Hypocritical Blame Is Unfitting

Rachel Achs
University of California, Santa Cruz

ABSTRACT: Philosophers disagree about what, if anything, is wrong with blaming hypocritically, but almost all treat the issue as a moral one: Either there is something morally wrong with hypocritical blame or there isn't. This paper argues that, although there are moral objections to blaming hypocritically, the first and foremost problem with hypocritical blame is that it's unfitting. More specifically, it is an enabling condition on blame's fittingness that the blaming subject be committed to the norm she blames a target person for violating. Because of a connection between fittingness and representational accuracy, recognizing this condition on blame's fittingness in turn has interesting upshots – both for theorizing about the ethics of hypocrisy and for understanding the significance of blame itself.

I.   Introduction

The lyrics of 1979's *Billboard*-topping hit "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" tell of a man who furtively combs the classifieds section when he feels the spark in his marriage dying. There, he alights upon an intriguing personal ad ("Do you like piña coladas/and getting caught in the rain?…"). He replies ("I'm not much into health food/and I do like champagne…") arranging to meet the listing's author the next day, planning, presumably, infidelity. In a bemusing twist of events, he arrives the following day only to find that his "own lovely lady" is the very stranger he had arranged to meet. The couple ends up laughing off the whole incident, both tickled to learn of their shared love for piña coladas and distaste for health food. The song's lyrics would be less consonant with its upbeat tune if its narrator, rather than reacting with humor, instead became incensed to discover that his partner had also been intending to cheat. Of course, in that case, however, his wife would have at hand a natural counter-reproach: to call out his blame as hypocritical. "You were leafing through the personals just yesterday for the very same reason!" she could say, "So who do you think *you* are to blame *me*?"

Recent years have seen a surge of discussion seeking to clarify what – if anything – is wrong with blaming hypocritically. Many philosophers decry hypocritical blame but disagree about precisely what makes hypocrisy objectionable.[1] Other philosophers contend that hypocrisy does

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[1] Does the hypocritical blamer offend against the moral equality of persons, or is her transgression less serious? (See Wallace 2010 and Fritz & Miller 2018 vs. Lippert-Rasmussen 2020.) And does the would-be hypocrite forfeit some sort of right or authority to stand in condemnation of others, or do her own vices merely tip the balance of reasons against blame? (See Wallace 2010, Fritz & Miller 2018, and Lippert-Rasmussen 2020 vs. King 2019.)

not undercut the authority to blame, or insist that there is nothing inherently problematic about being critical of others for failings one shares in.[2] Nearly all treat these issues as moral ones: either there is something morally wrong with blaming hypocritically, or there isn't. Yet these disputes about the *morality* of hypocritical blame overlook a more fundamental problem with it. For they treat hypocrisy as relevant to the question of whether blaming is morally okay to do – and yet not to the question of whether a blaming response is merited by the person it's directed at. In so doing, they miss an integral aspect of the content of blame, and of what blame intimates to others.

Here, I argue that, although there are moral objections to blaming hypocritically, the first and foremost problem with hypocritical blame is that it's unfitting. It is an enabling condition on blame's fittingness that a subject is, herself, committed to the norm she blames a target person for violating. Recognizing this fittingness condition in turn has several interesting upshots, both for theorizing about the ethics of hypocrisy and for understanding the significance of blame itself.[3]

Here's the plan: First, I'll say more to clarify my thesis, by making some preliminary remarks about how I'm thinking about 'fittingness,' about 'blame,' and about 'hypocritical' blame specifically. In the following section, I'll make the case that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit, by arguing that three familiar indicators of the fittingness relation are present in how we regard a blamer's own values and history as relevant to the appropriateness of her blame. The rest of the paper will then be devoted to explaining why we should care that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit. Section 4 will further flesh out the relationship between blame's fittingness conditions and what blame *represents* – in the service of contending that taking non-hypocrisy seriously as one of blame's fittingness conditions, in turn, grounds an intervention within a debate about what's *morally* wrong with hypocritical blame. In Section 5, I'll argue that recognizing the relevance of hypocrisy to blame's fittingness helps us to better understand how blame functions as a form of protest.

II.   Preliminaries

My title is "Hypocritical Blame Is Unfitting." I begin with some brief clarifications about how I understand the terms in this sentence, starting with 'fit.'

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[2] Bell 2012 and Dover 2019, respectively.

[3] I said "nearly all" philosophers treat hypocrisy as bearing on blame's ethics as opposed to its fittingness. The one exception of whom I know is Julia Markovits (ms). Indeed, many of the philosophers who regard hypocritical blame as a moral problem don't merely *overlook*, but rather explicitly *deny*, hypocrisy's relevance to blame's fit (e.g., Bell 2013: 267; King 2019: 269; and Wallace 2019: 545).

'Fit' is the relation that a response bears to its object when that object merits, calls for, or is worthy of that response. A response can be fitting even if it is not morally, prudentially, or all-things-considered justified. Amusement at an off-color joke may be morally inappropriate, and yet still fitting if the joke is amusing enough to merit it (D'Arms & Jacobson 2000a). Similarly, believing that you will soon recover from an illness may be the best thing to do all-things-considered, and yet unfitting if the evidence speaks against your swift recovery. We're commonly concerned to assess the fittingness of our attitudes. But certain types of action, *qua* those types of action, also express something about "objects" towards which they're directed and can be assessed for their fittingness too. For instance, punishment is an action that's unfitting to the innocent who don't merit it, while reporting in the news is a fitting response to newsworthy events.[4]

