

REACTIVE ATTITUDES BORNE TOWARDS THE SELF

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Reactive Attitudes Borne Towards the Self

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In developing my moral compass, I became increasingly aware of people explaining morality as it pertains to others, but not as it pertains to themselves. Indeed, moral philosophy tends to approach morality as an *interpersonal* not an *intrapersonal* enterprise. In particular, it reflects on moral emotions like blame and resentment borne towards others but not towards the self. This thesis develops an account of moral emotions directed towards the self. The first chapter examines reactive attitudes directed to the self, arguing that I can hold reactive attitudes not just towards others but also towards myself. From there, I will provide an explanation as to why reactive attitudes borne towards the self has been overlooked by examining the relationship between one's reactive attitudes and one's conscience. The second chapter will analyze the morality of actions directed towards oneself. I will argue that it is possible to morally wrong myself through my actions. The final chapter will draw from each of the prior chapters to answer the question: is self-castigation ever fitting? I will explain how it is sometimes appropriate to sanction myself for my actions that wrong myself. The overarching thesis illuminates reactive attitudes towards the self, the relation between the conscience and reactive attitudes, the ability

of a person to wrong themselves, and the connection of these ideas in sanctioning the self. The paper expands the contemporary discussion of reactive attitudes by adopting an introspective point of view. It gestures towards questions about the ability of sanctioning the self and about the concept of self-release.

DEDICATION

To my father for giving me the tools to grow in knowledge and understanding,

&

To my mother for teaching me to question the facts and to determine my own truth.

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Contributors

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophers typically examine morality as it pertains to our interactions with the people around us. Specifically, the conversation regarding morally charged emotions called *reactive attitudes* focuses on our emotional reactions to actions that directly affect us. For example, I am walking with a friend and they decide to intentionally trip me into some prickly bushes. I feel anger towards my friend and blame them for the harm they have caused me. The blame I feel is a reactive attitude directed towards my friend. The common theory behind reactive attitudes (which I will refer to as common theory for the duration of the paper) focuses on the relationships we have with other individuals that are not ourselves. I question the reasoning behind this focus and seek to understand reactive attitudes as they pertain to the self.

The reactive attitudes we hold towards others are found in our interpersonal relationships. *Interpersonal* relationships are social bonds that hold that tie us to others. For example, the relationship I hold with my mother is an interpersonal relationship, in this sense. This is different from our *intrapersonal* relationships. Intrapersonal relationships are specifically the relationship we have with ourselves. By this I mean, I have an intrapersonal relationship with myself, and you have an intrapersonal relationship with yourself. Philosophers focus almost solely on our interpersonal relationships with very little acknowledgement to our intrapersonal relationship. I believe inquiry into reactive attitudes should invert this priority. There is a very old saying that dictates one should ‘do unto others as you want done upon you.’ It suggests that to understand the morality of interpersonal relationships, we must first understand the morality of intrapersonal relationships. From this understanding, we can argue how we should treat others.

The first step of understanding our intrapersonal relationships as they pertain to reactive attitudes is examining the presence of self-borne reactive attitudes. Do self-borne reactive attitudes exist? If so, why have they been overlooked? I propose that these reactive attitudes do exist, and that they have been overlooked due to their connection with the conscience. Because self-borne reactive attitudes exist and because the presence of a reactive attitude often indicates the existence of a moral obligation, these reactive attitudes seem to imply that moral obligations in our intrapersonal relationships also exist. This is because negative reactive attitudes arise when a moral obligation is (perceived to have been) violated. If we have moral obligations to the self, can we wrong ourselves with our actions? I argue that we can wrong ourselves with our actions in violating moral obligations to ourselves. Furthermore, when we wrong ourselves, can we make up for the wronged actions? By this I am asking: can we sanction ourselves for wronged actions committed against ourselves? I explain that we can sanction ourselves to make up for wronging ourselves. We begin by deepening our understanding of reactive attitudes as they pertain.

1. CAN I HOLD REACTIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MYSELF?

On a Monday afternoon, I was sitting on my front porch enjoying the beautiful spring air. A friend sitting next to me started discussing how she hopes to improve herself over the next few weeks through self-motivation and productivity. She decided the best way to accomplish this goal was to take a pledge of sobriety. I agreed with her and decided to take the pledge of sobriety as well, and that we were going to hold each other accountable. In this pledge, we set for ourselves an expectation to not drink alcohol for the next few weeks. If I was to break the pledge, then she can blame me for not meeting our mutually set expectation. Therefore, my friend would feel the reactive attitude of blame towards me for wronging her by breaking our pledge.

I'm interested in a different but closely related question: what happens if we change this scenario by removing my friend from the story? Now, it is just me making a pledge to myself and holding myself accountable for the expectation. Could I blame myself for breaking the pledge of sobriety? In other words, can I hold reactive attitudes towards myself?

In this section, I will argue that reactive attitudes can be borne towards the self. In sections 1.1 and 1.2, I examine background information essential to understanding reactive attitudes and the conscience. Section 1.3 presents some thought experiments to support the above claim that I can hold reactive attitudes towards myself. Sections 1.4 and 1.5 will provide an explanation for why reactive attitudes borne towards the self have been overlooked by discussing them as they pertain to the conscience. In particular, I will walk through cases that focus on the connection between the conscience and reactive attitudes. In section 1.6, I will conclude by examining how the argument resists possible counter arguments and by presenting broader implications of the thesis.

