ON RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS' HARM: WONDER, REGRET, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

Department of Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

December 2022

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Abstract: I propose and analyze moral emotions that are fittingly experienced when one is socially, institutionally, or structurally affiliated with a perpetrator without causally contributing to their harm. The project explores the nature, scope, and urgency of our reactive attitudes and concomitant responsibilities that arise on account of harms caused by social and political relations. Drawing from resources in phenomenology, social epistemology, moral psychology, and feminist ethics, I argue that affective experiences can direct attention towards the moral salience of our relations and open the way for taking accountability for others' harm.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a project about social entanglement – how the question of who we are is a matter of who our relations are. I am so much the better because of those around me, and this dissertation would not have been possible were it not for the immense support I have received from mentors, colleagues, friends, and family.

I am grateful to my family – Susie, Jake, Sig, and Terry – for their unwavering belief in me. I also want to thank Pat, Matt, Jacqueline, and Willa for their support, as well as Huckleberry, the happiest dog there ever was. Thank you also to my friends for soul-nourishing nights of food, stories, and laughter.

My committee members have each played an enormous role in shaping the scholar that I am today. My advisor, Richard Kearney, has been a steadfast source of guidance and inspiration from my first year at Boston College, and I am grateful for his mentorship every step of the way. I also could not imagine developing this project without Richard Atkins, who has been a generous and attentive mentor and interlocutor. I am deeply grateful to Sally Haslanger for fundamentally altering the trajectory of my scholarship through the reading group in which we met, and for her invaluable feedback as a reader on the dissertation. Marina McCoy, Eileen Sweeney, Elisa Magri, Kevin Newmark, Greta Turnbull, and Vanessa Rumble have each enriched my graduate experience immensely through their mentorship and teaching – thank you all. I am also grateful to the Institute for Citizens and Scholars for supporting the final year of my dissertation research.

My greatest inspiration, both as a scholar and a person, is Kate. Thank you for the many conversations that have shaped this project, and for your daily company. I can't express how lucky we are.

INTRODUCTION

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Adam Smith raises the following maxim, which he takes to be self-evident: generally speaking, one should not praise or blame others on account of actions for which they are not morally responsible.

> The only consequences for which [an agent] can be answerable, or by which he can deserve either approbation or disapprobation of any kind, are those which were someway or other intended, or those which, at least, show some agreeable or disagreeable quality in the intention of the heart, from which he acted. (Smith 1984, 93 [II.iii.intro.3])

According to this principle, we should not blame others for purely contingent events or accidental harms, nor praise others on account of unforeseen and unintended outcomes of their actions. Smith takes this to be an uncontroversial and popular truism: "[T]here is nobody who does not agree to it. Its self-evident justice is acknowledged by all the world, and there is not a dissenting voice among all mankind" (1984, 93 [II.iii.intro.3]).

Smith is also keenly aware, however, that our moral sentiments do not always adhere to this rule. In his phenomenology of reactive attitudes, Smith identifies two notable irregularities. The first is that we tend to decrease sentiments of praise or blame for intended, but incomplete actions; or, in Smith's words, we "diminish our sense of the merit or demerit of those actions which arose from the most laudable or blamable intentions, when they fail of producing their proposed effects" (1984, 97 [II.iii.2.1]). Second, we also tend to increase sentiments of praise or blame "beyond what is due to the motives or affections from which they proceed" in light of the outcomes of another's actions. (1984, 97 [II.iii.2.1]) This means that, despite the attractiveness of the principle stated above, in practice our moral sentiments appear to be susceptible to seemingly irrational escalation and diminution on the basis of 'resultant' or 'consequential luck,' a

form of moral luck "concerned with the way in which the moral evaluation of an agent varies depending on actual results or effects of her actions" (Russell 1999, 37).[1] Smith repeatedly refers to this curious fact – that our moral sentiments are not, in practice, always proportionate to the intentions of the heart that give rise to them – as an 'irregularity' of sentiment and human nature, and he goes on to explain that God has implanted such excessive sentiments in us because of their social and societal utility.

There is, however, another 'irregularity' of sentiment that Smith mentions only briefly: that even those who are causally unaffected and uninvolved in an action are liable to experience disproportional moral sentiments: "Nor is this irregularity of sentiment felt only by those who are immediately affected by the consequences of any action. It is felt, in some measure, even by the impartial spectator" (1984, 97 [II.iii.2.2]). Smith's focus here is on a third party appraising the situation objectively, but much the same can be said for the *partial* spectator: our moral sentiments are vulnerable to escalation and diminution due to the consequences of actions performed by persons and groups with whom we are meaningfully connected. Smith goes on to explicitly endorse the idea that we experience heightened moral sentiments on behalf of significant relations, affiliations, and group memberships in his discussion of national pride and shame: "Upon account of our own connexion with [our nation], its prosperity and glory seem to reflect some sort of honor upon ourselves. When we compare it with other societies of the same kind, we are proud of its superiority, and mortified in some degree, if it appears in any respect below them" (1984, 227 [VI.ii.2.1]). In other words, we are susceptible to *self-directed* moral sentiments on account of our relations' behavior, and the intensity of these sentiments

[1] Thomas Nagel describes this category of moral luck as "luck, good and bad, in the way things turn out." (Nagel 1979, 28).

does not always adhere to the principle of moral responsibility described above. In the end, Smith argues that we can embrace the positive social utility of these disproportional moral sentiments, but we ought to recognize that they are irrational and excessive.

Over two hundred and fifty years later, the question of feeling responsible by association, which rose to prominence in the wake of World War II in the context of debates over German guilt, occupies center stage in public discussions about identity, structural injustice, historical trauma, the environment, and divestment. How am I to feel when my close family member inflicts harm on others through sexist or racist behavior? What about my neighbor, or my fellow citizen? How should I feel regarding the actions of my ancestors? Many people hold strong views about the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of self-directed moral emotions – guilt and shame, especially – in response to the wrongdoings of others. One can imagine two extremes: on one side, the dismissal of self-directed, negative emotions for anything other than one's own conduct as pathological; and on the other side, excessive and unproductive feelings of guilt and shame for events far beyond one's own control.

The object of this dissertation is to reframe the negative emotions of affiliated onlookers so as to find a middle way between these two extremes. My basic claim is that some of the moral sentiments associated with harms brought about by one's social relations are not curiously persistent pathologies, but instead *fitting* reactive attitudes. Taking these emotions seriously, we might ask: What does the emotion of an affiliated onlooker to a harm express? Where does it pull our attention? How does it predispose us to behave? Breaking from existing scholarship on collective guilt and shame, I focus my analysis on two unconventional emotions: wonder (or *thaumazein*) and regret (and more

specifically what I call 'social-regret'). Both of these emotions are fitting in situations in which one has not contributed to a harm, but are instead connected to the harm by social affiliation, relation, or group membership.

This is a project in moral phenomenology, in that my goal is to understand the affective experience of being connected to a harm, and to reconstruct some of the epistemic, conative, and morally salient outcomes of that experience. Note that culpability and blameworthiness do not enter much into the picture. One does not need to have done anything wrong in order to experience *thaumazein* or social-regret; in fact, one does not need to have done much of anything at all. Rather than signaling wrongdoing or vice on one's own part, these emotions provide the occasion for assessing the moral salience of one's social relations, opening the way for the upward revision of moral and/or political responsibilities in the wake of others' misconduct within institutions, social groups, and ways of living. In short, I aim to understand what it means to feel implicated in and accountable for others' harms.

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 1, I begin with Hannah Arendt's reflections on postwar wonder and responsibility. Although Arendt is widely cited as an early proponent of what is sometimes called 'forward-looking responsibility,' scholars have not dwelled at length on Arendt's claim that the experience of *thaumazein* – in her view, a form of wonder intermixed with horror – can serve as the impetus for taking on expansive political responsibilities. After first reconstructing Arendt's implicit theory of wonder from her numerous references to *thaumazein*, I draw from contemporary scholarship on the role of wonder and emotion in politics in order to develop an account of *thaumazein* as an affective, enabling condition for revising the

scope of one's responsibilities for the harms of others. I argue that *thaumazein* is a distinctive emotion with both political and existential salience, and that it can prompt those who experience it to scrutinize and reimagine inherited conceptual and political frameworks, including moral and legal frameworks for responsibility.

In Chapter 2, I build upon the idea (advanced by Bernard Williams, among others) that one need not be blameworthy in order to feel regret for one's own actions. My question is: What kind of regret is fitting for *other* people's actions? I propose that regret for others' behavior can be expressive of the way in which one values unrealized alternative possibilities. Regret is a counterfactual emotion: it involves a (sometimes implicit) comparison between reality and counterfactual alternatives. When we feel regret for another's harm, our attention is directed both towards that harm, and also towards an imagined world that we might prefer to live in, and that is possibly within our reach if we were to take ameliorative action. I call this distinctive emotion 'social-regret,' and argue that it affectively prompts us to attend to the moral salience of our social relations. Understood in this way, social-regret provides an occasion for questioning the ineluctability of harmful in-group practices. This chapter explores typical features of standard cases, and offers both conceptual and rhetorical arguments for understanding the emotion of an affiliated onlooker through the lens of regret instead of guilt or shame.

Chapter 3 gives an account of what it means for a relation to provide the basis for social-regret. Which groups and relations serve as vectors for social-regret, and what features of a relation render one vulnerable to social-regret on account of that relation? I endorse a metaphysically permissive answer by focusing on the role of a relation, affiliation, or group in one's 'practical identity.' In the account I develop, it is the

character of the relation between an individual and a relation that is decisive for understanding susceptibility to social-regret. I elucidate susceptibility to social-regret in terms of the self-application of normatively integral relations, where self-application can involve both explicit and implicit endorsement of normative expectations. A normatively integral relation is one that exerts inordinately high normative pressure over one's behavior, beliefs, habits, and dispositions, and also 'tracks' an individual across a variety of different social contexts and activities. This explanation of susceptibility to social-regret best explains how it is that some metaphysically 'thin' relations (such as membership in feature-sharing aggregates) can serve as vectors for social-regret.

Chapter 4 asks after the moral insights and routes of action that come into view after experiences of social-regret. I work through a variety of cases in which social-regret might open the way for subsequent examinations of one's own obligations, and I motivate several plausible forms of responsibility and ameliorative action after social-regret, including individual responsibility, collective responsibility, forward-looking responsibility, shared responsibility, and symbolic or supererogatory action. Across all of these cases, social-regret draws attention to the moral salience of one's relations and the details of the harms that they bring about. In the end, there are as many moral outcomes of social-regret as there are distinctive moral situations that give rise to it. The cases covered in this chapter give a sense of the spectrum of possible forms of responsibility and amelioration that social-regret can make relevant and actionable.

Finally, Chapter 5 attends to one of the most politically significant moral outcomes of social-regret: forward-looking responsibility for structural injustice. I confront what I call the 'accountability problem' of forward-looking responsibility,

which arises when we seek to hold others accountable for acting on their shared forward-looking responsibilities. The accountability problem is that many people bear large numbers of forward-looking responsibilities simultaneously, such that devoting limited time, resources, and attention to any particular forward-looking responsibility limits one's capacity to act upon others. In other words, it is unclear whether or not individuals who shirk their forward-looking responsibilities have done anything wrong. If falling short of limitless responsibility is inevitable, when is one negligent? Solving the accountability problem has significant stakes for practical applications of forward-looking responsibility. I reconstruct four strategies for circumventing the accountability problem, and ultimately I propose that we understand negligence for forward-looking responsibilities in terms of moral laxity for imperfect duties. Imperfect duties oblige the adoption of ends, but afford discretion as to how and to what extent those ends are pursued. Judgments of moral laxity provide one way to hold serial shirkers – individuals who fail to adopt requisite ends – accountable, without overlooking the cumulative demandingness of our forward-looking responsibilities. I conclude the dissertation by briefly sketching an account of what it would mean to make room for *thaumazein* and social-regret in one's own life and community, and what a predisposition towards such emotions might entail.

CHAPTER 1

Arendtian Wonder and Moral Reflection

Preface

I begin by turning to Arendt's writing on wonder, or *thaumazein*, which I understand to be a historical antecedent to social-regret. Although Arendt's theory of wonder is largely unacknowledged, it establishes a precedent for the idea that moral emotions can provide the occasion for reassessing one's responsibilities in the wake of others' wrongdoing. Reconstructing Arendt's implicit claim that transformative experiences of wonder can open the way to expanded moral and political responsibilities lays the groundwork for the next chapter's exploration of social-regret, which, like Arendtian wonder, also provides the occasion for reflection upon one's social interconnectedness in response to wrongs inflicted by others.

I. Introduction

Although Hannah Arendt is widely cited as an early proponent of what is sometimes called 'forward-looking' or 'future-looking' responsibility, theorists of forward-looking responsibility and Arendt scholars alike have not dwelled at length upon Arendt's claim that affective experiences have a key part to play in the cultivation of a new political consciousness suitable for the second half of the 20th-century.[2] This chapter has two principal aims: first, to take this facet of Arendt's thought seriously by reconstructing her theory of *thaumazein* – for Arendt, an experience of profound wonder intermixed with horror – from a number of her political writings; and second, to further develop, through engagement with contemporary scholarship on the role of wonder and the emotions in

[2] See Young (2011, 92–113); Smiley (2014). A notable exception to the general neglect of Arendt's theory of wonder is Barker (2019).

politics, an account of *thaumazein* as an affective and enabling condition for revising the scope of one's political responsibilities.[3]

Emotions have long been recognized as politically salient because of their distinctive epistemic and conative effects – they can guide us towards knowledge that we might not otherwise encounter, as well as predispose us to action that we might not otherwise consider. Building upon Arendt's limited comments on the political stakes of *thaumazein* (which she did not ever clarify in detail), I aim to show that *thaumazein* has epistemic and conative effects that are highly relevant for the process of reassessing and/or expanding the scope of one's political responsibilities.

I begin by motivating and contextualizing Arendt's claim that only those who have experienced a certain kind of "fear and trembling" can be relied upon to take responsibility for the atrocities of the 20th century (Arendt 1994b, 132). Working between a number of Arendt's essays on responsibility, emotion, and wonder, I argue that the affective experience in question is *thaumazein*, which Arendt idiosyncratically understands to be a mixture of wonder and horror. Building upon Arendt's position, Section III turns to contemporary scholarship on wonder, political emotion, and existential feeling in order to further clarify what kind of emotion *thaumazein* is, as well as its political salience and its epistemic and conative force. In the account that I construct, *thaumazein* is a species of political emotion that is precipitated by the failure of standard conceptual categories to make sense of the world, and that can direct one's attention towards the limitations and contingency of moral and political frameworks.

[3] I follow the standard transliteration of θαυμάζειν as '*thaumazein*,' despite the fact that Arendt is not consistent with her spelling. For example, in her essays "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought" and "Religion and Politics" she uses the slightly more unconventional '*thaumadzein,*' whereas in *The Life of the Mind* she employs '*thaumazein.*' I will leave '*thaumadzein*' unchanged when it appears in quoted passages.

When expressed by and shared across large social groups, such an emotion can provide the grounds for establishing what Sara Ahmed calls a "community of witnesses" disposed towards collective political action (Ahmed 2014, 95).[4]

II. Arendtian *Thaumazein*

At the end of "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," Arendt cryptically asserts that we can only rely upon those who have experienced a particular affective experience[5] to fight against the evils of totalitarianism:

> Perhaps those Jews, to whose forefathers we owe the first conception of the idea of humanity, knew something about that burden when each year they used to say "Our Father and King, we have sinned before you," taking not only the sins of their own community but all human offenses upon themselves. Those who today are ready to follow this road in a modern version do not content themselves with the hypocritical confession "God be thanked, I am not like that," in horror at the undreamed-of potentialities of the German national character. Rather, in *fear and trembling*, have they finally realized of what man is capable – and this is indeed the precondition of any modern political thinking. … Upon them and only upon them, who are filled with a *genuine fear* of the inescapable guilt of the human race, can there be any reliance when it comes to fighting fearlessly, uncompromisingly, everywhere against the incalculable evil that men are capable of bringing about. (Arendt 1994b, 131–132; emphasis added)

On the face of it, this passage is puzzling for at least three reasons. First, Arendt does not clarify precisely what she means by 'fear and trembling,' though given her reference to the Avinu Malkeinu and what she sees as a distinctively Jewish practice of taking responsibility for the sins of others, the allusion here is likely to Psalm 55:5. Still, it is difficult to rule out with certainty the possibility that Arendt has Kierkegaard (or

[4] See also Judith Butler's claim that shared experiences of grief can create "a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (Butler 2004, 22).

[5] Here, I understand the term 'affective experience' broadly so as to include a diversity of mental and bodily experiences, including emotions, dispositions, passions, moods, and existential feelings. In Szanto and Slaby's words, "While emotions are usually construed as mental states with specific intentional contents or directed at specific affectively significant targets – for example fear, anger, shame, hatred, envy or indignation – affect is an ontologically broader and less specific category" (2020, 479).

Philippians 2:12) in mind given her familiarity with his work. Second, Arendt describes a 'fear of the inescapable guilt' of the human race, despite her pointed resistance to the language of guilt throughout "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" and other writings.[6] What does she mean by "a genuine fear of the inescapable guilt of the human race"? Is Arendt using a different conception of guilt than the one that she openly criticizes elsewhere? Third, Arendt's phrasing makes it difficult to tell to which clause "the precondition of any modern political thinking" refers. Is it the realization of what humanity is capable that provides the precondition for modern political thought, or is it the experience of fear and trembling? This is to ask whether Arendt describes an epistemic condition, an affective condition, or both.

Arendt never spelled out the implications of this provocative passage, but she left a number of clues about the specific affective experience that she had in mind. From as early as "Religion in Politics" in 1953 to as late as her final work *The Life of the Mind*, published after her death, Arendt returns again and again to the experience of *thaumazein*, which she interchangeably translates as "wonder" (1978b, 121), "simple admiring and affirming wonder" (1978c, 21), "wonder at that which is as it is" (1994c, 370), "wonder at what is as it is" (1994a, 445), "wonder at everything that is as it is" (1998, 275), "shocked wonder at the miracle of Being" (1998, 302), and "the surprised wonder at everything that is as it is" (1961b, 115). Although the concept of *thaumazein* has its origins in ancient Greek philosophy, Arendt's appropriation of the term is decidedly unique. Even as she affirms Plato's suggestion in the *Theaetetus* that wonder is

[6] Elsewhere, Arendt argues that feelings of guilt and innocence "are no reliable indications, are in fact no indications at all, of right and wrong" (Arendt 2003, 107). Rather, feelings of guilt "indicate conformity and noncomformity," in that one can feel guilt simply for acting against established norms (2003, 107). Several of Arendt's objections to the language of guilt can be found in her disagreement with Karl Jaspers in Arendt and Jaspers (1992, 51). See also Schaap (2001).

the origin of philosophy – a claim "that in my opinion," she writes, "has lost nothing of its plausibility" – Arendt departs from classical conceptions of *thaumazein* in her characterization of the experience as one of not only awe and wonder, but also fear and horror (1978b, 141). This emphasis is evident, for example, in her claim that "the speechless horror at what man may do and what the world may become is in many ways related to the speechless wonder of gratitude from which the questions of philosophy spring" (1994a, 445). The ancient Greeks, in Arendt's view, understood *thaumazein* primarily as a form of "wonder-struck beholding," an "*admiring* wonder" at the "invisible harmonious order of the *kosmos*" (1978b, 142–143).[7] But admiring wonder, Arendt argues, "conceived as the starting point of philosophy leaves no place for the factual existence of disharmony, of ugliness, and finally of evil" (1978b, 150). In order to catch sight of the horror of the experience of *thaumazein*, the Greeks had to look no further than Homer, who reserved *thaumazein* for the experience of mortals before whom a god appears (1978b, 143). Even as philosophers celebrated the wonder and beauty of such an experience, they inadvertendly covered over the fear that is palpable in, for example, Homer's description of Apollo's reproach to Diomedes as spoken in "the voice of terror" (Homer 1961, 140), and again in his account of Ares' sudden appearance before Diomedes on the battlefield of Troy:

> …Ares made play in his hands with the spear gigantic
> and ranged now in front of Hektor and now behind him.
> Diomedes of the great war cry shivered as he saw him,
> and like a man in his helplessness who, crossing a great plain,
> stands at the edge of a fast-running river that dashes seaward,

[7] As Tobia notes, both Descartes and Mill also conceived of wonder as a form of admiration. (Tobia 2015, 967) Parsons notes that the English 'admiration' has its etymological roots in the Latin 'mirari': "The Latin word *mirari* means to wonder or marvel at, and *miraculum* was used in the Latin translation of the Greek New Testament to indicate 'anything wonderful, beyond human power, and deviating from the common action of nature, a supernatural event'" (Parsons 1969, 84).

> and watches it thundering into white water, and leaps a pace backward,
> so now Tydeus' son gave back…. (Homer 1961, 144)

One who is struck with this kind of fear, which Arendt elsewhere describes with Coleridge as "a sort of sacred horror" (1978b, 145), is both transfixed and impelled to flee or avert her gaze.[8] This is to say that it is possible to discern a sense of horror integral to the experience of *thaumazein* even in its early Homeric usage, despite the fact that this connotation is not carried forward in later Greek philosophy. Although Plato and Aristotle were right to recognize *thaumazein* as the *pathos* of the philosopher, according to Arendt they ultimately failed to tap into the specifically political implications of horrified-wonder, and thus engendered a tradition of "refus[ing] to own up to the experience of horror and take it seriously" that persists to the present day (1994a, 445).[9]

Arendt argues that philosophical interpretations of *thaumazein* gradually shift as the concept is taken up (explicitly and implicitly) in turn by Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and others (1978b, 141–151). Schelling in particular describes the question of being – why is there something rather than nothing? – that troubled Leibniz and Kant as a "most despairing question"[10] (1978b, 146) that fills him with a profound sense of dread, or what Arendt calls "sheer despair" (1978b, 146). Schelling chose to answer this feeling of "vertigo at the rim of the abyss" (1978b, 146), as Arendt puts it, through the absolute affirmation of the idea of God, without which the

[8] In Homer, *thaumazein* is frequently tied to the eyes; it is an experience of wondering *at* something that appears before us. As McEwen notes, "The verb ***thaumazein*** (to wonder at, marvel) and the noun ***thauma*** (a wonder, a marvel) are very closely related to ***theaomai*** [to gaze at, to behold], for in Homer it is almost invariably what is seen that is wondered at: it is the *eyes* that marvel" (McEwen 1993, 21).
[9] Arendt cites the following key passage from the *Theaetetus*: "For this is chiefly the passion (*pathos*) of the philosopher, to wonder (*thaumazein*). There is no other beginning and principle (*archē*) of philosophy than this one. And I think he [namely, Hesiod] was not a bad genealogist who made Iris [the Rainbow, a messenger of the gods] the daughter of Thaumas [the Wonderer]" (1978b, 142).
[10] This and the following are Arendt's own translations of Schelling (1954).

intellect would simply be "thunderstruck (*quasi attonita*), paralyzed, unable to move" (1978b, 147).[11] Arendt contrasts this response with that of Sartre, in whom she sees a willingness to face up to the feeling of "nausea at the opaqueness of sheer existence" (1978b, 147).[12] Describing this evolution of *thaumazein* through the history of philosophy – admiration, vertiginous affirmation of God, and finally nausea, despair, and horror – Peg Birmingham writes: "Rather than the wonder at the beauty and order of the world that characterized the ancient Greeks, today the condition for sheer wonder at what is, as it is [*thaumazein*], is the sheer horror of contemporary political events" (Birmingham 2006, 65). Viewed in this context, Arendt's engagement with *thaumazein* is inherited from a larger Western ontological tradition of wonder, but her appropriation of the concept is unique in that it takes its bearing from concrete, historically determinate events.[13] In this way, Arendtian *thaumazein* is shaped by the 19th- and 20th-century "turning from admiration to negation," though it is distinct from prior accounts of wonder that foreground ontological mystery over human deeds (1978b, 148).[14]

By emphasizing the horror of *thaumazein*, Arendt aims to reclaim its political salience. She even goes so far as to claim that "[a]n authentic political philosophy… can spring only from an original act of *thaumadzein* whose wondering and hence questioning impulse must now (i.e., contrary to the teaching of the ancients) directly grasp the realm

[11] The original passage (underlined in Arendt's personal copy) reads: "… ist sie im Setzen desselben wie regungslos, wie erstarrt, quasi attonita, aber sie erstarrt dem alles überwältigenden Seyn nur, *um* durch diese Unterwerfung zu ihrem wahren und ewigen Inhalt" (Schelling 1954, 165).

[12] See also Arendt's discussion of Sartrean nausea in "Concern with Politics in Recent European Thought," which she describes as a "reaction before the sheer density and givenness of the world" (1994a, 438).

[13] For more on Arendt's inheritance and appropriation of *thaumazein* from its prior treatment in ancient Greek philosophy, see Barker (2019). Barker rightly foregrounds Arendt's insistence that modern wonder is experienced in response to concrete human affairs.

[14] Although it is outside the purview of this chapter, in future work it would be worthwhile to thoroughly analyze the degree to which Arendt's theory of *thaumazein* is informed by, but also distinct from, Heidegger's concepts of *Stimmungen*, *Grundstimmungen*, and *Angst*. For perspectives on the relationship between Arendt and Heidegger's respective theories of wonder, see Kateb (1983); Strong (2012); Barker (2019, 190–192).

of human affairs and human deeds" (1994a, 445). Faced with the unprecedented diffusion of responsibility for the atrocities of World War II, Arendt's position is that *thaumazein* is not only fitting, but also the most "genuine" response (1994b, 132). But what does it mean to say that we can only rely upon those who experience a kind of wonder-horror? It is important to qualify the term 'horror,' especially because Arendt would certainly reject the claim that the raw experience of horror or terror is a suitable basis for political action. In fact, in "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" she explicitly notes that horror can obstruct efforts to reimagine moral and legal frameworks for responsibility:

> [T]he same speechless horror, this refusal to think the unthinkable, has perhaps *prevented* a very necessary reappraisal of legal categories as it has *made us forget* the strictly moral, and one hopes, more manageable, lessons which are closely connected with the whole story but which look like harmless side issues if compared with the horror. (Arendt 2003, 56; emphasis added)

Far from providing the starting point for new approaches to political responsibility, speechless horror causes us to flee into unthinkingness, preventing us from reimagining longstanding moral frameworks. The form of horror that Arendt associates with *thaumazein*, then, is not the "extreme horror" that one feels when confronted with Nazi atrocities, nor the horrors of war or statelessness (1994b, 126). Rather, we feel this specific kind of wonder-horror when we contemplate the political conditions under which "everyone, whether or not he is directly active in a murder camp, is forced to take part in one way or another in the workings of this machine of mass murder – that is the horrible thing" (1994b, 126). This suggests that for Arendt *thaumazein* arises out of or in response to the failure of our conceptual categories to grasp what lies before them, or in this case the failure of our moral frameworks to grapple with questions of responsibility and complicity in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust. *Thaumazein* comes over us

when we grasp that "there is no political solution within human capacity for the crime of administrative mass murder, so the human need for justice can find no satisfactory reply to the total mobilization of a people for that purpose" (1994b, 126). In short, Arendt proposes horrified-wonder as a fitting affective response to the sheer inadequacy of traditional frameworks for moral judgment when confronted with the unique form that evil takes in the 20th-century.

All of this suggests that Arendt consistently (if unsystematically) advances the view that *thaumazein* is properly felt in response to the moral confusion after World War II and the Holocaust, and that it is a plausible candidate for the experience of 'fear and trembling' referenced at the end of "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility." Still, her assorted descriptions leave a great many questions unanswered. For one thing, what *kind* of affective experience is *thaumazein*, and how can we situate it in relation to other emotions and affective states? Secondly, what is the political salience of *thaumazein* – that is, what are its revelatory and/or motivational effects, and how might they develop into political action? In the next section, I argue that *thaumazein* is a distinctive form of political emotion with both epistemic and conative effects that can open the way for reimagining the scope of one's political responsibilities. Understood in this way, *thaumazein* can be said to provide the occasion for reassessing moral, legal, and conceptual frameworks that would otherwise go unscrutinized.

III. Epistemic Emotion, Political Emotion, and Existential Feelings

In this section I supplement Arendt's account with contemporary scholarship on political emotion to better clarify what kind of affective experience *thaumazein* is and what it does for those who experience it. Drawing from recent philosophical accounts of wonder,

epistemic emotion, political emotion, and existential feeling, I argue that *thaumazein* has epistemic and conative effects that direct our attention towards the contingency and limitations of moral, legal, and political frameworks.