As for 'blame': I believe that one can recognize that another person is responsible for a wrongdoing – or even *tell* him so – without thereby *blaming* him. There is a distinction between, on the one hand, non-judgmentally registering a person's failings and, on the other, doing so in a "modality of moral criticism" (Wallace 2010: 317). But, beyond the caveat that not just any assessment that someone is culpable has a condemnatory-enough character to count as blame, I am ecumenical about the forms that blame can take. Both unexpressed feelings and public admonitions can be blame, and my claim here is that hypocrisy makes both private and overt blame unfitting. On my own way of thinking, because blame is always a way of reacting that's directed at someone, it has the general form of an affective attitude – albeit one that comes in many diverse modes and can incorporate other attitudes and even behaviors within it. So, on my way of thinking, both feeling angry and chewing someone out can each be *components* of the same general attitude-like stance, which is blame (Achs 2022). However, some readers will prefer a disjunctive picture, on which 'blame' refers to two distinct, but related, things: either to an attitude or to a piece of overt behavior which expresses that attitude. Readers who prefer this picture may read

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[4] The notion of 'fit' is often introduced by reference to the relation between objects that bear certain evaluative properties and responses that are etymologically connected to those properties: Fit, it is said, is the relation that admiration bears to the admirable, amusement to the amusing, lament to the lamentable, etc. This is a correct and helpful claim to make about fittingness, so long as it isn't taken unqualifiedly. It isn't fitting for just *any*one to admire the admirable, at *any* time, and in *any* way. Rather, admiration is the fitting response to the admirable, given the right conditions and context. D'Arms & Jacobson note as much in an early article on the topic: "To think the tiger is fearsome is to think fear at it appropriate [in the sense of fitting], but only when the tiger is nearby and on the loose – not, for instance, while you sit reading this article" (2000b: 729). Similarly, the blameworthy are fitting to blame *ceteris paribus*, but all else isn't always equal; it isn't, for instance, when my blame of someone blameworthy would be hypocritical. (Such a person would be blameworthy, and yet not worthy of *my* blame.) In some recent work, the relation between an object's possession of an evaluative property and the fittingness of the etymologically corresponding response has been exaggerated. For discussion, see Achs & Na'aman 2023.

my arguments here as focused on the blaming *attitude* (conceived as something akin to resentment or moralized anger). I don't think anyone will want to hold that expressions of blame can be fitting when the attitude of blame is not. So, if I make my case for blame the attitude, I should thereby make it for blaming behaviors too.

Finally, 'hypocrisy': I'll speak interchangeably of the "non-hypocrisy condition" on blame's fittingness and of the condition that "the blaming subject be committed to the norm she blames a target for violating." I'll do so because I assume, for present purposes, a rough account of what hypocritical blame *is*, namely: blame in the absence of a genuine commitment on the blamer's part to the very same norm, violation of which her blame condemns.[5] I won't attempt to be precise about what genuine commitment to a norm consists in, but I imagine that a person's beliefs about the validity of that norm, whether she adheres to it, and whether she blames herself and others for its violation all bear on whether she has a genuine normative commitment. (I also imagine that, although failures in these respects *evince* a lack of commitment, perfect compliance is nevertheless unnecessary for genuine commitment. We sometimes don't live up to our commitments.)

I like the view that hypocritical blame is blame in the absence of genuine commitment to the relevant norm, because this view has the potential to provide a unified explanation for several otherwise disparate-seeming intuitive judgments about *when* a person's blame counts as objectionably hypocritical. For instance, paradigmatically hypocritical blame is blame from a person who has previously performed the very same action she is criticizing. Yet it is also intuitive that blame from a person who has done the same thing in the past isn't objectionable when a blamer appears to have sincerely reformed her miscreant ways (Todd 2019: 357-359). The view that hypocritical blame is, fundamentally, blame in the absence of a blamer's commitment to the very norm her blame invokes explains why a person's past misdeeds usually, but don't *always*, render blame objectionable on grounds of hypocrisy: usually past misdeeds indicate a lack of seriousness about the relevant norm, but in cases of reform and recommitment, they needn't.[6] No

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[5] I take inspiration here both from Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen's (2020: 672) suggestion that "lack of seriousness about a norm undermines one's standing as a critic of others' non-compliance" and from Patrick's Todd's (2019: 326) arguments that a person loses standing to blame via "non-commitment to the relevant values."

[6] This view also seems capable of subsuming Fritz & Miller's (2018) "differential blaming-disposition" account of hypocrisy, insofar as the disposition to blame violations of a norm selectively might be part of what's involved in lacking a commitment to it. Moreover, it seems to me that this view can explain why self-blame needn't be hypocritical despite one's having (obviously) committed the same wrong oneself. And it seems a promising avenue for accounting for cases of "subjunctive hypocrisy" – in which we haven't done the same thing ourselves, but either *would* or *would have* (see Todd 2019: 360).

doubt we could dispute whether this is really the best account of hypocritical blame. But since my aim here is not to defend and draw lessons from a view of what hypocritical blame *is*, but rather a view about the *type* of standard hypocritical blame violates, I adopt this rough and ready conception of it. My hope is that my arguments that hypocritical blame is unfitting will be able to withstand some modification to this relatively loose suggestion about *which* instances of blame are hypocritical.[7]

III.   Indicators of Fit

'Fittingness' is not a commonplace term, but it is "intended as a technical term for a familiar type of evaluation" (D'Arms & Jacobson 2000a: 72). Insofar as this is true, I think I have a grasp on what fittingness is. Certainly, I grasp the distinction between asking whether, on the one hand, it would be a good thing for me to admire a person and, on the other, whether she merits my admiration. But insofar as I grasp the idea of evaluation for fit, it seems to me that an objection to someone's blame on grounds of hypocrisy appeals to precisely that form of evaluation. I ask a person, "Who are *you* to blame *me*?" to oppose the idea that *I* could possibly merit *that person's* blame. This is not an injunction that she better *manage* her blame, but rather a suggestion that her blame isn't warranted. Indeed, several indicators that the question of fittingness is at issue are present in how we think and talk about the relevance of hypocrisy to blame's appropriateness.[8]