1.1 Background Information Regarding Reactive Attitudes

Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment" introduces the idea of reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes are emotional states that engage people as objects that deserve a reaction to their actions --- that is, as moral agents. It is an innate emotional reaction that results from our perceptions of other people's actions. Common reactive attitudes that express the moral expectations distinctive of moral agents include gratitude and blame. For example, Rachel is blamed for running over Monica's new purse with her car. The reactive attitude of blame felt by Monica towards Rachel is a natural reaction to Rachel's action of destroying Monica's belongings. In contrast with blame, a person can have gratitude as a reactive attitude. Chandler helps an old lady cross the street, and the old lady feels gratitude towards Chandler for helping her. The feeling of gratitude is an emotion produced by recognition of Chandler's kind actions as the product of his agency. A person is praised when they have done a good deed or blamed when they have done a wrong deed. Both the feelings of gratitude and blame are examples of reactive attitudes. Strawson continues on to list resentment, forgiveness, anger, and love as other examples of reactive attitudes.¹ For the sake of this section, I will focus on gratitude.

Our capacity to bear partly constitutes our states as moral agents, at least insofar as we understand agency as the capacity to hold others morally accountable and to ourselves be held to account. An innate quality is a trait an individual was born with and remains constant throughout the duration of their life. Innate qualities can be broken down into four categories, but only one type is relevant for reactive attitudes. According to this type, innate traits are produced by particular patterns of interaction between genes and the environment.² Reactive attitudes, such as

¹ Strawson (1980)

² "The Distinction Between Innate and Acquired Characteristics" by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

blame or pride, fall into this pattern of interaction we have with individuals. Going back to the beginning story, my friend blamed me for breaking our pledge. The reaction she had to our interaction was innate. She was born with the ability to react with reactive attitudes. So, when I broke the pledge, the feeling of blame towards me came naturally. The same can be said for the reactive attitude of gratitude. If a random stranger helps me with my groceries, I feel grateful to them. The gratitude I feel was not learned, but was a natural reaction to my interaction with the stranger. Therefore, reactive attitudes are an innate quality that individuals naturally possess qua moral agents in their interactions.

Another important distinction for this section is the difference between reactive attitudes and moods. Reactive attitudes, as discussed above, have an object towards which the attitude is directed. The old lady expresses gratitude towards Chandler; therefore, Chandler is the object of the reactive attitude. This means that reactive attitudes have content. I'll assume that the object of a reactive attitude is the entity that the content --- more specifically, the proposition that is the attitude's content --- is about. Moods on the other hand do not have content or propositions. For example, if I wake up in a bad mood and am now grumpy because of it, there is no object that my grumpiness is about. Thus, there is no proposition for my bad mood to be about. It is the presence of a proposition as content that distinguishes an attitude from a mood, and so distinguishes a reactive attitude from other emotional moods, such as being grumpy or gleeful.

1.2 Background Information Regarding the Conscience

The conscience is intimate but elusive. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the conscience is the moral knowledge we share with ourselves internally.³ The best

³ "Conscience" by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

way to explain the conscience is by using the analogy of a river. The river constantly flows from one destination to another. As it travels from destination to destination it carries fish, rocks, vegetation, and other objects within its flow. Conscience operates similarly. It allows moral knowledge to efficiently flow from one thought to another. On this conception of the conscience, which I shall assume, the contents of the conscience are the mental states present, the emotions felt, and reasoning that occurs in the mind. The practical deliberation moves an individual through knowledge for the duration of the individual's life. Moral agents --- a moralists to the side --- are born with a conscience, and when they die, the conscience is gone. It is our way of sharing knowledge within ourselves of the environment around or within us. The conscience is our best form of communication with ourselves, just like the river is the best form of transportation for water.

For simplicity, I will assume that there is a moral code embedded into the fabric of the universe, and that we are born with the ability to understand the difference between right and wrong. In short, I will assume a version of moral realism, according to which there are immutable moral facts, just as there are mathematical facts or meteorological facts, and that we can learn at least some of the moral facts through a priori inquiry. I recognize that these assumptions are extremely controversial, but, if I'm right, they simplify downstream discussion and little of substance turns on the assumptions.

Strawson discusses the concept of reactive attitudes formed from innate tendencies ingrained in our disposition from birth. At the time we enter into the world, we have a moral compass embedded into our conscience. One of the ways we develop the moral compass is through our reactive attitudes. The reactive attitudes allow us to hone in on our interpersonal and

intrapersonal relationships throughout life. Therefore, reactive attitudes are an innate quality to individuals.

1.3 Reactive Attitudes and the Self

Discussion within moral philosophy has centered around expectations one has towards other people (interpersonal relationships). Specifically, reactive attitudes have been examined as emotions felt when a moral expectation is broken between *two* separate individuals. I question limiting philosophical focus on reactive attitudes to two-or-more person cases while ignoring the moral expectations we have towards ourselves. Because the primary focus of moral philosophy has been analyzing our interpersonal relationships, an important section of moral philosophy as it pertains to our intrapersonal relationships has been overlooked. This section draws attention to moral expectations and reactive attitudes borne towards the self, and the next two sections will provide a possible explanation as to why moral philosophy has overlooked this idea.

In order for moral expectations or reactive attitudes to be directed towards the self, a relationship must exist between an individual and themselves. I will refer to this relationship as one's intrapersonal relationship. We know we have a relationship with ourselves based on what this relationship produces. First, our intrapersonal relationship produces internal feelings and acknowledgements. I can feel emotions towards myself, and I can acknowledge things I may or may not be doing. These same contents are also produced as a result of my interpersonal relationships. For example, I can feel emotions towards others or acknowledge the actions of the people around me. In both scenarios, I am exhibiting habits that pertain to a relationship. The relationship I have with myself and the relationship I have with those around me. Therefore, if I am exhibiting habits of a relationship and they are directed towards myself, I must have a relationship with myself.