As mentioned above, wonder is a frequent object of commentary across the history of philosophy. Descartes, for example, famously declares that wonder is "the first of all the passions," and provides the following description of its phenomenology:

> Wonder is a sudden surprise of the soul which causes it to apply itself to consider with attention the objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary. It is thus primarily caused by the impression we have in the brain which represents the object as rare, and as consequently worthy of much consideration; then afterwards by the movement of the spirits, which are disposed by this impression to tend with great force towards the part of the brain where it is, in order to fortify and conserve it there; as they are also disposed by it to pass thence into the muscles which serve to retain the organs of the senses in the same situation in which they are, so that it is still maintained by them, if it is by them that it has been formed.[15]

Two of the features of wonder that Descartes highlights in this passage are its epistemic effects and its conative effects – that is, how it influences our knowledge, and how it influences our motivation and decision-making. It will be helpful to hold these two kinds of effects in mind going forward in order to construct an account of what *thaumazein* enables us to learn and how it disposes us to act. More thoroughly explicating the revelatory and motivational potential of *thaumazein* lends plausibility to Arendt's provocative claim that those who experience it are more reliable contributors to collective efforts to take accountability under certain political conditions.

Contemporary philosophical accounts of wonder can be grouped into two broad categories: one that understands wonder to be an attitude, and the other that understands

[15] This passage is taken from Luce Irigaray's discussion of Cartesian wonder in Irigaray (1993, 77). Irigaray cites Descartes (1955, 362).

wonder to be an experience. Under the former approach, wonder is a responsive and virtuous attitude of openness in the face of alterity (Young 1997; Friedman 2004; La Caze 2008). Such a view is typified in Iris Marion Young's conception of 'respectful wonder.'[16] In "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought," Young argues that wonder is essential for establishing ethical (and by extension, political) relations with others. For Young, a "respectful stance of wonder toward other people is one of openness across, awaiting new insight about their needs, interests, perceptions, or values" (Young 1997, 358). Still, Young conceives of wonder as an interpretive attitude that one can adopt willfully (though at times with great difficulty), while *thaumazein*, per Arendt, is "not something men can summon up by themselves" (Arendt 1978b, 143).

By contrast, and in a way that better complements Arendt's comments on *thaumazein*, wonder can also be understood as an affective experience. Ahmed, for example, includes wonder in her analysis of the role of emotions in community-formation, and especially emphasizes the potential for wonder to reveal overlooked or unrecognized facets of the world by rendering the familiar unfamiliar (Ahmed 2014). As Ahmed puts it, "wonder works to transform the ordinary, which is already recognized, into the extraordinary. As such, wonder expands our field of vision and touch" (2014, 179). The insights that come into view through experiences of wonder are, Ahmed goes on to say, connected to the historical contingencies of features of the world that might otherwise be taken for granted; hence, wonder "engender[s] a sense of surprise about how

[16] Young draws extensively from Arendt's writing on political responsibility, going so far as to state that her own analysis of forward-looking responsibility is "[i]nspired by Hannah Arendt's suggestive notion… of political responsibility as distinct from guilt" (Young 2011, 100). However, given the differences between Young and Arendt's respective approaches to wonder described above, it does not appear likely that Young's theory of wonder was particularly influenced by Arendt's writing on *thaumazein*.

it is that the world has come to take the shape that it has," and "allows the historicity of forms of life to emerge" (2014, 182–3). In both Ahmed and Arendt's accounts wonder takes the form of an experience of shock that the world is as it is.

But what *kind* of affective experience is *thaumazein*? Although Arendt asserts that *thaumazein* "is not something men can summon up by themselves; the wonder is a *pathos*, something to be suffered, not acted," this does little to differentiate it from other passions, emotions, and reactive dispositions (Arendt 1978b, 143). As a starting point we might ask whether or not *thaumazein* is intentionally directed in a way that is often taken to characterize the emotions.[17] It is widely accepted among contemporary philosophers of emotion (even those who reject strict cognitivism) that emotions are object-oriented mental states, or that, put more simply, "[e]motions are *about* something" (Slaby 2008, 431).[18] A standard move in the analysis of emotion is to distinguish between the 'target' and the 'focus' of an emotion, where the target is the object towards which the emotion is oriented or which elicits the emotion, and the focus is that which renders one's evaluation of the target intelligible (Helm 2001, 34, 69; Szanto and Slaby 2020, 483). To borrow Helm's example, "my anger at you for throwing the baseball in the house" – the target of my anger – is "made intelligible in light of the import my prize Ming vase has for me" – the focus of my anger (Helm 2001, 69).

Thaumazein, too, possesses this kind of intentional character, and can be understood in reference to both a target and a focus. Take, for example, Arendt's suggestion that *thaumazein* is a response to the skillful diffusion of responsibility for

[17] Note that some scholars argue that bodily feelings and moods *are* intentional, in the sense that they have objects towards which they are directed. See, for example, Crane (1998); Goldie (2000); Slaby (2008).
[18] One can hold this view without committing oneself to the position that emotions are primarily or fundamentally cognitive assessments, or that there are distinct evaluative and felt elements of emotion. For an example of such a blended approach, see Bortolan (2017).

atrocities across whole populations to the point of disappearing.[19] Here, *thaumazein*'s target is the human capacity to escape accountability for collective action, while its focus is the valued task of assigning responsibility for complex, totalitarian injustices. Just as in the case of the Ming vase, one's emotional assessment of the target is rendered intelligible by reference to the focus of the emotion. In other words, the human capacity for escaping responsibility undermines the valued task of assigning accountability in a way that indicates a failure of moral and legal frameworks, prompting *thaumazein*. More specifically, *thaumazein* can be understood as a member of the broad class of emotions called 'epistemic emotions,' which are emotions that modulate our efforts to seek out knowledge.[20] Borrowing from Ahmed's analysis of wonder, we can say that *thaumazein* draws attention to features of the world that might otherwise appear to be natural and irrevocable, revealing them to be historically contingent, human-made, and thereby changeable. Arendt's post-war *thaumazein*, for example, brought the limitations of traditional juridical approaches to guilt and responsibility to the fore of her attention and prompted her to seek out alternative conceptions of responsibility for diffused injustices. These experiences illuminated the potential for the world to be otherwise, opening the way for new political imaginaries.

Even while acknowledging the 'epistemic' effects of *thaumazein* – that it pulls our attention towards forms of life that normally go unscrutinized – it should be emphasized that *thaumazein* also provides the enabling conditions for what Arendt calls 'thinking,' which she distinguishes explicitly from cognition or knowledge-production. Citing Kant, Arendt understands thinking to be a form of rigorous critical reflection by

[19] I argue that this is Arendt's position in the previous section. See also Arendt (1994b, 126).
[20] See, for example, de Sousa (2008); Morton (2010).

which one arrives at meaning, as opposed to the verification of knowledge.[21] *Thaumazein* answers one of the central questions of *The Life of the Mind* – "What makes us think?" (1978b, 141). Arendt directly implies that *thaumazein* and thinking are interconnected when she refers to "the capacity for wonder and thought in contemplation" (1961a, 62). However, as she emphasizes repeatedly, the results of thinking are hardly predictable:

> [T]hinking inevitably has a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements of good and evil, in short, on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in morals and ethics. … Thinking is equally dangerous to all creeds and, by itself, does not bring forth any new creed. (1978b, 174–176)

Accordingly, "we cannot expect any moral propositions or commandments, no final code of conduct from the thinking activity" (1971, 425). Because it gives rise to thinking, *thaumazein* does not bring about a determinate set of political or moral beliefs in those who experience it. Rather, *thaumazein* impels us to "stop and think," providing the occasion for dismantling and reformulating dominant conceptual paradigms (1978b, 4, 175).[22]

So far, I have argued that *thaumazein* directs our attention towards the contingency and malleability of social and political systems, and also that it provides the impetus for critique. The overtly political connotations of these effects invite additional comparisons to the category of 'political emotion.' Emotions have long been recognized as sources for political motivation, energy, and solidarity, and this approach is especially prominent in late 20th- and early 21st-century feminist political philosophy.[23] Broadly

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[21] "The faculty of thinking, however, which Kant, as we have seen, called *Vernunft* (reason) to distinguish it from *Verstand* (intellect), the faculty of cognition, is of an altogether different nature" (Arendt 1978b, 57).

[22] Ahmed makes much same point independently: "But this is not to say that all students get to the same place through wonder…. What is shared is rather the capacity to leave behind the place of the ordinary" (Ahmed 2014, 183).

[23] See Scheman (1980); hooks (1993); Cherry (2021).

speaking, political emotions are a class of collective emotions that have political salience, typically in terms of the ends or foci towards which they are oriented.[24] Emotions such as anger, hope, and fear can provide the basis for solidarity with regard to collective political action, at which point they become 'political.' On this account, one's one-off flash of anger at Mayor Guiliani about the conditions of the roads in New York City after hitting a pothole in 1998 is *not* a political emotion; but the shared and expressed anger of a voting constituency that resolves to vote him out of office because of his failure to repair the roads *is*. Put more directly, the foci of political emotions are community values, priorities, and aims.

Similarly, community is the explicit focus of the cases of post-war *thaumazein* that Arendt discusses. The fact that the community of human beings in Arendt's analysis – that of all human beings, perhaps even all historical human beings – is hyperbolically large and lacks an organizational or agential structure does not disqualify it from serving as the focus of political emotion. As Szanto and Slaby put it, "emotions still qualify as political as long as the individuals' affective focus involves reference to a public space of shared concerns" (Szanto and Slaby 2020, 485). To be clear, these comments only indicate that *thaumazein* can operate as a political emotion, not that it always does. Just as anger, indignation, pride, and other emotions have non-political correlates, understanding certain cases of *thaumazein* as forms of political emotion does not deny that one can experience non-political *thaumazein*.

[24] For example, Martha Nussbaum understands political emotions as those that "engender and sustain strong commitment to worthy projects" (Nussbaum 2013, 3). See also Szanto and Slaby's claim that "[t]he target on its own… will not suffice to render an emotion political, even if it qualifies as a political object in some relevant sense" (Szanto and Slaby 2020, 483). In contrast to this view, Protevi argues that the target (rather than the focus) is what makes political emotions properly political (Protevi 2014, 327).

Lastly, we ought not overlook the ontological or existential overtones of *thaumazein*, which, as noted above, are especially obvious in prior philosophical analyses of the experience. Because *thaumazein* unsettles preconceived notions about how one is situated in the world at large, it bears some resemblance to a group of emotions associated with changes in 'existential feelings,' a term coined by Matthew Ratcliffe to refer to pre-intentional affective experiences that "constitute a sense of finding oneself in the world, which determines the shape of all experience and thought" (Ratcliffe 2013, 600). Existential feelings are pre-intentional, felt senses of reality that provide the conditions for the possibility of beliefs, emotions, moods, and other forms of mental activity. Such feelings orient us in the world through what some phenomenologists call a 'horizonal' structure of experience; or, in Ratcliffe's words, they "determine the *kinds* of possibility that are available to us" (2010, 621). Because the details of one's sense of belonging (or non-belonging) in the world constrain the intentional states that one takes up, existential feelings provide an enabling framework of possibilities for beliefs, actions, and other conscious mental states. Importantly, the pre-intentional structure of existential feelings can have profound impacts upon our moral decision-making (Bortolan 2017). In the same way that existential feelings open or foreclose possibilities for intentional mental states and experiences, they can similarly be understood to condition the scope of moral choices that we perceive to be available to us. In Anna Bortolan's words, "existential feelings fundamentally determine our possibilities of acquiring moral knowledge" while at the same time "constrain[ing] our possibilities of action, making it possible (or impossible) for us to act in particular morally relevant ways" (Bortolan 2017, 488).

Both in its earlier philosophical treatments and in Arendt's appropriation of it, *thaumazein* marks a shift in existential feeling. In different circumstances, changes in existential feeling can elicit admiring ascertainment of the order of the cosmos (Plato), vertigo at the sheer impossibility of thinking non-being (Schelling), nausea at the opacity of existence (Sartre), or a wondering horror at the ambiguity of one's own responsibilities for totalitarian evil (Arendt). The feature that Bortolan emphasizes – that existential feelings provide the enabling conditions for moral judgments, dispositions, and attitudes – helps to make sense of Arendt's claim that we can rely only upon those who have experienced *thaumazein* to shoulder expanded political responsibilities. This is to say that those who experience *thaumazein* may suddenly find themselves faced with a new field of possibilities, just as a shift in existential feeling can disclose and conceal different kinds of moral choices.[25]

This kinship with existential feelings lends plausibility to Arendt's suggestion that those who have undergone *thaumazein* are prompted, if not predisposed, to reconsider traditional moral and political frameworks. Read in this way, *thaumazein* is not so much a precondition of 'genuine' political thought as it is an interruption of default notions of moral and political interconnectedness. Such an interruption provides the occasion for reconsidering the scope one's political responsibilities in radically new ways. The decision to "tak[e] not only the sins of [one's] own community but all human offenses" upon oneself may not appear as a viable choice – or even a choice at all – without an affective impetus to critique one's own moral and political horizons of possibility (Arendt

[25] This point about the disclosive potential of experiencing changes in existential feelings (and the emotions associated with those changes) fits neatly with Peter Goldie's claim that emotions can "reveal to us what we value, and what we value might not be epistemically accessible to us if we did not have such responses" (Goldie 2000, 48–9).

1994b, 132). In this way, the experience of *thaumazein* can direct our attention towards new pathways for collective action and accountability when it is shared and expressed with others.

IV. Conclusion

Arendt's "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" analyzes the political circumstances in pre-war Germany that constrained citizens' capacities to experience and express certain forms of emotion. But the theory of *thaumazein* that I have attributed to her and elaborated upon above indicates that the reverse is also possible: affective experiences like *thaumazein* can prompt a radical shift in perspective, throwing the scope of one's political imagination and participation into question. The comparisons in the previous section are not meant to reduce *thaumazein* to its epistemic or conative effects, but rather to suggest that *thaumazein* is a distinctive emotion with moral, political, and existential salience. In particular, I have emphasized the capacity for *thaumazein* to provide the impetus for considering alternative moral, legal, and political frameworks of accountability for highly diffused harms. As R. T. Allen puts it, emotional experiences can serve as "the means… whereby we are moved away from the present situation, felt as unsatisfactory in one way or another, to look for the determinate object wanted or for a much less determinate 'something better' or 'something interesting'" (Allen 1991, 18). Similarly, the emotional disturbance of *thaumazein* moves us to imagine how we might recast and intervene upon seemingly entrenched features of the world and seemingly anonymous injustices.

Reading Arendt in this way goes against what Dan Degerman calls the "tendency to overestimate [Arendt's] antipathy towards the emotions" (Degerman 2016, 160).

Admittedly, Arendt's harsh critiques of sentimentality, guilt, empathy in *On Revolution* and her exchanges with Gershom Scholem following the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* indicate a pointed suspicion of political appeals to compassion (Arendt 2006).[26] Arendt is especially concerned with the way in which emotions can conceal and distort the truth of the world in self-serving and dangerous ways when they serve as the basis for political action.[27] However, as several scholars have noted over the past two decades, Arendt's keen attentiveness to the benefits of anger and fear for the development of effective political action suggests a more nuanced view of political emotion (Swift 2011; Degerman 2016). The theory of wonder that I have developed from Arendt's inchoate, but cogent comments on *thaumazein* is another indication that Arendt does not conceive of the relationship between the emotions and politics solely as one of interference by the former. This is a point that she makes explicitly in "On Violence": "Absence of emotions neither causes nor promotes rationality. … In order to respond reasonably one must first of all be 'moved,' and the opposite of emotional is not 'rational,' whatever that may mean…" (1972, 161).

In Arendt's time as in our own, it is all too easy to defer or avoid experiences of wonder at the world as it is. Ideology, for Arendt, can "immunize man's soul against the shocking impact of reality," foreclosing the shift in perspective that *thaumazein* might otherwise galvanize (Arendt, 135). Ideology projects the world to be fundamentally decipherable, as if mystifying or disruptive events can always be rephrased as foregone conclusions. It is in this sense that "[i]deologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process – the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the

[26] The pertinent letters between Arendt and Scholem are printed in Arendt (1978a).
[27] See Nelson (2006, 92); Swift (2011, 89–91).

uncertainties of the future" (1979, 469). Remaining open to being 'moved' by wonder at the contingency of the world is, in this line of thought, a *political* gesture of resistance that makes room for counterideological critique and action. As Lida Maxwell puts it, wonder "pushes back against convention, against what 'society' (in Arendt's sense) sees as valuable, and encourages individuals to ask how they might live differently: to escape bewitchment" (Maxwell 2017, 688). By the same token, however, enlisting others' support in efforts to reimagine new political possibilities is complicated by the degree to which we are ideologically insulated from wonder.

Arendt's theory of *thaumazein* is a distinctive and underexplored contribution to the study of political emotion, and her work prefigures recent interest in the role of wonder in politics. In and of itself, *thaumazein* is not a political solution. But if there are political solutions the lie beyond the horizon of our imaginations, then these may only become accessible after we have caught sight of the inadequacies and contingencies of the dominant conceptual paradigms of our own time. *Thaumazein* is one route by which one can become predisposed to this kind of critique and action. Granting that we all share some form of duty to resist ideology and totalitarianism, perhaps we also share in the duty to prevent wonder from disappearing from the world.

CHAPTER 2

Social-Regret and the Affiliated Onlooker

I. Introduction

When an individual, institution, or social group with which I am affiliated causes harm, how should I feel about it? An initial answer can be found by asking after one's moral responsibility. It is plausible to say that those who are morally responsible for a harm appropriately feel self-directed, negative emotions such as remorse, guilt, shame, or regret, and that such feelings are excessive, even pathological, in the absence of moral responsibility. Against this standard view, numerous arguments have been put forward to say that moral responsibility is not a necessary condition for rational feelings of guilt, shame, or regret.[28] My goal in this chapter is to build upon this uncoupling of self-directed reactive attitudes from moral responsibility by introducing an intuitive, but unnamed (as yet) moral emotion that is fitting in situations in which one's only connection to a harm is through social affiliation with a culpable individual or social group, and not grounded in one's own causal, negligent, or enriching connection to the harm in question.

The moral emotion that I have in mind is experienced by an *affiliated onlooker* – that is, someone who is a third party to a harm, but nonetheless feels implicated in that harm in virtue of her social connection with that harm's perpetrator. Existing scholarship on situations in which one feels morally implicated by association despite not satisfying standard conditions for moral or collective responsibility focuses on the concept of 'moral taint,' and the emotions that are claimed to be appropriately associated with moral

[28] See, for example, (Williams 1981), May (1991), Gilbert (2002), Tollefsen (2006), Christensen (2013), and Fricker (2016).

taint are often described as species of guilt and shame (May 1992; Oshana 2006). Against this trend, I aim to present an account in which the fitting emotion for social proximity to a wrongdoing is cast as a specific form of *regret* (in the tradition of Bernard Williams' 'agent-regret').

Here is my basic proposal: when one's relations and/or (members of one's) social groups behave badly, one may be susceptible to a species of regret that I call 'social-regret.' We feel social-regret when we are not agentially involved in harmful actions, but rather affiliated through social relations to a harm brought about by a group or agent other than ourselves. The concept of social-regret provides a different angle on what Marina Oshana calls the "phenomenological experience of [moral] taint" (2006, 364). It has long been recognized that emotions can redirect our attention by influencing the perceived salience of information about ourselves (Smith 1984; de Sousa 1987; Elgin 2007; Roberts 2013) and those who fall within our "circle of concerns" (Nussbaum 2013, 11) – that is, the community and social environment in which we are enmeshed. In a similar way, experiences of social-regret refocus our attention on the moral salience of our social relations. This foregrounding of relations, as opposed to isolable moral agents, means that social-regret is simultaneously self-directed, other-directed, and (in some cases) we-directed. Through social-regret, we come to see ourselves as relational beings – that is, beings who rely upon others for their practical identity,[29] and who are potentially accountable for the conduct of others, just as others are potentially accountable for them.[30] Much like Arendtian wonder, which provides the occasion for reflection upon one's political responsibilities, social-regret affectively opens space for a reconsideration

[29] See Chapter 3.
[30] See Chapter 4.

of one's social situatedness, as well as opportunities to take accountability and make symbolic actions in the wake of harms caused by social affiliates.

There are two initial advantages to a regret-based account of the emotions of moral taint, both of which will be expanded upon below. First, regret is a fitting affective response to others' actions, while guilt and shame are typically understood to be fitting only for one's own actions, character, or moral status. Of course, one can regret one's own conduct; but one can also coherently regret that the United States employed atomic weapons during World War II, or that one's elected representatives are corrupt. Instead of pushing the boundaries of guilt or shame beyond recognition so as to accommodate situations in which others do wrong, why not begin from the concept of regret, which requires no substantive revisions for non-agential cases? Second, rhetorically speaking, a regret-based account may better avoid connotations of culpability where guilt- and shame-based accounts tempt them, and so may help to head off common defensive reactions that would dismiss no-fault moral emotions as symptoms of a pathological 'bleeding heart,' or what Smith would call sentimental 'irregularities.' There are good reasons to avoid guilt or shame for others' conduct, but these reasons do not hold for regret. This means that regret may be a more attractive conceptual resource for enjoining others to be receptive to their moral emotions and take accountability for collective harms that are not, strictly speaking, 'their own.'

Future chapter will explore the kinds of relations that give rise to social-regret, as well as the moral responsibilities that social-regret can render urgent and actionable. The goal of this chapter is to introduce the concept and comment upon its basic

phenomenological profile – that is, what it feels like, where it pulls our attention, how it moves us to action, and the conditions that are typically satisfied in central cases.

In the next section, I describe a scenario in which an individual is connected to a harm purely through by affiliation, and I elaborate upon what I take it to mean for a moral emotion to be 'appropriate' in a given situation. Section III proposes social-regret as an adjacent concept to Williams' 'agent-regret,' and walks through three typical features of central cases. I also expand upon the relationship between social-regret, agent-regret, and regret in general. Section IV argues that social-regret is both *expressive* and *revelatory*: it expresses the way in which we value social relations and the expectations that undergird them, and it also opens the way for novel deliberation over one's responsibilities going forward. By way of conclusion, I consider several existing accounts of guilt, shame, and collective emotions that are plausibly appropriate to the situations raised. I argue that some of these accounts rely on excessively general categories of emotion, and I highlight the practical advantages of a regret-based account over guilt- or shame-based accounts – namely, that the language of regret may better circumvent charges of excessiveness or irrationality. Both conceptually and rhetorically, a theory of social-regret better avoids connotations of wrongdoing when compared to existing theories of vicarious guilt or shame.

II. Moral Taint by Affiliation

How should one feel when one is implicated in a harm solely by association, and not through contributory fault, complicity, negligence, or membership in a collective that is liable *qua* collective? In order to better illustrate this kind of scenario, consider the following case:

> *The Hiring Committee*: María is a new member of a hiring committee at her company, where she has worked in a different role for several years. In her first week on the committee, María reviews past application cycles and discovers a worrying trend. Despite the fact that the final lists of applicants to be interviewed are consistently diverse from year to year, final offers in the last five years were disproportionately awarded to men. It appears to María that gender bias, either individual or structural, has influenced the hiring practices of the committee in the years before she took up her new position as a member.

Some scholars would describe this scenario as a case of moral taint. In situations of moral taint, one's moral record, personality, and/or psyche are marred by the conduct of associated parties (Oshana 2006; Appiah 1991; May 1991). According to some accounts, moral taint can arise out of both deliberately chosen and incidental social connections. This means that the degree of affiliation requisite for making one vulnerable to moral taint can be as 'proximate' as a culpable family member, and as 'remote' as a culpable member of what Howard McGary calls a mutual, "loosely organized" group (McGary 1986, 160).

There is wide disagreement over whether and how moral taint can ground moral obligations or forward-looking responsibilities. Anthony Appiah, for example, characterizes moral taint as affecting the public-facing moral integrity of an agent, and the purging of taint as a fundamentally symbolic act, as opposed to a moral obligation (1991). Against this view, Oshana argues that moral taint "does not only emerge where the opinion of others matters," but rather concerns the authenticity of one's own self-conception (2006, 370). Oshana argues that those bearing moral taint are straightforwardly responsible for the "refusal to assess oneself and one's attitude toward one's community, and to choose one's identity on the basis of this assessment" (2006, 362), and also that certain forms of inherited moral taint "demarcat[e] a sphere of

responsibility over which none of the standard criteria for responsibility need obtain" (2006, 367). Similarly, Larry May distinguishes between three kinds of moral taint: 1) taint "based on one's associations regardless of whether one is even aware that one has such associations," 2) taint "based on associations one could distance oneself from," and 3) taint "based on associations which one could end, but which, if ended, would still not make any difference in the world" (1991, 250).[31] Of these, May argues that the second and third forms of moral taint can appropriately give rise to moral responsibilities, in that the individual bearing taint is responsible for their chosen response to their affiliates' harms.

For the moment I will remain neutral on the question of whether and when moral taint generates moral obligations on the part of affiliated persons, and instead focus on the phenomenology of moral taint as it is experienced through the reactive attitudes.[32] This is to ask what it *feels like* to be in such a situation, where such an experience pulls us conatively, and how our moral emotions might prompt us to reconsider what we ought to do in the wake of a harm with which we are connected, even if only vicariously.

In The Hiring Committee, María is not agentially involved in the apparently biased hiring, which occurred years before she joined the committee. It is also not clear that the harm in question is attributable to any particular members of the committee, since, for example, it is possible that the apparent pattern of gender bias is due to the unpredictable confluence of various poorly-designed hiring procedures and institutional practices. Keeping María's distinctive positionality as an affiliated onlooker to the biased hiring in view, what reactive attitudes or moral emotions are appropriate for her to feel?

[31] See Chapter 4 for discussion of this third category.
[32] I follow P.F. Strawson in understanding reactive attitudes to refer broadly to attitudes (including emotions) experienced in response to interpersonal behavior (Strawson 1962).

Here, I do not mean 'appropriate' in the normative sense of how María 'ought' to feel. Instead, I follow Deborah Tollefsen's position that "[t]he notion of appropriateness in discussions of the emotions is one of rational acceptability rather than morally obligat[ion] or compuls[ion]" (2006, 225). Put another way, I understand the appropriateness of an emotion in terms of what Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson call the 'fittingness' of an emotional response, which refers to the harmony between the evaluative features of an emotion and its object (2000). My focus in what follows will be on the fittingness of the "*shape*" of an emotional response to moral taint, as opposed to the "*size*" of that response (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000, 73). Of course, it is important to understand when social-regret becomes pathological in terms of its intensity, but we need to establish what kind of affective response is fitting in the first place before raising such a question. One way to assess object-directed attitudes (such as guilt, shame, regret, and the like) is to gauge the accuracy of the implicit evaluations that give rise to them. In what follows, I take it as given that there are criteria under which certain moral emotions are appropriate (in this evaluative sense), and that the absence of those conditions renders those responses inappropriate.[33]

III. Social-Regret

A starting point in the search for the fitting moral emotion for María's standpoint in The Hiring Committee are the 'counterfactual emotions,' which is a term that Kahneman and Tversky use to denote a class of emotions that are dependent "on a comparison of reality with what might or should have been" (1982, 206). Regret is one such counterfactual emotion, in that it involves considering and valuing alternative possibilities. (Note that one need not have a *specific* alternative reality in mind when regretting a state of affairs.

[33] In Chapter 4, I argue that even unfitting experiences of social-regret can be epistemically revelatory.

It is still counterfactual to compare a state of affairs with the negation of some of its elements, e.g., one can regret going to college without having a clear sense of what one would have preferred to do instead.)

Because regret is a fitting emotional response even in situations in which one has done nothing wrong, it is plausible that María might appropriately feel a kind of regret for the biased hiring practices of her institution. Williams famously argues that we can rationally feel 'agent-regret' for harms that we bring about nonculpably. To take Williams' example, a lorry driver who injures a child in a truly unavoidable accident may (fittingly) feel a unique kind of regret that moves him to take responsibility for his role in the accident, despite the fact that he is not blameworthy: "The lorry-driver may act in some way which he hopes will constitute or at least symbolize some kind of recompense or restitution, and this will be an expression of his agent-regret" (1981, 28). In Williams' view, the driver's agent-regret is a species of the broader genus of "regret in general" (Williams 1981, 27), which Carla Bagnoli calls "evaluator-regret" (Bagnoli 2000, 176). Evaluator-regret is an appropriate reactive emotion for practically anyone who learns of a harm. In Bagnoli's words, "the distinction between agent-regret and evaluator-regret is primarily drawn in terms of subject matter: the agent regrets his actions or his deliberation, while the evaluator regrets some state of affairs brought about by somebody else" (2000, 176).

Daniel Jacobson challenges Williams' premise that regret is generally appropriate for practically anyone to feel, and instead argues that "all regret is agential" (2013, 100). In lieu of the language of regret for third-party onlookers to a harm, Jacobson prefers that of *dismay*. Jacobson's disagreement with Williams follows in part from his commitment

to the views that 1) sentiments (as distinguished from emotions)[34] are natural psychological kinds (2013, 102n9) and that 2) regret is "a sentiment concerned with the agent's own *errors*" (2013, 102). In lieu of adjudicating this criticism, I will adopt a broad notion of regret 'in general' as a *genus* of which agent-regret, evaluator-regret, and social-regret are species, while remaining open in principle to the idea that social-regret could also be categorized as a species of dismay, rather than regret.

