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The Fitting Resolution of Anger

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A general puzzle emerges from recent discussions of backward-looking emotions. Grief, regret, and anger—to name a few examples that have attracted philosophical attention—are all directed toward and justified by a past occurrence, which remains forever unchanged. It seems to follow that these emotions rationally persist. And yet these emotions often seem to rationally diminish with time. A picture of rationality that binds us to the past seems not only unattractive but implausible. The dread of past-bound rationality, as it were, might explain why Rüdiger Bittner assumes that regret, if it could be justified at all, must be instrumentally justified by the valuable upshots it is likely to bring about (Bittner 1992). Dan Moller, by contrast, has endorsed the other horn of the dilemma, arguing that since grief is non-instrumentally justified by a past death it remains appropriate long past its normal duration (Moller 2017). And Berislav Marušić has argued that the conflict between these two ways of conceiving of the rationality of our emotions is in principle insolvable (Marušić 2018).

To understand what is at stake, it is useful to introduce the idea of ‘fittingness’. An emotion is said to be fitting to its object iff it properly represents the relevant evaluative properties of the object. Shame is fitting to what is shameful, disgust to what is disgusting, fear to what is fearsome, amusement to what is amusing, etc. (D’Arms and Jacobson 2000). Though norms of fittingness are especially important for appraising emotions, it is often thought that they do not exhaust the norms for appraising emotions. Fitting envy, for instance, might be morally or prudentially objectionable (*ibid*). This is because some reasons not to envy have nothing to do with whether the object of envy is in fact *enviable*. Talk of fittingness therefore provides a useful way to think of the distinction between right- and wrong-kind reasons for attitudes. Even if rationally relevant, reasons that do not bear on the fittingness of an attitude are *of the wrong kind*.¹

¹ There are also those who are ‘wrong-kind reasons skeptics’: they deny that a wrong-kind reason for an attitude is a normative reason for it. See Hieronymi 2005, 2013; Skorupski 2007; Parfit 2011, App. A; Way 2012; McHugh and Way 2016; and the clear articulation of the view provided in Gertken and Kiesewetter 2017. Since I focus on the *fitting* resolution of anger, what I say is relevant both to those who affirm the existence of wrong-kind reasons and to those who deny it.

Moller and Marušić acknowledge that the diminution of grief might be rational all-things-considered, given various moral and prudential reasons. But these reasons are of the wrong kind: they can render the diminution of grief rational but cannot render it fitting. There remains, on Moller’s view, an important sense in which recovering from grief constitutes a failure to respond appropriately to the death of our beloved. Marušić accepts Moller’s reasoning but maintains that we cannot accept its conclusion. If, like me, you find all three responses to the puzzle—Bittner’s, Moller’s, and Marušić’s—unsatisfying, then you are left with a question: how can we explain the rational diminution of backward-looking emotions without resorting to pragmatic or, more generally, wrong kind of reason explanations? That is to say, how can the diminution of these emotions not only be rational but *fitting*? In this paper, I offer an answer to this question by considering the case of anger.

I begin, in section 1, by examining Pamela Hieronymi’s important and insightful account of forgiveness, which she takes to involve the rational forgoing of resentment (Hieronymi 2001).² I argue that Hieronymi’s view rests on an unarticulated assumption about the rationality of emotions (and of attitudes in general)—namely, that a rational (and fitting) change in emotion entails a change in the fact or facts that constitute the reason for the emotion. Then, in section 2, I consider Agnes Callard’s recent criticism of accounts like Hieronymi’s as well as Callard’s alternative account of the rational resolution of anger (Callard 2017). I argue that Callard offers a promising account but fails to explain how it avoids the criticism she levels against Hieronymi and others. Finally, in section 3, I reject Hieronymi’s assumption (which Callard, also, implicitly shares) and argue that an emotion can cease to be fitting without any change in the fact or facts that constitute the reason for it. I also explain how my proposal enables a more plausible interpretation of Callard’s account of the rational dissipation of anger. My discussion of anger leads to a tentative solution to the general problem about backward-looking emotions: a fitting backward-looking emotion can fittingly diminish when it is part of a process that is itself a fitting response to the past occurrence.

1.

