THE HARMS OF WITHDRAWAL

By Camille Miner

In this paper, I will explain: 1) Scanlon's paradigm case of "Exit-Style Blame" (ESB), 2) how Agnes Callard's "co-valuing" framework makes sense of our relational obligations in relationships of attachment, 3) how communicating one's Strawsonian reactive attitudes is necessary for emotional vulnerability and valuing others, and 4) why exit-style blame is wrong and fails to express our subjective experience and solidify relational expectations. Some may argue that reactive communication of blame will only incite unproductive counter-anger or that this argument wrongly prescribes behavior universally. Nevertheless, without communicating some degree of our reactive attitudes when we are subject to them, we fail to express what we find valuable or harmful in the actions of those closest to us. This exclusion of our emotional experience wrongs the recipient of ESB, as it fails two epistemic and one practical obligation we have in relationships of attachment. Epistemically, we are obliged to explain what actions elicited reactive attitudes and some degree of our subjective affective experience. And since those we are close to regularly rely on our support and valuing, we are practically obligated to grant an opportunity for the wrongdoer to apologize and make amends for their wrong.

I. Exit-style blame

Tim Scanlon proposes a case in which he learns that his friend Joe cracked a cruel joke behind his back.[1] For Scanlon, it is permissible for him to silently withdraw his friendship and immediately "revise his attitudes" and intentions towards Joe without communicating blame.[2,3] I will call this "Exit-Style Blame" (ESB). Joe's violation of the norms of the friendship counts as an impairment of the relationship for Scanlon. This impairment then gives Tim reason for withdrawal with no obligation to explain why to the other party. Assuming that this relationship was one of mutual attachment, both parties were vulnerable to experiencing reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes (which I will explain in section III) are our emotional responses to the will of another and do not merely include anger, resentment, and indignation, but importantly gratitude.[4] I find Scanlon's case of ESB especially problematic in how it treats people who have relied on our will and care as dispensable members of our social circles. By not allowing the wrongdoer an opportunity to make contrition or even come to understand what they did wrong and how it affected the victim, the victim (in relationships of attachment), may be harming the initial wrongdoer along a new dimension.

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1 T. M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Belknap Press, 2010), 123–136.

2 My conception of blame as identification of the wrongdoing and an expression of one's reactive attitudes may appear very similar to Miranda Fricker's paradigm of communicative blame. Although both of our accounts foreground the communication and identification of wrongdoing, mine will argue that all blame involves negative "moral emotions" or reactive attitudes, and the "point" or telos of blame is not to necessarily inspire apology, but rather is morally required in relationships with a shared history of valuing and emotional vulnerability.

3 Miranda Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation," *Noûs* 50, no. 1 (2014): 170, https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12067.

4 P. F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (Routledge, 2008), 5.

In this paper, I will elucidate how relationships of attachment involve a mutual valuing of certain norms and rules of the relationship, and to develop and bolster these norms, we ought to blame and appreciate the other effectively. By telling the other how their actions or words subjectively felt, we not only communicate what initiated our blame or appreciation but importantly what it felt like to be wronged or valued. The communication of reactive blame, in particular, allows the recipient to engage with our claim in cases where our blame is unjustified and make amends to repair the relationship. Although the cruel joke may have violated the relationship's norms, there seems to be three wrongs committed by Tim's ESB: 1) a failure to communicate to Joe what he did wrong; 2) a failure to communicate to Joe his affective experience, which leads to; 3) a failure to give Joe an opportunity to respond to the blame and make amends.

II. Relationships of attachment and co-valuation

I will define relationships of attachment as a large class of relationships including romantic, platonic, and familial forms so long as they have a shared history of mutual valuing and a reasonably expected continuation of this valuing.[5] What counts as a sufficient amount of history or reason to believe the valuing will continue, will vary among relationships since no two relationships of attachment are identical in nature. Scanlon argues that relationships, even ones of long-term attachment, can be "conditional on the attitudes of the parties involved."[6] If one party betrays the other and this act stands as an expression of poor attitudes towards the other, then Scanlon argues the relationship need not continue, and the wronged party can justifiably modify their attitudes and intentions in the relationship.[7] However, when relationships undergo a long and sustained history of valuing, such conditionality often seems to fade. In relationships that we rely on for long periods of time, we tend not to judge day-to-day wrongs or missteps as immediate reasons to upend our previous intentions to maintain the relationship.

