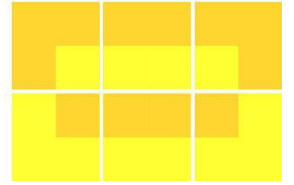




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Imperfect Duties Can't Curb the Demands of Beneficence

The distinction between perfect and imperfect duties is notoriously confusing. People have divergent views about the features that constitute the core of the distinction. Some suggest that imperfect duties permit more latitude than perfect duties (Rainbolt 2000), others claim that unlike perfect duties, imperfect duties are not correlated with rights (O'Neill 1996), yet others argue that the key to the distinction is that imperfect duties prescribe pursuing obligatory ends rather than performing or abstaining from performing specific acts (Baron 1995). However, there is a more fundamental problem: it is often not clear what is the purpose of drawing the distinction in the first place.

My aim in this paper is to argue that there are no plausible accounts of imperfect duties that can serve the purpose that is often relied upon to motivate drawing the distinction, namely, the purpose of defending a moderately demanding account of the duty of beneficence. I start with defending the idea that before trying to come up with a specific account of imperfect duties, we should first figure out the purpose of drawing the distinction. A clear purpose specifies the desiderata that an acceptable account must meet thus limiting the number of admissible and relevant accounts.

Second, I identify one such purpose and show that authors attempting to draw the distinction often rely, explicitly or implicitly, on this purpose (Hanser 2014, Noggle 2009). The purpose is to show that the concept of imperfect duties can be used to defend moderately demanding versions of duties such as the duty of aid or beneficence.

Third, I argue that no plausible account of imperfect duties can fulfil this purpose. The concept of imperfect duty cannot be used to defend a moderately demanding version of the duty of aid. It is common to argue that imperfect duties are moderately demanding because while imposing non-trivial restrictions on permissible action, they permit considerable latitude in how to fulfil them or formulate their requirements in an imprecise, vague way (Noggle 2009, Schroeder 2014). I argue that no feature that can be plausibly used to distinguish imperfect duties from perfect ones guarantees its moderate demandingness. So, permitting latitude or having vague requirements does not guarantee that the duty is moderately demanding. I do not claim that imperfect duties cannot be moderately demanding. I claim that if they are, then this fact has nothing to do with their being imperfect and is not due to the features that distinguish them from perfect duties.

This result is significant because there is a common move in the current debates about beneficence to claim that since the duty of aid is imperfect, it is moderately demanding. My argument shows that this move is too hasty. While there may be other purposes which the concept of imperfect duty can serve, it cannot by itself vindicate our intuitions about the moderate demandingness of beneficence.

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The Reason to Be Angry Proportionally

The main goal of this paper is to propose a novel solution to the Eternal Anger Problem in moral psychology.¹ Suppose I have previously betrayed you and now you are fittingly angry at me. The Eternal Anger Problem starts with the assumption that what makes your anger fitting is the fact of my past betrayal. Its challenge is to explain how your anger can ever stop being fitting, given that the fact of my past betrayal will forever persist. The solution I propose, which I call the Proportionality Account, meets this challenge in two steps.

The first step is to note that the very concept FITTING entails that your anger will become unfitting as soon as it becomes disproportional. This is based on the observation that it would sound conceptually confused to assert that your anger will remain fitting after becoming disproportional (just as it would sound conceptually confused to assert that someone will remain a bachelor after marrying).

The second step is to show that your anger can become disproportional due to sheer increase in duration. This, in turn, follows from two assumptions.

The first assumption is that your anger can become disproportional due to sheer increase in intensity. This is both antecedently plausible and implied by your folk practice of appraising anger. For example, note that the following appraisal sounds perfectly felicitous: “You have every right to be angry at me, but take it down a notch!”

The second assumption is that duration and intensity play the same role in determining proportionality. As long as no relevant disanalogy is in the offing, accepting this may simply be required by parity of reasoning. It is also required by transcendental reasoning: intensity cannot be a determinant of proportionality unless duration is one, too. My argument for this is that intensity and duration are compoundable, just like the width of an hourglass and the time it takes for the sand to run through are compoundable (narrow neck: long duration; wide neck: short duration).

