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Blameless Resentment: A Critique of Strawson

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Honors Requirements
for the Department of Philosophy

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I. Introduction

Throughout his life, P.F. Strawson joked that he would only contribute to moral philosophy once his powers had waned.[1] Strawson spent most of his career focused on the philosophy of language, metaphysics, and epistemology. Yet probably his most well known and perhaps his most influential piece of writing, "Freedom and Resentment", dives headlong into ethics.

In "Freedom and Resentment", Strawson proposes a common-sense argument for compatibilism. On his view, when we engage in interpersonal relationships with others, we open ourselves up to experiencing certain emotions. Since we cannot help but engage in interpersonal relationships, we are almost always susceptible to these emotions, which he refers to as reactive attitudes. One of the defining characteristics of the reactive attitudes is that they are sufficient for holding someone responsible for his or her conduct. Strawson thus claims that the metaphysical arguments for or against free will are irrelevant; as long as we engage in interpersonal relationships, we hold people responsible. On Strawson's view, even if it turns out that we live in a determined universe, this kind of moral responsibility is enough to make compatibilism plausible.

While Strawson takes himself to be explaining how the reactive attitudes relate to a compatibilist account of moral responsibility, the themes covered in "Freedom and Resentment" extend beyond the free will debate. Strawson actually says little about blame itself; instead, he focuses on how we hold people responsible when we engage in interpersonal relationships and open ourselves up to the reactive attitudes. Contemporary Strawsonians tend to focus on the nature of the reactive attitudes themselves. In particular, they look at how the reactive attitudes are connected to moral responsibility and blame.

[1] Paul Snowdon, "Peter Frederick Strawson," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Much of the work based on “Freedom and Resentment” in moral philosophy relies on resentment being sufficient for blame. Strawsonian moral philosophers often focus on the significance of blame in our interpersonal relationships. Some argue that blame’s value lies in its expressive function, while others propose that blame serves to regulate anti-social behavior. However, these conversations begin with the assumption that resentment is sufficient for blame. If this assumption is false, then Strawsonians will need to reconsider their conception of resentment and blame.

In this paper, I will examine resentment, one of the reactive attitudes mentioned by Strawson. As a reactive attitude, resentment is sufficient for blame on the Strawsonian view. Resentment is of particular interest because it exemplifies the inherently interpersonal nature of the reactive attitudes. Resentment is completely wrapped up in our relationships; Seth Shabo argues that we cannot even experience some of the deeper positive emotions like true romantic love without opening ourselves up to the possibility of resentment.[2] Other, similar emotions, like frustration or rage, are less interpersonal than resentment. We can and often do feel frustration or rage without any characteristically human interaction. However, paradigm cases of resentment show a resenting subject responding to an offender for having exhibited ill-will or indifference toward the resenting subject. Without our interpersonal relationships, an interaction like this would not be possible. Thus we resent because of our susceptibility toward interpersonal relationships.

I will engage with defenders of the Strawsonian view on the claim that resentment is sufficient for blame. Despite universally regarding resentment as one of the emotions, defenders of the Strawsonian view account for the emotionality of resentment in a way that

[2] Seth Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Intrapersonal Defense of Compatibilism," *Philosophical Review* 121.1 (2011): 98.

seems at odds with the general emotion theories. By doing good emotion theory, I will show that it is possible to resent without blaming. Thus I will argue that resentment is not sufficient for blame.

In Section II, I will look at accounts of resentment proposed by Strawson and R. Jay Wallace, a current torchbearer for the Strawsonian view. Wallace argues that when we engage in interpersonal relationships, we hold people to expectations. When someone violates these expectations, we respond with the reactive attitudes. These reactive attitudes are, on Wallace's view, sufficient for blame. Specifically, when someone violates an expectation by behaving with what we perceive to be ill-will or indifference toward us, we resent the person for his or her ill-will or indifference. On this view, when we resent the offending person, we also blame her.

In Section III, I will contest the Strawsonian view that resentment is sufficient for blame. My suspicion is that Strawsonians, when defending their view, pay too much attention to paradigm cases of resentment – those that are cases of both resentment and blame. However, little attention has been paid to abnormal examples of resentment that do not include blame.[3] By focusing upon non-paradigm cases of resentment, and doing so from the perspective of general emotion theory, I will argue that Strawsonians face the following dilemma: they must insist either that the non-paradigm cases are *not* cases of resentment, or

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[3] Nomy Arpaly agrees, arguing in *Unprincipled Virtue* that moral psychologists do a poor job of balancing paradigm cases with non-paradigm but still realistic cases (Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue: An Inquiry into Moral Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29-30.). She claims that many focus on cases that are barely informative, "[c]ases in which the mind of the agent seems quite transparent to her, cases in which she either acts for reasons that she understands and endorses or is carried to action by some atavistic force, […] and cases in which, even when she is irrational, she knows she is." On the other hand, when straying from the paradigm, moral psychologists tend to look at cases "involving bizarre, ill-understood individuals, artificial situations of the kind created by the television show *Survivor*, or horrible moral dilemmas that verge on the grotesque." Cases of the paradigm variety fail to tell the whole story, while these wildly abnormal cases may be impossible to truly understand. My goal is to provide non-paradigm counterexamples that are still somewhat normal – you may have experienced one of them yourself or know someone who has – so that understanding the cases will not require much imagination.

else that they *are* definitely cases of blame. And I will argue that neither option is acceptable. If it is possible that a character in these cases could resent without blaming, then the Strawsonian view regarding the relationship between resentment and blame must be false.

However, just because resentment is not sufficient for blame does not mean that resentment and blame are not connected. In Section IV, I will briefly discuss the expressive and sanctioning views of blame – two possible additions to the Strawsonian view that do not necessarily require resentment or any of the other reactive attitudes. In this discussion we will find that resentment's connection to blame is stronger than can be explained by the expressive and sanctioning views, and that any account of blame must begin with an account of resentment and the reactive attitudes. The reason that the relationship between resentment and blame is so close, I will argue, is precisely what Strawson noted to begin with: namely, that resentment and blame are both inherently interpersonal.

II. The Strawsonian View

While resentment and interpersonal relationships are often discussed in the context of moral responsibility, I will instead focus on the nature of resentment itself. In this section, I will begin by presenting a paradigm case of resentment. I will then show how the prevailing Strawsonian view would explain this paradigm case, drawing primarily on Strawson and Wallace, to show that resentment is an emotion sufficient for blame.

In order to explain the prevailing view of resentment, let us take a look at a paradigm case of resentment. Call this the *Lunch Case*:

> In the morning before work Jane makes herself a sandwich for lunch. She places her sandwich and an apple in a brown paper bag and writes her name in

> black sharpie on the outside of the bag. At work, Jane puts her lunch in the communal fridge – a place where people in the office normally store their lunches. A few hours later, she gets up from her desk and walks toward the kitchen to get her lunch. On the way, she sees a coworker named Stan eating a sandwich that looks surprisingly similar to the one she made earlier. Jane looks more closely and sees the brown paper bag with her name on it sitting on Stan's desk. The sandwich Stan is currently eating is the same one that she took the time to prepare this morning.

In a situation like *Lunch Case*, is normal that Jane resents Stan.[4] Stan is a coworker and Jane holds the people she knows to certain expectations. If she cares about her lunch, or she cares that people ask her before taking her things, or she cares about some other factor of *Lunch Case*, then she likely cannot help but resent Stan. Furthermore, if she fails to see any immediate excuses for Stan's actions, Jane may also *blame* Stan for taking her lunch.

Strawson famously argues that we cannot help but experience emotional reactions of this type. While proposing his argument for compatibilism, he discusses emotional reactions that arise in the context of interpersonal relationships. He writes, "What I have called the participant reactive attitudes are essentially natural human reactions to the good or ill-will or indifference of others towards us, as displayed in their attitudes and actions."[5] We are participants as long as we have any sort of interpersonal relations with other people.

