# 16
# Blame's Commitment to Its Own Fittingness

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## 16.1 Introduction

Blame is ubiquitous in our day-to-day moral lives. Yet even if we explicitly limit our focus to occurrent interpersonal cases,[1] it can be difficult to make progress when theorizing about blame's nature because the types of blame are multifarious. At a very general level, blame is a response to someone in light of some (apparent) norm violation on that person's part—it's a reaction people have to one another's wrongdoings.[2] But the ways of responding to wrongdoing that serve as examples of blame are very diverse. Public calling out, stony silence, private seething, sadly deciding to stop relying on a friend, dispassionately unfriending someone on Facebook—these all arguably count as instances of blame.[3] Correspondingly, philosophers who offer accounts of blame are in dispute about more than just minor details. Rather, they have been unable to agree even on what *kind of response* blame is—a judgement? a way of behaving? an emotion? a set of dispositions? some combination of these things?—and have held that blame may be comprised either entirely or partially by components that together make up an ontologically multitudinous list.[4]

[1] My topic here is interpersonal blame—the type of blaming that counts as a way of holding a person responsible. I thus set aside the 'causal' way in which one may 'blame' the rainfall for the flood.

[2] A wrongdoing, as I think of it, is the violation of a practical requirement: an impermissible action or omission over which a person had voluntary control. I will assume here that what people ultimately blame one another *for* are (putative) wrongdoings because I've defended this view elsewhere (Achs 2020). However, anyone who disagrees should, when reading future mentions of 'wrongdoing', substitute in his or her own preferred characterization of the type of (putative) violation blame is ultimately for (such as, for example, exhibiting an ill quality of will).

[3] The last two examples come from Scanlon 2008: 136 and Smith 2013: 32, respectively.

[4] Among other things, philosophers have proposed that blame consists in (1) some disapproving or sanctioning behaviour (Schlick 1962); (2) a judgement that the blameworthy party has diminished her moral credit or moral worth by her actions (Glover 1970; Zimmerman 1988); (3) the experience of reactive emotions such as resentment, indignation, or guilt—in turn comprised of sensory, behavioural, or physiological dispositions; physiological changes and bodily feelings; and cognitive elements (Wallace 1994; Pickard 2013; Menges 2017); (4) a judgement that some person has acted badly or is a bad person, conjoined with a desire that she *not* have done so and the affective and behavioural dispositions to which the frustration of that desire gives rise (Sher 2006); and (5) a revision of one's

Rachel Achs, *Blame's Commitment to Its Own Fittingness* In: *Fittingness: Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity*. Edited by: Christopher Howard and R. A. Rowland, Oxford University Press. © Rachel Achs 2022.
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895882.003.0016

In the face of such a variety of opinions and purported examples, it is probably wise to be ecumenical and allow that blame really can come in a wide range of response-types. But if so, then before delving deeply into the study of blame, it is worth reflecting on whether and why we should ever want to theorize about blame considered *as a single kind of thing*. A common core merely of being responses to wrongdoing is not sufficient to render the many modes of blame meaningfully unified. After all, there are responses to wrongdoing that seem the polar opposite of one another: one might react to a beloved son's commission of murder by becoming enraged, but also by showing him extra love and affection in anticipation of the hateful treatment he'll receive from others.[5] Yet, aside from all sharing the property of being reactions to wrongdoing, the types of response that can apparently be involved in blame are a motley collection of feelings (attitudes? actions? changes?), indeed. So do the diverse modes of blame actually have anything significant enough in common to give us reason to ask questions about *blame*? Or are they rather, as Martha Nussbaum (2016: 259) suspects, just 'descriptions of different phenomena somewhat misleadingly grouped under a single rubric'? If the latter, then perhaps blame is only ever properly subject to more piecemeal styles of investigation.

The thesis I want to defend in this chapter is that blame involves a particular, formal element of commitment to its own fittingness. I will argue that attributing this element to blame can illuminate several of blame's more elusive features. First, it can shed light on blame's directedness: on the way in which blame is targeted *towards* someone *for* some (putative) violation on her part. Indeed, I will argue that properly characterizing blame's directedness requires attributing this element to blame. Second, this element of blame can help to account for a felt quality that blame often has and that spans through many of its guises. I'll describe this quality in more depth later, but for now I'll just gloss it as a feeling of assuredness in one's blame. Finally, this element of blame can answer the question just posed about whether anything interesting ties the various types of blame together. *It* is a property common to blame's diverse modes which should make us think of blame as a phenomenon with unity, and one worth investigating as such.

In a sentence which will require explication, the formal element I claim blame possesses is this: when S blames T, S takes her present way of reacting to be fitting directly on the basis of T's having done something wrong.[6] I will call this blame's element of *reflexive endorsement*.

attitudes, intentions, and expectations towards the blameworthy party in a way that reflects that person's possession of relationship-impairing attitudes (Scanlon 2008; Smith 2013).

[5] Compare Smith 2013: 38.

[6] A clarificatory note: 'T's having done something wrong' should be read as referring to the (putative) fact that some *particular* $\varphi$-ing of T's is a wrongdoing—as opposed to the existence, in general, of something which is a wrongdoing of T's. *How* the blamer's commitment refers to the $\varphi$-ing of which it predicates wrongdoing (e.g. whether under a particular description, or by mental ostension) may vary

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Such reflexive endorsement is 'formal' in the sense that a great many types of reaction can conform to its structure; many types of reaction can be ones that subjects take to be fitting directly on the basis of someone's wrongdoing. Indeed, I will proceed under the assumption that any of the ways of reacting that philosophers have cited as components of blame—behaviours, judgements, dispositional changes, bodily feelings, modifications of intentions and expectations, etc.—can figure as the material content of a blaming reaction. Reflexive endorsement is 'reflexive' in the sense that it is self-referential, although I also hold that it can be 'reflexive' in the sense of being produced by automatic or inattentive mental processes. (It needn't be 'reflective', in the sense of representing a subject's considered judgement.) It is nevertheless an 'endorsement' because it involves a subject taking her reaction to be supported by a particular kind of justificatory basis.

Here is how my argument will be structured: in Section 16.2, I'll make an initial case for the claim that blaming involves an endorsement of the way that one is presently reacting by considering blame's directedness more closely. In Section 16.3, I'll issue several clarifications about the justificatory relation at issue in this element of blame, with the goal of explaining why I think that, while there are many ways of responding to wrongdoing, only *blaming* responses involve taking a wrongdoing to, in and of itself (i.e. directly), make one's present response fitting. In Section 16.4, I'll raise a problem for the picture of blame that I've drawn thus far, which I'll then solve by elaborating on the sense in which reflexive endorsement is self-referential. This will allow me both to finish defending my view that attributing reflexive endorsement to blame is necessary for accounting for blame's directedness and to say more about the assured feeling that I claim is typical to blame, which reflexive endorsement helps account for too. In Section 16.5, I'll argue that blame's element of reflexive endorsement gives us reason to at least sometimes inquire about blame as a unified entity. I'll then close by considering whether we should think that human responses *beyond* blame exhibit analogous commitments to their own fittingness.

from case to case. How the blamer's commitment represents the property of being a *wrongdoing* may also vary, so long as it predicates that property of T's $\varphi$-ing.

