



The Normativity of Blame¹

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The following paper examines the relevance of both Reasons Basicness and The Second-Personal Standpoint as potential explanations as to the nature of accountability. I begin by recognizing the importance of blame as an ethical experience, and start a project that aims to uncover the normative implications of blame. Ultimately I regard that, due to an inextricable link to obligation, normative notions of blame are grounded in morally normative pressures. In doing so, I deny the thesis of Reasons Basicness, and ask the reader to adopt a position sympathetic to the concepts of mutual accountability in Stephen Darwall's Second-Personal Standpoint.

Keywords: Normativity, Metaethics, Second-personal Standpoint, Mutual Accountability, Blame, Humean, Darwall

1. Introduction

1.1 Background & Thesis

I first began thinking of the following project when I asked a friend of mine what I thought at the time was a fairly innocuous question: at what point in our everyday life do we act on these normative pressures that are so frequently mentioned in the literature of ethical philosophy? I readily accept that there appears to be various forms of normativity, but what normative considerations are actually at play when we use ethics in our everyday lives? An answer to this query is what I call the *accountability thesis*. It is as follows: **(AT)** If ethical propositions are considerations of determining what one *ought* or *ought not* to do, then it seems fair that an awareness to such considerations is exercised in those moments when an agent or group of agents holds another accountable for their actions. Accepting AT as the actualization of ethical principles, the following project will develop an argument that focuses on the relationship that these principles have to normativity and moral obligation. I will contend that an agent is solely motivated by the normative pressure of moral obligations when she blames another. Further, I will argue that what is really needed to capture this sense of obligation necessary for AT is a particular kind of normative structure constituted within the moral community. So, by virtue of being intrinsically associated with blame, the normative pressure of moral obligation is qualitatively distinct from other possible examples of normativity.

¹ A special thanks to Imran Thobani for exciting the conversation that led to me thinking about this problem for months on end.

² It is here where I acknowledge that I reside on the Unceded Coast Salish Territories of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) Peoples. In every facet of my life, whether academic or otherwise, I- a first generation Canadian of European ancestry- am a guest on these lands.

In order to flesh out my above thesis, I will provide some background into the Hypotheticalism and reason basicness of Mark Schroeder. This concept will illuminate some key points regarding the role reasons play in determining the normative status of an object. However, I will eventually move to critique Schroeder's view that reasons alone provide normativity to an action, and showcase how normative accounts lacking an explicit connection to morality cannot successfully account for AT. I will move to discuss a profitable way to understand obligation and accountability. For the most part, I rely on Stephen Darwall's account of moral obligation and accountability conveyed through his seminal work *The Second Personal Standpoint*. I agree with Darwall that moral obligations are essentially connected to his conception of second-personal account ability.³ Ultimately I will push back against the idea that reasons provide a suitable account of the normative features that function when an agent blames another. I posit that non-moral normative pressures fail to capture obligation, and hence fail to provide an adequate account of blame. To begin, however, I will make some clarifying remarks regarding mutual accountability and the moral community.

1.2 A Very Brief Insight Into Blame and The Moral Community

It is important to demarcate between two dimensions of blame: the *blameable* and the *blameworthy*.⁴ The former concerns the reaction to a causal explanation. That is, it is just the reaction when an object is regarded by an agent as systematically responsible for something else happening. Lionel Kenner recognizes that in such cases "...all that we are doing is identifying the cause of some untoward event...".⁵ A fine example of this is when we blame the weather or the stars for causing our misfortune. Blameworthiness, on the other hand, insinuates that the object being blamed has not only caused the event, but that it also had within its power the capability to avoid doing so. Intuitively there seems to be something different happening when I consider an object to be blameworthy rather than blameable. For example, it is absurd to think that I would blame the rain for getting me wet in the same way as I would you if you sprayed me with a hose. In the case of you and the hose, my response appears to be based on your objectionable and perhaps malicious behaviour.⁶ It seems fair to say that I cannot object to the rain in the same way. While I will avoid an exhaustive discussion regarding these kinds of cases⁷, I think it is pertinent to pick up on the sentiment that agents blame other agents with an expectation that they can recognize, understand and react to being held accountable for their wrongdoing. For Kenner, this characteristic has to do with an agent's free-will and rational disposition.⁸ I will return to this notion that agents, by virtue of being rational, are able to hold one another accountable

³ Stephen Darwall, *The Second Personal Standpoint* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) p. 99.