[4] It is worth pointing out that in most situations in which we experience emotions, we probably have a variety of thoughts and feelings. As such, it may be difficult at times to differentiate exactly which emotion or emotions we are feeling. For the purposes of this paper, I will continue under the assumption that we *can* determine whether or not we are resenting.

[5] P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 5.

Strawson claims that it is impossible to avoid these types of interpersonal relationships – they come in a wide variety and open us up to countless possible emotional responses.[6]

Resentment is a key member of these emotions because of how strongly it is linked to interpersonal relationships. We resent other people, and typically we resent only other people with whom we have relationships.[7] Specifically, according to Strawson, resentment is a response to behavior that demonstrates ill-will or indifference.[8] In *Lunch Case,* Stan is a coworker, someone with whom Jane would naturally have an interpersonal relationship, and he exhibits behavior that demonstrates ill-will or indifference by stealing her lunch. In virtue of both the expectations to which Jane holds Stan and Stan's flouting of these expectations, Jane resents Stan.

When you resent, according to Strawson, you inhibit your own good will toward the object of your resentment, and this inhibition of good will is a form of blame. Strawson writes, "So the preparedness to acquiesce in that infliction of suffering on the offender which is an essential part of punishment is all of a piece with [resentment]".[9] When you resent, you no longer believe that the object of your resentment should be spared suffering – that is to say, you may bring about suffering of some kind because it is deserved. In *Lunch Case*, Jane may wish to bring about suffering to Stan in the form of yelling at him, stealing his lunch, or

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[6] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 3-4. Strawson lists the numerous possibilities, writing "We should think of the many different kinds of relationship which we could have with other people – as sharers of a common interest; as members of the same family; as colleagues; as friends; as lovers; as chance parties to an enormous range of transactions and encounters."

[7] T.M. Scanlon, "Blame" in *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008): 141. When I speak of relationships here, I do not mean to imply that resentment only occurs between people that have a close relationship. T.M. Scanlon actually goes so far as to say that we have a certain kind of relationship with all people we interact with, no matter how small the interaction, unless we have good reason to not have that kind of relationship. He calls this the "default moral relationship," and argues that "morality requires that we hold certain attitudes toward one another simply in virtue of the fact that we stand in the relation of 'fellow rational beings.'" Thus it may be right to say that relationship really refers to any people that have interpersonal interaction with each other.

[8] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 8.

[9] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 13.

some other form of punishment. Jane's desire to punish Stan occurs only because she has inhibited her good will toward him. On this view, blame is an essential component of resentment and resentment is sufficient for blame.[10]

Today, Wallace is perhaps the most prominent defender of the Strawsonian view. In his work, Wallace has attempted to connect the reactive emotions like resentment to the psychological stance of holding someone morally responsible. While Wallace takes his lead from Strawson, he is even more explicit about the emotionality of resentment. He argues that before we can develop an account of holding someone morally responsible, "[it] will be necessary to get clear about the nature of the reactive emotions. What are the essential features of these emotions?"[11] Others in the Strawsonian tradition concur that resentment should be discussed as an emotion. In their work on the reactive attitudes, for instance, Elisa Hurley and Coleen Macnamara point out that "the reactive attitudes are first and foremost emotions."[12] Since resentment is invariably considered a member of the reactive emotions, our discussion will focus on resentment as an emotion.

Wallace takes a cognitivist approach to emotion, which means he claims that emotions have intentionality. He accounts for the intentionality of emotion by claiming that emotions have propositional content. The propositional content of a reactive emotion, according to Wallace, is an underlying judgment. This judgment is constitutive of the reactive emotion. He writes, "One feels indignant *about* something, or guilty *for* something

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[10] Strawson actually says very little about the component parts of blame itself. Primarily, Strawson discusses blame in the context of its fairness or unfairness depending on the result of the free will debate. This reconstruction of Strawson's view of blame is in line with how it has been described by other philosophers, including Hurley and Macnamara, Shabo, and Wallace.

[11] R. Jay Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations" in *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 18.

[12] Elisa Hurley and Coleen Macnamara, "Toward a Theory of the Reactive Attitudes," *Philosophical Papers* Special Issue: Retributive Emotions 39.3 (2010): 374.

one has done."[13] When I resent another person, I resent them for doing something to me. The propositional content of this resentment is the judgment that this person has wronged me in some way. For example, when Jane resents Stan in *Lunch Case*, the propositional content of her resentment is the judgment that Stan has exhibited ill-will or indifference toward her by stealing her food.

The propositional content of resentment – the judgment that a person has acted with ill-will or indifference – is cemented in the normative expectations to which we hold each other. We make these judgments when a person violates these expectations. Since resentment is, on the prevailing view, a response to violations of normative expectations, let us briefly discuss normative expectations. A normative expectation is an expectation that something *should* happen, in the sense that it would be a transgression or a violation for it to not happen. For example, I might expect other people to refrain from eating my food without asking. Normative expectations can be contrasted with non-normative expectations.[14] A non-normative expectation is an expectation that something *will* happen, in the sense that my knowledge of certain facts about the world leads me to believe that such an event is highly likely. For example, I expect my sandwich to have a certain taste. In *Lunch Case*, Jane resents Stan because, by stealing her lunch, he violates a normative expectation to which she holds him. The expectation is normative for exactly the reason discussed above: Jane expects other people to not eat her food without asking, and doing otherwise is a transgression.

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[13] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 18.
[14] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 20. Wallace actually contrasts expectations that have and don't have a "special connection with morality, or with the moral emotions." However, this distinction fails to take into account conventional expectations. Wallace's argument becomes stronger if resentment and the rest of the reactive attitudes can come as a response to violations of both moral and conventional expectations. As such, I have chosen to contrast normative and non-normative expectations.

What then does it mean to *hold someone* to a normative expectation? Our normative expectations make it possible for us to respond emotionally to actions. We resent people for violating our normative expectations. Thus in order to resent, we must hold people to expectations. By holding someone to normative expectations, I open myself up to reactive emotions. Wallace writes,

> To be in a state of reactive emotions, one must believe that a person has violated some expectation that one holds the person to; and in terms of this belief, we can give an account of how the reactive emotions have the kind of propositional content that distinguishes them from other emotional states.[15]

When you hold someone to a normative expectation, you become susceptible to certain emotional responses when a person violates that expectation. This being susceptible to certain emotional responses *just is* holding someone to a normative expectation. By opening yourself up to the potential for a response of this kind, you have begun to engage in holding a person morally responsible.[16] You may not always actually emotionally respond to offenses, as some people are particularly good at controlling their emotions. However, to hold someone to a normative expectation opens up the possibility of this sort of emotional response.[17]

Holding people to normative expectations is the first step in entering the stance of holding someone *morally responsible*. When we hold people to normative expectations, we become susceptible to experiencing reactive emotions like resentment. According to this view, when the relevant expectations are expectations that we *accept*, we go a step further.

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[15] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 20.
[16] Note how odd it is to explain the process of holding someone *morally* responsible by talking about holding someone to *normative* expectations. This will end up being a problem for Wallace's account.
[17] Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Intrapersonal Defense of Compatibilism," 99.

Wallace proposes: "to hold someone morally responsible is to hold the person to normative expectations *that one accepts.*"[18] Accepting an expectation is an evaluation of that expectation. When I hold someone to an expectation, I must judge whether I accept this expectation. Once I accept the expectation, I engage in the stance of holding others morally responsible. For example, if I expect others not to engage in random violence toward me, I must evaluate whether or not I accept this expectation. If I have evaluated and accepted this expectation, I will find you morally responsible for being randomly violent toward me.[19]

When a person violates a normative expectation to which I hold her, and this expectation is one that I accept, then I resent this person for exhibiting ill-will or indifference toward me. *In doing so*, I hold this person morally responsible for that ill-will or indifference. This leads us to one of the central claims of the Strawsonian view: that resentment is sufficient for blame.

