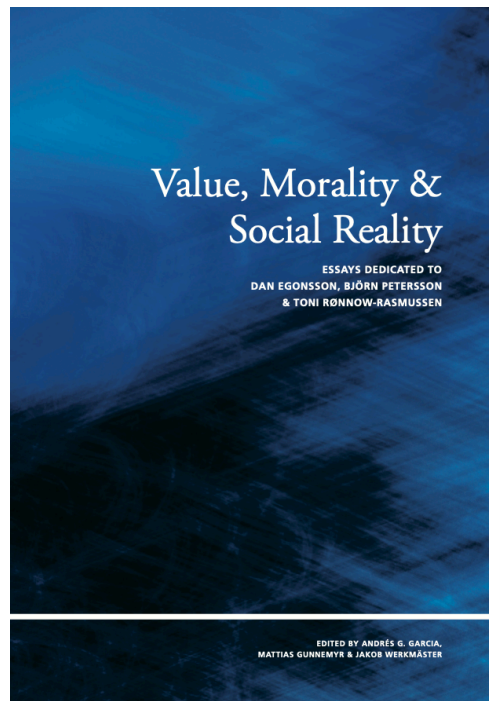


# Individually Fitting but Collectively Unfitting Blame

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# Individually Fitting but Collectively Unfitting Blame

Andrés G. Garcia

**Abstract.** People that produce bad outcomes can thereby become the fitting targets of blame, the fitting intensity of which is determined by the badness of the outcomes. In the following paper, I suggest that the amount of blame instances that people are fitting targets of is also determined by the weight of the badness of the outcomes. I use the example of online blame as a paradigmatic case where the amount of blame instances that people are made targets of risks being excessive, even when each instance of blame is fittingly held and expressed.

## Introduction

Debbie is morally responsible for having produced an outcome of moral value and has made herself the fitting target of reactive attitudes of a certain kind, duration, and intensity. The kinds of reactive attitudes that Debbie is the fitting target of is partly determined by the character of the moral value that she has produced. If the outcome is morally bad, then Debbie is typically the fitting target of blame, and if the outcome is morally good, then Debbie is typically the fitting target of praise.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The qualifier “typically” leaves room for the view that having produced bad outcomes is not *sufficient* to make agents fitting targets of blame. Agents are blameworthy when they fail to meet up to a normative standard. How we should cash this out in detail is controversial, but philosophers have offered additional constraints in the literature. These are meant to rule out cases where agents produce bad outcomes accidentally—or in other ways that are not suitably reflective of their character and understanding. Strawson (1962) insists that what he refers to as the “quality of will” of agents helps determine their blameworthiness. Others have argued that agents being fitting targets of blame entails

The duration and intensity of the reactive attitudes that Debbie is the fitting target of is partly determined by the weight of the moral value that she has produced. If the outcome is very bad, then Debbie might be the fitting target of a relatively long period of intense blame; and if the outcome is only slightly good, then Debbie might be the fitting target of a relatively short period of mild praise.<sup>2</sup>

There is a normative intuition suggesting that just as the weight of the moral value that Debbie has produced is relevant to the duration and intensity of the reactive attitudes of which she is the fitting target, it is also relevant to the *quantity* of reactive attitudes that can be fittingly directed at her. Suppose Debbie has made insensitive comments about a group of people on an online social media platform. We can imagine that once enough people learn of her moral transgression, she becomes the target of thousands of instances of blame, each of which is individually fitting in terms of duration and intensity. In the following paper, I shall explore and try to make sense of the suggestion that while each instance of blame that is directed at Debbie may also fit her, she can nonetheless be the unfitting target of the *total amount* of blame instances that is collectively directed at her.