Second, our intrapersonal relationship leads to our ability to have interpersonal relationships. It is the relationship that we have with ourselves that guides the relationship we have with others. An ideology taught through generations in multiple cultures is do unto others as you want done upon you. This ideology stems from the idea of our intrapersonal relationships guiding our interpersonal relationships. The question now becomes, how does an intrapersonal relationship guide interpersonal relationships? When we are born, the first thing we know is ourselves. We do not know what a mother or a father may be. We only know ourselves through our thoughts, emotions, and needs. We spend time developing the internal thought experience to make sense of these emotions and needs. Therefore, developing our intrapersonal relationship. Then, we move to develop a form of communication with the individuals around us similarly to how we developed our internal thought process. Thus, developing our interpersonal relationships. In an analogous example let's examine the structure of a sentence. There can be an independent clause and a dependent clause. The independent clause guides and supports the dependent clause since the dependent clause cannot stand alone. This is analogous to the way our intrapersonal relationship guides our interpersonal relationships.

In our relationships, we have agreed upon moral expectations. Moral expectations are a code to uphold that is not legally binding. For example, I have the moral expectation to not kill my friend's cat or hit her car with a baseball bat. For the sake of the argument let's assume that moral expectations exist and look at moral expectations as they pertain to the self. In the previous paragraph, I argued that we have a relationship with ourselves. The question now becomes is the relationship we have with ourselves different from the ones we have with others. Moral philosophy commonly holds that our interpersonal relationships are importantly different from our intrapersonal relationships. However, I question the reason why they would be seen as

different. What is the distinction between others and myself? Am I not also an individual? Morality, at least on many dominant conceptions, seems to require some degree of impartiality between persons. There are exceptions, of course, but, by and large, we all share some equal degree of moral significance to each other simply in virtue of being persons. However, if I am a person, then the impartiality of morality seems to require that I treat myself as I would treat others. This line of reasoning strongly suggests that there are important analogies between the norms that govern my relationship with others and those that govern the relationship with myself. Therefore, if I have moral expectations in my relationship with others, then, it seems, I can also have moral expectations towards myself.

We normally exhibit reactive attitudes when we perceive that someone has failed or surpassed a moral expectation. For the sake of the argument, I will be focusing on the negative reactive emotions like blame, which are normally felt in response to the perceived violation of a moral expectation. As discussed earlier, the principal component of reactive attitudes is that they are directed towards an individual. The individual can be a neighbor, a stranger, a friend, and others with whom we stand in relationships. I argue that one such individual is the self. If we agree that I can have moral expectations towards myself, then I can fail these expectations. Suppose that I am walking around a restaurant when I notice a figure moving swiftly towards me. I do not see the figure before it shoots me in the leg. Once the figure is closer, I see that it was myself. I shot myself in the leg, and I blame myself for doing so. The blame I feel is a reactive attitude borne towards the self. In a real-world example, I set the moral expectation for myself to study for an upcoming exam. Then, I decide not to study and end up failing the exam. I blame myself for failing my moral expectation that resulted in me failing an exam. In both

scenarios, I feel blame towards myself. Therefore, I have reactive attitudes borne towards the self.

In summary, if morality is impartial, then, if I am a person and I bear reactive attitudes towards others based on my beliefs and perceptions about the quality of their wills, I can have reactive attitudes directed towards myself. I now propose six truisms from the preceding discussion:

1. We have a relationship with ourselves.
2. Moral expectations occur within a relationship.
3. Moral expectations can be directed towards the self.
4. Moral expectations towards the self can be failed or surpassed.⁴
5. Reactive attitudes occur when an individual fails or surpasses a moral expectation.
6. Therefore, reactive attitudes can be directed towards the self.

1.4 The Connection between the Conscience and Reactive Attitudes

I propose that the reason self-directed reactive attitudes have been wrongly ignored is because their relationship to the faculty of conscience has been misunderstood. The conscience is normally understood as the thing feeling blame or pride, but it ignores the concept that blame and pride are reactive attitudes. Logically, if we can agree that the conscience processes blame and pride and, as we've seen, blame and pride are reactive attitudes, we must accept that the conscience processes reactive attitudes. Therefore, Reactive attitudes are linked to the conscience because they make up the conscience. I argue this from the connection of mental states to the

⁴ I acknowledge the relevance of self-release that could contradict this argument, and I discuss more on the idea in section 2.3 of this paper.

conscience. Mental states make up the conscience, and reactive attitudes are a mental state. From this, I propose that reactive attitudes are mental states that make up the conscience.

The conscience is composed of principles that interact with each other to form the stream of thought, which I will refer to as internal deliberation. These principles can also be referred to as mental states. The term principle refers to the fundamental components of an aspect or the foundation that composes an aspect. By saying mental states are a principle of the conscience, it means mental states are the foundation that make up the conscience. When a house is being built, several materials are needed to form the structure. Wooden posts, bricks, glass, and other materials make up the house. Mental states are the materials, and the conscience is the house. The house could not exist without materials, and the conscience could not exist without mental states. We know that mental states make up the conscience in understanding what the conscience is. The conscience holds the principles that make up an individual, such as their mannerisms, goals, ideas, etc. In his “Sermon on the Mount,” Bishop Butler talks about the principles as particular passions, instincts, attitudes, and affections... that the conscience governs.⁵ Based on Butler’s conclusion, each principle is a mental state, and every mental state makes up the individual’s conscience.

Another way of explaining reactive attitudes make up the conscience is by explaining all mental states make up the conscience. If you are playing Canon D on the piano, you cannot have the full body of the song if even one piano note is missing. The song is not what it once was. In fact, it is an entirely new song together. If one mental state is lost, then the conscience is not what it is meant to be and becomes something entirely different. For example, the mental state of affection was lost from a person’s conscience. The new person can no longer feel affection

⁵ Butler (2012)

towards anything or anyone. Without affections driving this person's conscience, would the person even need to have a conscience? It is perfectly reasonable to assume for the loss of affections; the conscience is no longer the conscience in that person. Instead, it becomes something else entirely. With that being said, the conscience cannot operate without all of its principles. Each principle of the conscience, or mental state, are the components that create the internal deliberation in an individual's mind, just like every piano note creates a beautiful masterpiece.

