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The emotion account of blame

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Abstract   For a long time the dominant view on the nature of blame was that to blame someone is to have an emotion toward her, such as anger, resentment or indignation in the case of blaming someone else and guilt in the case of self-blame. Even though this view is still widely held, it has recently come under heavy attack. The aim of this paper is to elaborate the idea that to blame is to have an emotion and to defend the resulting emotion account of blame.

1 Introduction

Alice and Barbara share all the duties of a common household. They are going to have guests at 7 p.m. and Alice promises Barbara that she will take out the garbage before the guests arrive. At 6:30 p.m. Alice still has not done so. She knows what she promised to do, she knows that Barbara can legitimately demand that she take out the garbage, but right now her favorite TV show is about to begin. Thus she decides to take out the garbage later. Then it is 7 p.m., the guests ring the door bell, and the garbage is still in the kitchen.

This brief story—the garbage case—should seem familiar to most of us. One person breaks a promise without a legitimate excuse, which is a standard example of a moral wrongdoing. And it would not be surprising if Barbara blames Alice for not keeping her promise. But what is it to blame a person for a fault? This is the question I will discuss in this paper.

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For a long time the dominant view on the nature of blame was that to blame someone is to have an emotion toward her, such as anger in the case of blaming someone else and guilt in the case of self-blame.[1] Even though this view is still widely held, it has recently come under attack and many authors have proposed alternative accounts of the nature of blame in order to avoid the emotion account's apparent pitfalls.[2] The aim of this paper is to show that there is no need to look for an alternative theory of blame. In order to do so I will first elaborate and motivate the emotion account of blame based on a clear-eyed view of what kind of thing emotions are (Sect. 2). Then I will show how the emotion account can make sense of the widely-held intuition that blame has a certain weight, sting, or force (Sect. 3). I will discuss the objections that it is implausible that we always have an emotion when we blame someone (Sect. 4) and that the emotion account cannot make sense of the fact that our practice of blaming people is diverse (Sect. 5).

One general remark is in order before I outline the emotion account of blame. We sometimes use the expression "blame" to refer to a certain behavior, such as aggressively approaching someone, or to a certain attitude that we can keep to ourselves. I will refer to blame behavior as *public blame* and to blame attitudes as *private blame*. The emotion account focuses on private blame, but I will discuss the relation between public and private blame in detail in Sect. 5.

2 A sketch of the emotion account of blame

The emotion account of blame says that to blame a person is to have an emotion toward her, such as anger in the case of blaming someone else and guilt in the case of self-blame. But what is to have such an emotion? In our everyday thinking and talking, we can have two different things in mind when we say that we are, for instance, scared of a dog, sad about a friend's death, or angry at our unreliable partner. First, we can mean that we are in the grip of the emotion, which typically lasts for a couple of minutes or, perhaps, hours. In the literature, this is often called an *emotional episode*. Second, we can mean that we have a long-term emotion. When we say that we have been sad about a friend's death since she died 5 years ago, we do not mean that we have been in the grip of sadness for that entire time. But if our claim is true, being sad about her death is a constant part of our emotional

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[1] The emotion account of blame is inspired by Strawson's (1962) remarks on reactive attitudes that had and continue to have a major influence on the debate about blame and responsibility; see, e.g., Watson (1987, 1996), Wallace (1994, ch. 2–4), Fischer and Ravizza (1998), Darwall (2006, ch. 4) and Menges (forthcoming). Recent proponents of emotion accounts of blame are, e.g., Wallace (2011), Wolf (2011), Tognazzini (2013), Cogley (2013), Pickard (2013), Graham (2014), and Pereboom (2014, ch. 6).

[2] The most prominent alternatives to the emotion account of blame have been developed by Sher (2006, ch. 6), Arpaly (2006, ch. 1), Scanlon (2008, ch. 4; 2013), Kekes (2009), McKenna (2012, ch. 3; 2013) and Fricker (2016). See also the helpful overviews by Coates and Tognazzini (2012, 2013), Tognazzini and Coates (2014).

household. I will call this long-term emotion an *emotional stance*.[3] Let me characterize emotional episodes first.

Most theorists agree that emotional episodes have the following three properties[4]: first, they have a phenomenal character. Being angry in the sense of an emotional episode, for example, involves experiencing a kind of hotness and tension, which supervenes on an increased heart rate and skin temperature. Second, emotional episodes have a motivational or behavioral dimension: sad people typically lack motivation, fear is associated with running away or attacking, anger with aggressive and sanctioning behavior, and people who feel guilty tend to apologize or to compensate for what they did. Third, emotional episodes have a representational content: being scared involves representing something as dangerous, anger involves representing something as having threatened, attacked, or interfered with something one values and guilt involves representing oneself as having threatened, attacked, or interfered with something one values.