Let us return to narrowing down the list. Unlike Williams' lorry driver, María is not *agentially* connected to the harm in question. Agent-regret is a consequence of an individual's first-person, agential involvement in a harm for which she is not culpable. For this reason, it is not an appropriate moral response for situations of moral taint in which one plays no causal or agential role. What about evaluator-regret? It is true that evaluator-regret is fitting for María's situation, insofar as "the feeling can in principle apply to anything of which one can form some conception of how it might have been otherwise, together with consciousness of how things would then have been better" (Williams 1981, 27). It is in this sense that someone born after World War II might say that she regrets the deployment of atomic weapons by the United States, for example. However, it is too general to say that it is fitting for María to feel evaluator-regret, since that would imply that it is appropriate for her to feel the same way about the biased hiring as anyone else who learns of it. María is not merely an onlooker, like a random passerby

[34] Jacobson "adopt[s] a broad construal of the emotions and a narrow, more technical notion of the sentiments" (2013, 102) in which emotions are "ways of feeling" (2013, 102), and sentiments are a "core class of emotions" (2013, 104) that "have some characteristic motivational tendency" (2013, 104), and which "can be in tension with our overall beliefs and desires. … [W]hereas emotions that are not sentiments evaporate when one disbelieves their associated judgment, the sentiments can be recalcitrant, in that an agent can be in the grip of a sentiment contrary to his better judgment" (2013, 102–3).

who happens to witness a car accident. Her affiliation with the committee means that she is something more than a spectator, albeit something other than a perpetrator.

I propose that we think of María is an 'affiliated onlooker' so as to underscore that her regret has a different character than that of an agent or unaffiliated spectator both, and that we call the fitting moral emotion for affiliated onlookers 'social-regret.' Typically and nonpathologically, in central cases of social-regret:

(1) the subject knows and is aware that a harm X has occurred;
(2) the subject knows and is aware that X is reasonably attributable to the actions of a social affiliate S, where S is a social group, institution, or another individual; and, X is not reasonably attributable to the actions of the subject;
(3) the subject knows and is aware that she is affiliated with S.

For the purposes of introducing the general concept of social-regret, I am not here arguing that these are necessary or sufficient conditions. Rather, they are typical features of core cases. I am skeptical of the general idea that one can be morally obliged to feel specific emotions, though I concede that there are circumstances in which it would be intuitively strange (and even offensive) for an individual to not feel any sort of counterfactual emotion whatsoever.[35]

(1) restricts core cases of social-regret to situations in which a harm has occurred. Not all regret involves harm. As I have mentioned, regret in its most general sense is appropriate in almost any case in which one would prefer to live in a world in which things turned out differently in some respect. For an example of regret that does not involve harm, take the case of an envious restaurant diner who regrets her order after catching sight of a neighbor's meal that looks much more delicious than her own. It would be an exaggeration to say that a harm has occurred. Rather, the diner simply

[35] For now, I am also bracketing the question of which or what kinds of social affiliations provide the basis for feelings of social-regret. This question is addressed in detail in Chapter 3.

wishes that she lived in the world in which she had ordered the fish. Benign situations such as this do not typically lend themselves to the feeling of social-regret. Accordingly, I will set such cases aside.

(2) specifies that the harm is reasonably attributable to an individual or social group, broadly conceived. On this point, it might be objected that social practices, as opposed to social affiliates, are the proper objects of social-regret. This is McGary's approach, for example, when he proposes similar conditions under which an individual can be held vicariously liable. A practice, according to McGary, is a "commonly accepted course of action that may be over time habitual in nature; a course of action that specifies certain forms of behavior as permissible and others as impermissible with rewards and penalties assigned accordingly" (1986, 158). I understand shared practices to require the (sometimes implicit) existence of a social group, that shares those practices, so long as we include implicit, informal, or unstructured groups in our understanding of what constitutes a social group. In other words, a capacious understanding of social groups that includes feature- and practice-sharing aggregates will not overlook harms generated by shared practices. In this way, (2) refers to social affiliation broadly construed.[36]

The main contribution of (2) is to specify the sort of harm with which we are *not* particularly concerned in cases of social-regret: one will not feel social-regret for harms that cannot be traced to any individual or social collective whatsoever. This is only minimally restrictive. It mainly excludes harms of sheer contingency – lightning strikes and the like. Importantly, harms related to structural injustice are included under this

[36] For a more recent account of the interplay between social practices and social identity, see Haslanger (2018).

condition, since they can be traced to (large) social groups.[37] Note also that under (2) it makes sense to feel social-regret for, for example, the rising frequency of natural disasters if the intensification of natural disasters is understood to be the outcome of the behavior of communities, corporations, and nations with which one is affiliated. The point here is that experiencing social-regret is typically accompanied by the knowledge and awareness that some person or social body has caused the harm in question.

(2) also specifies that the harm is not directly or reasonably attributable to the actions of the subject experiencing social-regret. The claim here is simply that the harm in question is not a reasonably predictable outcome of an individual's behavior, interests, or desires. This means that I am interested in a narrower set of cases than those involving non-agential or remote causation. A cocaine buyer may be said to be a non-agential, distal cause of violence related to systems of drug production and trafficking; but that violence is a predictable outcome of the buyer's desires, interests, and behavior, whereas social-regret is fitting just in case there is no such link. Consider, in contrast to the cocaine buyer, an athlete on a sports team who discovers that her teammates are doping. Though it could be said that the athlete's teammates took performance enhancing drugs for the sake of the interests of the athlete, or that the athlete's desire to win played a causal role in her teammates' decisions to dope, the harm in question is not a straightforward expression of the athlete's interests, desires, or behaviors, since cheating is not fundamental (and is perhaps anathema) to group membership on a sports team. (If

[37] Similarly, what Fricker describes as "epistemic bad luck," is also not excluded by (2) (Fricker 2007, 152). While Fricker claims that the harm suffered in cases of epistemic bad luck is incidental because it cannot be traced to harmful background social conditions, Kristie Dotson argues convincingly that such cases *can* be traced to non-accidental and structural forms of domination (Dotson 2012), which means that they can appropriately give rise to social-regret.

the athlete actively encouraged her teammates to dope, however, then social-regret would not be fitting.)

Finally, (3) accounts for the subject's feeling of being connected to or associated with the harm. When one feels social-regret, one considers oneself (at least implicitly) to be affiliated with the relevant social group or individual. If, for some reason, one is unaware of such an affiliation, social-regret is unlikely to occur.[38] It is worth underscoring that sometimes ignorance of one's social affiliations is actively maintained, as Charles Mills argues in his analysis of white ignorance (Mills 2007). For example, in Ashley W. Doane's words, "whites tend not to see themselves in racial terms and not to recognize the existence of the advantages that whites enjoy in American society" (Doane 2003, 13–4).[39] If one refuses to acknowledge specific facets of one's social situatedness or identity, then one may avoid social-regret even after learning of the harms caused by an affiliated party. From (3), it follows that the experience of social-regret can be evaded by denying or maintaining ignorance of one's affiliations with a given harm.

I take these paradigmatic features of core cases of social-regret to be on display in the case of the Hiring Committee. María 1) has knowledge and awareness that a harm has occurred, 2) knows and is aware that this harm is attributable to the members and/or procedures of the hiring committee, and 3) knows and is aware that she, herself, is affiliated with those members and procedures because of her current institutional role. These three features can also be used to explain the relationship between evaluator-regret,

[38] Chapter 3 clarifies that shared social practices or attitudes can provide the basis for social-regret, even when one does not consider oneself to be affiliated with others who share those practices or attitudes. But these are admittedly non-core cases.

[39] That said, my view (which I do not argue for fully here) is that social-regret is often unfitting in cases of racial affiliation due to the complexity of racial identity, and the fact that it is reductive to describe complicity and enriching connections to systems of racial domination as mere 'social affiliations.' See also f.n.27, below.

agent-regret, and social-regret. An individual feeling evaluator-regret typically satisfies (1); an individual feeling agent-regret typically satisfies (1) and a modified version of (2), such that the harm in question is reasonably attributable to the subject herself; and an individual feeling social-regret typically satisfies all three conditions.

IV. What Does Social-Regret Do?

So far, I have described basic features of the experience of social-regret in response to moral taint by social affiliation. But what do these experiences actually do for us? That is, what are the potential insights and practical opportunities that arise from experiences of social-regret? My suggestion is that social-regret (like other moral emotions such as general regret, guilt, and shame) can be an *expressive* and *revelatory* experience. The counterfactual reasoning inherent to regret means that it can be understood as "a way of expressing concern and of conferring value" (Bagnoli 2000, 169). More specifically, social-regret expresses the way in which one values unrealized alternatives, as well as the principles implied by those alternatives. As Bagnoli rightly notes, "reasons for valuing do not always provide overriding reasons. … That is, to say that something is valuable does not imply that the agent has any reason to bring it about" (Bagnoli 2000, 178). This means that one can feel regret (and social-regret) even when there are overriding reasons for avoiding valued unrealized alternatives.

María's social-regret expresses her high valuation of fair hiring practices, as well as her hope that her organization lives up to that principle in the future. María's social-regret also might prompt her to recognize important changes that can be implemented in

the present, some of which may fall within the scope of her in-group regulative control.[40] As Patricia Greenspan points out, emotions "can function as 'enabling' causes of rational decision making… insofar as they direct attention toward certain objects of thought and away from others" (2004, 206). Some emotions are sometimes described as providing a 'short road' (as compared with the 'long road' of conscious deliberation) to practical action by *narrowing* the perceived scope of the choices available to us.[41] Put another way, these emotions "limit the set of salient practical options to a manageable set, suitable for 'quick and dirty' decision making" (Greenspan 2004, 206). Social-regret, however, brings about just the opposite – it makes us aware of the previously overlooked moral salience of our social relations, as well as new paths of (potentially inconvenient and demanding) action, some of which may take the form of forward-looking responsibilities to respond to harm.[42] As Justin White puts it, regret "opens the possibility for a certain kind of self-directed change," though in the case of social-regret the change concerns the future conduct of a social group (of as few as two individuals) instead of the self alone (White 2017, 238).

Like other forms of regret, social-regret can also alert us to the existence of implicit in-group expectations that have been violated. Wallace argues that a key characteristic of reactive emotions, and the feature that sets them apart from other attitudes, is their close connection to the expectations to which we hold others. "[T]o hold

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[40] I borrow the term 'regulative control' from John Martin Fischer (1986). For more on the relationship between in-group regulative control and individual responsibilities for group wrongs (especially omissions), see French (1992, 71–78).

[41] See Goldie's description of the quicker, 'low road' of intuitive thinking and the longer, 'high road' of deliberative thinking (Goldie 2008, 149).

[42] I use the term 'forward-looking responsibility' to refer to a broad category of task-oriented responsibilities that can include both individual and shared obligations to bring about a state of affairs. There are a number of prominent views regarding the content, justification, and scope of forward-looking responsibilities; for example, Goodin (1998), Young (2011), Smiley (2014), and Zheng (2018). See Chapter 5 for a detailed analysis of the content and demandingness of forward-looking responsibilities.

someone to an expectation," Wallace writes, "… is to be susceptible to a certain range of emotions if the expectation is violated, or to believe that it would be appropriate for one to feel those emotions if the expectation is violated" (Wallace 1994, 23). In a similar way, we are susceptible to social-regret because we hold others (even others within unstructured aggregates) and are held by others to normative expectations. Importantly, we are not always conscious of the details of the expectations to which we hold others or to which we are held, and we may even hold inaccurate views about them. Emotions can intervene on such ambiguity by "rendering previously ignored features and previously unknown patterns salient" (Elgin 2007, 45), and "provid[ing] orientations that render particular facets of things salient" (2007, 33). Someone who discovers new and unexpected feelings of romantic jealousy when a friend begins dating someone else might be prompted to realize that the story she tells herself about their relationship is untrue. Here, her feeling belies her self-perception. Just as such a person might ask herself, "Do I feel jealousy because I am in love with my friend?" an individual experiencing social-regret is well-positioned to ask whether the social relation in question is *morally salient*.

When a relation is morally salient, I take it to mean two things: 1) that there are normative expectations built into the relation, either implicitly or explicitly, and 2) that the violation of those expectations can give rise to individual, shared, or collective obligations going forward. Social-regret affectively prompts us to consider whether or not an expectation has been violated, as well as the possibility that it is within one's power (and perhaps a kind of forward-looking responsibility) to contribute towards an ameliorative response.[43] Where agent-regret "is a way of questioning the ineluctability

[43] Note that under Wallace's technical conception of reactive emotions, the belief that an expectation has been violated is a necessary condition: "To be in a state of reactive emotion, one must believe that a person

and necessity of some of our deliberative constraints" (Bagnoli 2000, 180), the counterfactual expression of value that occurs with social-regret is a way of questioning the ineluctability of harmful in-group practices, some of which arise out of violated expectations.

Let me underscore that is not always the case that fitting experiences of social-regret give rise to reparative obligations going forward, or that the harm in question constitutes a violation of in-group expectations. For example, consider a variant of Williams' lorry driver scenario in which the lorry driver involved in a faultless accident is a member of your church community. In such a case, you may be 1) aware that a harm has occurred, 2) aware that the harm is attributable to your fellow church-goer, and not to you, and 3) aware of your social relation to the driver. But does social-regret in this sort of situation alert you to the fact that that you have obligations? I think that the answer is 'no.' Ex hypothesi, the accident is a truly unavoidable piece of bad luck. This means that social-regret may simply result in a feeling of proximity to a harm. I think it is important to not automatically dismiss such cases as excessive or pathological, and instead consider that they are fitting cases of social-regret that are not especially insightful or revelatory. This is not to deny that one can be misled in principle by excessive feelings of social-regret, but rather to emphasize that 'dead end' social-regret of this sort is still expressive of something real, even if it is not obviously expressive of values or implicit

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has violated some expectation that one holds the person to" (Wallace 1994, 20). Under my own account, however, social-regret can fittingly occur in the absence of beliefs regarding the violation of an expectation. As I argue at length in Chapter 4, not all fitting cases of social-regret involve norm violations or moral wrongdoing.

expectations.[44] Even in these cases, social-regret is the feeling of *vulnerability* to bearing accountability for one's affiliates, even in the absence of norm violations.[45]

By contrast with 'dead end' cases, María's social-regret does not merely express her social proximity to a harm; it also affectively alerts her to the moral salience of her affiliation with the hiring committee. Because she does, in fact, hold the committee to the expectation that hiring practices ought not to result in biased outcomes that unjustly favor men, and because the past hiring committee violated that expectation, María is now well-positioned to ask after her own role in responding to the harm.[46] In other words, her social-regret prompts her to assess whether the given harm amounts to a violation of an expectation to which she holds her fellow committee members.

When an in-group expectation is discovered to have been violated, a natural next step is to consider possible ameliorative avenues.[47] My goal in this chapter is not to give a complete account of how to best determine reparative obligations in the wake of social-regret, and more will be said on this point in Chapter 4. But I briefly want to suggest here that an adequate account needs to factor in an individual's intersectional situatedness. José Medina has rightly noted that in the context of hermeneutical injustice the responsibility that "differently situated subjects and groups have needs to be determined *relationally* in particular contexts of interaction" (Medina 2012, 216). The same holds for

[44] For more on the potential for our emotions to mislead us in systematic and self-concealing ways, see Goldie (2008).
[45] I discuss 'dead end' cases of social-regret at length in Chapter 4.
[46] For simplicity, I am assuming that there was an implicit in-group expectation for unbiased hiring at the time of the biased hiring. A more complicated, but perhaps more politically topical case would be one in which there was not such an in-group expectation at the time of the past wrongdoing, but there is currently such an expectation in place. For example, consider an organization that did not allow women as members in the past, but is currently committed to a more inclusive membership. Past actions can constitute violations of present in-group expectations, but the mixed temporality of such cases warrants a separate analysis.
[47] Note that an individual may find that they do not have moral obligations even when in-group expectations *have* been violated. As I clarify in Chapter 4, the violation of in-group expectations is not the only route between social-regret and accountability practices.

forward-looking responsibilities related to experiences of social-regret. What is needed is a control condition that is sensitive to whether, to what extent, at what cost, and how a person can address or intervene on a past, ongoing, or future harm. Such a control condition might read something like this:

> An individual must be able to reasonably and prudentially implement her ameliorative duties to prevent the continuation or make recompense for the occurrence of X (where X is caused by S) to be said to bear those duties.

In other words, whatever an individual's responsibilities following from social-regret may be, they must be commensurate with that individual's position in relational networks of institutional, social, and political power.

María's current influence over the hiring committee could mean that certain ameliorative strategies are within her power. But her social-situatedness is not reducible to her institutional role. She may have very good reasons to refrain from speaking out openly about biased hiring, including concerns about both formal and informal reprisal, as well as marginalization by colleagues who may dismiss her concerns as overly sensitive, excessively politically correct, or needlessly hostile due to various forms of identity prejudice. In turn, María's potential vulnerability to reprisal is linked to her financial security or confidence in her ability to quickly find another job. Other relevant considerations include, but are not restricted to, whether and to what extent María has actual (as opposed to nominal) regulative control over the committee, whether and to what extent she is in solidarity with those harmed or those doing the harm, the resources at her disposal that she might reasonably put towards ameliorative action, and the other demands and obligations that rank highly in her implicit moral triage.

If the outlines of this rough control condition are right, then we do not have nearly enough information about María to ascertain her precise responsibilities going forward. But we can say that the experience of social-regret provides the occasion for practical deliberation along these lines, in that it turns María's attention towards the moral salience of her social (and in this case, institutional) proximity to biased hiring.

V. Why Regret?

It is important to acknowledge that there are a number of moral emotions that are plausible candidates for cases of moral taint like The Hiring Committee. In what remains, I will briefly consider several of these alternatives in order to make the case that there are both conceptual and rhetorical reasons why an account of social-regret contributes to the extant literature.

Some scholars have suggested that shame, as opposed to guilt, is the most fitting affective response to moral taint. But what is the difference between the two? Helen Block Lewis proposes that while the object of guilt is one's behavior, the object of shame is one's self, and this distinction has been enormously influential in philosophical conversations around moral emotion (H.B. Lewis 1971). Keeping with Lewis, May claims that shame is "directly related to a person's conception of herself or himself, rather than to explicit behavior (which is what guilt most commonly attaches to)" (1992, 120). Similarly, Vice argues that guilt "is a reaction to what one has *done*, not primarily to who one *is*" (2010, 328). Haggerty voices much the same: "Shame is directly about the *self*. In guilt, however, it is not the self but the act that is the central focus of negative evaluation" (2009, 304).[48]

[48] A notable exception to this general trend is Wallace, who discusses shame for one's actions (as opposed to the self) at length (Wallace 1994).

Insofar as guilt involves both holding oneself to a demand and judging that one has fallen short of that demand (Wallace 1994), it follows that guilt (understood as a self-directed negative assessment of one's own conduct) is not an appropriate moral emotion for The Hiring Committee.[49] Shame, on the other hand, has been argued to be an appropriate affective response to moral taint generated by collective omissions (May 1992, 121). As Oshana puts it, "the tainted person would feel shame if she felt as she ought to feel" (2006, 364). Shame also appears to be a plausible moral emotion for María because, like regret, it can be an appropriate moral response to situations in which an individual is nonculpable, lacks an agential connection to the harm in question, and is connected to a harm through social relations (that is, is not a random spectator).

Still, I worry that shame is too broad of a phenomenon to adequately capture the phenomenology of situations like The Hiring Committee. If we say that it is fitting for María to feel shame without qualification, then we appeal to a rather broad emotion that is also appropriate when one's believes her character to be deficient, or when one is connected to a harm in other ways than social affiliation alone. Furthermore, shame is often (though not always) an appropriate moral response wherever guilt is, while my focus is specifically on nonculpable and noncontributory relations to another's harm.[50] Of course, one could specify species of shame, such as 'vicarious shame' or 'shame by association.' But given the fact that it is widely agreed that it is an integral feature of shame that it concerns deficiencies in one's own character, modifying shame to be

[49] For a more thorough description of Wallace's analysis of guilt, see also Tollefsen (2006, 225).
[50] The view that shame and guilt are compatible and sometimes overlapping moral emotions is voiced by, for example, Rawls: "Although both [shame and guilt] may be occasioned by the same action, they do not have the same explanation" (1999, 391). Rawls' example is that of someone who cheats, where guilt is warranted by the violation of an expectation and shame is warranted by the cheater's deficient character. Wallace agrees: "In addition to feeling guilt about my failure to act in accordance with the demands to which I hold myself, I may feel moral shame because I lack the moral excellences that I aspire to" (1994, 37).

'vicarious' or 'by association' negates that integral feature. The result is a somewhat contradictory term – a species of shame that is distinguished from its genus by the absence of an otherwise integral feature. Put another way, 'vicarious shame' names an exception to the general rule. Social-regret, by contrast, is more conceptually efficient, by which I mean that it cleaves closer to regret than vicarious shame does to shame. It is not essential to the concept of regret that it concerns one's own actions, and the species of social-regret does not overturn integral features of the general genus of regret.

Furthermore, if vicarious shame bears any resemblance to shame in general, the resemblance is that vicarious shame also concerns (another's) deficient moral character. But this does not capture the phenomenology of the emotion that I have in mind: social-regret is not an affective response to another's character, but to another's *actions* or *harms*. This is supported by cases in which one experiences social-regret on the basis of another's *nonculpable* harm, e.g., the feelings of a close family member of Williams' lorry driver. This is not to deny the possibility of fitting, vicarious shame, but only to say that it does not adequately capture many of the cases with which I am concerned here. In short, I will grant that it is fitting for María to feel something very much like guilt or shame – there is an affective resemblance – but to leave it at that does not get at the uniqueness of her situation.

Alternatively, one might also appeal to the class of moral emotions that Tollefsen calls "collective emotions," which are felt "in response to the actions of groups" (2006, 222). In particular, it has been argued that collective guilt and collective shame can arise out of numerous possible connections to wrongdoing, ranging from situations in which a single in-group member causes harm to those in which the collective *qua* collective is

morally responsible. Some have proposed expanding the concept of collective guilt so as to make it fitting to experience guilt in situations in which an agent merely benefits from ongoing group-based inequality (Branscombe and Doosje 2004, 6), and Christensen proposes a related concept, 'innocent guilt,' to refer to the keen awareness of the ethical claim generated by the suffering of others to which one has not contributed (Christensen 2013). Several of these more capacious concepts of collective guilt and/or shame appear to be fitting moral responses for someone in María's situation.

Once again, however, these categories are broader than the subset of cases that I have in mind. Collective guilt, for example, is not only appropriate in cases of moral taint by mere association, but can also be fitting when an individual has failed to prevent a harm (Lickel, Schmader, and Barquissau 2004, 42), benefits from a harm (Iyer, Leach, and Pedersen 2004, 266), or is a member of a collective that is culpable *qua* collective (Christensen 2013, 369). In short, collective guilt can fittingly accompany numerous different linkages between a group member and a harm, whereas my goal is to arrive at a specific moral emotion that is fitting when an individual is connected to a harm solely in virtue of her social relations, where that individual does not otherwise bear individual or collective liability.[51] As with shame, I concede that it is broadly appropriate for María to feel collective guilt or collective shame, but neither concept demarcates a purely social affiliation to wrongdoing.

Margaret Gilbert's concept of 'membership guilt' comes closest to capturing the specificity of the moral taint in The Hiring Committee. Gilbert and Priest argue that it can

[51] In Chapter 4 I argue that social-regret can be epistemically revelatory in situations of omission, benefit, or collective wrongdoing. But there I specify that these are cases of *unfitting*, albeit revelatory, social-regret, whereas the cases discussed above are *fitting* instances of collective guilt. This is to say that social-regret picks out a more precise subset of fitting cases than does collective guilt.

be appropriate for members of a plural subject (which Gilbert elsewhere uses interchangeably with the term 'social group'[52]) to feel membership guilt in response to the misconduct of their group, even when personal guilt is inappropriate (Gilbert and Priest 2020, 32). Since plural subjects are sets of jointly committed persons, membership guilt can express a negative assessment directed at the plural subject instead of the individual self. A strength of Gilbert's plural subject account is that it can be extended to include informal social affiliations that are implicit in shared social practices and attitudes.

Though Gilbert's analysis is convincing, I think that there are nonetheless conceptual and practical reasons for seeking out an alternative account of the moral emotion of purely social moral taint that takes regret, not guilt, as its genus. First, conceptually speaking, membership guilt does not explain guilt-like affective responses to social affiliates that are *not* members of plural subjects, while under the account that I present here (and elaborate in the next chapter), one can feel social-regret on account of social affiliates with whom joint action or commitment is impossible. This is readily discernible, for example, in the case of social-regret for the conduct of now-deceased ancestors or family members.[53]

Second, practically speaking, a regret-based account may, in certain contexts, avoid the tendency for guilt- or shame-based accounts to be dismissed as irrational, pathological, or excessive. Rhetorics of shame and guilt can elicit sharp and unproductive resistance, and it is easy to conflate species of guilt or shame that do not imply fault with species of guilt or shame that do. Individuals in situations like María's may

[52] See Gilbert (1989, 146–236).
[53] For a case of social-regret for deceased filial relations, see Appendix I. For more examples, see Telech (2022).

understandably be reluctant to describe their feelings in terms that generally connote fault, liability, or related stigmas. As Gilbert herself points out, "feeling guilt is unpleasant, and may have an inherently punishing character" (1997, 83). Though Gilbert goes on to claim that the unpleasantness of guilt can serve as a "stimulus to improvement in group action and the moral quality of group life" (1997, 83), that same unpleasantness can just as easily (and perhaps more frequently) elicit defensiveness, denials, and refusals. Tollefsen illustrates this in her description of Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran's refusal to sign his name to a resolution of apology for the Senate's past failure to pass anti-lynching legislation:

> When asked by a reporter why his name was absent from the list of sponsors Cochran said: "I'm not in the business of apologizing for what someone else did or didn't do. I deplore and regret that lynching occurred and that those committing them weren't punished, but I'm not culpable.[54] (Tollefsen 2006, 228)

Note that the senator's resistance to apologize for the harms of the (past) Senate is grounded in his intuition that apologies imply wrongdoing. (I do not grant this premise, but I will set that to the side.) The senator's complaint concerns the semantic connotations of apologies, as if to say, "Apologies are for wrongdoings, and I have done no wrong, and so I will give no apology." The moral connotations of apologizing tempt the senator to conflate being *affiliated* with a harm with being *at fault* in a harm, and then to dismiss the moral emotions and associated obligations following from the former as

[54] Note that the concept of social-regret that I have presented here will need to be adjusted further for situations of racial affiliation, in part because social-regret (as an emotion fitting in the absence of fault, cause, or benefit) may be an attractive concept for those interested in downplaying the benefits that they receive from their affiliation with whiteness. I do not have space here to adequately address important complications that arise when one's self-conception is beneficial to oneself and/or harmful to others, but I suspect that these are not straightforward cases of social-regret. See also Marzia Milazzo's argument that in critical philosophy of race the widespread preoccupation with a "flawed guilt versus shame debate… sidesteps discussions about justice and concrete ways to achieve it" (2017, 565).

excessive and unfitting in light of the evidence that he does not satisfy conditions for the latter.

This defensive reaction against the language of guilt is part of what Karl Jaspers acknowledges when he writes that "in a way which is rationally not conceivable, which is even rationally refutable, I feel co-responsible for what Germans do and have done" (Jaspers 2001, 74). Of course, Jaspers is unique in that he does *not* dismiss feelings of guilt beyond those related to one's individual conduct as irrational, but in this passage he openly admits to the intuition that his own emotions, when described and understood as a form of guilt, are seemingly irrational. So long as we are primed to associate guilt with individual guilt for one's own culpable actions, adjacent guilt-like feelings will appear to many as excessive and irrational.

The senator's reaction illustrates the way in which some might recoil at the idea that they ought to feel anything like a wrongdoer, no matter how insistent moral philosophers may be that certain species of guilt and shame do not imply as much. Anecdotally, my own experience is that many non-philosophers and philosophers alike are reflexively dismissive of moral emotions bearing the name 'guilt' or 'shame' in the absence of personal wrongdoing or character deficits. The connotations associated with those terms make it far too easy for some (sometimes in bad faith, sometimes not) to suppress feelings of moral implicatedness via social affiliations, or morally obligations to take accountability for others' harms.

But here is the rub: note that the senator is fully willing to admit to feeling regret – "I deplore and *regret* that lynching occurred and that those committing them weren't punished" – for the conduct of the past members of the Senate. Drawing a more obvious

terminological distinction between, on the one hand, the moral emotions proper to individuals who are linked to harm solely in virtue of their affiliations, and, on the other hand, those which are proper to individuals who are linked to harm through omission, benefit, or collective responsibility, can better prevent the former from being wrongly judged to be pathological cases of the latter. We would do well to explore new, alternative ways of describing such emotions, and the concept of social-regret is one such alternative. To be clear, this does not mean abandoning previous analyses of the phenomenology of moral taint that draw from concepts of guilt or shame, many of which directly inform my own concept of social-regret and have explanatory value beyond the scope of the cases I focus on here. Instead, my goal is to offer a novel account through the lens of regret that can find its place alongside these existing accounts, and that can even be of rhetorical value in the face of obstinacy over the moral associations of the language of guilt and shame.

