Two Problems of Self-Blame for Accounts of Moral Standing

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Traditionally, those writing on blame have been concerned with blaming others, including when one has the standing to blame others. Yet some alleged problems for such accounts of standing arise when we focus on self-blame. First, if hypocrites lack the standing to blame others, it might seem that they also lack the standing to blame *themselves*. But this would lead to a bootstrapping problem, wherein hypocrites can only regain standing by doing that which they lack the standing to do. Second, in addition to hypocrites, there may be hypercrites, who blame *themselves* more severely than others. Leading accounts for why hypocrites lack standing to blame others would also seem to imply that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others, but some may find this counterintuitive. We argue that neither of these problems from self-blame poses a unique threat to leading accounts of standing.

Keywords: blame, self-blame, standing to blame, hypocrisy, hypercrisy

THEORISTS writing on blame have traditionally concerned themselves with blaming *others*: when, if ever, is it morally justified to blame others, and why? Given the negative impacts blame can have on others, of course, this is understandable. Recently, however, some have shifted their attention inward, to self-blame. These theorists have begun to consider what self-blame can tell us about not only the nature of blame and blameworthiness (Clarke 2016; Carlsson 2017; Duggan 2018; Shoemaker 2022), but also about the nature of the *standing*,

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or right, to blame. Leading accounts of the latter focus on explaining why some agents lack standing. Yet the shift toward self-blame appears to spell trouble for these accounts.

If anyone lacks the standing to blame others, it's the hypocrite. Yet while this is largely uncontroversial, it *is* controversial *why* they lack standing.[1] Two established accounts offer different explanations for this fact. The *moral equality account* (ME) maintains that hypocrites lack the standing to blame for relevantly similar faults in virtue of the fact that their hypocrisy involves a violation or implicit rejection of the moral equality of persons (Wallace 2010; Fritz & Miller 2018; 2019a; 2019b).[2] The *taking norms seriously account* (TNS), on the other hand, maintains that hypocrites lack the standing to blame because they fail to be sufficiently committed to the norms they blame others for violating (Rossi 2018; Todd 2019; Riedener 2019; Lippert-Rasmussen 2020).

Attending to self-blame, however, seems to create problems for both ME and TNS. While each view might provide a useful explanation regarding undermined standing for blaming *others*, one might worry that ME and TNS have problematic implications concerning blaming *oneself*. For instance, Patrick Todd and Brian Rabern (2022) argue that both accounts seem to imply not only that hypocrites lack the standing to blame others, but also that hypocrites lack the standing to blame *themselves*. This might appear to create a bootstrapping problem: since the hypocrite's standing to blame can be regained only by the hypocrite coming to blame themselves (as ME and TNS apparently maintain), it seems that the hypocrite can regain standing only by doing the very thing they lack the standing to do.

Second, paying attention to self-blame reveals the existence of *hypercrites*: those who blame *themselves* more severely than others for some particular fault (Lippert-Rasmussen 2020). For example, Adrian may severely blame himself for stealing $10 from someone wealthy while only mildly disapproving of Beth stealing everything an impoverished person owns (Lippert-Rasmussen 2020: 668). Some have registered the intuition that hypercrites maintain the standing to blame others, and yet ME and TNS would suggest otherwise. The hypercrite seems to implicitly deny the moral equality of persons by seeing themselves as lower than others, so if denying the moral equality of persons undermines the standing to blame, both the hypocrite *and* the hypercrite lack standing. But the hypercrite also doesn't seem to sufficiently take a norm seriously if they're unwilling to blame others for violations as much as they blame themselves (Tierney 2021). So, both accounts apparently imply that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others.

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1. Notable detractors from the idea that hypocrites lack the standing to blame include Bell (2013) and Dover (2019).

2. Elsewhere, we have referred to ME as the "Equality of Persons view" (Fritz & Miller 2019a), but here we follow Lippert-Rasmussen (2020) and Tierney (2021) in their naming convention.

If ME and TNS imply hypocrites lack the standing to blame themselves and that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others, it might be tempting to abandon these views and begin anew the search for an explanation of why hypocrisy undermines the standing to blame. In this paper, we argue that this is too quick. In fact, ME and TNS can team up in response to these two challenges from self-blame. To see why, we first say a bit more about both ME and TNS in Section 1. In Section 2, we take up the accusation that no one—hypocrites included—has the standing to blame themselves. In Section 3, we take up the problem of the hypercrite. Ultimately, we conclude that self-blame poses no unique challenges to ME or TNS.

