountable. Without prejudging the question of whether blame of the accountability kind is ultimately appropriate in

the absence of free will, we can see that it is at least more tempting at the outset to think that being held accountable requires free agency than that being judged to have exhibited a moral failing does. Even many of those who argue for the justifiability of accountability blame in the absence of free will take themselves to bear the burden of explaining why it might have seemed otherwise.

Accounts of (Accountability) Blame

What exactly is blame in the accountability sense? There is a vibrant debate about the nature of blame, and a rich variety of proposals. Since, as we have seen, there are different concepts of blame, and different phenomena that go by the label 'blame' in some cases, it is less than obvious that a particular proposal is really intended as an account of accountability blame in particular. And some notable proposals are explicitly described as 'revisionist,' adding to the challenge of identifying those proposals that are genuine competitors for the best account of accountability blame. I will here canvass several accounts that have been taken to be promising candidates.

On one sort of view, often attributed to consequentialists such as J.J.C. Smart (1961), blaming is a kind of informal sanctioning or punishing (see Feinberg 1970). To blame is to scold or impose some sort of harsh treatment in response to a wrongdoing. But this cannot capture the essence of blame, since it seems possible to blame the dead and even to blame the living without expressing oneself in any way. It also seems possible to blame without *intending* harm to the target of one's blame, as when one blames a loved one for, say, forgetting to keep a promise; and since intending harm is essential to punishment, blame cannot simply *be* a form of punishment. But there may yet be other important connections between blame and sanction, even if blame is not itself a sanction. For example, blame might presuppose the judgment that a person is *deserving* of sanction without thereby involving any intention to sanction or even any judgment that it would be good if it were to occur (see Nelkin 2013a for further discussion). Or blame might be thought to predispose one to treat others in generally adverse ways, or to serve in some way "the ends of retributive and compensatory justice" (Watson 1996/2004: 279–80). An influential view of punishment is that it *expresses* blame, or blaming attitudes such as resentment and indignation, without being the same thing as blame, which itself requires no expression.

With this in mind, it is natural to consider the proposal that blaming is a matter of making judgments of some kind that need not be expressed. There are several variations of this kind of account. First, one might take the relevant judgments to be ones attributing ill will as expressed in the action or omission for which an agent is blamed. But as we have already seen, it appears possible to make such a judgment without holding someone accountable. Alternatively, one might take the relevant judgment to be that the agent in question is blameworthy. This suggestion faces at least two challenges, however. The first is a worry about explanatory circularity. Given the surface language, it seems that blameworthiness ought to be understood in terms of blame and not vice versa. (This issue about priority of explanation is taken up in the next section.) The second worry is that it seems coherent to say sincerely: "I judge him to be blameworthy, but I do not blame him." This suggests that judging blameworthy is not sufficient for blame, even if some sort of judgment may be necessary for it. (For an interesting analysis of this kind of utterance using speech act theory, see Beardsley 1970.) While these challenges do not rule out the possibility of identifying another judgment with a

different content that is both necessary and sufficient for blame, a more common reaction by those who take there to be something appealing in the judgment view has been to add further conditions to ones involving judgment, arguing that judgment alone is too 'cold' to count as blaming in the relevant sense.

George Sher, for example, argues that what it is to blame someone is to have "affective and behavioral dispositions" that "can be traced to the combination of a belief that that person has acted badly or has a bad character and a desire that this not be the case" (Sher 2006: 114). While adding the conative element of desire answers some of the criticisms of the judgment views, it, too, has been criticized for not capturing the essence of blame. For example, Angela Smith has argued that one could blame someone without having such a desire (her example is the group of Republicans who blamed President Clinton for his affair with Monica Lewinsky without at all desiring that it was not the case). Nor is such a belief and desire sufficient for the motivational and behavioral dispositions that even Sher seems to think essentially connected to blame (Smith 2013: 35–7).