But also remember, if you think that *wrongdoings* are not really what people blame one another for, that it is fine to substitute in a different sort of norm violation here. What's important is just that whatever sort of (apparent) norm violation blame responds to go in the place of 'T's having done something wrong'. Indeed, I think the arguments that follow would go through even if one just subbed in 'T's having violated a norm'. Theorists of blame generally agree that blame responds to *some* sort of (apparent) norm violation (Shoemaker and Vargas 2021: 582). Further clarifications, including on what I mean by 'directly', will follow in due course.

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## 16.2 Blaming *Someone for*

Although it seems that a host of different elements may be involved in blaming, there is at least one respect in which blame—no matter what its elements—bears a resemblance to an emotion. Blame is a directed way of responding to one's environment, just as many emotions seem to be. Just as one might be afraid *of* commitment, or grateful *for* yoga, so too does blame consist in a reaction that one experiences as concerned with some particular 'object'. More specifically, like the object of some, but not all, emotions, blame's object is comprised of two parts: someone it is targeted *towards* and something it is *for*. One always blames *someone* for *something that person has (apparently) done wrong*. An initial reason to believe that blame always involves an element of endorsement is that doing so seems necessary for capturing the phenomenal character of blame's relation to its object. What it is like to blame someone involves seeing that person's (apparent) violation as justifying one's present way of reacting to him.[7] Thinking through the various ways in which we might try to describe the relation between blame and its object can help one to recognize this aspect of what blaming is like.

Remember, we're supposing that blame may involve a variety of possible parts: behavioural or physiological dispositions, bodily feelings, modifications of intention, behaviours, judgements, etc. Let us call an episode of blame—whichever one, or many, of these things it might involve—a 'blaming reaction'. Let us refer to the person blame is directed *towards* and the particular wrongdoing it is *for* as its 'target' and 'focus', respectively. Our question is: what is the relation between a blaming reaction, the target it is directed at, and the violation that reaction is for?

Pre-theoretically one might think that a blaming reaction is always *caused* by the target's wrongdoing. But that can't be right. For one thing, subjects sometimes blame targets who haven't actually done anything wrong. And for another, supposing merely that a target's wrongdoing causes a blaming reaction won't capture the relation between a blaming reaction and its object, since one person's wrongdoing can cause another to experience a reaction directed at or about any number of other things. For example, John's betraying my secret might cause me to be angry about something else entirely, such as John's father's having neglected to be a better role model for him.[8]

Thus, many in the blame literature suggest that we can capture blame's directedness by holding that blame partially consists in a subject's *judging* that the target has done something wrong (or in some other way instantiates blameworthy-making

[7] To avoid clunkiness I'll sometimes drop the '(apparent)' in what follows.

[8] See Solomon 1973: 21. I assume the anger in this example is an instance of blame. In general, I think 'blame' and 'anger' have overlapping extensions: some, but not all, blame is anger, and some, but not all, anger is blame.

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properties).[9] The idea is that blaming consists of such a judgement plus some further way of reacting (be it a physiological response, or a behavioural one, or what have you).

However, saying *merely* that blaming reactions have this judgemental component won't suffice to capture blame's directedness either. For, whatever they consist in precisely, it seems that the other, non-judgemental components of a blaming reaction can also be directed at a target's violation. If one person blames another by yelling, for instance, then we say that the blamer is yelling *at* the target *for* that person's wrongdoing. In blame, a decision to no longer trust someone seems to be a response *to* her *for* what she's done. ('Well, I guess I won't confide in *her* again.') If a blamer feels miffed, then she is miffed *at* the target *for* the target's behaviour. Indeed, if a subject's blame involves awareness of changes in her body, then those changes too can be experienced as concerned with the target's wrong. ('My blood was just boiling at what he said!')[10] Thus, if a blaming reaction does involve a judgement that some person has done wrong, it will be crucial to specify the right relation between this judgemental component and whatever else that reaction may consist in in order to fully describe the relation between a blaming reaction and its object. In short: we must capture the way in which *non*-judgemental components of blame are directed at its object, too.

So, assuming for the moment that blaming does involve the relevant judgemental component, what could the relation between that judgement and the rest of a blaming reaction be? Again, we can't just say that a judgement of wrongdoing *causes* whatever else is involved in a blaming reaction. My, say, urge to slam my fist down may be just as much about John's father's neglect when it is caused by the *judgement* that John has betrayed my secret as when it is caused by his wrongful betrayal itself. We could try to build up the way in which the rest of the blaming reaction is about its object out of a *reliable* causal connection between it and a judgement of wrongdoing. But I think one should worry that, if we try to do this, we'll face a problem of deviant causal chains. After all, insofar as a subject does judge that some person has acted wrongly, and then (say) lashes out at him for it, surely that person's wrongdoing is not just the cause of her lashing out, but rather also seems to the subject to be the *reason* that her lashing out is merited. (And something more sophisticated than a mere reliable causal connection seems required to capture what it is for the target's wrongdoing to appear as the subject's reason.)[11]

[9] Wallace (1994), Sher (2006), Scanlon (2008), and Smith (2013) all suppose that blaming involves a judgemental component.

[10] See Goldie 2000: 55, 2002: 248 for a similar point that *all* components of an emotion have directedness, and Na'aman (this volume) for defence of the thought that the physiological components of an emotion do.

[11] Say that you reliably feel angry when insulted. Say, further, that a mad scientist rigs some wires to your brain so that pressing a certain button has the following effect: it induces you to forget everything that has occurred in the last five minutes, and then to exhibit exactly the syndrome of physiological,

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But that the target's wrongdoing has this appearance of a *reason* is precisely the point I wanted to draw out. If we suppose that the way in which blaming reactions are directed at individuals for their wrongdoing is explained by those reactions consisting, in part, in a judgement that some person has done wrong, then it is only natural to understand the subject as viewing the behaviour which that judgement concerns as providing *justification* for the rest of her blaming reaction. I submit that it is only natural to form this picture because what it is like to blame *someone*, and to blame him *for* some wrongdoing, involves regarding that person's wrongdoing as justifying the way one is presently reacting to him.

Perhaps, however, an episode of blame needn't involve a representation that some person has done wrong as a *component part* at all. An alternative way of approaching the problem of the relation between a blaming reaction and its object is to propose not that it involves a judgement, but rather that a blaming reaction *fully consists* in a representation of a person and his wrongdoing. This is how many psychologists and philosophers of emotion seem to conceive of the way in which emotions are directed. Emotional reactions, they say, are themselves a mode of representation: perhaps judgements about their objects, or perhaps perceptual or perception-like experiences of their objects as bearing some evaluative significance (Solomon 1973; Döring 2009; Tappolet 2012, 2016). Or, say the more empirically minded, they are 'appraisals' of their objects, where this typically means that emotional reactions function to represent an organism's relationship to some object(s) in its environment as conferring harms or benefits (Lazarus 1991: 820).[12] For example, D'Arms and Jacobson (2003: 139) describe fear as

> a syndrome of directed attention, physiological changes, affect, and motivation that can be functionally understood as constituting a kind of appraisal of the circumstances.