There is a discussion in the literature about which of these properties are necessary in order to have an emotional episode, but most authors agree that emotional episodes must have representational content because this explains the difference between an emotional episode such as sadness and a mood such as being gloomy. Sadness is directed at a specific object that is represented as a loss, but being gloomy is not (even though being gloomy often involves being sad about certain things).

There is no agreement in the literature about how exactly to explain the representational content of emotional episodes, but most theorists agree that this content can be explained without assuming that emotions are or involve judgments.[5] And one important reason for this is that emotions can be recalcitrant: Judgments are typically thought of as being critically endorsed by those who make them and those who judge that *p* accept or affirm that *p*.[6] If one judges, for example, that a dog is dangerous, one accepts or affirms that this is so. But we sometimes fear a dog, which involves representing it as dangerous, over a longer period of time while simultaneously judging that it is not in fact dangerous. If emotions involved judgments, we would be holding two obviously conflicting judgments over a longer period of time. But this is implausible. When we realize that we hold two obviously conflicting judgments, we usually give up one of them or we suspend judgment altogether. But emotions work differently. Even when we firmly judge that the dog is not dangerous and we realize that we nevertheless fear it, we do not simply stop being afraid. Sometimes, we stably have both attitudes over a longer period of time.

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[3] See, e.g., Deonna and Teroni (2012, ch. 1) for the distinction between emotional episodes and what I call emotional stances. It is interesting to observe that most authors in the current debate on emotions focus on emotional episodes, but see Goldie (2000, ch. 2) and Solomon (2004) for exceptions.

[4] For the following see, e.g., Ekman (1999), Ben-Ze'ev (2001, ch. 3; 2010), Goldie (2000, ch. 2 and 3) and D'Arms (who characterizes "sentiments" in this way, 2013). Pettigrove (2012), Shoemaker (2013, 2015, ch. 3) and Nussbaum (2015) characterize anger by pointing to the three properties.

[5] See, e.g., D'Arms and Jacobson (2003), Prinz (2004, ch. 2), de Sousa (2010), Deigh (2010) and Deonna and Teroni (2012, ch. 5) for discussions of judgment theories of the emotions.

[6] See, e.g., D'Arms and Jacobson (2000) and Deigh (2010).

This observation supports the idea that emotions do not involve judgments. There are alternative explanations of the content of emotions, the most prominent of which characterizes it in analogy with the content of sense-perceptions, but I do not need to take a stand here with regard to which account is the correct one.[7] However, I will assume that emotional episodes are not and do not involve judgments. Let me now turn to emotional stances.

It is completely normal to say that we have been sad about a friend's death since she died 5 years ago, that we have been angry at our neighbor for months, or that we have felt guilty ever since we cheated on our partner.[8] Having such an emotional stance necessarily involves the disposition to have emotional episodes in certain situations. Thus if Barbara does not have the tendency to be in the grip of anger when she thinks about Alice, then it would be false to say that she is angry at her. But Barbara's emotional stance will also involve the tendency to see Alice in a certain light and to take certain things to be particularly striking about her. For example, Barbara might take the fact that Alice's desk is a mess as supporting her evaluation that she is unreliable. Moreover, Barbara will have the tendency to behave in sanctioning ways toward her, for example by complaining to her friends how hard it is to live with Alice or by not doing Alice's dishes. These disparate facts are combined and structured by Barbara's having adopted a certain stance toward Alice. And it is this stance that gives the diverse forms of behavior and the different feelings, thoughts, and desires Barbara has toward Alice their meaning and importance for Alice and Barbara. And we typically call such a stance being angry at someone.

Let me take stock of what has been said so far. The emotion account of blame says that to blame someone is to have a certain emotion toward that person. We can blame someone by being in the grip of the emotional episode or by having a long-term emotional stance toward the blamee.

Different versions of the emotion account vary, among other things, with respect to the question of how to further characterize the relevant emotions. Some authors claim that disappointment and contempt can be blame emotions.[9] But I will follow the standard view that to blame someone else is to have a form of anger toward her and to blame oneself is to have the emotion of guilt. Within this standard view, it is further debated how to characterize the relevant forms of anger and guilt. The reactive emotion account, for example, says that having one of the blame emotions involves representing the blamee as having some objectionable attitude.[10] Typically, blaming others is then identified with resenting or being indignant toward them and resentment and indignation are often thought of as specific forms of anger.[11] Other versions of the standard emotion account are more liberal. They

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[7] See, e.g., de Sousa (1987), Döring (2003) and Prinz (2004).