² I follow Hieronymi and Callard in using “anger” and “resentment” interchangeably, but I don’t mean to take a stand on the exact components of the negative emotions that fall under this rubric. For a discussion of the different views about what negative emotions forgiveness is supposed to rationally disarm, see Hughes and Warmke 2017.

The right kind of reason for anger lies in a past occurrence: a wrong done by a stranger, an inconsiderate act by a friend or partner, an injustice done to one's group.³ We think that a process of moral repair that involves an apology (among other things) might lead to forgiveness, the dissipation of anger and the forswearing of resentment. But how can forgiveness rise above self-manipulation of one's emotions? Are we supposed to forgo resentment while believing it remains justified by the past occurrence?

Pamela Hieronymi argues that this is a serious challenge for any account of genuine forgiveness. She writes: "If both resentment and forgiveness admit of justification, i.e., if one resents or forgives another person thinking one has good reason to, then forgiving will entail more than figuring out how to rid oneself of certain unfortunate affects" (Hieronymi 2001, 530). Rather than self-manipulation, Hieronymi claims, genuine forgiveness "must involve some revision in judgment or a change in view" and an account of genuine forgiveness must articulate this revision in judgment or change in view (ibid). According to Hieronymi, the challenge for such an account is to explain the change in judgment in a way that allows the forgiver to retain three judgments: (1) the act in question was a serious wrong worthy of moral attention; (2) the wrongdoer is a member of the moral community who can be expected not to do such things and therefore can be held responsible for her actions; (3) the person wronged ought not be wronged (ibid). Furthermore, on Hieronymi's view, resentment is a protest against the trespass and an affirmation of these three judgments. Therefore, her aim is to explain how the three judgments can be maintained while the protest they warrant is rationally abandoned.

The challenge seems difficult to overcome. Just as a good excuse gives us reason to revise the judgment on which our indignation is based, so would a good reason for forgiveness undermine the judgment on which resentment is based, says Hieronymi, though it must do so without excusing the offense (535-536). Hieronymi assumes that if a rational emotion is grounded in a certain judgment, then only a change in this very judgment would ground a rational change in the emotion. But in the case of forgiveness, we want to insist that the initial resentment was justified and the three judgments remain unchanged. So if the three judgments are sufficient to justify resentment, nothing we might learn about

³ The claim that the reason for anger lies in the past should be qualified: you can have reason to be angry with me because of what I am about to do, or because of what I am currently doing. But insofar as forgiveness is relevant in these cases, it is relevant after the deed or attitude that constitutes the reason for anger had already passed. Consider: if my reason for anger is what you are about to do, then once you are no longer about to do it I lack this reason for anger. However, if my reason is that you are willing to do it, then even if you eventually change your mind, it will remain true that you were once willing to do it and therefore I will continue to have reason to be angry with you.

the past and nothing that might happen in the present or future can warrant a change of view that undermines resentment.

Before considering Hieronymi's solution to this problem, it is worth pausing over how she sets up the challenge. Hieronymi presents a dichotomy between the forgoing of resentment *as self-manipulation*, on the one hand, and *as a rational response to reason* on the other; if genuine forgiveness is rational than it does not involve self-manipulation. But it might be suggested that self-manipulation can be rational insofar as one has good reason for it. Moreover, Hieronymi maintains that a rational forgoing of resentment implies a revision in judgment according to which one no longer has reason for resentment. But arguably we can have good (even decisive) reason to forgo resentment without any change in the original reason *for* resentment. We might have, for example, prudential reasons to let go and move on in order to avoid the burden and distraction of resentment. We might even have moral reason to forgo resentment compatible with the existence of reason for resentment, e.g., when our warranted resentment comes at the expense of the attention we owe our loved ones. These reasons might justify forgoing resentment either through self-manipulation or, more immediately, by responding directly to one's judgment about one's prudential and moral reason to let go. Hieronymi's challenge for accounts of forgiveness might therefore seem to dissipate: we can rationally forgo resentment without implying a change in the original reason for resentment or in the judgments that justify it.