It is usually assumed, in adopting this approach, that the various types of emotion are differentiated from one another by the object of an emotional reaction appearing to the subject to possess evaluative properties that emotions of *that* type represent. (Some call such properties the emotion's 'formal object'.) For example, it is assumed that a reactive syndrome that is an episode of fear will be one in which some object appears to the subject as fearsome; that an episode of contempt will

motivational, and attention-directing effects that is typically involved in feeling angry. The scientist then proceeds to amuse himself thus: he invites a series of your most tactless family members into the room, and every time one of them says something insulting to you, he waits to make sure you have registered the wrongfulness of this insult and then presses the button. Thus, it is your belief that you have been wrongfully insulted which causes him to press the button, which, in turn, causes you to forget the insult and then to undergo the syndrome of physiological, motivational, and attention-directing effects that are regularly caused by violations against you. Intuitively, this 'anger-syndrome' is not one that is *about* being insulted—at least not in the way that anger is normally about an insult.

[12] D'Arms and Jacobson (2003), Prinz (2004), Moors (2013), Pickard (2013), and Menges (2017) also speak of emotional (or blaming) reactions as 'appraisals'.

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be one in which some object appears to the subject as contemptible; and so forth. Adopting this approach for the case of blame, we would suppose that a blaming reaction—whatever it consists in—itself represents some object as blameworthy. Or rather, to more accurately accommodate blame's dyadic object, we might suppose that blaming reactions represent some target as blameworthy and represent some focus (that target's wrongdoing) as making him so.[13]

To say this is not yet to suppose that blaming must involve a subject's taking the target's wrongdoing to justify her present way of reacting. It *is* to suppose that blaming involves representing some target's wrongdoing as making that person *blameworthy*, but one might imagine that this occurs without the relation between the target and the subject's present way of reacting to him actually figuring in the content of the subject's representation. To be sure, the subject represents some target person as bearing some evaluative badness, and the name that we have for this sort of badness is 'blameworthy'—but this doesn't necessarily mean that the subject must represent the target as *meriting the subject's emotional reaction itself*.

And yet, it seems to me that saying anything less would leave out something about the sort of appraisal that is involved in both emotions and blame. For emotional experiences—and also blame experiences—*do* seem to involve at least some registration of the relation between an emotion's object and the way one is reacting to that object. Consider: although emotions are about particular objects, they are not 'transparent' vehicles of representation in the way that judgements and perceptions are. In introspecting on emotional experience, one doesn't simply 'see through' that experience to the object one's emotion is directed at (Deonna and Teroni 2012: 69). Rather, one also becomes aware of how one feels—because emotional episodes aren't *just* experiences of objects, but rather experiences of *responding to* objects. But once we say this, I think we are pressed to acknowledge that the sense in which emotions represent their objects *does* involve representing those objects as meriting our feelings. For the connection between our emotional feelings and their objects certainly doesn't seem arbitrary from the inside. Nor does the connection here seem to be merely causal.[14]

Moreover, the preposition we use to describe the relation of a blaming reaction to its focus further supports the view that the target's wrongdoing presents to the subject as providing normative support for her blame. We say that the blame is 'for' the wrongdoing, as when we give a gift to a person 'for' something they've

[13] Behaviours can remain a component part of blame on this model too, provided we allow behavioural expressions to be part of what is doing the representational work of blame. The idea that behaviours may represent doesn't seem odd if we recall the many behaviours that do. Ballet, for instance, represents.

[14] Cowan (2016: 74) proposes that emotional opacity supports the thought that emotions themselves may figure in the representational content of emotions. Relatedly, Mitchell (2019: 373) argues that we are blocked from fully distinguishing attitude and content in the case of emotions, because emotions represent the evaluative properties of their objects as 'having the power to intelligibly motivate' a component of emotional experience itself.

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done to merit it. Assuming now that a blaming reaction *is* a representation of its object, it is hard to imagine why we would speak this way if representing some target as blameworthy didn't also involve representing our blaming reaction itself as made appropriate by the target's wrongdoing. After all, it is not normally the case that when I represent an object's possession of some property as obtaining in virtue of some other fact, I speak of myself as having a reaction that is *for* that latter fact. I submit that, in the case of blame, I *do* regard my reaction as *for* its target's wrongdoing precisely because the way I represent a person when blaming him *does* involve representing his wrongdoing as making him worthy of my way of reacting.

Thus it seems to me that, no matter what its other elements are precisely, blaming always involves taking some person's wrongdoing to justify one's present way of reacting, because this is what must be said if one wants to accurately capture what it's like to blame *someone*, and to blame him *for* some wrongdoing.

Let me also add two clarificatory notes about this point: first, once we recognize that a blaming subject views the target's behaviour as providing reason for her present way of reacting, I think it becomes apparent that the subject doesn't take the target's behaviour to provide justification merely by virtue of just *anything* about it. A blamer doesn't take the target's wrongdoing to justify her blaming reaction merely by virtue of that behaviour's being, say, an utterance. Rather she takes that behaviour to provide justification by virtue of its making the target worthy of blame. And whatever precisely need be the case in order for the target's behaviour to do this, it includes, at the very least, that behaviour's being the *type of thing* that makes people worthy of blame—which is wrongdoing. So what I actually think we're in a position to conclude at this moment, put more carefully, is that the blaming subject sees the target's wrongdoing *qua wrongdoing* as justifying her present way of reacting to him.[15] From here on, this qualifier should be understood as implicit whenever I say that the subject takes the target's wrongdoing to justify her present way of reacting.

Second, I must make a clarification that I already alluded to briefly in the introduction: although the commitment we've located in blame *is* an endorsement in that it involves the subject taking her present reaction to be justified, the endorsement at issue needn't be a reflective one, in the sense of representing the subject's considered judgement. In holding that blaming subjects take a target's wrongdoing to make their blame justified, in other words, I by no means deny that a person might blame while simultaneously judging that her blame *isn't* justified, perhaps because she thinks the target hasn't actually done anything wrong. The idea is rather that, because one always blames a target *for* that person's

[15] Or, in other words, that she takes the (putative) fact *that the target's φ-ing was a wrongdoing* to justify her present way of reacting. Although, again, anyone who disagrees with me about what type of thing people blame one another for may make appropriate substitutions.

