REASONABLE BELIEF, UNDERPERFORMANCE, AND THE DEGREES OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The article's main argument is that by demonstrating where both Gideon Rosen and Martin Montiminy fall short, we may set up a discussion between their opposing perspectives on moral responsibility. Rosen argues that an agent is blameworthy for his wrongdoing only if his action is an episode of clear-eyed akrasia or an upshot of an episode of clear-eyed akrasia. Denying this epistemic condition for moral responsibility, Montminy argues that an agent is to blame for his wrongdoing only if his action is a result of his belief which is not compatible with his ability. He is blameworthy only if his wrongdoing is due to his underperformance. He is to blame for his action only if he fails to do his reasonable best. However, the paper argues that Rosen's view is problematic because its procedural epistemic obligations are vague. Though mostly, Montminy's account appears to be unproblematic, it suffers from two problems: there is no necessary connection between reasonable belief and moral responsibility, and underperformance does not always make agents blameworthy. In order to avoid these problems, the paper, based on Montminy's view, proposes a brief alternative that needs improvement. According to this alternative view, an agent's blameworthiness for wrongdoing is a matter of the degree of being consistent in holding an epistemically reasonable belief. Hence, one's degree of responsibility for action depends on consistency with epistemically reasonable belief.

Keywords: *Agency; Action; Akrasia; Moral Responsibility*

Introduction

Gideon Rosen (2004) has argued that an agent is blameworthy for his wrongdoing only if his action is an episode of clear-eyed *akrasia* or an upshot of an episode of clear-eyed *akrasia*. Denying this epistemic

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condition for moral responsibility, Martin Montminy (2016) argues that an agent is to blame for his wrongdoing only if his action is a result of his belief which is not compatible with his ability. He is blameworthy only if his wrongdoing is due to his underperformance. That is, he is to blame for his action only if he fails to do his reasonable best. Though mostly, I agree with Montminy, I do not think that his view is unproblematic, which is the central thesis of this paper. However, based on Montminy's view, I will briefly discuss the possibility of the degrees of moral responsibility that I believe is still in need of improvement.

The paper will be started by delineating Rosen's skeptical argument about moral responsibility. Then, I will present Montminy's view about what moral responsibility requires. After setting up the debate, I will move on to the discussion of the problem of vagueness that I think Rosen's view suffers, and Montminy's view does not. In the next section, contra Montminy, I will show that the relationship between one's reasonable belief and moral responsibility is not necessary, and underperformance does not always make one blameworthy. In the last section, I will outline a view that prefers the degrees of moral responsibility and that I believe at least has some merits, if not without problems.

Rosen on Moral Responsibility

Rosen (2004) argues against the confident positive judgment of blameworthiness. His argument has two parts. The first part of the argument asserts that if an agent acts in full knowledge of his wrongdoing, then the agent is culpable or blameworthy for the relevant action. That is, an agent acting in full knowledge of his wrongdoing is a necessary condition for his being culpable or blameworthy for the relevant action. The other part of the argument, with which I am not concerned in the paper, posits that we rarely have full knowledge of an agent's exact state of mind prior to his action. Hence, we rarely have sufficient ground to be confident to attribute culpability to that agent.

On Rosen's view, culpability can only be due to *akratic action*. By akratic action, Rosen means an action that an agent acts contrary to his reflective judgment (i.e., occurrent true belief) that it is wrong to do the action. But the question is: why does Rosen think that culpability only applies to the akratic action? According to Rosen, an agent is excused from culpability for wrongdoing if he acted it "from ignorance." Megan is blameworthy for putting arsenic in Blake's tea that caused his death