To make sense of why Tim can and ought to blame Joe, it is helpful to understand relationships of attachment through Agnes Callard's "co-valuing" framework. Callard proposes that we can think of all relationships as a co-valuation of some project. When one agent in a co-valuing relationship fails to uphold the norms and rules of the project, then blame becomes justifiable.[8] When we "co-value" a project, such as playing a duet, each participant gives the other participant reason to anticipate that they will perform the relevant actions and uphold the necessary values that make the project meaningful. When I play in a classical duet with someone, I lead the other party to believe that I will actively endorse the norms of the relationship. I practice the music, show up to rehearsal on time, and execute my part in such a way as to express aesthetic appreciation. Callard refers to this as the "norms and rules" of a co-valuing relationship.[9] Should I fail to learn the notes of the duet before our rehearsal, I have violated a fundamental norm of the relationship. Since a duet is impossible without two people playing their parts, failing to practice my part of the duet is a failure to value the project itself, and hence I fail to value my duet partner's work and interest in the music. Since I would be disappointing my duet partner, disrespecting their work and our shared valuation, this would likely cause my co-valuer emotional harm. In failing to practice, I deceived the other into believing I would value the relationship. Thus Callard argues that blame becomes justified when one violates the norms of the co-valuing relationship.

Of course, not all co-valuations are centered on some passion project. Often the most important co-valuations we participate in are the ones in which the project we are "co-valuing" is the relationship itself. When I co-value the project of being a good sister, I call to check in on my sisters, remember details of their lives, and am attentive to their emotional sensitivities. These, amongst many more norms, whether explicitly or implicitly understood, are the behaviors that make the relationship meaningful and valuable. When we co-value a relationship, we do

5 This expectation condition need not be held by both parties, but so long as one person in the relationship has reason to believe that past valuing will continue in the future, they deserve proper notice if valuing activities will terminate. In other words, blame or communication of what the agent did wrong and why it mattered is required to fairly end that expectation.

6 Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 134.

7 Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 141.

8 Agnes Callard, "The Reason to Be Angry Forever," in *The Moral Psychology of Anger*, ed. Myisha Cherry and Owen Flanagan (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), 130.

9 Callard, "The Reason to Be Angry Forever," 130.

not only value the other and what is good for them, but importantly, we value what we create together in our co-valuing. Discussing ethics with my mother is not only valuable insofar as it interests both of us, but by sharing our originally independent thoughts and intuitions we generate new ideas and arguments. Such a generation, as Callard argues, would likely be impossible to create independently.[10]

Although breaking the norms of a co-valuing relationship may reasonably elicit blame, co-valuation alone does not typically entail an explicit contract or agreement on what norms will be upheld. The question then arises, what about being in a co-valuing relationship obliges us to comply with its norms? As argued by R. Jay Wallace, we can think of relational norms on the model of promissory obligations between the two parties. Promissory obligations are not unconditional to uphold but "defeasible: so long as exceptional circumstances do not obtain, the promisor is under a moral obligation to do the thing that was promised, an obligation that was entered into through the promissory act."[11] In relationships of attachment, it seems that sustained valuing over time functions to generate relational obligations that are like promissory obligations in being owed by each party to the other. Unlike promissory obligations, however, they cannot be traced to an explicit transaction or exchange between the parties, but derive from the patterns of emotional interdependence characteristic of relationships of attachment.