The view that whenever we feel resentment, we also blame is shared among a great many reactive emotion philosophers such as Seth Shabo, Derk Pereboom, and, of course, Wallace.[20] Wallace proposes that blame is backward-looking, in the sense that it is a *response* to the violation of the normative expectation.[21] In addition, blame has no necessary components beyond its emotional character – i.e., blaming S requires no more than a certain sort of emotional response to S. Thus it is possible to blame without the object of blame or

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[18] R. Jay Wallace, "Responsibility," in *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 63. Italics mine.
[19] I will return to the idea of accepting an expectation in Section III, where I will discuss how this concept is crucial to Wallace's account of irrational emotions.
[20] Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Intrapersonal Defense of Compatibilism," 102. Derk Pereboom, "Free Will Skepticism, Blame, and Obligation," in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, ed. D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 189-206. Wallace, "Responsibility," 52-83.
[21] Wallace, "Responsibility," 56.

anyone else ever becoming aware that you are blaming.[22] When Jane resents Stan in *Lunch Case*, she thereby blames Stan for his actions. She might *also* yell at Stan in order to express her resentment, or she might scold Stan in order to guilt him into refraining from stealing her lunch in the future. However, it is possible that Jane may not show her blame in any way.

Let us put the pieces of the prevailing view together. Resentment is an emotion. The propositional content of resentment is the judgment that someone has exhibited ill-will or indifference toward the resenting subject in some way by violating the resenting subject's normative expectations. By holding people to normative expectations, we become susceptible to experiencing resentment when someone violates those expectations. We hold people morally responsible when we accept the expectations to which we hold them. And finally, when a person violates an expectation that we accept, we both resent *and* blame that person, since resenting is sufficient for blaming.

Now that we are familiar with the prevailing view, let us see how defenders of this Strawsonian approach would diagnose Jane's response in *Lunch Case*. Jane holds Stan to a set of normative expectations, perhaps the same set of normative expectations to which she holds many of her coworkers. By holding Stan to these normative expectations, she is susceptible to the reactive emotions, including resentment, if he were to violate these normative expectations. Jane also holds Stan morally responsible because she accepts the expectations to which she holds Stan, including the expectation that people do not eat each other's lunches without permission. When Stan steals her lunch, Jane resents him for violating those expectations. Jane's resentment is sufficient for blame, and her blame may influence her decision to carry out some action or change her behavior toward him.

[22] Hurley and Macnamara, "Toward a Theory of the Reactive Attitudes," 374.

Objecting to the prevailing Strawsonian view, George Sher asks: does blame require resentment or another of the reactive attitudes? According to Sher, in order to blame you must *believe* that a person has acted wrongly and *desire* that she not have performed her action.[23] This belief-desire pair does not require a reactive attitude like resentment. It seems quite possible to believe that a person has acted wrongly without responding emotionally to that action. Furthermore, it seems likely that I can desire that a person not have acted wrongly from the same sort of objective position. On this view, Jane can blame Stan in *Lunch Case* as long as Jane believes that Stan has acted wrongly by stealing her lunch and desires that he not have done so.

We likely engage in Sher's style of blame more than we realize. For instance, we often blame criminals or inept politicians we hear about on the news. These possibilities fit with Sher's account of blame. We believe that theft or incompetence is bad and we desire that the criminal or politician had not stolen or acted so incompetently. Thus, on Sher's view, we blame the criminal or the politician, and this blame might cause us to sign up for the neighborhood watch or vote for a different politician.

Defenders of the prevailing view respond that because Sher's account of blame lacks resentment or any of the other reactive attitudes, it is not *moral* blame. Typical blame that occurs between partners in an interpersonal relationship has a certain emotional depth that is absent when you dole out blame to politicians or criminals that you have never met. Susan Wolf agrees, arguing that blame is not simply pointing out that a person has erred and desiring that the error not occur. She writes,

> When… we consider an individual worthy of blame or of praise, we are not merely judging the moral quality of the event with which the individual is so

[23] George Sher, *In Praise of Blame* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 112.

> intimately associated; we are judging the moral quality of the individual herself in some more focused, noninstrumental, and more serious way. We may refer to the latter sense of responsibility as deep responsibility, and we may speak in connection with this of deep praise and blame.[24]

Merely judging that a person is blameworthy or marking someone as having acted wrongly is not the same as moral blame because lacks a sort of interpersonal depth. The normative expectations necessary on the prevailing view for resentment and the rest of the reactive attitudes allow us to judge the individual instead of the act. Similarly, when we resent, we do not resent the *violation* itself, we resent the *person* for violating our expectations. Without these normative expectations, and without the feeling of the reactive attitudes like resentment, blame would lose this depth. Contemporary Strawsonians therefore argue that Sher's account of blame is not the same thing as moral blame and that his objection is not relevant to discussions of true moral blame. Since the type of blame that Sher discusses does not fit the parameters for moral blame, he must be giving an account of something else. I will call what Sher has offered an account of *judicial* blame, since it can be given out from a somewhat objective position.

For the rest of this paper, I will grant that the Strawsonian response to Sher's view is sound and stipulate that resentment or one of the other reactive attitudes is necessary for the special kind of blame at focus here – what I have so far called *moral* blame. Henceforth, unless otherwise noted, I will use 'blame' to refer only to moral blame. I will spend the following section raising my own objection. On the prevailing view, resentment is sufficient for blame. By bringing in sound emotion theory and strong counter-examples of abnormal cases of resentment, I will argue that this view is false, that resentment is not sufficient for

[24] Susan Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41.

blame. The more we reflect on the true nature of resentment, the more we will see the inadequacy of the prevailing view.

III. Resentment and Emotion Theory

In the previous section, we clarified the Strawsonian view that resentment is an emotion that is sufficient for moral blame. I will now argue that this view is false, that resentment is not sufficient for moral blame. Since we all agree, as Hurley and Macnamara propose, that resentment is "first and foremost an emotion," let us explore what happens when we subject resentment to a straightforward emotion theory. In this section I will analyze the emotional nature of resentment on its own, without any prior commitments to the relationship between resentment and blame. Instead of debating the myriad options available, I will adopt an emotion theory that I find independently plausible. I will use Robert C. Roberts' emotion theory to provide an in depth look at the different elements of resentment.[25] Once we understand what resenting entails, we will take a look at some cases that pry resentment apart from blame. These non-paradigm cases will act as counterexamples by showing that it is possible to resent without blaming. I will discuss and hopefully defeat objections raised by defenders of the prevailing view regarding these abnormal cases. However, I hope to show that we should shift our thinking about paradigmatic resentment so as not to exclude cases merely because they do not include blame.

Roberts defines emotions as "concern-based construals."[26] What does this mean exactly? Let us begin with 'construal'. To construe something, a person thinks of an object in

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[25] Robert C. Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," *The Philosophical Review* 97.2 (1988): 183-209. This view is laid out and defended in Roberts' essay. (For an even more thorough defense of the view, see Roberts 2003.) Roberts' view is a hybrid theory that describes both the components and features of emotions. On his view, emotions are made of two components (I will discuss them later) that can be plausible generalized across all emotions. Furthermore, Roberts lists a number of features that are sometimes but not always a part of our emotional experiences.

[26] Roberts, What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," 191.

terms of something else. As an example, Roberts has us consider Wittgenstein's famous duck-rabbit. When we see the image, we construe it, or bring it to mind, as either a duck or a rabbit. (So there is a difference between seeing the image, on the one hand, and seeing it as a duck (or rabbit), on the other. The second sort of 'seeing', the sense of seeing-as, is what I am calling a construal.) We cannot see both the duck and the rabbit at the same time. By seeing it as one or the other, we see the image in terms of its duck-ness or rabbit-ness. Similarly, when you bite into a hamburger, you might construe the burger as overcooked. The construal in this case is seeing the meat in terms of its taste, as opposed to seeing it in terms of its color or weight. When we experience resentment, we do not merely experience the person acting; we experience the person *as* acting with ill-will or indifference toward us. If you curse at me, my resentment comes from construing you as demonstrating your ill-will toward me by cursing.

