Olle Blomberg[1] & Björn Petersson[2]

Collective Blameworthiness and the Group's Perspective[3]

A violation of a collective moral obligation can take place without each member violating an individual obligation. That may seem problematic. A violation of a moral obligation typically justifies moral blame. If we blame a group, individual members will register the blame. According to an influential view from John Stuart Mill and others, the primary function of moral blame is to evoke feelings of guilt, and guilt feelings, as Mill says, are unpleasant and can be considered as a basic form of punishment. Also, feeling guilty involves acknowledging fault. Then, in line with the Millean view, the individual member may be punished for a violation she did not commit, and be required to take on responsibility for a fault that was not hers, which appears unfair as well as incoherent. Given the Millean view of moral blame, it seems then that we should give up the idea that groups can have irreducibly collective obligations. We confront this objection by explaining how genuine feelings of guilt which are unpleasant and involve acknowledging fault can be the appropriate response to moral blame towards one's group, even for an individually innocent group member. We thereby reconcile the Millean view of moral blame with the possibility of irreducibly collective moral obligations. Our explanation is based on the idea that an individual can identify with her group in a strong sense, and harbour guilt feelings from different perspectives.

[1] University of Gothenburg, olle.blomberg@gu.se.

[2] Lund University, bjorn.petersson@fil.lu.se.

[3] The Lund Gothenburg Responsibility Project (PI: Prof. Paul Russell), funded by the Swedish Research Council, is gratefully acknowledged.

1. Introduction

We often target several individuals considered collectively, as a group, with blame for outcomes they fail to prevent as well as for collective wrongdoing. The group might consist of a few individuals, as when we blame a group of co-workers for the bullying of a colleague. Or the group might consist of a large mass of people, as when we blame a state's citizens for electing an authoritarian leader or when we blame the world's affluent people for failing to slow down global warming. We have previously argued that at least in the former sort of small-scale case, several agents can have an irreducible collective moral obligation (Blomberg & Petersson 2023).

In this paper, we discuss what happens when such a group fails to act in accordance with their obligation: what sort of blaming responses may aptly be directed to individual members of such a group? We are particularly interested in cases where one or more members may not individually be at fault even though the group is blameworthy for violating an obligation.

Drawing inspiration from work in social psychology on group identification and building on our account of collective moral obligation, we argue that it can be morally fitting for group members, including those not individually at fault, to feel guilt from the group's perspective, in light of the group's failure to act in accordance with its obligation. Moreover, one function of directing moral blame towards a collective may be to evoke such we-feelings of guilt in the individual members. Our view that it can be fitting for members to feel guilt from the group's perspective gives substance to the idea that an unstructured group, what Virginia Held (1970) calls "a random collection of individuals", can be collectively blameworthy in a way not reducible to some aggregation of the individual blameworthiness of members. It is not uncommon to assume that a socially organized group may be a proper target of moral blame, on the condition that it has an established collective decision procedure or fulfils some other substantial criterion meant to capture what is necessary for a group to possess moral agency in its own right. Companies and other organizations are paradigmatic examples. Like Held, we instead focus the conditions under which a group lacking such organizational features can be blameworthy in a non-distributive sense.

We compare and contrast our view to accounts claiming that assignments of collective guilt have no implications at all for individual members' guilt (Cooper 2001; Gilbert 2002), to views according to which collective guilt is fitting because guilt does not imply fault (Morris 1988; Sepinwall 2011; Velichkov 2023), and to views according to which some other moral emotion than guilt is fitting in those members not individually at fault (Oshana 2006; Telech 2022)[4]. While we have considerable

[4] Gunnar Björnsson seems to hold a view of the last kind as well: A group can be retrospectively morally responsible for a bad outcome without each group member having a substandard quality of will (2014: 113-114,

sympathy for views of the last kind, we here seek an account of collective blameworthiness that provides a direct response to the common individualistic objection that a practice that takes collective responsibility seriously will necessarily be unfair and/or incoherent.