T.M. Scanlon offers an account of blame having the following two components: a judgment that an agent is blameworthy for an action (where to make such a judgment is to judge "that the action shows that something about the agent's attitudes toward others impairs the relations that others can have with him or her"), and taking one's own relationship with the agent to be impaired in just the way the judgment takes to be appropriate (Scanlon 2008: 128, 129). If we understand "taking the relationship to be impaired" to be a judgment without any implications for behavior, then we could see this as a pure judgment view. But even if it is fundamentally a judgment, it is reasonable to think that one couldn't make a judgment with this particular content without one's relationship being in some way actually modified or impaired by one's dispositions to spend less time with the other or share fewer confidences, for example.

Scanlon's account has been criticized along a number of dimensions in ways that bring out some of the main fault lines in the debate about blame. As with one version of the judgment view described earlier, we can start by asking whether understanding blame in terms of the blameworthy is to reverse the proper order of explanation. Further, there seem to be counterexamples to both the necessity and to the sufficiency of the conditions proposed for blame. For example, one might blame one's child without taking one's relationship to be impaired. And one might take one's relationship to be impaired, say, in a case of friendship, such as when a friend has to choose between fulfilling obligations to different friends, while not blaming the person for making the choice she does. It is important to note that Scanlon acknowledges that his account might strike some as revisionary (2008: 122), and if it is, then purported counterexamples to our current concept of blame would not be devastating objections. In that case, though, the debate would shift to the question of whether revision is called for. (It is instructive here to compare Scanlon's account to Pereboom's explicitly forward-looking account of blame and blameworthiness, according to which we can be justified in keeping some but not all of our responsibility practices, if we are not free agents [Pereboom 2013, 2014]. This view is clearly revisionary, and does not purport to compete with many accounts of accountability blame.)

It is also worth noting that, as Pereboom (2014) observes and Scanlon himself accepts about his own view, both Scanlon's and Sher's accounts could be recognized as legitimate forms of blame even by free will skeptics. This is not by itself a reason to reject the accounts, but even if it turns out to be correct that free will is not required for

justified accountability blame, it would be desirable for such an account at least to explain how we might have initially thought that free will is implicated. As they stand, neither account offers such an explanation. Of course, one might deny that Sher and Scanlon are trying to capture blame in the accountability sense in the first place. If that were true, however, then at least some important participants in the debate would simply have been talking past each other from the start.

Finally, and importantly, Scanlon's account has also been criticized for failing to capture the 'sting' of blame. And one natural way of trying to repair this purported deficiency is by requiring something missing from both of these accounts: an emotional condition.

In his widely influential "Freedom and Resentment," Peter Strawson (1963) argued that we ought to see resentment, indignation, guilt, and forgiveness, among other so-called "reactive attitudes," as taking center stage in discussions of freedom and responsibility. Many have thought that taking these attitudes is essential to blaming. For example, R. Jay Wallace writes that "to blame a person is to be subject to one of [the] reactive emotions because of what the person has done" (Wallace 1994: 75). While such emotions are certainly associated with many instances of blame, we might ask whether they are necessary. Can one blame someone even if one lacks these emotions? Consider blame outside of the context of personal relationships. Sher, for example, suggests that we might blame strangers or people who committed misdeeds in the distant past without feeling any emotions at all (Sher 2006, 2013). Because a defender of the reactive attitudes account of blame might insist that these are not genuine cases of blame, a full evaluation would be aided by more investigation into what else might be added to (or replace) judgment of some sort to capture what is distinctive about blame.

Another strategy is to adopt an insight of the reactive-attitudes account without explicating blame in terms of the attitudes at all. Strawson, for one, takes the reactive attitudes to embody moral demands. But one might agree that reactive attitudes *can* embody demands, but reject the idea that they are strictly necessary in order to make demands. It is the making of demands itself that is fundamental to blame, on this view. But it is not clear exactly what the contents of the demands are that are supposed to be central to blaming. It does not make sense to demand that you not do the thing you did earlier since you can't go back in time. You can, of course, demand that someone not do the same sort of thing in the future. But that is something we could do with anyone, not only those who have already acted badly, so it is not clear that this is yet blame. On some views, the demands in question are demands that others justify their actions (e.g., Smith 2008). Making such demands may be a part of our reaction to being wronged much of the time, but again it seems neither necessary nor sufficient for blame. For one thing, suppose that the target of the demand manages to justify the action in question. Then we should not blame him, and it seems perfectly coherent to have suspended judgment about blameworthiness and all else until we have given him a chance to meet this demand. So it seems that there might be circumstances in which we reasonably make such a demand, but we do not (yet) blame. Similarly, we might decide that the action is unjustifiable and blame the target without making this sort of demand either externally or internally. None of this is to say that demands are unrelated to what makes someone blameworthy, since the flouting of legitimate demands may be part of what makes someone blameworthy, for example; it is just to cast doubt on the idea that what it is *to blame* must be partly constituted by the making of demands.