My foregoing argument for the Proportionality Account entails that your anger can become unfitting due to mere time lapse. Thus, we need not worry that it will remain fitting forever and the Eternal Anger Problem has lost its bite. On this basis, I contend that the Proportionality Account is at least a satisfactory solution to the Eternal Anger Problem. I argue further that it is also *ceteris paribus* preferable to its alternatives.

The dominant family of extant solutions, which I call Expansive Solutions, solve the Eternal Anger Problem by positing special, fittingness-revoking events (e.g., the resolution of a problem that my betrayal has caused,² the restoration of the co-valuation of our relationship,³ the completion of your process of emotional repair⁴). Since the Proportionality Account solves it in terms of mere time lapse instead, it remains independent of such contentious assumptions. Moreover, since independence of contentious assumptions has theoretical virtue in tow, I contend that the Proportionality Account is *ceteris paribus* preferable.

¹ E.g., Agnes Callard (2018), Beri Marušić (2020), Oded Na'aman (2020). The label I use to refer to the problem and the example I use to illustrate it are due to Callard, whose paper title (“The Reason to Be Angry Forever”) has also inspired mine.

² E.g., Pamela Hieronymi (2001).

³ Callard (2018).

⁴ Na'aman (2019; 2020).

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Guidance under Moral Uncertainty

Sometimes we are uncertain about what is morally required of us despite knowing all the relevant empirical facts. How ought we to act under conditions of such pure moral uncertainty? In some sense, of course, we simply ought to act in accordance with the correct moral theory. But some have argued that there must be another norm, more directly relevant to decision-making, on which what we ought to do is sensitive to our pure moral uncertainty. The most prominent candidate for such a norm holds that we ought to perform that action which, relative to the evidential probabilities of competing moral views and the moral value these views assign to different outcomes, maximizes expected moral value.

One prominent argument in favour of this maximization of expected moral value approach appeals to the need for action guidance under moral uncertainty. It holds that since under conditions of moral uncertainty, we do not know what the correct moral theory is, we cannot guide our actions by that theory: the correct moral theory provides the criterion of rightness, but it is not a viable decision procedure. Therefore, we need some other norm that can serve to guide us.

The claim I defend in this paper is that the guidance argument for the maximization of expected moral value approach fails, because considerations of action guidance, once appropriately restricted, do not in fact favour that account over the correct moral theory to any substantial degree. My argument starts by introducing a minimal condition on an acceptable norm, which is that in following it, we will on average get things right more often than by simply acting at random. If a norm does not meet this minimal condition, it is hard to see why the fact that it guides us somewhere should count in its favour, in the sense of giving us any reason to follow it. I then argue that for the maximization of expected moral value approach to meet the minimal condition, our pure moral evidence must not be systematically misleading, and that we must be sufficiently good at correctly identifying what our pure moral evidence supports. But these two conditions are not generally met. This is supported by structural features of pure moral evidence and by cases of well-intentioned fanatics.

The upshot of the first three steps is that the maximization of expected moral value account in its current form does not qualify as an acceptable decision procedure. I consider a possible response, which is to turn it into a disjunctive decision procedure. Against this modified version, I argue that while it may meet the minimal condition, it will cease to be more action guiding than the correct moral theory. Therefore, the guidance argument fails. While defenders of the maximization of expected moral value approach like to point to the difficulty of ethics to motivate their account, the difficulty of ethics actually undermines their account, at least insofar as it is based on the guidance argument.

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Climate Justice and the Corporation as a Moral Agent

Normative literature in climate justice fails to question the responsibilities of corporations, despite their impact on society and the natural environment. While theorists have discussed the responsibilities of states and individuals, the responsibilities of corporations have been largely overlooked in the climate change ethics debate.