⁴ I reference these terms merely as a means to facilitate a distinction. Other writers may use these titles in a more technical and poignant manner.

⁵ Lionel Kenner, "On Blaming" (*Mind* LXXXVI, 1967), p. 239.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 239-240.

⁷ For further illumination on this very vibrant and interesting topic, see the Kenner (1967) already referenced and the object of that work's critique, J.J. Smart's *Free-will, Praise and Blame* (1961).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 239

when I begin an explication of Darwall's theory of second-personal reasons and its conceptual link to moral obligation. I mention it here, however, as a means to illustrate how built into this idea of mutual accountability is a notion of a moral community. There does appear to be something normatively different between a rational agent's standing to the rain and their standing to other rational agents. Perhaps, we owe things to beings or objects that fall short of mutual accountability, but given that my focus here is blame in a blameworthiness sense, my only concern is with those members of the moral community that respectively share this quality. Before I return to this notion of accountability, however, I will begin a discussion in the next section regarding Schroeder's reason basicness.

2. Reasons & Normativity

In much of the contemporary literature surrounding metaethics, the concept of reasons has dominated discussions of normativity. As T.M. Scanlon notes in *Being Realistic About Reasons*, "...a significant part of the debate [in metaethics] concerns...reasons for belief and other attitudes, which are increasingly recognized as normative...".⁹ In the opening of his book, Schroeder recognizes this transition "...largely because it is seen to potentially have...vast implications on morality...".¹⁰ In Schroeder's project, it has turned the discussion away from whether or not morality is objectively prescriptive, and refocused it on an examination of how an agent's reasons align with her psychological states (her desires). It seems uncontroversial to say that there are reasons that an agent may cite when acting in a particular way. Yet, it is still up for question whether or not this provides us with enough substance to account for a normative "ought" existing within such reasons. The following section will explore this philosophical picture by focusing on the neo-Humean perspective that Schroeder endorses.

2.1 The Humean Theory of Reasons & Hypotheticalism

The following is the scenario that serves as the backbone case-example for Schroeder:

Ronnie and Bradley, like everyone else, have been invited to the party. But while Ronnie loves to dance, Bradley can't stand it. Not only does he not like dancing, he prefers to stay away from where it is going on [...]. So while the fact that there will be dancing at the party is a reason for Ronnie to go, it is *not* a reason for Bradley to go.¹¹

What this example initially provides is an insight into the subjective nature of reasons between agents. That is, while the object is the same (that there is to be dancing at the party), Ronnie's and Bradley's reasons contrast with one another. Schroeder posits how

⁹ T.M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic About Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 1.

¹⁰ Mark Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

“...this is something to do with their respective psychologies”.¹² In the Humean sense that he purports, Schroeder notes how reasons function in a way that is desire based—stemming from particular psychological states exclusive to that agent. This could be based on someone’s desires as it is professed in Hume’s original work, but Schroeder asks that this term be used sparingly, and regarded instead as a “...stipulative abbreviation for ‘the kind of psychological state...that ultimately explains the difference between Ronnie and Bradley’”.^{13,14} Still, his position falls under the umbrella of the Humean Theory of Reasons (HTR). While Schroeder alludes to the variability that this philosophical belief can carry, I will skip the distinctions he makes in his book, and instead move to explicate the version that he adopts, Hypotheticalism.