For example, a first indicator of fit is that our language does (gently) track it. "You should associate it," Chappell (2012: 689, n. 11) says, "with words like 'warranted', 'appropriate', 'right' or 'correct'... not with 'useful', 'fortunate', 'important.'" So too are 'merited,' 'worthy of,' and 'calls for' cognates of 'fitting,' and 'fit for' (Howard 2018; Berker 2022). The registration of fittingness by our language in turn affects what sounds right to our ear. It sounds off to use fit-talk to evaluate a response

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[7] But just to head off a possible objection: I don't think holding that hypocritical blame is blame in the absence of genuine commitment precludes us from also holding – should we wish to – that *blaming* someone for violating a norm itself involves being committed to that norm. How is this possible? If blame *involves* a commitment, then how can hypocritical blame be blame in the *absence* of that commitment? There are two things we might say: First, we might insist on a distinction between partial and full commitment, and hold that, whereas blaming always involves at least partial commitment, *genuine* commitment to a norm is full commitment to it, and not being a hypocrite requires genuine/full commitment. (If we went this route then we would want some way of distinguishing between partial and full commitment to a norm – and preferably one that still didn't equate full commitment with perfect compliance. We would also need to be more stringent than I plan to be in what follows about maintaining the "genuine" qualifier when characterizing hypocritical blame; I sometimes drop it for convenience.) The second option would be to insist that blame involves genuine/full commitment and hold that the hypocritical blamer's self is thus disunified: In blaming hypocritically, part of oneself is genuinely committed to the relevant norm and part of oneself is not, such that one both is, and is not, committed. (One might wish to characterize the *akratic* person analogously.).

[8] In Achs & Na'aman 2023, we employ the same indicators.

when the considerations we're using to assess it don't bear on its fit, but rather merely on whether it's a good response to have. For instance, it sounds off to describe how the potential rewards of trusting another count in favor of trusting that person by saying that the benefits of trusting him make him "worthy of our trust." Nor do trust's benefits make trust "warranted." But using fit-talk to describe the effects of hypocrisy on blame does not sound similarly off. It sounds natural to use cognates of 'fit,' for example, in saying that "while my hypocrisy won't make you cease to merit blame from *someone*, it will make you cease to merit blame from *me*," or to say that "while I may be blameworthy, I'm not worthy of *your* blame, since you regularly do the same thing yourself."

A second, widely acknowledged indicator of fit applies to the fittingness of attitudes, specifically. There is an "asymmetry in the ease with which we can have attitudes" for fit- and (mere) value-related reasons (Schroeder 2010: 53) – a special type of *rational impact* on our attitudes that only fit-related considerations can have. Whereas recognizing fit-affecting facts can rationally impact our attitudes directly, recognizing facts that bear merely on whether our attitudes are good to have can rationally impact those attitudes only indirectly, by motivating us to try and manage them. Facts that constitute evidence for or against the existence of God, for example, can be reasons directly *for which* I either believe or don't believe in God. In contrast, the prospect of eternal heavenly rewards for my faith can't be a reason directly for which I believe – although it may be a reason directly for which I undertake to place myself in a position to (Pascal 1670/2009: §233).

This point about rational impact applies not just to facts that themselves *make* our attitudes fitting or unfitting, but also to facts that constitute the conditions under which other facts make our attitudes fitting or unfitting. Plausibly there are some fit-affecting facts which aren't themselves grounds of our attitudes' fit or lack of fit, but rather background *enabling* or *disabling conditions* on the fittingness of our attitudes. For illustration's sake: perhaps the fact that I love a person I've lost is not itself a fact that makes grieving her fitting, but rather a fact that enables other facts – such as the fact of her death – to make grief fitting (Na'aman 2021: 251). Similarly, pride plausibly isn't "*made* fitting by the fact of a special and close relationship between you and its object," but rather "wouldn't be fitting without one" (Howard 2022: 10). Yet note that recognizing fit-affecting enablers and disablers, just like recognizing fit-*makers*, can rationally impact our attitudes directly, as opposed to simply motivating us to manage them. Even though what *makes* pride fitting is not my relationship to a person, but rather that person's achievements, a change in what I take our relationship to be can have a direct rational impact on my pride. For instance, the newly learned

fact that I was mistaken about the academic affiliation of the winner of a race – that she's not from my school after all – can be a reason directly for which I cease to feel pride in her win. This is very much in contrast to the sort of rational impact that can be had on my pride simply by (say) realizing that my pride is making people irritated.[9]

Being committed to the norm that the target of one's blame has violated plausibly isn't what *makes* it fitting to blame her. What *makes* it fitting to blame a person is that she's done something wrong. But recognizing that my blame is, or would be, hypocritical can have a direct rational impact on my blame, in the way that recognizing the absence of an enabler on an attitude's fittingness can in general rationally impact that attitude directly. The (newly learned) fact that I'm being a hypocrite can be a reason directly for which I cease to blame – as when, in admitting to myself that my own actions were just as bad, my anger immediately evaporates. Moreover, the fact that my blame would be hypocritical can be a reason directly for which I never begin to blame in the first place. Consider what the narrator of "The Piña Colada Song" might say if asked why he doesn't resent his wife: "Of course it was wrong of her to plan to cheat on me, but *I* don't blame her since I was doing the same thing myself." The behavior of his own to which our narrator here refers isn't a reason for which he *brought it about* that he doesn't resent his wife. Rather it is a consideration that directly rationalizes his lack of blame – which, again, indicates its bearing on fit.