Valuing others entails that we are often emotionally vulnerable to their well-being and actions. When I exhibit emotional vulnerability and care towards another over time, the recipient of this care will reasonably expect my valuing to continue. The quiet termination of my care will then be akin to a broken promise, bringing a surprising end to what the recipient could reasonably rely on. When we exist in these co-valuing relationships we implicitly commit ourselves to uphold the norms of the relationship. One may worry that they will be unfairly blamed for failing to uphold the norms of a relationship they never wanted to be in originally. This fear does not devalue relationships of attachment but rather makes blame and the explicit communication of relationship expectations more valuable between two co-valuers. Furthermore, what I am calling "relationships of attachment" are at-will co-valuations, not forced contractual agreements. For instance, one may have a long relationship with their parents from birth, but this, I argue, does not constitute a free-standing relationship of attachment until the agent is of the age to freely decide whether the relationship and its values are important to them. Otherwise, all children would have relational obligations to their parents regardless of their parents' moral values or lack thereof. Furthermore, you can exist in a relationship of attachment also in an explicit contract (e.g. marriage), but this ought not to overshadow the implicit relational obligations created in your shared valuing of the relationship.

Assuming that Tim and Joe's friendship qualifies as a co-valuing relationship of attachment, its sudden end requires a violation of some norm: the cruel joke.[12] Tim's blame in this scenario is likely based on the assumption that, as friends, Joe would abstain from public mockery, especially without his consent or knowledge. Even if this rule was not explicitly outlined, what it means to esteem one's friend should intuitively entail speaking about them with respect and charity. Blame, as Callard argues, can function as a means of communicating and coming to understand what the norms of the relationship are or ought to be.[13] However, for Scanlon, blaming involves a two-part process. First, we judge the person to be "blameworthy" insofar as their action(s) shows an attitude capable of impairing the relationship (e.g. disregard for your well-being). And then in light of this judgment, we can modify our relationships "in a way that this judgment of impaired relations holds to be appropriate."[14] By focusing on the "appropriateness" of one's modification, Scanlon fails to consider the harms that arise from ESB, which I will argue amounts to a violation of our epistemic and practical moral duties to the other person.

Without explicit communication of blame, Tim leaves Joe unaware of the reason for his withdrawal and how this wrong affected Tim emotionally. However, Tim might want Joe to come to his own understanding of how he harmed Tim, without Tim expressing his blame. But acting on this desire may be further wrong. By executing

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10 "Our co-valuation of music is different—richer—than our separate valuation was. We can enjoy music in a new way because we now are in a position to enjoy it together."
Callard, "The Reason to Be Angry Forever," 130.

11 R. Jay Wallace, *The Moral Nexus* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 6.

12 Not all relationships of attachment end in a norm violation; many can gradually end by the two parties "growing apart" or realizing that they no longer value enough in common. For the case of Tim and Joe however, the end of the relationship was initiated by a norm violation.

13 Callard, "The Reason to Be Angry Forever," 130.

14 Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 128–129.

ESB so that Joe can identify his wrongful act independently, Tim is making a silent demand. Joe is almost destined to fail a demand that was not made explicit.[15]

III. Reactive attitudes and valuing

When we care about someone, we often are emotionally sensitive to their well-being, or we may have, as Strawson argues, attitudes that react to the "quality of will" of the person.[16] "Quality of will" refers to how an individual exercises their agency, thus making emotional vulnerability a signal of valuing another. In co-valuing relationships of attachment, where we value the relationship itself, being subject to some degree of reactive attitudes is essential for the participatory nature of these relationships. By "being subject to" reactive attitudes, Strawson importantly notes that, as implied by "subject to," we do not choose whether or not to experience the reactive attitudes. Such experience of reactive attitudes is a mere cause of our valuing the other and, in particular their "quality of will." However, being subject to these attitudes does not necessarily entail their communication.