2. Collective moral obligation

When agents only together can bring about an outcome that is morally good or best, and they know that they can do this without significant risk to themselves, they will at least sometimes be morally required to bring about the outcome (Blomberg & Petersson 2023; McKinsey 1981; Copp 1991; Wringe 2010; Cripps 2013; Björnsson 2014; Pinkert 2014; Aas 2015; Schwenkenbecher 2021). In such cases, it will be to *them*—collectively rather than distributively—that a moral demand to bring about the outcome should be directed.

On our account, several moral agents have such a moral obligation together only if they each have (i) a context-specific capacity to view their situation from the group's perspective—to "group identify"—and (ii) at least a general capacity to deliberate about what they ought to do together (Blomberg & Petersson 2023; see also Schwenkenbecher 2021). If they also have the joint ability to realize a morally required outcome, then they together have the collective obligation to bring it about.[5] An agent who identifies with her group in our sense does not merely see herself as a member of the group and does not merely care about the group.[6] A group-identifying member also views the choice situation from the group's perspective. If she also ends up deliberating about what they should do—engaging in so-called "team reasoning" (e.g. Bacharach 2006; Colman & Gold 2018)—then she evaluates different courses of action open to the group and infers that she, as a group member, ought to do her part of the optimal action profile available to the group. If an agent lacks capacities for group identification and team reasoning, then she will not be able to grasp the normative reasons that make the collective action morally required. Compare: a singular individual would not have a moral obligation to raise and take care of a child unless she had capacities to identify as a persisting person over time and for planning and coordinating her activities over time. Without these capacities, she would not be able

fn. 10), and it would not be fitting for those with a satisfactory quality of will to feel guilt (2021: 3556). Instead, for them, "sadness, pain, horror, disappointment, contempt, or shame" may be fitting (ibid.).

[5] For details, see (Blomberg & Petersson 2023). For critical discussion of our account, see (Ludwig 2023).

[6] The notion of group identification is central in social identity theory (Hogg et al. 2017). Some empirical findings suggest that group identification prompts cooperation and team reasoning in social dilemmas and coordination games, although the data is hardly conclusive or decisive (see Thom et al. 2022).

to grasp the normative reasons that make the cross-temporal activity of raising and taking care of the child morally required for her.

We distinguish between an individual obligation, understood in terms of what I ought to do given my expectations about the actual behaviour of people around me, and what we might call a participatory obligation, which is what I ought to do as part of what we ought to do.[7] Wilfrid Sellars notes that even when my individual action is what figures in the content of my intention, the intention can be held either from my group's perspective or from my individual perspective. "[We] can say that Jones intends to do A *sub specie* 'one of us,' and flag our representation of his intention with a subscript 'we,' thus, Jones intends 'Shall$_{we}$ [I do A]'" (Sellars 1980: 99). To paraphrase Sellars, we can say that I have a participatory obligation to do A when I ought *sub specie* "one of us" to do A.

An individual agent's participatory obligation and her individual obligation may be in irresolvable practical conflict. Consider a moral multi-player social dilemma such as the following:

> *Community School*: In our small local community, I can either pay a school tax or keep my money to pay for some private teaching for my children. Each parent in our community has this choice. My children would get excellent education if they could go to our public school and get extra private teaching on top of that, good education if they merely go to our community school, considerably less good education if they merely get the private teaching that I can afford, and no education at all if I can't pay for private teaching and there is no public school. A sufficient number of school tax payers are required to sustain the school. The number of school tax payers in our community is far below that threshold. Therefore, I would merely make the situation worse for my children by paying school taxes, and paying them would not make the situation better for anyone else. The same is true of each parent in our community.