Another suggestion for how to replace the reactive attitudes as a necessary condition for blame is to include instead as a condition of blame, in addition to a judgment of a certain sort, the registering a moral protest in the modification of one's judgments, intentions, and expectations toward another. Smith, for one, suggests that what is appealing about the reactive attitudes accounts is that reactive attitudes come close to capturing this idea (Smith 2013: 28–9). (Talbert also suggests that protest is a function of blame, but, in contrast to Smith, he takes blame to be the expression of the negative reactive attitudes or a judgment of their appropriateness [Talbert 2012: 90]).

Drawing partly on Hieronymi (2004), Smith (2013) understands protest to be a kind of registering and challenging of a claim implicit in the wrong action, namely a claim that such an action is acceptable, and a seeking of some sort of moral acknowledgment from the wrongdoer or the community. While this is a rich account, it is not yet clear that what we have is blame in the accountability sense. Could we protest a cruel and contemptuous action in this sense while explicitly refusing to hold the agent accountable for it? Perhaps someone suffering from mental illness could have an excuse for his action that renders him not blameworthy, even though we might rightly register and challenge a claim implicit in his action. Now, not all of the authors who have recently proposed views of this sort explicitly describe their task as providing an account of blame in the accountability sense. It might be that there are simply multiple concepts of blame with overlapping extensions and an account that features protest at its center is one important one. Protest is indeed of great moral importance in human life, but it remains to be seen whether an account that puts it at center stage can capture blame in the accountability sense.

Faced with serious challenges to each view described to this point, one might adopt a hybrid view in which blame is seen to require a conjunction of conditions from accounts we have already seen. This might help if we were convinced that, say, protest, was necessary but not sufficient, but it would need to be combined with other conditions not already rejected for being unnecessary themselves. Another kind of hybrid view would be to see blame as requiring one of a disjunction of conditions. But here we might ask what makes the set of disparate conditions all ones that can constitute blame, and without an answer, the view would be unappealing. Further, it would not help in rounding out accounts whose conditions seem necessary, but insufficient.

There are other kinds of accounts that can explain what is attractive in a variety of accounts we have already canvassed without reducing to either a conjunction or a disjunction of them. For example, Michael McKenna (2012, 2013) sees blame fundamentally as a move in a moral conversation (see Watson 1987/2004 for discussion of blame as essentially communicative). On his view, the paradigms of blame are instances of expression and essentially communicative (in this way sharing some features of those accounts that feature demand or protest), while instances of unexpressed blame are non-paradigmatic and can be understood in derivative terms. According to McKenna, blame cannot be understood independently of the conversational moves that come before and after. Since there are many ways of expressing the same thing, and since there are many different expressions that would be felicitous in response to an opening of a conversation, this view can accommodate the idea that a number of responses to wrongdoing count as blame, without requiring that any particular kind of response is necessary. For example, on McKenna's view, taking up a reactive attitude like indignation is unnecessary. Blame on this view is a response to ill will as expressed in action in the first stage of the conversation, and *can* convey anger,