Strawson's distinction between two positions of interpersonal treatment, the objective and participant stance, provides a framework that helps to assess which relationships garner obligations of communicating reactive attitudes. In the objective stance, we do not attribute full freedom to the individual, or consider them an unfortunate product of their environment, and do not blame them for their wrong deeds and norm violations. These persons include the psychologically ill who cannot be held responsible for their delusional acts, children who do not have the necessary cognitive abilities to make certain deliberations, and any party who ought not to be held morally responsible due to prevailing circumstances.[17] Conversely, in the participant stance, we see the other as capable of deliberation and independent free action. In the participant stance, Strawson argues that we are subject to reactive attitudes of anger, annoyance, gratitude, and any other moral emotion that attributes credit or disapproval to the agent's action. As the name suggests, we are *participating* with the other in the relationship, attentive to their actions, and our reactions have the power to in part communicate our care and valuing. If you value someone due to how they exercise their will, you will treat them as a participant. Of course, communication of these attitudes is not necessary for the participatory stance, but when we do communicate our reactive attitudes we are showing emotional vulnerability towards the person even when these attitudes are uncomfortable or unflattering.

There may be cases in which we momentarily treat someone we once saw from the participant stance objectively or as incapable of acting freely (e.g. if they are on psychologically impactful medication). However, on the whole, if we consider them to be a free actor we ought to treat them as a participant. Without communication of our reactive attitudes, our co-valuer will not know with certainty that we see them as a participant and their actions predispose us to feel resentment, anger, and gratitude. This knowledge of our emotional vulnerability signals that we truly value the other and to what extent they uphold the norms and rules of the relationship.

Furthermore, expressing our reactive attitudes (to a degree appropriate to the relationship's norms) is a necessary but not sufficient condition of relationships of attachment. We treat many people as participants and reactively blame or appreciate, yet they do not exist in relationships of attachment with us. For instance, if you yell at a stranger for hitting your car, a relationship is not created from their wrongdoing and your reactive blame. Conversely, relationships of attachment require a shared history of valuing and trust that such valuing will most likely continue into the future.

A relationship of attachment with no emotional vulnerability or affective communication is hard to imagine. However, there are instances in which we may inhibit or lessen the expression of our reactive attitudes to those we love for pragmatic reasons. If my partner were to forget to attend my orchestra concert, I may feel indignant enough to harm him. But I know a manifestation of angry blame would be unproductive in communicating to him

15 Even if one of the norms of the relationship is to be sensitive to potential wrongs they commit to each other, it seems like a further injustice of Tim against Joe to withdraw all valuing and friendship as a means of "teaching Joe a lesson."

16 "The reactive attitudes I have so far discussed are essentially reactions to the quality of others' wills towards us, as manifested in their behaviour: to their good or ill will or indifference or lack of concern."
Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment*, 15.

17 Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment*, 9.

what he did wrong and why the moral violation mattered to me. Nevertheless, if I say over dinner, "You forgot my concert" in a neutral tone, my partner will have limited epistemic access to *my* subjective experience of having my concert forgotten, that I was hurt and maybe started to doubt whether we both co-valued the relationship. He may think that his attending of my concert mattered to some degree and perhaps even recognize that he committed a norm violation, but without understanding what it felt like to have my concert forgotten, he could not fully know how and to what extent the norm mattered to me.

In co-valuing relationships of attachment we become emotionally vulnerable, but not necessarily to direct reactive attitudes or moral emotions; at times we might only be vulnerable to sadness or happiness.[18] For instance, I may be saddened to learn that a close friend received a cancer diagnosis. This sadness isn't a reaction to their "quality of will", but rather my care for their well-being. However, suppose our emotional vulnerability only compels us to feel saddened when they violate our expectations instead of feeling reactive attitudes like anger. For example, simply feeling sad about the fact that your birthday was forgotten by your friend and not necessarily disappointed by your friend's failure to remember. This emotional vulnerability to merely "the facts of the matter" appears rather one-dimensional and may be damaging to the relationship, as it would make our fellow co-valuers out to be people incapable of behavioral change and improvement.