VI. Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to identify social-regret as a phenomenon that is distinct from agent-regret and the general regret of a spectator, as well as existing shame- and guilt-based accounts of social proximity to wrongdoing. I have argued that social-regret redirects our attention counterfactually towards valued alternative possibilities, as well as the moral salience of the relation in question and the details of their harm. Social-regret provides the occasion for assessing one's connection to others and the ineluctability of in-group practices. I have also explored typical features of standard cases, and presented reasons for conceptualizing social-regret as a distinct phenomenon from various forms of guilt and shame.

A number of important questions remain: What relations give rise to social-regret, and on what basis? What moral outcomes can follow from social-regret? These questions will be taken up in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

CHAPTER 3

Practical Identity and Susceptibility to Social-Regret

I. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the concept of social-regret, and proposed that it is a fitting and potentially revelatory affective response to others' harms that directs our attention towards the moral salience of our social relations. The goal of this chapter is to offer an account of what it means for a relation be such that it can potentially give rise to social-regret. Which social affiliations matter for experiences of social-regret? Can any kinds of affiliation or group memberships serve in this capacity, or only certain kinds under certain conditions? How metaphysically 'thick' or 'thin' does a relation need to be to prompt social-regret?

It is worth stating at the outset that the account that I aim to develop is descriptive: using examples, I will elucidate what it means to be in a relation such that one could experience social-regret on account of that relation. Accordingly, I will bracket a related set of questions that deal with the normativity of social-regret and social affiliation, since my goal here is not to explain on account of which social relations we *ought* to feel social-regret, but rather what it means for a social relation to be such that it is relevant for – that is, that it can give rise to – experiences of social-regret in the first place. I will also avoid making empirical or predictive claims about the kinds of relations that provide the basis for social-regret *de facto*.[55]

An important test for a descriptive account is that it is non-trivial. It is not enough to answer the question, "Which groups give rise to social-regret?" with "The set of

[55] That said, as I mention below, I do think that study designs and methods from behavioral psychology could measure disparities in affective responses on account of different relations.

groups that, by definition, give rise to social-regret." This chapter's goal is to develop a non-trivial, conceptual account of what it means to be socially connected in such a way that one could feel social-regret on account of a social affiliate. I will argue that susceptibility to social-regret varies concomitantly with how normatively integral a given relation is to one's self-applied practical identity. Building this argument will require motivating the idea of 'practical identity,' which I understand to be a form of selfhood constituted by normative influences over one's practical decision-making and behavior.

First, a brief terminological point: when the misconduct of a group or its member elicits feelings of social-regret, I will refer to that group or relation as a 'vector' for social-regret, and a social relation is a 'potential vector' of social-regret for an individual when that individual is susceptible to social-regret were that group or a subset of its members to bring about harm.[56] Note that a group is a potential vector *for* someone, not in general. No social group or relation (for example, the social kind 'brothers') is invariably or essentially a potential vector for social-regret, since brotherly relations are not uniform. This qualification tips my hand about what is to come: On my view, a suitable explanation of what it means to be a potential vector of social-regret must be able to account for variations according to the specifics of an individual's intersectional identity.

I will begin by arguing against a straightforward metaphysical explanation for which groups are potential vectors for social-regret. It would be convenient if we could simply appeal to features such as organizational structure, membership conditions, agential capacities, and the like in order to say that groups with *X* metaphysical features

[56] There need not be only one vector in a given case of social-regret. For example, in The Hiring Committee there are at least two notable vectors: the hiring committee, and also the larger company in which the hiring committee is embedded.

are potential vectors for social-regret, and groups with *Y* features are not. Although it is often useful to distinguish between social groups in this way, for the purposes of this chapter I will instead sketch a picture of what it means for a relation to be normatively integral to one's practical identity. Building upon feminist and phenomenological perspectives on relational identity, I motivate the view that one's practical identity is inexorably linked to one's relations with others. More specifically, I argue that social relations and affiliations play a central role in the formation, maintenance, and normativity of one's 'practical identity.' According to the approach that I develop, social-regret is neither enabled nor precluded by the metaphysical features of social groups, but rather by the self-application of social affiliations as normatively integral to one's practical identity. What is paramount is the degree to which an affiliation guides one's behavior, beliefs, and sense of self.

II. The Metaphysics of Groups Doesn't Help

Why do we feel social-regret for some relations and not for others? Imagine opening the morning paper and reading that a jewel thief has been caught red-handed, and it is someone you know. For which of your friends, family, coworkers, or other social affiliates would you feel social-regret were they to be named and pictured in the newspaper as the thief? For which social affiliates would you feel practically nothing beyond a sense of recognition or curiosity?

One strategy for answering these questions is to appeal to the structures and features of different kinds of social groups in order to correlate vulnerability to social-regret with specific kinds of social affiliation. This is the approach that many philosophers use in discussions about moral responsibility and group membership. In

debates over the conditions for collective responsibility, for example, some scholars rely on a distinction between 'collectives' and 'aggregates.' Collectives are typically understood to be groups of individuals bound together by decision-making structures (French 1984), shared interests and needs (Feinberg 1968), and/or shared attitudes (Freidman and May 1985; McGary 1986; May 1987). Aggregates, or 'random collections' (Held 1970), by contrast, are merely groups of individuals who share a particular feature or features in common (French 1984; Gilbert 2002). Some scholars argue that only groups capable of coordinated collective action can have collective responsibilities (Isaacs 2011; Collins 2013), while others claim that certain kinds of uncoordinated groups can have collective responsibilities as well (May 1987; Tuomela 1989, 2005, 2006; Kutz 2001; Wringe 2010; Cripps 2011). To a similar effect, Katherine Ritchie draws a distinction between 'Type 1' groups, which are structured organizationally, and 'Type 2' groups, in which members simply share features (Ritchie 2015).

Beyond group structure, one can also delineate between groups on the basis of their capacities for coordinated action or shared intentionality. Margaret Gilbert, for example, distinguishes between groups with 'plural subjectivity' and those without it, where plural subjectivity refers to the joint adoption of shared ends and the expression of willingness to participate in shared action.[57] For Gilbert, a group need not have formal structures or hierarchies in place in order to be considered a plural subject. Even two strangers engaged in an impromptu conversation can be considered a plural subject under the right circumstances (Gilbert 1989, 170, 200). Jean-Paul Sartre offers an example of

[57] Note that for Gilbert "a set of people constitute a social group if and only if they constitute a plural subject" (Gilbert 1989, 204). I use the term 'social group' more expansively to include aggregates lacking plural subjectivity.

this kind of informal plural subject in his well-known analysis of a group of strangers waiting at a bus stop. "There is identity," Sartre writes, "when the *common* interest… is made manifest, and when the plurality is defined just *in relation to this interest*" (Sartre 2004, 260). Distinctions between groups on the basis of structure, agency, interests, and the like can be enormously helpful, and this approach could yield an explanation of vulnerability to social-regret that takes the following form: collectives (or Type 1 groups, or groups with plural subjectivity) are potential vectors for social-regret, and aggregates (or Type 2 groups, or groups without plural subjectivity) are not.

However, there are two reasons why sorting groups into metaphysical columns will not help us to develop an explanation for what it means to be vulnerable to social-regret on account of a group. The first reason is simply the overwhelming diversity of kinds of social groups, which is not fully captured in standard binary divisions (such as that between collectives and aggregates, Type 1 and Type 2 groups, groups with and without plural subjectivity, and so on). As Brian Epstein argues convincingly, "categorizations of this sort focus our attention on two small and rather arbitrary clusters, and risk distracting us from the analysis of broader cross-sections of groups" (Epstein 2017, 6). Deborah Tollefsen elaborates on this point:

> I am very skeptical that there can be any general account [theory of group membership] given. There are numerous types of groups – political, ethnic, social, familial, and so on. I suspect that the membership conditions are different in each of these and even within a group the conditions may change and transform over time. In some groups membership is determined by certain rules, in others it may be a matter of commitments or agreements. (Tollefsen 2006, 237)

In other words, single-axis distinctions fail to capture finer-grained differences between, for example, collectives that are structured organizationally but lack plural subjectivity,

on the one hand, and collectives that lack structural organization, but possess plural subjectivity, on the other hand. An example of the former is María's relation to the past members of her hiring committee, since, taken together, the group of past and present members do not have collective agency – only present members of the hiring committee have the power to carry out the committee's work.[58] For an example of the latter, an impromptu mob lacks an organizational or hierarchical structure, but exhibits plural subjectivity. My view is that both of these cases can give rise to social-regret, despite their metaphysically dissimilar profiles.[59]

The complexity of social groups emerges when we look beyond single-axis comparisons between group kinds, and instead develop multi-axial profiles that include: a *construction profile* (how groups are organized, come into being, and persist); an *extra essentials profile* (essential properties such as abilities, responsibilities, and guiding norms); an *anchor profile* (membership and identity conditions); and an *accident profile* (salient accidental properties) (Epstein 2017, 2–3). To achieve a well-rounded understanding of the metaphysical differences between groups, it is not enough to sort them into broad (and internally diverse) piles. Instead, we would need to have answers for a multitude of questions about the organization, origins, identity conditions, persistence conditions, hierarchy, collective capacities, powers, responsibilities, and principles of the group. But this kind of rigorous metaphysical analysis of social groups is an unrealistic way forward for my purposes here. Building an exhaustive metaphysical

[58] One might object that the hiring committee does possess plural subjectivity in the present, and its members have merely been swapped out. But this is to have it both ways: María's social-regret is prompted by her affiliation to the *past* members of the hiring committee, so the social group under consideration is inclusive of past members – and *that* social group lacks plural subjectivity.

[59] In Chapter 4, I propose that merely sharing in risky attitudes with others can, in some contexts, provide the basis for social-regret. This would amount to an example of an unorganized, feature-sharing collective that lacks plural subjectivity.

taxonomy of potential vectors for social-regret is an overwhelmingly vast undertaking, and the metaphysical traits of potential vectors of social-regret would only come to light through an empirical analysis of data about individuals' experiences and behavior. Moreover, even if one were to carry out this kind of study, I expect that one would run into an inconvenient result: that the same group can be a vector for social-regret for one person, and not for another. A metaphysically-oriented account has the burden of explaining why it is that, for example, not all Columbia University students, faculty, and alumni are susceptible to social-regret on account of the recent scandal in which Columbia submitted false information to US News in order to achieve a higher national ranking. Why is it that college affiliation can provide the basis for social-regret for some and not for others?

This brings us a second reason to look beyond the metaphysics of social groups: differences in social situatedness. The weight, character, and affective pull of membership in a social group varies widely for differently situated group members on the basis of their intersectional identities, such that employees of a company, members of sports teams, and participants in political marches can experience dissimilar feelings with regard to their social affiliations. Although social-regret draws our attention to the moral salience of our relations, it is important to emphasize that it is experienced by individuals with unique backgrounds, identities, and standpoints within social, political, and institutional constellations. Accordingly, the answer to the puzzle of what it means to feel social-regret on account of some social groups and not others will not be found in the

features of the groups themselves – rather, something about the character of the *relation between* an individual and their group is what is decisive.[60]

This last point yields another test for the descriptive account I will propose below: in addition to being non-trivial, it should also be consistent with the idea that a single social group can be a potential vector for some of its members and not for others. In the next section, I lay the groundwork for such a descriptive account by drawing from feminist and phenomenological scholarship on relational identity. Building towards a concept of practical identity – that aspect of our selfhood that pertains to the normative pressure that we give out and take in through expectations, desires, self-conceptions, and behaviors – will bring us closer to a metaphysically-permissive description of what it means for a group to be a potential vector of social-regret.

III. Relational Identity

So far I have argued that we will not find an explanation for what it means for a group to be a vector for social-regret in the metaphysical features of groups, as is standard practice in scholarly discussions of the kinds of social groups that can bear or generate moral responsibilities. Instead, I suggest focusing on the influence that social relations and affiliations exercise over our practical identities.

It will be helpful to give a basic sense of what I mean by 'practical identity.' (A more detailed account will be provided in Section IV.) I understand one's practical identity to be the locus of normative influences that enable and constrain one's behavior.

[60] Admittedly, the membership conditions of some groups can require the adoption of a specific comportment towards the group, e.g. an acapella group might only accept members that exhibit extreme enthusiasm and loyalty to the group, and commit themselves to five practices a week. Below, I discuss vulnerability to social-regret on account of a relation in terms of the normative significance of that relation over one's practical identity, and it is plausible that membership conditions could, in practice, require the self-application of a group as normatively significant. In such cases, the membership conditions of the group do bear upon the relation between an individual and group, but the specifics of the interrelation between the two is still the crux of vulnerability to social-regret.

As I use the term, practical identity is simultaneously subjectively, socially, and materially produced, which means that it is constituted through the interplay of one's self-understanding, choices, agency, and expression coming into contact with other individuals, groups, institutions, systems, scripts, practices that take up, reject, modify, and otherwise exert normative pressure over one's behavior. In this way, practical identity is fundamentally *relational*, and thus bears an affinity for existing frameworks that understand other forms of identity to be the product of relational systems.

Theories of relational identity are hardly unique to the field of philosophy. Two early social psychological theories of relational identity are the 'social identity theory,' originally proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Charles Turner in the 1970's and 80's, (Tajfel and Turner 1979), and Turner's subsequent 'self-categorization theory' (Turner 1985). Both social identity theory and self-categorization theory explain social cognitive and interactive behavior by emphasizing the influence of group membership and categorization over self-understanding and social-interpretation, and vice versa.[61] For reasons of space and disciplinary focus, I will instead motivate the view that some forms of identity can be understood as deeply intertwined with social relationality by drawing from two philosophical traditions that offer distinct, but compatible concepts of relational identity: feminist philosophy and phenomenology.

For decades, feminist scholars have proposed alternatives to traditional, autonomy-focused accounts of identity and selfhood.[62] The myth of the "autonomous man" who "is – and, it is commonly believed, should be – self-sufficient, independent,

[61] For an overview of the features and intellectual history of social identity theory in social psychology, see Abrams and Hogg (2010).
[62] See, for example, Sara Ruddick's analysis of women's relational experiences as mothers (Ruddick 1989) and Eva Kittay's more recent analysis of caregiving and relational identity (Kittay 2011).

and self-reliant, a self-realizing individual" came to be regarded by many feminist theorists not only as a privileged ideal that is unattainable for whole swathes of the population, but also a misleading picture of even the most powerful among us (Code 1987, 358). While many 20th-century philosophers of identity were primarily interested in the "reidentification question" (Schechtman 1996) which asks, how is this self at time t is the same as that self at t+1?, feminist philosophers went against the grain by posing important questions about the *construction* (in contrast to the persistence) of identity (Brison 1997; Alcoff 2006; Lugones 2010; Haslanger 2012). In other words, the question of identity that many feminist philosophers have sought to answer is not how it is that one can be numerically the same person over time, but rather what influences and structures shape one into the kind of person that one is. This emphasis on how identities are formed through interactions with and within systems of power and oppression aligns many feminist philosophers with the prior analyses of Black philosophers and philosophers of color writing about imposed and oppressive identities. Both W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, for example, had long already produced incisive analyses of the construction and internalization of Black and colonized identities (Du Bois (1903) 1997; Fanon (1952) 2008).

Some feminist theorists have proposed understanding personal identity as a fundamentally relational construct. Judith Butler, for example, argues that subjects are created through what Althusser calls 'interpellation,' which refers to the invitation by which beings are called into linguistic and social life by other linguistic beings (Butler 1997). For Butler and Althusser both, interpellation precedes the emergence of the subject: "[I]t is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social

existence of the body first becomes possible" (1997, 5). In a similar vein, Adriana Cavarero writes that the self is "exhibitive," and that identity "from beginning to end, is intertwined with other lives – with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes – and needs the other's tale" (2000, 88). In her writing on the undoing and remaking of identity after trauma, Susan Brison agrees that the self is relational in the sense that "they [others] participate in the ongoing process of my self-constitution" (2017, 226). According to Brison, "I am the particular self I am by virtue of my relations to particular persons" (2017, 226). Common to all of these claims is the insight that the self is dependent, both ontologically and practically, upon its relations with others for its original and continuous emergence.

Other feminist scholars have noted the importance of shared and circulated interpretive resources (including social labels) in the construction of personal and/or narrative identity. The terms and categories that we use to describe ourselves and that others use to describe us are drawn from and informed by pools of shared interpretive resources, or what Miranda Fricker calls the "economy of collective hermeneutical resources" (2007, 1). These interpretive and expressive resources are not entirely determinative of one's self-understanding, in that a disharmony can emerge between one's lived experience and the shared tools upon which one relies to express and interpret that experience. All the same, the ways in which one is classified under dominant conceptual paradigms inevitably informs and structures one's self-understanding, even if one's response to that classification is to resist it. As Brison puts it succinctly, "we are not in control of the linguistic means with which we construct our selves narratively. … How *other* people use words constrains our self-narratives" (2017, 227).

A relational approach to identity also features prominently in many phenomenological accounts of personal identity, some of which have been taken up by feminist theorists.[63] Although for Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre the social world can pull one towards 'inauthentic' or 'bad faith' self-interpretations, both philosophers affirm the way in which one's lived, practical attitudes, embodied comportments, and interpretive frameworks are shaped by a relational fore-structure of interpretation. Influenced greatly by Heidegger's analysis of the implicit 'world' against which interpretation and deliberation become possible, Hannah Arendt drew from her experiences as a refugee during World War II to articulate the profound change in identity (both in the sense of self-understanding and in the sense of practical identity) that one undergoes when deprived of social and political relations. In virtue of our membership in social communities, Arendt claims, we become empowered to share in a common world with others. But this fundamental dependency on open channels with others also means that we are vulnerable to losing our sense of self and the shared world when those relational moorings are stripped away. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that stateless refugees in Europe were reduced to what she calls "the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human" (1979, 297). This status, which she also calls "the minimum fact" of being human, occurs when a human being is removed from the social realm by being legally or violently denied participation in systems of communication and social exchange (1979, 300). Because "[t]he presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world *and ourselves* [my emphasis]," the absence of those others with whom we share the world threatens the stability of our identity (Arendt 1998, 50).

[63] For an overview of feminist appropriations and deployments of phenomenology, see Al-Saji (2017).

More recently, Lisa Guenther's critical phenomenological analysis of solitary confinement similarly underscores the impact of social isolation on selfhood (Guenther 2013). Bringing Merleau-Ponty's relational ontology into conversation with firsthand accounts and memoirs of incarceration, Guenther argues that the harms of long-term intensive confinement are more than affronts to human dignity, which is how they are often depicted in humanist critiques. Some forms of enforced isolation are more accurately characterized as forms of "violence against the ontological structure of life itself" because they undermine the constitutive relationality and intercorporeality that is foundational to it (2013, 143). For Guenther, violence done to social bonds can fundamentally reshape the self. As David Carr writes, "our personal identity is not something that exists independently of our social interactions and commitments. Our social world gives us our identity, or it is that world from which we choose our identity" (Carr 2021, 351). As I will elaborate in the next section, this point stands as much for personal identity as it does for practical identity, in that practical identity is formed out of the relational pressures that shapes our behavior and decision-making. In other words, practical identity (like personal identity and self-interpretation) is inextricably socio-relational.

The point of this brief excursus into feminist and phenomenological perspectives on various kinds of identity – personal, social, narrative, and more – is to provide an initial orientation for the next section's investigation into what I call 'practical identity,' or the facet of our selfhood that is constituted through the interplay of self-applied, received, exchanged, and exerted normative principles. If we grant the broad claim, common to the accounts above, that various forms of selfhood depend upon relational

systems, including how others perceive us, the language that we share with others, the possibility for communicative uptake by others, and the normative pressure exerted over us by others, then perhaps *the relative influence and priority of different social relations over our practical identities* (more than their metaphysical profiles) best explains which groups are potential vectors for social-regret. Admittedly, under a relational approach to practical identity, one's practical identity is shaped (at least to some extent) by even the subtlest of social relations. But some sources of normativity play an inordinately large role in shaping one's choices, behaviors, beliefs, as well as the ways that one is taken up by others. I will argue that these are the relations that render us susceptible to experiences of social-regret.

IV. Practical Identity

Recall that Chapter II considered Williams' suggestion that our moral lives are shaped by forces beyond our conscious, controlled, or willful conduct. Others, such as Mariana Oshana, have explicitly advanced the view that social relations are a possible source of extra-autonomous moral disfigurement, or that, as Oshana puts it, one's "moral record" can be "sullied by the unjust conduct of those with whom one is associated" (Oshana 2006, 354). An individual's moral status, according to this perspective, is not fully insulated from the behavior of those with whom she associates; in fact, it is maintained and injured by a myriad of forces, some of which lie beyond her control or volition. This basic insight into our moral and affective vulnerability to so-called 'moral luck' served as the jumping-off point for my own claim that the conduct of social relations, much like blameless actions, can provide the impetus for fitting experiences of regret. Williams challenges the pervasive idea that "if we conducted ourselves clear-headedly enough,

entirely detach ourselves from the unintentional aspects of our actions… [we would] yet still retain our identity and character as agents" (1981, 29). Similarly, the assorted approaches to relational identity in the previous section undermine a related misconception – that one's personal, social, and/or narrative identity would survive being uncoupled from one's social relations unscathed. I now want to sharpen the general claim that social relations are constitutive of our identity in order to develop a relational account of *practical identity*. In this section I build towards the following claim: that differences in normative influence among *self-applied* relations can account for the fact that a diverse, but limited set of social relations serve as vectors for social-regret.

My position is that it is on the basis of one's *self-applied practical identity* – that is, the subset of normative influences over one's practical identity that are implicitly or explicitly self-applied – that one is vulnerable to affective responses to extra-autonomous harms. Recall that I am using the term 'practical identity' to refer to the locus of normative and/or influence exerted over and by an individual. The concept of a specifically 'practical' identity brings together one's subjectively endorsed self-image, or how one 'identifies,' and one's socially constructed identity, including how one is taken up by other people, institutions, or systems.[64] One's practical identity broadly encompasses (a) the way that one perceives one's practical behaviors, aims, and capacities to be normatively enabled and constrained; (b) the way that (independent of one's own perceptions) others enable, constrain, and respond to one's behaviors, aims,

[64] By 'taken up,' I mean a diverse array of social judgments and behaviors, including those related to credibility, acknowledgment, stereotypes, institutional power, aretaic assessments, hospitality, perceived capacities, and more. In this broad sense, to take someone up simply means acting with (implicit or explicit) reference to the relation that obtains between the two of you. Note also that, as I use the phrase, 'taking up' refers to general social reactivity, and does not imply positive endorsement, such as when one 'takes up' another's idea.

capacities, and self-understanding; (c) behaviors that implicitly express the internalization of norms or normatively significant relations.

Let me briefly expand upon each of these three facets. First, who one takes oneself to be is relevant for, but does not exhaust, one's practical identity. For example, one may understand oneself to be an expert on Stoic philosophy and a leader of the field, when the reality is that one is deeply misguided and uninformed. In this case, one's practical identity – who one is, practically speaking – is not that of an authority, in that one does not exert the influence typical of a scholarly expert over other scholars, and one's research does not receive the uptake (i.e., is not consulted or cited) that is typical of an expert by other scholars. All the same, even misguided self-understandings inform our practical identities. The delusional scholar may still hold himself to certain expectations and normative constraints fitting for his (perceived) self-understanding by, for example, taking it upon himself to offer unsolicited advice to junior scholars or demanding substantial fees for keynote lectures. In other words, one's practical identity is influenced by, but not reducible to, one's self-understanding.

Inversely, and for the same reasons, our relations do not fully determine our practical identities. Someone who outwardly wears a crucifix, but is privately agnostic, may hold herself to different normative constraints than the ones that others assume govern her behavior. How this person moves through the world (the opportunities, conflicts, and choices that present themselves to her, and the normative pressures that enable and constrain her behavior) is a matter both of who this person takes herself to be *and* who others take her to be. Given the possibility for a gulf to open between one's self-understanding and the interpretations and expectations that others foist upon one, a purely

'external' account of practical identity risks downplaying our agency as autonomous, self-governing subjects.

Furthermore, practical identity is not only discernible in interpretations and expectations (either one's own or others'). It is also discernible in behavior that implicitly expresses the self-application of norms and normatively significant relations. One need not understand oneself (or be understood) as someone for whom a specific normative force is important in order for that norm to shape one's practical identity. Consider, for example, a racist living in a racist society. This individual consistently interprets others through the lens of racial hierarchies, and her social interactions, professional conduct, and public behavior is consistently influenced by racial prejudice. Assume, however, that this individual does not explicitly understand herself to be bigoted against racialized others, and also that practically everyone in her insulated social *milieu* do not interpret her behaviors as expressive of racism. Here is a case in which an important feature of an individual's practical identity – that she is, practically speaking, racist – expresses itself through her behavior, and not through her own or others' interpretations. In short, it is part of this individual's practical identity that racist principles influence her decision making and conduct, even though those principles go unrecognized by both her and her social relations.

Practical identity is not secure, nor fully within one's control. Rather, it is a site of continuous conflict, renegotiation, maintenance, upheaval, and transformation, much of which is precipitated by sources outside of one's own volition. This is not to say that practical identities are purely contingent, or matters of luck or fate. Practical identity is constituted by the (sometimes fraught) interplay between the material, social, cultural,

and institutional conditions in which one finds oneself embedded, and one's own aims, achievements, commitments, behaviors, and choices.

It will be helpful to disambiguate this account of practical identity from two other accounts – those of Christine Korsgaard and Daniel Telech – both of which I take to be instructive for my own approach. First, consider Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity*, in which the idea of a normative, practical identity features prominently. For Korsgaard, "a human being is an animal who needs a practical conception of her own identity, a conception of who she is which is normative for her" (1996, 123). A prerequisite for practical reasoning and decision-making, Korsgaardian practical identity is a "conception" or "description" of oneself through which one confers worth to actions. The construction of a practical identity is the natural demand of the "reflective structure of human consciousness" with which one obtains reasons, laws, and principles for action (1996, 103–4). One's practical identity is derived from myriad sources, including institutions, social relations, cultural upbringing, abilities, legal entitlements, nationalities, roles, and affiliations. As Korsgaard puts it, "Practical identity is a complex matter and for the average person there will be a jumble of such conceptions" (1996, 101). Each of these discrete conceptions of selfhood amalgamate to form one's lived, practical identity that, (*qua* amalgam of discrete normative conceptions) guides decision-making by providing reasons for acting within parameters.[65]

Korsgaard argues that some conception of practical identity is a prerequisite for self-legislation, by which one comes to value certain ways of living above others, finds

[65] Note that Korsgaard uses the term 'practical identity' for both (1) discrete, constitutive identities (roles), and (2) the amalgamation of all of one's discrete identities. For an example of (1): "Our other practical identities depend for their normativity on the normativity of our human identity" (Korsgaard 1996, 125). For an example of (2): "[A] human being is an animal who needs a practical conception of her own identity, a conception of who she is which is normative for her" (1996, 123).

worth in those ways of living, and holds oneself to concomitant demands and obligations. Most importantly for Korsgaard's overarching (Kantian) purposes, one can discover the operation of an implicit *moral* identity by reflecting upon the operation of one's practical identities:

> Guided by reflection, we may be led to see that our tendency to treat our contingent practical identities as the sources of reasons implies that we set a value on our own humanity and so on humanity in general. This realization leads us to the moral principle of valuing humanity as an end in itself. (1996, 250)

When one values a way of life from the standpoint of a particular practical identity (say, that of a teacher), one's valuation of that identity is supported by reasons, which, in turn, are furnished by other practical identities. Interrogating this chain of practical identities and reasons, one eventually arrives at a practical identity that provides an "unconditional answer" for itself, or an answer that "makes it impossible, unnecessary, or incoherent to ask why again" (1996, 33). This ur-identity, Korsgaard argues, is one's identity as a human being. "Since you cannot act without reasons," she writes, "and your humanity is the source of your reasons, you must value your humanity if you are to act at all" (1996, 123). In short, our various practical identities model the kind of normative self-legislation that, when further refined through reflective endorsement, reveals the transcendental moral value of humanity.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to comment upon Korsgaard's strategy of grounding transcendental morality in the reflective interrogation of practical identity, but it is worth emphasizing that her concept of practical identity overlaps with my own on several points. First, note that under Korsgaard's account one's practical identity is constituted through a variety of kinds of affiliation, membership, and relationality, and

not only those with specific metaphysical profiles. Practically any kind of relation (including implicit memberships in feature-based aggregates) can shape one's practical identity so long as it provides reasons for acting or refraining from acting in particular ways, and those reasons can be self-legislated. In other words, Korsgaardian practical identity is metaphysically permissive.