Schroeder’s revamped version of HTR posits that the psychological states motivating an agent to have a particular reason are contingent imperatives in themselves.¹⁵ Now, what is important when distinguishing Hypotheticalism is what Schroeder says regarding objective normative reasons. In considering again the case of Ronnie and Bradley, Schroeder notes the following: “... if we suppose that neither Ronnie nor Bradley is aware that there will be dancing at the party tonight, the fact that there will be dancing there still counts...as a reason for Ronnie but not for Bradley to go...”.¹⁶ For Schroeder such a reason is normative in that there is a particular element of the reason (that is, the fact that there will be dancing at the party) which can be distinguished from the desires of Ronnie and Bradley respectively. Such a normative sense is what allows us to recognize the difference between Ronnie and Bradley.¹⁷ Now, this does not mean the normativity exists outside of the agent’s psychology, but that there is a sense in which external facts-of-the-matter contribute to the normative pressures internal to the agent. Thus there is a kind of third-personal relation between the reason(s) and agent(s). So, while the normative reasons, in order to be objective normative reasons, depend on the inner desires of the agent¹⁸ they still “... depend on how things are independently of the agent’s belief...”.¹⁹ This point goes further with Schroeder’s distinction regarding the triadic nature of the objective normative reason relation.²⁰ This is the *consideration-place* (Ronnie’s fondness to dance), the *agent-place* (Ronnie), and the *action* (attending the party). Hypotheticalism recognizes the external conditions that allow for normative reason to make some intuitive sense. That is, that there *is* a party happening where dancing is going down. With this in mind, it makes sense to regard Ronnie’s fondness to busting a move as a reason for him to go to the party.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴ This being said, Schroeder does eventually concede in Chapter 8 that best version of reasons will turn out to be a desire-dependance view that regards desire in the traditional sense of the term. However, my explication focuses mainly on Chapters 1 and 4, which doesn’t need to make such a hard-lined distinction.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁰ Ibid., 19.

2.2 Reason basicness and its relation to the normative

The normative project for Schroeder, then, becomes a reductive one. For it is Ronnie's desire that explains his reason "...because having such a desire is part of *what it is* for Ronnie to have a reason...".²¹ Schroeder regards that it is exactly because normativity is best explained through *reasons* that this project becomes reductive.²² It is the idea that "...commitments of normative discourse are primarily set out at least in part terms of other normative notions".²³ So, what then is a normative notion? To answer this, Schroeder employs a distinction made by Jean Hampton "... 'that there are moral norms that are 'objectively authoritative' *in the sense that they give us normatively necessary reasons* for various human activities'".²⁴ Now, because reasons themselves are for Schroeder a normative category²⁵, the reduction then takes on a normative to normative distinction. What is avoided then is any perplexity following from a non-normative to normative reduction.²⁶ I will attempt, however, to showcase an example from Schroeder as to how the normative reduces to normative. Now, in order for a claim to be regarded as normatively *relevant* it must point to certain facts that are sure to be relevant to a normative consequence, but, from outside of the scenario involving any normative content, appears to paradigmatically non-normative in nature.²⁷ Schroeder uses the example of there being a really good reason *not* to pull the trigger of gun when it's pointed at your head. Now, facts regarding the gun or death, which clearly relate to normative consequences, are only relevant- and not contentful- in that they are not directly about the reasons themselves.

Consider the two following sentences: (i) "pulling the trigger will result in your death", and (ii) "it is better *not* to pull the trigger". Now, (i) focuses on the reasons *as* a consequence— the relevant normative facts that surround the reason. Conversely, (ii) directly involves the reason *itself*— the reason being of course that the pulling of the trigger will result in one's death. Now, moving towards his thesis of reason basicness, Schroeder notes that while normative claims can be regarded as being *about* the reason or already *involving* reasons, it is still likely that the "... normative properties and relations have to be partly *analyzed* in terms or reasons...".²⁸ So, the thesis is as follows: (RB): What it is to be normative, is to be analyzed in terms of reasons.²⁹ Then conclusively: "[t]he normative is all about reasons".³⁰ What RB allows for is a characterization of the normative that avoids an attempt to analyze it in terms of some kind of basic property such as *good*, *right*, or *just*.³¹ Such moral concepts, have been a serious point of contention between philosophers. Yet,

²¹ Ibid.,21.

²² Ibid., 79.

²³ Ibid., 78.

²⁴ Ibid., 80.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The problem with this is fleshed out in part 4.3 and 4.4. However, my paper does not have the scope to capture these distinctions.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 80-81.

²⁹ Ibid., 81.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Schroeder's project can account for any of these basic properties because such properties are structurally related to "...some basic normative property like that of being a *reason*".³²

While this account does not purport that a reductive project will also result in garnering the real moral facts, it does provide an explanation of how normative claims can be grounded in an *analysis* of reasons.³³ Further, it also offers a third-personal account in that a reason can exist for Ronnie to go to the party regardless of whether or not he is aware that the party is taking place. Given the prospect that the normative is best explained by reasons alone³⁴, Hypothetical-ism is then a project which can adequately tract questions surrounding various normative claims and relations.