To feel an emotion, we must care, to a certain extent, about what we are construing. Just because I construe the fact that you passed a test as good for your future does not necessarily mean that I experience joy or any other emotion as a result. I must care about you and your future in order for me to have an emotional response. Roberts refers to this as a concern-based construal.[27] Resentment comes from construing a person as having acted with ill-will or indifference toward you. However, resentment also requires a certain kind of concern. This concern is linked to the type of ill-will or indifference with which you construe the object of your resentment as behaving. In *Lunch Case*, Jane construes Stan as behaving indifferently toward her. Furthermore, Jane cares about people stealing her lunch; she cares about her property, she cares about the regard that other people show her, and she may care about many other elements of the situation. This concern-based construal connects the pieces

[27] Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," 191.

of the puzzle. Without the construal, Jane may still 'see' the behavior, but she wouldn't see it *as* anything; there would be no significance to it. Without the concern, Jane would not care enough to respond. She must see the behavior in some light and care about that behavior in order to respond to it emotionally.

It is important to note that construing something in some way is often an unconscious process. When you see the duck-rabbit, you automatically and effortlessly construe it as either the duck or the rabbit. You can bring yourself to view it differently with work and observation, but not all construals require or involve such conscious effort. Emotional construals often take place with no forethought or conscious reasoning at all. When I see my roommate carelessly break one of my dishes, I do not take the time to reason through construing his action as disrespectful, nor do I immediately think about my concern for property. Instead, I quickly and effortlessly feel mildly angry at him for being so careless. In *Lunch Case*, Jane likely cares about her lunch since she spent time preparing it that morning. Furthermore, we can easily imagine her construing Stan as exhibiting ill-will or indifference toward her as a result of his behavior. Yet it seems unlikely that she would reason through the concern-construal process when she sees Stan eating her lunch. More likely, Jane feels resentment almost automatically.

Because we experience emotions without making a conscious effort, we are often unable to choose our emotions. By this, I do not mean to say that we are often emotionally out of control. Instead, I mean that often we do not decide whether or not to feel an emotion. Furthermore, we sometimes cannot prevent an emotion. It may be possible at times to undertake what Strawson calls the "objective attitude" in which a person ceases to respond

emotionally to a person or a set of circumstances. [28] However, as Strawson points out, given our interpersonal natures, holding the objective attitude is incredibly difficult to maintain for an extended period of time. The proclivity to emotionally respond to other people is a hallmark of our interpersonal nature as humans. Cutting off the potential for emotional responses also removes the possibility for true human interaction. So as long as we have no choice but to engage in interpersonal relationships, we will experience emotions that we sometimes cannot choose.[29]

While we often do not choose our emotions, we can sometimes exercise positive control over them. For example, we can create an emotion in the absence of an action or new information by calling upon a strong memory. If I wish to feel a certain kind of joy, I can think about my baby niece and nephew, construing them in thought as beautiful. Simply remembering them playing together in my house last summer makes me feel happy. Furthermore, I can accentuate an emotion that I am currently feeling by bringing to my mind connected memories or increasing the strength of my concern. If I feel anger at my neighbor for playing loud music well into the night, I might 'dial up' my anger by remembering her past offenses or increasing how much I care about getting a good night's sleep.

If, in *Lunch Case*, Jane is not attempting to undertake the objective attitude, she may be unable to prevent herself from resenting Stan. After the fact, she may attempt to reel her resentment back in and keep it in check. However, as a normal working adult, it is likely that

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[28] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 5

[29] Here is an excellent example of why it is better to think of the cognitive component of emotions in terms of construals, instead of judgments as Wallace does. We often cannot choose what emotion we will experience, and sometimes we might determine that we should not have experienced a certain emotion or that our emotional experience was irrational. For example, a person who is afraid of flying even though she knows that flying is safe feels fear because she construes flying as dangerous. As such, her construal is at odds with her judgment. In order to defend the view that emotions are tied to judgments, one would have to explain how a person could judge that flying is dangerous and judge that flying is safe at the same time. I will explain later how seeing emotions as tied to construals offers a much simpler explanation for such irrational emotions.

she will not undertake the objective attitude toward her coworker without good reason (for example, if she knew that Stan had a mental handicap). Instead of the objective attitude, Jane may decide to lean in the opposite direction if Stan has acted with indifference toward her before. She might summon memories of other instances in which Stan had acted indifferently toward her in order to intensify her resentment toward Stan to the point where she might be motivated to confront him or file a complaint.

Thus we find a final feature of emotions: "some emotions beget dispositions to kinds of actions, and… why a person performed an action of a certain kind can thus often be explained by reference to the emotional state he was in."[30] When I experience joy, I often smile and laugh. When a person causes me to experience joy, I might thank her or give her a hug. If the person were to ask why I hugged her, I might respond by referencing the joy she had caused. Such an answer is only intelligible because emotions often provide motivation for action. In *Lunch Case*, Jane may decide to confront or report Stan for stealing her lunch. Whether or not she actually acts, her desire to confront or report Stan is linked to her resentment.

So according to the view I have taken up here, emotions are mental states consisting of a concern-construal pairing. The emoting subject construes an object in some manner in light of some action or new piece of information. The emoting subject must also care about what she is construing. We often cannot choose our emotions, but we can sometimes control the strength of our emotional experiences. Finally, emotions can provide us with motivation for actions.

Now that we have a basic understanding of emotions in general, let us return to the Strawsonian view of resentment in particular. As we saw in the last section, on this view,

[30] Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," 204.

Jane's resentment is sufficient for blame. Thus if Jane resents Stan for stealing her lunch, she also blames him for doing so. She might also confront Stan, or file a formal report, or else she might not act at all. But as long as she resents Stan, she also blames him.

I disagree that resentment is sufficient for blame. While some instances of resentment are coincidental with blame, blame is not a necessary feature of resentment. To show that this is true, I want to now consider three cases in which resentment and blame seem to come apart. Each case represents some kind of departure from what I take to be paradigm cases of resentment, like the previously discussed *Lunch Case*: the first is a case of resentment toward an inanimate object; the second is a case of resentment toward a person with a serious mental disability; and the third is a case of resentment toward a group of people who are not only not doing anything wrong, but actually doing what is clearly right.

The first non-paradigm case of resentment we will examine involves resentment toward an inanimate object. We will call this the *TV Case*:

> Jack comes home from a long day of work. He works in human resources, and is frustrated from having to mediate a dispute between two colleagues about lunch protocol. Usually, Jack is able to unwind and relax after a tough day by watching something mindless for an hour or two on television. However, sometimes the TV breaks and he has to call a repair man to fix it the next day. He pours himself a drink, stretches out on the couch, and presses the 'ON' button on the remote. But the TV does not turn on. Instead, there is a flicker of light and a pop, indicating something is broken.

In the *TV Case*, it seems possible, even likely, for Jack to resent the TV. Jack clearly cares about relaxing after work, and watching television is a crucial part of his post-work routine.

Jack's concern is already ramped up; he had a stressful day and is clearly expecting the TV to help him alleviate some of that stress. Furthermore, Jack has a history with the TV. Since it has broken before, Jack might believe that the TV often breaks on the nights that he needs to relax the most. As we often do in our ordinary lives, Jack is here guilty of a kind of personification of an inanimate object. We might do the same when we ask a challenging problem set for a solution, or plead with a perpetually leaky faucet to stop leaking. In this way, Jack briefly assigns agency to the TV. You can imagine Jack saying things like, "Why do you always break when I'm stressed?"