if she knew about the arsenic. But if, through no fault of hers, Megan is completely ignorant in this regard (assume, following Rosen, that some weird agent transformed sugar into arsenic or some third party replaced sugar with arsenic unbeknownst to Megan), Megan will be excused from blameworthiness for wrongdoing. The story is not over, yet. If Megan is not entirely innocent for her ignorance (assume, following Rosen, that she forgot that she put arsenic and sugar in two unlabeled containers which cannot be distinguished from each other), then Megan is not excused from wrongdoing. Here, Megan, in the first place, is to blame for her action of poisoning because she is culpable for the ignorance that led her to the action. Thus, Rosen argues that an agent is not excused from culpability for wrongdoing if he acted with full knowledge of his wrongdoing. That is, if his action is akratic, he will not be excused from culpability for wrongdoing. In this connection, Rosen (2004, p. 302) points out that we are responsible for passive occurrences – things that happen to or around us – only if they are the foreseeable result of our prior culpable actions or omissions, like taking sleeping pills before driving or not repeating your name when introduced.

In this connection, Rosen's distinction between *original* and *derivative* responsibility for action is noteworthy. If Jekyll knowingly takes a drug that makes him go berserk, then he is derivatively responsible for his smashing up the china shop because he is originally responsible for the act of taking the drug. Thus, "X's responsibility for A is derivative when X is responsible for A only because he is independently responsible for B – some prior act or omission. The responsibility that is not derivative is original" (Rosen, 2004, p. 299; emphasis omitted). When Megan poisons Blake's tea because of her negligence of not being aware of keeping sugar and arsenic in identical unlabeled containers, her act is derivatively culpable because maybe she is originally responsible for not being aware. Thus, Rosen claims that "*an action done from ignorance is never a locus of original responsibility*, or equivalently: our responsibility for what we do from ignorance is always a matter of derivative responsibility" (2004, p. 300; original emphasis).

According to Rosen, if an agent meets certain epistemic precautionary requirements, he can be said to fulfill *procedural epistemic obligations* (henceforth PEOs). Then, what are PEOs? Rosen states that as we navigate the world, we are expected to take steps to inform ourselves about factors affecting the permissibility of our actions. These are our PEOs. For

example, we must keep our eyes on the road while driving, seek advice before starting a war, consider that advice carefully, ensure dangerous substances are clearly labeled, and similar responsibilities (Rosen, 2004, p. 301).

Rosen acknowledges that PEOs are impossible to codify and are highly dependent on the agent's circumstances. In evaluating the agent's ignorance, we need to know whether the ignorance is due to a failure of doing an act that a reasonably prudent person would not have done if he is in the same circumstances. So, we need to know, for example, whether the agent has obligations "to do (or to refrain from doing) certain things; to ask certain questions, to take careful notes, to stop and think, to focus on [his] attention in a certain direction, etc." (Rosen, 2004, p. 301). Thus, Rosen clarifies, "The procedural obligation is not itself an obligation to know or believe this or that. It is an obligation to *take steps* to ensure that when the time comes to act, one will know what one ought to know" (2004, p. 301; original emphasis).

Rosen, therefore, argues that an agent who acts non-akratically and wrongly acts from ignorance. As mentioned, Rosen holds that an act done from ignorance cannot be a locus of original responsibility. Agents who act non-akratically acts wrongly because they do not fulfill precautionary requirements of PEOs. They are not aware of the factual considerations making an action wrong (factual ignorance). Or they are not aware of the normative significance of the facts (normative ignorance). After following all steps of PEOs, if an agent finds an action wrong and still decides to do that, he is identified as akratic by Rosen's terminology. Thus, for X to be culpable for his wrongdoing A, A must be either a clear-eyed *akrasia* (original responsibility) or an upshot of a clear-eyed *akrasia* (derivative responsibility).

This section will be incomplete if I do not explain how Rosen derives his skepticism about moral responsibility from. Rosen is against any confident judgment of culpability though he thinks that the epistemic conditions for culpability may often be met. The reason for this skepticism, according to him, involves an imposter or what Rosen (2004, p. 309) calls *ordinary weakness of the will*. He finds that the distinction between akratic actions from actions resulting from ordinary weaknesses of the will is extremely difficult. Rosen explains that the akratic agent believes A is the right action but does something else, keeping the original judgment. In

contrast, the morally weak individual loses confidence in A and convinces themselves that the alternative is just as reasonable (2004, p. 309). Because of this difficulty in distinguishing both of these actions from each other we can confidently exclude neither the possibility that the agent acts from ignorance, nor the possibility of his ignorance is non-culpable. Rosen, therefore, concludes that placing significant confidence in any specific positive judgment of responsibility would be unreasonable (2004, p. 308).