1. Moral Equality Accounts and Taking Norms Seriously Accounts

ME and TNS are perhaps the leading explanations for why hypocrites lack the standing to blame. Understanding ME and TNS, as well as their value, can help us better understand the challenges self-blame purportedly raises for each.

ME is best understood as a family of views. While each member of the family may differ with respect to the details, what unites ME views is the idea that hypocritical blamers lack the standing to blame because their hypocrisy involves a violation or implicit rejection of the moral equality of persons. One advocate of ME, R. Jay Wallace, understands this violation of moral equality as problematic because of how it relates to our interest in being protected from moral criticism. Moral criticism is unpleasant, and many of us would prefer to avoid it. For this reason, blaming requires a "commitment to critical self-scrutiny" to ensure we distribute the burdens of moral criticism fairly (Wallace 2010: 329). Yet the hypocritical blamer subjects others to the negative effects of moral criticism while avoiding such criticism himself, and in so doing, treats the interests of others as less important than his own. This is a violation of the fundamental moral principle of the equality of persons (Wallace 2010).

We offer a slightly different account that isn't focused on shielding oneself from moral criticism. On our view, the hypocritical blamer is disposed to blame others, but not themselves, for certain norm violations, and this involves a rejection of the impartiality of morality and thus the moral equality of persons. We go further, claiming that the moral equality of persons *grounds* the right to blame, and that in rejecting the former, one forfeits the latter. Since the standing to blame is equivalent to the (undefeated) right to blame, in rejecting the moral equality of persons through their differential disposition to blame, the hypocritical blamer forfeits the right to blame others for violations of the relevant norm (Fritz & Miller 2018; 2019a). Other variations could undoubtedly be developed

that explain how the hypocrite violates or rejects the moral equality of persons and why this results in loss of standing, but these two accounts have garnered the most attention for ME.

One strength of ME seems to be its ability to provide a deep explanation of why hypocrites lack the standing to blame (Fritz & Miller 2019a). Yet some have criticized some ME views for casting too wide a net, undermining the standing of merely inconsistent blamers as well (Todd 2019: 368–71). Still others have claimed ME is too narrow, and unable to account for certain sorts of hypocrites (Rossi 2018: 555–61). Though we have responded to such criticisms (2019a; 2019b), whether our responses are successful we leave for the reader to decide. Regardless, ME appears on the surface to offer a powerful and satisfying explanation for why hypocrites lack the standing to blame, even if that explanation still requires further development or adjustment.

An alternative family of views, TNS, has developed out of the understanding that what undermines the hypocrite's standing to blame is a failure to be committed in the right way or to the right degree to some particular norm for which one holds others responsible. Exactly what it means to be committed to a norm, or how much commitment is required, allows for diversity among views in the TNS family. Todd, for instance, writes that "the sort of commitment at issue . . . consists, minimally, in *endorsement* of the value as a genuine value, together with at least some degree of *motivation* to act in accordance with the value" (2019: 355). Benjamin Rossi builds this lack of commitment into his account of hypocrisy, adding a dispositional element:

> An agent is hypocritical with respect to some norm, good, or ideal just in case the agent is responsible for failing to respond appropriately to it, is unjustifiably not disposed or is indisposed to accept blame from others for such failures; and is disposed to communicate commitment to the relevant norm, good, or ideal—which again, can be accomplished in a number of different ways, including overt blaming and advice-giving. (2018: 563)

While Todd (2019) and Rossi (2018) both write in terms of *commitment* to a norm or to morality, Riedener (2019) and Lippert-Rasmussen (2020) write in terms of a lack of *seriousness* about a norm. Stefan Riedener writes that what it means to take a norm seriously "should be a rich notion, concerning a range of intentions, actions, attitudes and dispositions" (2019: 197). Agents who take norms seriously in this way aim to comply with them, usually succeed in doing so, feel remorse or make amends when they fail to do so, try to prevent others from violating the norms, blame others when they are responsible for violating them, and do all of these things for the right reasons (2019: 197). Lastly, and in the same vein,

Lippert-Rasmussen highlights that a lack of seriousness can be seen in the way the hypocrite is not terribly concerned about their own norm violations, even if they do blame others for violating that norm (2020: 672). However this commitment is understood, the idea is that in order to have the standing to blame, one must be committed to or serious about the norm for which one blames others, and this will require holding oneself responsible for such violations as well. Yet this is precisely what hypocrites fail to do.