Jack's history with the TV and tendency to personify cause him to feel like the TV chooses to break when he is most stressed. He sees the TV in that moment as intentionally interfering with his attempts to relax. This allows Jack to construe the TV as exhibiting indifference toward him by preventing him from relaxing. Of course, if asked, he would presumably deny that televisions are the sorts of things that can show indifference. Remember though that our construals are often unconscious and our emotional experiences are sometimes uncontrolled; we cannot always choose our emotions. So it is not unbelievable, given our tendencies to personify non-human objects and Jack's history with the TV, that he might unconsciously construe the TV in this moment as exhibiting indifference toward him. Jack's construal, combined with his concern for relaxing by watching television, is exactly the sort of concern-construal pairing that makes up resentment.

Let us now turn our attention to a non-paradigm case of resentment involving a human target. We will call this the *Sibling Case*:

> Sam is a teenager with a younger sister named Sally who has Down syndrome. Sam's parents have spent extra time and money to provide Sally with a nurturing environment. The extra time and money spent on Sally means that Sam often has to miss out on things he values. For instance, Sam's parents occasionally miss his sporting events when they conflict with Sally's visits to the doctor, and Sam may be unable to afford college because of the cost of Sally's medical care.[31]

In situations that force Sam to think about how Sally has made his life more difficult, Sam may resent Sally. For example, when Sam walks toward the batter's box and realizes that his parents are not in the stands cheering for him because they are with Sally at her doctor's appointment, he may resent Sally. When Sam hears his friends talking about applying to college, Sam may resent Sally for preventing him from getting a college education. You can imagine Sam thinking, "Why does Sally always get our parents attention? They're my parents too!" or, "Sally is such a burden, my life would be better if she were normal." Sam might simultaneously realize that none of this is Sally's fault and that he should not resent her. However, as discussed earlier, we cannot always exercise control over our emotions. Every once in a while, when faced directly with the difficulties of living with Sally, he cannot help but resent.

We may wish to think that we would deal with Sam's circumstances in a more appropriate manner, but his reactions are a normal human response to what seems like an unfair situation. Like any normal child, Sam cares about his parents' attention. So even though he loves his sister, he may occasionally construe Sally as showing him ill-will by

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[31] Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet: Strawson's Intrapersonal Defense of Compatibilism," 102-103. Here I elaborate on a case that Shabo mentions in passing. He lists "resentment felt toward a sibling who requires extra attention from one's parents" as a type of non-moral resentment.

requiring all of their parents' time. Sam also cares about going to college and understands how beneficial an undergraduate experience could be. He may construe Sally as showing him indifference, even though he knows otherwise, when family resources are spent on her, preventing Sam from fulfilling this dream.[32] When Sam construes Sally as influencing his life in this manner, the seriousness with which he cares about his relationship with his parents and his future causes him to resent Sally. Sam may try to engage in the objective attitude as much as possible to refrain from resenting his sister whom he loves. However, since he cannot sustain the objective attitude at all times, he still occasionally resents Sally.

In our final case, we will look at a non-paradigm instance of resentment toward people who actually demonstrate interest and good will toward the resenting subject. We will call this the *Intervention Case*:

> Beth is an alcoholic. She has lost her job and ruined many relationships because of her alcoholism. Things have gotten bad enough that Beth genuinely wants to stop drinking. She tells a few of her closest friends and family members that she would do anything to get clean. These friends and family members get together and decide to have an intervention in order to begin Beth's recovery. At the intervention, each friend and family member shares how Beth's behavior has affected him or her, and the group lays out the challenging road ahead.

[32] This is another example of the advantage of using construals instead of judgments to explain the cognitive component emotions. On Roberts' view, Sam's resentment is based on his construal that his sister is acting with ill-will or indifference. This construal conflicts with his judgment that she is not ill-willed or indifferent toward him. That Sam's construal and his judgment conflict might be problematic for him, but this conflict is not problematic for us. However, as discussed in footnote 29, Wallace's view *is* problematic because its explanation of resentment forces Sam to simultaneously make two conflicting judgments.

When faced with a situation like *Intervention Case*, people in Beth's position have a variety of responses. One common response is to become defensive. Beth might become hostile, she might try to leave, and she might start yelling or cursing at her friends and family. You can imagine her screaming at her friends "I have this under control!" or "I can do this by myself!"

It seems likely that Beth would resent her friends and family for putting her in the position described in *Intervention Case*. Even though she asked them for help, accepting help and actually facing the facts is easier said than done. In the moment, Beth would likely construe those friends' and family members' who are attempting to help her as ill-willed and indifferent to her best interests. She might feel like she's being cornered. Because she cares about her personal freedom, and perhaps because a certain part of her is not yet ready to fully give up drinking, she resents her friends and family members for forcing her into such a difficult situation.

If Strawsonians are right to believe that resentment is sufficient for blame, then cases like those described in this section apparently push the Strawsonian into the following dilemma: they must either deny that the cases are genuine examples of resentment, or else insist that they are cases of moral blame. Wallace flatly denies the possibility of resentment in the *TV Case*. He writes, "I may dislike my television set or be frustrated and annoyed when it fails to turn on; but insofar as I do not hold the TV to expectations, I cannot properly speaking, be said to resent it or to be indignant at it."[33] On the other hand, if the three cases *are* examples of resentment, then Strawsonians are compelled to claim that they are also cases of blame.

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[33] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 21.

If Wallace is talking about normative expectations, then I agree with Wallace that we do not hold inanimate objects like TVs to normative expectations.[34] But even if it is true that we do not hold TVs to expectations, this approach comes from the wrong direction. Since resentment is an emotion, answering the question 'Does S resent T?' should be as simple as applying our emotion theory and should not depend upon any prior commitment to the Strawsonian view of the connection between the reactive attitudes and blame. Jack construes the TV as behaving with indifference toward him by interfering with his relaxation, and Jack still has a concern about his relaxation. Since both components of resentment are present in this case, why not call it a case of resentment, regardless of whether or not it is non-paradigmatic? Wallace's refusal to acknowledge the *TV Case* as an example of resentment seems ad hoc. I disagree with Wallace and instead believe that it is possible to resent the TV. And this same concern-construal occurs in both the *Sibling Case* and the *Intervention Case*; in each case the resenting subject construes someone as having exhibited ill-will or indifference, and each subject cares about the ill-will or indifference that has been demonstrated. So, absent a prior commitment to Wallace's view, I hardly see what should keep us from counting these as cases of genuine resentment, even if they are outside of the paradigm.

Now, it is true that in all three cases there is *something wrong* with the subject's resentment. In the *TV Case*, Jack briefly views the TV agentially, allowing Jack to construe the TV as being indifferent toward him. However, if Jack were to reflect on his resentment, he would see that it was improper for him to have resented since he should not have viewed

[34] If Wallace is not talking about normative expectations (and he does not actually use a word like moral or normative in this quotation), then he is probably descriptively wrong. We do hold televisions to expectations, like the expectation that they will turn on when we press the 'ON' button on the remote, or the expectation that they will contribute to the electric bill.

the TV agentially. Sam construes his sister as acting with ill-will or indifference toward him in the *Sibling Case* even though she cannot be held responsible for how she was born. And in the *Intervention Case*, Beth construes her friends and family members as exhibiting ill-will or indifference toward her even though their behavior is actually a clear demonstration of their interest in her well being and good will toward her. As discussed earlier in this section, we sometimes cannot control our emotional responses. As such, we can view the resenting subjects in these three cases as having resented *irrationally*.