In a later paper, Hieronymi argues that one cannot forgive for the wrong kind of reason, that is, for reasons that do not bear on one's answer to the question the settling of which is the formation of the attitude (Hieronymi 2005). But even if, contrary to her view, one can forgive for the wrong kind of reason and therefore forgive rationally without changing the judgment that justifies forgiveness, the challenge for accounts of forgiveness still has force. Suppose, for example, that one can and should forgive after some time because resentment is burdensome. Even if such forgiveness is possible and rationally justified overall, it still seems flawed in an important sense. We should like to know how can forgiveness avoid this flaw; how can forgiveness not only be rational but fitting to its object? So the challenge Hieronymi raises, though framed in terms of her view of reasons and motivation, is independent of her specific view and poses a problem for any view that grants the significance of the distinction between right and wrong kinds of reasons.

Hieronymi's solution is to grant that the three judgments are *necessary* for the justification of resentment but to deny that they are *sufficient*. Resentment, according to her, is also grounded in a fourth

judgment about a present fact that might indeed change, namely, the fact that the past wrong gave rise to a present threat. According to Hieronymi,

a past wrong against you, standing in your history without apology, atonement, retribution, punishment, restitution, condemnation, or anything else that might recognize it as a wrong, makes a claim. It says, in effect, that you can be treated in this way, and that such treatment is acceptable. That—that claim—is what you resent. It poses a threat. In resenting it, you challenge it. If there is nothing else that would mark out that event as wrong, there is at least your resentment. And so resentment can be understood as protest. (Hieronymi 2001, 546)

The real object of anger is not the wrong act in the past, but a claim that poses a present threat. The past deed creates a claim by exposing and asserting the evaluative stance of its author and it is this claim which poses a threat until it is disarmed. When the offender renounces the deed, through an apology for instance, the claim is “cut off from the source of its continued meaning” and “anger loses its point” (548).

By making the present threat the object of anger, Hieronymi makes room for the possibility of a warranted change in judgment that does not imply that the initial resentment was misplaced. Anger was justified for the right reason as long as the claim authored by the offending agent through his or her deed had not been taken back, but once it has been taken back there is no longer the right kind of reason for resentment. The three judgments—that the act was a serious wrong, that the wrongdoer is morally responsible as a member of the moral community, and that the person wronged should not be wronged—remain unchanged throughout.

This concludes the summary of Hieronymi’s account. Note, again, that Hieronymi assumes that if resentment rationally (and fittingly) diminishes, the fact that constituted the reason for resentment must change. Put in more general terms, she assumes that if, at time t , fact r constitutes the reason that makes ϕ -ing fitting, then ϕ -ing remains fitting as long as r remains unchanged. This is a substantive assumption about the fitting duration of an attitude held for the right kind of reason. It is at least conceptually possible that ϕ -ing is fitting in response to some fact r but that it, for instance, fittingly fades away, the way fitting amusement in response to a joke normally fades. The rational emotion is *stirred* by the right kind of reason, but must it persist *alongside* the fact that constitutes the reason? If it is possible that a fitting emotion has a fitting trajectory, then there is at least a conceptual possibility that fitting resentment can fittingly diminish while the fact that constitutes the reason for it remains unchanged. But this is not a possibility Hieronymi argues against, nor does she consider it. I will return to this crucial lacuna in the third section.

2.

Agnes Callard has recently described “the eternal anger argument”. It goes like this:

P1: My betrayal of you at t1 is your reason for being angry with me at t2.

P2: If it is true at t2 that I betrayed you at t1, then it will also be true at t3, t4, t5, and so on that I betrayed you at t1.

Conclusion: If you have a reason to be angry with me, you will have a reason to be angry with me forever. (Callard 2017, 123)

Though Callard does not explicitly speak of the *fittingness* of anger, she stresses that the argument does not imply that once there is reason for anger there is all-things-considered reason to be angry forever, only that once there is *a* reason for anger *that* reason persists whatever other reasons come to be and wherever the balance of reason lies.

What Callard calls “problem-solving accounts of anger” resist this argument by rejecting P1. The reason for being angry, on these accounts, is not your betrayal but some continuing problem generated by the betrayal. Callard says that “on the problem-solving account, anger is desire-like: It responds to reasons to make (what the agent perceives as) a positive change in the world” (124). Reasons for anger are therefore as unproblematic as reasons for desire: they go away once the relevant end is achieved.