Second, Korsgaard explicitly affirms the claim that "[p]ersonal relationships are therefore *constitutive* of one's practical identity," and notes that "the thought of oneself as a certain person's friend or lover or parent or child can be a particularly deep form of practical identity" (1996, 127–8). Insofar as our relations (even those that do not make explicit normative demands of us) make our lives worth living, and accordingly impel us to preserve ways of life in which their ends are also met, those relations are sources of normative pressure. Importantly, Korsgaard's comments indicate that relations can exercise normative pressure to varying degrees and with different intensities; hence, close personal bonds can be "particularly deep," leaving a sharper imprint upon one's practical identity than casual or incidental relations (1996, 128).

There is a key facet of Korsgaard's account, however, that differs from my own: for Korsgaard, practical identity is *self-constituted* through the process of *reflective* endorsement – a conscious construct – while I conceive of practical identity as constituted through the interplay between self-endorsed normative constraints and externally-imposed demands and categorizations. Moreover, Korsgaard suggests that the process of constituting practical identity is one of 'reflective endorsement' of a reason- or principle-giving role. However, as Raymond Geuss points out, there remains the question of "whether 'using' a principle is quite the same as 'identifying' with it" (Geuss 1996,

191). In short, I want to make space for prereflective, implicit forms of endorsement in my account of practical identity. This is more of similarity than a difference, since I agree that endorsement is a condition for an influence to be normatively integral to one's practical identity. The difference, as I elaborate below, is that I think that one can 'endorse' a relation as normatively integral to one's practical identity without explicitly reflecting upon it, but simply by participating in self-applied social practices that express the normative pressure of that relation. As I conceive of it, practical identity is not merely a matter of how we think of ourselves and what principles we have consciously endorsed, but also a matter of what we in fact do and are inclined to do.

My adoption of a more permissive sense of endorsement is inspired by Telech, who develops a concept of practical identity in the tradition of Williams in which practical identity is not simply how one 'identifies,' but rather a matter of "our identity and character as agents" construed more broadly (Williams 1981, 29). For Telech, practical identity is simply "who one is, practically speaking" (Telech 2022, 236). He asserts that one's "practical identity is constituted by one's (a) subsumption under and (b) self-application of normatively significant (for the self in question) categories" (2022, 249). Here, subsumption is a "(social) metaphysical notion" that refers to the facts of the matter about whether one is or is not a member of a category, and self-application is "a psychological matter" referring to one's adherence to a normative category or principle (2022, 249–50). In this way, practical identity is distinct both from personal identity (understood as one's subjective self-understanding) and also social identity (understood as one's location in a constellation of relations, affiliations, and group memberships), and

is not reducible to a psychological self-image or a list of facts about of one's social situatedness.

For Telech, the self-application of a social category or relation need not entail a consciously held belief about one's own identity. Instead, self-application can occur through participating in social practices that express the normative weight of a social category. For example, one need not consciously conceive of the abstention from consuming animal products as an expression of 'veganism' in order to effectively self-apply the category of 'vegan' through commitment to a plant-only diet by another name. Indeed, social conditions can render explicit or conscious self-application unnecessary:

> [S]elf application might not be reflected in self-conscious thought. The Buddhist monk will be disposed to reason and behave in ways expressive of his identity as a monk – many of his deliberations and evaluations will be performed from the perspective of this practical identity – but the conditions of his monasticism (including his being in the company of other monks, exclusively) might preclude the need to make explicit the identity-given nature of the reasons on which he typically acts or to justify himself to others in terms of his being a monk. (2022, 250–1)

Telech's point here is that within certain social milieus, some practical identities are so pervasive that they are rendered nearly invisible, except under particular circumstances in which attention is brought to bear on them. Imagine someone who has lived his entire life in a culture in which it is the norm to remove one's shoes before entering a home. This person may be aware of the fact that removing shoes is a social expectation, and that it is not the norm in other places and cultures. But in his day-to-day life there is no need to *reflectively* endorse his practical identity as someone who removes his shoes before entering. He does not consciously consider himself to be a member of the aggregate of 'people who remove their shoes before entering'; it is a habit deeply ingrained into him

since he was a child, and everywhere he goes in his social *milieu* he sees others doing the same.

I think it makes sense to say that this person self-applies the practice of removing his shoes before entering a home, in the sense that he chooses to consistently participate in the social practice, holds himself to it, and would find it to be a breach of etiquette were someone to forget to remove their shoes before entering his own home. Being a 'shoe-remover' is a normatively integral facet of his practical identity, despite the fact that he does not explicitly (and likely would find it strange to) describe himself as a member of the social aggregate of 'shoe-removers.'

Now imagine that this individual goes travelling abroad and encounters a completely different set of social norms regarding footwear indoors. It suddenly becomes obvious and noteworthy that he is a 'shoe-remover,' and that others are not. He may even come to reflectively endorse the practice of removing his shoes on the basis of conscious deliberation. But, upon returning home, the relevance of being a 'shoe-remover' may fade, returning him to a state of nonreflective endorsement of shoe-removing. The point here is that one need not explicitly voice or affirm with the proposition 'I am a member of *X* group' in order to self-apply a relation with X as normatively integral to one's practical identity. Self-application is more than merely how one consciously describes one's own identity, relations, or categorizations. One can nonreflectively endorse practical identities and their associated principles through behavior.[66]

[66] It is worth mentioning that Korsgaard's relatively strict requirement that endorsement needs to be reflective makes a great deal of sense in the context of her overarching goal to establish a liaison between practical identity and moral identity. If, as she claims, we are moved to preserve our practical identities, then those identities must be known and doxastically endorsed.

Following Telech, I will adopt a broader view of endorsement so as to include both reflective and nonreflective self-application. (Note that both reflective and nonreflective self-application are subject to standard control conditions, as I discuss below.) This means that my account of practical identity will preserve Telech's suggestion that our practical identities are vulnerable to moral disturbances generated by "the actions of those to whom we are bound in *robust forms of group co-membership* [emphasis added]" (2022, 255). But what is a 'robust' group membership? For Telech, it is one in which a member "is beholden to the norms constitutive of [the category]" (2022, 255). There are myriad social categorizations and affiliations that delimit or enable one's behavior, comportments, or beliefs by exerting explicit, implicit, internalized, or imposed normative pressure. Which of these relations are robust enough to be considered normatively integral? Telech rightly argues that self-application is "more substantive than mentally classifying oneself as having some feature in common with others" (2022, 249). Some family relations, for example, are more than acknowledgments of legal or biological relationships. To provide a contrast with the normative significance of such family relations, Telech points to the weaker normative pull of aggregates, such as the aggregate of all green-eyed persons (2022, 249).

Although it is intuitive to use family ties as an example of a substantive relation, a minor objection to Telech here is that centering family relations over feature-based aggregates tempts the kinds of social-metaphysical correlations that I wish to eschew. There is no degree of normative robustness or gravitas intrinsic to familial relations. For some, specific feature-based social connections can exert equal or greater normative influence when compared with familial relations. Even within the same family relation

(twins, for instance) the normative pressures of family ties will vary. To take Telech's own example, although the aggregate of green-eyed persons may appear to be normatively benign simply in virtue of the fact that it is a metaphysically 'thin,' non-substantive, feature-based grouping, in some contexts affiliation with others of the same eye color can have heightened normative significance. Perceived similarities and differences in eye color, skin color, facial shape, hair texture, and other racialized physical features bear directly upon the way that we perceive, interpret, and categorize others, as well as our social behavior. A racial supremacist can be metaphysically subsumed under and have subjectively self-applied his relationship to other 'light-eyed persons,' and that affiliation can be said to exert significant normative sway over the supremacist by constraining and enabling different social behaviors and self-understandings. To be clear, I understand Telech's centering of family relations to be heuristic, and not a metaphysical claim. But all the same, it tempts misleading associations between group kinds and normative significance, since it is the character of an individual's relationship to a social relation or category, and not the social-metaphysical kind of the relation, that is most decisive for understanding what it means for a group to be normatively integral to one's practical identity.

Given that my aim is to produce a descriptive (and not normative) account of what it means for a group to serve as a vector for social-regret, a more substantial modification that I propose making to Telech's account is to abandon the subsumption requirement. Under Telech's view, self-application without subsumption is an insufficient basis for a social category to constitute one's practical identity. To take the same example from above, this means that if one psychologically self-identifies as a

vegan, but in fact continues to consume large quantities of animal products, then the social category of 'vegan' is not normatively integral to one's practical identity. Inversely, if one eats a vegan diet entirely by chance (there just happen to be a lot of vegetables and no animals lying around) but does not self-apply that social category, either explicitly or implicitly, then Telech's approach would likewise suggest that the category 'vegan' is not constitutive of one's practical identity.[67] Applying Telech's account of practical identity to our guiding question – that of what it means for a group to be a potential vector for social-regret – yields something like the following answer: "If and only if one both self-applies and is subsumed under a normatively significant category, then that category is a potential vector for social-regret." But this proves too restrictive a rubric. Specifically, it is not clear that subsumption (in fact) is a necessary condition for a relation to exercise the requisite influence over one's practical identity such that it can serve as a potential vector for social-regret, even though it may be a necessary condition for *accurate* or *fitting* experiences of social-regret.

In Chapter II, I claimed that reactive emotions (including social-regret) "involve *evaluative presentations:* they purport to be perceptions of such properties as the funny, the shameful, the fearsome, the pitiable, et al" (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000, 66). It stands to reason that some (non-core) experiences of social-regret may follow from inaccurate evaluations. But just because an emotion is precipitated by inaccurate evaluations does not mean that the emotion does not take place. Take, for example, pride. One might feel pride for a group under which (unknown to oneself) one is not actually subsumed. Imagine someone who has been told for her entire life that her family has ancestry in

[67] The contingency referenced here is different from circumstances under which one is authoritatively held to a vegan diet, e.g. growing up in a militantly vegan household.

Ireland, and who feels significant pride for that affiliation. Decades later, she discovers through a 23andMe genetic test that she has no Irish ancestry at all, and that practically all of her family originates from central and eastern Europe. It is wrong to say that her previous feelings were not pride; she did feel pride, but it turns out that her pride was unfitting. Similarly, groups can serve as potential vectors for social-regret even in the event that one is not actually subsumed under the group in question.

In the end, there is much in Korsgaard and Telech's accounts that I will preserve. The concept of practical identity that I employ below is not meant to replace Korsgaard's or Telech's (and would not fare well in their respective projects!). Instead, it is designed specifically to aid in shedding light on what it means for a social relation to render an individual affectively vulnerable to reactive attitudes like social-regret. The modifications I have proposed yield a conception of practical identity that captures the dimension of selfhood that is constituted through the self-application of normatively-laden relations, categories, or groups, and that is not reducible to self-understanding or external interpellation alone.

V. Practical Identity and Susceptibility to Social-Regret

Equipped with a metaphysically permissive account of practical identity that is understood to be constituted through both reflective and nonreflective self-application, we can now propose the following descriptive account: What it means for a relation to be a potential vector for social-regret for an individual is that *the relation in question is self-applied (implicitly or explicitly) as normatively integral to that individual's practical identity*.

Let us take on each of the key terms of this claim separately. I have already defined a 'potential vector' of social-regret as a relation that can ostensibly serve as the basis for an individual's social-regret were a harm to come about that is attributable to that relation or a member thereof. I have also appealed to the concept of 'practical identity,' making alterations to both Korsgaard and Telech's respective usages of the concept, in order to capture the dimension of an individual's selfhood that is the locus of relational, normative influence exerted by and over that individual. Finally, I have adopted an expansive view of 'self-application' so as to include both explicit and implicit endorsement of normative categories through behavior.

For a relation to be self-applied as 'normatively integral' to one's practical identity, I take it to exert inordinately high normative pressure over one's behavior, beliefs, habits, and dispositions, and also to render the individual vulnerable to a marked shift in practical identity were one to be deprived of the affiliation in question. The basic claim here is that some relations play an outsized normative role in the constitution of one's practical identity. Those inordinately constitutive relations, for some, can include family members or religious institutions; for others, nationality or cultural affiliations; for others, political affiliations and networks of solidarity; and for others, even metaphysically 'thin' relations such as the group of all devoted fans of the Houston Rockets, or loyal patrons of a particular coffeeshop can exercise significant normative power over one's behavior and choices.

One indication that a relation is normatively integral to an individual's practical identity is that the relation's normative pressure 'tracks' the individual across different

social contexts and activities.[68] If one experiences the normative weight of an affiliation consistently across a myriad of social contexts, as if carrying it along with oneself no matter where one goes, then that relation can be said to exert nonincidental influence over one's practical identity.[69] Admittedly, I think that it will be difficult to come to precise comparisons of how normatively integral different relations are, so I am reluctant to draw too sharp a line between incidental relations and normatively integral relations. Still, two questions that we can direct towards different self-applied relations in order to ascertain their significance to an individual's practical identity are: 1) Does this relation normatively constrain, enable, modulate, or regulate the individual's behaviors, beliefs, habits, and/or dispositions across a wide variety of social contexts? and 2) Would the individual's practical identity be profoundly transformed without the self-applied relation in question? Answering both questions in the affirmative is a good indication that the social group in question is normatively integral.

It remains to account for how the urgency and intensity of different experiences of social-regret can vary widely. I propose that susceptibility to social-regret and the self-application of a relation to one's practical identity are two sides of the same coin, such that the normative significance of a relation can be described in terms of vulnerability to social-regret. In other words, the more central a relation is to one's practical identity, the more vulnerable one will be to social-regret on account of that relation. Because centrality and vulnerability here are functions of one another, susceptibility to social-

[68] I borrow the language of 'tracking' from Miranda Fricker, who uses it to distinguish between "incidental" and "systematic" testimonial injustices. The latter are produced by "those prejudices that 'track' the subject through different dimensions of social activity – economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on" (2007, 27).

[69] One need not always capitulate to the demands of normative affiliations or relations in order for them to be normatively integral, since normatively integral relations can come into conflict with one another and can be contextually defeasible.

regret can be elucidated in terms of the self-application of normatively significant categories. Producing a quantitatively precise claim about commensurability, as if to specify degrees of normative significance in proportion to susceptibility, is beyond the scope of this paper, and would require research in the behavioral sciences. For example, future work could empirically assess the relationship between self-reported normatively integral affiliations and self-predicted susceptibility to social-regret (although a limitation of this research would be that it is difficult to capture *implicitly* self-applied normative categories.)[70] My prediction is that such research would support the idea that social-regret and the self-application of normatively significant relations are concomitants of one another, such that the more normatively integral a self-applied relation is, the more vulnerable one will be to social-regret. Underlying this hypothesis is a conceptual claim: we can describe a relation's likelihood of serving as a vector for social-regret for an individual in terms of the self-application of that relation to that individual's practical identity. Whether or not the self-application of normatively integral relations and vulnerability to social-regret are quantitatively commensurate, I take them to be descriptions of the same phenomena in parallax.

Let us consider some of the implications of the above. To begin, one might worry that my account implies the counterintuitive view that highly influential, but *oppressive* normative relations are potential vectors for social-regret, since oppressive institutions, groups, and individuals can exert profound normative pressure upon behavior, beliefs, and self-understandings. Why, one might ask, would antagonistic relations be potential vectors for social-regret? Why would the victim of a stalker feel social-regret for harm

[70] I am currently developing a collaborative, behavioral psychological study design to do precisely this, and also to explore possible confounding factors that would preclude social-regret on account of a relation.

inflicted by her stalker? Why would targets of discrimination feel social-regret for the harms caused by oppressive regimes?

There are two points to clarify regarding this line of criticism. First, note that not all relations that are normatively integral to one's practical identity are *self-applied* as such. Though I am using a permissive concept of self-application that includes implicit commitments to behaviors, practices, and comportments, it is still the case that implicit self-application requires that the commitments, behaviors, and comportments in question are affirmed or endorsed by the individual (even if the group memberships entailed by those commitments, behaviors, and comportments are not). Consider a variation of the case of the vegan in which someone is imprisoned and forced into eating a vegan diet. Obviously, the imposed vegan diet exerts significant normative pressure over the prisoner. But the prisoner has not self-applied membership in the social group 'vegans,' nor has she self-applied behaviors that implicitly express the normativity of that social group. Put another way, standard 'control conditions' must be satisfied for both explicit and implicit self-application.[71]

Second, my account allows for the possibility that a single relation can be both oppressive *and* self-applied as normatively integral at the same time. Take, for example, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," in which a young woman suffering from what we might now call 'postpartum' or 'postnatal' depression is coerced into confinement as a form of 'rest cure.' Like most relationships, the narrator's relationship with her husband John is multivalent. She refers to him as 'dear John'

[71] This raises the difficult question of whether or not one can be coerced into self-applying identities or principles, such as in the case of indoctrination. Note, however, that indoctrination is problematic for adjudicating moral responsibility in general, and not only for the matter of self-application, and so I do not take this to be a specific challenge to my account.

throughout the story, describes him as "so wise," and is confident that "he loves me so" (Gilman 2017, 14); but she also describes him as stifling and manipulative, at one point confesses that she is "getting a little afraid of John" (2017, 16). Here, the narrator appears to self-apply a relation that she understands, on some level, to be toxic, antagonistic, and oppressive. Some other examples might include choosing to continue to maintain relations with a manipulative family member (explicit self-application), or participating in a valued, collaborative project with an openly hostile coworker (implicit self-application). In short, the oppressiveness or toxicity of a relation does not preclude the possibility of self-applying that relation, either implicitly or explicitly.

A related point is that it is also possible for *imposed* relations to be self-applied. Take citizenship as an example. One does not choose one's nationality at birth, and for some the options for obtaining citizenship in a different country are severely constrained, if not non-existent. Despite the impositional nature of citizenship, it is still possible to self-apply that relation explicitly (by self-identifying with it) and implicitly (by voting, celebrating national holidays, participating in distinctive social practices, or exercising rights only afforded to citizens). Although the initial fact of citizenship is outside of one's control, the self-application of citizenship to one's practical identity is. Again, self-application is not the same thing as conscious endorsement – one can self-apply one's American citizenship despite consciously disavowing American policies or cultural practices. Disavowing a relation is not enough to insulate one's practical identity from the normative significance of that relation. As such, I leave open the possibility that one may still be susceptible to social-regret on account of vectors to which one is consciously and doxastically opposed in principle.

Another relevant case is that of a social group of which one *used to* be a member, but are not anymore. My view is that past (and not current) affiliations can also be self-applied as normatively integral. Take, for example, the case of Leah Remini, who was raised within the Church of Scientology, but left the organization later in her life due to experiences of abuse and corruption. Although Remini consciously cut formal ties with Scientology, she has since worked to spread awareness about the organization's abuses through interviews, books, and documentaries. It would be conjecture to guess at Remini's emotions regarding her former membership as a Scientologist, but at the very least we can say that it appears that Remini has self-applied her past affiliation to her present practical identity, with noticeable implications for her expressions, behaviors, principles, and beliefs.[72] Similarly, one can imagine an expatriate who has legally disentangled himself from American citizenship, but feels social-regret for contemporary American political blunders upon learning of them. His practical identity is significantly informed by *having had been* American, though I would expect that the social-regret that ensues from such 'past perfect' cases expresses itself differently (and perhaps with different urgency) than cases in which one's practical identity is shaped by a normatively significant relation that one self-applies in the present. This is also another reason to abandon the subsumption requirement discussed above – Remini is not subsumed under the social group 'Scientologists' in the present, but that relation continues to exercise normative influence over her practical identity.

VI. Conclusion

[72] One could parse Remini's relation with Scientology as a 'former affiliation' as opposed to a 'present affiliation.' But it is the social group 'Scientologists' (and not 'former Scientologists') that appears to serve as a vector for Remini's social-regret, which suggests that 'former scientologist' falls under the larger social group of 'Scientologists',

The guiding question of this chapter has been: What does it mean for a relation to be a potential vector for social-regret? I have proposed that a potential vector for social-regret for an individual is a relation, affiliation, or category that has been self-applied as normatively integral to that individual's practical identity. Inversely, part of what it means to have self-applied a normatively integral relation is to be susceptible to the reactive attitude of social-regret on account of that relation. In other words, my claim that susceptibility to social-regret and self-application of normatively integral relations and categories are interrelated phenomena, and my hypothesis is that they are positively correlated concomitantly. The potential pool of relations for which one might feel social-regret is made up of those groups and affiliations that one takes on, both implicitly and explicitly, as central to one's practical life. An advantage of this account is that it is able to absorb the diversity of metaphysical group kinds that might serve as vectors for social-regret. If it is the case that we feel social-regret for relations that we have self-applied as normatively significant, then practically any kind of group or relation can be a potential vector in theory. Furthermore, this account makes room for the uniqueness of an individual's social-situatedness, since individuals in the same groups or social categories may self-apply their membership differently from one another. By focusing on self-application of normatively significant relations, we are better equipped to explain the affective disparity of the fact that a single group can be a potential vector for some of its members and not for others.

CHAPTER 4

Moral Outcomes of Social-Regret

I. Introduction

What kinds of moral insights become accessible through experiences of social-regret? In this chapter, I consider several plausible, morally salient outcomes of social-regret. My goal is not to stipulate the precise responsibilities that arise out of these scenarios, but rather to illustrate how social-regret directs attention towards one's relations and the harms that they cause in a variety of contexts. In each of these cases, the shift in attention precipitated by social-regret opens the way for subsequent examinations of one's own situatedness and obligations going forward. I will motivate several plausible forms of responsibility and ameliorative action that may follow from experiences of social-regret (individual responsibility, collective responsibility, forward-looking responsibility, shared responsibility, and symbolic or supererogatory action) and reconstruct multiple justificatory arguments for those reparative actions. The project here is not so much to conclusively argue for specific accounts of the obligations of affiliated onlookers, since small variances in contextual factors make significant differences in the ascription of responsibilities.[73] Instead, this chapter will raise examples that illuminate a spectrum of moral outcomes that fittingly follow from the moral reflection that social-regret prompts. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, and there are distinctive variations of each scenario below that warrant further attention. But the responsibilities and ameliorative actions that I consider here at least give a sense of the diverse field of possible moral outcomes of which we may become aware through experiences of social-regret.

[73] In the Hiring Committee case from Chapter 2, for example, María's institutional position, intersectional identity, and in-group regulative control all bear upon the existence and nature of duties to intervene on the committee's hiring practices going forward.

It is important not to expect too much of an emotion. My claim is *not* that social-regret is sufficient for the realization that one has ameliorative duties, or an infallible guide to our ethical responsibilities, or that fitting social-regret always motivates (at least) symbolic actions of reparation.[74] Note, however, that the fallibility of an emotion in no way prevents us from noting the ways in which it can reliably influence our attention, knowledge, desires, and moral deliberation. As Myisha Cherry argues, the action tendencies of emotions (that is, the "behavior[s] that a person is likely to engage in, given the [emotion]") are defeasible, but nonetheless carry moral and political stakes:

> Emotions motivate us to act in a certain way. They can also influence our beliefs and desires. Yes, we can act or not act, and the emotion can only do its thing through us and in partnership with us. If I say the action tendency of anger is to approach a target, I simply mean that the anger motivates us to do so. What we eventually do is up to us. (2021, 14)

This is a helpful way to think about social-regret. The action tendencies of social-regret are those of *investigation* and *reflection* upon social relations and relata. Experiencing social-regret provides the occasion to learn more about the situation that gave rise to it, as well as to reflect upon one's relationship to the person or group on account of whom one experiences it. It is through this shift in attention that morally significant outcomes (such as the taking on of responsibility and accountability for harm) are made possible. Again, this does not mean that everyone who experiences social-regret will actually weigh the possibilities for action that I discuss here. Like anger, pride, guilt, jealousy, and other emotions, social-regret can be suppressed, denied, ignored, or drowned out by other affects, emotions, desires, projects, or obligations. The scenarios below do not presume that everyone possesses a predisposition towards reflecting upon their emotions, or that

[74] I explicitly discuss 'dead end' cases of social-regret, in which no moral duties or symbolic actions obtain, below.

the moral reflection that arises out of social-regret is philosophically erudite. Rather, I aim to present a spectrum of possible moral outcomes that can become epistemically and conatively relevant through social-regret, gesturing as I go towards plausible philosophical justifications for each.

I will begin with three morally significant outcomes of *unfitting* cases of social-regret. Even when social-regret is not the fitting emotion to feel in a given situation, its epistemic action tendencies – in a word, where it pulls our attention – can result in the discovery of more fitting reactive attitudes and their concomitant moral responsibilities. Next, I will turn to three fitting cases of social-regret, and explore a range of justifiable moral outcomes, including the absence of responsibility, shared responsibilities, and revelations regarding implicit affiliations. I conclude by considering symbolic and supererogatory actions that, while not moral responsibilities, can nonetheless be rational expressions of respect and solidarity with victims of harm, and that can be experienced affectively as morally obligations in situations of social-regret.

II. Unfitting Social-Regret and Responsibility

We often notice the specks in others' eyes before the beams in our own. By pulling our attention towards a harm and its (perceived) perpetrators, unfitting experiences of social-regret can provide the enabling conditions for reflection upon and discovery of moral responsibilities associated with one's (previously overlooked) causal contributions to a harm. This section considers three possible, fitting reparative obligations that follow from social-regret: 'straightforward' individual responsibility, 'straightforward' collective responsibility, and forward-looking responsibility on the basis of causal contributions to structural injustice. Note that these outcomes are *not* associated with the kinds of cases

that I have been focusing on in previous chapters, largely because in each case there is an overlooked agential connection to the harm in question. These situations illustrate how even unfitting experiences of social-regret can provide an affective push to reassess the moral salience of one's relations. In each case, upon reflection it emerges that reactive attitudes other than social-regret (including guilt, collective guilt, and collective agent-regret) are more fitting attitudes. The forms of responsibility discussed in these cases, then, are not actually appropriate for merely affiliated onlookers, but are rather grounded in (sometimes distal) contributions to a wrongdoing. I take these cases to illustrate morally significant outcomes of social-regret, even though the evaluations underlying social-regret are incomplete or inaccurate.

Individual Responsibility

Upon experiencing social-regret on account of a vector[75] and attending to the moral salience of one's relation with that vector, one could discover that one is indirectly responsible for that vector's harm, and come to experience guilt on account of that harm. Here is an outline of this kind of case:

(1) A wrongs B
(2) As a direct result of (1), B brings about a harm
(3) A learns of B's harm, and initially experiences social-regret on account of B's actions
(4) A's social-regret leads to the recognition that (1) gave rise to (2), and that she is morally responsible and/or culpable for B's harm
(5) A's initial social-regret becomes guilt, and she takes morally responsibility for (2)

Imagine that you borrow a close friend and coworker's car and use up practically all of the gas, but fail to report this to your coworker after returning it (1). In the morning, your

[75] Chapter 3 establishes that a vector for social-regret is a relation that elicits feelings of social-regret, i.e. the relevant relation that brings about a harm. The account presented there holds that potential vectors of social-regret are those relations that are self-applied as normatively integral to one's practical identity, and that susceptibility to social-regret on account of a relation is concomitant with that self-applied relation's normative influence.

coworker discovers this fact and must go out of his way to stop and fill up the tank. As a result, he is late for an important client meeting, damaging his client relationship and harming his company's reputation (2). As you are waiting for your coworker to arrive to the meeting, you feel social-regret for what you understand to be your friend's negligence, and your attention is drawn to the moral salience of your relation (3). However, as your social-regret prompts you to reflect upon on your relation and the circumstances of the harm, you realize that the fault is at least partially your own for not telling him about the empty gas tank ahead of time (4). Your social-regret gives way to guilt – you feel culpable and responsible for making him late to the meeting, and you begin to consider how to make amends with your coworker and the client (5).

Social-regret can modulate into guilt and give rise to reparative obligations when the shift in attention that it prompts leads one to recognize morally salient details that indicate one's own culpability. In cases like this, the responsibilities to which one is alerted by social-regret are simply run of the mill moral responsibilities associated with individual wrongdoing.[76] Learning of an injustice or a harm, it is not always immediately apparent whether and how one has set the stage for that harm. Social-regret can provide the affective impetus to look closer at our interconnections with others, and can alert us to unrecognized culpability and associated moral responsibilities. To be clear, in this kind of case (as in the two cases below) social-regret is the result of faulty or incomplete evaluations of the situation, and is not actually fitting with the facts: what one ought to

[76] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide justifications for the widely-held view that one is (generally speaking) morally responsible for knowing, willful, and controlled actions, and that one may bear specific responsibilities for culpable actions. I take both of these claims as premises. See also n.9, below, for an overview of standard conditions for moral responsibility.

feel in the case above, one could argue, is (also) guilt, and not (only) social-regret.[77] But even misguided social-regret can lead one to recognize one's own individual responsibilities associated with culpability, insofar as its action tendency is to elicit attention towards and reflection upon one's relation to the harm in question. The important mechanism here is this: because social-regret redirects attention towards the moral salience of one's relations, it also prompts attentiveness to the details of the connection between the ostensible vector of social-regret and the harm itself. Social-regret is the feeling of being interconnected with a harm, and so it is only natural to ask oneself whether one's feeling of implication is based in causal contribution, as if to wonder, "Have I done anything wrong such that I feel this way?" When the answer to this question is 'yes' and culpability and straightforward moral responsibilities are acknowledged, the occasion of this moral insight is partly attributable to the feeling of social-regret. Of course, the answer to the question above that most interests me is 'no,' and cases of these sort will be considered in Section III, below.