As with ME, there is something intuitively attractive about TNS. It nicely captures a variety of purportedly hypocritical blamers, ranging from paradigmatic hypocrites to weak-willed hypocrites, subjunctive hypocrites, and even fictional hypocrites (Rossi 2018: 561–64; Todd 2019: 362–64; Lippert-Rasmussen 2020: 672). It's less clear, however, how TNS can offer a *deep* explanation for why hypocrites lack standing. Todd, for instance, after finding no such explanation, suggests that maybe "it is simply a *fundamental* fact that, if you lack the requisite commitment to the given values, you lack the standing to blame those who would violate them" (2019: 372).[3] Nevertheless, perhaps a deeper explanation will be forthcoming by advocates of TNS.[4]

Whatever their shortcomings, ME and TNS have seen significant attention in the literature in no small part because of their ability to provide compelling explanations for why various hypocrites lack the standing to blame. Yet with the rise of attention to self-blame, some have raised challenges that might threaten these explanations, forcing us back to the drawing board. We turn now to the first of these problems.

2. Problem #1: Hypocrites and the Standing to Self-Blame

Quite recently, a number of authors have drawn attention to the fact that accounts of standing seem to imply that hypocrites lack the standing to blame *themselves* (Tierney 2021; Todd & Rabern 2022; Shoemaker 2022). Some have gone even further, arguing for a more radical claim: that *all* self-blame would be hypocritical, and therefore that *everyone* lacks the standing to blame themselves. In Section 2.1 we argue that this broader claim (that *all* self-blame would be hypocritical) simply doesn't follow from the characterizations of hypocrisy provided by proponents of ME and TNS. Even so, the claim that *hypocrites* lack the standing to self-blame comes with its own challenges, which we address in Section 2.2. We

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3. Riedener suggests something similar (2019: 208–9).
4. For instance, Rossi claims that offering an account of hypocrisy will be instrumental in justifying the non-hypocrisy condition, which seems to be his motivation in writing the paper (2018: 553–54). Similarly, Rossi (2020) is focused on understanding hypocrisy, presumably at least in part to explain why hypocrites lack the standing to blame.

argue that, while ME and TNS *are* committed to this latter claim, its initial counterintuitiveness dissolves upon closer inspection.

2.1. *Does Everyone Lack the Standing to Self-Blame?*

If hypocrisy undermines the standing to blame, and if all self-blame is hypocritical, then it follows that *everyone* lacks the standing to self-blame. While most accept that hypocrisy undermines the standing to blame, few would claim that *all* self-blame is hypocritical. Yet Todd and Rabern (2022) accept both these claims. Why should someone think that all self-blame is hypocritical? For Todd and Rabern, the answer begins with their formulation of the non-hypocrisy condition on standing (2022: 112):

> *Inappropriateness of hypocritical blame (IHB)*: For all subjects x and y and norms N, if x is a violator of N, then it is inappropriate for x to blame y for violating N.

As suggested by IHB, it would be hypocritical for one to blame some agent for a violation of some norm if one has violated that norm oneself. But, in cases of *self*-blame, the agent blaming and the person blamed are the same. *Any* case of self-blame, then, would involve an agent blaming someone (i.e., themselves) for violating a norm that they themselves have violated. In short, IHB implies that all self-blame would be hypocritical. So, if IHB is true, then it follows that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame.[5]

Notably, Todd and Rabern are not the only ones to recognize that all self-blame could be hypocritical. David Shoemaker writes:

> If paradigmatically emotional self-blame were fundamentally like other-blame, consisting of slighted anger, it should in every case ground a legitimate charge of hypocrisy. That's because if the blamer is one and the same person as the blamed, then the blamer himself is guilty of having done precisely what he is now blaming the blamed for. (2022: 39)

If this were so, Shoemaker explains, then an agent could question themselves by asking, "Who are *you* to blame *me*?" But, at least as Shoemaker sees it, "this is just silly" (2022: 40). Unlike Todd and Rabern, Shoemaker thinks that this shows,

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5. Notice that insofar as IHB frames a non-hypocrisy condition in terms of *inappropriateness* rather than *standing*, it shifts focus away from the topic at hand. We address this in more detail later in this section.

not that all self-blame is hypocritical, but rather that self-blame must be different in kind than other-blame. Consequently, we will focus on Todd and Rabern's argument here, though what we say may perhaps also apply to Shoemaker's argument to resist his conclusions about self-blame.