Among the exceptions is Simon Caney who outlines general principles of climate justice and applies these to a wide range of actors including corporations. Henry Shue starts out with general ethical principles, such as the no-harm principle and the principle of beneficence, and applies these to corporations in the context of climate change. Jeremy Moss employs the conception of complicity in climate-change related harms for so-called 'carbon majors'. Finally, Stephanie Collins and Anne Schwenkenbecher argue that corporations qua collective moral agents have climate-related duties.

Indeed, these are good starting points for thinking about corporate responsibilities in climate change. However, the different approaches provide only a fragmented picture. Thus, a more holistic approach is necessary. Caney leaves questions about the moral agency of corporations unaddressed. Shue and Moss are most concerned with attributions of blame rather than ascriptions of duties. Collins and Schwenkenbecher recognize corporations as collective moral agents but fail to recognize their institutional status that gives rise to corporate-specific responsibilities. Hence, what is needed is an account of corporate responsibility in climate change that ties together questions of justice and agency, retrospective and prospective responsibility, and moral and institutional responsibility.

In this paper, I aim to contribute towards such an account. I proceed from an ontological conception of corporations that recognizes corporations as both collective moral agents and social institutions. The collective moral agency of corporations grounds attributions of retrospective responsibility. For example, it is possible to attribute blame to corporations who knowingly contribute to harmful greenhouse gas emissions or who are complicit in practices that lead to dangerous climate change.

However, ascriptions of prospective responsibility are grounded in both a corporation's moral agency and its institutional status. I contest that corporations acquire special responsibilities in climate change through their legal form, the privileges of which demand a public benefit, and through their economic reasons for existence, which demand the avoidance of 'market failures' including negative externalities such as greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, I posit that corporations have political responsibilities to rectify injustices that arise from the socio- economic structures in which they operate. These are essentially shared

responsibilities, and they are distributed in accordance with principles of justice. Hence, in the context of climate change, corporations have shared, prospective responsibilities to change the socio-economic structures which lead to unjust climate change harms, and principles of climate justice specify the sharing of burdens with respect to these responsibilities.

Engaging with Hard Cases

Internalism about reasons for action holds that an agent, A, has a reason to ϕ only if there is a certain psychological connection between A's subjective motivational set, S, and ϕ -ing. This view may seem to have an issue in dealing with, what we may call, "hard cases"; for instance, an abusive husband that seemingly lack any motivation to treat his wife nicer. Given the husband's S, internalism might imply that the husband does not have a reason to treat his wife nicer. If we, plausibly, think that having a reason to act otherwise is a distinctive normative claim, intertwined with the idea that the agent ought to act nicer and judgments of blame, the hard case is a case where a claim of this kind may fail to get a grip. According to Kate Manne (2014), this is "sad but true". On Manne's novel, socially situated reason internalism, the connection between A having a reason to ϕ and A's S is modelled on the appropriateness of interpersonal engagement, drawing on P.F. Strawson's (1962) idea of the participant stance. According to her account, a consideration is a reason to ϕ for A only if it "would be apt to be cited in favour of A's ϕ -ing, by her ideal advisor, who is reasoning with her in an ideal way about what she ought to do" (2014, p. 109).

There is much to be said in favour of thinking of reasons in terms of the practice of interpersonal reasoning. However, there are several issues with Manne's understanding of reasons and what she takes internalism about reasons to entail; I'll raise five here. (1), we need to get clearer on *what* is supposedly "sad" given internalism, and *how* it is. In light of the pertinent possibilities, we may distinguish between the hard, the bad, and the lost case. Participation is itself an activity, sustained by some prospect, and this fact may be captured by distinguishing these cases along the dimension of hope. This does not merely redirect or dampen a potential 'sad truth' about internalism, but, (2), it also suggests that Manne's model is too strong. While Strawson rightly held that reasoning is conditional on the participant stance; the corresponding biconditional, that Manne holds, is highly questionable. Further, the interpersonal relationship on which she models her account contains two idealisations. The interlocutor is ideal in moral and prudential respects, which, (3), undermines an original motivation for internalism, contra externalism. Also, (4), the process of reasoning imagined by Manne rests on an ideal about relationships that is blame-aversive, which is not only a questionable (rather myopic) ideal itself, but it (not internalism *per se*) seems to be the reason for why the hard case is troubling for Manne. Lastly, (5), I'll argue that Strawson's framework, adequate for his purposes, is inadequate for internalism's. I suggest that we expand the bipartite perspectival model for a tripartite, employing a distinction of perspectives suggested by Bernard Williams (1995), thus aiding Manne's attempts to show internalism plausible.