[8] See, e.g., Goldie (2000, ch. 2) for a detailed account of what I call emotional stances.

[9] See, e.g., Pickard (2013).

[10] See, most prominently, Wallace (1994, ch. 2, 3 and 5).

[11] See, e.g., Cogley (2013) and Pereboom (2014, ch. 6).

say that to blame another agent is to have some form of anger toward her.[12] These differences within the camp of the standard emotion account are interesting in their own right, but for the purposes of this paper I can remain neutral toward them.

So far I have only presented the basic ideas of the emotion account of blame. Those who do not already find that view attractive will not be persuaded by what I have said. I will close this section by presenting a consideration that makes the emotion account appear more attractive than most alternative theories of blame: It seems as if blame can be recalcitrant in the same way in which emotions can be recalcitrant. And a good explanation of this is that blame is an emotion. I will take a moment to flesh out this point, which was first made by Pickard (2013), because it will be important in the sections to come. To see that blame can be recalcitrant, take the following case—the bakery case:

This time, Alice promises Barbara to buy bread at their favorite bakery on her way home from the office. But a car crash takes place directly in front of Alice's car on the only street that leads to the bakery right before closing time, making it so that Alice cannot get there. After a long and hard day at the office, Barbara passes the traffic jam on her way home, sees Alice, realizes that Alice could not make it to the bakery, and understands that it was not her fault. When Barbara arrives home she washes the dishes, just as she promised to, and, while she does it, she realizes that she blames Alice for the fact that there won't be fresh bread for dinner. When Alice comes home, Barbara cannot suppress an angry comment.

Let us assume that Barbara judges that Alice does not have any feature that could make it appropriate to blame her (e.g., that Alice did not violate an obligation without excuse and that she does not lack good will), that Alice does not deserve to be blamed and so on. But Barbara nonetheless blames Alice, which involves representing Alice as having some negative property.[13] Judgment theories of blame that say that blaming someone involves making a judgment about her have problems explaining how such a case is possible. For if blaming involved making such a judgment, Barbara would simultaneously hold two obviously conflicting judgments over a longer period of time. But this is, as I said above, implausible. For when we realize that we hold two obviously conflicting judgments, we usually give up one of them or we suspend judgment. But this is not what happens here. Barbara continues to blame Alice even though she firmly judges that Alice does not have a property that could make it appropriate to blame her, that Alice does not deserve to be blamed and so on. Moreover, Barbara continues to blame her even though she realizes that doing so is inappropriate.

The emotion account of blame can easily explain how such a case is possible: having an emotion involves representing an object in a certain way without necessarily judging that the object is that way. Therefore, there can be a conflict between the representational content of one's emotion and the content of one's

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[12] See, e.g., Owens (2012, ch. 1).

[13] Here is a similar case: sometimes people blame a partner who has died for having left them alone. But in most cases, the survivor also judges that it is not the partner's fault that he or she is now alone.

judgment. Barbara's blame emotion represents Alice as having some negative property, whereas her judgments represent Alice as not having such a property.

Judgment theorists of blame could contend that Barbara does not really blame Alice in the bakery case. But this is unconvincing because it seems intuitive that at least one of Barbara's responses is a way of blaming Alice. Judgment theorists have to say that this is not so unless Barbara also makes a certain judgment. Why should this be so? What seems to be the guiding motivation of the judgment account of blame is that blame has content and that blame can, therefore, be accurate or inaccurate. But the emotion account can capture that intuition because emotions also have content and emotions can also be accurate or inaccurate. Therefore, there is no reason to insist that Barbara's response is only a form of blame if she makes a certain judgment.[14]

To sum up, the emotion account identifies blaming an agent with having a certain emotion toward her. We can blame an agent in the sense of having a blame episode toward her or in the sense of adopting a blame stance toward her. This account is intuitively plausible and it has, at least *prima facie*, an explanatory advantage over judgment theories of blame because the emotion account is better equipped to make sense of conflicts between blame attitudes and certain judgments. In the remainder of the paper I will defend this account against pressing objections and show how it can make sense of further features that we intuitively associate with blame.

3 The weight of blame

Blame seems to have special meaning for our everyday lives. Most of us do not like being blamed and most of us feel challenged in a certain way when we realize that others blame us. This seems to be true of both public and private blame. The challenging aspect of blame is sometimes referred to as blame's force, sting, or weight.[15] Some critics of the emotion account of blame argue that this view has difficulty making sense of the weight of blame. I will call this thought the too-light objection. Here is how Pamela Hieronymi puts it:

> [I]t is unclear how the affective accompaniment of a judgment could, itself, carry the characteristic force of blame. An affective accompaniment of a judgment would be a certain unpleasant emotional disturbance, occasioned by the judgment. But, the force of blame seems deeper, more serious or weighty than simply being the object of certain unpleasant emotional disturbance. The affect, itself, seems insufficiently robust (Hieronymi 2004, 121).