A third indicator of fit derives from the philosophy of emotions literature, where it is common to hold that emotional attitudes all represent the objects at which they're directed in emotion-specific ways. Things appear either dangerous or fearsome under the guise of fear. Hence, it is said that fear represents its object as either fearsome or dangerous.[10] Many who think of

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[9] If the fact of a special relationship with pride's object is an enabling condition on pride's fittingness, then shouldn't the (newly realized) lack of such a relationship be not a *reason* for which I cease to feel pride, but rather the *absence of a psychological enabler*? Technically, yes. But I here follow the everyday convention of using "reasons for which"-talk in a manner inclusive of salient background conditions, because I find this language to be helpful for communicating the distinction between considerations that can rationally impact our attitudes directly, and considerations that can rationally impact our attitudes merely via rationally impacting how we *manage* them. My point is that (recognizing) the presence or absence of a relevant background condition can have a rational impact that's direct in the sense that it's not managerial and, thus, be a "reason for which" in *this* sense.

[10] I will mostly speak here of what an *attitude* represents – as opposed to what a *subject* represents in having an attitude – in order to capture the idea of an attitude's having a certain representational content. But really, I think this is a distinction without a difference: Insofar as my *fear* represents the snake as dangerous, *I* do too (in the medium of fear), since it is, after all, *my* fear. There *is*, I think, a subtle difference between, on the one hand, my attitude representing something (or me representing something via having that attitude) simply in the sense of my attitude's having content and, on the other hand, my attitude representing something *to* someone (or me representing something *to* someone via having that attitude). After all, neither I, through my attitude, nor that attitude itself can represent anything *to* anyone (other than myself) unless that attitude is expressed. But my concern in the present section is only with what an attitude

emotions as thus representing in turn think of a response's fittingness as a matter of its *accuracy* – as "a matter of representing things as they are" (Tappolet 2016: 87).[11] And while, for my own part, I think it mistaken to simply *equate* fittingness and representational accuracy, I do agree that there is a deep connection here. Certainly, part of what seems off about an unfitting response is always that it seems to misrepresent its object. Amusement at a joke that doesn't merit amusement seems to represent that joke as funny when it's not; extreme irritation at a merely minor annoyance seems to portray that annoyance as more irritating than it is.[12] But if it's right that a response's fittingness and its accuracy at least covary, then this link between fittingness and representational accuracy can serve as yet another measure of whether hypocrisy bears on blame's fittingness. If unfitting attitudes misrepresent, and if I'm right that hypocritical blame is unfitting, then blame should, in one way or another, *represent* something incompatible with its subject's hypocrisy – such as that the subject is, herself, committed to the norm the target of her blame has violated.

Now, at first its apparent implications for what blame represents might seem to ground an objection to my claim that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit. Indeed, the idea that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit has seemed implausible to some precisely because it appears to attribute the *wrong content* to blame. Macalister Bell, for instance, assumes that understanding non-hypocrisy as one of blame's fittingness conditions requires "insisting that the content of resentment includes the judgment...that the wrong in question is not something that the blamer has done or would do," and holds, further, that assigning such content to blame is "indefensible" (2012: 267, n. 8). The idea that blame represents something about our own commitments may perhaps strike one as counterintuitive if one begins with the thought that one's focus in blaming is the target's violation. "What I'm concerned with in blame," one might think, "is the wrongdoing of the person I'm blaming. So blame doesn't represent anything about *me*, the blaming subject."

But it will seem implausible to think that blame represents as much only if one insists upon being narrow-minded about what a fit-evaluable response can represent. For while it is true that fit-evaluable responses are always directed at a particular object, it is a mistake to assume that a response's directedness at its object precludes it from also representing how its subject and object are related. Take fear of a snake. What such fear is *of* is the snake, and what one will tend to focus

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represents in the sense of its having content. When, in the next section, I speak also of what we represent *to* people via our attitudes (or what our attitudes represent *to* people), I'll be clear.

[11] See also, D'Arms & Jacobson 2000a: 72; Macnamara 2013: 144; Rosen 2015: 72; and Strabbing 2019: 3122-3124.
[12] Indeed, the point holds for fit-evaluable types of action: Publishing an above-the-fold column about a mundane event seems to misrepresent that event as newsworthy.

on during an episode of such fear is the snake's possession of features that (seem to) make it fearsome: its quicksilver slithering, teeth dripping with venom, etc. Yet the snake that one fears is the rapidly approaching one – not the snake that's locked far away, in a cage, at the Bronx Zoo. This is because part of what's involved in such an episode of fear is registration of the snake's location in relation to oneself. Indeed, it makes perfect sense to say that part of what an episode of fearing a snake is "about" is that snake's unsettling proximity. Next, consider grief at the death of a loved one. What such grief is "about," most immediately, is that person's death. Yet, again, it makes perfect sense to say that one's grief is also "about" the loving relationship that was shared with the deceased. In general, it does make sense to think of the presence of fit-enablers and absence of fit-disablers as part of what our responses represent, although as parts that appear more in the background of how our responses cast things rather than as their immediate focal points.

The same is equally true of blame. Blame is directed at a target person, and what blame represents most immediately is that person's violation of some norm. But the subject's own allegiance to the violated norm nevertheless features in what blame represents and seems to be part of what blame is "about" too: Blame is "about" its target having violated a norm *to which the subject, herself, is committed*.

Indeed, once we jettison the conflation of what blame represents and what its central focus is, I think that, far from grounding an objection to the view that hypocrisy bears on fit, the connection between fittingness and representational accuracy provides a third, positive reason in favor of this view. Blame *does* seem to represent that the target of blame has violated a norm which the subject, herself, wouldn't violate. In turn, part of what seems off about hypocritical blame is that it seems to falsely cast the blaming subject as committed to the norm her blame concerns. It is yet another *indicator* that hypocrisy bears on blame's fittingness that blame appears to so represent.

Distinctive indicators accompany the assessment of a response's fittingness. Some of these indicators are admittedly subtle, but their joint presence provides solid evidence that a way of evaluating the appropriateness of a response is an assessment of whether it's fitting. In this section, I've argued that the way in which hypocrisy is seen to render blame inappropriate bears several such indicators. So we should acknowledge that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit.