Montminy on Moral Responsibility

Montminy (2016) thinks that Rosen is mistaken in his argument that an agent is directly blameworthy only when he has an occurrent belief, that is, only when he deliberately does an act that he knows wrong. The epistemic condition of direct culpability according to Rosen's position is the following (call it EC1): "An agent S is directly blameworthy for her wrongdoing A only if S has an occurrent belief that her doing A is morally wrong" (Montminy, 2016, p. 57). Like Harman (2011, 2011, p. 449), Montminy argues that EC1 is implausible because a person can be blameworthy not just for uncertainty, but for knowingly acting on something they believed could be wrong. To support his position in this regard, the following example is provided: Suppose agent S is uncertain whether doing A is morally right, assigning a 0.5 credence to the proposition that doing A is morally wrong (Montminy, 2016, p. 59). S would still be blameworthy for choosing to do A freely. So, if we accept EC1, we also need to accept that for being blameworthy, an agent need not believe that his action is morally wrong.

To avoid this outcome, Montminy thinks that one may prefer the following condition (call it EC2): "An agent S is directly blameworthy for her wrongdoing A only if S lacks the belief that her doing A is morally permissible" (Montminy, 2016, p. 59). Hence, according to EC2, for being blameworthy, one must lack either a dispositional or an occurrent belief about the moral permissibility of his act. However, this epistemic condition is problematic too. Why? We often lack knowledge of morally relevant facts, leaving us uncertain about the morality of many actions and omissions. It seems harsh to blame us for every wrong action performed in such uncertainty (Montminy, 2016, p. 59). To avoid this problem, Montminy (2016, p. 59) wants to replace EC2 by the following:

> [A]n agent S is directly blameworthy for her wrongdoing A only if S lacks the belief that her doing A is morally permissible and the credence

S attaches to the moral permissibility of A is not at least as high as the credence S attaches to the moral permissibility of any other available course of action.

However, Montminy (2016) avoids any talk of credence because he thinks it is very cumbersome and devotes himself to talking about belief instead.

Despite fulfilling all his PEOs, an agent may end up being blameworthy for wrongdoing. His belief about the morality of his action is not well supported by evidence that he gathers. Hence, he is blameworthy for his wrongdoing though he believes that he is doing the right thing. Here, he clearly underperforms. For example, though Dr. Singh knows that antibiotics are harmful to bronchitis patients, he forgot it when prescribed antibiotics to a bronchitis patient. This forgetfulness is not an incident of memory deficiency or cognitive malfunction; rather this is an incident of cognitive lapse. A few hours later, Dr. Singh realized his mistake and felt embarrassment. Montminy thinks that Dr. Singh underperforms in his prescribing antibiotics to bronchitis patient. So, Montminy (2016, p. 60) argues for the replacement of EC2 by the following (call it EC3):

> An agent S is directly blameworthy for her wrongdoing A only if S lacks an epistemically reasonable belief that her doing A is morally permissible. (Again, bear in mind that to avoid blame the agent need not have an occurrent belief. Moreover, a more accurate condition should incorporate a clause concerning reasonable credences.)

Montminy prefers epistemically reasonable belief to epistemically justified belief as a requirement for moral responsibility because he believes the former is "agent-relative," meaning it depends on the agent's cognitive abilities and relevant background knowledge (Montminy, 2016, p. 61). This view exempts children and cognitively challenged people from moral responsibility. On this account, one is morally responsible for acting per his abilities. Anything below one's ability makes him morally culpable.