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[14] The judgment theorist could also claim that Barbara in fact does make the relevant judgment. But this is problematic because now the judgment theorist uses the word "judgment" in what seems to be a non-standard way. I take it that those who judge that *p* endorse, accept, or affirm that *p*. However, Barbara does not endorse, accept, or affirm that Alice, say, lacks good will or acted wrongly.

[15] For "force", see Hieronymi (2004); for "sting", see McKenna (2013) and Pickard (2013); and for "weight", see Scanlon (2008, ch. 4).

Note that Hieronymi seems to have the phenomenal character in mind when she talks about the "affective accompaniment of a judgment". She claims that the weight of blame cannot be explained by that phenomenal dimension but only by the content of the judgment she takes to be essential for blame. But according to the sketch of what emotions are that the emotion account is based on, emotional episodes also have content. Let us, therefore, ask whether an account based on that understanding of the emotions can make sense of the weight of blame.

In order to evaluate the too-light objection, it is important to distinguish between a descriptive and a normative reading of it. Let me start with the descriptive reading. The claim is that most people in fact do, for example, feel uncomfortable when they realize that others blame them, and that they do feel challenged to explain, justify, excuse themselves, or apologize. The descriptive reading of the too-light objection says that the emotion account cannot explain why this is true.[16]

Whether or not blame in fact has these effects depends heavily on the situation in which the blamee realizes that she is being blamed (e.g., whether she is drunk or sober), on the character of the blamee (e.g., how confident she is), and probably also on other factors.[17] But it seems in general likely that we do not like and feel challenged by being the object of the kind of anger that the emotion account identifies with blame.

First, anger is associated with aggressive and sanctioning behavior and it is intuitively plausible that most of us do not like being the object of an attitude that has such a behavioral dimension. Second, we often respond to others being angry at us by getting angry ourselves. Being angry at something involves representing that something as having attacked, threatened, or interfered with something we value. When we are angry at others' being angry at us, we represent this as an attack, threat, or interference with something we value. And part of what it is to value something is not to like other people's attacking, threatening, or interfering with it. Thus, it is quite plausible that we do not like it when others are angry at us. And since the emotion account of blame says that to blame someone is to be angry at her, this account can easily make sense of the claim that blame has a certain weight in the descriptive sense that many of us in fact do not like being the object of blame.

Third, the emotion account says that part of what it is to blame an agent is to represent her as having attacked, threatened, or interfered with something one values. When we realize that someone represents us as having done something like that, it is natural to feel challenged to explain, excuse, or justify one's behavior, or to apologize. Therefore, the emotion account of blame can also easily explain why blame has a challenging aspect in the descriptive sense that many of us really do feel challenged when we realize that we are the object of blame.

Now take the normative reading of the too-light objection. It says that most people do not only feel challenged to justify, explain, excuse, or apologize when they realize that they are being blamed. The normative claim is that blame gives the blamee a reason to justify, explain, excuse, or apologize for what they are being

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16 This is how Pickard (2013) understands the too-light objection.

17 See Pickard (2013, 619).

blamed for.[18] The normative reading of the too-light objection says that the emotion account of blame cannot explain why this is true.

However, there are counter-examples to the claim that all instances of blame have that kind of normative weight and these counter-examples involve recalcitrant blame. Imagine a case in which it is common knowledge that Alice is not blameworthy for a certain action or omission, say not buying bread. And imagine that Barbara nonetheless blames Alice for not buying bread. In this case, Alice and Barbara know that blaming Alice is inappropriate and both of them know that the other has this knowledge.

If all instances of blame have the normative weight sketched above, then Barbara's blaming Alice would now be a reason for Alice to explain that it was not her fault that she did not buy bread. But this is counter-intuitive. Alice knows that Barbara knows that it was not Alice's fault. And in such a situation it is implausible that Barbara's blaming Alice gives Alice a reason to tell Barbara what Barbara already knows. It may give her a reason to tell Barbara that she knows what Barbara knows. And she may have other reasons for explaining herself. For example, it could be that providing an explanation is the best way to prevent a long argument. But intuitively, Barbara's blaming Alice does not give Alice a reason to explain why she could not buy bread.