IV.   Hypocrisy and Dishonesty

If I'm right that hypocritical blame is unfitting, then this should be our foremost concern about it. Before we even get to the question of whether morality demands better management of our blame, we should already be worried that it isn't justified according to the standards by which we rationally govern it directly.[13] Nevertheless, to claim that hypocritical blame is unfitting is not to deny that it's *also* morally wrong. Hypocrisy is a vice; I don't disagree. I think we do have reasons deriving simply from the respect we owe to other persons to desire not to be hypocrites and to avoid being hypocrites if we can. This much seems intuitive. Yet precisely what the moral objections are to hypocritical blame is a matter of dispute.

On one way of thinking, what's morally wrong with hypocritical blame is that it's an affront to the equality of persons. By enforcing a norm on someone else without properly applying that norm to herself, the hypocritical blamer illegitimately either treats or regards that person as inferior (Wallace 2010: 328-330 and Fritz & Miller 2018: 126). Yet one might worry, along with Eric Marcus (ms), that this analysis makes too little of the hypocrite's obvious *dissemblance.* There is something, Marcus insists, that "most of us would want to say" about a person who castigates others for failing to adhere to a norm by which he, himself, fails to abide: that "he is a fraud, a charlatan, a phony...He is full of shit" (Marcus ms: 11). So, on an alternative way of thinking, "the fundamental vice of the hypocrite is dishonesty" (ibid.: 21).

One reason it's important to recognize that hypocrisy bears on blame's fit is that doing so helps to shed light on this interesting question about the precise nature of the hypocrite's moral failings. Recognizing the bearing of hypocrisy on the fittingness of blame lends support to Marcus' view that the hypocrite's fundamental *moral* vice is dishonesty. This is once again because of the connection between fit and representational accuracy. If commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions, then blame in some way represents its subject as committed to that norm. In turn, part of what blame represents *to anyone to whom it's expressed* is that the subject has the relevant normative commitment. In the hypocrite's case, this representation is dishonest.

But this argument went by quickly. Why am I so confident that, if commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions, then blame in some way *represents* its subject as committed to this norm? (Earlier I took the link between fit and accuracy on intuition, but is there a principled argument for this connection?) And what *is* the way in which blame represents

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[13] And indeed, as I said above, I think our language indicates that most objections to hypocritical blame *are* objections to its fittingness – i.e., that this *is* our foremost concern about it.

its subject's commitment? Answering these questions will help to better explain why hypocrisy's bearing on the *fittingness* of blame speaks to the hypocrite's inherent dishonesty.

Starting, then, with the first question: I'm confident about the connection between blame's fittingness conditions and what blame represents, because I think this connection is entailed by the story that makes the most sense of *why* fit-related considerations are capable of direct rational impact on our attitudes. This is Pamela Hieronymi's (2005) idea that fit-evaluable attitudes are constituted by the *settling of questions* – questions that are settled *by* those attitudes' fittingness conditions being met.

Here's the idea: Fit-related (and not mere value-related) considerations can have a direct rational impact on our attitudes, because they (and not the mere value-related ones) are the considerations that bear on commitments we undertake – or "questions we settle" – in forming those attitudes. For example, what explains why fit- (and not mere value-) related considerations for belief can have a direct rational impact on belief, is that to *believe* is to settle the question of *whether p*, and fit-related considerations are the considerations that bear on that question. (Fit-related reasons *for* believing that *p* – that is, considerations that show belief that *p* to be fitting, or *evidence for p* – are considerations that bear *positively* on the question whether *p*, whereas fit-related reasons *against* believing that *p* bear negatively.) Similarly, the thought is, what explains why fit-related reasons for and against other sorts of attitudes can have a direct rational impact on those attitudes is that those attitudes, too, are each constituted by the settling of a particular question (or set of questions) on which considerations that speak to that attitude's fittingness bear. The fit-related reasons for or against admiring my friend, for example, are those considerations which bear on whatever question(s) I settle in admiring my friend; the fit-related considerations for or against blaming my brother are those considerations which bear on whatever question(s) I settle in blaming my brother. It is because these considerations can either *settle for me* or leave me *unsettled on* the relevant question(s), that they can be reasons directly for which I have or cease to have the relevant attitude. In short, fit-affecting considerations have their distinctive rational impact because forming a fit-evaluable attitude involves settling a question that is settled *by* the reasons which show that attitude to be fitting winning out against the reasons that show it not to be – settled *by* that attitude's fittingness conditions being met.[14]

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[14] Hieronymi (2005) speaks not of "fit-related considerations" but rather of "right-kind reasons" as those considerations which settle the relevant questions, but it is clear from context that her "right-kind" reasons are what I consider "fit-related" reasons for an attitude. I've thus taken the liberty of translating into my own terms. Of course, Hieronymi

But this is why we should think that, if commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions, then blame in some way represents its subject as committed to the relevant norm. Forming a fit-evaluable attitude such as blame involves settling some question, one that is settled by the satisfaction of that attitude's fittingness conditions. Yet to settle such a question, it seems to me, *is* to represent – in some way or another – that that attitude's fittingness conditions have been met. If it's a condition on the fittingness of fearing *x*, for example, that *x* is dangerous, then to settle the question settled by fear *is* to represent – in some way or another – that *x* is dangerous. For, to settle a question that is settled by the satisfaction of particular fittingness conditions is to *commit* to those conditions having been satisfied – to take the stand that they have been met. But I *can't* take a stand that S without in some way representing S as being the case. I can't take the stand that S without representing *something* as being the case which, for me, *amounts to* representing it as being the case that S. So, whatever the exact question that is settled by fear, or grief, or blame, it is going to be a question, the settling of which amounts for the subject to representing, in some way, that those facts that are required for her attitude to be fitting obtain. If commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions, for example, then blame in some way represents its subject as committed to that norm.[15]