3. The Second-Personal Standpoint & Moral Obligation

The previous section highlighted an account aimed at the reduction of normative properties into the analysis of an agent's reasons— sharing a close connection with that agent's psychological states (or desires). Schroeder's project does provide some interesting insights. For one, it pushes the discourse in a way where the motivating features of normativity are to be cashed out in terms of the reasons as to why an agent would be moved to do so. I think this is intuitive. Surely if X is normative then there will be recognizable reasons for an agent to X. Further, his project alluded to the concept of there being objective normative reasons for action. I showed how for Schroeder this relates to particular external facts relevant to a normative consequence, and how his account avoids slipping into establishing certain objective standards such as *Goodness* or *Justice*.

Yet, this still might not be enough for an account of moral obligation that can work in the way I expect it to in order to satisfy AT. While Schroeder's reductive project is insightful, it seems too locked to an agent's individual psychological state for a robust account of accountability to be made. While a reason can exist outside of an agent's awareness, for a normative pressure to be felt it appears as though the acting agent would need to experience the reason too. What is missing, I would, argue is a sense of obligation that can apply some kind of normative pressure onto such reasons. What I need is a position that can account for something I considered earlier, that there is a moral community in which rational agents are able to hold each other accountable to one another. HTR may have moments that allude to this³⁵, but I doubt it goes far enough to sufficiently recognize AT. I will now move to discuss Darwall in hopes of gaining a sense of implicit agent-based obligations that still aligns with the intuitive appeal of reasons.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 82-83.

³⁴ Ibid., 79.

³⁵ What Schroeder borrows from Hampton.

3.1 Second-personal Stance & Second-personal Reasons

Much of the discussion surrounding the focus on moral obligation in chapters four and five of *The Second-Personal Standpoint* show Darwall citing the concept of an implicit second-personal standing referenced at the book's beginning. In coming to understand his account of moral obligation, it is necessary to touch base with what Darwall means by the second-person stance and second-personal reasons. After all, and as Michael Smith and Jada Twedt Strabbing note regarding Darwall's position, "[w]e are morally obliged to act in a certain way only if we have sufficient second-personal reasons for so acting".³⁶

For Darwall, there are particular presuppositions built into second-personal addresses.³⁷ One is as follows: "...you and I must presuppose that we share a common second-personal authority, competence, and responsibility simply as free and rational agents".³⁸ Here Darwall is appealing to what I have already cited as a fairly intuitive sentiment regarding normative relationships between autonomous agents. That is, that there exists a moral community that rational agents are members of. Perhaps other non-rational beings or objects can have membership too, but it is in the corporation of rational agents where we see instances of second-personal authority and mutual accountability emerge. Darwall refers to this relationship as the second-person stance.³⁹ Basically, the second-person stance serves as a practical invocation of a moral community as it pertains to those kinds of agents who share in the reciprocal relationship of second-personal authority. Such agents are then able to recognize and facilitate certain kinds of reasons by proxy of being in this relationship (or standpoint) with one another.

Darwall's move to illustrate his account of second-personal reasons begins with a demarcation between agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons. He notes how the latter can be regarded as "objective" and the former as "subjective".^{40,41} To help facilitate his point, Darwall asks us to imagine a scenario in which an agent has caused you distress by placing their foot on top of yours. Now, an agent-neutral reason for Darwall is *epistemic* in that it serves as "...a reason for [an agent] to do something...".⁴² Basically, it is an attempt to make the agent stepping on your foot aware of the pain they are causing, and subsequently recognize that removing their foot is the most appropriate action to take. So, the goal is to make the agent aware of some information or knowledge relative to the situation. Now, it is important to note that for Darwall "...second-personal reasons are always fundamentally agent-relative, [and that] the second-person stance...is the perspective one assumes in addressing practical thought...".⁴³ He contends that agent-relative reasons are *practical* in

³⁶ Michael Smith & Jada Twedt Strabbing, "Moral Obligation, Accountability, and Second-Personal Reasons" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXXXI, 2010), p. 237.