Todd and Rabern's IHB suggests that it would be hypocritical for one to blame someone for violating a norm that one has violated oneself. But this seems to be a simplistic account of hypocrisy. As many authors have pointed out, whether one is hypocritical depends not only upon whether one blames others for faults one has committed oneself, but also on whether one is prepared to blame oneself or accept blame for similar faults (Wallace 2010: 326; Bell 2013: 276; Fritz & Miller 2018: 121; Rossi 2018: 563; Todd 2019: 355). One who is willing to blame oneself equally for similar norm violations is plausibly not hypocritical. For these reasons, IHB seems to rest on an overly simplistic understanding of hypocrisy.[6] Thus, one might think that the claim that *everyone* lacks standing to self-blame only arises from this (perhaps idiosyncratic) formulation of the non-hypocrisy condition. To forestall objections to this effect, Todd and Rabern turn their focus to alternative versions of the non-hypocrisy condition as formulated by representative proponents of TNS and ME.

First, Todd and Rabern consider a version of the non-hypocrisy condition formulated by a proponent of TNS, Patrick Todd: "one has moral standing to blame [a given responsible wrongdoer] if and only if one is morally committed to the values that condemn the wrongdoer's actions" (Todd 2019: 357, quoted in Todd & Rabern 2022: 117). They continue:

> Plausibly, in order to match the intuitive data concerning who "lacks standing", the "commitment" at issue in Todd's account needs to be very strong. However, if the "commitment" at issue is strong enough to match the data, it will also be strong enough to imply that violators of norms, insofar as they are, are never in fact committed to the values undergirding those norms—in which case those violators will, given Todd's account, lack standing to blame those who violate them, *including themselves*. (Todd & Rabern 2022: 117, emphasis original)

It is odd that Todd and Rabern suggest that Todd's account of commitment must be "very strong" to account for intuitive data concerning who lacks standing. This intuitive data, for Todd, is meant to include all and only hypocrites, because the central thesis of Todd's account is that all conditions on the standing to blame

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6. Notably, Shoemaker does not characterize hypocrisy as simply as Todd and Rabern do in IHB. He recognizes, as others do, that whether someone is hypocritical depends on how they respond to the fault (2022: 40).

are reducible to a non-hypocrisy condition. Yet Todd and Rabern suggest that in order to capture all hypocrites, Todd must set the bar for "commitment" so high that *everyone* fails to meet it. But this doesn't match the intuitive data at all!

Essentially, the question for TNS is whether there is an understanding of "commitment" to a norm that shows that hypocrites are not so committed, but non-hypocrites are. Todd's account implies that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame only if *everyone* fails to be committed to norms in the relevant way. If one can be committed to a norm and yet still violate that norm without being hypocritical, then proponents of TNS can avoid the implication that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame. So, all that Todd (or other proponents of TNS) would need to do is to provide reason to think that hypocritical norm-violators fail to meet a bar that non-hypocritical norm-violators (at least usually) do.

Take, for example, Nina, who is deeply committed to the norm against losing one's temper in response to the misbehavior of a child. Nina highly values the importance of responding in a measured way to her own child's misbehavior, both in terms of healthy child development as well as fairness. She is conscientious about managing her own stress level, and takes steps (e.g., meditation, exercise) to avoid bringing home problems and frustration from work. We can go as far as to stipulate that, on the supposition that no one is perfect with respect to this norm, Nina is at least as morally committed to it as anyone else. Though she has never before violated it, one evening she fails to maintain her cool when her child misbehaves (we can suppose that Nina's failure is in part due to the confluence of numerous stressors that are beyond her control). The mere fact that Nina violated the relevant norm on this single occasion clearly doesn't imply that she isn't very strongly morally committed to it. To repurpose Aristotle, "For one swallow does not make a summer, nor one day" (1098a18). One violation does not necessarily show that one is not committed to a norm. And again, we can stipulate that, if *anyone* is committed to this norm, she is.