I shall start out by elaborating on the normative intuition that there can be something problematic about a collection of attitudes. I illustrate it by appealing to a type of case where people do something online and become targets of reactions that seem disproportionate in terms of collective scope. Previous works on the dangers of moral sanctions on the internet have often been limited to their harmful effects on their targets (Tosi & Warmke 2020: 103; Billingham & Parr 2020), e.g., by considering how expressions of blame (understood broadly, to include speech acts as well as punitive practices) may affect the blameworthy. I will take a slightly different perspective by looking at the issue whether there can be something problematic about a quantity of blame instances as such, irrespective of its potential for psychologically harmful effects *vis-à-vis* the blamed.<sup>3</sup>

## Excessive Blame

The paper proceeds from the normative intuition that not everything is as it should be regarding the quantity of blame that is sometimes heaped on individuals, even though they may have produced morally bad outcomes and made themselves the fitting targets of blame. Real-life examples that illustrate the phenomenon are inevitably controversial, but the infamous case of Justine Sacco springs to my mind.

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that they have sufficient knowledge, understand their own actions, and are aware of relevant reasons and values (e.g., Held 1970; Pettit 2007; Coates & Swenson 2013; Nelkin 2016; Tierney 2019).

<sup>2</sup> For more on how the weight of value relates to the intensity and duration of fitting attitudes, see Andersson & Green Werkmäster (2020).

<sup>3</sup> See also Aitchison & Meckled-Garcia (2021) for the relevance of non-consequentialist *disrespect*.

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Sacco was an American woman on her way to South Africa for work. Before she boarded her flight from the United States, she logged into the social media platform *Twitter* and posted a public message in the form of an insensitive joke: “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!” (Ronson 2015). By the time Sacco woke up in Cape Town, she had lost her job and was the target of a massive online campaign involving tens and thousands of enraged people.

I will leave aside issues about whether Sacco’s joke was just a crude satire about racism and privilege or whether the joke itself was an expression of these things. I shall also bracket questions about whether the intensity and means by which people subsequently expressed their blame toward Sacco were appropriate.<sup>4</sup> I will instead look at the question whether there could be something about the quantity of blame that was directed at her that was not as it should have been. Even if each individual that blamed Sacco may have done so fittingly, the normative intuition is that we should be given pause by the sheer quantity of blame that ended up being directed at her in the end. *The unfittingness view* states that while Sacco was the fitting target of blame, her overall moral character could still have made her the unfitting target of the collection of blame that ended up being targeted at her.

To avoid being stuck in the specifics of the Sacco example, I will continue to phrase my discussion in general terms and focus on the hypothetical case of Debbie. My hope is that readers will recognize the ubiquity of the general phenomenon to which I am alluding, even if they happen to have qualms about the example I have just used. The question is whether there is some way of capturing and vindicating the normative intuition that I have emphasized without adopting the unfittingness view. In other words, is it possible to explain what it means that not everything is as it should be regarding the quantity of blame that is sometimes heaped on individuals, without thereby accepting that collections of blame instances themselves can in some sense be unfitting? Before I attempt to answer this question, I need to lay out some relevant assumptions that I will be making about *blameworthiness*.

I assume that an agent that produces bad outcomes is typically blameworthy and that this means that they are the fitting targets of blame.<sup>5</sup> Fittingness should of course be understood as a normative relation holding between a response and a target. Blame fits blameworthy agents much like admiration fits admirable artworks, respect fits respectable achievements, and love fits lovable people. Certain objects call for certain responses and *vice versa*, by virtue of the former fulfilling the inherent standards of the latter. While the notion of fittingness is a normative one,

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<sup>4</sup> My suspicion was that they were not always so. For more details, see Ronson (2015).

<sup>5</sup> This fits well but does not entail a fitting-attitudes analysis of blameworthiness. For more on this pattern of analysis, see, e.g., Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004). Also, note that philosophers tend to speak of blame as a complex phenomenon involving both a judgment about the blameworthy and a collection of attitudes, such as moral resentment and anger. I am primarily interested in the *attitudinal* part of blame, meaning that I shall be using the term as a placeholder for those particular non-doxastic and motivational mental states that we direct toward people for the bad outcomes that they produce and for which they thereby become fitting targets.

this does not mean that it must involve a relation of *requirement*. Instead, the notion of fittingness can involve a less demanding sense of congruence, such that if objects fulfil the inherent standards of certain responses, then the objects become *recommended* targets of those responses.<sup>6</sup>

In their work on the fittingness relation, D'Arms & Jacobson (2000) distinguish between a narrow and wide sense in which objects can be fitted to certain responses. The former involves a congruence between responses and their targets, exclusively grounded on facts about how well the former fulfils the inherent standards of the latter. By contrast, the wide notion of fittingness is guided by a more general sense of what is good and right and thus takes into consideration the *effects* of adopting certain responses as well.<sup>7</sup> Similar ambiguities presumably occur for physical notions of fit. A Harley Davidson vest could be visually fitted to me in the narrow sense that I have the right measurements to wear it, but because such a vest is meant to convey certain things about the look and demeanour of its bearer, wider contextual factors may cause the vest to *not* fit me visually.