Arguably, I would not violate any individual obligation to my children or to anyone else by not paying the school tax. My children would be worse off if I made myself unable to pay for private teaching. But we parents together give our children a considerably less good education than we could have given them. Given that we each have a context-specific capacity to view our situation from the perspective of the community of parents, as well as at least a general capacity to deliberate about what we ought to do together, then we would arguably together violate a collective obligation

[7] This distinction between an agent's individual obligation and his or her participatory obligation is not explicitly drawn in (Blomberg & Petersson 2023).

to sustain the public school. In this kind of community, conditions for group identification may be more or less favourable. The plausibility of holding the group collectively to account for violating an obligation will vary with those conditions.

We do not think that this type of dilemma is uncommon in real life, nor that the feeling of being torn between the duties they typically incur is irrational. In such cases, there is an irreconcilable conflict between an individual obligation—what the individual agent ought, from the individual perspective, to do, and a participatory obligation—what the individual agent ought, from the perspective of the group with which the agent identifies, to do. (One might think that each parent would violate an individual obligation to engage and convince the others to together pay enough school taxes to sustain the school by e.g. handing out pamphlets, talking to friends and neighbours etc. It is possible that each knows that this would be fruitless though, in which case no one would have such a complex individual obligation. And even if each has such a complex individual obligation, these individual obligations can co-exist with the collective moral obligation of the group and the ensuing participatory obligations.)

On our account, a collective moral obligation is not reducible to individual moral obligations. Individual agents can together, as group members, violate their collective obligation without all or any of them violating any individual obligations. Nevertheless, a collective obligation does not require that the group in question has a formal organization or that it is a unified group agent in some substantial sense. What is required is rather that the group members in the specific decision context can identify with the group and can frame their options from a joint plural perspective.

3. Blame and the individualist's objection

In cases where the subject of an obligation violates it and lacks excuse, it is appropriate for the victims of the violation, or for members of the moral community at large, to direct blame towards the perpetrator. According to some, the core function of blame is to protest wrongdoing (e.g. Hieronymi 2001; Talbert 2012). According to others, it is to signal one's endorsement of the moral norm that has been violated (Shoemaker & Vargas 2021). Yet others take the core function of blame to be that of getting the target to blame themselves and to evoke feelings of guilt in the target (e.g. Mill 1863: 33; Brandt 1958: 16–17; Gibbard 1990: 150). In this paper, we do not take a position on what the defining core function of blame is, nor do we take a position on whether it at all has such a core function. Instead, we assume for the sake of argument at least that in many cases where we express and communicate blame, we do that with the aim of evoking guilt feelings in the target. We make this assumption because it forms

the basis of a common objection to the very idea of collective blameworthiness that we want to respond head on to.

A group member can be 'individually innocent' to her group's wrongdoing in the standard sense that she did not intentionally make a marginal contribution to it. Given that the individual group members are the ones who will hear and register the moral complaints against the group that has violated the collective obligation, evoking guilt feelings in the group may seem unfair at least to those members who have not violated any individual obligations. If the individually innocent member acknowledges the moral blame directed towards his group, he will be punished "by the reproaches of his own conscience" (Mill 1987 [1863]: 65). Hence, to continue using John Stuart Mill's language, the member will be punished for a violation he has not committed.

Moreover, as Galen Strawson (1994: 9) points out, it is doubtful whether it is conceptually possible to feel guilt for something without believing that one is morally responsible for it. So, if some members of a group have no reason to believe that they are guilty of any individual wrongdoing, directing blame towards the group may not only seem unfair, but nonsensical since it aims at evoking incoherent attitudes in its recipients (cf. Wallace 1994: 135).

A group can fail to fulfil a collective moral obligation even if some or all of its members have fulfilled their individual obligations, or so we and others have claimed. In light of the two potential problems with collective blame – unfairness and incoherence – what would be the appropriate moral attitude towards such a group? And how ought an individually faultless group member respond to blame directed at her group?