shunning, and alienation as expressions of morally reactive attitudes (McKenna 2013: 132). This view has the advantage of being able to accommodate insights from a number of the previous accounts. McKenna offers examples of what can count (e.g., the failure to issue a regular invitation to lunch where this has a negative meaning for the one blamed, the expression of indignation), but we might also ask whether we can identify conditions for what can count as blame, or whether there are general constraints on the content of the conversational move, and, if so, what exactly they are. We might also ask how to account for unexpressed blame. McKenna urges us to adopt an interesting methodological assumption that provides a response to both sorts of questions. He rejects the very project of finding necessary and sufficient conditions for blame, opting to focus on what he sees as the prototypical cases of blame, which he takes to be expressed. Other more peripheral cases might then be accounted for in terms of similarity or other relations to the prototypical ones. It is possible that this is the best that we can do. But how satisfying this is might ultimately depend on how we see the relationship between blame and *blameworthiness*, an issue we will take up in the next section, as well as how we see the relationship between *blameworthiness* and punishment.

Another approach that joins the prototype approach in being interestingly different from the others we have examined is to see blame in functionalist terms. Victoria McGeer explicitly takes this kind of approach, seeing blame as defined by the input of wrongdoing and various behavioral outputs, which themselves aim at regulating behavior and preventing further norm violations (McGeer 2013: 172). As it happens, the reactive attitudes often (but not always) play this role. This sort of view also has the advantage of explaining the centrality of the reactive attitudes in discussions of blame without taking them to be necessary or sufficient. But there is some reason to doubt that our concept of blame is at bottom a functional one, and that blame is whatever plays a particular functional role. Suppose we were to discover that what we were calling 'blame' turned out to be quite ineffective in regulating moral behavior (and many current theories of education and parenting purport to rest on such discoveries). In that case, we would not be likely to say that we had not blamed in the past, for example. Yet even if this approach to the concept of blame and its nature does not work in the end, there is much that can be fruitfully discussed about the functions it serves (see, for example, Watson 1996/2004: 280; Talbert 2012).

Given the apparent counterexamples and objections to all of the specific proposals of necessary and sufficient conditions for blame, and given the concern that a prototype approach might not be fully satisfying, we are left with the following choices. First, we can try to explain why the apparent counterexamples are merely apparent, and defend particular views against objections. Second, we can await a new view, perhaps one that combines the insights of some of these (including the prototype approach) in the right way via either conjunction or disjunction. Third, we can recognize that blame is itself a phenomenon that can be instantiated, and, importantly, *expressed*, in a variety of ways in different contexts. This is not to treat blame as a functional concept with different realizations, but as a category that admits of different kinds of instantiations (as it is possible for both oaks and magnolias to be trees). To blame is to hold a wrong against someone, and this requires taking a certain stance toward the wrongdoer. In turn, this requires making certain negative judgments and also being disposed in certain ways. (For example, on my view, holding a wrong against another person is partly to be prepared to hold the wrongdoer to the obligations

incurred by having performed the wrongdoing (Nelkin 2013b)). Taking such a stance can be manifested in a variety of ways depending on the context. Each of these three strategies might be fruitfully pursued.

Blame and Blameworthiness

What is the relationship between blame and blameworthiness? Start with the following thesis: if someone is blameworthy for performing an action, then it is, in a relevant sense, appropriate to blame her for it, and vice versa. So far, this seems to be a simple claim about what 'blameworthiness' means. And it seems uncontroversial to say that blameworthiness is defined in terms of *blame*. And equally uncontroversially, it would seem that the property of being blameworthy for an action is just the property of its being appropriate, in the sense that one is worthy of it, to blame. At the same time, inspired by Peter Strawson's influential "Freedom and Resentment," there has been much recent debate surrounding the question whether we should understand blameworthiness to be an essentially response-dependent property or not. One way to see how debate arises, consistent with agreement that to be blameworthy is to be worthy of a particular kind of response is as follows: we can ask whether being blameworthy is grounded in some *further* properties, and, if so, whether these properties are themselves response-dependent or not.