This case suggests that not all instances of blame have the relevant normative weight. But there are explanations for why we often do have reason to explain, justify, excuse ourselves, or apologize when we are blamed. Imagine, first, that it is appropriate to blame a person and that person is being blamed by a victim who has the standing to do so. Then the blamee plausibly has a reason to apologize. But here, it seems to be the fact that the blamee is blameworthy and the fact that the victim has the standing to blame the blamee that make it appropriate for the blamee to respond in this way. For the wrongdoer would plausibly also have reason to apologize even if her victim did not blame her in that situation.

Imagine, second, that it is inappropriate to blame a person for an action, but someone who would have the standing to do so blames her for that action and judges that the blamee is blameworthy for it. Then it seems appropriate for the blamee to justify, explain, or excuse what she did. But what makes that response appropriate in this case is not the blaming itself but rather the fact that the blamer judges that the blamee is blameworthy when in truth she is not. For the blamee would have reason to respond in the same manner if the other person merely judged that she is blameworthy without blaming her.[19]

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[18] Scanlon argues in an earlier book that moral criticism has this kind of normative weight: "Moral criticism claims that an agent has governed him- or herself in a manner that cannot be justified in the way morality requires, *and it supports demands for acknowledgment of this fact, and for apology, or for justification or explanation*" (1998, 272, my italics).

[19] To avoid misunderstandings here, I do not assume that justifying, explaining or excusing is only appropriate if the blamer makes a false blameworthy judgment. I only assume that, other things being equal, the blamer's making such a false judgment is a typical reason for the blamee to justify, explain, or excuse what she did.

To sum up, the emotion account of blame has no difficulty explaining why most people do not like and feel challenged by being the object of blame. Moreover, it is not true that all instances of blame are reasons for the blamee to explain, justify, excuse herself, or apologize. But there are explanations of why we often do have reason to respond in these ways when we are blamed that are compatible with the emotion account. Thus the too-light objection is not convincing.

4 The simply-implausible objection

The simply-implausible objection is the claim that it is simply implausible that we always have an emotion when we blame a person and, especially, that we are always angry when we blame someone else. This objection is supported by cases in which a person seems to blame someone but does not seem to be angry.[20] Here is the case favored by Angela Smith:

> After repeated disappointments, for example, I may have lost my ability to feel anger toward an unreliable friend, yet I may still protest his treatment of me by cutting off relations with him. In doing this, […] I make clear that I blame him, even if my predominant feeling is one of sadness (Smith 2013, 41).

Whether or not the proponent of the emotion account has to deny that this response is a form of blame depends on what theory of the emotions she accepts and on what it means to say that one has lost the ability to feel anger.

Smith describes a case in which an agent—call her Barbara again—cannot *feel* anger toward another person—call her Alice. The sketch of what emotions are that the emotion account of blame is based on says that to have an emotion is not simply to have a feeling. Now, if one assumes a theory of emotional episodes that says that having feelings is not necessary for having an emotional episode, one can simply say that one can have anger episodes without having anger-feelings.[21] Then, the case is not a counter-example to the emotion account of blame. Barbara may have anger episodes toward Alice and she may, thereby, blame Alice without having anger-feelings toward her. This is the first way in which the proponent of the emotion account can agree that the response described by Smith is a form of blame.

But let us assume that to have an emotional episode necessarily involves having certain feelings. Now, one should ask whether Barbara has lost the very specific ability to feel anger toward Alice in that particular moment, or whether she has lost a more general ability, for example the ability to feel anger at Alice at all. Assume first that Barbara is only unable to feel anger at Alice when she cuts off relations with her. This may be because someone drugged her, because she is depressed, or because her sadness about Alice's unreliability is so predominant that she simply cannot feel any anger in that moment. This case is not a counter-example to the emotion account of blame. Barbara may still be angry at Alice in the sense of having

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[20] For different versions of this objection, see Sher (2006, ch. 5), Kekes (2009) and Fricker (2016).

[21] See, e.g., Nussbaum (2015) for such a view.

an anger stance toward her. This stance involves the disposition to have episodes of certain forms of anger, the tendency to evaluate certain things as supporting the negative evaluation of Alice, and to behave in sanctioning ways toward her. Plausibly, Barbara's cutting off relations with Alice can be understood as sanctioning her. Thus, if one has more background information, Barbara's cutting off relations with Alice may turn out to be an actualization of a disposition that is part of her being angry at Alice in the sense of having an anger stance toward her. For this to be true, Barbara does not need to have anger-feelings when she cuts off relations. This is the second way in which the proponent of the emotion account can agree that the response described by Smith is a form of blame.