Some, like Margaret Gilbert, have argued that assignments of collective guilt have no implications for individual members' guilt (Gilbert 2002; Cooper 2001). But given Mill's and others' observation that an important function of moral blame is to evoke feelings of guilt, and that groups as such arguably are incapable of harbouring such feelings, it is difficult to see the point of blaming a group as such without implying anything about its members. Moreover, even if there was some plausible sense in which groups as such *were* capable of feeling guilt, as Gilbert claims, it is difficult to see how moral blame towards the group could avoid affecting group members in addition to that, and make them react with the unpleasant feelings that blame normally creates. This needs to be justified.

Others have claimed that appropriate guilt reactions do not imply fault (e.g. Morris 1988; Sepinwall 2011; Velichkov 2023: 59–80). One may e. g. feel guilty for merely having certain bad thoughts or being a survivor of some catastrophe ("survivor guilt") (Morris 1988). This move makes it easy to accommodate that group members who are not themselves at fault may nevertheless appropriately feel guilty for what

others in their group have done. Admittedly, these kinds of painful reactions – feeling guilty for bad thoughts, feeling survivor guilt, and feeling guilty, e.g., for what a family member has done – seem psychologically natural, understandable, and they are probably not unusual. However, one may question whether such guilt feelings are really *appropriate* unless there is *some* reason to think that the thoughts, the survival, or the family member's behaviour, is connected to a moral shortcoming of the agent, like being disposed to act on the bad thoughts, failing to help others in need to save oneself, or failing to intervene to set one's family member straight. In cases where we exclude the possibility of such connections, we typically try to talk people out of having such painful feelings, or recommend that they get professional help to get rid of them, and intuitively this seems to be the right thing to do.

Thirdly, in the context of collective blameworthiness some have rejected the view that guilt feelings must be the appropriate responses to moral blame directed at the group (e.g. Oshana 2006; Björnsson 2021; Telech 2022; Knudsen 2023). Blame, on this view, can call for a variety of reactive attitudes. Members who are not at fault may appropriately feel, say, shame, a kind of agent-regret, or disappointment. This seems plausible and there is no reason to deny that blame may have multiple functions.

However, our aim here is to explain how moral blame towards a group can make sense *even* on the Millean assumption that blame aims at guilt feelings and thereby constitutes a basic form of punishment.[8] That assumption is the basis for aversiveness to the idea of collective blame and responsibility, and it is what gives rise to worries about unfairness. Moreover, we should at least admit with Allan Gibbard and others that blame and guilt as characterised by Mill occupy a central "region in our moral thought" (Gibbard 1990: 52). Then it seems important to examine to what extent that strong conception of moral blame is applicable in the collective context. Finally, the move to less paradigmatic conceptions of blame appears *ad hoc* when we analyse what people do when they blame groups, insofar as the move is motivated solely by a concern that collective guilt and punishment seems unpalatable to many. Therefore, our ambition is to provide an account of moral blame towards collectives that retains the Millean assumptions about the functions of moral blame and guilt feelings. Such an account should explain, rather than reject, the connection between (collective) guilt and (collective) fault, as well as the connection between acknowledging collective wrongdoing and feeling guilt as a member.

[8] For attempts to make sense of moral blame directed at collectives without the Millean assumption, see (Garcia 2022; Smith 2009).

4. Collective guilt

When a collective obligation is violated, several agents are jointly blameworthy.[9] How does our account then deal with the problems associated with collective blame mentioned earlier (unfairness and incoherence)? While the solution we give here fits our account of collective obligation especially well, it can in principle be combined with other accounts of collective obligation.