In sports, we blame an experienced player for a mistake though we do not blame an amateur for the same mistake. That means our responses are relative to a person's capacity. We blame an individual who has the relevant capacity but fails to accomplish it. We identify him as an underperformer. Montminy rightly thinks that though the threshold of underperformance is vague, we can easily categorize which one is

underperformance, and which one is not. Along this line, Montminy argues, we should think of moral responsibility. He writes,

> We have a primary moral obligation to act according to what morality requires. And moral responsibility imposes a secondary moral norm on us. To act in a morally responsible way is to do one's reasonable best to respect one's primary moral obligations. And to do one's reasonable best is to perform according to one's relevant abilities, which include cognitive, volitional, and motor abilities (Montminy, 2016, p. 62).

It, therefore, is seen that Montminy distinguishes three types of underperformances that involve one's cognitive, volitional, and motor capacities.

Montminy (2016, p. 62) refers to Randolph Clarke (2014, p. 164) who was asked by his wife to bring milk home from a nearby shop. But in his driving home, he keeps himself busy thinking about his paper and forgets to bring milk. He realizes it when he arrives at home. Here, Clarke can take some measures based on his dispositional belief to avoid such forgetfulness. Moreover, he lacks a reasonable belief that there is nothing wrong in his action during the relevant period. On both occasions, Randolph Clarke, according to Montminy (2016, p. 72), clearly, underperforms. This is an incident that involves Clarke's cognitive capacity. The above-mentioned Dr. Singh case is also an illustration of blameworthiness for lapsing cognitive ability because Dr. Singh's belief that he is doing something permissible is unreasonable due to his lapse of cognitive ability. So, underperformance that involves the failure of deployment of one's cognitive ability happens when one's "attempt to act (or omission) is not based on a reasonable belief that the act (omission) is morally permissible" (Montminy, 2016, p. 71).

If one lacks volitional capacities, he may be excused from moral responsibility. Montminy (2016, p. 63) gives an example of snapping an unruly child by his father. If the father does that out of sorrow or depression, he will be less blameworthy than if he does that when he has the capacity for self-control. But he is clearly blameworthy if his action is an upshot of a failure of successful deployment of his self-control. Hence, Montminy (2016, p. 72) contends that a person is responsible for failing to meet a moral obligation if they don't effectively use their motivational abilities.

Another sort of underperformance is related to one's motor skills. A seasoned surgeon may fail to perform a regular operation successfully

though he has reasonable belief that what he ought to do, how to carry out that operation. If he fails to carry out the operation according to his physical abilities, it is an underperformance.

Montminy claims that the two following points emerge from his view of doing one's reasonable best: First, having an ability doesn't guarantee success, even in favorable conditions. While circumstances like illness or grief can hinder performance, failure doesn't automatically imply unfavorable conditions or a lack of ability. Second, people are still blamed for failing to act on their abilities, even when the failure is unintentional (2016, pp. 64-65).

Vagueness in Rosen's View Leads to Montminy's View

One of the biggest problems that Rosen's position encounters is the vagueness in the concept of PEOs. The vagueness lies in the limit of these obligations, i.e., the threshold of PEOs. How does an agent know he crosses the threshold? That is, how does he know that he follows all the steps required for PEOs? It is also a big ask from X that he will be sure enough that all his steps taken are compatible with what Rosen means by PEOs. It would be painstaking and sometimes possibly practically unnecessary to verify whether one followed all required PEOs, given the infinite numbers of PEOs in some cases. Even if one verifies, he may never be sure that he did enough background check since there is no clear-cut answer about the threshold of PEOs. One person's view of the limit of different steps of PEOs may differ from another. From this, it follows that if blameworthiness depends on whether one follows all required PEOs, and if we are not in agreement regarding the steps of PEOs, sometimes our moral judgments may become a matter of subjectivity. For this inherent vagueness lying in the concept of PEOs, the idea of culpable ignorance becomes a not-very-straightforward concept. That is, since we are not very clear about the threshold of PEOs, we cannot be certain whether one's ignorance (i.e., lack of true belief) is culpable or not. Hence, Rosen's premise – "If X does A from ignorance, then X is culpable for the act only if he is culpable for the ignorance from which he acts" – becomes an unclear one.