The unfittingness view states that while Debbie may have produced bad outcomes for which she is the fitting target of blame, her overall moral character can still make her the unfitting target of the quantity of blame that is directed at her. This could now be interpreted as saying that while Debbie is the fitting target of blame in the narrow congruence sense, she is the unfitting target of a collection of blame in the sense that involves our general sense of what is good and right. I think that this is true as far as it goes, but we need to be careful here as the point is not just that Debbie can be psychologically affected by becoming a knowing target of a quantity of blame. The intuition is that not everything is as it should be regarding the fact that she is a target of so many blame instances *irrespective* of the emotional harm that she might suffer from her awareness of being a target.<sup>8</sup>

I will return to the two different fittingness notions momentarily, but before that it might be helpful for me to take a quick detour and consider the main rivals to the unfittingness view. The aim of such accounts would be to explain how there might be something problematic about the kind of cases to which I have alluded without

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<sup>6</sup> The idea that attitudes have "inherent standards" that determine their fittingness to certain targets comes from McHugh & Way (2016).

<sup>7</sup> Actually, D'Arms & Jacobson distinguish between a narrow and broad sense of *appropriateness* and reserve the term 'fittingness' for the narrow sense. I do not think that this difference marks an important disagreement between us. The same distinction that they have in mind seems to apply to the everyday notion of fittingness.

<sup>8</sup> It would be uncontroversial to suggest that an object could be fitting as a target of a collection of attitudes that are adopted by an individual agent (i.e., fitting attitudes can be *intrapersonally* aggregated). For example, a lovable person may to that extent also be admirable and respectable, which typically entails that they are the fitting target of a collection of attitudes that includes love, admiration, and respect. The question is if a person can be the fitting target of a collection of attitudes that are adopted by a single agent, why could a person not be the unfitting target of a collection of attitudes that is dispersed among many (i.e., fitting attitudes that are *interpersonally* aggregated)?

having to assign any normative status to collections of blame instances *as such*. Considering the general features of such accounts will help us see the commitments of the unfittingness view and what it might entail for our understanding of the normative dimensions of blame. In the next section, I will start out with an account that puts emphasis on the notion of *moral standing*.<sup>9</sup>

## Atomistic Understandings

It seems clear that for an individual to be a fitting blamer in a given situation, they must have moral standing to blame in that situation. For example, a person that has produced a morally bad outcome can lack moral standing to blame someone else for producing that outcome—or for producing an outcome of the same general type. This suggests the possibility that there might be cases where there is a limited number of places of moral standing that would make people fitting blamers. Debbie has produced a morally bad outcome and is to that extent blameworthy, but potential blamers need to make sure that there is enough space for them to be fitting blamers of her. Debbie is the fitting target of blame, but it could still be unfitting *for most people* to blame her. If this is right, then we can explain her situation without saying that she is the unfitting target of a quantity of blame instances *as such*.

*The standing view* insists that insofar as there is something problematic about Debbie's case, this is because not all the instances of blame that are directed at her are fitting in the first place. The idea is that the fittingness of an individual instance of blame depends, *inter alia*, on the number of blame instances of which someone is already a target.<sup>10</sup> One immediate problem is that whether someone has moral standing to blame typically depends on the contents of their character, abilities, or quality of will—in short, who they are as people—as well as on facts about how they have been affected by the actions of the blameworthy (Todd 2017). This explains why people that have produced a bad outcome may lack the moral standing to blame someone else for producing that same outcome—or for producing an outcome of the same type. Put simply, they are hypocrites.

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<sup>9</sup> For an excellent discussion about the notion of moral standing, see Todd (2017).