On our account, moral obligations are always relative to an agential ("I"/"we") perspective. Similarly, blameworthiness is always relative to such an agential perspective. The behaviour of several agents can be framed as a violation of a collective obligation, or it can be viewed as the combined result of several agents each reasoning and acting relative to what they each, considered as individuals, ought to have done. When we blame the group as a collective, we address its members in a way that is different from what we do when we blame them as individuals. We address them as parts of the group to which we ascribe the violation of the collective obligation. This holds true also when the one blaming is herself a member of the group, engaging in plural self-blame: If she identifies with her group, she may feel guilty from its perspective - she may have "we-feelings" of guilt (Petersson 2020). The motivational role of the feeling evoked by registering blame towards one's collective may differ from the role of the feeling which is a response to being blamed as an individual.[10]

We typically direct blame towards groups as such when we want to stress the collective character of the action or omission for which the group is blamed. Our suggestion is *not* just that a member can feel guilt *for* her group or what it has done, in analogy with how one may feel embarrassed or ashamed for someone else's behaviour. An individual who merely categorizes herself as a group member but does not identify with the group in our strong sense can feel such vicarious guilt for what

[9] Rowan Mellor (2024) argues that while there are collective obligations, only an individual is a fitting target of resentment. Given Millean assumptions about blame (which Mellor may reject), this would imply that while several agents can jointly violate an obligation, individuals would at most be severally blameworthy. An individual is blameworthy in the sense of being the fitting target of a victim's resentment on Mellor's view only if they act "out of a lack of due concern for their legitimate interests." (61) However, the object of blameworthiness and resentment cannot in that case be the violation of the collective obligation, but only the individual's violation of her own obligation not to act out of a lack of due concern or to do her part (or some more complex conditional individual obligation; see e.g. (Goodin 2012; Collins 2019: 116–117)). We therefore think that Mellor's view risks undermining the claim that there are collective obligations.

[10] Our account has affinities with Nicolai Knudsen's (2023) account of appropriate collective blame. Knudsen does not single out guilt as the proper response from members to such blame but he mentions that we expect a member, M, who is individually innocent "to see and measure himself in light of the failed group effort and, as a result, to direct negative reactive attitudes toward himself, e.g., to feel guilty, regretful, or ashamed about the group failure." (164). Furthermore: "If we believe that M's relation to the failed group effort warrants such self-directed negative reactive attitudes, we blame M as a group member." (ibid.) And we can blame M, and M can blame himself, both "*tout court*"—as an individual—and as a group member (150).

the group has done. Feeling guilty for what we have done *from our perspective* involves group identification in our strong sense though. There is a motivational difference between these ways of feeling guilt in light of the wrongdoing of one's group.[11] As we have argued elsewhere, this motivational difference can be brought out by considering certain problematic social choice situations, as Michael Bacharach's (2006) work on team reasoning indicates. To simplify: Guilt feelings from our perspective do not only trigger thoughts about what I ought to have done for us, or what I ought to have done given my expectations about what others would do, but primarily thoughts about what *we* ought to have done.

To summarize, when we assign an irreducibly collective obligation to a group, we implicitly assign a capacity for group identification to its members (Blomberg & Petersson 2023). Our account of collective moral blame mirrors this claim about collective obligations. Such blame appeals to a presumed capacity of group members to feel guilt from the group's perspective. In this way, we don't have to give up any of the standardly assumed connections between collective guilt and membership guilt, between feeling guilty and acknowledging wrong-doing, or between moral blame and genuine guilt feelings.

We-feelings of guilt are just as genuine as I-feelings of guilt on this view. Genuine guilt feelings are painful or at least unpleasant, and this is part of what explains the motivational importance of guilt feelings. So, will not the individually innocent member who feels guilty from her group's perspective for what her group has done or failed to do be unfairly punished, as Mill says, by the reproaches of her own conscience, just as much as someone who feels guilty for something she is no part of at all?