³⁷ Darwall, *Second Personal*, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ See footnote 9 in *SPS* (2006).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

that they make very distinct and direct claims upon the agent.⁴⁴ This would amount to you making a demand that the agent remove their foot. Darwall notes that while the reasons for wanting the agent to remove their foot may vary, what is important is that the agent is being addressed in a particular way. That is, via a demand.⁴⁵ In doing so the addresser implies a kind of authority that we as agents have when making claims or demands on other agents. This is different from the agent-neutral case in that there is no expectation for the agent to come to know why you're in pain. Rather, your address is meant to immediately instigate the agent to act in a particular way. So, a second-personal (or agent-relative) reason follows from a demand "...that asserts or implies [an agent's] authority to claim or demand...".⁴⁶ This insinuates that there are certain demands one agent can make to another relative of the nature of the standing of one agent to another. What is being shown here is that there is a conceptual link between the second-personal stance, and the second-personal reasons that agents may make to one another. Further, the nature of such reasons, by virtue of being expressed within the second-person stance, are evoked as demands or claims between agents.

3.2 Reactive Attitudes and Their Relation to Second-personal Authority

Up to now I have given some much needed background surrounding Darwall's conception of the moral community, and how we as rational agents appear operate within it. However, what is still needed is a sufficient explanation of how exactly obligation and the normative pressures that surround obligation are to be regarded. In the introduction to his book *Morality, Authority, & Law*, Darwall notes how moral concepts such as rightness, wrongness and moral obligation have a second-personal structure.⁴⁷ So, built into the notion of the second-person stance previously highlighted, is an explicit account of obligation that is second-personal by nature. In order to understand the implicit second-personal relationship of moral obligation, I must first explicate the notion of reactive attitudes that Darwall highlights in Chapter 4 of *The Second Personal Standpoint*. This concept has substantial implications on notions of blame and wrongdoing. After all, Darwall recognizes how "[w]hat is wrong is what we can be morally expected not to do, what the moral community assumes the authority over us".⁴⁸ And further, that "...an agent is aptly blamed or the object of some other form of accountability-seeking reactive attitude if she lacks an adequate excuse".⁴⁹ So, the sentiment here is that a reactive attitude is vital for the second-personal operation of blame and accountability.

Borrowing from P.F. Strawson, Darwall argues that "...the right kind of reasons for warranting the relevant attitude in its own terms must derive from distinctive norms for

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Stephen Darwall, *Morality, Authority, & Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xi.

⁴⁸ Darwall, *Second Personal*, 93.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 93.

attitudes of that kind...".⁵⁰ What is meant by this is that in order for something to count as a warranted attitude (a legitimate reaction perhaps) it must be connected to reasons of the right kind.⁵¹ Therefore the relevant reactive attitude is toward something relevant to the reasons surrounding the object involved. Reactive attitudes work as responses to "... 'transactions' between individuals..."⁵², and can be distinguished into two classes: *Participant reactive attitudes*, and *Impersonal reactive attitudes*. The former distinction is an attitude felt from a personal (or "transagent") perspective. While the latter is described as being felt "...from the standpoint of the moral community..."⁵³ Darwall uses the reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation to show this difference— resentment following from an individual attitude while indignation from the standpoint of the moral community at large. Or, in the very least, other members of the moral community. It may be that not all members are either aware of the object that such attitudes reference, or care in the same way to excite an impersonal reactive attitude.

It appears that both classes of reactive attitudes can function simultaneously. Turning back to the example involving the foot, one can recognize how resentment and indignation can both be applied second-personally by both the agent who's foot is being stepped on, as well the moral community as a whole. Interestingly, while the reactive attitudes differ categorically they both excite a similar normative focus. That is, they both have the potential to make the same kind of claim against the foot-stepping agent: "Get off my (their) foot!". Now, Darwall also specifies how "...reasons that can warrant these attitudes—that can be reasons of the right kind—must be second-personal reasons".⁵⁴ This follows from the idea that these reactive attitudes condition- ally include "...a sense of authoritative demand...".⁵⁵ To summarize, Darwall conceives that re- active attitudes will invariably involve the following⁵⁶:

- (a) a form of (second-personal) address
- (b) which presupposes an other's competence and standing to be thus addressed (second-personal competence and authority) and
- (c) which responds to the person's conduct
- (d) with respect to persons (at least)