The question that remains is in *what* way fit-evaluable attitudes represent their fittingness conditions as being met. For, just as I may, in *some* way, represent that a man is married by thinking several different thoughts ("He's married" and "He's not a bachelor," just to name two), so too are

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and I *disagree* about whether there can be a fit-related/value-related (or "right-kind/wrong-kind") distinction for reasons for *action*, but that disagreement is irrelevant to what I say about attitudes here. I should also note that Hieronymi is careful to describe right-kind reasons as ones that "bear *or are taken to bear*" on a question, the settling of which amounts to forming an attitude. She includes this caveat so as not to build into the definition of a "right-kind" reason that it is a *good* reason (447-448, n. 23). I have dropped this detail for streamlining's sake.

[15] I have cast the above argument from a first-personal perspective, from which there is no distinction between the considerations that bear on a question and the considerations that one takes to bear on that question. To accommodate a third-personal perspective, I might instead have said: *What we take to be* considerations of fit can have a direct rational impact on our attitudes because our attitudes are (at least in part) constituted by commitments which *we take* to be settled by what *we take* to be that attitude's fittingness conditions. To settle a question that *one takes* to be settled by what *one takes* to be certain fittingness conditions is to represent, in some way, those conditions as having been met. Thus, if a subject's commitment to the violated norm is *taken to be* a condition on the fittingness of blame, blame represents the subject as committed to the violated norm.

This way of casting the argument brings out that we perhaps *shouldn't* be confident that blame includes the relevant representational content unless the subject's commitment not only *is* a condition on the fittingness of blame, but also *is recognized as* (or widely taken to be) such a condition. But then, my arguments thus far that non-hypocrisy is a condition on blame's fittingness have all been arguments based on the observation that non-hypocrisy *is* widely taken to be a condition on blame's fittingness, in the way we reason and talk about blame (even if many philosophers are intellectually blind to this fact). So, it is still true that, if my arguments thus far for recognizing non-hypocrisy as one of blame's fittingness conditions have been correct, then we should be confident that blame in some way or another represents that its subject is committed to the norm she blames the target for violating.

there different ways in which we can conceive of what actually goes on in a subject's mind when she forms a fit-evaluable attitude, all of which amount to her settling a question which is settled by an object meeting her attitude's fittingness conditions – and, thus, all of which amount to her in *some* way representing those conditions as having been met.

For example, on one way of thinking, fit-evaluable attitudes such as fear or blame involve thoughts with the content that particular facts obtain, where these are precisely the facts that must obtain in order for the relevant attitude to be fitting. Blame, for instance, might involve the thoughts "*t's* ɸ-ing was wrong" and "*t's* ɸ-ing was unexcused" and fear the thoughts "*x* poses a threat" and "The threat is to me." This sort of picture would seem to make good sense of why considerations that bear on the fittingness of blame or fear – such as that one's brother has broken a promise, or that the snake is locked in a cage – are capable of direct rational impact on our blame or fear. If fear of a snake literally involves the thought that the snake poses a threat, then learning (and really internalizing) that the snake is locked safely away is going to immediately rationally undermine my fear by rationally undermining the thought that (at least partly) constitutes it.

Alternatively, the way that I have found it more helpful to think about the commitments incorporated in affective attitudes is to think of the subject of such attitudes as *regarding an object's possession of fit-making properties for her present type of attitude as making her present response fitting.* On the way I think about blame, for example, blame involves taking the (putative) fact that *t*'s ɸ-ing was wrong to make one's present way of reacting fitting. Insofar as there are enabling and disabling conditions on the fittingness of a particular type of attitude, moreover, I think of subjects as having some background knowledge of those conditions. So, on my view, the blaming subject regards (what she takes to be) *t*'s wrongdoing as making her present way of reacting fitting – where this is something she does against a background of further knowledge about the conditions under which someone's wrongdoing makes a blaming response fitting. These may include the conditions, for example, that *t's* wrongdoing was unexcused, or (as I am arguing here) *that the subject is, herself, committed to the norm that* t *has violated*. The way blame thus *represents* its subject's own commitment, on this picture, is by being a response that's understood as rationally sensitive to this commitment.[16]

My own picture also makes good sense of fit-related considerations' rational impact: I claim that, in blame, I take *t*'s wrongdoing to make my blame fitting, while also knowing that my own commitment to the norm *t* has violated is what enables *t*'s wrongdoing to make my blame fitting.

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[16] I argue for this way of conceiving of blame in Achs 2022.

This explains why bringing to my attention that I'm *not* actually that committed to the norm *t* has violated would leave me unsettled as to the question that I settle in blame: Realizing that I'm not actually committed to the norm I'm blaming *t* for violating can leave me unsettled as to whether *t*'s wrongdoing *does* actually make my blame fitting – and thus be a reason directly for which I cease to blame.

I (of course) think my own way of thinking about the mental lives of those who form affective attitudes is most accurate to the phenomenal experience of our attitudes. But what's important for present purposes is not that one adopt my own picture of what a subject's undertaking the commitments involved in an affective attitude consists in. The important point is just that fit-evaluable attitudes are constituted (at least in part) by the settling of questions that are settled by the satisfaction of those attitudes' fittingness conditions – and thus that such attitudes in some way *represent* their fittingness conditions as met.

Now that we're more confident that blame represents the satisfaction of its own fittingness conditions, and now that we've modeled some ways of picturing *how* it does, let's return to Marcus' thought that the hypocrite's fundamental vice is dishonesty. The main challenge for this position, as Marcus sees it, is "the difficulty of saying precisely how" blaming someone else (for *her* behavior) "amounts to the creation of a misleading impression about one's *own* behavior" (Marcus ms: 2).[17] How does either castigating or resenting someone *else* for violating a norm imply anything about the subject's *own* commitment to that norm? We can now see that the view that the subject's own commitment to violated norm is, itself, a condition on the fittingness of blame provides a ready answer to this question.