One may ask, however, why "authentic" or honest expression of one's subjective experience is necessary for *all* relationships of attachment. It seems plausible in a Stoic relationship that part of what makes the relationship valuable is the norm of suppressing reactive attitudes. I admit that such a relationship is possible, but without emotional vulnerability, it will likely not be as rich and intimate as relationships in which the exchange of subjective experience is permissible or even foregrounded. Perhaps this is an unfair non-Stoic bias I maintain; however, it seems as though everything that makes a relationship particularly good and meaningful is derived from honest communication between two parties. For romantic relationships, Callard notes that "your partner's anger is a mechanism of your striving."[19] Being in a relationship of deep connection and importance, necessarily means that the subjective experience is particularly important to the other co-valuer. Without any indication of how our actions may be affecting them, we have a limited understanding of how we could become better co-valuers of the relationships or of the moral imperatives we share in common.

Scanlon may argue that he can know that his friend Joe is capable of changing his behavior but still be sad at the fact that he didn't do otherwise. Perhaps even Joe's wrongdoing was actually one of many moral violations he committed against Tim—the straw that broke the camel's back. This form of sadness may be the realization that it is unlikely for the person to change, that their repetitive behavior is in fact incorrigible. Scanlon does not consider this sadness a "moral emotion," instead sadness here is simply a reaction to the state of the matter: being wronged.[20] By this, I suppose Scanlon means that his reaction isn't necessarily relational—it's not just because Joe is my friend that he should not have gossiped or joked about me. But rather, it's a shame Joe harmed me.

The sad realization that another's behavior may not change does not, however, change the fact that Joe was not explicitly shown what he did wrong nor Tim's subjective experience of being wronged. Even if such change for Joe is highly unlikely or challenging, it will only be made more implausible without Tim's aid. Sadness or other non-reactive attitudes may at times demotivate us from giving wrongdoers a second chance or attempt at contrition. We may feel as though the other is "beyond hope" or not worth the effort of confronting. Such attitudes however, are riddled with bad faith. In many cases, we do not know the extent to which the wrongdoer was responsible for their act or how sorry they may be for the harm they caused. Such knowledge can often only be accessed when blame is communicated and an apology is attempted.

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18 "To revise my intentions and expectations with regard to Joe in this way, or in some less extreme way, is to blame him. I might also resent his behavior or feel some other moral emotion. But this is not required for blame, in my view—I might just feel sad."
Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 136.

19 Callard, *On Anger*, 77.

20 Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions*, 136.

IV. Appreciation and blame in relationships of attachment

At times, it may feel as though certain norm violations can reasonably terminate our valuing of another. However, in relationships of attachment, we treat the other as a participant capable of upholding the norms of our relationship and subject to our reactive attitudes. This treatment and our shared history obliges us to express what actions inspired our reactive attitudes and what this reactive experience felt like. Tim exists in a friendship with Joe, and even when Joe commits an act that puts their friendship at risk, Tim still has, in light of their shared history of trust, an obligation to communicate his disapproval and reactive blame. It may be the case that Joe's action truly does stand as a reason for Tim to begin to modify his intentions and attitudes towards Joe. However such modifications ought not to occur until Joe is given proper opportunity to understand the fact that what he did was wrong and its subsequent emotional experience for Tim. ESB makes Joe's position epistemically disadvantaged with an impaired ability to seek contrition and critically engage with Tim's judgment.

Exit-style blame thus treats its recipients as "at-will hires" in our lives, subject to our unexplained firings. This treatment not only harms them epistemically but also terminates their ability to seek contrition and change their behavior. In light of their shared history of trust, Joe is entitled to at least some insight into Tim's experience of being wronged. However, this obligation for communicative and reactive blame may seem more benign given the somewhat frivolous nature of cruel jokes. Suppose that Joe had committed a greater act of betrayal against Tim: initiated an intimate affair with Tim's wife. Is this Joe still deserving of communicative blame?