3.3 Second-personal Authority and Obligation

From this convention of second-personal authority and the stance that captivates it we arrive at Darwall's conception of obligation. Now, for Darwall, moral obligations are intrinsically tied to second-personal reasons, and therefore are subject to reactive attitudes

⁵⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 70.

from other agents.⁵⁷ He puts forward a conceptual connection between accountability and moral obligation. This conception of obligation and its inextricable link to accountability is as follows:

We hesitate to impute wrongdoing unless we take ourselves to be in the range of the culpable, that is, unless the action is such that the agent is aptly blamed or the object of some other form of accountability-seeking reactive attitude if she lacks an adequate excuse.⁵⁸

So, if an agent has a second-personal reason for doing an action, others agents who are incorporated within the second-person stance with the first agent then have an authority to make claims on them. So, for Darwall, moral obligation "...is conceptually related to standards of minimally decent conduct that moral agents are accountable for complying with".⁵⁹ Further, reactive attitudes presuppose that there are reasons for agents to be obligated and potentially held account- able for their actions within the moral community. It is through second-personal forms of accountability that a sense of moral obligation arises. For it is in the nature of the moral community (in that it is second-personal) to have reasons to demand or make claims regarding particular normative conventions that are standard for the moral community and that define the nature of the second-person standing between agents.

Borrowing a sentiment from Bernard Williams, Darwall notes how "...holding someone accountable for wrongdoing through blame unavoidably carries the implication that she had conclusive reason not to do what she is blamed for doing...".⁶⁰ He recognizes (and I would have to agree with him) that this statement is a fairly intuitive one. Just imagine, for example, blaming an agent for doing an action while simultaneously recognizing that she had rational reasons for doing it.⁶¹ This would be silly. So, second-personal accountability is where we see moral obligation emerge. It is visible due to the sentiments that surround the interactions between agents with mutual accountability, the claims they make on one another, and the reactive attitudes expressed and regarded throughout their interactions. After all "...[t]here can be no such thing as moral obligation and wrongdoing without the normative standing to demand and hold agents account- able for compliance".⁶² Hence there is an inextricable link between moral obligation and the second-personal standing between agents. Moral obligations must have at their foundation sufficient reasons, and sufficient reasons- as I have already discussed- are intrinsically second-personal. Regarding the conceptual link between second-personal reasons and moral obligation mentioned above: "Second-personal reasons secure the connection with

⁵⁷ Ibid., 91-92.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁶¹ Of course, a blamer may be wrong as to whether or not the blamed agent is actually wrong. The point here is describe- in a sense- the psychology of the blamer.

⁶² Ibid., 99.

accountability because, when some- one has such a reason, others are guaranteed to have the authority to make demands of him".⁶³ The existence of a moral obligation describes the mutual standing of reasons between agents— signifying corresponding second-personal reasons.

4. Moving Towards A Positive Account

When thinking about the normative pressures of blame, I find that only moral considerations can possibly be present when an agent blames another. Further, I have also aimed to push back on the idea that reasons alone can sufficiently explain the structural relationship between normativity and blame. The following section will further these notions.

4.1 *Blame and Moral Considerations*

It is generally uncontroversial to claim that etiquette is a social system that carries with it normative pressure. We likely recognize and react to such pressures on a daily (or nightly) basis. Etiquette is often present at the dinner table; consider the following example:

Imagine a dinner party taking place in a society much like our own. In this society, or perhaps even in just a particular station of this society, there is a code of etiquette (X) that requires a particular spoon be used in a particular hand at a particular point in time during the meal. X is very well known to all the guests who have been invited to the party. Now, Ursula- the daughter of the host⁶⁴- has been brought up knowing and practicing X, and is present at the dinner. However, despite her knowledge of X, Ursula forgets to switch spoon-hands at the correct time, and after the dinner party Ursula is blamed for her actions. That is, Ursula becomes held accountable to the normative standard of etiquette that she failed to carry out.