To see even better how controversy arises, note that writers often substitute for 'blame' what they take to be constitutive of blame in the thesis connecting blame and blameworthiness. For example, as we have seen, some take blame to be the taking up of the reactive attitudes, such as resentment or indignation toward another. Staying with this example, and substituting 'taking the reactive attitudes' for 'blame,' we now have the following substantive thesis: A person is blameworthy for performing an action if and only if it is appropriate to respond to A's action with the reactive attitudes. And now we can ask whether it is the appropriateness of taking the attitudes that explains why A is blameworthy, or, rather, whether A's blameworthiness explains the appropriateness of the attitudes. Some have observed that the debate on this point has certain parallels with recent discussions of other evaluative and ethical concepts and properties such as 'the funny' and 'the good' (Ramirez 2012; Todd forthcoming). Are the emotional responses more fundamental in explaining the property of 'the funny' or 'the good,' or are the emotional responses answerable to response-independent properties?

On some response-dependent views about evaluative concepts such as 'the funny' or 'the fearsome,' such concepts are not to be understood in response-independent terms (see, for example, D'Arms and Jacobson 2003). For example, the fearsome is not to be understood in terms of being dangerous, nor is the funny to be understood in terms of incongruity, though these properties might be referred to in 'rules of thumb;' otherwise, giving a response-dependent account of the concepts would be 'superfluous.' And this naturally suggests that the funny and the fearsome are not response-independent properties. Should we think of blameworthiness in a similar way? To answer affirmatively would be to say that the conditions that make us blameworthy are simply ones like its being appropriate to respond to us with resentment and related attitudes. (On one reading of Strawson [1963] that emphasizes his claim that there is no justification of our moral responsibility practices outside of those practices themselves, Strawson is himself a proponent of this kind of view.) There are

objections to this sort of approach, however. For example, such an account must explain why we seem to be able to give quite detailed response-independent conditions as excusing of blameworthiness, to take just one example, and this has not been done. (Interestingly, D'Arms and Jacobson explicitly contrast resentment with emotions like fear, which they take to be more apt for the response-dependent account of their target properties.)

On a second kind of account, being blameworthy is grounded simply in the appropriateness of the relevant blaming responses, but there are response-independent conditions that are co-extensive with being blameworthy and that are related in some way to blameworthiness other than by a relationship of grounding. (See Wallace 1994; and on a reading of Strawson [1963] that emphasizes his own identification of excuses and exemptions in response-independent terms, Strawson can be seen to be a proponent of this kind of view.) This kind of account faces its own challenges. First, it might be asked whether offering the response-dependent account is in some way superfluous, as D'Arms and Jacobson suggest is the case if indeed we have response-independent conditions available. Second, the account must explain what the relation of blameworthiness to the response-independent conditions is, if it is *not* being grounded in them. A variant of this view is McKenna's (2012) proposal that there is a mutual grounding of blameworthiness and appropriate blaming responses; but this view faces the objection that grounding is an asymmetrical relationship. (See Fine 2001 and deRosset 2013 for recent discussion of grounding and explanation.)

On a third sort of view, the property of being blameworthy is response-dependent in the sense that being blameworthy is a matter of a certain kind of response being appropriate, while it is also the case that being blameworthy is *grounded in* wholly response-independent conditions, which could include the target agent acting with control or acting with free will, for example. This sort of view accounts for the very salient fact suggested by the surface language of both blameworthiness and responsibility that what it is *to be* blameworthy is for certain responses to be appropriate. But at the same time it accommodates in the most natural way the existence and intensity of the very debate over whether free will is required for blameworthiness in its recognition that there are response-independent conditions that *ground* blameworthiness, or *in virtue of which* an agent is blameworthy (see Brink and Nelkin 2013; Nelkin 2011). This view is not without its challenges, however. Proponents should ultimately explain why possessing the relevant response-independent conditions (whether control, or free agency, or the freedom to do otherwise, and/or something else) makes one worthy of blame for wrongdoing. And a full answer to this question will ultimately have to be given in conjunction with an answer to the question of the last section: what exactly is it to blame in the accountability sense?