<sup>10</sup> This version of the standing view takes the blame game to be like a game of musical chairs. There are a limited number of chairs placed in a circle, each of which represents a place of moral standing that can enable its occupant to be a fitting blamer. Music is played and people dance around the chairs, following one another until a moral transgression is committed. As soon as Debbie produces a bad outcome, the music stops, and people scramble for seats. Only those that manage to occupy a chair find themselves with the moral standing to blame Debbie for producing the bad outcome. Those that find themselves without a seat cannot adopt an attitude of blame at Debbie, on pain of doing so unfittingly. Of course, one difference is that when the actual case involves thousands of anonymous strangers, as may easily happen online, it can be difficult to ascertain with accuracy who has moral standing. In fact, the number of places of moral standing could even be *indeterminate*.

Given this perspective, it would be surprising if someone could lack moral standing to blame Debbie simply for arriving too late to the blame game. The order in which someone finds themselves among other blamers does not necessarily say anything about their character, abilities, or quality of will—nor about how they have been affected by the actions of the blameworthy. Of course, this points in the direction of a version of the standing view that puts more emphasis on how people are personally affected by bad outcomes. In many cases where we might be given pause by the quantity of blame that is directed at individuals, this might be because there is a piling on from outsiders that do not have anything to do with the case at hand. Most of the blame might come from people that have not been personally affected by the relevant outcomes produced by the blameworthy (cf., Radzik 2011).

While this may capture *many* examples of the relevant type of problem case, it is unclear whether it applies to all—especially if the relevant moral transgressions can be plausibly understood as contributing toward some structural injustice that affects a large portion of the moral community. For example, it seems perfectly conceivable that the amount of people that were in fact fitting blamers of Sacco is still sufficient to give us pause and a sense that not everything is as it should be regarding the quantity of blame that ends up being directed at her. Nevertheless, the standing view might get *something* right in that it refuses to assign a negative normative status to a collection of blame instances. Perhaps we should at least consider whether there is room for other accounts that manage to be just as individualistic.

An alternative suggestion makes use of the aforementioned distinction between two types of fittingness. Recall that attitudes are made fitting to targets in the congruence sense by the properties of attitudes and the properties of their targets.<sup>11</sup> For example, the explanation for why love is the fitting response to lovable people has to do with the nature of love as well as the nature of the people (i.e., they have certain descriptive characteristics that *make* them lovable) (Howard 2019). Wider considerations about the effects of loving someone do not influence whether that person is a fitting target of love in the congruence sense (for they do not say anything about whether the people fulfil the inherent standards of love), but it might still be relevant to the question whether it is morally right to love them. To answer this question, we need to take a wider view of love and its *consequences*.

If these sorts of observations hold for blame as much as they do for love, then there is room for *the wrongness view*. It states that while each individual instance of blame that is directed at Debbie could be fitting, some of them may nevertheless be morally wrong, all things considered. The account therefore tries to explain the problem case in individualistic terms but does so while avoiding appeals to the notion of moral standing.<sup>12</sup> Personally, it also seems to me intuitive to suggest that

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<sup>11</sup> For more on the explanation of the fittingness of attitudes and its implications for the relation between the fittingness of attitude and value, see, e.g., Orsi & Garcia (2021, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> The standing view and the wrongness views are reminiscent of the axiological theory *conditionalism*. While the two former views state that whether an attitude is fitting or right can depend on how many

while a person may indeed be a fitting blamer, it can nevertheless be morally wrong for them to adopt an attitude of blame, all things considered. That there can be such cases seems an attractive notion irrespective of its use in the current context. The question then is whether an account like this can capture everything there is to say about cases where too much blame is heaped on individuals.

One potential worry is that, insofar as individual instances of blame appear morally problematic, this is at least *sometimes* because of the contribution they have to a collection. The reason it is wrong for me to blame Debbie is that I would then be contributing to an even larger quantity of blame instances, and it is *this* that should give us pause. This means that when the wrongness view attempts to explain the relevant problem case by appealing to the normative status of individual blame instances, it risks putting the cart before the horse. While this is not a devastating problem, it at least invites us to consider accounts that do not deny the normative intuition from which we proceeded. We should at least be open to a more collectivist view of the relevant problem case. Let us therefore return to the unfittingness view and consider some of its advantages to the individualistic accounts.