In order to explain how these instances of resentment could occur independently of blame, Wallace provides a theory of irrational reactive attitudes. If Wallace's account of emotional irrationality works, then he might use it to argue that I've actually placed the Strawsonian into a false dilemma, since he can allow that the three non-paradigm cases are cases of irrational resentment, but still deny that they are cases of blame, since only rational resentment is sufficient for blame. So it will be important to assess Wallace's take on emotional rationality. As I mentioned earlier, Wallace distinguishes between expectations that we accept and those that we do not. His theory separates the irrational reactive emotions from their rational counterparts based on whether or not the emoting subject *accepts* the expectation that has been violated. He claims that many of our expectations are ingrained into us, like the expectation that our peers will not be randomly violent toward us. Some of these expectations we may come to disagree with. This possibility, according to Wallace, accounts for our irrational emotions. He writes,

> Accepting a demand, by contrast, is an evaluative state… It involves a further tendency to adduce reasons to support the demand, reasons that weigh with one for purposes of practical deliberation, and that one is prepared to call on

> to justify one's behavior and perhaps to address criticisms and recommendations to others.[35]

When we accept the demands and expectations to which we hold other people, our corresponding emotional responses are rational. For example, if I fully accept the expectation that people not to be randomly violent to me, then my emotional response toward someone who is randomly violent toward me is rational. In the *Lunch Case*, Jane likely accepts the expectation that people not eat her lunch, so her resentment toward Stan for violating that expectation is rational. But Wallace argues that we do not always accept the expectations to which we hold people. When discussing irrational guilt, for instance, Wallace gives as an example a person with a Catholic upbringing who feels guilty about having recreational sex.[36] This person has internalized the expectation that people not have sex outside of marriage even if she no longer accepts that expectation. Thus she will feel irrationally guilty when she engages in such behavior because she is violating an expectation that she does not accept. His proposal regarding irrational resentment is analogous; my resentment is irrational when it stems from the violation of an expectation that I do not accept.[37]

At first glance, Wallace's view seems to offer an excellent account irrational resentment. However, his account is problematic because it *only* provides an account of irrational resentment and the rest of the reactive emotions. In general, we prefer theories and explanations that have a wide range of applicability. Since Wallace's theory pertains only to emotions that stem from violations of expectations, it only explains the irrationality of these

[35] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 41.
[36] Wallace, "Emotions and Expectations," 43.
[37] Wallace, in conversation

so-called reactive emotions.[38] On Wallace's own view, that limits the usefulness of this proposal to just resentment, indignation, and guilt. Emotions like fear and disgust do not arise from holding other people to expectations. We can experience fear and disgust regardless of whether we are participating in interpersonal relationships. So Wallace's account of irrational emotions does not apply to them, or any of the many other emotions that are not based on holding other people to expectations. Interestingly, fear is the emotion that is perhaps most commonly discussed in the context of irrational emotions. If we are to accept Wallace's proposal explaining the irrationality of the reactive attitudes, then Wallace will need to come up with an entirely different theory in order to explain the irrationality of these emotions, including fear, the emotion paradigmatically used to exemplify irrationality in emotions. In this sense, Wallace is being a good *Strawsonian* at the cost of being a bad *emotion theorist*. This is problematic given his explicit acknowledgment that the reactive attitudes are, fundamentally, emotions. If we are to explain the irrational emotions with the best possible emotion theory, then we would have *prima facie* reason to prefer an account of emotional irrationality that could apply to all emotions.

Instead of cobbling together multiple theories, let us see if we can come up with an account of emotional rationality that generalizes over all emotions. Good emotion theories tend to generalize over all emotions instead of offering different explanations for segmented groups. Here is an account of irrational emotions that can be generalized across all emotions: when we experience an irrational emotion, it is because we have made an irrational construal.

[38] Furthermore, Wallace's account of irrationality may not even adequately explain the reactive emotions, as it offers a somewhat muddled account of the counterexamples that I have provided. When Sam resents Sally in the *Sibling Case*, it is unclear which expectation Sam does not accept. Sam likely expects his siblings not to take up more than their fair share of their parents' time and resources. Yet Sam likely accepts this expectation, as this is a fairly reasonable expectation. Instead, it seems like he doesn't think she should be *held* to that expectation. A theory of irrational emotions should be able to better explain why Sam's resentment in the *Sibling Case* is irrational.

There are two types of irrational construals; I will call these types inaccurate and inconsistent. An inaccurate construal is a construal that is wrong. For example, if you see a snake and construe it to be dangerous even though it is not a dangerous snake, this is an inaccurate construal. If you knew more about snakes were able to instantly recognize the snake as a harmless garter snake, then you might construe the snake as not dangerous. An inconsistent construal is a construal that does not line up with your world view or what you believe to be true. For example, a person who is afraid of flying might very well know that flying is safer than driving a car and that the danger of flying is miniscule. However, the facts of the situation do not influence a confused construal. The person who is afraid of flying might continue to be afraid of flying regardless of how many people demonstrate its safety.

In the three cases, Jack, Sam, and Beth irrationally resent as a result of both types of error. In the *TV Case*, Jack inaccurately construes the television as exhibiting indifference toward him. However, he also knows that a television is not something that can be indifferent, so his construal is also inconsistent. Sam inaccurately construes Sally as responsible for the unfair allocation of his parents' time and resources in the *Sibling Case*, yet Sam also recognizes that she is not actually responsible. And in the *Intervention Case*, Beth mistakenly construes her friends and family as exhibiting ill-will toward her even though she also knows that they are actually demonstrating their good will and interest in her well being.

This account of irrationality has a strong advantage over Wallace's account in that it can be generalized over all emotions. On this view, when I resent irrationally, I do so because I have made an inaccurate construal or an inconsistent construal. The same can be said about fear and disgust. Perhaps my friend places fake vomit on my bed. I might be irrationally

disgusted because I inaccurately construe the painted plastic as real vomit. Similarly, if I am irrationally afraid of a cuddly kitten because a much larger cat once scratched me, it could be because I have inconsistently construed it as dangerous even though I do not actually believe it to be. Because this account of irrational emotions generalizes over all emotions, it does not require separate accounts depending on whether or not a particular token of an emotion is sufficient for blame. Wallace's account, on the other hand, seems to be an ad hoc explanation; it does not generalize to other emotions, and it does not offer any advantages other than that it fits with Strawson's account of blame. Since Wallace's account is so problematic, it does not offer the 'way out' of my dilemma that the Strawsonian might have hoped.

Returning to the question at hand: are the three cases I have provided actually cases of resentment? In each case, the subject has the specific sort of concern-construal pairing that makes up resentment. In the *TV Case*, Jack is concerned about his relaxation and he construes the TV as acting indifferently toward his relaxation by breaking. In *Special Needs Sibling Case*, Sam is concerned about his relationship with his parents and about his future. Sam construes Sally as indifferent and ill-willed toward him by taking up an unequal share of their parents' time and money. And in *Intervention Case*, Beth is concerned about her personal freedom and construes her friends and family members as acting with ill-will and indifference toward her by infringing upon her personal freedom. Since the conditions for resentment are met, the subjects in these examples *are resenting*, even if their resentment is irrational.

Since we have ruled out the possibility that the three cases are not cases of resentment, the Strawsonian must argue they are also cases of blame. If it is at all plausible

that the subjects in these cases do not blame, then the Strawsonian view that resentment is sufficient for blame is false. And it seems as though Jack does not have to blame the television in *TV Case*. He might very well experience the emotion of resentment without feeling like blaming the TV. In fact, he might resent the TV while *simultaneously* blaming himself for breaking the TV. Similarly a person might resent a teacher for giving her a bad grade on a test, all the while blaming herself for knowing that the test was going to be challenging and not studying hard enough.

In the *Sibling Case*, it also seems possible that Sam might not blame. Sam likely tries to undertake the objective attitude as often as possible toward his sister. On the rare occasions that he fails to undertake the objective attitude, he resents. Since he clearly tries to resent as little as possible, there is good reason to think he also stops himself before blaming. Perhaps every time he catches himself resenting, he immediately cuts it short and steels himself against the possibility of resenting her in the future. He knows that Sally is not responsible for the hardship that she has caused, and he loves his sister unconditionally. Without a prior commitment requiring blame at each instance of resentment, there is little reason to believe that Sam must blame Sally whenever he resents her. It seems possible that he might even blame himself for resenting her and not being a better brother.