But recall, firstly, that on our account blame towards a group is fitting only given the assumption that the members of the group had at least a capacity to identify with the group in the situation where the group failed. A person's capacity to identify with a group of people may depend on various external factors as well as on social cues which in turn may have some moral relevance.[12] Moreover, such factors are relevant

[11] Empirical research in social psychology and the social sciences on "collective guilt" (Goto & Karasawa 2011; Ferguson & Branscombe 2014) or "group-based guilt" (Hakim et al. 2021) does not always distinguish between vicarious guilt for what a group that one is associated with has done, and feeling guilt for what a group has done from the group's point of view—that is, from the retrospective deliberative point of view that concerns what the group ought to have done. But some of this empirical research may be measuring the phenomenon we are interested in: we-feelings of guilt.

[12] It would reach too far to attempt to provide a proper account of the concept of 'capacity' here. We want to stress two things though. First, we are not only referring to the general capacity to identify with a group, presumably shared by all normally functioning adult human beings, but to an ability to identify with a group when in a relatively specific concrete choice context (a useful discussion about how to think about more or less specific abilities/capacities and how they relate to relevant contexts can be found in (Jaster 2020, especially section 4.5)). The question of whether someone has the capacity to group identify in a certain situation plausibly depends on

to how the blameworthy group should be delimited and separated from innocent bystanders to begin with.

Consider the following situation:

> *Workplace:* Agnetha, Björn and Benny are good friends and work closely together in a research team. Frida is employed within the same team and performs her work well but rarely talks to the others or takes part in their social activities. There is a growing shared sense between Agnetha, Björn and Benny that Frida is different from them, and a bit odd. Björn and Benny even start to make fun of Frida at times, while Agnetha is careful to treat Frida respectfully at all times. At some point, Frida cannot avoid being affected by the situation. This makes Frida sad and eventually severely depressed. When Agnetha, Björn and Benny realise how the situation has affected Frida, they all feel guilty about it.

Suppose Agnetha did what she had good reasons to think would be least hurtful to Frida throughout this whole process. Is it rational of her to feel guilty? Would it be correct to blame Agnetha for Frida's getting depressed? This is a case where it seems likely that Agnetha identifies with the group of three and that there is "a sense of us" – that is an element in the group's sense of there being something odd about Frida. Moreover, Björn's and Benny's making fun of Frida is partly a manifestation of an attitude towards Frida that Agnetha shares with Björn and Benny, an attitude that none of them might have acquired as individuals without the dynamics within this specific group.

In line with our previous account, we find it natural for Agnetha to feel guilty as a group member, to feel that *we* have wronged Frida – i.e. to feel guilt from her group's perspective. Moreover, it would seem at least permissible to criticise Agnetha morally if she did not in any way react like this when she realised how Frida had been affected. This is acceptable, we think, because in this case it is obvious that all conditions for group identification are fulfilled, and also because the very formation of the group, with the diverging attitudes towards outgroup members which are typical for strong group identification, is morally relevant. At the same time, it is clear that Agnetha's individual fault – understood as her individual intentional marginal contribution to Frida's predicament – is much less grave than Björn's or Benny's, perhaps even negligible.

A natural objection to this might be to say that it may be proper of Agnetha to feel guilty for not having done enough on her own to stop the bullying, but that she

interpersonal factors ranging from verbal communication to more subtle social signs, as well as on the nature of the decision problem and on various other circumstances, some of which may be wholly external to the group. Second, the question of whether the conditions in a specific case are such that individuals are capable of group identification is empirical, and a matter of degree rather than all-or-nothing.

should not feel guilty at all if she did everything she could. We think that the dichotomy presupposed in this kind of response fails to recognise our capacity to frame situations from different perspectives. Agnetha may know that she did everything she could for Frida, given how her fellow group members acted, and she might even be justified in thinking that she cannot be blamed on account of her individual contribution to what happened. Still, it may not be improper of Agnetha to apologise to Frida on behalf of the group, and, in light of what happened, to think of future interactions in terms of how *we* should behave to make up for what we did, as opposed to thinking merely of how *I* should behave given the behaviour of others. This may also result in different attitudes and behaviour toward Björn and Benny. Instead of viewing their bad behaviour from the point of view of a bystander, and feeling indignation toward them as a third party, she will see them as co-participants who must be brought to behave in line with how they together ought to behave: she may try to get them to feel guilty from their group's point of view too, and urge them to apologise on the group's behalf as well. In other words, by framing the past situation from her group's perspective and feeling guilty from the group's point of view, she will be motivated in a way distinct from how she would be if she just considered her individual contributions.