## Holistic Understandings

Let us remind ourselves of the general features of the unfittingness view. It allows that while Debbie may have produced bad outcomes for which she is the fitting target of blame, her overall character can still make her the unfitting target of the collective blame that ends up being directed at her.<sup>13</sup> The sense in which her character makes her the unfitting target of a large amount of blame instances is wider than the sense in which she nevertheless fulfils the inherent standards of blame. However, it is not meant to be so wide as to take into consideration all the morally relevant effects that might follow from her becoming the knowing target of so many blame instances. Debbie becomes the victim of a kind of collective harm as a result

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other attitudes of that type are already held, conditionalism states that whether an object has value can depend on how many other objects of that type already exist. More precisely, conditionalism states that the value of objects depends on context, so that the same object can be good in one situation and bad in another. Crucially, this is supposed to hold for non-instrumental values as well, meaning that whether an object is good or bad *for its own sake* could also depend on the context in which it occurs, including how many other objects of that type already exist. For discussions, see, e.g., Korsgaard (1983), Kagan (1998), Hurka (1998), Dancy (1993, 2000, 2003, 2004), Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen (2001), Olson (2004), and Orsi (2015).

<sup>13</sup> The unfittingness view also shares certain similarities with a more general view in axiology, namely *organicism*. While the unfittingness view states that a collection of attitudes can be unfitting even if each attitude within the collection is fitting, the latter states that we cannot calculate the values of wholes on the basis of the values of their parts (cf., G. E. Moore 1993/1903: 79). Typically, organicism also insists that the values of parts are not sensitive to context in the way that conditionalism claims—at least if said values are meant to be something other than instrumental.



of her being the target of so many instances of blame, even if she remains unaware of the fact and does not suffer emotionally or psychologically.

The suggestion that there is this wider notion of fittingness starts to look particularly attractive when we consider the connection between reactive attitudes and *dispositions*. It seems plausible to suggest that the attitude of blame correlates with dispositions to act in certain ways *vis-à-vis* the blamed. For one thing, a person that blames another will typically be disposed to treat them in ways that are punitive or that otherwise increases the social distance between the one who blames and the one who is blamed. Indeed, this seems plausible even in the event that reactive attitudes cannot be reduced to dispositions. If this is on the right lines, then the unfittingness view could be supported by an argument stating that a person can be the unfitting target of too many such dispositions, even if they should result from individual instances of blame that are all fitting. My argument is that it is a bad thing if someone with a good moral character is put in a situation of *social fragility*.

Suppose that Debbie has produced a slightly bad outcome but that she remains a morally good person overall. For the most part, she acts toward others in ways that are kind, caring, and compassionate. While she fulfils the inherent standards of blame, Debbie has a history and moral character that makes her undeserving of a situation where thousands of strangers are disposed to act toward her in ways that are punitive, or that would increase the social distance between her and the rest of the moral community. I submit that there is a sense in which such a state of affairs, where Debbie is put in a situation of social fragility, would not be fitted to her. This is so irrespective of whether she “breaks” in the sense that the dispositions are ever realized. As this notion of fittingness is guided by our general sense of what is good and right, perhaps we can elaborate on it by invoking this sense more directly. Let us briefly consider how a collection of blame instances can be bad.

If an attitude is fitting, then the adoption of the attitude by someone is typically good. Indeed, the fact that a fitting attitude is adopted is itself the fitting target of a positive attitude, such as respect and admiration.<sup>14</sup> I would argue that while each instance of blame that is directed at Debbie may be fitting and its adoption would to that extent be good, the fact that so many instances of fitting blame are directed at her is nevertheless bad *overall*. This means that while it may be fitting and right for anyone that contemplates Debbie and her actions to adopt an attitude of blame toward her, *pace* the standing view and the wrongness view, it may also be fitting for them to lament the collection of blame instances to which they would thereby be

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<sup>14</sup> This is not to suggest that the adoption of fitting attitudes is always good *overall*. Suppose an Evil Demon threatens to destroy the universe if people should ever condemn him for his destructive tendencies. It would be fitting to condemn the evil demon for his destructive tendencies (i.e., he fulfils the standards that are inherent to the attitude of condemnation) and yet, condemning the evil demon would be bad overall. Nevertheless, it remains intuitive to suggest that, typically, the adoption of attitudes in cases where they are fitting is to that extent (i.e., *pro-tanto*) good, say, in the sense of being *admirable* or *respectable*. This is so even when the attitudes happen to be of the kind that draws more unpleasant associations, such as envy and hate.