Consider the following example. Dr. Hossain – a village doctor from Bangladesh – is a dispositionally bad person. Assume that he follows all available PEOs before treating a patient. Since he does not have all medical facilities, his PEOs is limited, and in turn, occurrent belief is problematic. A

patient called Marzina who does not know the bad aspect of Dr. Hossain's character visits him for treating disease D. Dr. Hossain figures out using his un-updated medical chart (which is common in Bangladeshi village areas) that the only medicine available to him that would cure Marzina is Medicine M. But he gives Medicine N to harm her. But earlier another incident took place. One of Dr. Hossain's enemies (who is a dispositionally good person) – Dr. Khan – replaced Medicine N with Medicine M keeping the same bottle label of which Dr. Hossain is not aware. (Assume that Dr. Khan knew Marzina was coming to Dr. Hossain, and the knowledge of and facilities available to Dr. Khan are identical to Dr. Hossain.) So far of the story, despite his bad dispositional belief, Dr. Hossain cannot harm Marzina. But recent medical practice is that Medicine M is harmful, and Medicine N is beneficial to the disease D patient of which none of the doctors are aware. Moreover, this information arrived at the village just after the treatment of Marzina had taken place, and given the condition of Marzina, the treatment could be done a few days later.

This last additional information makes the case more complex that would result in different answers regarding the blameworthiness of Dr. Khan. Consequently, there are people who may argue that Dr. Khan is morally blameworthy for switching the medicines despite his good disposition, and occurrent belief of doing good to Marzina because a relevant question regarding PEOs arises: Should Dr. Khan wait till the updated information comes? On the other hand, some may argue that since the additional information is not known to Dr. Khan at the very moment, he is exempted from moral blameworthiness. So, my point is that we cannot all be certain about the blameworthiness of Dr. Khan; confusion and a matter of subjectivity consistently persist, thereby casting doubt on Rosen's concept of *clear-eyed akrasia*. It shows that culpability cannot be understood merely by the *clear-eyed akrasia* or occurrent true belief. There is something else going on. This missing point is excellently captured by Montminy (2016), especially when he argues, referring to Elizabeth Harman (2011), that "culpability does not require the belief that one's action is morally wrong" (Montminy, 2016, p. 59). Since Dr. Khan is a dispositionally good person, and since he does his reasonable best, in the given example, he is not morally blameworthy for replacing Medicine N by Medicine M. So, though Dr. Khan responds to his occurrent belief by replacing the medicine, it gives an adverse outcome of which he is not aware because of the shortage of the relevant information. Should he wait

till that information comes? Should he have not replaced the medicine in the first place? And so on. These are the considerations that, many would argue, should be included in PEOs. These factors make the concept of PEOs a vague concept. But Montminy readily asserts that the moment we see that Dr. Khan does not underperform, we can identify him not morally blameworthy. Even his occurrent belief is not important here; dispositional belief suffices. This leads us to Montminy's view that can avoid the problem of vagueness.

Problems in Montminy's View

Montminy's view is not unproblematic either. However, since I have already described his view above, here I will not spend any more time on it. Rather I am moving to exploring some inherent issues that I find problematic in Montminy (2016).

1. **The Relation between Reasonable Belief and Moral Responsibility is Not Necessary**

Montminy (2016) argues that if an agent does not perform an action out of epistemically reasonable belief, he is directly blameworthy for his wrongdoing. He prefers epistemically reasonable belief to epistemically justified belief on the ground that the former sort of belief is agent-relative (Montminy, 2016, p. 61).