Collective Responsibility

Upon experiencing social-regret on account of a collective of which one is a member and attending to the moral salience of one's membership, one could discover that the group in question bears collective responsibility for its harm, and eventually experience some form of self- or we-directed negative reactive attitude (e.g. collective guilt) on account of that harm. Cases of this kind might adhere to the following form:

(1) A is a member of collective G, and G collectively inflicts a harm
(2) A learns of harms associated with G's harm, and initially experiences social-regret on account of G's harm

[77] In Chapter 1, I note that one can experience social-regret and other emotions simultaneously; i.e. one can feel guilt for one's own contribution to a harm, and also social-regret for the contribution of a relation to that same harm.

(3) A comes to recognize that she shares in collective responsibility for G's harm in virtue of her participation in G's harm and/or membership in G *qua* collective agent
(4) A's initial social-regret becomes collective guilt or a related self- or we-directed reactive attitude

Imagine that a neighborhood association sponsors a beach cleanup in which local residents join together to pick up trash from their local beach. You agree that a beach cleanup is a good idea, and you turn up to the event enthusiastic to pitch in. A plan is collaboratively drawn up by the group, and teams of volunteers are assigned different stretches of the beach. For thoroughness, everyone agrees that it is a good idea to take small steps and kick up the sand while walking to churn up as much litter as possible, and to have multiple teams retrace each other's footsteps. The next day, it comes to light that the collective beach cleanup efforts have inadvertently damaged the nesting grounds of a group of endangered piping plovers (1). You are dismayed to learn of this – you love piping plovers – and you experience social-regret for the harms wrought by the volunteer effort, though you are not certain that the harms are directly traceable to your individual causal contribution (2). As you reflect upon the moral salience of your connection to the other volunteers, you come to realize that the harm is rightly attributable to the collective of neighborhood volunteers, and not only to those individual members who directly damaged the nesting grounds (3). After all, all volunteers endorsed and acted upon the plan. Your social-regret gives way to collective guilt, since a collective agent of which you were a part brought about the harm. You begin to consider possibilities for how the neighborhood can collectively right their mistake (4).

The harm in this case is carried out by relations (fellow volunteers) and is not traceable to one's individual causal influence; hence, social-regret initially appears to be

a plausible reactive attitude. But the fact that the aims and practices of the group of volunteers were collectively decided, endorsed, and executed means that there are good reasons to question any single volunteer's efforts to distance themselves from the harms wrought. There are numerous philosophical accounts that support the idea that the entire collective of volunteers for the beach cleanup bear collective responsibility for the damage to the piping plovers' nests, all of which would support the idea that we-directed negative moral emotions such (as collective guilt) are fitting. I will canvas three such accounts.

First, Christopher Kutz comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of the bombing of Dresden during World War II. For Kutz, the fact that the attack on Dresden was an "overdetermined" harm, in that each of the 8,000 bomber's respective contributions to the raid were "marginal to the point of insignificance", does not exculpate those bombers from responsibility (Kutz 2001, 118). Rather, the grounds for responsibility can be located in "the cooperative structure of the bombers interaction" (2001, 120) – that is, the fact that each bomber (along with other military participants) participated in a shared project while "sharing a goal, in the sense of having overlapping participatory intentions" (2001, 139). Note that it is participation, and not causation, that provides the basis for collective responsibility here, albeit participation that satisfies certain epistemic and agentic conditions. These conditions are satisfied in the piping plover case: each volunteer participated freely and with overlapping conceptions of the shared project. Just as it makes sense to say that a bomber in Dresden whose aircraft (completely by chance) malfunctioned and failed to drop its payload bears responsibility for the attack, we can also say that volunteers who (completely by chance) did not happen

to stomp on any piping plover nests bear responsibility for the harms of the beach cleanup.

On a second account, one could also argue that the group of volunteers satisfies the criteria for moral agency *qua* group, and hence the collective is "fit to be held responsible" (Pettit 2007, 172). To support this claim, one would need to show that: 1) the collection of volunteers had the capacity to set goals, form plans, and deliberate reflectively; 2) the collection of volunteers is sensitive to, and able to adjust behavior in response to, moral reasons. Philip Pettit sets the conditions for a group to be held responsible *qua* group in the following way:

> *Value relevance.*—The group is an autonomous agent that faces a significant choice between doing something good or bad or right or wrong.
> *Value judgment.*—The group has the understanding and the access to evidence required for making judgments about the relative value of such options.
> *Value sensitivity.*—The group has the control required for being able to choose between the options on the basis of its judgments about their respective value. (Pettit 2007, 177)

In this line of argumentation, one could assert that the collective of beach volunteers is a moral agent (or was a moral agent at the time of the cleanup), and therefore that it bears collective responsibility for the harm caused.[78] Of course, additional questions naturally arise about how collective responsibilities are fairly distributed among volunteers – for example, perhaps some young children also participated in the clean-up, but bear little responsibility on account of their limited capacities to consent to collective actions. But

[78] For more arguments supporting the idea that collectives can satisfy the conditions for moral agency (and hence collective responsibility), see French (1984); Cooper (1991); Mathiesen (2006); Pettit (2007). For opposing critiques of standard collectivist accounts, see Velasquez (1991); H.D. Lewis (1991); and Mäkelä (2007). Alternatively, one could take the position that collective obligations can arise even in groups that lack moral agency, in which case one would not necessarily need to satisfy the conditions above. For one such argument, see Schwenkenbecher (2020).

questions of distribution aside, evidence that the group in question exhibits the traits of a moral agent can provide a basis for we-directed, negative reactive attitudes, as well as deliberation over accountability for collectively wrought harms.[79]

Third and finally, instead of arguing for the moral agency of collectives, one could appeal to what András Szigeti calls "[r]esponsibility-based arguments" that problematize accountability deficits that emerge in cases in which responsibility for wrongdoing cannot be parsed in terms of the contributions of individual agents (Szigeti 2020, 298). Suppose that the harm to the plovers' nests was overdetermined, much like the Allied attack on Dresden, such that it is impossible to disentangle the causal significance of the contributions any discrete set of individuals, and no single individual's contribution is the *sine qua non* of the damage. What emerges in such a situation is an accountability gap, or what Stephanie Collins calls a 'collective duty gap,' which occurs when:

> … a group caused (or will cause) harm that requires remedying but no member did harm serious enough to impose a remedial duty on them. In other words: intuitively, there exists a duty to remedy the group-level harm, but there is a 'gap' between this apparent group-level remedial duty, and a lack of justification for individual-level remedial duties for the group members. (Collins 2017, 574)

Recognizing that no one will be held accountable for the damage to the plover nests, one might move to 'fill' the collective duty gap through soliciting joint action. Importantly, failing to plug accountability gaps means that accountability is often distributed by default to victims of a harm, insofar as they are the ones that have to live with the

[79] This is perhaps a relevant argument for María's situation in the hiring committee from Chapter 2. It is plausible that María's social-regret could give way to a form of collective guilt in light of the hiring committee's capacities for value relevance, value judgment, and value sensitivity.

consequences of the harm.[80] This means that accountability gaps are better described as misattributions of accountability than as lacunae.

The point here is not to endorse a specific account of collective moral agency or responsibility, of which there are many more variations, but rather to highlight some basic justifications for why an individual volunteer of the beach cleanup could, upon reflecting on the moral salience of her relation with the group that covered the stretch of the beach where the piping plovers nest, come to experience collective guilt and/or take on reparative obligations of a collective nature. Here, the answer to the troubling question, "Have I done anything wrong with regard to this harm?" is "*We* have done something wrong." Just as in the first case above, in which unfitting social-regret is the occasion for the discovery of individual responsibility and feelings of guilt, this case illustrates how a morally significant outcome – recognizing some form of collective responsibility for a collective wrongdoing – can emerge from the redirection of attention brought about by the experience of social-regret.

Forward-Looking Responsibility for Structural Injustice

Upon experiencing social-regret on account of a vector's contributions to a structural injustice and attending to the moral salience of one's relation with that vector, one might discover that one shares in forward-looking responsibility to respond to that structural injustice on the basis of one's own contributions to unjust systems, and eventually experience collective agent-regret.

(1) A contributes causally (but diffusedly) to structural injustice S

[80] This point is argued by Bill Wringe in a forthcoming paper. Wringe highlights the following asymmetry between blame and accountability: sometimes, there is no blame to go around, but injustices *always* give rise to accountability. The question is not whether someone ought to be accountable, but rather whether we are content to leave victims of an injustice as the sole bearers of accountability for that injustice.

(2) A learns that relation B contributes causally to S, and initially experiences social-regret on account of B
(3) A comes to recognize that she, like B, also contributes to S, and that she shares forward-looking responsibility to intervene on S
(4) A's initial social-regret becomes collective agent-regret

Imagine that a friend invites you to a screening of a documentary about the injustice of the 'fast fashion' industry. The documentary begins by highlighting the concrete harms that fall upon many garment sector factory workers and residents in Cambodia and Bangladesh, including exploitative and coercive labor practices, unsafe working conditions, environmental degradation of the surrounding area (which leads to unsafe drinking water and hazardous pollution), and related harms. You are incensed by the sheer scale of the suffering wrought by clothing companies who profit from cheap, unregulated labor and government corruption, and you feel social-regret on account of your close friends, family, and acquaintances who you know to be frequent consumers of fast fashion, and hence indirect contributors to the structural injustice described in the film (1, 2). In other words, you initially feel like a bystander who has learned of a harm wrought by consumers to whom you are affiliated. However, as the film progresses and you continue to reflect upon the moral salience of your connection to fast fashion companies, it becomes clear that you, too, play a significant causal role in the exploitative system described in the documentary (3). Without consumer demand (constituted by individual consumer choices like your own), fast fashion companies would not be able to wreak havoc on workers and their communities. In light of this new perspective on the way that you are causally implicated in (albeit not straightforwardly blameworthy for) the structural injustice of fast fashion, your social-regret gives way to a different kind of self- or we-directed reactive attitude that is more fitting to nonculpable, causal contributions to

a harm, and you begin to explore possible avenues by which you can join with others to make change (4).

In a global trade system in which large garment brands benefit from unregulated, exploitative, and dangerous labor practices as a means to minimize costs to boost profits, and in which garment workers often have limited or nonexistent alternatives for providing for themselves and their families, the injustices that affect garment workers and their communities are (partly) attributable to cumulative consumer behavior and demand, amounting to what Iris Marion Young refers to as 'structural injustice.' As Young uses the term, structural injustice occurs when social systems produce harms that are not exhaustively reducible to culpable individual contributions, but emerge out of the confluence of thousands, if not millions, of nonculpable interactions:

> Structural injustice… exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them. … Structural injustice occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms. (Young 2011, 52)

The exploitation of garment workers is, of course, exacerbated by the choices and behavior of particularly powerful moral agents and institutions (business executives, corporations, corrupt regulators, foremen), some of whom are directly culpable. But the injustice is not exhaustively attributable to those agents and institutions. Part of what makes structural injustice unique is that it is shaped and maintained by nonculpable contributions from many individuals who understandably pursue their own well-being without violating social, moral, or legal norms.

For Young, structural injustices require new ways of thinking about responsibility beyond the standard 'liability model,' which is her name for standard frameworks for responsibility attribution that attempt to "identify liable parties for the purposes of sanctioning, punishing, or exacting compensation or redress" (2011, 98). Typical judgments of liability involve evidence of traceable causal pathways between an individual's action and a harmful consequence, as well as an evaluation of the individual's subjective capacities, attitudes, and motives. But situations of structural injustice, by definition, are precipitated by highly diffused, cumulative causal contributions that are not traceable to individuals, and that fail to satisfy typical conditions for moral responsibility.[81] It is, for all intents and purposes, impossible to say precisely how much one's purchase of cheap socks contributes to the structural exploitation of garment workers; it is often the case that individual consumers lack knowledge of the material conditions for the production of cheap socks; and many consumers are forced into buying goods that are manufactured in exploitative ways due to financial constraints and a dearth of alternatives. At least some contributions to structural injustice – and arguably a majority – do not satisfy the conditions for moral culpability and responsibilities associated with it. Appealing to an accountability gap like the one discussed in the previous section, Young writes: "If we want to say that some people nevertheless bear responsibility for structural injustice, then we need a conception

[81] Summarizing the wide range of literature on the conditions for moral responsibility, van de Poel identifies these standard conditions: *moral agency* ("the agent A is a moral agent, i.e. has the capacity to act responsibly"), *causality* ("the agent A is somehow causally involved in X"), wrongdoing ("[t]he agent A did something wrong"), *freedom* ("[t]he agent A was not compelled to bring about X"), and *knowledge* ("A knew, or at least could have known, that X would occur and that this was undesirable") (van de Poel 2011, 45). See also Feinberg (1970).

of responsibility different from the standard conception, which focuses on individual action and its unique relation to a harm" (2011, 96).

Young's proposed alternative to the liability model is the social connection model, under which "all those who contribute by their actions to structural processes with some unjust outcomes share responsibility for the injustice" (2011, 96). Importantly, the responsibility that one shares under the social connection model is 'forward-looking,' which is to say that it does not attribute culpability or fault to isolated perpetrators. Those who share forward-looking responsibility are obligated to join together to collectively intervene on unjust structural conditions. Unlike collective responsibility, which is assigned to a collective as such, shared forward-looking responsibilities are distributed to each member of a group (May 1992, 38). As Young puts it, "I *personally* bear [forward-looking responsibility for structural injustice], but I do not bear it alone. I bear it in the awareness that others bear it with me" (2011, 109–110). An individual who discovers her own embeddedness in the system of fast fashion, as described in the scenario above, is a paradigmatic candidate for forward-looking responsibilities as Young conceives of them.

The point of this excursus into Young is that experiences of social-regret can pull our attention towards our relations with others in structurally unjust systems. This is especially important when our own diffused, indirect contributions to structural injustice are initially less obvious than those of other individuals or institutions with whom we are connected. In other words, the situation above initially appears to be one in which social-regret is fitting; but because social-regret directs attention towards the moral salience of one's relations, it prompts increased scrutiny of the causal mechanisms by which the

harm in question is produced, opening the way for a reassessment of one's own causal contribution.

Young's social connection model provides one way to articulate the prospective obligations that become relevant in the wake of social-regret for others' contributions to structural injustice. This is another example of how unfitting social-regret can yield morally significant outcomes, and give way to more fitting reactive attitudes. In the context of structural injustice, those reactive attitudes might include "resentment of disappointment" (Fricker 2007, 104), "normative hope" (Martin 2014, 118–40), or a nameless emotion of "moral anger and disappointment" with oneself over "mere moral failures" that do not warrant blame (Tannenbaum 2015, 73). Note also that these emotions need not entirely take the place of social-regret; one can simultaneously feel social-regret for one's relations' contributions to structural injustice, and moral disappointment at one's own contributions.

Taken together, these scenarios sketch out the general contours of three possible moral outcomes that follow from experiences of social-regret. The point of these opening analyses is that even *unfitting* experiences of social-regret provide epistemically advantageous starting points for sustained reflection upon one's relations and obligations. Social-regret pulls us to look closer, and sometimes when we look closer we discover that social-regret is not the right way to feel at all. As I argued in the previous chapter, unfitting emotions are still emotions. They move us to action and introspection, even when our implicit evaluative judgments and perceptions are off the mark. When it comes to complex moral dilemmas involving large numbers of individuals and collective or

cumulative harms, our initial affective responses can alert us to the clues that we need to notice our own fingerprints with regard to structural harms.

III. Fitting Social-Regret and Responsibility

The next three outcomes that I will investigate arise out of *fitting* cases of social-regret. Unlike in the cases above, in which social-regret is merely a stepping stone to other reactive attitudes and forms of responsibility associated with culpability and agentic contributions to harm, these cases admit no causal connection between the individuals in question and the harms that prompt their social-regret.

'Dead End' Cases

As anti-climactic as it may be, it is worth beginning by pointing out that social-regret does not always give rise to reparative obligations going forward. This is most obviously the case in some situations in which the harm that gives rise to social-regret would fittingly give rise to agent-regret in the perpetrator. To illustrate this point, imagine that you are a passenger in a car with your partner, who is driving. As you chat about your plans for the following week and nod your heads to the radio, a tiny, dark shadow tugs at the corner of your vision. Faster than anyone can possibly react, a small bird swoops low across the road from off to the right, directly in front of your car. There is a quiet sound of impact, and then a jarred silence as the car continues driving straight ahead. Your partner (an animal lover) finds herself to have faultlessly brought about a harm, much like Williams' proverbial lorry driver.[82] It does not help matters much that she was driving safely, under the speed limit of the highway, and without distractions. It would have taken superhuman reflexes to avoid the bird, and in any case it also would have

[82] I am granting the assumption that harm to animals constitutes a moral harm. I take this to be non-essential to the argument.

been deeply unsafe to swerve out of the way and into another lane. Still, none of these exculpating conditions do much to blunt the emotional impact of the encounter for your partner – she is agentially connected to a nonculpable harm, and her acute agent-regret prompts her to consider how to make things right.

So far, this scenario walks closely with Williams' case. But consider now the moral emotions of the you, the passenger. Many of the typical features of fitting cases of social-regret are present, in that you are 1) aware that a harm has occurred, 2) aware that the harm is causally attributable to your partner, and 3) aware that your relationship to your partner is normatively integral to your practical identity. Put a little less dryly, it is fitting for you to feel implicated in a harm that has been caused by your most intimate relation.

One thing to note in this scenario is that your social-regret does not alert you to any violations of the expectations to which you hold your partner, nor reveal new facts about the moral salience of your relation to her. What is more, it is not clear that there are actionable reparative obligations going forward, for either you or your partner. The accident was a truly unavoidable piece of bad luck, and there is nothing for either of you to do to set it right, or to take steps to avoid similar incidents in the future. The two of you are not going to boycott all automobiles or highways going forward, or constantly keep your heads on a swivel searching for starlings while driving. In the end, your social-regret does not give way to practical action.

One might object that in this scenario, you *are* obliged to respond to the harm in specific ways, e.g. to ask after your partner's emotional well-being, or avoid cackling maniacally after the accident. But obligations of these kinds are reducible to role

responsibilities and/or the (admittedly vague) demands of 'basic decency' which impel us to refrain from offensive, inappropriate reactions. (In one's role responsibility as a romantic partner, for example, one may hold oneself and be held to expectations to be caring and empathetic.) The point I make above is not that you are entirely normatively unconstrained after the accident; it is that your social-regret is not particularly revelatory, and does not lead you to ameliorate the situation in ways you would not otherwise.

I think that it is important not to dismiss 'dead end' cases such as this, and instead to consider that they are fitting cases of social-regret without revelatory potential or concomitant obligations. Dead end social-regret is still expressive of something real, even if it is not revelatory of moral obligations. At bottom, social-regret is an affective response to one's social situatedness relative to a harm. It arises out of the way in which we are entangled (socially, politically, ideologically, behaviorally) with others.[83] In dead end cases of social-regret, we affectively experience our *vulnerability* to the conduct of others – the way in which their actions can impact our practical identities – even in the absence of reparative obligations. Part of what you might feel in the scenario above, then, is simply the closeness of your relationship to your partner, and the sense that if the situation were different (e.g., if your partner were a reckless or negligent driver) that you could plausibly bear responsibility to take some form of action on that basis. To be clear, not all situations in which the vector of one's social-regret fittingly experiences agent-regret are dead end cases – if, for example, your partner had faultlessly hit a human, one's social-regret might appropriately lead to symbolic or reparative actions towards the victim's family. The point here is that at least some fitting cases of social-regret do not

[83] I borrow the language of entanglement from Trystan Goetze, who uses the term 'moral entanglement' to refer to the "ways in which aspects of one's identity and agency are connected to others, such that one is (or is required to make oneself) vicariously responsible for their behavior" (Goetze 2021, 220).

lead us to take on responsibilities. Instead, they affectively express our interconnection and (potential) moral entanglement with others.

Shared Responsibility

Upon experiencing social-regret on account of a harm caused by a vector's vicious attitude, one might discover that one shares responsibility for that harm on the basis of sharing the same vicious attitude, despite a lack of causal connection between one's own vicious attitude and the specific harm in question. This scenario takes the following form:

(1) A does not contribute to a harm that is brought about by relation B, where B's harm is caused by vicious attitude V, and A also harbors V
(2) A learns of B's harm, and experiences social-regret on account of B
(3) A comes to recognize that she, like B, exhibits V
(4) A takes on shared responsibility for B's harm

Put more simply, social-regret can alert us to the fact that we share in vicious attitudes and risky social practices with causal perpetrators, and can prompt us to take on responsibility for harms inflicted by those with shared attitudes.

The claim that shared vicious attitudes can engender shared responsibilities is most fully articulated by Larry May, who adopts a 'social-existential' approach to the responsibility of informal groups that is heavily influenced by Arendt, Jaspers, and Sartre (May 1992). In contrast to what he sees as a deep commitment to individualism in Anglophone moral philosophy, May opts for a relational approach to social ethics that foregrounds the interdependence of individuals and groups. On this view, neither individuals nor the groups to which they belong can be understood without reference to the other, both metaphysically and ethically.

One of the ways in which groups modulate individual behavior is through the perpetuation of attitudes, including some attitudes that are distortive, dangerous, or

otherwise morally reprehensible. Robert Merrihew Adams argues that there are involuntary beliefs and attitudes that warrant moral sanction, including "believing that certain people do not have rights that they do in fact have; perceiving members of some social group as less capable than they actually are; failing to notice indications of other people's feelings; and holding too high an opinion of one's own attainments" (Adams 1985, 18). What makes this claim somewhat provocative is that not all reprehensible attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions are entirely within an individual's control. To take Adams' example, the attitude of excessive, unwarranted, and vitriolic anger is not, strictly speaking, something that one undertakes willfully. All the same, such hostility (along with other "morally objectionable states of mind, including corrupt beliefs as well as wrong desires") is, according to Adams, an appropriate occasion for blame and moral sanction (1985, 4).[84] Even though the appearance of such attitudes is not voluntary, they can be reflected upon, endorsed, transformed, and averted through willful intervention. It is in this sense that May claims that attitudes are "not *fully* under the control of the will, [but] they should still be subject to moral appraisal, so long as they are at least *partially* under the control of the will" (May 1992, 6).

May analyzes attitudes like the one described above – discriminatory, callous, condescending, and oppressive attitudes – in terms of *riskiness*, by which he means their tendency to bring about harm. Just as a bar patron's bellicose attitude increases the risk that a fight will happen, the "climate of attitudes" generated within social groups can also

[84] To anticipate one predictable objection, neither Adams nor May endorse ethical 'thought policing' in which merely entertaining certain thoughts is blameworthy. May clarifies that by the term 'attitudes' he means "not mere cognitive states, but… also affective states in which a person is moved to behave in various ways as a result of having a particular attitude" (May 1992, 46). Attitudes are not merely mental images or context-less propositions, but are rather motivate and are exhibited through behavior. To quote May again, "The test for whether someone actually has a particular attitude or not is a behavioral test" (May 1992, 46). Someone with a racist attitude, for example, does not only harbor inward, racist thoughts, but also is moved to behave in racist ways. Put another way, for May attitudes are conative.

increase the risk of wrongdoing and/or harm (May 1992, 46). Crucially, May argues that individuals are morally responsible for their contributions to 'attitudinal climates':

> My thesis is that insofar as people share in the production of an attitudinal climate, they participate in something like a joint venture that increases the likelihood of harm. Those who hold racist attitudes, but who do not themselves cause harm directly, participate in the racial harms of their societies in two distinct ways: first, by causally contributing to the production of racial violence by others; and second, by becoming… people who choose to risk harm and yet do nothing to offset this risk. (May 1992, 47)

The upshot of May's argument is that members of social groups who share risky attitudes with perpetrators share responsibility for harms brought about by the risky attitudes of fellow members, even if they do not themselves directly bring about those harms. While this might initially seem to be a radical claim, it becomes more intuitive when one considers the analogous case of risky *conduct* (as opposed to attitudes). Imagine, for example, a bored and deviant group of teenagers who climb onto the roof of their school and take turns tossing loose bricks from the roof into the parking lot. After four bricks land harmlessly on the concrete, a fifth shatters the windshield of a car. May's claim is simply that this last teenager – the one whose brick happens to cause damage – does not bear responsibility for the harm alone (although his responsibility may be of a different kind than his friends). The other teenagers also took part in actions that could predictably cause serious harm, and contributed to a group dynamic in which that kind of risk was a predictable result. They, too, share in the responsibility. The analogy here is that the adoption of risky attitudes, like the adoption of risky behaviors, contributes to an in-group atmosphere of risk-taking.

There are important nuances to May's position, including key distinctions between different kinds of contributions to attitudinal climates ranging from direct

(Henry II wondering loudly why none of his supporters have murdered the archbishop of Canterbury yet) to indirect (a sailor who nods energetically when a mutineer begins fomenting discontent). Still, this brief reconstruction of May's position illustrates one route by which social-regret on account of a relation's faulty attitude can lead to the discovery and adoption of shared responsibilities when one harbors that same faulty attitude.

Consider the following example: A college student is part of a fraternity on campus (and has self-applied that relation as normatively integral) in which a great many members exhibit and perpetuate blatantly sexist attitudes. A pervasive culture has emerged in the fraternity of making crude, offhand jokes about women's bodies and valorizing binge drinking and sexual conquest. The student joins in the jokes and valorization and shares his fellow members' chauvinist attitudes, but often leaves parties early because of his job on campus. The morning after leaving a party, he learns that a fellow member has publicly and cruelly verbally harassed a woman at the party. He fittingly feels social-regret, and his attention is directed towards the moral salience of his relation to that member, whereupon it emerges that he, like the perpetrator, shares an overtly risky attitude (tolerance and endorsement of sexism) that predictably leads to, or at least increases the risk of, sexual harassment. Here, the experience of social-regret generates the occasion to take on shared responsibilities of the sort that May describes.[85]

It is worth acknowledging the concern that this scenario might appear to be excessively optimistic. What kind of real-life human, one might ask, moves linearly from the admittedly complex and murky experience of social-regret to constructing ethical

[85] José Medina discusses a similar case in which shared *ignorance*, instead of shared vices or attitudes, gives rise to shared responsibilities (Medina 2013, 135–45).

syllogisms? This is hardly a reasonable expectation of even the most emotionally-attuned and erudite among us. Recall, however, that the point of these examples is to explore the myriad forms of responsibility that social-regret can alert us to in principle. I will happily admit that the experience of social-regret does not somehow implant an individual with virtue or a tendency for reflection. Social-regret is not a sufficient condition for taking up shared responsibility, or any other kind of responsibility. What social-regret *does* do is provide the occasion for reflection upon one's relations and the harms that they bring about. What I am illustrating here is where the emotion of social-regret pulls us in different social situations, even if we are often predisposed to resist its pull. Shared responsibility is one fitting outcome of the redirection of one's attention that occurs with social-regret when one shares in dangerous attitudes and/or social practices with the perpetrator(s), but did not contribute directly to the harm in question.

Disclosing Implicit Relations

Another morally significant outcome in cases in which the individual experiencing social-regret shares in attitudes or social practices with perpetrators is that social-regret can draw attention to unacknowledged implicit relations and group affiliations. Such discovery might follow this general narrative:

(1) A does not consciously recognize B as a morally salient relation
(2) A does not contribute to a harm that is brought about by B, and B's harm is the result of social practice S, where S is self-applied as normatively integral to both A and B's practical identities
(3) A learns of B's harm, and experiences social-regret on account of B's participation in S (due to the normative significance of S over A's practical identity)
(4) A comes to recognize membership in social group Gs, of which B is also a member

I am relying here upon my claim in the previous chapter that social-regret can fittingly arise when one has implicitly self-applied a social relation as normatively integral to one's practical identity. One can feel social-regret on account of an individual with whom one does not consciously identify when a self-applied social practice is inordinately influential over one's practical identity, and also the source of a harm inflicted by that individual.[86]

Imagine, for example, a prototypical 'gossip' – someone always eager to receive and relay stories about his colleagues. Every day at work begins with gossip around the coffee machine, and the workday is broken up by routine visits to his colleagues on the floor below to share scandalous stories. This person does not consciously identify as a gossip, or as belonging to the social aggregate constituted by people who gossip compulsively. Moreover, he might object vociferously to accusations that he is a gossip. Nonetheless, the social practice of gossiping is self-applied as normatively integral to his practical identity, in that he volitionally and habitually goes out of his way to seek out gossip across a wide variety of social contexts, and his pursuit of gossip consistently bears upon his practical decision-making.