There can often be precious information lost when we exercise ESB. When we feel reactive attitudes towards the wrongs of another, it may subjectively feel as though we have all the evidence we need to make an informed judgment. More often than not, however, our judgments lack essential information capable of muting or even modifying our reactions. Often the new evidence that could change our judgments is only accessible once reactive blame is expressed (e.g."How could you betray my trust? I thought we were friends!"). In response, Joe may deny the blame and provide evidence for why he is not culpable or why the wrongdoing did not occur (e.g. "That was my twin brother with your wife at the party"). However, more likely, if Tim's hunch was correct, Joe may only be capable of admitting guilt. In such cases, social friction will arise, where Tim wields a particular social power over Joe.

As articulated by Wallace, all blame has an "oppositional nature" where reactive blame is experienced by the recipient as aversive. Such a dynamic places the blame giver in a position of social power, whereby they can influence the "attitudes and behaviors" of the recipient through their negatively valenced reactive attitudes (e.g. resentment, anger, disappointment).[21] Wallace goes on to argue that standing in relations of power to other individuals is inherently morally fraught.[22] The parties will likely not have the chance to become equals again until proper contrition is made and forgiveness is granted. Even after such amelioration, resentment can still linger, making the oppositional nature of blame more difficult to overcome. I do not intend to show that we are obliged to apologize and forgive in every relationship for every moral violation until social equality is established. However, without communication of one's reactive attitudes and articulating blame for what the agent did wrong, such a resolution is highly impaired.

One may argue that a recipient of harm owes the wrongdoer nothing, not even an opportunity to make amends. However, in the case of relationships of attachment, where both parties have reason to believe that mutual valuing could continue into the future, ending the relationship without explanation can be a harm in itself. By leaving Joe to cope with the uncertainty of his past friendship and move on to other projects and relationships, Tim is committing a counter-harm to Joe. The discomfort of confrontation or the fear of conveying an inappropriate amount of negative affect may demotivate us to communicate reactive blame. However, without an indication of what the wrong was and what emotional value the wrong bore, amends become out of reach for the wrongdoer.

The question then arises: what amount of affect is appropriate? During times of betrayal, anger may feel "like being trapped in a room with the last person in the world you want to talk to."[23] However, this subjective

21 R. Jay Wallace, "Resentment and Social Friction: Reactive Blame and Its Vicissitudes," Fordham Colloquium in Law and Philosophy, Spring 2025, 46, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dl-dOJv6J5N8zx4baH3OLoiwRSO8lv7P/view.

22 Wallace, "Resentment and Social Friction," 48.

23 Callard, "The Reason to Be Angry Forever," 133.

experience is insufficient reason for not communicating blame. The type of affect one demonstrates while articulating blame will be dependent on the subject's culture, relationship, and intentions. Cultural norms that require individuals to reserve emotional expression, as well as relationships with particularly sensitive people, will likely temper their expression of reactive blame to fit the appropriate context. However, this temperance ought not to deprive the blame of all emotion since emotional vulnerability is an essential part of valuing the other person. Such valuations may change in light of a recent offense or lack of apology after explicit blame. But by refusing to express the reactive attitudes the wrongdoer elicited to any extent is to refuse to express your subjective experience of being wronged.

Emotional vulnerability and valuing are not just linked to the possible failings of our co-valuers, as expressing appreciation is also required for relationships of attachment. We have an obligation to express reactive appreciation as it signals our emotional vulnerability and thus valuing. Affective appreciation helps to identify what acts bolster our co-valuing relationship and can temper the intensity of future blame. This appreciation may express itself as gratitude for promises kept and identifies how we need help. Suppose I never voice appreciation for my friend who regularly consoles me when I feel upset. In that case, she cannot fully understand why this act in our relationship is so valuable to me. Not only should I communicate appreciation when I value the co-valuing acts of another, as an epistemic duty I have toward my friend, but when done with some degree of emotion I reveal how this relationship matters deeply to me. There is something a bit off with the picture of someone communicating love and appreciation for someone with no emotional expression of happiness, or gratefulness in their communication.