Here is another case where it might be clearer that an individual who can fittingly feel we-guilt has done everything he could reasonably be expected to do to avoid becoming individually blameworthy:

> *Hooligans*: Patrick is a devout supporter of Brumlington Football Club. He and other Brumlington F.C. fans are travelling in the same train to Harchester to see their team play Harchester United. During the train journey, the increasingly exuberant and heedless group of supporters start to vandalise the interior of Patrick's train car. Patrick tells some of them to stop it, and even tries to physically restrain one of them, but to no avail. The other supporters either ignore him or hold him back. They end up completely demolishing the car's interior before the train arrives at Harchester station. While Patrick is convinced that he individually did all that could reasonably be expected of him in the train car, he nevertheless feels guilty for what he and the other supporters did to the train car's interior.[13]

[13] Various people have suggested to us that in this kind of case, where it is obvious that the other group members won't do their parts, each individual (including someone like Patrick) must lack the appropriately context-specific capacities to group identify and team reason about what they ought to do (for another case of this kind, see Blomberg and Petersson 2023: 23-24). It would follow that the group could not have and violate a collective obligation in this sort of case. After all, the relevant team-reasoning capacity must be a capacity for *valid* practical reasoning, and one might think that the known non-compliance of others would make team reasoning invalid (thanks to Niels de Haan for pressing this objection). But we do not find this obvious. A person's capacity to identify with a group in a specific situation depends on various cues (from things like shared history and common

Despite his individual innocence, given his social identity as a Brumlington F.C. fan, Patrick might nevertheless identify as a member of the same group as the other fans in the train car who together vandalise the train car. It might therefore be fitting for him to feel guilt from the perspective of the group consisting of himself and the other supporters in the train car, even if he is not individually morally responsible or blameworthy for contributing in any way to the vandalism. In moments when he feels estranged from other Brumlington F.C. fans, he might fittingly feel no guilt at all for what the others did in the train car, especially in light of his courageous attempt to stop the hooligans in the train car.

Like Bacharach (2006), we find it very reasonable to think that we sometimes vacillate between framing situations from our group's perspective and framing them from our individual perspective. In *Workplace*, there would be no inconsistency in Agnetha vacillating between on the one hand feeling guilty from the group's perspective and on the other hand taking comfort in knowing that her individual marginal contribution to the harm done was negligible, and feeling innocent from that perspective. We don't think that this kind of predicament is very unusual, nor that it is morally problematic. There is nothing unfair about Agnetha feeling bad about what *we* have done to Frida, and Agnetha's we-feelings of guilt are fully consistent with her feeling innocent in terms of her individual behaviour. Similarly, if Patrick in *Hooligans* group-identifies with the other Brumlington F.C. fans in the train car, then there is nothing unfair about him having we-feelings of guilt for what *we*—I and the other Brumlington F.C. fans—have done to the train car.

If we, as outsiders, view these individually innocent agents as parts of the group that has violated the collective obligation—the group of colleagues or the hooligans in the train car—then we will expect them to feel guilty from their group's point of view, to apologise or to try their best to get their fellow group members to acknowledge the collective fault and also have we-feelings of guilt. As Knudsen points out, an individually innocent group member who "was unaffected by the group's failure… and merely shrugged it off saying that he did everything he could" could rightly be viewed with "suspicion and resentment" (Knudsen 2023: 164). Of course, when an individual like Agnetha or Patrick reacts against her/his group's collective wrongdoing, this will sometimes make us regard that individual as an innocent member with respect to the group's particular wrongdoing—that it, not regard him or her as

interests to more subtle inputs like body language, proximity and physical environment), not only on whether the others are likely to do their parts in what the person identifies as the best collective alternative. And we see no reason to think that a team member's capacity to validly team reason—i.e. to reason in a valid way about what is the best option available to the team together and what his own part of it is—must be obstructed by knowledge that the behaviour of the other members will result in a collective failure to realise the best option. From the point of view of the team-reasoning member, the mistake would be in the collective action rather than in his or her reasoning.