Were this prototypical gossip to learn of a friend at a different company who is harmed by gossip in his office space, I think that social-regret is a fitting response. The thought here is something like: 'This harm was caused by someone who acts a lot like me.'[87] In other words, the perspective of the prototypical gossip is different from that of an unaffiliated onlooker and perpetrator both – he is noncausally implicated in the harm through membership in the implicit social aggregate of individuals who gossip

[86] Note that the social practice need not be mutually self-applied as normatively integral to *both* individuals' practical identities.
[87] This is not to imply that emotions are reducible to propositions.

excessively. Even though he did not previously consider himself to be affiliated with the perpetrators (and perhaps was unaware of their existence before hearing of the harm), the harm that emerges from the social practices that they share in common can provide the basis for recognizing an implicit social connection. To be clear, many implicit social aggregates in which members share social practices are not organized around conscious projects, and lack the features (capacities for decision-making and action, for example) that typically ground collective responsibility.[88] The claim here is not that the prototypical gossip ought to feel responsible or accountable in this situation, but rather that his fitting social-regret draws his attention towards the fact that he is implicitly affiliated with the perpetrator in a way that was previously unobvious. The epistemic upshot of his moral emotion is that social-regret enables him to think of himself differently – and specifically *relationally* – in a way that is relevant his future choices.

Discovering that a harm has occurred because of similar behavior to one's own can interrupt default assumptions about one's interconnectedness with others. In his discussion of informal social groups that share harmful social practices, Kutz claims that novel, implicit collectives of which we are a part can come to our attention through attending to the perspectives of victims:

> [F]rom the victims' perspective, the source of the harm is clearly identifiable: a people engaging in a concrete way of life that generate these harms. To a member of the environmentally affected population, or to a member of a community ravaged by violence, a systemic view quickly becomes salient, and collective agency is attributed to the group causing the harm. … Thus, to the victims, a community of accountability is identifiable: a set of individuals who jointly cause harm, against a background of interdependent activity and shared values. (Kutz 2001, 186)

[88] The next section considers supererogatory forms of responsibility and accountability that still may obtain in the absence of these conditions.

To borrow Kutz' example, imagine a gun-seller who becomes increasingly uncomfortable as he hears more and more about incidents of gun violence brought about by legally purchased firearms. Our gun-seller does not generally tend to think of himself as 'in community' with other gun-sellers, and to his knowledge he has not sold any weapons to individuals who have gone on to commit violent crimes. All the same, Kutz argues, the gun-seller can come to see himself and other sellers as "unified in part by shared trade networks, lobbying efforts, and manufacturing standards. And they are united by a shared universe of values, here regarding the permissibility of selling such deadly instruments" (2001, 186). His affiliation with other gun-sellers (which is already known to him, but not relevant for his daily life) becomes topical when a harm that is causally traceable to those shared practices and values occurs. From the point of view of some victims of gun violence, the loose social aggregate of 'gun merchants' is obvious and identifiable, while from the point of view of many gun-sellers such affiliation may only be subtly or implicitly acknowledged under 'normal' circumstances. When the perspectives of victims become urgent and conspicuous– such as in the wake of a gun-related tragedy – then it is natural that a gun-seller's relationship with other gun-sellers takes on a different weight in his self-understanding. In other words, engaging with the perspectives of victims can yield new understandings of how one's participation in harmful social practices is intertwined in the actions of a "quasi-participatory" collectives (2001, 186).

Admittedly, as Kutz points out, this kind of "systemic collective view… only rarely coincides with agents' own first-personal perspective" (2001, 186–7). Addressing the challenge of eliciting a sense of accountability for harms which emerge from quasi-

participatory collectives might involve encouraging others to think of themselves as embedded in networks of behavior, and not simply as isolable actors. Importantly, this socially embedded, as opposed to autonomous, view of the self is part of what social-regret evokes. As I have argued above and in previous chapters, social-regret is fundamentally an expression of and reaction to social interconnectedness. Feeling social-regret and considering to the harms and relations that it puts before us, one can come to see oneself as aligned and affiliated with others within (otherwise background) systems of behavior, unearthing "regional identit[ies] I already hold" (2001, 189). If I see a harm, and if I see that the harm was brought about by someone who moves through the world much like I do, then I am within reach of identifying myself with the perpetrators of that harm.

As with the previous section, this is hardly an exhaustive list of scenarios, and there are many additional permutations and variations that yield distinctive moral outcomes. Still, these cases give some sense of the moral outcomes that can follow from fitting social-regret. I take these examples to illustrate three claims: 1) social-regret does not always disclose responsibilities going forward; 2) social-regret can alert us to shared responsibilities when our own behavior and social practices sufficiently resemble that of perpetrators; and 3) social-regret can bring implicit, background affiliations with loose aggregates into relief, changing the way that we understand ourselves to be connected to others.

IV. Supererogatory and Symbolic Actions

To close this chapter, I want to consider some possible outcomes of social-regret that can broadly be considered supererogatory. Some behaviors that feel obligatory in the wake of

others' harms are not, strictly speaking, moral obligations, responsibilities, or duties, but can be understood as symbolic expressions of sympathy, recompense, and solidarity that allow us to retain a sense of moral integrity. I will argue that this kind of action is a rational outcome to social-regret, and that the pressure to make symbolic recompense can be experienced affectively as something very similar to moral obligation.

Many symbolic actions are outcome-independent, insofar as one might feel obligated to act even knowing that one's actions will not have any direct ameliorative impact whatsoever. To give an example of this kind of situation, consider a thought experiment proposed by Anthony Appiah about divestment efforts from the South African Republic during *apartheid*. Many individuals, institutions, and nations divested from South African industry as an expression of moral outrage in response to the cruelty of the South African government's policies and the corporations which supported them. It is plausible that some (and perhaps many) individual divestments made little to no difference in the material conditions under which South Africans lived, and that divestors merely swapped places with other investors who lacked such moral qualms. Appiah imagines a scenario in which one is sure of the following considerations when weighing the decision to divest from a company that provides equipment to be used by the South African government to maintain *apartheid*:

> 1. Our divestment will not lead anyone in our own institution, or in our own country, or in South Africa, who does not already see that *apartheid* is wrong to come to agree with us that it is wrong. Consequently, we can expect our action to have no effect on the level of political or economic pressure on the government there to change its policies for the better, and we have no reason to think that our action will contribute to anybody's moral education.
> 2. Divestment from the company will make no relevant difference to the outcome of South Africa. Other people without our

scruples will buy the shares, and even if the company were to refuse to provide its equipment, other suppliers would supply equally efficient equipment at about the same cost.

3. If we were to hold on to the shares we should have no influence on the behavior of the company in question that would lead it to behave in ways that will relevantly affect the South African situation; so that, in particular, threats to divest will have no useful consequences. (Appiah 1991, 224–5)

To be clear, Appiah does not believe that all of these conditions held in the majority of cases of divestment. His goal is to construct a thought experiment in which divestment would have absolutely no impact whatsoever on the policies of the South African government or the material conditions of its population, and to consider whether or not such a "pure" case could provide reasons for the decision to divest (Appiah 1991, 224). This is to ask: What reasons might I have for symbolically distancing myself from a perpetrator, even when that distancing will not change anything? This scenario breaks from our central cases of social-regret in two notable ways: 1) the investors are causally, albeit indirectly, involved in the maintenance of *apartheid*, in that their money supports a corporation that provides equipment used to maintain an unjust system; and 2) the scenario introduces the complicating factor of enrichment, in that investors profit from their relation to the company. Despite these differences, Appiah's thought experiment about divestment can shed light on the moral intuition that symbolic actions are rational, if not morally obligated, in the wake of harms brought about by social relations.

It is difficult to construct an argument supporting the idea that one can be morally obligated to undertake actions that will not have any impact on the world whatsoever.[89] As Kutz puts it, "It is doubtful whether any plausible construction of morality could require outcome-independent self-sacrifice" (2001, 191). Note, however, that although

[89] For arguments that individuals *are* morally obliged to divest in Appiah's scenario, see May (1992, 155–60) and Oshana (2006, 366).

(under the conditions of Appiah's scenario) divesting will not change minds, influence policy, or otherwise alter material conditions, it can still make a difference to the self-perceived moral integrity of the divestor. To cite Kutz once more: "In overdetermined contexts, agents can have reason to refrain from participating in a harm, not because of the relation between this choice and an actual outcome, but because of what the choice symbolizes in their characters and commitments" (2001, 190). Put another way, divesting can be an expression of principles, and can impact one's self-understanding.

Against this view, Andrea Sangiovanni argues that Kutz "presupposes an answer to the very question we are asking: Do agents bear special responsibility for the harms they together aid in bringing about?" (Sangiovanni 2018, 471). For Sangiovanni, if an individual is not in fact responsible for the harm, then their failure to cease participating in the harm does not express a lack of respect. I disagree: imagine someone who throws an empty can of soda towards a recycling bin, but does not stop to check whether it actually lands in the bin, and assume that the can does, in fact, land in the bin. This person may not be morally responsible for any wrongdoing related to littering; but all the same, there is good reason to suspect that this individual might contribute to littering in the future on a day when his aim is less accurate. The reasons for suspicion here are not so much the individual's moral responsibility for a harm, but rather the way in which the individual conducts himself uncaringly. As Kutz puts it: "Agents who show no concern for their participation in collective harms in overdetermined contexts make themselves vulnerable to the suspicion they will be indifferent even when they could make a difference" (2001, 190). This passage suggests to me that Kutz does not have in mind only agents who refrain from extracting themselves from overdetermined harms, but

rather individuals who don't really care to know whether or not the harm in question is overdetermined in the first place.

To return to the case at hand, a critic of *apartheid* might rationally wish to remove herself from any association with the South African government simply because it does not sit well with her moral self-understanding. In this line of thinking, the practice of divestment can be understood as an effort to safeguard the integrity and consistency of one's moral identity (as opposed to enacting outcomes). The demands of maintaining moral integrity and/or one's moral reputation provide reasons for divestment, albeit reasons that (arguably) fall short of moral obligations.

Symbolic actions like divestment can also signal solidarity with the victims of a harm and a commitment to future collective efforts, while continued association with perpetrators can express apathy for the well-being of victims and an unwillingness to participate in future efforts. To cite Kutz once again: "A gun seller's refusal to associate himself with even inevitable crime identifies him with the interests of those who will be harmed. The motive in these cases is not, or is not necessarily, causal. That is, agents need not believe that unilateral nonparticipation will lead others to follow. Rather, they choose to act as a way of expressing meaning" (2001, 190). Understood in this way, divestment from South African companies can be understood to communicate respect for those oppressed by *apartheid*, and indicates that were the opportunity to arise in which one could contribute to more concrete, collective action, one would do so. This kind of alignment with victims of a harm is discernible in, for example, the popular reposting of the slogan "Je suis Charlie" on social media in the wake of the 2015 shooting at the office of Charlie Hebdo in Paris, or in some Americans' decisions to hang the Ukrainian flag

outside of their homes following Russia's 2022 invasion. Neither of these actions are morally obligated in the sense that one would be culpable for failing to undertake them, but both express something urgent about the priorities, sympathies, and moral orientations of those who carry them out. It likely makes little difference to the material conditions of the people of Ukraine whether or not one hangs a Ukrainian flag on the door of one's house in the suburbs of Long Island; but it does contribute to a community of attentiveness to the well-being of the Ukrainian people, and it can serve as an outward affirmation of one's principles.

Symbolic gestures that express principles and express solidarity and respect can become compelling avenues of action after experiences of social-regret. Consider the (real life) example of Lucy Winters Durkin, whose father was an engineer on the Manhattan Project. Durkin's filial proximity to her father's crucial contributions to the effort to construct the atom bomb yielded complex emotions that can be characterized as fitting experiences of social-regret. In a letter to President Obama in the days leading up to his visit to Hiroshima, Durkin felt compelled to share her longstanding feelings of being implicated in the use of atomic weapons in the Pacific front. After living in Japan for three years, Durkin wrote, she eventually felt the need to "confron[t] the necessity – the obligation – to go to Hiroshima."[90] Her family's visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial expressed solidarity and respect with victims and their descendants, as well as the moral principles that Durkin lives by. Despite the fact that, like Appiah's case of divestment from South African industry, this action was 'outcome-independent' (in that Durkin had no way to ameliorate the suffering of victims or their descendants), her

[90] This is a selection from a letter sent by Durkin to President Obama. The unabridged letter and Obama's response are included in Appendix I.

decisions to pay homage to the war memorial in person and to write a letter to President Obama sharing her unique perspective were both experienced as quasi-moral obligations, or what Kutz would call "supererogatory" obligations that "fit awkwardly with a pure ethics of obligation" (Kutz 2001, 191).

To take another example, apologies are not always descriptive claims that one is, in fact, guilty or sorry, as is obvious in the common usage of apologies to comfort the bereaved. Saying "I am so sorry" rarely communicates useful information, or does much to change ameliorate the situation at hand. But apologies can affirm something meaningful about the bonds that tie us together by expressing attentiveness and respect for others' hardships. Moreover, one can affectively experience a 'quasi-obligation' to apologize to another even in the absence of moral responsibility. I take this to be yet another moral outcome of social-regret: that it can prompt symbolic and outcome-independent actions that are sometimes affectively experienced as akin to moral duties.[91]

V. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a sampling platter of sorts of the different kind of moral outcomes that can plausibly arise in the wake of social-regret. I have argued that social-regret can lead us to more fitting reactive attitudes, shed light on our implicit relations, and prompt us to take on a host of different forms of responsibility and accountability including individual responsibility, collective responsibility, forward-looking responsibility, shared responsibility, and supererogatory or symbolic action. Despite the significant differences in the cases discussed above, social-regret performs the consistent

[91] Of course, symbolic expressions of moral principles can quickly become overbearing when they are the product of an expression with the purity of one's moral record or identity. But the fact that symbolic acts of solidarity, respect, and moral expression can be pathological or handled clumsily is not reason enough to turn up one's nose to all symbolic action.

function of drawing attention towards the moral salience of one's relations and the details of the harms that they bring about. I have also emphasized that the reflective and attentive action tendencies of social-regret are defeasible. The deliberation that follows social-regret will almost always be complex and highly situational. Accordingly, there is no simple answer for the question of what kinds of responsibility that it prompts us to take – there are as many moral outcomes of social-regret as there are distinctive moral situations that give rise to it. All the same, this chapter at least gives some sense of the spectrum of possible forms of responsibility that social-regret can make relevant and urgent.

CHAPTER 5

Does Forward-Looking Responsibility Have an Accountability Problem?

I. Introduction

There are multiple meanings of the term 'responsibility,' and a great deal of philosophical scholarship has sought to clarify these different senses and their relationship to one another.[92] Increasingly, scholars interested in structural injustice, global rights, and collective responsibility have appealed to a distinctively prospective form of moral responsibility, sometimes called 'forward-looking responsibility,' hereafter FLR. The past two decades have given rise to a growing body of literature applying FLR to a number of contexts, including, for example, exploitative labor systems (Young 2004, 2011), environmental degradation (Fahlquist 2009), the global refugee crisis (Parekh 2020), legacies of colonialism (Lu 2011), corporate ethics (Schrempf 2013), implicit prejudice (Fricker 2016), and healthcare (Feiring 2008; Vallgårda et al. 2015), among others. Perhaps the most widely cited work on FLR is Iris Marion Young's posthumously published *Responsibility for Justice*, in which Young proposes that individuals embedded in unjust structures and systems have FLRs to address those structural injustices. A key feature of FLR that is emphasized across many accounts is that it does not impute wrongdoing to those who bear it, and this disassociation between FLR and culpability has been taken up enthusiastically. Theories of FLR provide a way to argue that many people have the responsibility to intervene against unjust systems in which they participate, even if their only contributions to those system are nonculpable.

In practice this means that many people have FLRs without having acted culpably, but simply by going about their lives within unjust structures. This attribute –

[92] See, for example, van de Poel (2011) and Vincent (2011).

that FLR does not ascribe wrongdoing or guilt (although it does not preclude it) for diffused, causal contributions to structural injustices – has led many scholars to note its potential as a conceptual tool for advocacy and reconciliation efforts (Card 1996, 29; Walker 2006, 223; Campbell 2014, 149–53). For example, in her analysis of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal memory in Canada, Sue Campbell writes:

> [F]orward-looking senses of responsibility are politically powerful because they give people a sense that there is action that can be taken for the future. To talk of taking responsibility can move non-Aboriginal people away from the sense that they are being blamed to think about what they can do now, and this language allows people to make themselves accountable where they would reject blame. … Forward-looking responsibility may be more appropriate to responding to ongoing structures of injustice that require reforming and dismantling. (2014, 151)

Part of Campbell's point is that attempts to convince others of their FLRs to respond to ongoing injustice may, in certain contexts, prompt less resistance when compared with attempts to convince others that they are culpable for an ongoing injustice. Young openly claims that there are rhetorical advantages to FLR over what she calls the 'liability model' of responsibility, noting that practices of blame in the context of structural injustice can "produce defensiveness and unproductive blame-switching," interfering in efforts to collectively bring about change (2011, 117). As Robin Zheng puts it, refraining from blaming "may be more effective by preventing the feelings of threat and hostility that so often prevent uptake" (2019, 120).

As interest in these strategic advantages of foregrounding FLR over other kinds of responsibility has mounted, so too have concerns and criticisms of its conceptual coherence.[93] One important concern is that FLRs seem to demand too much, especially

[93] Three of the most prominent lines of criticism of FLR concern (1) the relation between forward- and backward-looking responsibility and how past behavior can ground FLR (van de Poel 2011; Vincent 2011;

given the vast number of FLRs that many individuals bear under Young's popular account. In this chapter, I confront a related problem that arises when we seek to hold others accountable for acting on their shared FLRs. Call this the 'accountability problem.' This concern arises out of the prospect of negligent or apathetic individuals who consistently kick their FLRs down the road. Put simply, the accountability problem is that there are *so many* FLRs that one simultaneously bears, that devoting time, resources, and energy to any set of FLRs takes away from one's capacity to contribute to others. The upshot is that it is unclear whether or not individuals who shirk any given FLR have done anything wrong, since the sum total of one's FLRs is overwhelming and exceeds standard control conditions for moral responsibility. If it is the case, as Jeffrey Reiman argues, that there is a "logically reciprocal relationship between prospective responsibility and retrospective guilt: if people are responsible for doing X, then they are guilty for not doing X," then it is hard to see how FLRs could be obligatory without being overburdening (Reiman 2012, 745).

The key question of this chapter is: How can we hold others accountable for acting on FLRs when shirking some (if not most) of them is an inevitability? There are two senses of the word 'can' in this formulation of the accountability problem. One might ask, first, whether and how it is possible for individuals to be morally blameworthy or negligent with regard to failing to act upon their FLRs *in principle*; and second, whether there are practical and effective ways by which we can hold others accountable for their FLRs *in practice*. The former concerns the blameworthiness and moral status of

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Smiley 2014; Collins 2019a), (2) the best principles for distributing individual duties from collective FLRs (Schrempf 2013; Neuhäuser 2014; Aßländer 2020), and (3) how to best hold individuals and groups accountable for their FLRs (Nussbaum 2011; Barry and Ferracioli 2013; Zheng 2019). My focus in this chapter will be on this third concern.

individuals or groups, while the latter concerns the application of accountability practices with an eye towards the impact that practices of blame will have upon individuals and/or valued outcomes, such as solidarity-building or deterrence.

Although these may initially appear to be separate issues, note that moral blameworthiness is highly relevant to the practical effectiveness of blame, since individuals are likely to resist practices of blame when they take themselves to be innocent of wrongdoing. Of course, the culpability of an individual does not always coincide with the advisability of blame, but the former is surely an important consideration for the latter.[94] Young, for example, offers both "conceptual" and "rhetorical and practical" arguments in *Responsibility for Justice*, and appears to understand the two to be mutually enriching (Young 2011, 113). Some have suggested that these rhetorical strains of Young's argument are unphilosophical (Reiman 2012; Barry and Ferracioli 2013), and it is true that many of Young's rhetorical arguments call out for empirical verification, since it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of blame from the armchair.[95] Still, I take Young to share Gerald Dworkin's view that "investigating the pragmatic features of moral discourse can increase our understanding of moral phenomena" (Dworkin 2000, 187). In a similar vein, I purposefully formulate the accountability problem so as to implicate both of these dimensions. My chief concern is that FLRs are overburdening in principle, and thus toothless in practice. This amounts to a conceptual problem with high practical stakes, since failing to address the

[94] See also discussions of the 'appropriateness' of blame, which can depend upon epistemic and agential facts about the blamed party (Rosen 2003; Washington and Kelly 2016) and the standing of the blamer (Todd 2012; Roadevin 2018).

[95] As Reiman puts it, "The simple fact… is that these are rhetorical matters, not philosophical ones (as Young recognizes). It's about what we should say to people to bring about good effects, not about what is true" (2012, 747).

accountability problem would render a great deal of applied scholarship that draws upon the concept of FLR abstract and unenforceable.

After considering several strategies for addressing the accountability problem and noting complications that arise from each, I propose reconceiving of FLRs as *imperfect duties.* Unlike determinate obligations, imperfect duties afford a great deal of discretion to their bearers, which generally exculpates individuals for failing to carry out their FLRs at a particular time, in a particular way, or to a particular extent. Still, bearers of imperfect duties are vulnerable to blame in the form of *judgments of moral laxity* in the case of repeated failures to adopt the ends stipulated by their FLRs. Additionally, some individuals' may be vulnerable to more straightforward practices of blame for shirking FLRs in virtue of the fact that FLRs can be 'perfected' in light of salient role responsibilities. Under this account, we can coherently hold others accountable for their numerous FLRs, while at the same time acknowledging the impossibility of shouldering all of them and granting reasonable discretion over how one takes them on.

II. Forward-Looking Responsibility

Before turning to strategies for circumventing the accountability problem, let me lay out some of the assumptions that I am taking on board about the nature and scope of FLRs. I will rely on the tradition of theorizing FLR that has its origins in key contributions by Young and Robert Goodin in the context of developing moral frameworks for intervening on structural injustice (Goodin 1996, 1998; Young 2004, 2006, 2011). This approach to FLR is distinct from, though informed by and sometimes relevant for, other philosophical discussions of prospective responsibilities that are borne in virtue of specific roles (such as parental, regulatory, or institutional roles), and also debates over the conceptual

relationship between retrospective and prospective responsibility (van de Poel 2011; Vincent 2011). I do not claim that the accountability problem is an issue for every theory of prospective responsibility; rather, it arises out of a set of specific claims about the scope and demandingness of FLRs to intervene on structural injustices. Since the account of FLR that I consider here closely resembles Young's, it is important to note that Young's theory of FLR appears in the context of her larger project of developing a 'social connection model' of responsibility that is geared towards understanding the responsibility of citizens who contribute indirectly to structural injustice. Broadly speaking, the social connection model is designed for injustices that are *overdetermined* and *cumulative*, and in which it is practically impossible to trace individual contributions, and where participation is often unknowing or undertaken with few, if any, alternatives. These traits each pose impediments to holding individuals liable or culpable for structural injustice, but the social connection model holds that they can still be said to bear FLR.[96]

In what follows, I will assume that FLRs are *responsibilities* that are *prospective, shared,* and *numerous*. Let me expand upon each of these assumptions. First, I will take it as given that FLRs are, in fact, responsibilities. Some have proposed that FLRs are better understood as compelling reasons for joint action, and are not actually obligations (Smyth 2021), effectively circumventing the accountability problem. My goal, however, is to consider ways around the accountability problem that do not involve abandoning the claim that FLRs are responsibilities of some kind. In other words, I aim to show that there is an account of FLRs *qua* responsibilities that is not overburdening to the point that it is impossible to hold others accountable for them.

[96] For more detailed reconstructions of Young's social connection model (including critical appraisals), see Nussbaum (2011); Zheng (2019); Beck (2020); Gunnemyr (2020).

Second, by 'prospective' I mean that FLR is a "task-oriented sort of responsibility" that does not mark culpability or liability (Goodin 1998, 150). Of course, the past is highly relevant for FLR, in that a thorough understanding of material conditions, historical developments, and causal networks is indispensable for devising strategies for intervention.[97] So the word 'forward' in FLR does not denote apathy towards backward-looking considerations, but rather an orientation towards practical action going forward. Several scholars have convincingly applied pressure to a strong conceptual distinction between 'forward-looking' and 'backward-looking' responsibility (Beck 2020, 13; Sangiovanni 2018, 467–9). Many forms of 'backward-looking' responsibility involve assigning prospective obligations, and (according to Young's account) individuals share FLR on the basis of past contributions to structurally unjust systems. But despite reasons for scrutinizing a strong conceptual distinction between forward- and backward-looking responsibility, I understand Young to employ the distinction heuristically to mark the practical *orientation* of assigning FLR, and not solely its justification. This is to say that we can draw a broad distinction between FLR, primarily oriented towards interrupting unjust background conditions, and (many, but not all) forms of backward-looking responsibility that are practically oriented towards adjudicating the moral status of agents. This reading is supported by Young's description of practices of blame and sanctioning as "backward-looking *in their purpose* [my emphasis]" (2011, 98), and her claim that "[t]he primary *purpose* of practices of blame,

[97] "Understanding how structural processes produce and reproduce injustice requires having an account of how they have come about and operated in the past coming up to the present. Having such a backward-looking account also helps those of us who participate in those processes understand our role in them. The purpose of such backward-looking accounts, however, is not to praise or blame, but to help all of us see relationships between particular actions, practices, and policies, on the one hand, and structural outcomes, on the other" (Young 2011, 109).

guilt-finding, or fault-finding… is backward-looking [my emphasis]" (2011, 98), while "we should conceptualize responsibility differently [FLR] for *the purposes* of assigning responsibility for structural injustice [my emphasis]" (2011, 104). Already, if we grant that FLRs are prospective, we are faced with the problem of holding negligent individuals accountable for carrying out their FLRs, since, as Martha Nussbaum points out, it seems strangely as if one could "get a free pass indefinitely" for kicking one's FLRs down the road (Nussbaum 2011, xxi).[98]

Third, a point of agreement among many scholars who adopt, respond to, or revise the social connection model is that FLRs are *shared* across large populations (Medina 2013; Smiley 2014; McKeown 2018; Zheng 2019). The difference between shared responsibility and collective responsibility is that shared responsibility is distributed to each member of a group, while collective responsibility is assigned to a group *qua* collective, and is therefore "nondistributional" (May 1992, 38). This means that FLRs are borne by individuals, but concern collective action. Granting this, in what follows I will focus on individual negligence with regard to shared responsibilities, as opposed to collective failures. Because shared FLRs concern both individual and collective agency, the accountability practices that typically adhere to individual negligence do not fit cleanly. This is to ask how it is possible to hold individuals accountable for their FLRs over and above accountability practices that fall on collectives of which they are a part.

[98] Smyth argues that Nussbaum's criticism is unfair, in that she relies upon "the very conceptual scheme that Young is trying to complicate" (Smyth 2021, 581). Nussbaum and others, Smyth thinks, are led wrong by "failing to appreciate that Young's [FLR] is indexical" (Smyth 2021, 581). By 'indexical,' Smyth means that "its truth-conditions change depending on the time at which the responsibility judgment is made," much like the word 'now' or 'tomorrow' (2021, 580). Even granting this point, however, Nussbaum's critique still has important stakes for the practical application of FLRs.

Fourth, FLRs are also *numerous*: there are as many of them as there are structural injustices, and many individuals bear multiple FLRs simultaneously. Because the conditions for bearing FLR are relatively modest, in that merely contributing subtly and indirectly to cumulative structural injustice is sufficient, one bears as many FLRs as there are structural injustices towards which one contributes.[99] In Robin Zheng's words:

> Homelessness, hunger, unemployment, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, not to mention war, occupation, imperialism – all of these are structural injustices that command our moral attention. Each of us is causally implicated in these injustices through the ineluctable everyday actions we perform to provide for ourselves and others…. Because justice is ongoing and ubiquitous – because it makes up the very fabric of the current social world in which we are all enmeshed – it is simply not possible for anyone to ever "clean" her slate. (Zheng 2019, 111)

Structural injustices and their concomitant FLRs are virtually omnipresent, leading Maeve McKeown to go so far as to say that "in the contemporary world our political responsibility is limitless" (2018, 500). But in the face of unending political obligations, accountability is a problem. If falling short of this limitless responsibility is inevitable, when is one negligent?