However, one can also describe the case in such a way that the proponent of the emotion account and Smith disagree about whether the response is a form of blame. Imagine that Barbara has lost the general ability to feel anger at Alice at all: even if Barbara has no other predominant emotion, she is not drugged, she is concentrating on what Alice did to her, and so on, Barbara cannot feel anger toward Alice. If one also assumes that feelings are necessary for emotional episodes, then the version of the emotion account that I defend here implies that Barbara's response is not a form of blaming Alice. The opponent of the emotion account may conclude that this is why the emotion account is untenable. In the remainder of this section, I will show why this would be too hasty. I will do so by motivating the claim that completely anger-free responses lack features that we typically associate with blame and by explaining why some people may, nonetheless, tend to call Barbara's anger-free response a form of blaming Alice.

One of the intuitions that drives the emotion account of blame is that blame is something aggressive and, therefore, potentially destructive. The aggressive dimension of blame easily explains why we care so much about blame in our everyday lives and in philosophical reflection. First, it is, as I said above, intuitive that in everyday life we simply do not like being the object of aggressive attitudes. Second, in philosophical reflection, we wonder whether it can be fair or appropriate to blame a person if everything she thinks, feels, and does is a result of causal chains that started long before she was born. This is why the fairness or appropriateness conditions of blame are central to the debate about the consequences of determinism.[22] If one takes blame to be something aggressive, it becomes clear why philosophers care so much about the appropriateness conditions of blame: it seems intuitively problematic to be aggressive toward a person because of something that is the result of causal chains that started long before she was born. Finally, philosophers discuss whether it would be better to get rid of our tendency to blame and to replace it by a tendency to have more peaceful responses such as sadness or disappointment.[23] This debate is based on the idea that blame is something aggressive and, therefore, at least potentially problematic.

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[22] See, e.g., Wallace (1994), Fischer and Ravizza (1998) and Pereboom (2014).

[23] Pereboom (2013, 2014, ch. 6), e.g., is critical of blame. See Wallace (2011) and Menges (2014) for further discussions.

If one finds it plausible that blame is something aggressive, the emotion account suggests itself because it elegantly explains this dimension of blame: to blame someone else is to be angry at her, which involves the tendency to aggressive, sanctioning behavior. A theory of blame that makes room for completely non-aggressive blame, on the other hand, is at risk of losing sight of what many take to be one of the most interesting features of blame. If one finds this line of reasoning convincing, then one should conclude that Barbara, who has lost her general ability to feel anger at Alice at all, does not blame Alice. Whatever attitude or stance she has toward Alice is too peaceful to count as blame.

The opponent of the emotion account will probably contend that the connection between blame and aggression is looser than the emotion account suggests. This is an important clash of intuitions. But proponents of the emotion account can do more than merely register this clash.

First, proponents of the emotion account can show that their opponents have serious problems that proponents of the emotion account do not have. One advantage of the emotion account that I stressed above is that it can make sense of conflicts between blame attitudes and certain judgments. Judgment theories of blame, such as Smith's, have problems with cases of that sort.

Second, the emotion account can explain why completely anger-free responses are easily mixed up with what the emotion account identifies as real blame. Proponents of the emotion account can argue that in cases of that sort the apparent blamer judges that the apparent blamee has some feature that would make it appropriate to blame her, such as having violated an obligation without excuse. And even though making such a judgment is, one might say, close to blaming, it is not itself a way of blaming. Therefore, the emotion account can show why some may tend to call Barbara's anger-free response a form of blame even though, strictly speaking, it is not.

I will come back to this point in the following section. But let me briefly summarize the discussion so far. If one backs up the emotion account of blame with a better understanding of what emotions are, many supposed counter-examples turn out to be compatible with the emotion account of blame. And in those cases in which the emotion account implies that a certain response is not a form of blame even though some find it intuitive that the response is in fact a form of blame, the proponent of the emotion account can both independently motivate her view and explain why some may confuse the response in question with blame. Therefore, the simply-implausible objection against the emotion account is not successful.

5 The diversity of blame

The emotion account of blame belongs to a category of theories that I will call classical theories of blame. These theories try to identify a clearly outlined group of attitudes, having one of which is necessary for blaming an agent. The version of the emotion account that I defend says that we can only blame another agent if we have a kind of anger toward her. Recently, classical theories of blame have come under criticism. Miranda Fricker claims that such theories have problems dealing with the

fact that our practice of blaming people is "internally diverse" (2016, 166) and "significantly disunified" (2016, 166)[24]: there are many different ways of blaming people such that searching for a certain group of attitudes, having one of which is necessary for blaming, will not help to make sense of the whole practice. She claims that the "highest common denominator will turn out to be very low, delivering an extremely thin account. In particular, it will not be capable of illuminating how the different forms of the practice are explanatorily related to one another" (Fricker 2016, 166). Fricker's alternative approach is to describe a paradigm of blame that she calls Communicative Blame: "[I]n Communicative Blame you are *finding fault with the other party, communicating this judgement of fault to them with the added force of some negative emotional charge*" (Fricker 2016, 172 italics in original).[25] Then, she tries to explain different instances of blame by showing that they are derived from the paradigm and how.