Fit-evaluable attitudes like blame involve settling questions that are settled by their fittingness conditions being met. They thus represent, in some way or another, that their own fittingness conditions have been satisfied. So, if I am right that hypocrisy makes blame unfitting, then hypocritical blame creates a misleading impression about the subject's *own* commitments, because hypocritical blame misrepresents that its subject is committed to the norm her blame

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[17] In fact, Marcus wants to know not just how expressing *blame* can create a misleading impression about one's own behavior, but also how expressing *positive* support for a principle of action – e.g. through offering *advice* – can also do so. Marcus' own answer focuses largely on the case of hypocritical advice giving; it is that to *give advice* is not just to express a *belief* about what someone ought to do, but rather to express a *principle that governs one's will*. Marcus suggests that something similar can be said for the case of blame, although he doesn't go into detail (ms: 33). Here's how I would supplement his view: What one expresses, in blaming, is *blame*. And to *blame* someone is to regard that person's having violated a principle that governs one's own will as rendering one's present way of reacting to them fitting.

concerns. Insofar as she expresses her blame aloud – or others interpret her as blaming – she will make this misrepresentation to others. Insofar as the subject keeps her blame private, she will still falsely represent that she is committed to the relevant norm (although she will make this misrepresentation *to* only herself). Indeed, the view on which commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions explains quite straightforwardly why the hypocrite's fundamental *moral* problem would be phoniness. For the view implies that hypocritical blamers falsely represent themselves.[18]

V.   Blame's Force

Earlier, I introduced the idea of blame into our discussion with the point that not just any way of registering that a person is responsible for a wrongdoing has a condemnatory enough character to count as blaming that person. Indeed, as several philosophers have noted, one can literally judge that another person possesses the property of being blameworthy without thereby blaming that person. One can think, "I know he's blameworthy, but I just can't bring myself to blame him." For instance, this is just the stance that Angela Smith takes towards the agent who threw a pie in the face of Rupert Murdoch as he was testifying to Britain's Parliament. Although she does judge this agent to be blameworthy, Smith confesses, she just can't bring herself to blame him (2013: 43).[19]

What more can we say to flesh out the idea that *true* blame has a condemnatory character which seems absent from less judgmental assessment of a person's culpability? (We'll come back to hypocrisy and fittingness in just a moment.)

Whether an assessment of someone as culpable possesses this condemnatory character seems to have nothing to do with whether we keep our thoughts about that person's culpability to ourselves. One can privately judge someone blameworthy without thereby blaming him, and one can (with the proper caveats) publicly express such a judgment without thereby blaming as well. (Publicly expressing such a judgment without thereby blaming is precisely what Angela Smith has

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[18] An objection: Falsely representing oneself doesn't amount to *phoniness* unless one, on some level, *knows* that the representation one is making is false. Fair enough. But here I'm inclined to say that *what one's own normative commitments are* is always something that one, on some level, knows, or else they couldn't be one's normative commitments. Marcus takes a similar line (ms: 5). (If one wanted to hold, à la note 7, that blame *itself* always involves being committed to the violated norm, then one might insist that, even if *part* of the blamer knows she's not committed, another part – the *blaming* part – must lack this knowledge. This would entail that hypocritical blamers aren't merely dishonest, but also *self*-deceptive. But self-deception is still deception.)

[19] See also Hieronymi 2001: 530 and Pickard 2013: 614.

done in reporting to us her take on Rupert Murdoch's pie-throwing assailant.) One thing we might say by way of capturing this condemnatory aspect of blame is that blaming seems to have a *force* that goes beyond a mere blameworthiness judgment. To blame a person seems to involve directing a certain kind of negative, well, *energy* at him, in a way that merely registering his faulty behavior does not.[20] We might continue that blame, as opposed to a less judgmental assessment of a person as a culpable wrongdoer, seems to *demand* something of its target. "In blaming another," writes Daniel Telech, "one does not merely suggest, or flag it as an option, that the blameworthy agent attend to his culpable action; one communicates that *he must* do so" (2021: 155). Indeed, this quality of *demandingness* has been held to be aptly attributed even to unexpressed blame.[21] Perhaps most perspicuous (and inclusive of the ideas of force and demand) is Smith's own observation that blame always involves an element of *protest* which a mere judgment of blameworthiness lacks. To blame, Smith thinks, is to modify one's attitudes, intentions, and expectations toward a wrongdoer "as a way of *protesting* the moral claim implicit in that agent's conduct," (2013: 43) or to undertake a response to a wrongdoer "*in protest* of his latest let-down" (ibid.: 41).

I have argued in this paper that a subject's own commitment to the norm she blames a target for violating is a condition on the fittingness of blame. And I have embraced that this view has a consequence for what blame represents: Blame doesn't merely represent (say) that a person's behavior reflects her ill quality of will, or that a person is responsible for a wrong, or even that a person is worthy of someone's blame. Blame also represents that the blaming subject is, herself, committed to the norm that the target of her blame has violated. Thus, another reason it's important to recognize hypocrisy's relevance to fit is that doing so illuminates the meaning of blame itself. For the representational content that this view imputes to blame helps to explain what *gives* blame the condemnatory character that is lacking from a mere blameworthiness judgment. That blamers represent their own commitments to the norms their blame concerns is, I believe, largely what *makes* blame (as opposed to a mere blameworthiness judgment) a form of protest – largely what *invests* blame with demandingness and force.