To be sure, each of these four assumptions about FLR are open to criticism, and there are worthy alternative accounts of FLR and revisions of Young's social connection model that break from them, at least partially.[100] But many scholars of FLR and the social connection model, as well as those who draw upon the concept of FLR in applied contexts, continue to maintain that FLRs are responsibilities that are prospective, shared, and numerous. In what follows, I aim to show that accountability is possible even if we

[99] For criticism of the view that 'participation' is sufficient for bearing FLR, see Gunnemyr (2020). Gunnemyr offers a more nuanced set of possible grounds for FLR, including causal or moral responsibility, benefit, capacity, and communal ties.
[100] See, for example, Gunnemyr's account of pro tanto obligations (Gunnemyr 2020), Beck's theory of 'structural responsibility' (Beck 2020), and Zheng's 'role-ideal model' (Zheng 2018).

preserve these axioms about FLR. Below, I reconstruct four possible strategies for circumventing the accountability problem. Some of these strategies are often deployed together in critical scholarship, but I take them up separately in order to assess the ground that each strategy gains on the accountability problem.

III. Getting Around the Accountability Problem

There are at least four strategies for circumventing the accountability problem: 1) endorsing alternative accountability practices other than blame; 2) reducing the number of FLRs; 3) tempering the demandingness of FLRs; and 4) reconceiving of FLRs as imperfect duties. This section motivates the first three of these strategies, and highlights some of the complications that arise from each, as well as the ways in which they fall short of fully addressing the accountability problem. To be clear, my analysis of these strategies will focus solely on whether or not they help us to gain ground on the accountability problem, and so I will remain neutral on the question of if there are other compelling reasons to adopt these strategies beyond concerns about overburdening and accountability. In the next section, I argue that it is the fourth strategy – reconceiving of FLRs as imperfect duties – that brings us closest to a theory of accountability for FLR.

Alternative Accountability Practices

A first strategy around the accountability problem is to endorse accountability practices other than blame. When we fail to take on an FLR, one could say, we ought not be found morally blameworthy, although we can still be criticized and challenged. Young, for example, takes this approach when she argues that most, if not all of us lack the moral grounds to blame others for avoiding their FLRs because practically everyone defers the vast majority of their FLRs on a daily basis. Instead of blame, Young endorses a host of

alternative accountability practices, including criticism (2011, 144, 150–1, 153, 165), pressure (2011, 126, 133–4, 144–5, 149, 151, 153), shaming (2011, 149), publicizing and public debate (2011, 125, 133–4, 144–5, 149–50, 169, 183), and making demands (2011, 122, 126, 134, 149–51). These practices, according to Young, are less likely to give rise to unproductive resentment and defensiveness, as well as the tendency to focus attention on the past instead of organizing and generating actionable solutions (2011, 117). According to Young, even when one does not react defensively, practices of blame often lead people to "become more focused on themselves, their past actions, the state of their souls and their character, than on the structures that require change," which "distract[s] us from discussing more objectively how social structures operate, how our actions contribute to them, and what can be done to change them" (2011, 118). The thought here is that tempering the severity of accountability practices could alleviate some of the burden of inevitably falling short of one's FLRs. In this line of thinking, although we are open to criticism for our shirked FLRs, we are not saddled with unavoidable moral culpability.

However, this strategy alone does not solve the accountability problem. For one thing, as Smyth argues, there are good reasons to suspect that criticism, public pressure, and shaming are likely to prompt defensive resentment in much the same way that blame does (Smyth 2021, 584). And even granting that blame for shirking FLRs is practically inadvisable, it is not clear why blame for shirking FLRs would be inappropriate in principle. After all, as Gunnemyr points out, one can be blameworthy for falling short of responsibilities that one bears nonculpably, like role responsibilities (2020, 579). "[I]f Young were to concede this point," Gunnemyr notes, "she would lose one counter-

argument to the charges that [the social connection model] is… overly demanding" (2020, 579). So this strategy falls short in several ways: empirically, it is doubtful that alternative accountability practices are more productive than blame, and we would still wake up each morning with far more criticism, pressure, and shaming than we could ever answer to; and, additionally, it seems like it should be possible to culpably shirk FLRs in principle.

Reducing the Number of FLRs

A second strategy to avoid being overburdened by FLRs is to propose stricter conditions under which individuals can be said to bear FLRs, and clarify the conditions under which individuals are excused from them. Gunnemyr, for example, argues that it is too broad to say that those who 'participate' in unjust systems bear FLR to intervene on them. Instead, Gunnemyr disambiguates several distinct grounds for bearing pro tanto obligations to respond to structural injustice, including causal contribution, moral responsibility, direct capacity to intervene, enrichment on account of the injustice, or community ties with victims of the injustice (Gunnemyr 2020). This provides a more exacting rubric by which to assign FLR, potentially relieving individuals of FLR who would otherwise bear it under a basic 'participation' account.

Establishing exception conditions could also effectively reduce the number of FLRs that individuals bear simultaneously, plausibly resulting in fewer, more actionable FLRs, and ameliorating the problem of intra-FLR interference. One might question, for example, whether it makes sense to say that *everyone* who contributes causally towards unjust systems and structures shares FLR for intervening upon them, since this entails the counterintuitive view that even those most harmed by structural injustice, but who

participate within unjust systems, bear FLR. This criticism is raised, for example, by Carol Gould, who argues that even if victims can be said to bear FLR "on a very abstract level…. [H]olding [victims] responsible, while perhaps not amounting to 'blaming the victim'… seems unfair to them, since the systems that dominate them are not of their choosing" (Gould 2009, 203). Gould goes on to argue both that Young's popular account of FLR holds "the *wrong people* responsible" and also "*too many* people responsible" (2009, 203). Of course, Young provides basic 'parameters of reasoning' – power, privilege, interest, and collective ability – that suggest, for example, that victims of structural injustice ought to bear less responsibility than more affluent contributors. But what is at stake here is the question of who can be said to bear FLR in the first place, not what their distributed duties are.

Although I think both Gunnemyr and Gould are right to clarify the conditions under which one could be said to bear FLR, these modifications do not solve the accountability problem. Even we excuse victims from FLRs relating to the injustice that harms them, or more carefully apply multiple criteria for bearing FLR, it is still the case that the vast majority of global citizens will bear large numbers of mutually exclusive FLRs, if only because "the very acts of feeding, clothing, sheltering, and caring oblige us to participate in globally exploitative structural processes" (Zheng 2019, 111). Setting stricter, more nuanced conditions for who bears FLR might, at best, reduce the number of people for whom the accountability problem is a problem. But it leaves the fundamental issue of how to conceive of accountability for insurmountable, concurrent, and mutually exclusive responsibilities untouched.

Tempering the Demandingness of FLRs

A third strategy is to temper the content of FLRs in order to make it reasonable to discharge many FLRs simultaneously. Here, we might ask: What does it mean to 'shirk' an FLR? The scholarship on FLRs sometimes is at cross-purposes due to a lack of clarity on this point. For example, Nussbaum and Zheng appear to disagree over the appropriateness of blame for shirking FLRs, but upon closer examination their respective positions refer to different failures and are compatible in principle: Nussbaum argues that it is excessively permissive to refrain from blaming agents who "have failed to shoulder" their FLRs (Nussbaum 2011, xxi), while Zheng argues that it is excessive to blame individuals for their "failures to discharge responsibilities" (Zheng 2019, 111). This leaves the morality of shouldering, but failing to discharge a responsibility unclear.

Here are two general forms that shirking can take: (1) the failure to bring about a state of affairs through collective efforts, and (2) the failure to do one's part in collective efforts. To be clear, these are not the only ways to shirk FLR, and in the conclusion I note a third form of shirking that warrants future attention, which is that of ineffective or counterproductive contributions. (Alternatively, this third kind of shirking could be understood as a dysfunctional form of shouldering FLR.) I will call the first kind of shirking 'failure to discharge' and the second kind 'failure to shoulder.' This distinction lines up roughly with the difference between obligations in which "what you ought to do is achieve the outcome" and obligations in which "what you ought to do is perform the act" (Goodin 2012, 20). It is not always clear which 'ought' is at play in scholarship about FLR – does FLR oblige one to bring about a state of affairs, or does it oblige one to do one's part by taking actions that contribute towards a shared aim?

Under the first sense of failing to obtain an outcome, our FLRs are patently overburdening, even if there are relatively few of them. This is because bringing about wholesale structural change lies beyond the capacities of even the most powerful and well-resourced individuals. But the second sense of failing to *shoulder* one's share is a relatively lower bar, since shouldering is a more modest task than unilaterally transforming unjust background conditions. If we clarify that FLRs are duties to shoulder, as opposed to duties to discharge, can we get around the accountability problem?

Unfortunately, no. Even if one sets a quite modest minimum requirement of what it means to shoulder FLR, as in a threshold of action or effort above which one has shouldered and under which one has shirked, it is still overburdening to expect that an individual will shoulder *all* of her FLRs. Consider, for example, if the minimum requirements for shouldering amount to communicating one's conditional or hypothetical willingness to coordinate with others with whom one could ostensibly join with in the future. This approach to shouldering is in line with what Stephanie Collins calls 'coordination duties,' or obligations "to be responsible to the others [in a group] with a view to [an] outcome" (Collins 2019b, 117). Shouldering, by this standard, could consist of communicating expectations and intentions, giving or following instructions, anticipating others actions, and requesting that others participate in collective efforts.

Even though signaling conditional responsiveness falls well within most individuals' capacities, regardless of whether or not they are actually in a situation to act at a specific moment, it is hard to see how one could reasonably communicate willingness to coordinate for each and every FLR that one bears, since the demands of each will interfere with the others. This is to say nothing of the other kinds of

responsibilities and obligations that (rightfully) occupy high positions in our implicit moral triages – role responsibilities, filial duties, situational obligations, and the like. We do not typically expect others to exhaust all of their time and resources in the pursuit of their responsibilities, and many scholars have pointed out that it is rational and morally permissible for individuals to prioritize their own interests and ends over those of others in a way that is "disproportionate to the weight of those projects as assessed from an impersonal point of view" (Cordelli 2018, 374n), or to prioritize themselves over others when faced with inordinately burdensome tasks (Scheffler 1982, 20). Even setting the bar as low as merely communicating a hypothetical willingness to coordinate, then, it is still unreasonable to sanction individuals for discrete failures to shoulder a particular FLR.

IV. Recasting FLRs as Imperfect Duties

Perhaps an exception to this last claim is the case of an individual who unambiguously fails to shoulder *any* of her FLRs, and who has the demonstrable capacity to do so (or at least to shoulder one), while, at the same time, lacking other interfering obligations. In practice, it can be difficult to reliably discern between such individuals and others who deprioritize FLRs due to the demands of contingency or a lack of resources. But the fact that our knowledge about each other's commitments, obligations, priorities, and resources is limited, however, does not mean that it is impossible in principle for an individual to be culpable for shirking. I agree with the moral intuition that such a person is culpable. But she is not culpable for a discrete instance of shirking an FLR for the same reasons given above – namely, that the sum total of her FLRs are so demanding that no matter whether she acts upon some or not, shirking most of her FLRs is inevitable. In

short, she seems to be culpable in some way, even despite the fact that her discrete omissions are nonculpable.

I propose that we understand this individual's culpability in terms of *moral laxity*. This brings us to a fourth strategy, which is to conceive of FLRs as imperfect duties. Perfect duties have determinate content (what is to be done) and objects (the persons towards which the duty is carried out) (Buchanan 1996, 28). By contrast, imperfect duties oblige the adoption of specific ends, but afford significant discretion as to how, when, where, to whom, and to what extent those ends are pursued. Such duties "demand that certain ends be promoted, but they leave some 'playroom' or 'latitude' for free choice as to the specific way of promoting these ends" (Loriaux 2017, 83-84). To take a standard example, the imperfect duty of charity does not stipulate to whom one ought to give, or how much, or how often. Moreover, a single instance of non-giving does not mean that one has failed in one's imperfect duty. Rather, failures to uphold one's imperfect duties can only be detected across longer stretches of time as patterns of behavior emerge.

Perfect and imperfect duties give rise to different forms of moral failure. In Kant's words, the "failure to fulfill [imperfect duties] is not in itself *culpability*… but rather mere *deficiency in moral worth*" (1996, 521 [6:390]). Kant adds the caveat that a subject *is* culpable for the failure to fulfill imperfect duties if that subject "make[s] it his principle not to comply with such duties" – that is, if she willfully adopts countervailing ends (1996, 521 [6:390]). Buchanan names the failures of perfect and imperfect duties 'moral backsliding' and 'moral laxity,' respectively:

> Moral backsliding is failure to comply with what one perceives to be a determinate duty. Moral laxity… refers to a more subtle moral failure which generally can only be ascertained if a temporally extended view is taken of an agent's actions. … To conclude that I have been morally

> lax, I need not be aware of an instance in which I failed to carry through on a resolution to perform a particular action that I believed myself duty-bound to do. Instead, I may simply – and correctly – conclude that I have not done enough over the years to further certain moral goals whose worthiness I recognized. (Buchanan 1996, 31)

Judgments of moral laxity diagnose patterns of behavior that indicate a refusal or failure to take on ethical ends as one's own. The key point here is that, as in the case above, one can be rightly judged morally lax even without being blameworthy for the discrete omissions that cumulatively provide evidence for that judgment. The view that discrete instances of shirking imperfect duties do not render the shirker blameworthy is openly endorsed, for example, by Theresa Scavenius with regard to imperfect environmental duties:

> [W]e have reason to excuse democratic citizens from their omissions if they are related to imperfect duties. This is not an argument that imperfect duties are morally permissible or that democratic citizens are not obliged to fulfill their imperfect duties in the same manner as they fulfill perfect duties. To accept the moral significance of imperfect duties is only to say that democratic citizens frequently face difficulties in fulfilling their imperfect duties due to the uncertainty and imprecise character of those duties. It is also to say that these difficulties should be considered morally significant and hence reasons for morally excusing people for their omissions. (Scavenius 2018, 14)

This is to say that judgments of moral laxity are not sanctions for failing to act on specific occasions. Rather, they are a form of aretaic judgment concerning "the question of what activities and ways of life are most choiceworthy" (Watson 1996, 231).[101]

Recasting FLRs as imperfect duties provides us with one form of moral sanction that is fitting even if we will inevitably fail to shoulder all of our FLRs, and goes far towards defusing the accountability problem. Generally speaking, most of our FLRs will take the form of imperfect duties – bearers of FLR have the responsibility to adopt the

[101] Watson explicitly argues that negative aretaic assessment is a form of moral blame (1996, 231).

ends of changing unjust structural conditions in coordination with others. In a given day, or even a given year, most of us will not act upon all, or even most, of our FLRs. In some cases, our friends, peers, and fellow citizens may detect in us symptoms of apathy towards structural change, or patterns of behavior, expression, and disposition that signal a failure to adopt the ends of justice. In such cases, judgments of moral laxity provide a way to hold serial shirkers – understood here as individuals who fail to adopt requisite ends – accountable. Moreover, on a practical note, moral laxity is not a foregone conclusion in the way that failing to discharge or shoulder FLRs is, and so there is no reason to think that individuals making judgments of moral laxity will inevitably do so hypocritically or without moral standing.

One could object that reframing FLRs as imperfect duties risks affording *too much* discretion to certain individuals (and collectives) that have determinate role responsibilities. It would be strange, for example, to say that an inspector of workplace safety who shares in the FLR to respond to labor injustice has significant latitude as to how and whether she contributes to collective efforts to intervene upon systems of labor exploitation; surely the contents and objects of her duties are quite determinate. The same could be said for members of legislative bodies with the power and opportunity to enact policy changes. Such members are not excused from their determinate responsibilities to vote on, for example, proposed housing equity legislation on the basis that they are too busy with other, less actionable FLRs.

Here are two answers to this objection. First, FLRs can 'stack' with determinate obligations, much in the same way that imperfect duties can stack with perfect ones. It makes sense to say, for example, that a senior philanthropy officer for institutional giving

at a large corporation can simultaneously bear the imperfect duty of charity, and also (once an institutional decision is made) the determinate duty of giving a specific amount of money to a specific cause. The latitude afforded by the philanthropy officer's imperfect duties does not excuse the officer from determinate role responsibilities. In the same way, a workplace safety inspector can simultaneously bear the duty to inspect a particular factory at Wednesday at 9am, and also the imperfect duty to adopt moral ends related to transforming unjust labor systems.

Second, as Robin Zheng argues, some roles carry obvious affinities for particular FLRs such that individuals who occupy salient social or institutional roles (and thereby have inordinate capacities to intervene on specific structural injustices) may have more urgent obligations to adopt the aims stipulated by the FLRs associated with those injustices (Zheng 2018, 879). Put another way, FLRs can become more perfect – that is, more urgent and determinate – depending upon the social situatedness of their bearers. The suggestion here is that one's role responsibilities modulate the priority of our FLRs, to the point that one can be obliged to go beyond what is normally required to minimally satisfy one's role responsibilities. Zheng characterizes these sharpened, role-specific FLRs as obligations to undertake one's roles with 'raised consciousness' so as to "push the boundaries of [one's] social roles" in the pursuit of morally valued ends (Zheng 2018, 877). For example, over and above the determinate duties associated with the role of a senior official in a federal environmental protection agency, Zheng might argue that such an official also has obligations to "strive towards a role-ideal" (2018, 878). Such a role ideal can be developed through "critical reflection on the purposes and aims of the role, how it might be modified to better achieve them, what auxiliary roles should be created

or modified, and how to collaborate with others possessing similar aims" (2018, 878). In this sense, FLRs not only stack with role responsibilities, but can also intensify and sharpen them.

One might also object that even when FLRs are understood as obligations to adopt ends, they are still overburdening due to the sheer number of structural injustices. The tightrope here is this: on one side, setting too high a bar for what qualifies as 'adopting an end' risks making even imperfect FLRs overburdening; and on the other side, too low a bar risks making imperfect FLRs immaterial and overly-abstract. A great deal hinges on what it means to 'adopt' an end – adoption needs to be meaningful enough to matter, but not so demanding that it overburdens when extrapolated to numerous FLRs. In the account I am proposing, adopting an end can take a variety of different forms and varying amounts of effort. Here, it makes sense to draw upon the language introduced in Chapter 3 to describe the endorsement of principles and normative relations over one's practical identity: to adopt an end is to *self-apply* that end as reason-giving. Adopting an end, like self-applying a normative relation, can be accomplished through conscious avowal and resolution-making, but also through implicit commitment to behaviors, public expression and communication, coordination, heightened consciousness, and even mere recognition of an end's moral significance. Just as there are many ways to adopt the ends of charity, there are many ways to adopt the ends of one's FLRs. Adopting the end of ethical labor systems for garment workers, for example, could take the form of spreading awareness of structural harms, holding oneself to principles of ethical consumption, affirming and expressing its moral significance, or even simply bearing witness to the harms inflicted. Even such basic gestures of

recognition of and respect for harms suffered can amount to the adoption of an end as reason-giving, in much the same way that someone without resources can adopt the imperfect duty of charity by recognizing and affirming its moral significance as an end.

To be sure, it is sometimes difficult to discern whether someone has adopted an end. But at other times it is not. Open expressions of apathy with regard to a structural injustice, patterns of behavior that needlessly exacerbate that injustice, and habits of disregard and/or willful ignorance with regard to that injustice can provide good evidence that someone has failed (or refused) to adopt the end of intervening upon that injustice. We cannot transparently perceive the constraints that others face, or how their time, resources, and energy are already allocated. But judgments of moral laxity are not prison sentences, or final judgments over one's moral status. Rather, they are opportunities for dialogue and discussion around how we ought to use the resources at our disposal given a surfeit of deserving causes. Engaging in both sides of these conversations – about one's own conduct as well as that of others – is part of what it means to be accountable for structural injustice.

V. Conclusion

Recasting FLRs as imperfect duties explains how it is that bearers of FLRs can be blameless with regard to specific omissions or failures (except, as noted above, in cases of salient role responsibilities), and also why serial shirkers are appropriate targets of blame in the form of judgments of moral laxity. This account offers one way to hold others accountable for their (many) FLRs, while also recognizing that FLRs are cumulatively demanding. We can appeal to moral laxity when individuals consistently fail to adopt the ends of their FLRs, and when individuals occupy certain powerful or

salient roles, failures to shoulder FLR can amount to culpable negligence that warrants more straightforward practices of blame. This account does not specify what sanctions are appropriate for specific omissions or persons. But it does defuse the accountability problem, in that it shows that we can coherently preserve the vast scope of our FLRs, understood as prospective, shared, and numerous responsibilities, while leaving open the prospect that we are accountable for them.

Allowing for mere recognition to count as the adoption of an end might lead some to object that FLRs do not ask much of us at all. I think this is wrong – even imperfect FLRs are *extremely* demanding, to the point that they may well need tempering by additional exculpating conditions. As argued above, our social situatedness bears on the urgency and content of our FLRs, such that it is insufficient to merely recognize or bear witness (or otherwise minimally adopt the requisite ends) for *all* of our FLRs; some of our FLRs, depending on who we are, demand more substantive forms of adoption. 'Weak' adoption is a baseline, and may not be sufficient given our behavior, capacities, expertise, and influence over specific structural injustices.

At bottom, I have proposed that those of us who live within and contribute to structurally unjust systems have, at the very least, moral obligations to recognize the harm caused by those systems, and to orient ourselves – socially, psychologically, materially, hypothetically, and politically – towards ameliorating those harms. This is, I think, a substantial demand. It requires that we seek out information about the systems in which we participate; that we remain attentive to structural precipitators of harm; that we listen to the perspectives of victims, many of whom are at an epistemic advantage when it comes to recognizing the harms of structural injustice; and that we ask ourselves whether

there are more substantive actions that we can undertake given our roles and situatedness. In a word, FLRs broadly demand that we take on political responsibility for ones way of life, and for those with whom one is bound in ways of living.

Does FLR have an accountability problem? Certainly, in that it is always going to be difficult to motivate others to do their part in collective efforts to address structural injustice. Debate over how to best organize large groups of people is an important step towards realizing the practical potential of FLRs. But this substantial challenge is not a conceptual weakness. So long as we understand FLRs to be imperfect duties, the tension at the center of the accountability problem abates.

In addition to the failure to shoulder and the failure to discharge, it is worth acknowledging a third form of shirking FLR that I have not explored in this article: that of ineffective or counterproductive action. One can adopt the aim to intervene on a structural injustice, but pursue that aim in an inadvisable or detrimental way. Young specifically notes that individuals can be criticized for "taking ineffective action, or taking action that is counterproductive," but leaves a great deal unclarified as to how to distinguish between ineffective action and strategic disagreements (Young 2011, 144). Furthermore, how one acts upon her FLRs can interfere or constrain another's efforts to do the same. There is not space here to provide a thorough analysis of the culpability of shirkers of this third variety, but, as is often the case in assessments of moral responsibility, one can expect that the conditions surrounding instances of counterproductive shouldering are of the utmost importance, including epistemic conditions – is the individual aware that her strategy is suboptimal? – and control conditions – was the counterproductive effect due to factors outside of the subject's

control? A worthy challenge for scholars of FLR is to clarify when misguided efforts towards one's FLRs tip over into self-serving complicity and/or willful ignorance. Addressing *that* accountability problem will likely prove more challenging than the accountability problem that I have attempted to defuse here.

CONCLUSION

Throughout these five chapters I have drawn from resources in social epistemology, moral psychology, feminist ethics, and phenomenology in order to explore the possibility for affective experiences to bring new moral and political possibilities to our attention. I began with a reconstruction and development of Arendt's theory of *thaumazein*, which opens the way for critically reassessing moral and legal frameworks for responsibility in the wake of World War II. I next introduced a novel reactive attitude, 'social-regret,' and devoted three chapters to understanding typical features of central cases, its epistemic action tendencies, the relations that serve as its vectors, and possible moral outcomes that follow from it. I argued that social-regret pulls our attention towards the moral salience of our social relations, and can open the way for taking accountability for others' harms in a myriad of ways. To explain what makes us susceptible to social-regret, I proposed a theory of practical identity in which the self-application of normatively integral relations opens one to negative, self-directed emotions on account of those relations. Finally, I raised the problem of coherently holding others accountable for forward-looking responsibilities (one of the most politically salient forms of responsibility discussed in Chapter 4) and proposed that negligence with regard to forward-looking responsibilities is best understood as a form of moral laxity for imperfect duties.

I see this project as providing a basis for future research into what it would mean to habituate oneself to moral emotions like *thaumazein* and social-regret. If *thaumazein* and social-regret can bring about politically and morally salient epistemic and conative outcomes, as I have argued, then how might we cultivate a predisposition to feeling them in ourselves and in others? Put another way, what would it mean to make room for

thaumazein or social-regret in one's own life and community? More to the point, do we have a duty to do so?

The position that I develop above regarding what it means to feel implicated in and accountable for others' harms sets the stage for a subsequent theory of emotional habituation to *thaumazein* and social-regret. A notable historical precedent for such a theory can be found in the writing of Hans Jonas, a peer of Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers. In *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Jonas argues that we are morally obliged to sensitize ourselves to a "spiritual sort of fear" for the well-being of future generations: "Such an attitude must be cultivated; we must educate our soul to a willingness to *let* itself be affected by the mere thought of possible fortunes and calamities of future generations" (Jonas 1985, 28). By becoming responsive to 'spiritual' fear through deliberate self-conditioning, one comes to recognize the rights and responsibilities of not-yet existent humans. Developing an 'emotional readiness' to fear for future humans is, for Jonas, the precondition of taking accountability for the world that one will pass on to them, and for making political decisions on the basis of a 'fictive contemporaneity' by which we grant rights not only to those now living, but also to those who come after us.

The overarching normative framework of Jonas' project – a phenomenologically-informed revision of a virtue ethics of emotion – could be adapted to both *thaumazein* and social-regret. To cultivate 'emotional readiness' for these emotions might mean unlearning myths of autonomous selfhood and scrutinizing the instinctive rejection of self-directed, negative moral emotions in the context of harms brought about by others. It would also mean thinking of oneself as a fundamentally relational being who is morally burdened by others' choices, and who similarly burdens others. Something much like the

unnamed virtue of holding oneself open to such self-directed emotions on account of others' conduct is implicitly discernible in, for example, the practice of reminding school children on a field trip that their behavior is representative of their entire school. It is the virtue of seeing oneself as inextricably entangled with others, for better or for worse. Conceptual accounts of *thaumazein* and social-regret (such as those presented above) can contribute to this way of seeing oneself and allow us to recognize the emotions of an affiliated onlooker as rational, fitting, expressive, and reason-giving, instead of merely what Smith might call 'irregularities' of sentiment.

APPENDIX I

May 12, 2016

Dear Mr. President,

One of the hardest days of my life was visiting Hiroshima. It wasn't at all abstract - it was personal. No, I didn't know anyone who died there. Except all of them.

My father was an engineer on the Manhattan Project. The one-ounce gold medal he was awarded attests to the importance of his contributions, and he cherished that to his dying day more than fifty years later. We were brought up to be proud of what our father did - and to the end he truly believed that the Manhattan Project was the only way to stop the hellish bleeding of the Pacific war. He probably was right.

Nevertheless, for years I carried a deep guilt - it's SO easy in retrospect to see what was wrong with the decision to make and use such a weapon. As an historian, though, I reject the idea that anyone - given the evidence at the time - would decide NOT to explore every path that would end the bloody island-hopping across the Pacific, and what would have, in all likelihood, been a catastrophic invasion of Japan itself. But it's not that easy in emotional terms.

I was 47 when we moved to Japan in 2004, and we spent a challenging three years learning to love and respect that culture. I became friends with a number of Japanese, but never disclosed my family's connection to the Manhattan Project, because I found it hard to reconcile the people we had come to know and respect with the history of what had been. It wasn't until we had a firm exit date that I confronted the necessity - the obligation - to go to Hiroshima.

When we arrived it was sunny, and, typically for Japan in June, a sudden downpour moved in swiftly. Our first photos of the A-dome show roses in bloom, and within minutes the next blossoms visible were umbrellas. Despite the weather, groups of school kids ran around with the abandon that only children can have in such a place.

I didn't cry - the rain did it for me.

The burned out remnants should be reminders - as Coventry Cathedral is a reminder - that war is ultimately wasteful of all that is good. The greatest sadness that I have come to feel was that it ever came to such an impasse. And, oddly enough, I no longer feel guilty.

Please, Mr. President, don't sell the subtlety and horrors of history short. I trust you to be the voice of the United States. Sound bites don't allow for subtlety, which is a great sadness, but I will be listening for your voice through the rain.

I thank you for all you have done for the good of our nation.

Lucy Winters Durkin

The White House
Washington

December 1, 2016

Mrs. Lucy Winters Durkin
Victor, New York

Dear Lucy:

I personally read the email you sent me before my visit to Hiroshima, and I wanted to take a moment to reach out and thank you for sharing your reflections.

I believe by understanding the past, we can secure a more peaceful future. You are not alone in the grief you feel for the people of Hiroshima - individuals who you did not know but were bound to in common humanity. We must never allow the lessons we've learned to fade. Knowing our history helps us fight complacency, fuels our moral imaginations, and emboldens us to be better.

While we may not be able to eliminate man's capacity to do evil, we must have the courage to escape the courage to escape the pull of fear. If we come together to bridge differences, we can ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again.

Thank you, again, for writing. I appreciate your sharing your and your father's story with me, and your message will remain on my mind.

Sincerely,
Barack Obama

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