Callard mentions various examples of problem-solving accounts, notable among them are Hieronymi’s view, as well as Martha Nussbaum’s recent account (Nussbaum 2016), according to which all anger is irrational except “transition anger”, which aims at a change for the better. Callard stresses that on these accounts “we’re angry not at the fact that the person violated some norm but at the person’s *present* lack of commitment to that norm, or the fact that the person is, by not apologizing, *now* behaving as if the wrong was acceptable ... Anger, on this picture, is productive management of the aftershocks of the wrong action” (Callard 2017, 125). However, Callard claims, anger seems to be primarily concerned with the past wrong, not with a present problem or with future ways of addressing it.

According to Callard’s own account, anger is a form of “valuational vulnerability” (127-128). Like fear, sadness, disappointment, and jealousy, anger is a way of caring. We care about bad things because we care about good things: our reasons for these negative emotions derive from our reasons for valuing and having positive emotions towards good things. “The person’s concern for the good thing in question—the object of value—manifests itself in the form of a concern for the injurious action or event” (127).⁴ Since negative emotions are forms of valuational vulnerability, the reason for a negative emotional state

⁴ Callard follows Samuel Scheffler’s account of valuing, see Scheffler 2010.

is “whatever rationalizes your devolution from valuing proper to that negative emotional condition” (ibid.) Love becomes sadness when its object is withdrawn, for example, and, similarly, it turns into anger in response to betrayal. So, Callard concludes, a reason for ceasing to be angry is “whatever rationally explains your transition back to the positive emotions characteristic of valuing” (ibid.)

But, Callard concedes, this account still faces the following dilemma. Either the reason to cease to be angry comes at a tangent to the reason to be angry, or it addresses it. Put another way, either the reason is a wrong kind of reason, which does not bear on the fittingness of anger, or it is a right kind of reason, which does bear on the fittingness of anger. If it is a wrong kind of reason, then the reason for anger remains standing and anger remains fitting. If it is the right kind of reason, then it is a reason that “resolves or addresses the problem” picked out by the reason for anger. In this case, “your anger was targeted at a positive change in the world, and when that change is made, it constitutes a reason ... for you to cease being angry” (128). If this is the only way anger may fittingly come to an end, then the object of anger must be something that can be changed, not an occurrence that lies in the past. Callard rejects both horns of the dilemma. Reasons for anger are not eternal nor is anger a wish to return to the relationship and repair the damage done to it.

It is not enough, therefore, to say that anger is a form of valuational vulnerability; Callard must also explain how anger is both backward-looking and resolvable. She fills in the details of her account. Anger is a response to a violation of a norm that constitutes a defection from a “shared valuational project.” Our relationships are constituted by the norms according to which we coordinate our shared valuing; by following these norms we value the relationship. When I violate a norm of our relationship I “fail to care about what we can only care about together” (128). Your anger in response to my violation of a shared norm is the way in which you value on your own that which can be valued properly only by both of us together.

Now, and this is the crucial move, Callard argues that although your anger is indeed fundamentally concerned with the relationship, it is not directed at its repair. Unlike desires, assertions, and commands, which have satisfaction conditions and therefore anticipate their satisfaction (132), anger is amenable to a fitting response though it does not anticipate it. Callard says that in this respect anger is like a genuine question: a genuine question does not know the answer it seeks, it is not asked as a “test” of the other person’s knowledge; rather, in posing a genuine question one acknowledges one’s own ignorance and seeks assistance from the person to whom the question is addressed. So a question doesn’t have the

conditions of its satisfaction written on its sleeve, as it were; it doesn't know what it is looking for. And yet a question can be adequately addressed. Similarly, says Callard, anger is "amenable to a fitting response without being satisfiable" (132).

Callard argues for this characterization of anger by describing the significance of apology. Uttering the words "I'm sorry" does not suffice for a genuine apology. A genuine apology requires contrition, and contrition is itself a form of caring about the relationship and its violation. Your anger and my contrition spring from a concern for the same value. While anger reflects a transition from "we" to "I", a sincere apology makes possible a transition back from "I" to "we". But, Callard writes, the angry person can't value the relationship on his or her own and therefore is not motivated to return to it. He or she is waiting for a response he or she cannot anticipate.

My apology testifies to the fact that there is a real response—a real feeling—out there that stands as a correlate to yours. You couldn't ask for it or anticipate it, even if you fantasized a hundred times about how abjectly I would grovel before you. What you discover you needed from me when I eventually do apologize is precisely what must go missing from every fantasy: that I be no imaginary interlocutor but a real person with real feelings that answer to your real feelings. (133)

Intersubjectivity saves the day. Due to the intersubjective nature of co-valuing, it is impossible to anticipate repair in the midst of anger. This impossibility is supposed to explain the sense in which anger, unlike desire, does *not* seek its own satisfaction. Indeed, it is because you can't repair the relationship on your own—because you depend on the person who defected from the relationship—that you resort to anger to begin with.