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wrongdoing, blame *internally* involves a commitment to that wrongdoing's justifying one's present reaction, and thus *internally* involves an endorsement of one's blaming response. I take it that episodes of blame, which *include* commitments to the subject's present way of reacting being justified, may sometimes be triggered automatically by stimuli other than a subject's reflectively judging that the target has behaved wrongfully. Thus, blame may sometimes conflict with and be recalcitrant to a subject's considered beliefs—and thus be regarded as irrational by her own lights.[16]

## 16.3 Justificatory Relation

I'll now continue to sharpen the picture of blame's formal element that I'm advancing, focusing in this section on the justificatory relation involved in reflexive endorsement. Specifically, I want to speak carefully about the *dimension* along which the subject takes her reaction to be justified; the type of *justificatory support* at issue in the subject's commitment; and the distinctive *justificatory role* played by the target's wrongdoing in the subject's thought. My aim in this section is twofold: in addition to staving off any potential confusion about the content of the commitment that blame incorporates, getting more precise about the justificatory relation invoked in blame's element of reflexive endorsement will also help me to point out the features that make me think this commitment is unique to blame.

As an initial clarification, we'll distinguish between two dimensions along which a response might have the status of being 'justified': the dimension of *fittingness* and the dimension of that attitude's being *good to have* (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000a, 2000b). Pascal's wager purportedly demonstrates that belief in God can be good to have even if it isn't fitting. An offer of a million dollars to

[16] One may, if one wishes, hold that the cognitive commitment internal to blame is not a *judgement*, but rather what Rosen (2015: 71) calls a 'seeming', or what Roberts (1988: 191) calls a 'construal' which possess a certain 'verisimilitude', and has 'for the construer, the *appearance* of truth'. For my own part, what I think is important is just to hold that blame, including the endorsement internal to it, can be the upshot of the sort of mental processing psychologists call 'autonomous'. An autonomous process 'initiates and completes outside of deliberate control' (Pennycook 2018: 8); such processes are 'mandatory when their triggering stimuli are encountered' (Evans and Stanovich 2013: 236). It seems to me that, so long as such a process can produce blame, and can be triggered by something other than a subject's considered judgement that a target is blameworthy, we can account for the existence of recalcitrant blame. There is an interesting question which may be raised here about how best to account for the level of felt irrationality involved in recalcitrant blame and in recalcitrant emotions. While experiences of recalcitrant emotion and blame feel more irrational than illusory perceptual experiences, they also feel less incoherent than experiences of making two directly contradictory judgements. (For discussion, see Döring 2009 and Tappolet 2012.) Some philosophers attempt to account for the level of felt irrationality present in recalcitrance by assimilating the type of appraisal involved in emotions and blame to a type of perception that we strive to manage over time (D'Arms and Jacobson 2003; Tappolet 2012). I am personally unconvinced that this is the best strategy—but I won't pursue that issue here.

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desire a saucer of mud may make that desire very good to have, even if saucers of mud are never fitting objects of desire. In general, while whether a reaction is good to have can speak for or against bringing it about that one has it, 'fit' is the normative relation that obtains between responses and things that merit, call for, or are worthy of those responses: between desire and the desirable, amusement and the amusing, contempt and the contemptible, etc.[17] As with all responses that we deem to be fitting, there is always something a blaming subject takes her present reaction to be appropriate *to*, namely its target. Moreover, that a target has violated some requirement bears most directly on whether that person is *worthy* of a subject's blame—in and of itself such a violation does not tell us whether it would be a good thing for a subject to blame that person. So, when I say that blame involves a subject taking some target's violation to 'justify' the way she is reacting, I mean 'justified' with respect to whether it fits its target, not with respect to whether it is good to have.

I must also clarify the sense in which a reflexively endorsing subject takes the target's wrongdoing to provide support for the fittingness of her present way of reacting. It is not simply that she regards the target's wrongdoing as a normative reason for that reaction. Rather, she regards the target's wrongdoing as providing support for how she reacts from a first-personal perspective which implicates both justification and explanation at once.

By 'normative reason,' I refer to a consideration that can provide support for the fittingness of a subject's reacting in a certain way regardless of how she came to be reacting in that way, and, indeed, regardless of whether she even is reacting in that way.[18] The relation of justificatory support invoked by the reflexively endorsing subject *isn't* merely that she takes the target's wrongdoing to be a normative reason to react in the way that she is. After all, a subject may take the target's wrongdoing to be a normative reason (or even to provide her with sufficient normative reason) to react in the way that she presently is *without* that wrongdoing being the focus of her blame. To illustrate, imagine you encounter me slamming my fist down in anger (about John's father's neglect), and you tell me that John's betrayal of my secret makes this behaviour fitting. I may concur wholeheartedly, but my anger still needn't be *about* John's betrayal.

What would be missing if we held reflexive endorsement merely to invoke the normative reason relation is that the blaming subject also takes the target's

[17] Reasons that count towards a reaction's fittingness are sometimes called 'right-kind', while considerations that favour having a reaction merely by counting towards bringing it about that one reacts in that way are called 'wrong-kind' reasons. Some philosophers think that wrong-kind considerations in favour of attitudes aren't really reasons for those attitudes, because those attitudes can't be directly based on such considerations (Kelly 2002; Shah 2006). Maguire (2018) argues that right-kind reasons for affective attitudes aren't really reasons because they are neither gradable nor contributory in the way that reasons for action are. I refer to both types of consideration as reasons, although from here on out I'll really only be talking about right-kind (i.e. fit-related) reasons anyway.

[18] This is the analogue of some consideration's supplying 'propositional justification' in epistemology.

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wrongdoing to play a role in the genesis of her blaming response—to *explain why* she is reacting in that way. But of course the sense of 'explanation' here is not merely causal. It is instead that the blaming subject regards the target's wrongdoing as we regard the rational bases of our attitudes from the inside. She takes that wrongdoing to explain her present way of reacting and to justify it, and, indeed, to explain it because of the justification it provides.[19] She takes it to render her reaction *justificatorily well supported*.

As I initially characterized her, the reflexively endorsing subject 'takes her present way of reacting to be fitting on the basis of the target's wrongdoing'. But what I mean by this phrase is open to misunderstandings that need warding off. One may hear me as asserting simply that the subject takes the target's wrongdoing to provide normative support for her present reaction. But I don't mean this; the subject also takes the target's wrongdoing to be a reason *for which* she reacts. Alternatively, one may hear me as asserting that the target's wrongdoing is the rational basis of the subject's *taking*, as opposed to what she takes to be the rational bases of her *reaction*. But I don't mean this either.[20] Rather, I mean that the subject takes the target's wrongdoing to render her reaction *justificatorily well supported*, with respect to fit.

The complication in clarifying the sort of justificatory support at issue in the content of reflexive endorsement has at least has one simplifying effect. We need no longer ask whether the blaming subject merely takes herself to have *some* reason to think that her attitude is fitting or whether she takes herself to have *sufficient* reason for its fittingness. Since the idea is not just that the subject takes herself to have justificatory support for her reaction, which is something that a person may have in part but not in full, but rather that she takes her reaction to be justificatorily well supported, which a reaction simply either is or isn't, it follows that the subject takes herself to have sufficient reason for her reaction's fittingness. This doesn't mean, however, that she takes the target's wrongdoing to provide sufficient reason for her reaction's fittingness *no matter what*.