part the group to which we ascribe the collective failure. The individual may come to regard herself as such an innocent member too, for the same reason. She may then still categorise herself as a member and care about the group's moral worth. She may feel disappointment, regret or shame for the group's collective wrongdoing, and perhaps even feel vicarious guilt for it. However, she will not have a we-feeling of guilt for it unless she identifies with the group in our strong sense.

In cases where a group member reacts against her group's collective wrongdoing, her capacity for continuing to identify with the group may erode. Since group identification may be prompted by a variety of different factors apart from the members' attitudes to a specific decision, this consequence does not follow by default though. Hence, she may retain the context-specific capacity to group identify and therefore be a potential addressee of fitting collective blame (from herself or others) that targets her qua member with potential for group identification, even if she is in fact seen (by herself or others) as an innocent member who does not identify with her group in our strong sense.

5. Conclusion

The general point we have made previously is that when we direct a moral demand to a group as such by assigning an obligation to it we appeal to a capacity of each to regard their situation from a group perspective and to deliberate about what they ought to do—to team reason (Blomberg & Petersson 2023). Each having such a capacity is a necessary condition for the agents to have a collective moral obligation to begin with. We now suggest that we can make sense of blame directed at a group for failing to fulfil its obligation as involving an appeal to this same capacity. Moral blame directed towards a group when it has failed to fulfil an obligation can appeal to the members' capacities to view their failure from the collective perspective and have we-feelings of guilt. This account of collective blame, we have argued, can make sense of the possibility of fitting collective blame even given the Millean assumption that blame aims at guilt feelings and thereby constitutes a basic form of punishment.

We have argued that the relevant capacity for group identification is tied to the relatively specific context of choice in which the group violated its obligation, and that the external conditions that the individual agents were in must have been relatively favourable for group identification. Favourable external conditions could have been that the group were confined to a limited common space, that there were no obstacles to communication or signalling preparedness to coordinate, and so on.

What about large-scale collectives, like those of the world's population who contribute to global warming? The question of whether it makes sense to blame such a group morally, or regard it as proper for members of such a group to feel guilty from

their group's perspective, will depend on empirical matters concerning the actual conditions for group identification in which the group failed to live up to presumed collective obligation. If those conditions made it unlikely for a member of such a group to ever be able to identify with the group, then our view implies that it makes little sense to demand collective guilt feelings, i.e. individual we-feelings of guilt. In that case, such large-scale problems may be more effectively handled in terms of political responsibility than in terms of moral guilt.

More favourable external conditions for group identification makes moral blame for violation of an obligation to act collectively more apt. In considering thought experiments as well as real life cases, it seems to us that the strength of our intuitions about several agents' collective blameworthiness vary with the presence or absence of features favouring group identification, in a way predicted by our theory.[14]

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[14] We are grateful for challenging and insightful comments and questions from audiences at the Practical Philosophy and Political Theory seminar at Gothenburg University (Nov. 16, 2022), the Social Ontology 2023 conference in Stockholm, the ESPP 2023 conference in Prague, the Coordination Ethics workshop at the Institute for Future Studies in Stockholm (Sept. 27-28, 2023), a Center for Subjectivity Research seminar in Copenhagen (Oct. 31, 2023), and at the online *1o Encontro de Ontologia Social e Intencionalidade Coletiva* (April 12, 2024). Thanks also to Tim Campbell for helpful written comments on an earlier draft.

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