But why should the fact that you need me in order to repair the relationship imply that you cannot anticipate or demand that I make a sincere effort to repair the relationship? A real question can, after all, demand a real answer, even if it does not know exactly what the answer is. When I ask you whether it is raining outside, I know what I am asking for and I have a good sense of what would make your answer adequate. I can anticipate the answer, too. The sky was clear earlier in the day so it is probably not raining, but you just came in so I better double check before I leave my umbrella home. In this case, a real question indeed looks forward to its satisfaction. Why can't anger do the same?

Callard perceptively observes: "Anger feels like being trapped in a room with the last person in the world you want to talk to. Even when I am not around, you find yourself making angry speeches at me in your head" (133). But if that is true, then you are quite capable of imagining the possibility of repair; your problem is simply that you have nothing you can do to bring it about. As long as I am unwilling to

listen to what you have to say, you cannot tell me what you wish you could. The dependence on the other person does not block anger from *seeking* its satisfaction, though it can certainly block it from *getting* it.

Callard says that what must go missing from every fantasy is that the offender be a real person. But this is clearly not true. When you fantasize about how I abjectly grovel before you, you fantasize that *the real person that I am* abjectly grovels before you; you do not fantasize that an imaginary version of me grovels before you. Of course, what must go missing from every *fantasy of the real me* is *the real me*: your imagination of my apology cannot replace my actual apology. This is why you're trapped, unable to relieve your longing. But this aspect of anger is analogous to desire: I can fantasize about having a wonderful (real) meal but the fantasy of having a real meal cannot satisfy the desire to have a real meal. The intersubjectivity that underpins the reason for anger does not distinguish anger from desire after all.

I therefore do not believe that Callard successfully explains how anger is relevantly different from desire, and I do not see how her account, as she presents it, can avoid the second horn of the dilemma, according to which anger is primarily concerned with repairing the relationship. As it stands, Callard's account is an insightful and interesting problem-solving view of anger, according to which the reason for anger is a present defection from a relationship. The defection originated in a past violation of a constitutive norm of the relationship and it can be rectified if both parties express genuine care about the past violation and reengage in the relationship.

3.

Despite Callard's initial insistence that anger is "a way of concerning oneself with the (unchangeable) fact that some wrong was done" (126), her eventual proposal stresses that in the grip of anger we fantasize about repair and the prospect of setting things straight. Even the person who seeks revenge, like the person who seeks an apology, wants recognition on the part of the wrongdoer. Perhaps, then, being concerned with the past wrong and being concerned with restitution are not as mutually exclusive as they first seem.

This thought seems to me on the right track. Nevertheless, we need to explain in what sense anger is *about* the past wrong at all given that its fitting resolution seems to involve future occurrences. This is what I wish to do in this third section. I believe that there is a possible amendment to Callard's account that would distinguish it from problem-solving views while allowing the fitting resolution of anger that she proposes.

Recall Callard's eternal anger argument:

P1: My betrayal of you at t1 is your reason for being angry with me at t2.

P2: If it is true at t2 that I betrayed you at t1, then it will also be true at t3, t4, t5, and so on that I betrayed you at t1.

Conclusion: If you have a reason to be angry with me, you will have a reason to be angry with me forever. (Callard 2017, 123)

In the last section I argued that, as it stands, Callard's account seems to reject P1, like other problem-solving accounts of anger. According to Hieronymi's problem-solving account, anger is about a past wrong but only insofar as it persists as a present threat; according to Callard's problem-solving account, anger is about a past violation of the norms of a relationship but only insofar as it persists as a current defection. On both accounts, the fact that the wrong in some sense continues into the present explains why it can be addressed. The object of anger is not the past occurrence as such but its "aftershocks."