Compare Nina to Tina, who often takes out her frustration on her own children, lashing out disproportionately when they misbehave. Though Tina is frequently critical of *other* parents who do this, she never blames *herself* for it. Tina is, by any measure, a hypocrite. And Tina's own repeated failures in this regard, along with her failure to blame herself for them, indicates a serious lack of commitment to the (values undergirding the) relevant norm. But this simply isn't the case for Nina, who, though imperfect, quite clearly demonstrates a high level of commitment to the norm. This comparison could, of course, be replicated for any number of norms, illustrating clear and intuitive distinctions between hypocritical norm-violators and non-hypocritical ones.

Now, unless the bar Todd sets for commitment is intended to be *impossibly* high (something there isn't the least suggestion of in Todd 2019), then Nina plausibly meets it with respect to the norm in question, and Tina plausibly fails

to meet it. Otherwise, Todd's account would imply that *anyone* who ever violates *any* norm lacks the standing to blame *anyone* for it. But that would far outstrip what the "intuitive data" is presumably supposed to be concerning who lacks standing (since it would extend well beyond hypocrites to any agent that isn't morally *faultless* with respect to some norm). So, as long as Todd or other TNS proponents can provide reason to distinguish hypocrites and non-hypocrites in this regard, it's perfectly plausible that the standard of commitment that hypocritical norm-violators fail to meet is in fact met by non-hypocritical norm-violators.[7] Furthermore, the possibility of agents like Nina demonstrates that TNS accounts needn't imply that *everyone* lacks the standing to self-blame.

Next, Todd and Rabern consider a version of the non-hypocrisy condition in the way that we, as proponents of ME, formulate it (Fritz & Miller 2018): "if you are unfairly differentially disposed to blame violators of some norm *N*, then you lack standing to blame with respect to norm *N*" (Todd & Rabern 2022: 118).

Our account implies that hypocrites and certain types of inconsistent blamers lack the standing to self-blame. But why think, as Todd and Rabern do, that our account implies that *everyone* lacks the standing to self-blame? To motivate this, Todd and Rabern discuss the case of Michael, originally presented in Todd (2019): "Suppose Michael has two colleagues, Ellie and Suilin, both of whom regularly fail to reply to his emails on time. However, Michael is only really disposed to blame *Ellie* for this failure, but not Suilin—and there is no adequate moral justification for this differential disposition" (Todd & Rabern 2022: 118). Our view implies that Michael lacks the standing to blame for violations of the relevant norm, which in turn implies that he lacks the standing to blame *himself* for violations of that norm. Todd and Rabern proceed to argue as follows:

1. If self-blame is sometimes appropriate, Michael's blaming himself is appropriate.
2. If Fritz and Miller's account is correct, Michael's blaming himself is not appropriate. [He is unfairly differentially disposed to blame with respect to the violation in question.]
3. So, if Fritz and Miller's account is correct, then self-blame is never appropriate. (2022: 118–119)

What reason do Todd and Rabern provide for (1)? They write, "from the perspective of a moral theory on which self-blame is sometimes appropriate, it is wholly unacceptable that Michael could be prohibited from blaming himself for

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7. Another proponent of TNS, Stefan Riedener, explicitly sets the bar for taking norms seriously so that it allows for non-hypocritical norm-violators. On his account, those who take norms seriously "standardly" succeed in avoiding violations, and blame themselves when they fail in this respect (2019: 197).

violating *N*, simply and precisely because he rejects the equality of persons with respect to *N*!" (2022: 118). But this is little more than a restatement of (1), not an argument for it. So, whether or not (1) is true, Todd and Rabern haven't provided any reason to accept it. Nevertheless, we can set (1) aside for the moment.

Why think that (2) is true? After all, our account concerns the *standing* to blame, and not the *appropriateness* of blame. So, how is something about the latter derived from our account of the former? Todd and Rabern are operating on the basis of the assumption that blaming (a responsible wrongdoer) is appropriate if and only if one has the standing to blame (2022: 115). However, they offer no reasons to accept this claim. Furthermore, even the weaker claim that standing is necessary for appropriateness is rejected both by ourselves and by other theorists in the literature (Fritz & Miller 2018: 119; Cohen 2006: 119, n. 10; Edwards 2019: 452–53; Khoury & Matheson 2018: 221).[8] And, in any case, Todd and Rabern's shift from standing to appropriateness is somewhat puzzling, given that their central thesis is that (even on various alternative accounts of standing) no one has the *standing* to self-blame. Directly following the above argument, they write: "thus, both the account from Todd and the account from Fritz and Miller give us the resources, in different ways, to reach some version of our startling conclusion: we never have the *standing* to blame ourselves" (2022: 119, emphasis added).