Some norms, however, such as fidelity in a romantic partnership, seem so fundamental that an expression of gratitude or praise undermines the dignity of the gratitude giver. Thus someone may argue that we are only obliged to praise or communicate and appreciate supererogatory acts or acts that go beyond the scope of our relational/co-valuing obligations. This, however, is mistaken. Even if praise and gratitude for obvious promises or commitments may come across as pedantic this does not diminish our obligation to remind those we love how and why we value them. Suppose the person receiving appreciation and gratitude cannot recognize these attitudes as sincere or important. In that case, this is a failing on their part rather than one of the gratitude-giver. Furthermore, since many norms in co-valuing relationships are implicit, what counts as supererogatory may subjectively depend on each individual's conception of what is and is not required from the relationship. For instance, a husband of two toddlers might consider himself to be highly generous in taking the kids out for ice cream. However, the stay-at-home mother may not find him deserving of praise since he fails to discipline, clean, or perform any of the more burdensome tasks of parenting. When we appreciate the more monotonous sacrifices of our fellow co-valuers we help establish what norms are fundamental for the maintenance of our relationship.

Not only is appreciation just as necessary as blame in establishing what important behaviors and norms bolster the co-valuing relationship, but can often do preventative work by counterbalancing future blame. For instance, if Joe was a highly appreciative friend on the whole, but on the night of the fateful party slipped up by telling a cruel joke about Tim, then perhaps Tim's response would be tempered by Joe's previous appreciation of their friendship. Tim's reason for blaming Joe does not change since Joe's joke is still a moral violation of the relationship's norms; however, knowing that Joe sincerely does value him in important ways may affect how Tim perceives the violation. When Tim considers whether it is worth withdrawing from his relationship with Joe, he must not only evaluate Joe's moral violation but also the history of Joe's appreciation towards him.

While appreciation is just as necessary as blame in establishing and bolstering the norms of the co-valuing relationship, not all relationships will or should survive past certain harms. For example, if someone believed they were in a loving and appreciative marriage for many years but later found that their partner was cheating on them from the beginning, it would seem as though all the appreciation and love was never sincere. Betrayal of this kind not only expresses that one violated the fundamental norms of the relationship, but that the wrongdoer knowingly deluded the other into thinking the relationship was mutual and real. One may argue that the victim of such betrayal is entitled to perform ESB since the violator is not entitled to identify the wrong committed or exercise emotional vulnerability in this process. However, the reason why this scenario eliminates the obligation to express reactive blame is because the "relationship of attachment" was pseudo. One party perceived that they existed in a relationship with a shared history of norms and rules, but they were deluded. By committing such a

fundamental betrayal from the beginning the wrongdoer created a superficial relationship, destined to fail. In this case reactive blame may still be motivated (although not necessitated) by the dignity of the victim. Insofar as you were led to believe that the relationship was one of trust and fidelity, to present a neutral affect to the betrayal of your partner is to be dishonest to your previous understanding and subjective experience of blame.

V. Counter-anger and prescriptive ethics

One worry of reactive blame is that expressions of negative reactive attitudes can often incite counter-anger by the blame recipient. If the communication of reactive blame only creates more conflict, then it is hard to see why such communication would be imperative for our relationships of attachment. Although it may be true that affectively laden blame can create counter-anger in the recipient, this fact does not make the blame or its affect (when appropriate) any less justified, nor is counter-anger inherently wrong. Counter-anger isn't necessarily the fault of the blame giver. Just because one may express their subjective experience while identifying what was wrong, this doesn't mean that the recipient of this blaming process is entitled to further harm the blamer.

However, even if counter-anger is not the fault of the blame giver, there may be particular sensitivities in the blame receiver that the blame giver ought to be sensitive to in light of the norms of their relationship of attachment. For instance, we can imagine a blame receiver who is particularly sensitive, and when they receive blame, they feel saddened and hurt, even when they agree that the blame was justified. In such cases, the impetus is thus on the blame giver to appropriately calibrate their affect and means of blaming to the sensitivities of the blame recipient.