I would like to suggest that there is a better construal of Callard's account, on which P1 is preserved and the conclusion is rejected. In fact, I will argue that the conclusion of the eternal anger argument does not follow from its premises. In particular, from the fact that my betrayal at t1 is your reason for being angry with me at t2 (Premise 1), and that it remains true that I betrayed you at t1 (Premise 2), it does not follow that my betrayal at t1 remains a reason for you to be angry with me, so it does not follow that if you have a reason to be angry with me, you will have a reason to be angry with me forever. Let me explain.

Callard assumes, like Hieronymi, that if anger rationally (and fittingly) diminishes, the fact or facts that constitute the reason for anger must change. As we saw in section 1, this is an instance of the more general assumption that if, at time t , fact r constitutes the reason that makes ϕ -ing fitting, then ϕ -ing remains fitting as long as r remains unchanged. But the reason for an attitude is not the entire rational explanation for the attitude. The fact that r is a reason to ϕ is itself explained by further facts that *enable* it to be a reason to ϕ (Dancy 2004, 39-40) or by facts that function as background-conditions for it (Schroeder 2007, 27; Scanlon 2014, 48). The fact that I love Helen does not itself give me a reason to grieve for her, but it is a background condition that explains why her death gives me a (fitting) reason to grieve for her. Similarly, the fact that you and I stand in a moral relationship does not give you a reason to resent me, but it is arguably a background condition that explains why the fact that I harm you without justification gives you a reason to resent me. Thus, various facts can be part of the rational explanation of the reason to ϕ without being the reason, or part of the reason to ϕ .

It follows that a change in the fittingness of an attitude might be due to a change in the fact or facts that constitute the fitting reason for the attitude *or* due to a change in the background conditions for the fitting reason. If the fitting diminution of resentment is due to the neutralization of the threat that is its object, then in this case fittingness changes due to a change in the fact that constitutes the reason. Alternatively, if the fitting diminution of grief is due to the waning of one's love for the deceased, then in this case fittingness changes due to a change in the background conditions. It is therefore a mistake to assume, as Hieronymi and Callard do, that a fitting attitude fittingly diminishes only if the fact or facts that constitute the fitting reason for it change. A change in background conditions can explain a change in fittingness without any change to the facts that constituted the fitting reason for the attitude. So the eternal anger argument equivocates between "the fact that constitutes the reason" and "the reason": the fact of past betrayal (which constitutes the initial reason for anger) remains unchanged, but the status of this fact as a reason for anger might very well change, depending on changes in background conditions.

Thus, an alternative strategy for resolving the dilemma with which both Hieronymi and Callard grapple is to identify a relevant change in background conditions that explains why the past wrong no longer constitutes a fitting reason for anger. The change we seek would not be a change in what anger is about, nor a change in the fact that constitutes the reason for anger, but it would nevertheless account for a change in the fittingness of anger. This can allow us to retain the idea that anger is about a past occurrence as well as the idea that fitting anger can fittingly diminish.

To this end, I suggest that Callard's account is best understood as an account of the background conditions of fitting anger. While anger focuses on a past violation of the norms of the relationship, expressed contrition on the part of the offending party shifts the background conditions of anger, signals to the wronged person that the offending party values the relationship, and can thus enable the continuation of the relationship and the fitting resolution of anger. This suggests that anger is properly understood as fitting in the context of a crisis in a relationship—whether the relationship is a personal one or a general moral relationship between persons as such—though anger is not *directly* concerned with the relationship. It also suggests that the diminishing fittingness of anger is explained by a fitting process of repair, which is itself a process that one cannot normally carry through on one's own. The completion of the process is not the aim of anger, but it is in the context of this process that the occurrence, duration, and diminution of anger are made fitting. The relationship and the process of its repair are the background conditions of the reason for anger.

One might worry at this point that if anger only looks backward then the forward-looking process in which it is embedded cannot be normatively guiding. How can we be guided by the present change in background conditions and by future repair if our attention is focused on the fact that constitutes the reason for anger, a fact that lies in the past? In considering this worry, it is instructive to recall Callard's observations about fantasies of restitution. Anger looks backward at the past wrong, but it is not entirely indifferent to the future and involves characteristic thoughts and imaginings about future possibilities. A normative theory of anger should not explain away this ambivalence; it should capture it. The process view, which I am suggesting as a general framework, explains the sense in which anger is about the past as well as the sense in which it is part of a forward-looking movement.⁵

This account of anger suggests a strategy for resolving the general problem with backward-looking emotions. The puzzle about the possibility of fitting diminution of backward-looking emotions springs from the assumption that the only possible or relevant explanation of a change in fittingness is a change in the facts that constitute the reason for the emotion. Once we acknowledge that background conditions can have an important role in explaining the change in fittingness, we may start looking for relevant changes in facts that are not part of the reason for the emotion. I have also suggested that the fittingness of the emotion is best understood by the fittingness of the process of which it is a part. The process is the background condition for the reason that makes the emotion fitting and the progression of the process explains why a fact that was once a reason is no longer so.