Is Fricker right that classical theories of blame in general and the emotion account in particular are too thin to make sense of our practice of blame? In order to answer this question, I will first discuss her claim that the practice of blame is internally diverse. I will argue that it is less diverse than she believes. Then, I will show how the emotion account of blame can illuminate explanatory relations between different forms of blame, namely between private and public blame.

Fricker supports her claim that the practice of blame is internally diverse by pointing at self-blame and other-blame, blaming the near and blaming the distant, blame of the victim and blame of a third party, and so on.[26] She is right that a plausible theory of blame should be able to make sense of these forms of blame. And the emotion account can do so: as long as the blamer has a certain emotion toward another agent, she can be considered as blaming that agent. But Fricker also contends that

> [f]urther diversity is moreover introduced by the fact that each of these forms of blame may or may not involve some emotional colour, and of somewhat different tones. Sometimes our blame is little more than a dispassionate judgement that someone is blameworthy, the merest answer to the question 'Whose fault is it?' ('I blame the carpenter for the warped table top') [...] (Fricker 2016, 167).

A bit later Fricker suggests a minimal definition of blame (which she characterizes as explanatorily weaker than what she takes to be the paradigm of blame) as "*a finding fault with someone for their (inward or outward) conduct*. I suspect if one were required to offer a definition, this would have to be it" (Fricker 2016, 170, italics in original).

In supporting these claims, Fricker relies heavily on the intuition that drives the simply-implausible objection against the emotion account, namely that it seems

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[24] Similar considerations motivate McGeer's (2013) and McKenna's (2013) non-classical theories of blame.

[25] See McKenna (2012, ch. 3; 2013) for a similar approach to and account of blame.

[26] See Fricker (2016, 166–167).

possible to blame someone without having an emotion. She briefly discusses the reply that I developed in the preceding section, namely that we should understand these responses not as instances of blame, but as judgments about the agent's having a property that makes her an appropriate object of blame. Here is Fricker's response:

> Certainly it is possible to carve up the concepts that way. But any observations we might make of supposed mere judgements of blameworthiness are in themselves entirely neutral as to whether they should be described as examples of judgements of blameworthiness without (something called) blame being present, or whether instead we say, more simply, that there can be forms of blame that lack emotion […] (Fricker 2016, 171).

I will now argue that this reply is not convincing. Admittedly, observing the mere judgment that something was an agent's fault does not help to determine whether it is a judgment of blameworthiness unaccompanied by blame or blame unaccompanied by an emotion. But it helps to integrate such a judgment in a realistic web of attitudes. Take a judgment of the following kind: "The warped table top was the carpenter's fault, but I do not blame her for it". If the mere answer to the question "Whose fault is it?" is itself an instance of blame, then the speaker would contradict herself. But this is counter-intuitive.

Take, first, a case in which you have already forgiven the carpenter for having warped the table top. You still judge that it was her fault and that it would, in principle, be appropriate to blame her for it, but you have forgiven her. Many authors assume and it seems intuitively plausible that having forgiven someone for some fault at least typically involves not blaming that person for that fault (anymore).[27] If this is true, one can correctly insist that the warped table top was the carpenter's fault, but that one does not blame her for it. And this conclusion supports the claim that making a mere judgment of fault is not sufficient for blaming.

Take, second, a case in which you judge that you are not in the right position to blame someone. Imagine that you carelessly scratched your neighbor's table top a couple of months ago and now she carelessly scratches yours. You judge that it was her fault and that it would, in principle, be appropriate to blame her for it. But, as you did the same thing, you believe that you are not in the right position to blame her for it. Thus, you may tell your partner that the new scratch was your neighbor's fault and add that you do not blame her for it because you are not in a position to do so. If making judgments of fault were itself a form of blaming, then your self-description would be false. However, it seems very plausible that complex judgments of that kind can be true.

These cases support the claim that making a judgment of fault or merely answering the question "Whose fault is it?" is not sufficient for blaming.[28] If this is

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[27] See, e.g., the overview about blame by Tognazzini and Coates (2014) and the overview about forgiveness by Hughes (2015).