The next distinction to make is that reactive attitudes are a mental state. A component of mental states is the ability for that particular principle to be directed towards an individual. For example, let's look at Butler's principle theory and focus on the principle of passion. A woman dedicates her life to the art of ballet. She works constantly to improve her movement and become the best in the field. In this example, the woman is passionate about ballet dancing. The principle of passion is directed towards the movement of ballet. Therefore, passion is a mental state of the conscience. Using the logic that mental states require an object of their direction, we can argue that reactive attitudes are a mental state. As discussed in section 1.1, reactive attitudes also must be directed towards an object (namely another individual). If I am punched in the face by my next-door neighbor, then I blame them for hurting me. The reactive attitude of blame is directed towards the individual that hurt me. The necessary component of direction towards an object is the reason why reactive attitudes are mental states. If mental states make up the conscience and reactive attitudes are mental states, then reactive attitudes make up the conscience. Simply put, reactive attitudes make up the conscience because they are mental states. I will now conclude the argument by presenting three truisms:

1. All mental states make up the conscience.⁶
2. Reactive attitudes are a mental state.
3. Therefore, reactive attitudes make up the conscience.

1.5 Counter-Arguments and Future Implications

There are two counter arguments that I would like to address in this next section. The first is the concept of displacement within my intrapersonal relationship. The second is the ability to have a conscience without having reactive attitudes. After I discuss these counter arguments and how my claim still holds true, I will examine the future implications this claim will have in the field of philosophy.

The first counter-argument attacks the validity of intrapersonal relationships. One could say that when I have feelings towards myself it is a displacement of the feelings that I have from my interpersonal relationships. For example, if I become angry with myself, then I am truly angry at someone else I have a relationship with. I am displacing my anger from them to myself. Displacement of feelings from one individual onto another is a form of self-deception according to Bermudez.⁷ While this may be true in some cases, it does not negate the fact that I have a relationship with myself. In fact, it helps support the argument for intrapersonal relationships. When you displace one thing onto another, you cannot place it onto nothing. In other words, I cannot displace my feelings from one relationship onto another that does not exist. I can only

⁶ I argue that all mental states make up the conscience, not that the conscience is only made up of mental states. Mental states are just one component of the conscience (like a brick is one component of a house).

⁷ Bermudez (2000) and Mele (2000)

displace my emotions onto something that does exist. Therefore, if I happen to displace my anger towards a friend onto myself, then I must have a relationship with myself.

A second counter-argument argues that the conscience could exist without reactive attitudes. To argue against this, I would like to discuss the existence of reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes exist as a reaction to a set of actions towards an individual. When an action is committed for or against the person, the person feels a certain way towards the individual who performs the action. This innate feeling is our reactive attitudes. The purpose of these reactive attitudes is to allow an individual a method to experience interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. If we take away reactive attitudes from the conscience, the conscience no longer has a way of feeling emotions in our relationships with others and ourselves. There is no imaginable scenario where a conscience could exist fully without the ability to form or experience these relationships. Therefore, reactive attitudes must exist for the conscience to exist.

The connection between reactive attitudes and the conscience will help me in my future arguments in this thesis. Since reactive attitudes are a part of the conscience, I will discuss the possibility of wronging myself. I will take the claim a step farther and argue that I not only can wrong myself, but I can also sanction myself for these wrong doings. Reactive attitudes relationship with the conscience also promote questions around other mental states that the conscience possesses. It can give more insight to the connection of the conscience with all of its mental states.

2. CAN I WRONG MYSELF?

The morning of my birthday I find myself walking alone along a wooded path that seemed to lead into the abyss. I stare at the road in front of me as I do not know where it leads, but I know that I must head somewhere, anywhere. The clouds linger a bit longer in the sky this morning covering the atmosphere in a grey enchantment. It was as if the environment reflected the greyness that was inside of me. It is in this thought that a red bridge catches my eye. The bridge beckons with an answer to a question that I did not even know existed. I wonder over to the bridge and peer over the side to see canyon walls falling into a river some miles below. I continue with my movement by moving to the other side of the wall and taking the final step that would end it all. As I fall into the abyss, I wonder have I just wronged myself?

While death is the ultimate account of a wrongdoing, this story introduces an important question about the ability to wrong oneself. For example, I do not study for an exam, so I fail the class. I have wronged myself in the lack of preparation for something so important. The same can be said about improving oneself. I can take a yoga class to center my body and provide daily exercise for the release of endorphins. In this section, I will discuss the ability of a person to wrong themselves based on their actions. The section will be focused on the negative concept of wronging yourself instead of the positive concept of improving yourself. This is simply because there are more examples when discussing the negative view point.

I will argue that I can wrong myself. In part 1, I examine relevant background information that outlines moral responsibility and the meaning of a wrong action. Part 2 will look at theoretical cases to prove the above thesis. I will walk through thought experiments that discuss the commitment of a wrong action against someone else and then against yourself. Each

situation will lead to proving I can wrong myself. In part 3, I will wrap up the argument by examining how it holds up against possible counter arguments and present broader implications of the thesis.