Consider possible candidates for fitting processes that include backward-looking emotions. Regret about being late to a meeting might be a stage in a fitting process of *agential* repair by which I improve my functioning as an agent, but regret is also plausibly demanded of wrong-doers as part of a fitting process of *moral* repair. Grief, to mention another example, might be part of a fitting process a person undergoes in response to the death of a loved one and which throws light on the fitting occurrence, duration, and diminution of grief's anguish. Worries about "the medicalization of grief" as well as some claims by medical experts about "normal grief" seem to presuppose ethical conceptions of the fitting evolution of grief. An especially conspicuous example is found in the DSM-5 (*Diagnostic and Statistical*

⁵ Peter Goldie offers a process view of grief, according to which the emotion of grief is properly understood as a narrative processes. Grief, according to Goldie, is "a complex pattern of activity and passivity, inner and outer, that unfolds over time, and the unfolding pattern over time is explanatorily prior to what is the case at any particular moment, and moreover, explanatorily prior to any particular mental state or event at any particular moment that is part of the process" (Goldie 2012, 69). Perhaps anger, too, is best understood as a process and, in particular, as a processes that involves a movement between backward-looking and forward-looking thoughts and points of view.

Manual of Mental Disorders, edition 5), which permits clinicians to diagnose major depressive disorder within the first few months after bereavement but cautions that “...periods of sadness are *inherent aspects of the human experience*” and “should not be diagnosed as a major depressive episode” (APA 2013, 168, my italics). We generally do not recoil from applying medical treatment to various phenomena that are “inherent aspects of the human experience”—after all, isn’t disease inherent to the human experience?—but the cautionary statement implicitly invokes a view about when sadness is *appropriate*. The above examples are very brief, but they are meant only to indicate the direction other process accounts of backward-looking emotions might take as well as the process-conceptions we already presuppose.⁶

To conclude, I wish to elaborate on the idea of a “fitting process,” and I intend to do so by considering a possible objection. The objection I imagine maintains that if, as I suggest, what makes anger fitting is a process of repair, then in cases where attainment of repair is possible *without* anger, anger is not fitting. But this is an implausible upshot: anger is fitting when a wrong was done independently of the prospect of repair and even if repair can be guaranteed without it. My view, it might be concluded, makes anger too instrumental. It is therefore implausible that what makes anger fitting is a process of repair.

The objection assumes that the process in question is an instrumental process, which is determined according to its desired end-state. The different stages of the process are then justified by the fact that they bring about the end most efficiently. So if efficiency does not require one of the stages, the stage in question is precluded from the process. However, I propose that the process in question is not of an instrumental kind. A non-instrumental process is a process that is not determined by its end-state but rather determines it. That is to say, the desired end-state is defined as the end-state that is produced by the proper unfolding of the process.

There are many examples of non-instrumental processes. Obtaining an academic degree implies having undergone a certain process, not because undergoing the process happened to be the best way to obtain the degree, but because what it means to obtain a degree is that one has completed an institutionally defined process. The diploma hanging on the wall is an indication of this history, it is not itself the proper goal of one’s academic studies. Another example can be found in competitive sports. Competitions can be construed as methods for discovering who is better, or best, with regard to a certain skill. But competitions often carry their own weight, and the significance of being the winner in a competition is

⁶ In other work, I explore in detail process accounts of grief and regret, and develop the process view more fully, see <redacted>.

not exhausted by its indication of skill; rather, it is also explained by the significance of having finished the competitive procedure as the winner.

If anger is understood as part of a non-instrumental process of repair, then it is in principle impossible that repair be achieved without anger. When the end-state is defined by how it came about, it cannot be realized in any way other than the one that defines it as such. I propose that moral repair as well as repair of a personal relationship often include essential backward-looking stages without which no genuine reconciliation can be accomplished.

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