Now, consider the following example. Dave and Raj are very close friends. Assume that they live away from their parents. Dave's father just passed away of which Raj is aware, but Dave is not. Considering the potential for Dave's going into depression for a few days, Raj forms a reasonable belief that he should not inform Dave about his father's death. This belief is reasonable also because Raj believes, knowing the weird nature of Dave, that if he gives this news to Dave, he may lose Dave's friendship forever because when Dave is extremely sad, he sometimes breaks the relationship with the person who is in front of him. But at the same time, Raj has enough evidence based on which he can form another reasonable belief that he should tell Dave the news. Assume that the relevant evidence is also very weighty. Some aspects of the evidence are, for example, Dave is the only person who can arrange the funeral, he has a sibling of eight years old who needs Dave at this moment of crisis (assuming that Dave's mother died six years ago), their enemy will occupy their property in the absence of him, and so on.

One may wonder, how can one form a reasonable belief that not-*p* and a reasonable belief that *p* simultaneously? I think this is possible if we consider the strength of evidence where it is extremely hard to determine which set of evidence is stronger than the other. As a result, some people (say Xs) would use a set of evidence to form a reasonable belief that not-*p*, and the other set of evidence to form another reasonable belief that *p*. Still, there are people of the same cognitive abilities and background knowledge (say Ys) who would use the set of evidence that Xs use to form a reasonable belief that not-*p* to form a reasonable belief that *p*, and so on.

However, Montminy (2016, p. 61) indeed says that reasonable belief is agent-relative. Nevertheless, the case I mention is different from Montminy's description. Here, the same agent forms two reasonable beliefs about the same issue based on two different sets of evidence. It shows that the agent cannot be very confident in either. Thus, the reason for which Montminy rejects EC1 (i.e., Rosen's view) applies here: if an agent is unsure whether her action is morally correct, he would be blameworthy for (freely) performing that action.

It is also possible to imagine that two groups of people form two different reasonable beliefs on the same topic based on the two sets of evidence. Here, my point is that sometimes it is up to belief-formers to decide which (set of) evidence he should accept as reasons to form a reasonable belief that not-*p*, and which to form a reasonable belief that *p*. Here, there might be people around who would not find the evidence Raj accepts to form a reasonable belief to not reveal the news of Dave's father to Dave as strong as to form a reasonable belief about disclosing the news. For them, this set of evidence might work as weaker evidence on the basis of which they cannot form a reasonable belief that they should disclose the news. They would say, "No, these are not comparatively stronger evidence than the other set of evidence." Accordingly, these people would decide to disclose the news to Dave simply on the basis of the set of evidence that Raj uses to form a reasonable belief that he should not disclose the news of Dave's father's death to Dave. These considerations make me a skeptic about the necessary connection between epistemically reasonable belief and moral responsibility.

2.   **Underperformance does not Always Make One Blameworthy**

The condition of "doing one's reasonable best" overlooks cases when one may not be blameworthy despite underperformance. Imagine that

Davis is a sprinter. Currently, he holds the world record of 9.4 seconds in the 100-meter sprint. He never stood second in any of his runs in his entire professional career. Moreover, in all his 100-meter runs so far, he took less than 9.8 seconds. But today he took 10.01 seconds though weather and running track were very favorable. It clearly shows that it is an occurrence of underperformance for a man of his caliber. Still, he stood first as no other runners were able to surpass him. Note that there is no doubt that he needs not run faster because his underperformance is not intentional. Now, should we blame him for not being able to run according to his capacity even though he stood first? Though Davis underperforms today, considering his all-other previous performances, ordinarily we may not blame him. We may think that this is just a bad day. This is how in sports we evaluate great players when they have a bad day. That means we do not always blame someone for a particular underperformance. We usually take his previous history into our consideration. But one may argue that it would be okay for Davis to blame himself for his underperformance. In this case, I should not disagree with this view. But I have another example that would show that for one's underperformance, it is not always okay to blame oneself.

Two experienced chess players, Jim and Pat, are playing against each other. Jim fails to see a move (say, the move is M). But when Jim makes a move other than M (say, the move is Q), his opponent Pat also does not realize M. Hence, Pat also is not aware that Jim is committing a mistake by making Q. But when Jim's turn is over, both Jim and Pat suddenly see the right move M at the same time. Both fail to see M for the same span of time. One may argue that since it is Jim's turn, it demands more awareness from Jim than Pat. But as an active player, the same level of awareness is also required from Pat. Apparently, here both Jim and Pat underperform. However, for not seeing M before his turn, Pat would not blame himself. But like sprinter Davis, Jim may blame himself for not seeing M on time. So, in this example, for not seeing the move for the same duration, Jim would blame himself, and Pat would not.