When Ursula is blamed for failing to do X, her mother is exhibiting a particular reactive attitude (possibly disdain) towards her. Now, in order to be qualified as reasonable kind of attitude it must "... derive from distinctive norms for attitudes of that kind...".⁶⁵ That is, the reactive attitude must be connected to the norm of etiquette that has been usurped. For, such attitudes as Darwall notes "...are distinctively involved in holding people responsible".⁶⁶ Yet, Ursula's mother doesn't appear to be blaming her solely on the grounds of etiquette alone. Rather, her blame follows from a belief that there is something *wrong* with breaking the normative standards of etiquette. She has reasons to describe her reactive attitudes towards Ursula's failure of X, but in holding her accountable for such failure she is holding her up to a standard of moral obligation that is conceptually connected to the

⁶³ Smith et al., "Moral Obligations", 240.

⁶⁴ Note, too, that Ursula is of the age and rational competence where she is participates in second-person- al accountability. After all, and as Darwall notes on the bottom of p. 95 (2006) some humans may be ex- ceptions to mutual accountability.

⁶⁵ Darwall, *Second Personal*, 66.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

demands that she (and her society) has made in enforcing X. Hence, there are second-personal reasons for Ursula not to break X. As I have come to argue, the mere fact that X is in some sense blameworthy indicates its inextricable link to morality.

4.2 *The Normative Structure of Blame*

Now, I have two concerns with Schroeder's account when approaching something like the example in 4.1. Firstly, I disagree with the idea that reasons alone are a relevant normative category in instances of blame. A *reason to blame* is not what instigates the pressure to blame Ursula. Rather, what instigates this pressure- that is, what makes it a valid claim to make- is the structure of norms that X is related to. Here I do not necessarily mean the structure of social norms, but rather the second-personal relationships between agents of a relevant second-personal standing that perpetuates such norms and makes the breaking of such norms an ethical violation. In being merely concepts counting in favour of something, reasons do little to explain the *pressures* behind normativity. What moves an agent to action, I argue, is the obligation present in instances of mutual accountability.

I think Darwall is right in regarding such relationships of accountability as stemming from a second-person stance; and, further, I would contend that such a conception of the moral community allows for the focus of normativity to fall on the obligations themselves rather than reasons. After all AT stresses this conceptual link between obligation and the moral community in that the action of blaming in a blameworthy sense insinuates a kind of mutual accountability. Reasons alone do not stress this differentiating factor. For example, the reasons to blame the rain and the person with the hose appear to be the same- they both get you wet. Of course, one may note how the reasons are actually different because the rain and the person are qualitatively distinct and as such the reasons for blame would be too. I would have to agree. However, the reasons behind blaming the agent with hose are intrinsically second-personal, and as such their normativity is best described by appealing to the second-personal relationships from which they stem.

So my second complaint is that Schroeder's position doesn't provide a robust enough account of a moral community. That is, one that has a conceptual link to instances of AT. I think AT insinuates the potential for there to be a kind of moral community. However, I do not think it thereby necessitates a strict moral standard from which there can arise distinct moral facts regarding what one *ought* or *ought not* to do. Rather, this conception of a moral community provides a structure in which normative reasons can be applied between agents insofar as it allows us to make normative claims and demands upon one another.⁶⁷ Much of this I have borrowed from Darwall's account of second-personal standing, which carries with it a robust and useful sense of obligation. I contend that the position he sets down in

⁶⁷ Further, it acknowledges the intuitive belief that we as rational agents share in similar phenomenological experiences- such as normativity.

regarding second-person accountability can allow for a variety of relevant reasons that serve to excite the same claim and therefore the same expected action.⁶⁸

5. Concluding Remarks

We care about blaming people. Not in a malicious or maniacal kind of way, but in a way that cements our awareness of the moral community, and that second-person stance that we have to those applicable agents. Being that this project focused on blame as it pertains between agents of mutual accountability, I must note that I do not take this to mean that obligations are not owed to beings outside of this relationship. The moral community I think can harness objects that may not share in a second-person stance with us, but given that my focus here is on blame as it pertains to AT, I've left such considerations aside. So, we care about having ethical standards, and we care about the descriptive community of agents that can actively hold one another accountable. And if not in a philosophical way, we certainly care about the active implications this phenomenological experience of normativity has upon us. Our awareness of AT is reassuring in that it grants us license to hold other likeminded agents accountable. This, I would argue, is a beautiful freedom.

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⁶⁸ See my section 3.1 where I discuss Darwall's account of agent-relative (*practical*) reasons.