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contributing. The unfittingness view can in this way be expanded upon by incorporating a “holistic” view of the values accruing to attitudes.

What is attractive about this elaboration is that it also provides a practical answer to the question what people that are contemplating Debbie and her actions should do. The standing view and the wrongness view provide practical advice as well, but their advice seems incorrect in the relevant type of problem case. Some of them suggest that, depending on the *order* in which people find themselves among other blamers, they might find that they should avoid blaming Debbie even if she is morally responsible for a bad outcome and thus fulfils the inherent standards of blame. By contrast, the unfittingness view suggests that while each person that contemplates Debbie’s actions is right to blame her, it could also be fitting for them to direct a negative attitude at the collection of blame of which she is a target—perhaps with an appreciative eye toward her history and moral character.

One objection takes aim at the generality of the unfittingness view. Suppose that Kate is a morally bad person, responsible for having committed a very slight moral transgression. She stole a pencil from someone’s desk, say, or threw a pebble at a squirrel and missed. This was caught on film and went viral on social media, with the result that millions of people ended up blaming Kate fittingly. The sheer quantity of people that blame Kate may still seem excessive. She does not deserve so many instances of blame, but not for the reason that she has an overall good moral character. Kate is an overall bad person.<sup>15</sup> I am not entirely sure what to say about this sort of case, though I am tempted to suggest that while Kate has an overall bad character, there is a sense in which the actions for which she is blamed is not indicative of this character. Be that as it may, I also wish to stress that the unfittingness view states that a quantity of blame instances can be unfitting to a certain person, but perhaps it can be liberal when it comes to the explanation of this. One commonplace explanation has to do with the overall moral character of the would-be blamed (this is the case when it comes to Debbie) but other explanations may be required to capture our intuitions about other examples (about Kate).

Another objection to the unfittingness view maintains that, unlike its individualistic rivals, this view does not fit well with commonplace ideas about how fittingness should be understood. One such idea is that notions of fittingness, whether they are of the narrow or wide variety, should be understood in terms of *normative reasons*. This means that whether an attitude is unfitting is ultimately a matter of whether there are normative reasons for some agent to avoid adopting the attitude. This is a problem for the unfittingness view because when we say of a quantity of blame instances that *it* is unfitting in respect of a target like Debbie, it seems that we cannot understand this suggestion in terms of there being some agent that has normative reasons to avoid adopting that quantity of attitudes.

The theoretically expensive choice would be to respond by insisting that there is a *collective entity* for whom there can be reasons to avoid adopting a collection of

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<sup>15</sup> I owe this objection to Mattias Gunnemyr, who raised it to me (in private communication).

attitudes, but this appears too costly in the present context.<sup>16</sup> Instead, we might suggest that there are notions of fittingness that cannot be understood in terms of normative reasons in this way. Among other things, these notions allow us to say that Debbie is, by virtue of her history and moral character, the unfitting target of a certain quantity of attitudes, even if there is no one agent that has reasons to avoid adopting any attitudes within the quantity. The manoeuvre would have seemed *ad hoc* if not for the fact that several philosophers have put forward good reasons to think that the fittingness of responses is not generally reducible to normative reasons for responses (e.g., McHugh & Way 2016, 2022).<sup>17</sup>

Another objection states that if blame works in the way that I have suggested, then this would make it unique from other kinds of reactive attitudes. After all, there is nothing unfitting about Debbie becoming the target of large amounts of love, respect, or admiration—unless she was not the fitting target of such reactive attitudes to begin with. I am not convinced that this is true. For example, praise seems to me to mirror the behaviour of blame in this regard. The amount of praise that Debbie becomes the target of could be excessive given the weight of the value that she has produced. There may also be cases where other kinds of reactive attitudes, including admiration, exhibit this sort of behaviour. Personally, I often find that the amount of admiration that is heaped over popular songs and movies is not as it should be—even when the individual instances of admiration happen to be fitting in terms of their intensity and duration.