2.1 Background Information

To examine the ability, I have to wrong myself, we must first define moral obligations and responsibilities as a whole. Moral obligations are an internal set of expectations that a person holds themselves to like a code of honor. Within moral obligation, there are two criteria for the expectation to meet in order for it to stand as a moral obligation. The first criterion is the moral expectation being proposed to the individuals in the relationship, whether the individuals include a whole society, two individuals, or myself. The second criterion is the moral expectation has to be accepted as an expectation by every individual in the relationship. Moral responsibility is the fitting outcome of exceeding a moral obligation or falling short of one. For example, John has the moral obligation to help his mother with the dishes since his mother cooked dinner for him. John is held morally responsible for not meeting his moral obligation if he decides not to do the dishes, and his mother can blame him for not fulfilling his moral obligation. In a parallel universe, John not only helps his mother with the dishes, but he also buys her flowers as a thank you for everything she has done. John is morally responsible for exceeding his moral obligations, and his mother can praise him for the good deeds he has done.

Since the rest of the section focusses on the negative concept, we will discuss what immoral, or wrong actions refer to. A wrong doing occurs when an action falls short of the accepted moral obligation. For example, my roommate cleans the entire house from top to bottom. I come home and throw my dirty shoes on the floor and make a mess of the kitchen.

Let's assume that in one scenario of this example, my roommate did not set the obligation of keeping the house clean when we got home. Therefore, I am not morally responsible for making a mess. In another scenario of this example, my roommate sends a text explaining she had cleaned everything and would like me to keep it that way when I got home. By accepting her request and not meeting those expectations, I am morally responsible for coming home and ruining her hard work.

An important distinction for this section is the difference between third-person and first-person actions. Third-person actions involve two separate individuals within the action: one receiving and one giving. For example, if the action is hugging, the one person is giving the hug while a second person is receiving the hug. Another example can be seen in the action of cutting. If I give my neighbor a cut, the neighbor received a cut. The same concept of giving and receiving an action can be applied to first-person actions. First-person actions only involve one individual, and the individual is both the person receiving and the person giving the action. If we transition the cutting action from third-person to first person, the example of cutting myself is formed. If I cut myself, I am the one giving a cut and the one receiving the cut. This is an example of the same individual in both roles of an action making it first-person.

2.2 The Ability to Commit an Action Against Myself

In order to prove that I can wrong myself, we must start by examining my ability to wrong another person. For me to wrong another person, I must fall short of a moral obligation set for me, like discussed in the above section. The moral obligation must be set between the two individuals: one giving the moral expectation and one accepting the moral expectation. For the sake of the thesis, let us assume that moral obligations do exist in the first place, and the moral

obligations that are present in my examples will stand as true. If no moral obligation is set, then there is nothing for an individual to fall short of in the relationship. Now, let's use the example that society dictates to preserve life is a moral obligation. If I decide to take my neighbor's life because they were becoming too annoying, I fall short of the societal moral obligation.

Therefore, I commit a wrong action against my neighbor. What happens to the scenario if my neighbor is replaced with myself? The societal obligation states that no individual can take a life, and logic dictates that I am an individual. Continuing on with the scenario, I take my life instead of my neighbors. In this scenario, the societal obligation to preserve all life still stands and is agreed upon by me. Therefore, if I decide to take my own life, I am committing a wrong action against myself for the same reason that I wrong my neighbor for taking their life.

The logical approach to this argument is easy to grasp, but it does not acknowledge why an action could wrong myself. Any individual with a conscience has moral obligations, and these moral obligations can be directed towards the self (as discussed in chapter 1). Moral obligations combined with reactive attitudes create the ability to commit a wrong action. In other words, a wrong action occurs when a moral obligation is failed by an individual. We know a moral obligation was failed due to the reactive attitude of blame or resentment that is present after an action. In an analogous example, let's look at promises towards the self. I promise myself that I will go to the gym every morning. The promise shows an agreement that I make with myself. We can agree that breaking a promise is wrong. Therefore, if I break a promise I have with myself, then I am doing something wrong. Moral obligations are like promises in manner that they set a standard for myself to live up to. If I fail a moral obligation to myself, then I have done something wrong, just as though the moral obligation was a promise.

In agreeing with chapter 1 (the argument that I can have reactive attitudes towards myself), we must accept that I have moral obligations with myself. When I fail the moral obligations to myself, I am wronging myself. In summary, I present four truisms:

1. An individual has moral obligations to the self.
2. An individual commits a wrong action when they fail a moral obligation.
3. I am an individual.
4. Therefore, I wrong myself when I do not live up to the moral obligations I set for myself.

2.3 Counter-Argument towards the Ability to Wrong Myself

The most important rebuttal for my argument to address is the ability to release the self from moral obligations. In our interpersonal relationships, we can release each other from a set moral obligation. For example, if I cheat on an exam and the teacher catches me, I expect to be sanctioned with a failing grade or a trip to the conduct board. The teacher can choose to forgive my actions and not provide any sanctions for cheating. The teacher is releasing me from my moral obligation not to cheat. If we can release each other from moral obligations in our interpersonal relationship, can we release ourselves from moral obligations in our intrapersonal relationships? If so, what would be the point in entering into a moral obligation with the self if one could release themselves from it whenever they please?

I argue that we cannot release ourselves from moral obligations set within our intrapersonal relationships. I make this claim for two reasons. The first reason is moral obligations towards the self become irrelevant if we can release ourselves from them whenever we please. For example, if someone only tells lies, then their word becomes meaningless. This is

the same idea for the use of self-release. If I can always release myself from my moral obligations, then the moral obligation becomes meaningless. The second reason is that the release happens after an action. If I am able to release myself from an action, then I would have to be able to converse with my future (or past depending on how you look at the scenario) self. This is physically impossible. Therefore, I could not release myself from an action since my past and future self cannot converse.