One may argue against my position that both Jim and Pat would say, "I should have seen M!" and thus, blame themselves for their failure. Against this claim, my suggestion is to consider two perspectives, one is micro-level point of view and the other is macro-level point of view. The micro-level perspective deals with simple actions, such as the move M, the move Q, etc. From this perspective, Pat would blame himself that he should have

noticed M. However, the macro-level perspective is about the aggregation of simple actions. From this perspective, Pat would not blame himself because the result of the game goes in his favor.

Moreover, we see that since it is Pat's turn, and Pat makes the correct move, he wins. So, Pat's blameworthiness is compensated by some additional moments of time that he gets, and that Jim does not get to rectify his move. My point is that in our everyday life we do not always blame one for wrongdoing that he does due to underperformance. It sometimes involves something else too. So, it seems that sometimes blaming involves things other than underperformance, such as level of perspectives, outcome, duration of correction, etc. I think this is the problem to which Montminy (2016) does not offer any good answer in his exposition of the idea of underperformance.

Gary Watson (1996) holds that the idea of moral responsibility captures either accountability or attributability. Now, I will mention a case that, I believe, will show that the concept of accountability is not covered by Montminy's notion of "doing one's reasonable best." Diana is a Ph.D. in electrical engineering student. She is also a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). Last semester, she took two 3-credit courses. Also, she taught an independent course and had to conduct her research in the lab as well. She felt she could not finish all her course requirements on time. So, she went to one of her course teachers and asked for an Incomplete. Now, if we look at the case, we will see that Diana is accountable for her work because she is accountable for finishing the course before the end of the semester. Since she could not do that, she clearly underperformed for which she has no excuse. I do not think that for this underperformance, she should be held accountable because the university allows her to take an Incomplete even though she did not act per his capability.

Now, consider another case that involves attributability. Sheikh Salman is a billionaire whose relevant moral duty is to donate to a charity. He can donate $90,000,000,000 to a charity (or charities). Assume that Sheikh Salman is capable of giving this huge amount of money without harming his family. The point to remember here is that for donating this amount, he is not accountable. That is, he is not liable or in any legal obligation. Donating is an action which is attributable to Sheikh Salman because it will show that he is doing an action which speaks well of him. So, if Sheikh Salman donates $90,000,000,000 to a charity (or charities),

it may speak very well of him. But what would happen if he donated $89,899,999,999 to the charity? He then seems to be an underperformer because he does not donate the amount he is capable of. Should we then speak less well of him if Sheikh Salman does donate $89,899,999,999 instead of $90,000,000,000? This point of attributability is not very well covered by Montminy's concept of underperformance.

In this section, I have showed two shortcomings that Montminy's view encounters. The view to be discussed in the following section, in my opinion, offers a resolution to these issues. As we delve into this perspective, I will demonstrate how its emphasis on the varying degrees of moral responsibility addresses the limitations faced by Montminy's view.

The Degrees of Moral Responsibility: A Proposal

The view I am going to propose is a development of Montminy's view in the sense that it is based on his view. My primary purpose is to modify his view in the way that, I believe, can answer the problems mentioned above. One of the advantages of Montminy (2016) is that it can be taken as a basis to develop an account of degrees of moral responsibility that would be clear from my subsequent discussion. To allow the account of degrees of moral responsibility, I will slightly adjust Montminy's account though mostly, it will remain "Montminyan." Montminy's position is the following: "An agent S is directly blameworthy for her wrongdoing A only if S lacks an epistemically reasonable belief that her doing A is morally permissible" (2016, p. 60).