Indeed, I think we can infer, simply from thinking about what it takes to make a blaming reaction fitting, that, if blame involves reflexive endorsement, then blaming subjects are also at least implicitly committed to certain enabling conditions on the fittingness of their present reactions being met. For, although the fact that some person has behaved impermissibly can make that person worthy of blame *by some possible person*, it is not sufficient to ensure that that person warrants that *particular* blamer's blame. Even when a target is blameworthy in the sense of satisfying the criteria that a person must to be the fitting target of some

[19] This is the analogue of some consideration's supplying 'doxastic justification'.

[20] Although a blaming subject must *take* the target's having done something wrong to be a reason for which she blames, I make no claim that the target's wrongdoing must *be* a rational basis *either* of her blame *or* of her reflexive endorsement.

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*possible* person's blame, intuitively a subject must also have requisite standing if the target is really to merit blame from *her*. She must, for instance, not have committed the same wrongdoing without having reformed, or else her blame would be hypocritical. Thus, since reflexive endorsement *does* involve a subject's taking her present way of reacting to be justificatorily well supported, we can infer that the blaming subject must also be (perhaps more implicitly) taking criteria beyond the target's having wronged to be satisfied, such as the criterion that she possesses standing to blame.[21]

Let's turn now to the distinctive justificatory role played by the target's wrongdoing in a blaming subject's thought. To see the special role of wrongdoing that I want to highlight, consider first that it is possible to take one's *non*-blaming reaction to be made fitting by a target's wrongdoing. For example, if I've been coaching you not to be such a goody two-shoes, then I may be *proud* when you finally do something wrong and take your wrongdoing to justify my pride. But consider also a further feature of this sort of case: if I take your wrongdoing to provide justificatory support for my pride, I must also take additional considerations to *link* your wrongdoing to my reaction's fittingness. Indeed, if we roughly gloss pride's fittingness conditions following Philippa Foot's (2002: 76) suggestion that pride responds to achievements that are 'in some way splendid and in some way one's own', then we will straightaway recognize that *the satisfaction of those conditions* play a mediating role in our coaching case. Because acting wrongly is precisely what I've been trying to coach you to do, I regard your wrongdoing as my own splendid achievement, and my prideful reaction as fitting in virtue of my own success. I thus take your wrongdoing to make my prideful reaction fitting precisely because your wrongdoing demonstrates that I've achieved something splendid—my expert coaching has finally borne fruit!—which, *in turn*, renders my prideful reaction fitting. Moreover, I *can't* take your wrongdoing to provide justificatory support for my pride without also taking that wrongdoing to demonstrate that I've achieved something splendid, because wrongdoings are not, in and of themselves, prideworthy.

In contrast, a *blaming* subject needn't see the target's wrongdoing as calling for her blaming response via demonstrating that anything else is the case. It is *wrongdoing*, after all, which makes a person blameworthy.[22] Thus, a *blaming* subject takes the target's wrongdoing to *directly* justify her blaming response. In other words, regardless of whether her reaction involves getting in the target's face or merely distancing herself from that person, a blaming subject takes the target's

[21] For discussion of what contributes to standing, see Cohen 2006 and Todd 2019. My suggestion here is that lacking standing can render a person's blame unfitting. Thus, philosophers who argue that there is nothing morally wrong with hypocritical blame do not directly address what I take to be at least one problem with blaming hypocritically.

[22] Although background conditions may need to be satisfied for a target's wrongdoing to do so. And, again, one may make appropriate substitutions for 'wrongdoing' if one wishes.

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wrongdoing to justify her present response *without* having to also demonstrate that some further set of conditions has been satisfied. Indeed, this is why a blaming subject often *does* take her response to a target to be justified without also taking that person's wrongdoing to demonstrate anything further. For example, I might take your wrongdoing to justify my decision to stop speaking to you, without actually thinking that your wrongdoing makes giving you the silent treatment worth doing. Rather, I might take your wrongdoing simply to make you worthy of the silent treatment.

Having noticed the *directness* of the justificatory role a blaming subject attributes to the target's wrongdoing, it is thus worth building this directness into our understanding of the commitment involved in blame. It is worth saying (as, indeed, I did initially), that a reflexively endorsing subject takes her present way of reacting to be fitting *directly* on the basis of the target's wrongdoing—where what I mean is that the subject takes the target's wrongdoing to (i) justify her blaming response and (ii) to justify it *without* having to demonstrate that something else is the case which, in turn, justifies her response. It is worth building this directness condition into blame's element of reflexive endorsement because this condition ensures that the reflexively endorsing subject (perhaps more implicitly) takes her present way of reacting to be justifiable directly by wrongdoing. It thus ensures that she (at least implicitly) takes her present way of reacting to have justification conditions that, in human life anyway, appear to be *unique* to blame.

Indeed, it bears emphasizing here that the specific justificatory relation invoked in blame's element of reflexive endorsement is what makes it plausible that this commitment is the formal element of *blame*, in particular. In the introduction, I explained that merely having in common that they are all responses to a person's wrongdoing does not suffice to render the many types of blame a unified phenomenon. But, although there are many ways of responding to wrongdoing, and, although several of those ways may perhaps involve a subject taking someone's wrongdoing to provide justificatory support for her response, they don't all involve a subject taking her response to be made fitting to the target, and made so by the target's wrongdoing, in and of itself. Some responses to wrongdoing, while they may involve commitments to their own justification, don't involve a subject taking a target's wrongdoing to provide justificatory support for that response's *fittingness* at all: a mother who decides to show her murderous son extra affection in order to compensate for the treatment he'll engender from others is not taking her son's wrongdoing to make him *merit* her extra affection. Rather, insofar as her son's wrongdoing is a reason for her response, it is a consideration that makes her affectionate response *good to have*: it indicates that her son is likely in for harsh treatment, and that compensatory affection may thus do him some good. Other responses to wrongdoing may be ones that a subject regards as made fitting by the target's wrongdoing, but made fitting by his *wrongdoing* only indirectly. One *could* take a person's wrongdoing to render him worthy of affection, for instance, if one

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has particular reason to view his wrongdoing as demonstrating that he satisfies the fittingness conditions of affection. Perhaps, having coached you to behave badly, I now regard the fact that you've done something wrong as indirectly warranting my affectionate response by demonstrating that you have affection-worthy qualities: you're a special, fun person, say, with a dare-devil streak—not one of those lame goody two-shoes after all.

But in blame, a subject takes the target's wrongdoing to, in and of itself, make her present response fitting—that is, to make it fitting directly.[23] Non-blaming responses aren't made fitting by wrongdoing in and of itself, but rather, insofar as they can be fitting at all, made fitting directly by objects possessing other sorts of properties. This is why I think that, although there are many ways in which humans respond to wrongdoing, we find the commitment I've described just in those among them that are blame.