[28] Moreover, Fricker's minimal definition (and what she calls Communicative Blame) belongs to the class of judgment theories of blame that say that blaming a person involves making a certain judgment. As such, Fricker's definition has problems making sense of recalcitrant blame and is therefore, at least *prima facie*, less attractive than accounts that do not have that problem.

true, then it follows that the practice of blame is less diverse than Fricker supposes in her case against the emotion account of blame. Since Fricker's claim that the emotion account cannot make sense of the whole practice of blame is based on the assumption that making judgments of fault is a form of blaming, her objection is not convincing.

In order to further strengthen my plea for the emotion account, I will now discuss what can plausibly be regarded as the most important part of the remaining diversity of blame, namely the relation between private and public blame. The emotion account focuses on having blame attitudes. But can it also make sense of the speech-acts and behaviors that we associate with blame?

Plausibly, we are primarily concerned with public blame when we think and talk about blame in our everyday lives. Take the garbage case again. When we think about Barbara's blaming Alice for having violated her promise to take out the garbage, we might think about Barbara's asking her in an aggressive tone: "Do you think you are living in a hotel?" The emotion account suggests a plausible explanation of when and why such a response is a form of blame. To see this, consider that emotional episodes can be expressed by behavior. There is a debate about how exactly to construe the relation between emotional episodes and the relevant forms of behavior, but it is intuitively plausible and widely assumed that we can, for example, kill out of hatred or jump for joy.[29] According to the emotion account, one form of privately blaming an agent is having a certain emotional episode toward her. And these blame episodes can be expressed by behavior. Now, a particularly clear form of public blame is an agent's behaving in ways toward another person that are expressive of the agent's having a blame episode toward that person. This is the case when Barbara aggressively approaches Alice as an expression of her having a certain anger episode toward Alice.

We also tend to call certain forms of behavior blame that are not accompanied by, let alone expressive of, the relevant blame episode. Consider a case similar to the one described by Smith[30]: Barbara cuts off relations with Alice and thereby expresses a sadness episode. As I said above, the proponent of the emotion account needs more information to decide whether Barbara's response is a form of blame in that situation. If the response is an actualization of a disposition that is part of the agent's being angry at the other person in the sense of having adopted an anger stance toward her, then the proponent of the emotion account can identify the behavior as an instance of public blame.

There are forms of behavior that are often associated with blame in everyday life but that are neither expressive of blame episodes nor actualizations of dispositions that are part of blame stances. For example, Barbara can ask Alice in an angry tone whether she believes that she is living in a hotel without having an anger episode or stance. She might be practicing for a play in which she plays a Fury or she might have lost a bet and the price she has to pay is to make a scene the next time Alice breaks a promise. In such a case the agent behaves in ways that are typically

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[29] See, e.g., Goldie (2000, ch. 2 and 5), Döring (2003) and Scarantino and Nielsen (2015).

[30] See Sect. 4.

expressive of one's having a blame episode toward the other person, or she behaves in ways that are typically actualizations of dispositions that are part of anger stances, but the agent is not subject to an anger episode and has not adopted an anger stance. Sometimes, people unwittingly adopt facial expressions or talk in a certain tone that are usually associated with anger episodes or stances even though they do not have such an episode and have not adopted an anger stance. But sometimes, people try to make others believe that they are angry inside and they intentionally behave in ways that are closely associated with anger episodes or stances even though they are not subject to them.

When we realize that a person's behavior is in such a way independent of her blame attitudes, we may still call it blame in everyday life, but we may also hesitate to do so. Something important seems to be missing in these cases. The emotion account suggests, plausibly, I believe, that such responses should not be considered full instances of blame but merely seeming or non-genuine public blame.

The upshot of these considerations is that very different forms of behavior that we associate with blame in everyday life can be explained by their relations to the blame emotions. Public blame is, first, a behavior that is expressive of a certain emotional episode, or, second, an actualization of a behavioral disposition that is part of a certain emotional stance. What I propose calling merely seeming or non-genuine public blame is, first, a behavior that is typically an expression of a certain emotional episode, but in fact the behavior is not expressive of that episode, or, second, a behavior that is typically an actualization of a disposition that is part of a certain emotional stance, even though it is, in fact, not. Thus even if the emotion account's primary focus is on attitudes, it nonetheless makes sense of public blame by illuminating explanatory relations between private and public blame and between different forms of behavior that we associate with blame.

To sum up, Fricker's objection against classical theories of blame relies on the claim that our practice of blame is internally diverse. However, the practice is less diverse than Fricker believes and the remaining diversity is not problematic for the emotion account.

More generally, the aim of this paper was to develop and defend the idea that to blame a person is to have an emotion toward her. I have argued that once this view is backed up by a better understanding of what emotions are, the emotion account of blame is superior to many alternatives and defensible against the most pressing objections.

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