The *Intervention Case* provides perhaps the clearest distinction between resentment and blame. Beth likely resents her friends and family for putting her in a position for which she does not feel ready. She construes them as exhibiting ill-will or indifference toward her by forcing her into a corner. However, she also recognizes that by putting together this intervention for her, her friends and family are actually demonstrating their interest in her well being and their good will toward her. She knows that they are just doing what they

believe to be the right thing for her. As such, even though she might resent their tactics, it is completely plausible that she does not blame them for bringing about the intervention.

Surely Jack, Sam, and Beth do not do what Wolf describes when she talks about blame. As discussed in Section II, Wolf sees blame as having a characteristic depth. She argues that when we blame, "we are judging the moral quality of the individual herself in some more focused, noninstrumental, and more serious way. We may refer to [this] sense of responsibility as deep responsibility, and we may speak in connection with this of deep praise and blame."[39] It is unlikely that Jack, Sam, or Beth would, in their respective cases, muster the depth necessary for true moral blame. For example, in the *Sibling Case*, since Sam tries his best to refrain from resenting whenever possible, it seems likely that when he does resent, he still doesn't find his mentally handicapped sister deeply responsible or blame her in this deep way.

The fact that it is possible to resent without blaming in these instances indicates that blame must require something more than mere resentment. Resentment requires a concern-construal pair of a certain type. Since, as shown by the three cases we have explored, it is possible to have this concern-construal pair without blaming, the conditions for blame must include some other component.

Earlier, we determined that defenders of the Strawsonian view must either deny that these three cases are instances of resentment, or else they must affirm that they are instances of blame. We have seen that the three cases are indeed examples of resentment. Though they may be cases of irrational resentment, they are cases of resentment nonetheless. It is now clear that they are also cases in which it is possible that the resenting subject does not blame.

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[39] Wolf, *Freedom within Reason*, 41.

As such, neither argument available to defenders of the Strawsonian view is viable. We must therefore reject the Strawsonian view that resentment is sufficient for blame.

The view of resentment that I am providing here differs from the prevailing view in that I have taken more seriously the fact that resentment is an emotion. As such, I have provided an account of resentment based on a general emotion theory. On this theory, resentment is a type of concern-construal pairing, just like every other emotion. What distinguishes resentment from other emotions is the content of its characteristic construal. Resentment requires that I construe someone as exhibiting ill-will or indifference toward me. Furthermore, I must care about the ill-will or indifference that I have construed the object of my resentment as exhibiting. If someone causes something or acts in a certain way that demonstrates indifference or ill-will toward me, then I resent that person. Sometimes, perhaps often, we also blame whomever we resent. However, as demonstrated by the three cases that we have examined, it is possible to resent without blaming. Thus resentment is not sufficient for blame.

IV. Linking Resentment and Blame

Even if we reject the Strawsonian view, elements of this view still ring true. Our everyday experiences suggest that resentment and blame are still strongly correlated. We might share Wallace's intuition that when Jane is in the depths of her resenting of Stan, there is some sense in which blame *isn't far off*. Since, as I have argued, Jane's resentment is not sufficient for blame, we are left wondering: why does the relationship between resentment and blame seem so close?

Earlier I granted that the reactive attitudes may be necessary for moral blame. I want to use this section to explore the possibility that there might be something more to the link

between resentment and blame (but something *less* than sufficiency). I do not intend to definitively establish this connection. Instead, I will provide a suggestion: that resentment and blame are linked by their inherently interpersonal nature. I will begin by briefly explaining two common conceptions of the value of blame that are often given as supplements to the Strawsonian view. These possible additions to the Strawsonian view will serve to highlight how attempts to explain blame that do not involve its inherent interpersonal nature seem misguided and empty. In contrast, I will discuss the accounts of blame provided by T.M. Scanlon and Pamela Hieronymi. These accounts, which can be easily made compatible with the emotion theory taken up in Section III, showcase the intrinsically interpersonal nature of blame. By investigating these accounts of blame, we will see that Strawsonians are right to insist that resentment and blame are closely linked. However, we will find that the link does not stem from resentment being sufficient for blame, but rather that both resentment and blame are inherently interpersonal.

Those interested in giving a Strawsonian account of blame often argue that the value of blame lies in its expressive function or its sanctioning function. Blame expressivists believe that blame is an expression of disapproval toward a person for an action. This view is described by Michael McKenna in what he refers to as his conversational theory. On this view, all actions by morally responsible agents have the potential for moral significance. When a person blames, that blame is an expression of her disapproval toward a person who has acted in such a way as to meet the blaming subject's conditions for blame. The blaming subject may express this disapproval by speaking or acting in a certain manner. On this view, the speech or action used as a vehicle of expression for the blame is not intended as a

punishment. Instead, McKenna holds that the expressive function of blame is a valuable form of moral communication that is part of a larger moral dialogue.[40]

The second commonly held view sees the value of blame in its sanctioning and behavior-regulating properties. On this view, we blame in order to sanction or change other people's behavior. While critiquing this view, Wallace refers to it as the "economy of threats."[41] On this view, when a person acts in a way that satisfies the conditions for resentment, the blaming subject blames. When the blaming subject blames, the force of this blame may prevent the offending person from acting in that manner in the future. The value of blame then is that it reinforces proper behavior. In this way, sanctioning blame is forward-looking, as its value lies in its ability to change future behavior. The blaming subject often employs some form of punishment in order to discourage the offending behavior. Jane might scold or file a complaint against Stan for stealing her lunch, hoping that these consequences will be enough that he will refrain from stealing her lunch in the future.

Neither of these potential views of blame is necessarily related to emotions like resentment. On the expressive view, blame expresses disapproval toward the person who has met the conditions for blame for acting in such a way as to meet those conditions. On the economy of threats view, blame sanctions a person who has met the conditions for blame in the hope of preventing further behavior that might meet those conditions. If the value of blame is in its expressive or sanctioning properties, then blame that lacks emotionality but still serves its expressive or sanctioning purpose could still count as blame.

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[40] Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 91-92.
[41] Wallace, "Responsibility," 54. Wallace borrows the phrase from H.L.A. Hart, "Legal Responsibility and Excuses" as reprinted in Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility*, pg 28-35. He further credits the idea to Moritz Schlick, P.H. Nowell-Smith, J.J.C. Smart, and, more recently, Daniel Dennett.

As discussed in Section II, we do not blame because of blame's instrumental value. Blame carries with it a characteristic depth; it is a reflection of the moral quality of the individual, not just the action. So accounting for the value of blame as condemnation of or sanctioning against a specific behavior seems misguided. Both the expressive and the sanctioning views of blame explain the value of blame as instrumental – the expressive view sees the value of blame as its contribution to the moral conversation, while the sanctioning view sees the value of blame as its ability to prevent unwanted behavior. As such, neither view has the resources to account for the necessary depth of true moral blame. Furthermore, these possible additions o the Strawsonian view provide no better explanation for how resentment and blame are linked.

The Strawsonian view on its own has a distinct advantage in this regard over the expressive and sanctioning views of blame: with the reactive attitudes, the Strawsonian view has the resources to account for moral blame's characteristic depth. As such, we should prefer something in the neighborhood of the Strawsonian account of blame when searching for the connection between resentment and blame. In this spirit, we will now examine an account of the reactive attitudes proposed by T.M. Scanlon, and an account of blame put forth by Pamela Hieronymi. These accounts focus on the *relationship itself* between the blaming subject and the object of blame, and how blame changes that relationship. By examining these views, we will see that blame is essentially a change in this relationship. This feature of blame will help us connect resentment and blame. Though these accounts may be flawed, they can be modified in order to fit the view of resentment that I have defended in the previous section while maintaining the resources needed to account for the depth of moral blame.