## 16.4 Self-Reference

I have supposed that a blaming reaction may contain *any* of the diverse ways of reacting that philosophers have thought involved in interpersonal blame, although I've also argued that each episode of blame must involve a subject's taking her present way of reacting to be fitting directly on the basis of the target's wrongdoing. So, as things stand, one should understand blame as involving a subject's reflexive endorsement plus a material reaction, where the latter might consist in a way of behaving, a physiological response, or any number of other things. But there is a final twist that must be added to this picture, which will help elucidate how reflexive endorsement makes blame what it is.

To see why a final twist is needed, consider how the reference in reflexive endorsement to the blaming subject's 'present way of reacting' is to be understood. Which aspects of what the subject is presently doing count for her as the way of reacting she is endorsing?

A natural thought is that what the subject takes to be justified is just whatever the material reaction component of her blaming consists in. For instance, if the material element of her blame consists in not speaking to the person it's directed at, then what she takes to be justified is her refusal to speak to that person. But this thought may seem strange given that I've allowed that the material reaction in an episode of blame can consist in *any* of the diverse reactions that philosophers have held blame to involve. In particular, it may seem strange given that I've allowed that the material element of blame might consist in things like physiological changes and dispositions, such as, say, one's blood pressure rising or

[23] Or, again, if one wishes to make substitutions: something unique that is very close to wrongdoing—a norm violation of some sort.

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a disposition to scream and make certain facial expressions. The idea that *these* sorts of reactions could be what the blaming subject takes to be justified may seem dubious, since physiological changes and dispositions aren't really the sort of thing that can be characterized as justified or unjustified. Taking these ways of reacting to be justified, one may worry, would be like taking having a stomachache to be justified.

And yet, the phenomenological considerations raised in Section 16.2 would seem to suggest that even material elements of blame that we would normally consider arational *are* what the subject takes to be justified. The feeling of 'boiling blood', I suggested, can seem to be concerned with a target's wrongdoing, and postulating a merely causal connection—even a reliable one—between a judgement that some target has wronged and a subject's body temperature rising seems insufficient for capturing what that's like. Moreover, insofar as emotionally blaming someone seems not merely to involve representing him and his wrongdoing, but also that wrongdoing as justifying how one *feels*, it's hard to imagine this 'how one feels' bit as constituted by any type of thing that we normally take to be rationally justifiable. It seems as if anything left over in emotional experience once we've subtracted out representation of an object *is* just awareness of the physiological and dispositional changes involved in one's body readying itself to act in certain ways.

Indeed, although the trouble seems starkest for arational material elements of blame, there is actually an issue for the rationally justifiable material elements of blame too. I have claimed that, in reflexive endorsement, a subject takes her present way of reacting to be made fitting *directly* by the target's wrongdoing. Yet the mental states that philosophers generally hold to be the rationally justifiable components of blame—states like beliefs, desires, intentions, and actions—do not seem to be the sort of thing that normally *can* be justified *directly* by wrongdoing. After all, these states all have their *own* justification conditions. Thus, one would think that the only way for a target's wrongdoing to justify these sorts of states would be via demonstrating that *their* justification conditions had been satisfied—in which case that wrongdoing wouldn't justify them directly.[24] But then we face a problem: it seems as if accounting for what it's like for blame to be directed requires holding that blamers take the material elements of their blame to be justified directly by the target's wrongdoing. Yet, if neither the arational nor

[24] Consider intention. Normally considerations that can serve as reasons for intending to $\varphi$ are considerations that demonstrate $\varphi$-ing *worth doing* (either as means to our ends or as ends in themselves). So how can a blaming subject take deciding not to speak to someone—forming an intention—to be justified *directly* by a target's wrongdoing, rather than justified by that wrongdoing merely because it demonstrates giving the target the silent treatment to be worth doing? And yet I have claimed that a blaming subject sometimes *does* take responses like deciding not to speak to the target to be justified *without* also taking giving the silent treatment to be worth doing. So she *must* take the target's wrongdoing to directly justify this sort of response. How is it possible for her to do this?

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rationally justifiable material components of blame *are* generally justifiable directly by a target's wrongdoing, then how can blamers take the material components of blame to be justified in this way?

Here's one thought. If it is right to consider blame a way of representing some target's wrongdoing as making her *blameworthy*, then it seems reasonable to hold that when a blaming subject takes her present way of reacting to be fitting on the basis of the target's wrongdoing, what she regards as her 'present way of reacting' *is blame*. Moreover, what I've been arguing all along is that *reflexive endorsement* is an element of blame. Thus, I suggest that, whenever a blaming subject takes her present way of reacting to be fitting, she never takes *merely* the material components of blame to be fitting. Rather, she also regards *her reflexive endorsement itself* as part of her present way of reacting that she takes to be justified.

The proposal, then, is that blaming involves taking one's present way of reacting to be justified, where one's present way of reacting is constituted both by particular physiological, behavioural, or cognitive responses one is presently manifesting *and by one's representation of what one is presently doing as justified*. On this proposal, blaming's element of reflexive endorsement becomes truly reflexive, in the sense of being self-referential. It is as if the blamer is pointing at her present reaction and saying 'this way of reacting is fitting'—while understanding that 'this way of reacting' *includes* that very pointing at her present reaction and asserting that it is fitting. This is the final twist to our picture of blame.

Does this picture solve the problem of how blamers can take the material elements of blame to be justified directly by the target's wrongdoing? Do we not now just have a picture on which our blaming subjects take the target's wrongdoing to directly justify *several* things, many—if not all—of which can't be justified in this way? I think we *have* solved our problem, so long as we don't view blame's material elements as fully separable from her endorsement itself in the subject's mind. In endorsing the material elements of her reaction *together* with her endorsement itself, as I want us to see it, it is not that the subject endorses separate things (despite my having, for ease of exposition, spoken of blame's elements as if they were separable). Rather, we must hold that the material elements of her blame, by virtue of being represented by the subject's endorsement as one with that endorsement itself, are transformed into something that they wouldn't otherwise be. They are transformed, via the union within endorsement with endorsement, into *parts of blame*, and it is only as parts of a whole unity—her *blame*—that the subject takes blame's material elements to be justified.

In what sense does the subject's reflexive endorsement transform blame's material elements? In the sense that it *renders* blame's material elements directed. My idea, in other words, is that material elements of blame which otherwise *wouldn't* necessarily be about a person's wrongdoing—ranging, potentially, from physiological changes to overt behaviours—are made to be about a person's

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wrongdoing *by* being united with the subject's endorsement within that endorsement. Thus, in endorsing the *unity* born of that very endorsement, a blamer never takes *merely* any material elements of blame to be justified.

Here is my best attempt to flesh out why reflexive endorsement can make blame's material elements directed. We give shape to our experiences, at least in part, by how we interpret them. And so there seems something plausible in the idea that I could render a material response one that is concerned with a particular person's particular behaviour by taking that response to be called for by that person's behaviour: that what could make my reaction directed *towards* you *for* what you've done is my taking it to be justified—in the sense of fitting *to* you—*by* what you've done. The same idea about giving shape to our own experiences also makes it seem plausible that part of what makes a response have particular justification conditions is *viewing* it as capable of being justified by particular reasons—such that taking a response to be justified directly by someone's wrongdoing could be part of what *makes* it the sort of response that can be justified directly by someone's wrongdoing. A response's being justifiable directly by *wrongdoing*, moreover, would also seem to make it a type of response that, whenever it's experienced as *for* someone's behaviour, would cast that behaviour *as* a wrongdoing. So our ability to give shape to our own experiences through how we interpret them makes it plausible that *taking* some material response to be made fitting directly by a target's wrongdoing could *make* that response have the directedness characteristic of blame.