In my explanation for why one cannot self-release from moral obligations, one may propose the argument of self-epiphanies. For example, an individual believes their culture is the best culture among people. They create a moral obligation with themselves that they will never marry another individual from a different culture. A few years later, the individual has an epiphany. They realize that it is wrong to discriminate between cultures and want to release themselves from the moral obligation previously set. It would only be morally just for them to release themselves from this moral obligation. Therefore, one would have to be able to self-release from their moral obligations. Again, I disagree with this rebuttal. It is not, in fact, one releasing themselves from the moral obligation. It is the overarching moral standard to always do good that releases one from this moral obligation. By this I mean, with the moral obligations we set with ourselves there are correct and incorrect moral obligations. It is the moral standard that defines these obligations as correct or incorrect, not the individual. The correct moral obligations are binding, and one could not release themselves from these obligations. The incorrect moral obligations are not binding. Going back to the example, in the prejudice moral obligation that was set by the pre-epiphany individual, it is an incorrect moral obligation since it does not meet the moral standard to do good. Therefore, the individual was not bound to the moral obligation they set upon themselves.

Overall, there is no self-release from moral obligations. Therefore, I can wrong myself with my actions when I fail to meet moral obligations to myself. This argument can move forward to discuss possibilities of what specific actions can one do to wrong themselves or the connection between wronging the self and harming the self.

3. CAN I SANCTION MYSELF FOR MY ACTIONS THAT WRONG MYSELF?

On a bright, starry night, I lie in a field of grass staring at the constellations slowly move with the spinning of the earth. It was in this peaceful moment that I was swept away by a vision very different than my current scenery. In the vision, I am in a chaotic amusement park looking at a roller coaster that spun and dropped in every direction. As I process the tricks of the roller coaster, I am caught off guard by the number of people standing in front of me. It appears to be the line for the ride itself, and I am standing in it. I am sure it will take hours to finally feel the exhilarating heart drop of the roller coaster ride with the number of people in front of me. Suddenly, someone shoved me from behind and several others to the ground. They proceeded to move up towards the front cutting through the line like scissors through wrapping paper. I did not know who this person was, but they must be reprimanded for such actions. I take off running in their wake. Finally, I catch up to them, spin them around, and see the person doing such actions is me. Does my response to reprimand the person causing devastation change because it is myself?

To sanction another person for their actions, whether the sanction is positive or negative, is a common reaction in interpersonal relationships. For example, little Tommy is sent to time out upon hitting Suzie. In the relationship between Tommy and Suzie, Suzie is wronged by Tommy's actions. Therefore, Tommy is sanctioned by sitting in the corner without the ability to play with his friends. The relationship between Tommy and Suzie is an interpersonal relationship. Taking this idea further, the question I hope to examine applies sanctions to our relationship with ourselves, also referred to as our intrapersonal relationship. In other words, can

we apply the same rationale of sanctions we do for others to the self? Can I sanction myself for my actions that wrong myself?

In this section, I will argue that I am able to sanction myself for my actions that wrong myself. In part 1, I examine relevant background information that sets up the argument I will use in future sections. Part 2 will look at theoretical cases to prove the above thesis. I will walk through thought experiments that handle sanctioning in four specific situations. Each situation will lead to proving I can sanction myself for my actions that wrong myself. In part 3, I will wrap up the argument by examining how it holds up against possible counter arguments and present broader implications of the thesis.

3.1 Background Information Regarding Sanctions

In previous chapters, I defend that one can hold reactive attitudes borne to the self. Wallace develops Strawson's theory of reactive attitudes by discussing the connection between moral sanctions and reactive attitudes. He explains that the common approach to penance when a person feels as though they have been wronged is through a behavioral sanction. Sanctions resulting in the completion of an action by the wrongdoer to appease the wronged may be seen as necessary to make up for the actions that were committed. However, when issuing sanctions, the goal should not be to inflict a malicious punishment on the wrongdoer. Instead, Wallace argues that sanctions are used to demonstrate the commitment to the moral standard and set obligations. I will use the argument presented by Wallace in my defense that I can sanction as the wronged and the wrongdoer.⁸

⁸ Wallace (1998)

The emotional components of blame and the behavioral components of a sanction are distinct from one another. Behavioral components refer to the specific actions done by an individual to make up for wronging a person; whereas, the emotional components are the feelings of the reactive attitude itself. For example, Piper blames Maggie for burning the last piece of toast while she was in the shower. Maggie then runs to the store to buy Piper more bread to make toast as an apology. In spending her own time and money to make up for the wrong actions, Piper forgives Maggie. Maggie's behavior resolves the blame placed on her by Piper. This shows that emotional component of blame tends to go hand in hand with the behavioral aspect of sanctions. To get rid of the blame placed on one person, that person may have to complete a behavioral sanction. Where there is blame, there is also a sanction that can make up for the action. The question now is what is the role of sanctions in interpersonal relationships and the relationship we hold with ourselves.

Blame is a reactive attitude that people naturally hold in interpersonal relationships. The attitude that Piper takes toward Maggie when she burned the toast is a reaction. This is an example of blame as a reactive attitude. The blame can hold several different forms based on the individuals who are placing the blame on a particular person. If some outside individual places blame on the wrongdoer, the blame is not personal. However, if the person who is wronged places blame on the wrongdoer, the blame becomes more personal because the wronged person holds the reactive attitudes. The fittingness for the blame placed by the wronged seems more apt than the blame placed by the outside party. The fittingness of something tells you how apt or appropriate the something is. By this I mean, fittingness is a way of describing the level of justification something has. Diving into the above example, it is more fit, or apt, for Piper to place blame on Maggie than it would be for Piper's boyfriend who watched the whole scenario

to place blame on Maggie. Just like if the neighbor was to punish a child for stealing toys from their sibling, it would not be very appropriate or justified. However, if a parent was to be the punisher, the sanction would be fitting for the child. This tells us that blame becomes more relevant the closer it is linked to the situation producing the reactive attitudes. The relevance of who the punisher is can also affect the fittingness of the sanction. This will be discussed in greater detail later in section 2.