The Dave and Raj example shows that the relation between epistemically reasonable belief and blameworthiness is not necessary. Sometimes agents have epistemically reasonable belief, but they are blameworthy. To avoid this problem, my proposal is to focus on the degrees of moral responsibility, instead of hit or miss case of "an epistemically reasonable belief."

The Sheikh Salman case is a good example of the account of degrees of moral responsibility. Can we identify Sheikh Salman as blameworthy for donating $89,899,999,999 to the charity whereas he is capable of donating $90,000,000,000? His actual donation is so huge that it needs a lot of courage to call him blameworthy for underperforming. What about if Sam is capable of donating $20, but donates $15? Does it still need a lot of courage to call Sam blameworthy for not paying the remaining $5? What

is that that would make Sam blameworthy, but Sheikh Salman not? Is it only the amount of money? Another consideration is that it might be the case that, relatively speaking, donating the remaining amount needs more financial efforts from Sam than Sheikh Salman (though Sheikh Salman's remaining amount is $100,000,001!) because Sam is economically much worse than Sheikh Salman. From this discussion, it seems that there is a threshold. But fixing this threshold is possibly almost impossible. But I do not think that the threshold is agent-relative only, at least in these donation cases. It also depends on agents with which we interact, along with many other dimensions. So, one proposal of the threshold would be to consider harms or benefits one incur on another. If Sheikh Salman's not donating the remaining $100,000,001 causes harm to others, then he is blameworthy. For example, if he is capable of donating that money to a charity organization that works for the famine victims in Africa, then Sheikh Salman cannot avoid blameworthiness if that charity organization cannot function their action properly because they still lack money. And the same line of argument is also applicable to Sam, I think. If he donates $15 to a person to buy a dinner, if that person cannot buy a nutritious dinner by $15, i.e., if he still needs $5, Sam cannot avoid culpability for not donating the remaining $5. So, my proposal is the following: the more consistent one with his epistemically reasonable belief, the less blameworthy he is. Sheikh Salman would be more consistent if he donated $90,000,000,000 to a charity of which is relatively more capable than Sam's donating a meager sum of $20. Here, the point is Sheikh Salman is not as blameworthy as Sam when he donates $89,899,999,999, and Sam donates $15. Still, there remains a scope of calling him blameworthy for not donating the remaining $100,000,001. But not donating this amount does not make him blameworthy for underperforming. He is simply to some degrees blameworthy on the scale of degrees of blameworthiness for which he may not be called morally irresponsible. And this scale is not something that we can say that this is the threshold crossing which makes one morally responsible. Rather this is the situation understanding of which will help build up a sort of intuition for which we can often recognize when one is morally culpable and when one is not.

Here, the notion of epistemically reasonable belief involves one's ability, as Montminy (2016) argues. Consider Diana, the Ph.D. student, again, who is blameworthy, but not much. She is less blameworthy in keeping her courses Incomplete than the blameworthiness she would have

if she avoided many of her duties of the course that she teaches. In her teaching, avoiding teaching duties is more blameworthy than keeping her courses Incomplete because the former involves interaction with others. So, my position is that if Diana is culpable for keeping Incomplete, she is not at least as blameworthy as Montminy's notion of underperformance touts her to be.

> I, therefore, propose the following view:

> An agent S is directly culpable for her wrongdoing A only if S lacks an epistemically reasonable belief (dependent on the situation, i.e., the situation will determine what sort of belief one should form) that his doing A is morally permissible. But the more consistent he is with his epistemically reasonable belief, the less culpable he is.

Conclusion

I have discussed an objection against Rosen's position, i.e., the problem of vagueness in his notion of procedural epistemic obligations. This issue in Rosen leads me to focus on Montminy's position. But his view also suffers from two problems: there is no necessary connection between reasonable belief and moral responsibility, and underperformance does not always make agents blameworthy. Alternatively, I have proposed that an agent's blameworthiness for wrongdoing is a matter of the degree of being consistent in holding an epistemically reasonable belief. Hence, my suggestion is one's degree of responsibility for action depends on consistency with epistemically reasonable belief.

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