Yet there seems a problem with taking any response that isn't *already* relevantly directed to be justified directly by a target's wrongdoing. How can I take your behaviour to be rendering my response justificatorily well supported unless it's *already* a response *to* you *for* your behaviour? And how can I take that response to be made fitting directly by your behaviour's being *wrong* unless it's already the type of response that can be made fitting directly by someone's wrongdoing? My thought is that this is where the reflexivity helps. By endorsing my material responses as parts of a united whole which includes *this very endorsement*, I can *simultaneously* take the material parts of blame to be merited by you directly for your wrongdoing and conceive of those parts as already ones that I take to be justified in this way—and thus as already relevantly directed. So I can make all the material parts of blame directed, and conceive of those parts as I must to bestow that directedness, all in one go.

I argued in Section 16.2 that capturing the phenomenal character of blame's directedness requires holding that blame involves an element of endorsement. In fact, it requires holding that blame involves an element of *reflexive* endorsement. Holding that blame involves an endorsement is necessary for capturing what it's like for all the material parts of blame that seem directed to seem this way. Holding that blame involves a *reflexive* endorsement is necessary for explaining how a subject's endorsement of blame's material components is possible. Thus,

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attributing reflexive endorsement to blame is necessary for properly characterizing blame's directedness—since we can't properly characterize blame's directedness without accommodating its phenomenal character. And, indeed, attributing reflexive endorsement to blame isn't merely necessary for capturing what it's like for blame to be directed. Rather, blame's element of reflexive endorsement is what *gives* blame its characteristic directedness. Blame's formal element really does *form*.

. . .

Thinking of blame as involving this sort of transformative self-reference solves the problem of how a blaming subject can take the material parts of her blame to be justified directly by the target's wrongdoing. But, additionally, thinking of the element of reflexive endorsement as self-referential also provides us with further reason to favour the view that blame involves this element. This is because reflexive endorsement, so understood, can help to explain something else about blame. It can help to explain why blaming often involves a feeling that transcends the phenomenal character of its directedness—a way of feeling that I roughly glossed earlier as one of assuredness in one's blame.

The idea that an attitude's involving a self-referential endorsement may, in some cases, imbue that attitude with a more holistic feeling is one I take from a place that may seem far afield of our present discussion: from Kant's account of aesthetic appreciation of the beautiful. Nevertheless, I think there is something to be learned from briefly reflecting on Kant's view.

As Kant understood it, appreciating a beautiful object involves regarding it disinterestedly—without any ulterior motive or plan to use the object for some personal purpose—and then taking one's current way of regarding that object to be appropriate or legitimate to that object ('universally valid') (1790/1987: 58). Kant took this element of endorsement involved in aesthetic appreciation to be self-referential in the same way I take reflexive endorsement in blame to be. As Ginsborg (1991: 299–300) describes Kant's view, aesthetic appreciation of the beautiful involves 'self-referentially judging that one's mental state in that very act of judging is universally communicable or universally valid with respect to an object.' Moreover, Kant thought the self-referential character of this type of judging gave it a sort of self-perpetuating, or self-maintaining, quality and held that our consciousness of this quality *is* the distinctive feeling of aesthetic pleasure. As Ginsborg explains it, the

> consciousness that I ought to be in the very same mental state as that in which I presently find myself…qualifies as a feeling of disinterested pleasure. For although it involves no interest or desire, the consciousness that I ought to be in my present state of mind supports or maintains itself by serving as a ground or justification for being in that very state of mind. (302)

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We might think of it thus: to approve of one's present state of mind, as one does on Kant's picture of aesthetic appreciation, involves approving of that very state of approval. But then this, in turn, amounts to approving of *that* very state of approving of one's present state of approval. Which, in turn, amounts to approving of *that* very state of approving of approving of one's present state of approval…and so on. This view may seem implausible if we picture the aesthetic appreciator as occurrently thinking that she approves of her approving, etc., but we needn't picture her in this way. It is rather that the content of her judgement implicitly contains an infinite number of iterations, such that, were she to unpack it, she would find herself committed to approving yet again. We might say that she is in a state of mind that seems to *invite* its own renewal; each time she approves of what she is doing, the content of that very approval invites her to approve of what she is doing once more. And for Kant, that aesthetic appreciation is a state that continuously invites the subject into another iteration of that very same state explains why aesthetic appreciation feels pleasurable in a distinctive way. The feeling of such a state of engagement with an object is the feeling of being *captivated* by it.

Of course, *blaming* does not feel like being captivated by a beautiful object. But then there are already dissimilarities we can point to between aesthetic appreciation and blame. Although blame's material components are diverse, I think it fair to say that blame is not ever constituted by strictly disinterested contemplation. Additionally, blame is a way of reacting that the subject takes to be made fitting by another's *wrongdoing*, while of course aesthetic appreciation is not. Moreover, I've said, being in such a state involves being committed to having a certain *standing*. But blaming does, on my view, like aesthetic appreciation as Kant conceived of it, involve a self-referential type of approval. And I think we can recognize a phenomenological characteristic typical to blaming that, together with these other important factors, this self-referential approval can help to account for.

Blaming, I claim, involves taking *the way I am reacting right now* to be fitting, where *the way I am reacting right now* includes *taking the way I am reacting right now to be fitting*. Hence, blaming also amounts to taking *taking the way I am reacting right now to be fitting* to itself be fitting. But then my blaming must also amount to taking *taking taking the way I am reacting right now to be fitting to itself be fitting* to itself be fitting…and so on. Again, my thought is not that blaming must involve *thinking about* how the commitment it consists in iterates. Rather, it is that, like aesthetic engagement with beauty on Kant's view, to blame is to be in a state that, in virtue of its content, *invites* itself to self-perpetuate. It is to be in a state that involves determining what's right, determining oneself to have a certain standing with respect to another, and also approving of one's making those very determinations—such that one feels right to be determining what's right, and perhaps even right to feel right to be determining what's right…and so on. Thus, I think we do well to propose that blame involves a self-referential commitment to its own fittingness. This commitment helps explain why blamers can feel so

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justified in pronouncing judgement, and even so justified in feeling justified, so (goddamned, one wants to say) *self-righteous*.[25]

## 16.5 Unity in Diversity

Postulating reflexive endorsement as blame's formal element can help to account for the self-righteous phenomenology that often accompanies blame and explains what makes blame directed. Moreover, if I'm right that reflexive endorsement makes blame directed, then reflexive endorsement is common to all forms of blame—because one *always* blames someone for something. But if reflexive endorsement is a necessary and, indeed, essential feature of blame, then there *is* something significant enough to make blame itself worth inquiring after that ties all the types of blame together. What cooler, more judgemental, private blame has in common with a furious and public dressing down is that *they* are both instances of the type of response that involves a commitment to its own fittingness directly on the basis of a target's wrongdoing. Such a commitment is capable of taking diverse forms of reaction and giving them all a, well, *blamey* shape.