3.2 The Fittingness of Sanctions

In order to understand the fittingness of sanctions towards the self, we must first examine the fittingness of sanctions as it applies to our interpersonal relationships. Sanctions are fittingly imposed on a person that has done a right or wrong action against another person. Because we unknowingly tend to link the sanctioning of a person to a negative consequence, this section will focus on the negative form of sanctioning. Let's start by looking at the individuals involved in a sanction:

1. The transgressor is the person who has committed an action against B.
2. The victim is the wronged person.
3. The sanctioner is the person who sanctions A for wronging B.

In our interpersonal relationships, it is most common to find the transgressor, the victim, and the sanctioner as three separate individuals. In case number one, I consciously choose to inject a friend with a dose of heroin. A cop arrests me for the wrongful injection of a drug into another person. Using the above breakdown, we can rewrite this statement to say: The transgressor consciously chooses to inject the victim with a dose of heroin without the victim's consent. The sanctioner sanctions the transgressor by arresting them for the action they committed against the victim. The transgressor has committed a wronged action against the victim and should be

blamed for the situation. The blame is fitting because the transgressor could consciously choose against going through with the action. Since the transgressor went through with the action, they can be blamed for the situation and sanctioned appropriately. Therefore, it is a logical conclusion to say that the sanction the transgressor receives by the sanctioner is fitting for the scenario.

Using the above breakdown of the individuals involved in sanctioning, what would happen if the victim and the sanctioner were the same individual? By this, I mean that the victim is the person who is wronged by the transgressor and is also the person who punishes the transgressor for their actions. I will apply this to the previous example. The transgressor consciously chooses to inject the victim with a dose of heroin. The victim sanctions the transgressor by not allowing the transgressor to interact with the victim going forward. The act of preventing the transgressor from being around the victim is a fitting sanction against the transgressor. The sanction is fit for the wrong action. For the same reason that the sanctioner is able to sanction the transgressor in the first case, the victim is able to sanction the transgressor in the second case.

Now that we have discussed the victim and the sanctioner to be the same person, let's look at a person sanctioning themselves for wrong actions. The sanctioner and the transgressor are the same individual. In the third case, I present the transgressor as the person who commits a wrong action against another and sanctions themselves for their actions. For example, the transgressor consciously chooses to inject the victim with a dose of heroin. The transgressor sanctions themselves by not going into the social scene for a week. The transgressor commits an offense against the victim that gives rise to a sanction, as we have discussed in the first two cases. So, the question this case proposes is does the person enforcing the sanction matter. I argue that the person enforcing the sanction does matter. In other words, the fittingness of the sanction does depend on the person giving the sanction. The punisher must be someone directly

involved with the action occurring. In case one, it is obvious that the transgressor assaulted the victim by wrongfully injecting them, and assault is against the law. Therefore, the cop can arrest a person who has committed a crime because their job is to get involved when a person has broken the law. In case two, the person being wronged is able to sanction because they are the ones being hurt. They can sanction the person who wronged them because they know what would make the situation right again in their eyes. The wrongdoer is also directly involved in the action. A human with a normal amount of empathy and sympathy would feel some sort of guilt or remorse for the crimes they have committed. The wrongdoer can then sanction themselves to make up for the sense of guilt they feel from the action. The connection between all three cases is the attempt to rectify the wrong action. The cop does this by enforcing the law, and the wrongdoer does this by attempting to make up for the guilt felt upon committing the action. The sanction itself will differ based on who the sanctioner is, but this does not affect the fittingness of the individual in their ability to sanction. We can now agree that the transgressor has the same right to sanction as the sanctioner, and therefore, can be the same individual.

So far, we have established that there are three individuals in the action of sanctioning. The transgressor, the victim, and the sanctioner. We have examined how the victim and the sanctioner can be the same person and how the transgressor and the sanctioner can be the same person. The next case I bring up looks at the victim, the transgressor, and the sanctioner all being one singular person. Can I be the transgressor, the victim, and the sanctioner? First let's examine the possibility of the victim and the transgressor being the same person. In order for this to occur, it must be possible for someone to wrong themselves. I intentionally choose to inject myself with a dose of heroin. Let's assume for the sake of the argument that injecting heroin into the body is considered wrong for the addictive, mind altering, and abusive properties of the drug. I am the

one who chooses to inject myself with the drug. Therefore, I am committing a wrong action against myself. Another way of looking at the impact of the action I commit against myself is by examining my reaction to the action. If I cause myself guilt for the action I have done, then I am possessing reactive attitudes toward the self. The reactive attitudes occur because I have morally wronged myself. Here are other examples of how I can wrong myself: I decide not to study for an exam, I obsessively eat to make up for my emotions, and I jump off of a building. All of the acts discussed are wrong acts. In all of the examples, I did the act towards myself. Therefore, I am wronging myself. This is how one person can be both the victim and the transgressor. The fact that a person can be both does not negate the fact that the victim can be the sanctioner and the transgressor can be the sanctioner. If we agree that the victim and the transgressor can be one person, the victim and the sanctioner can be one person, and the transgressor and the sanctioner can be one person, then it is possible for the transgressor, the victim, and the sanctioner to all be one person. I will now propose the argument based on five apparent truisms:

1. In the action of a sanction there are three individuals: the transgressor, the victim, and the sanctioner.
2. The victim and the sanctioner can be the same individual.
3. The transgressor and the sanctioner can be the same individual.
4. The victim and the transgressor can be the same individual.
5. Therefore, the transgressor, sanctioner, and victim can be the same individual.

By this argument, we can conclude that I can sanction myself for actions that wrong myself.