The Expressive Function of Healthcare

Most of us value healthcare and regard it as an important aspect of egalitarian justice. However, the moral significance of healthcare has recently been challenged on two key fronts: first, by public health theorists who rightly point out the relatively limited role of healthcare (as opposed to the social determinants of health more broadly) in influencing population health outcomes; and second, by ‘reductionists’ who argue that healthcare’s purpose is merely to promote, or can be subsumed within, some broader metric of justice such as wellbeing or opportunity.

This paper defends the moral significance of healthcare against these and other challenges by reference to a central but neglected dimension – healthcare’s expressive function. Over and above its influence on health and other metrics of justice, and in spite of its relatively limited impact on population health outcomes, healthcare expresses respect for individuals in a distinctive and morally salient way. The respect-expressing dimension of healthcare is linked to the fact that healthcare characteristically focuses on individuals, addressing our inherent vulnerability as human beings in three central ways and, in doing so, signifying respect to us qua persons. This respect-expressing function of healthcare provides a central argument for acknowledging the moral significance of healthcare and for supporting its universal provision as a matter of egalitarian justice.

The principal challenge for anyone who thinks healthcare is important is to articulate the moral significance of healthcare (the practice of providing clinical care by health professionals) as opposed to the broader notion of health (a state of the absence of disease) and interventions aimed at the social determinants of health (health promotion through socio-political interventions).

Two of the most common answers in the literature can be articulated as follows:

HC1 (Biomedical View): The moral significance of healthcare lies in its ability to promote health – that is, to alleviate, manage, and/or minimise illness and disease.

HC2 (Indirect View): The moral significance of healthcare lies in its ability to promote some broader metric of justice, such as wellbeing or opportunity.

Both HC1 and HC2 are vulnerable to the public health and reductionist critiques. Alone, they cannot ground the moral significance of healthcare in a sufficiently robust and stable way. I argue that healthcare possesses a unique expressive function that is central to its purpose and for grounding its moral significance:

HC3 (Expressive View): The moral significance of healthcare lies in its ability to express respect to individuals in a morally salient and distinctive way.

My argument is not that HC1 and HC2 have no role to play in grounding the moral importance of healthcare but that they are incomplete and unable to ground the moral significance of healthcare by themselves. HC3 is an overlooked and central component of establishing the moral significance of healthcare.

Even if healthcare has a limited impact on population health outcomes, it expresses respect for individuals in a morally salient and distinctive way, centrally linked with our inherent vulnerabilities qua human beings. Reducing healthcare's function to the achievement of other metrics of justice cannot capture this central role of healthcare.

Blameworthy Vices

Vice epistemology is the study of epistemic vices, which are understood as character traits, attitudes or thinking styles that obstruct knowledge (Cassam, 2019). Within vice epistemology, a debate is emerging as to whether it is appropriate to hold agents responsible for their epistemic vices, and crucially whether, by their very nature, those who possess and exercise vices are blameworthy. I refer to this claim as the ‘constitutive blame thesis’.

This thesis gains prima facie plausibility from the observation that epistemic vices cause a variety of epistemic and moral harms which are damaging to one’s overall character and surroundings. For example, we frequently want to hold people accountable when they fail to acquire the truth due to their gullibility or naivety, or when their closed mindedness or arrogance leads to false beliefs. However, despite the intuitive plausibility of the constitutive blame thesis, two objections have been offered by prominent vice epistemologists as to why we should think that the thesis is incorrect.

Against this background, my paper has two central aims, one negative and one positive. The negative aim is to demonstrate that the two main objections to the constitutive blame thesis don’t hold up. The positive aim is to present an account of the constitutive blame thesis and epistemic vice.