Further, the question will have to be answered in conjunction with a further question concerning the relationship between blame and blameworthiness: How should we understand 'worthy' in 'blameworthy?' In some discussions, 'worthy' is treated as equivalent to 'appropriate candidate for' and in others as 'deserving of.' (For the latter, see Pereboom [2013, 2014], who offers an account of the kind of responsibility related to free will as essentially one of 'basic desert' of blame or praise.) 'Desert' itself has a variety of uses, but on one notable one, what one deserves is measured on a scale of size of harms and benefits. If this were the correct notion of 'worthy' in the accountability sense of blameworthiness, then a further constraint on an acceptable account of the nature of accountability blame would be that it is a kind of harm.

Blame and Forgiveness

Forgiveness is often understood to consist in the foreswearing of blame on the part of one who is wronged. So it is not surprising that just as there are many accounts of blame, there are many accounts of forgiveness. According to a very influential account, often (but misleadingly) attributed to Butler, forgiveness is the foreswearing of resentment in particular. In contrast, according to a debt-release model of forgiveness, forgiving is a matter of ceasing to hold the wrongdoer to obligations incurred as the result of the wrongdoing. The former fits well with the reactive attitudes account of blame, the latter with the account of blame as holding an offense against another person in a way that includes the holding to obligations. Because of the tight connection between blame and forgiveness, it makes sense to develop an account of each in light of the other.

At the same time, there is an interesting asymmetry between the two phenomena. Forgiveness seems to be something that only those who are wronged have the standing to do, whereas blame seems to be something anyone can do (whether they ought to or not). Suppose Avery gratuitously reveals a confidence of Pedro's. Pedro's friend might blame Avery and feel indignation, but only Pedro himself is in a position to forgive Avery. It seems it is not Pedro's friend's place to do so, and, as a result, he simply cannot forgive Avery. As we will see in the final section, there are questions about who has the standing to *justifiably* blame, as there are questions about who has the standing to forgive. But the standing to forgive seems to be constrained in particular to those who have been wronged (or perhaps to those who have in some way been authorized to forgive on their behalf), whereas the standing to blame is not similarly constrained. There may be a third-party analogue of forgiveness, available to all. But this is an under-explored question.

Praise and Blame

There is much more focus on blame than on praise in the literature, and at least one explanation for this fact might be that, as Watson (1996/2004) suggests, blame tends to be a "more serious affair," with more being at stake. Another might be that discussion of responsibility in the law focuses on blame rather than praise, and given the parallels between legal and moral responsibility, the emphasis is placed on blame rather than praise in the moral literature.

Nevertheless, even if only in passing, praise and blame are very often mentioned in the same breath, and are naturally taken to be opposites. But even this apparently obvious claim is questioned with surprising frequency in discussions of blame. For example, Coates and Tognazzini (2013), following Brandt (1958), suggest that the idea of private blame makes sense in a way that private praise does not. Scanlon (2013: 95) finds a very different reason for thinking the two are not opposite, suggesting that praise is a purely evaluative notion whereas blame requires more. As against the former suggestion, we might concede that private praise is perhaps less frequent than private blame, and that obstacles to overt praise tend to be easier to overcome than obstacles to overt blame. But private praise is not incoherent; a coach might privately praise an athlete, thinking that doing so outwardly would undermine the athlete's motivation to prove herself, for example. As against the latter suggestion, once we have distinguished between different kinds of blame—attributability and accountability—we can see that there is a *kind* of praise that is merely evaluative, and a kind that is not. But we can say something similar about blame.

Other sorts of grounds for asymmetry seem to pose more of a challenge to seeing the two phenomena as opposites. For example, if blame requires the attribution of wrongdoing on the part of a responsible agent, then we can ask what the opposite attribution is in the case of praise. An attribution of an action that fulfills moral requirements for which one meets the conditions of responsibility? Perhaps this is correct, but because we do not think praise is justified by all permissible action done by responsible agents, and we often praise supererogatory action, it seems that the conditions of blameworthiness and praiseworthiness themselves might come apart in ways that undermine the idea that they are opposites, and so the idea that blame and praise are opposites. As has been pointed out, 'holding accountable' itself doesn't obviously seem apt when it comes to praiseworthy actions in the way it does when it comes to blameworthy ones. Such worries are not decisive, however, and point to further development of accounts of the conditions that ground both praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. Recent exploration of common factors that appear to ground degrees of *both* praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, such as difficulty in performing the action in question, have the potential for a contributing role here (Coates and Swenson 2013; Nelkin 2016).