Scanlon's view focuses on how certain behavior can change relationships. He sees certain actions as relationship-impairing by their very nature. To borrow an example from Scanlon, if I learn that a friend spoke ill of me at a party, my friend's behavior impairs our relationship. The behavior is, according to Scanlon, inherently relationship impairing. On his view, I can and often will respond to this behavior with resentment, as the reactive attitudes are responses to relationship impairing conduct.[42]

Scanlon's view of resentment moves us in the right direction; both resentment and blame are highly interpersonal responses, so it makes sense that they might both be connected to relationship impairing conduct. However, Scanlon does not properly account for how the relationship is impaired. Hurley and Macnamara point out that transgressing-conduct on its own cannot be relationship-impairing. They write,

> …there is always a *gap* between what one party in a relationship does in violation of the norms governing that relationship, and that relationship's thereby being *impaired*. When one participant in the relationship acts in norm-transgressing ways, it is an open question what the other participant is going to do with that fact, whether she is going to take it seriously or not, whether she is going to let it affect her regard for the actor, her orientation towards him.[43]

In other words, if I hear about my friend's words, it is *up to me* to impair the relationship. On this objection, the behavior in question cannot actually impair the relationship; there is something missing between seeing a behavior and the relationship becoming impaired. A person must, to a certain extent, choose to assign the behavior its relationship impairing

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[42] Scanlon, "Blame," 129-130.
[43] Hurley and Macnamara, "Toward a Theory of the Reactive Attitudes," 376.

qualities. Certain behaviors often lend themselves toward relationship impairment, but I must do the actual impairing of the relationship once I recognize the behavior in question. If I do choose to impair my relationship with my friend, I might, as is often the case, describe his behavior as the cause of the impairment. Yet this impairment is still something that I undertake, not something that is inherent in the behavior itself.

Hurley and Macnamara's objection is sound; there does seem to be a piece missing from Scanlon's account regarding how the relationship becomes impaired. However, it seems possible to reconstruct Scanlon's view in a way that would both overcome Hurley and Macnamara's objection and line up with the view of resentment that I defended in the previous section. It seems possible that it is blame that actually impairs the relationship. When I hear that my friend has insulted me at a party, it is a matter of fact that I resent him as long as the right concern-construal pairing is present. However, it is still up for debate whether or not I blame him. If I blame my friend, then our relationship will become impaired. Were his insults insignificant enough to brush off, or did they hurt me substantially enough to warrant some sort of relationship impairment? If I judge that he has acted in a manner worthy of relationship-impairment, then it is possible for me to blame and for our relationship to thus be impaired. Resentment or one of the other reactive attitudes is still necessary for blame, as the reactive attitudes provide the depth that characterizes true moral blame. However, a decision to impair the relationship is at least also necessary for blame on our revised version of Scanlon's view. Thus resentment is not sufficient for blame.

Hieronymi proposes a theory of blame with some similarities to Scanlon's account, but that also takes our judgments to be relationship changing, not the behaviors themselves. She argues that relationships require that people engage in proper regard toward each other.

For example, a good relationship between coworkers and a good relationship between a married couple will both require equal regard, but a proper spousal relationship requires a very different kind of regard than a proper relationship between coworkers. We then blame only if someone acts in a way that fails to demonstrate that proper regard. Hieronymi writes, "[When you blame] you have thus made a judgment that carries a certain kind of force – it bears a certain importance for your relations with her. You no longer stand in a relation in which regard is recognized."[44] Where previously mutual regard had been held, some actions might cause a person to judge that another has violated that regard. This judgment cannot help but change the relationship between the blaming subject and the object of blame. Jane likely expects that Stan treat her with the same regard that she treats him. When she sees that he has eaten her sandwich, Jane judges that Stan does not treat her with that same regard. Upon making this judgment, she sees the relationship differently. Even if she takes no action, she sees Stan as someone who does not treat her with the same regard with which she treats him. The relationship is now changed; if she does nothing, then the relationship is one of unequal regard, and if she changes her regard to match his, then she no longer sees him as someone to whom it is important to treat with respect and good-will.

Hieronymi's view of blame and the revised version of Scanlon's view offer us a number of advantages over the expressive and sanctioning views of blame, as well as Scanlon's original account of blame. First of all, they allow for blame to be backward-looking, in that a blaming subject appeals to the behavior in question. We should prefer theories that are backward looking in some respect, since only backward-looking theories have the characteristic depth of blame. Second, they also allow for blame to be forward-looking, in that they explain blame's effect on how blaming subjects interact with those they

[44] Pamela Hieronymi, "The Force and Fairness of Blame," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18.1 (2004): 126.

blame. Third, they line up with the view of resentment that I defended in Section III in which resentment or one of the other reactive attitudes is necessary but not sufficient for blame.

Perhaps the greatest advantage belonging to accounts of blame like Scanlon's and Hieronymi's is that they help to explain why we find resentment and blame so closely linked. Even if resentment, as one of the reactive attitudes, is necessary for blame as determined in Section I, there seems to be something further connecting resentment and blame. As we discussed earlier, resentment is inherently interpersonal. I might consider my relationships with all people I interact with interpersonal, and so I might resent all people who act with indifference and ill-will toward me. However, my resentment is characteristically stronger and perhaps more rational when it is directed at a person with whom I have a relationship that is more than merely incidental. This account of blame shares that quality; it is also wrapped up in our relationships. We only resent when we have interpersonal relationships, and we impair these relationships when we blame. In this sense, resentment and blame don't need to have the same conditions. They apply to many of the same cases because these cases are often inherently interpersonal in nature.[45]

I do not intend to claim that this view is the be all and end all of blame. It is possible that this view improperly accounts for some features of blame or fails to account for other necessary components of blame. However, I see Scanlon and Hieronymi as pointing at something important: like resentment, blame's importance lies in its interpersonal nature. When we blame, something happens to the relationship between the blaming subject and the object of blame. It is by further examining this change in the relationship that we will come to a full account of blame.

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[45] In particular, many of the cases in which resentment and blame do not overlap include some element that restricts the interpersonal nature of the case. In both *TV Case* and *Sibling Case*, the relationships in question are not interpersonal in the same way that two normal adults can have an interpersonal relationship.

V. Conclusion

Defenders of the Strawsonian view hold that resentment is sufficient for blame. In this paper, I have attempted to refute this claim by offering an account of resentment grounded in a plausible, general emotion theory. By breaking down resentment to its component parts and providing non-paradigm examples of resentment, I showed that it is possible to experience resentment without also blaming. Since blame then requires something beyond mere resentment, resentment cannot be sufficient for blame. Instead, I have proposed that resentment and blame are connected because they are both inherently interpersonal in nature.

The next few steps may involve determining whether or not it is possible to confirm my thesis through empirical psychology. Further work in the psychology of emotions could determine if our emotional processes are indeed effortless and automatic. This evidence will only strengthen my argument that emotions like resentment cannot be sufficient for blame. However, I have some reservations about accepting some of the psychological data *prime facie*. Numerous psychologists, including Jonathan Haidt, have shown that we have a tendency to report more than we know about our mental processes.[46] Psychological experiments attempting to confirm or deny my proposal by ascertaining the nature of the relationship between resentment and blame may fall victim to subjects reporting incorrectly. It may be difficult for people to adequately report on their resentment and blame experiences, especially if resentment, as an emotion, is effortless and automatic.

[46] For example, when making moral judgments, Haidt shows that people often justify their judgments with responses that seem explanatory even though there is reason to believe that their explanations are merely post-hoc rationalizations for their automatic judgments (Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108.4 (2001): 819-821). This is not to say that people intentionally report more than they know – they often accurately report exactly what they experience. However, research has consistently shown that our experiences with things like choice do not accurately correlate with the way we actually make choices.

If my argument is sound, then it may be worth examining whether or not Strawson's work in free will can survive my challenge. Since, on my objection, resentment is not sufficient for blame, it seems likely that a similar argument can be made regarding the relationship between resentment and moral responsibility. If resentment is not sufficient for moral responsibility, then it seems unclear how Strawson's compatibilist proposal would still stand. On the view that I defend in section III, we can engage in interpersonal relationships and experience the reactive attitudes without holding people morally responsible or blaming them. As such, my argument may force defenders of the Strawsonian view to reevaluate certain features of Strawson's contribution to the free will debate.

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