The plan for this paper is as follows. I will begin with the negative aim, in which I identify two arguments that have been raised against the constitutive blame thesis. First, is the ‘Argument from Lack of Control’, which revolves around epistemic vice acquisition – the process of acquiring one’s epistemic vices – and the lack of control agents often possess over this process. As many vice epistemologists have argued, agents often come to possess their vices in seemingly unblameworthy ways e.g. by unwittingly absorbing vicious traits from local communities (Battaly 2016, Kidd 2016, Cassam 2019). Blame then, is arguably not always an appropriate response to our displays of epistemic vice. Relatedly, the second objection directed at the constitutive blame thesis, I refer to as ‘Argument from Absence’ which objects to the constitutive blame thesis by claiming that there are cases of vice which we do not want to attribute blame to (Battaly 2016), or because another form of responsibility, such as criticism, is more apt in some cases of vice (Cassam 2019).

After identifying these above concerns, I propose two solutions. Firstly, I argue that a form of responsibility without control, attributability responsibility, explains how agents can be blameworthy for vices acquired in environments outside of their control. I then argue why this form of responsibility is best suited to our understanding of epistemic vice. Secondly, I argue that it necessarily follows from adopting a form of attributability responsibility that blame is integral to the definition of epistemic vice. I appeal to the literature on constitutive normativity to argue for this claim.

These two claims then form the basis for a new account of epistemic vice which has blame at the very centre.

Moral Testimony and Emotional Experiences: A New Problem with Moral Deference

In principle, it does not seem difficult to accept that moral testimony is one of the main sources of moral knowledge. However, some philosophers have argued that a significant problem with moral testimony consists in the lack of moral understanding that results from it, and/or in the absence of moral worth in the actions that follow from it (Hills, 2009, McGrath, 2009). Guy Fletcher (2016) has argued that moral testimony is problematic in a different sense; he claims that moral sentiments—which are intimately related to moral judgements—are at least difficult to form on the basis of pure, direct, testimony. For Fletcher, it is psychologically odd that Margaret feels indignant towards the death penalty solely on the basis of Bob’s testimony.

Contrary to all these views, my aim is to show that the relevant problem with relying on moral testimony rests on the lack of emotional acquaintance with the morally relevant features of the action being evaluated. Hence, in this essay, I argue that moral knowledge acquired from testimony is defective, for two previously unrecognised reasons: (i) the understanding that it provides is insufficient for achieving highest moral cognition, and (ii) given the lack of emotional acquaintance, it fails to provide the degree of knowledge required for moral improvement. To do this, I first introduce the most common objection to moral testimony, which states that even if moral knowledge may be transferred by testimony, relying on testimony gives us no moral reason to perform (or not to perform) the action being evaluated, and no reason to make any resulting action worthy of praise. Call this view ‘Unusability Pessimism’ (Hopkins, 2007). I also introduce Fletcher’s theory, in order to illustrate his claim that, whilst it does not seem psychologically strange to defer when it comes to empirical matters (e.g., ‘Where is the stadium?’ ‘It’s on 21st street. Ruth told me.’), there is something psychologically odd about deferring on moral matters (e.g., ‘It is wrong to watch boxing. Ruth told me.’).

Second, I seek to undermine these putative explanations of the defectiveness of moral testimony, partly relying on Daniel Wodak’s arguments (2019). According to Wodak, if normative testimony gives us strong reasons for certain attitudes, it should not be fishy or odd to form those attitudes in response to such testimony.

I then turn to Michael Brady’s account (2013) on the epistemic role of emotions, in order to argue that emotions promote a distinctive understanding of our evaluative judgments, by capturing and consuming our attention (2003:158). I show how moral emotions fixate agents’ attention on the morally relevant features of an action or a situation, resulting in a higher level of moral cognition, which would otherwise be absent in the cases where moral knowledge is obtained through testimony. I argue, further, that without the moral

understanding that emotional experiences provide, it is impossible to achieve moral improvement, i.e., the ability to detect one's own morally flawed behaviour and correct it.