The Scope of Blame

Without getting into the details of the debate about what the conditions are for blameworthiness, we can ask a more general question about the scope of accountability blame that has implications for the relationship between blame and freedom. The question is what kinds of things are people blameworthy, and so, appropriately blamed, *for*. Actions? Omissions? Character? Wrongdoing? Motives? Recently, there has been renewed interest in the particular question of whether people can only be blameworthy for instances of wrongdoing, or whether, instead, people can be blameworthy for performing permissible actions albeit with ill will or bad motives. One sort of case that has been thought to support the latter view is due to Julia Driver: one permissibly refuses to give a kidney to one's brother, but one can nevertheless be blameworthy for doing so (Driver 1992; see also McKenna 2012). On this view, it is the meaning with which an action is done (or omitted), where meaning is determined by motives and attitudes, and not the deontic status of an action, that ultimately underlies blameworthiness. This has potential implications for the free will debate because action seems like the paradigm instance of something free; what motive one has does not (initially anyway) seem like the kind of thing that is the object of free choice. This assumption itself might fruitfully be questioned, as can the assumption that motives do not themselves partly *determine* the rightness or wrongness of an action or omission. (The role of intentions and reasons in determining permissibility is itself a subject of intense debate.) Those who take blameworthiness to be restricted to violations of moral obligation can also respond to cases such as Driver's described above by disagreeing that the agent in question has done nothing wrong if indeed blameworthy. Further, given that we have distinguished between different kinds of blame, it is open to those who restrict accountability blameworthiness to wrongdoing to say that such a restriction does not preclude attributability blameworthiness for having bad character or bad motives.

The Norms of Blame

Finally, just because someone is blameworthy, and so in an important sense it is appropriate to blame her, it does not follow that any particular person ought to blame her.

Consider an instructive analogy. Just because a joke is funny (on whatever account of ‘funniness’ you like), it does not follow that any ought to laugh at it. Suppose your friend tells a very funny joke about a mutual friend of yours who is present. It might be a genuinely funny joke, but because you know that your laughing would hurt your mutual friend, it would be wrong of you, all things considered, to laugh. Similarly, a person might be blameworthy, and thus, there is a sense in which blame would be an appropriate response. But there might be factors that make it the case that particular people—or even everyone—ought to refrain from blaming. For example, many take it that hypocrisy overrides any reason to blame someone when you yourself are guilty of the same offense. If this is right, then it appears that blame, like forgiveness, is related to requirements of standing. But there is a difference that goes beyond even the difference noted earlier: a hypocrite might blame even if she does not have the standing to do so appropriately, whereas it seems that a third party cannot forgive at all (whether rightly or wrongly). Still, when it comes to blaming, and possibly also when it comes to forgiving, whether and, if so, how one ought to blame will depend on more than whether the target of one’s blame is blameworthy. Other factors that might support whether all things considered one ought to blame include complicity and ‘meddling’ (Tognazzini and Coates 2014), the kind of relationship between the relevant parties (Scanlon 2008), the severity of the offense (Smith 2007), and whether one is judgmental or compassionate (Kelly 2013; Watson 2013). Thus, even if we could settle the question of what the conditions are in virtue of which a person is blameworthy, and we could settle whether they include free agency, there could still be much interesting work to do in identifying the norms or ethics of blame itself.

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Further Reading

- Coates, D.J. and Tognazzini, N.A. (eds) (2013) *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (An excellent cutting-edge collection of essays on all aspects of the topic, several of which are cited above.)
- McKenna, M. and Russell, P. (eds) (2008) *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes: Perspectives on P.F. Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment."* Burlington: Ashgate Publishing. (Contains a number of interesting articles focused particularly on Strawson's seminal article calling attention to the relationship between freedom and the blaming attitudes.)

Related Topics

- Free Will and Moral Sentiments: Strawsonian Views
Revisionism
The Relationship between Moral Responsibility and Freedom