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[20] Indeed, many philosophers have written about blame's 'force' (e.g., Wallace 1994; Hieronymi 2004; Smith 2013), and I should be careful here because the term may be used to capture several different aspects of blame. Blame and judgments of blameworthiness are deeper than mere attributions of causal responsibility (Wolf 1990: 64); as well as more forceful than other types of critical evaluation that reflect on a person's rational/agential capacities (Wallace 1994: 83; Hieronymi 2004: 117, 123); and, additionally, *blame* is *still more* forceful than a mere judgment of blameworthiness (Hieronymi 2004: 132; Smith 2013: 29). I am here using 'force' to capture this final sense in which blame has force – the forcefulness that blame possesses *in contrast to a mere blameworthiness judgment*.

[21] Darwall 2010: 219 and Strawson 1963/2003.

Consider what Smith says by way of elaborating the idea that blame is a form of protest. Blame, Smith claims, serves two related protesting functions: first "to *register* the fact that the person wronged did not deserve such treatment by *challenging* the moral claim implicit in the wrongdoer's action" and second "to prompt moral recognition and acknowledgment of this fact" (2013: 43). Insofar as blame is like protest, we might hasten to add, it serves this second function *demandingly*. Blame doesn't merely seek recognition of wrongdoing, but also does so insistently – with *imperatival* force.[22] Yet we may wonder precisely how it is that blame serves these functions. If it's distinctive of blame that it both challenges and demands, in virtue of what features does it actually do so? My contention is that blame serves these two related functions largely in virtue of being partially *about* the blaming subject's own commitment to the norm that its target has violated.

Indeed, the view that blame represents not just that its target has violated a norm, but rather *a norm which, for the subject, holds force* explains quite readily how blame serves the first function of protest. How is it that blame registers a *challenge* to its target's wrong? What feature of blame makes it something that takes "stand against, a certain presumption implicit in the wrongdoer's behavior: the presumption that he or she has a right to treat others in objectionable ways?" (ibid.: 36) My answer: It is by being about, not merely the target's norm violation, but also the blamer's own commitment to that norm, that blame serves the function of registering a challenge to the wrongdoer's violation. Blame affirms the victim's moral status by representing that the norm that protects that person's status is one which the blaming subject respects.

The idea that blame represents the blaming subject's own commitment explains how blame serves the second function of protest too: the function of demanding acknowledgment that the blameworthy party's behavior was wrongful. In virtue of what feature of blame can we understand it as issuing a demand? (It is not, after all, as if every instance of blame involves the utterance of relevant words.) I answer: in virtue of representing the blaming subject's commitment to the violated norm. For, if blame represents as much, then, even insofar as blame remains unexpressed, it makes sense to think of blame as seeking out – nay *insisting* upon – recognition of the violated norm, by dint of its representational content. If blame is about its target's violation of a norm which, for the subject, holds normative force, then it represents *both* the norm's violation and the forcefulness of that norm. But to represent as much, I would argue, is a way of directing the force of the violated norm at the person who has violated it – a way of imposing that norm's force on the

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[22] I take Smith's conception of blame as a protest to readily incorporate the ideas of blame's demandingness and force precisely because protest seeks recognition so insistently.

violator. It thus makes sense to say that even private blame demands recognition of the violated norm, simply because it represents the violated norm *as demanding*. Of course, in expressed blame, the demand is even more apparent. In expressing her blame, a blamer expresses that the norm which has been violated is one that *she* sees as deserving of respect. This public affirmation carries with it a certain pressure for allegiance to the relevant norm – whether through apology, or future obedience, or what have you. Expressed blame demands recognition and acknowledgment *by* expressing the blaming subject's commitment and, through that, the violated norm's demandingness.

I've said that blame has the force and demandingness characteristic of protest "largely" in virtue of the representational content my view ascribes to it because I don't want to deny that there are other features of blame which help it to serve its protesting functions. Perhaps blame is also often aided in serving the functions of challenge and demand by virtue of involving angry affect and its accompanying dispositions – responses to which it is unpleasant to be subject.[23] But it is controversial whether blame always *does* involve the heat of anger, and this tells in favor of the view that blame owes its condemnatory nature *largely* to its representing its subject's own commitment.[24] I also think it telling that a main way of transforming a judgment that someone is blameworthy (whether private or overt) into a response that lacks blame's condemnatory character – and, hence, *isn't* blame – is precisely *by* clarifying (whether aloud or to oneself) that one lacks a commitment to the relevant norm.

A final point concerns my description of blame's character as "condemnatory." The term seems to aptly capture blame's protesting nature, yet it also carries a connotation of superiority. To condemn isn't *merely* to challenge and demand, but also to disapprove and to cast down. The idea that a blaming subject's commitments bear on blame's fit – and thus that blame is *about* such commitments – illuminates this aspect of blame as well. For, to represent that the target has violated a norm to which the blaming subject is committed, is not merely to represent that norm's demandingness, but also to suggest a difference between how the target and subject fare with respect that norm's demands. This implication of difference between the target and the subject with respect to the relevant norm explains the sense of moral superiority inherent to blame.

VI. Conclusion

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[23] Wallace thinks the forcefulness of blame can be attributed to blame's connection to the reactive emotions (1994: 83).
[24] Those who deny that blame is always angry include Sher 2006; Scanlon 2008; and Smith 2013.

I have argued that non-hypocrisy, or commitment to the norm one's blame concerns, is a condition on the fittingness of blame. A connection between fit and representational accuracy might seem to present an obstacle to this view. I think, on the contrary, that this connection renders the view all the more plausible. Blame *does* represent that its target has violated a norm which the blaming subject, herself, wouldn't violate. The link between fittingness and representational correctness is also why it is important to recognize that hypocrisy bears on fit. Since commitment to the violated norm is one of blame's fittingness conditions, blame represents that its subject is committed to the relevant norm. Attributing such content to blame in turn helps to explain what's morally wrong with hypocrisy, and how blame protests.[25]

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