In the case of abusive relationships, either physical or verbal, explicitly stating blame may put the victim at risk for greater harm. In such cases, however, it is unclear if the parties still exist in a relationship of attachment. If a relationship of attachment (as I've defined) entails that both parties have reason to believe that the valuing will continue into the future, abuse may terminate this expectation for both the abuser and the abused. For instance, in the case of domestic violence, it would be absurd to assume that the abuser can reasonably suppose that their victim will continue to love and care for them post-abuse. Similarly, a victim of sound mind cannot reasonably expect the abuse to magically stop after one instance. Of course, abuse makes the pragmatic picture of blame far more complicated, especially since many victims of abuse often cannot identify the treatment as wrong in light of their abuse. Nevertheless, such relationships do not take the form of relationships of attachment, I propose, insofar as neither party can reasonably predict the other to continue in their co-valuing.

So long as the blame is apt to the relationship's norms and the importance of the wrongdoing, counter-anger is likely unjustified. Assuming that the relationship is not Stoic, expressions of reactive attitudes ought not to be moral violations, especially when such vulnerability is a signal of value to the blame recipient. The blame recipient is just as free to emotionally respond to the blame or not. Additionally, even in cases where the blame is justified and the recipient is prone to react with counter-anger or another negative reactive attitude, it seems like these expressions are still important insofar as the recipient of the blame is also able to freely express their subjective experience.[24]

No two relationships of attachment have identical norms. Thus, one may worry that by arguing that relationships of attachment oblige us to communicate reactive blame and appreciation, I am making a hasty behavioral prescription that cannot be universally applied to the nuances and complexities of all relationships. However, expressions of reactive attitudes seem to be fundamental to all relationships of attachment, especially to those we are closest to. As observed by Wallace, "we are exceptionally sensitive within these contexts to the presence of angry emotions on the part of persons that we are very close to; we can discern such emotions in the subtle emphasis with which our partners stack the dishes after supper or close the door on their way to work."[25] Relationships of attachment often entail acute sensitivity to the emotional well-being of the other. Like slamming

24 If in a relationship there exists one partner who is extremely sensitive to blame and the other who regularly expresses anger when a moral violation occurs, then any friction these two create in the blaming process is a greater sign of incompatibility rather than moral wrongdoing.

25 R. Jay Wallace, "Trust, Anger, Resentment, Forgiveness: On Blame and Its Reasons," *European Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (2019): 4, https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12485.

the door in anger, Scanlon may argue that exit-style blame is a communication of blame insofar as it signals to the wrongdoer that harm was committed. However, ESB (like slamming the door) still fails to communicate exactly what the wrong is, what the subjective experience of the wrong was, and importantly, fails to allow the recipient to respond and make amends. Without such communication, the wrongdoer is epistemically disadvantaged from understanding what the wrong was and the particular feeling of being wronged.

One may argue that although some expression of reactive blame may be necessary in times of norm-breaking, this does not justify why affective appreciation is necessary for relationships of attachment. Although relationships of attachment can involve a slew of different norms, it is hard to imagine a relationship of attachment where each participant actively co-values the relationship but does not, in their co-valuing, appreciate the relationship to any degree. In my definition of relationships of attachment, I importantly include that these are at-will relationships. Although not all were started by choice, their maintenance and continued valuing are up to the participants themselves. Thus, if the two individuals are in a relationship of free co-valuing, expressing their valuing seems necessary for reminding and informing the other of their relational importance and worth.

Ultimately, by overlooking how our relationships may oblige us to communicate reactive blame and appreciation, Scanlon's thinking leads us to relationships that are vulnerable to deterioration that could have been prevented. When Tim silently modifies his intentions to continue in a friendship with Joe, he leaves Joe epistemically disadvantaged about what he did wrong and its emotional consequences. By not communicating blame and its relevant affect, Joe is not afforded the knowledge of his wrong and its subjective experience for Tim, nor an opportunity to apologize and seek forgiveness. If emotional vulnerability is a necessary condition for being in a relationship of attachment, then not communicating reactive attitudes towards another fails to recognize the epistemic and practical obligations one owes the other member of the co-valuing relationship.

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