3.3 Counter-Arguments towards Sanctioning of the Self

In this section, I will address two possible counter-arguments to the claim above, and explain how these counter-arguments do not hold merit. The first argument examines the fittingness of a sanction based on the ability of the one sanctioning. The heroine example above has a first case where the cop is the one sanctioning the transgressor and a final case where the transgressor is the one punishing themselves for their actions. It is true that the cop has different sanctioning ability than I would towards myself. The cop can place the transgressor under arrest and ship them off to jail for the night. I cannot do that to myself (even if I was a cop myself). I can, however, sanction myself internally by mentally scolding my behavior and checking myself into rehabilitation. So, how does the fact that I am me affect my ability to sanction myself? The answer is simple, the ability to sanction it does not change. The sanction given by the different individuals may differ, but the ability to set a sanction remains the same regardless of whether I am sanctioning myself or someone else is. The point of a sanction is to make up for a wrong deed, and if the sanction accomplishes this goal then the sanction is considered fit. There are multiple sanctions that can complete this job, so the ability of a person to set the sanction does not change. All people within the scenario are fit and able to provide a sanction.

The second argument is the connection between the negative reactive attitudes with other reactive attitudes. Does the ability to provide consequences for ourselves change if the reactive attitude is pride and not guilt? The ability does not change based on the reactive attitude that is present. For example, if I work incredibly hard on my thesis and receive an award for the paper, I can treat myself to some ice cream that evening to celebrate. The reward that I give myself for positive actions holds the same merit as the sanction that I give myself for negative actions. The

consequence will change based on the reactive attitude present, but the ability to provide consequences towards myself does not change.

The ability for us to sanction ourselves for actions that wrong ourselves opens up several doors for arguments in moral responsibility that pertains to the self. The next thing to look at is when is it appropriate to sanction myself for the actions that I commit against myself. I have argued that we can sanction ourselves, but that does not mean we should. The thought of when we should self-sanction is important to understand internally for those with high guilt complexes or egotistical individuals. Another implication this argument could have is the relationship between self-sanctioning and the sanctioning of others. Do we treat others differently than we treat ourselves? If the way we treat ourselves should model the way we treat others, then looking at the way we sanction ourselves can give us insight into the way we should sanction the people around us.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of reactive attitudes as they pertain to moral philosophy has strongly centered around our interpersonal relationships. For example, I can blame or resent another person for an action they commit against me. Common theory dives into trying to understand reactive attitudes in the relationships we have with others and glosses over the idea that reactive attitudes can also apply to the self. Logic dictates that moral philosophy applies to every individual that possesses a conscience equally. This means that I am an individual to myself just as much as my neighbor is an individual to me. Therefore, if I possess reactive attitudes to the individuals around me, I must also possess reactive attitudes towards myself. In accepting the logical conclusion of moral philosophy, we must incorporate self-borne reactive attitudes into common theory.

The discussion regarding reactive attitudes in our intrapersonal relationships starts with examining the presence of self-born reactive attitudes and questioning why common theory has overlooked them for so long. Just as logic tells us that we can hold reactive attitudes borne towards the self, so does nature. There is an innate capability for us to hold reactive attitudes. We innately blame someone who commits an action against us. For the feeling of blame is not taught to us by anyone; it, instead, comes naturally as a result of the individual's actions. Blame can also be innately directed towards the self. For example, I blame myself for not studying for an exam. The blame I feel towards myself comes naturally because it is a reaction to the fact that I have committed an action against myself. Self-borne reactive attitudes are a natural part of our intrapersonal relationships. From this conclusion, I propose that reactive attitudes borne towards the self have been overlooked because they are being confused with the conscience. The

conscience is a natural capability an entity possesses that makes them an individual subject to moral responsibility. Instead of analyzing self-borne reactive attitudes, common theory discusses conscience as a whole. I argue that reactive attitudes are a mental state that makes up the conscience. In understanding the connection of reactive attitudes and the conscience, we learn more about the conscience. This ideology can lead to further examination of other mental states.

After examining reactive attitudes borne towards the self, the discussion continues to analyze the possibility for one to wrong themselves. Basically, is it possible to commit an action against myself? I argue that it is possible to commit an action against oneself due to the presence of moral obligations. In our interpersonal relationships, we possess moral expectations and obligations to one another. We also have the same moral expectations and obligations in our intrapersonal relationships. The presence of moral obligations sets a standard for which we must morally live up to. If I do not live up to a moral obligation set upon myself, then I commit an action against myself. Therefore, I can wrong myself by not living up to the moral obligations I place on myself. This thought process brings up the concept of self-release. I argue that we cannot release ourselves from our moral obligations because that negates the point for the moral obligation to exist in the first place. Since I cannot release myself from moral obligations, I must uphold them. When I fail to uphold said moral obligations, then I have wronged myself.

Now, that it has been discussed that I can wrong myself, it brings in the question of if I can sanction myself when I have wronged myself. Through this discussion, I argue several scenarios regarding a victim, a transgressor, and a sanctioner. The scenarios add up to a final scenario where I am all three individuals. I can be the victim, the transgressor, and the sanctioner. Therefore, I have the power to sanction myself after I have wronged myself. Further discussion can take this concept and ask the question of when it is appropriate to sanction myself

or praise myself (depending on the action and moral obligation). The paper addresses the presence of reactive attitudes and moral obligations as they pertain to the self, but does not look into the fitting nature of these components. If we understand when or how we should treat ourselves through reactive attitudes and moral obligations, then we have a greater understanding of the concept of reactive attitudes as a whole. Just as the saying 'do unto others as you want done upon you' talks about treating others the way you wish to be treated, we can apply the same concept to reactive attitudes. It is in understanding how reactive attitudes pertain to the self that we can grasp a deeper understanding of reactive attitudes as they pertain to others.

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