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Perspectival Domination

There is an underlying phenomenon that occurs in cases where one group attempts to subjugate another group's ways of looking at the world, i.e., in circumstances of assimilation, indoctrination, and globalization. Call this, *perspectival domination*.

Perspectival domination occurs when one group imposes its *perspective* (i.e., what plays the functional role of shaping its members' mental representations in a particular way) on another. As the DuBoisian concept of a 'double consciousness' illustrates, marginalized groups in society can take on the perspective of their oppressors while retaining their own group's perspective and remain oppressed as a group.

In this paper, I reveal how complicated relations can arise when one group dominates another group's perspective, especially where perspectival aspects converge between groups, but hierarchical separation persists. In particular, I investigate the cognitive underpinnings of the group perspectives of both privileged and marginalized groups, noting how their structures differ. I argue that there is an asymmetry in the way they recognize the ways in which their perspectives structure their realities: members of marginalized groups must inevitably reckon with their perspectives as members of marginalized groups, while privileged members face no such pressure and have a positive interest in not recognizing their status as a privileged group member. From this asymmetry, I explain how privileged members in society often default to individual assessments of desert rather than advocating for structural reform.

Additionally, I propose that these hierarchical gaps can often only be closed at the expense of destroying the marginalized group's perspective and status as a group. I bolster this claim with two case studies: First, the Irish in America. When they attained 'whiteness', their Irishness became no longer a salient feature of their group identity, and it drastically changed their interactions with other marginalized groups (especially Black people). Similarly, I submit that 'lean in feminism' encourages women to abandon their interests in alleviating the group oppression of women and instead pursue individual interests as men can more freely do in our current society. I evaluate the normative consequences that follow.

Testimony of Oppression and the Limits of Empathy

The practice of giving and receiving testimony to (ideally) transmit knowledge poses myriad epistemic and ethical challenges, which can vary according to the specific type of testimony. Recently, many have argued that moral testimony is special in that it is problematic to defer to it (even in cases, where doing so can transmit knowledge). According to one prominent type of view, this is because, while accepting testimony can lead to knowledge, it does not typically lead to understanding, and we should aim for understanding in the moral domain. However, others have argued that accepting moral testimony is unproblematic and that we should thus defer in order to gain moral knowledge. I want to raise a related question about a different kind of testimony: testimony of oppression. By “testimony of oppression”, I mean testimony by members of oppressed groups that something they encountered constitutes or contributes to a form of oppression (of their group). The question I want to raise is: How should we deal with testimony of oppression in an epistemically and ethically sound way? Should we defer to it or try to understand it?

Testimony of oppression is a form of testimony about personal experience: There is something it is like to encounter oppression and members of oppressed groups will often recognize instances of oppression and form the corresponding judgment that something constitutes or contributes to a form of oppression based on such an experience. This has consequences for the kind of understanding that is at issue. While in the context of moral testimony, the relevant understanding is often described in terms of grasping the reasons for a moral claim, the kind of understanding that is relevant in the context of testimony of oppression is understanding of another person’s experience or “interpersonal understanding”. For this kind of understanding, empathy, in the sense of emotionally engaged imaginative perspective-taking, plays an important role. In order to understand testimony of oppression, it will often help to take up the testifier’s perspective on their situation in imagination and doing so can elicit empathetic emotions.

Because deferring to testimony of oppression and trying to understand it are mutually incompatible, it is not obvious what the most epistemically and ethically sound policy to deal with testimony of oppression would be. The purported advantages of understanding over the knowledge attainable by accepting testimony as well as the fact that empathy can “change one’s mind”, in the sense that successful empathizing can lead us to accept claims we would have initially dismissed, speak in favor of trying to understand. However, empathy can also fail in various ways and this can lead us to wrongly reject a testifier’s claim. These “limits of empathy” together with the value of testimonial trust for members of oppressed groups support deference over trying to understand. I will argue that, on balance, these considerations support a mixed strategy: We should try to understand testimony of oppression, but sometimes defer even if we cannot understand it.