There are several questions we might want to ask about blame, so conceived. For instance, while we do reflexively endorse a wide variety of responses, it doesn't seem as if just *anything* goes; being in the grips of blame doesn't seem, as a matter of fact, to involve reflexively endorsing just any old material component. So one thing we may wish to know is *why*, as a matter of fact, blaming involves reflexively endorsing certain material components but not others. (Why not, for example, just *jumping twice*?) Is it something in the nature of wrongdoing? Something in our own nature? A matter of convention?

Recall also that I have proposed that, because not *everyone's* blame is fitting in response to a particular target's wrong, since blame involves reflexive endorsement, it must also involve various background commitments—such as commitments to the subject's standing to blame. So we may also wish to inquire further about which background commitments blame involves, and about the contributions they make to its meaning. Note that the absence of standing to blame a target for a particular wrong doesn't seem to undermine the fittingness of only *certain types* of blame. A person who has violated a norm that you, yourself, violate happily all the time merits *neither* your high-handed speech *nor* your silent disapproval.

[25] As far as I know, the only other philosopher who has claimed to explain why blaming feels self-righteous is Pickard (2013). On her view, blame consists in a first-order emotional appraisal of some target (e.g. anger towards it), plus a second-order feeling of entitlement to that first-order appraisal. But my point has been that taking oneself to be *entitled* to undergo the material responses involved in blame, in the way characteristic of blame—that is, taking one's present response to be fitting, directly on the basis of the target's wrongdoing—requires taking *that very entitlement* to be part of what one is entitled to.

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So when we ask what background commitments concerning standing are involved in blame, we are asking about blame considered as a unity. And such questions certainly seem worth asking.

None of this is to say that specific types of blame don't also sometimes deserve their own attention apart from other types. Blame's diversity surely demands that. Indeed, part of what I like about the picture that I've drawn here is that it *allows* for blame to be diverse. Something that I, in any case, find interesting about blame is that blame is *like* an emotion insofar as it's directed, and yet is also an especially mutable form of response, capable of incorporating a range of other mental and physical states and events—almost as if blame is an *expanded* emotion.

The thought that blame is like an emotion brings me to the question I want to consider briefly in conclusion. Much of my argument has appealed to blame's directedness—a feature it bears in common with emotions. Thus, the question naturally arises: should we say that *emotions* all involve an element analogous to reflexive endorsement? Should we say, for example, that fear involves taking one's present way of reacting to be fitting directly on the basis of something dangerous, or that grief involves taking one's present way of reacting to be fitting directly on the basis of a significant loss?

I am content to remain officially neutral on this issue. I hope to have convinced the reader that, in blame, the target's wrongdoing has the appearance of a reason, and thus that blame involves an endorsement of one's present way of reacting. So long as these claims are accepted, I won't be too bothered by anyone who wants to deny that the objects of all emotions have a similar appearance from the 'inside', and thus wants to deny the stronger claim that all emotions involve an element analogous to reflexive endorsement. After all, discovering and carefully describing this sort of element is especially important in the case of blame. For while it is true in general that the tokens of a particular emotion-type vary in their feel and intensity, it isn't true that emotions in general are *as* diverse as blame. Blame doesn't just vary in feel and intensity, but rather also in the very category of response it seems to involve—so much so that there is reason to be sceptical about whether blame itself, considered as a unified phenomenon, is worth investigating. Holding that blame involves a commitment to its own fittingness directly on the basis of a target's wrongdoing helps us to see that cases of blame which *don't* involve many of the paradigmatic features of emotion—and that we might therefore hesitate to even call 'emotion'—still have something significant in common with cases that do. And this makes it particularly illuminating to attribute a distinctive commitment to its own fittingness to blame.

Yet, although I would be satisfied to have made my case just for blame, I do believe, for my own part, that all emotions—or, at least, all *my* (adult, human) emotions—involve something analogous to reflexive endorsement. I believe this precisely because I can identify a similarity in what it's like for blame to be for wrongdoing and what it's like for emotions to have directedness generally. The

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objects of my fear *do* seem to both explain and justify my fear because of their dangerousness; the objects of my grief *do* seem to both explain and justify my grief by virtue of being significant losses; etc. But reflexive endorsement, even if it can be unreflective, seems cognitively sophisticated. So those concerned to attribute emotions to less cognitively sophisticated animals will likely balk at the suggestion that analogous formal elements are required for capturing the way in which our emotions in general are about objects. Such a view might seem to (unacceptably) imply that many animals don't have emotions that are about things.

What I believe such a view would imply, however, is not that less cognitively sophisticated animals don't have emotions that represent objects *in some sense*. (After all, one can always hold that *any* sort of emotional response performs a representational function.) Rather, what it would imply is that some such animals don't have emotions that are directed at objects *in the same way that ours are*, and thus that what it is like for such animals for their fear to be about things is different from what it is like for ours to be. Some philosophers will dislike even this concession, but personally I don't mind making it. Indeed, I'd be unsurprised to learn that the rational capacities of we creatures who possess them infuse the way we think so thoroughly that they transform even our most primitive emotional experiences.[26]

Say, though, that I am right to think that all adult human emotions have a component analogous to reflexive endorsement. Would such an element, then, in *every* case have an effect—as Kant thought it did for aesthetic appreciation—on our emotional feeling itself? I admit to being somewhat unsure what to say, in part because I do think that how each emotion feels must be mediated largely by both its material components and by *what* particular considerations make that emotion fitting. But I do not think it obviously wrong to say that the way in which emotional experiences seem, from the inside, to be called for is part of what explains the feeling of being taken with the objects of our emotions—part of what makes emotional experiences feel *enthralling*. On such a picture of emotions, reflexive endorsement might be thought to explain why valuing or disvaluing something feels the way it does.[27]

[26] For this sort of picture of rational minds, see Boyle 2012 and 2016.

[27] Research for this work was supported by an ERC advanced grant project, Roots of Responsibility: Metaphysics, Humanity, and Society. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 789270). This chapter has also benefited enormously from feedback on earlier drafts. For written comments, discussion, or both, I thank Diana Acosta Navas, Selim Berker, Sandy Diehl, Lidal Dror, Aaron Elliot, David Enoch, John Hyman, Christine Korsgaard, Jed Lewinsohn, Max Lewis, Jeff McDonough, Oded Na'aman, Yuuki Ohta, Tim Scanlon, Heather Spradley, Christine Tappolet, Daniel Telech, Mark Thomson, and Preston Werner. Thanks also to the editors of this volume, Chris Howard and Rich Rowland, for extremely helpful notes and suggestions.

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