Perhaps we should also be open to the possibility that there is something special about the attitudes of blame and praise, which results in them becoming subject to these wider fittingness conditions. The question why this might be is a difficult one to which I regrettably have no answer. Perhaps it has something to do with the distinctive roles and social functions that moulded the attitudes of blame and praise in the first place. In the absence of an explanation, there is of course the temptation to be sceptical and insist that quantities do *not* play a role for the fittingness of any reactive attitudes—though they may play a role for determining whether it is fitting to express them. The weight of being a knowing recipient of too much blame is heavy, as is the weight of being constantly reminded of one's moral transgressions. It is certainly easy to explain the salience of *such* factors.

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<sup>16</sup> There is a wealth of literature on the topic of collective agency going back to the first half of the 20th century. For a small selection of recent and insightful discussions, see, e.g., Held (1970), Gilbert (1989, 2000, 2006, 2013), Tuomela (1989, 2005, 2006, 2013), Smiley (1992), Velleman (1997), Bratman (1999, 2013), Kutz (2007), List & Pettit (2011), and Tuomela & Mäkelä (2016). I wish to note that the collective entity that I am here referring to is very unlikely to be integrated enough to be considered a collective agent, even on the most generous accounts of what this means. So, for this type of theoretically expensive account to work, it would have to invoke the idea that not only agents can be subject to reasons. I owe thanks to Mattias Gunnemyr for pressing this issue (in private communication). Unfortunately, I will have to set it aside here.

<sup>17</sup> The assumption is that unless we understand fittingness in terms of normative reasons, then we must understand it in terms of another normative category, like value. We should be neutral here although I am tempted to suggest, as McHugh & Way do (2016), that fittingness is a primitive notion.

In particular, the effects of expressing otherwise fitting attitudes have a big impact on the decision whether to make one's private blame of an individual public. I have so far treated blame as a non-doxastic and motivational mental state that is directed at people for the bad outcomes that they produce. When we talk about blame in everyday life, however, we often have in mind something distinctly public, like acts of punishment as well as written or spoken speech-acts (e.g., "How could you, Debbie!").<sup>18</sup> Sceptics to the unfittingness view might dig in their heels and insist that if we look to quantities of blame and keep in mind the attitudinal understanding, then there can be no question about the unfittingness of such quantities. An agent simply cannot be the unfitting target of a collection of blame instances *as such*, regardless of the kinds of dispositions with which they are then subjects.

Fair enough. The paper proceeds from the normative intuition that there could be something about a collection of blame instances that is not as it should be. What I have argued is that the approach that is most likely to capture the intuition well is something like the unfittingness view. The reason is that it does not explain the normative status of a collection of blame instances by giving up on the idea that the individual instances within it are all morally unproblematic. In other words, if one senses the pull of the intuition, then there are reasons to prefer something like the unfittingness view. That said, I acknowledge that if one does not sense the pull of the intuition—perhaps because one harbours convictions about the reducibility of fittingness to normative reasons—then something like the standing view and the wrongness view may be preferable.

## Concluding Remarks

I have suggested that just as the weight of the value that people produce can become relevant to the duration and intensity of the reactive attitudes of which they are the fitting targets, it can be relevant to the amounts of reactive attitudes of which they are the fitting targets as well. The suggestion was meant to help explain and vindicate our reaction to cases where people have said or done something bad and thereby made themselves the targets of disproportionate quantities of reactions. I used the example of online blame as a paradigmatic case where this is a risk. The purpose of the paper was to explore the implications of the intuition just mentioned, and to outline some of the theoretical costs that are associated with its various interpretations. I suspect that further research into this area could yield a better understanding of the social dimensions of moral blame.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See the discussions about private and public blame between McKenna (2012, 2016) and Driver (2016). For more on the normative stakes that are associated with these, see also Gokhale (2019).

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