In order to establish their conclusion about the *standing* to self-blame without introducing a controversial assumption, then, Todd and Rabern's argument must be recast:

1*. If agents sometimes have the standing to self-blame, Michael has the standing to self-blame.
2*. If Fritz and Miller's account is correct, Michael does not have the standing to self-blame. [He is unfairly differentially disposed to blame with respect to the violation in question.]
3*. So, if Fritz and Miller's account is correct, then agents never have the standing to self-blame.

Thus reformulated, the second premise of the argument, (2*), seems true (Fritz & Miller 2018: 131–33; 2019a: 565–66). But not only is there no compelling reason

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8. This weaker claim is what Matt King calls the "Orthodox View" concerning standing: "One can't blame appropriately unless one has the requisite status (with the accompanying right, authority, or jurisdiction)" (2019: 267). However, the theorists listed above either suggest or explicitly maintain that having the standing to blame and blame's being appropriate can come apart due to other morally relevant considerations, such as the value of the consequences of blaming (or not blaming) and the agent's response to their own fault. Consequently, they reject the Orthodox View.

offered to accept (1*); there's also good reason to reject it. (1*) is equivalent to the claim that, if Michael doesn't have the standing to self-blame, then no one does. But our account can draw a principled distinction between Michael and other agents. In particular, our account implies that hypocritical or inconsistent agents—those who have unjustified differential blaming dispositions with respect to violations of *N*—lack the standing to blame for violations of *N*. Accordingly, our account provides a reason why inconsistent blamers like Michael lack the standing to self-blame that doesn't extend to *everyone else*. So, there's good reason to reject (1*).

Our account implies that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame only if everyone has an unjustified differential blaming disposition with respect to every norm. And our view doesn't imply that simply violating some norm *N* is sufficient for lacking standing to blame for violations of *N*, since one can violate a norm while also being disposed to blame oneself and others equally for such violations. So, while our view implies that hypocrites and some inconsistent blamers lack the standing to blame, it doesn't imply that *everyone* lacks the standing to blame.

In summary, although a simplistic understanding of hypocrisy might imply that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame, this doesn't follow from the accounts of hypocrisy that are standard in the literature and held by proponents of TNS and ME. In particular, it follows that everyone lacks the standing to self-blame only if *all* self-blame is hypocritical. But, as these accounts show, that's simply not true.

2.2 Hypocrites Lack the Standing to Self-Blame

Neither Todd's TNS account nor our ME account imply that *everyone* lacks the standing to self-blame for the simple reason that not all self-blamers are hypocritical. But, of course, *hypocritical* self-blamers are hypocritical. So even if we can avoid the implication that *everyone* lacks the standing to self-blame, we seemingly must accept that *hypocrites* lack the standing to self-blame. And perhaps this is problematic enough. One concern is that it is, at least initially, counterintuitive that hypocrites lack the standing to blame themselves. As Tierney writes, "Not only do hypocrites possess standing to self-blame, they are often *encouraged* to blame themselves" (2021: 267, emphasis original).[9] After all, the fact that they fail to blame themselves seems to be the very fault that *makes* them hypocritical. For this reason, self-blame might seem to be the route by which they can remedy their hypocrisy and thereby regain the standing to blame (Tierney 2021: 267).

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9. Here Tierney cites Fritz and Miller (2018) and Lippert-Rasmussen (2020). For reasons we will presently explain, our view on this matter is subtly but importantly different.

But this very thought leads to a second concern: if hypocrites *do* lack the standing to blame themselves, as TNS and ME imply, it's not clear how they can possibly regain it. To see why, suppose that the route by which hypocrites can regain standing is by coming to blame themselves equally for the relevant norm violations. If so, then before regaining the standing to blame themselves, they would *first* have to blame themselves. But this appears to create a bootstrapping problem: since the hypocrite's standing to blame can be regained only by the hypocrite coming to blame themselves (as ME and TNS apparently maintain), it seems that the hypocrite can regain the standing to *self-blame* only by doing the very thing they lack the standing to do (Todd & Rabern 2022: 115). But again, we typically think that hypocrites *should* blame themselves. And, *all else equal*, standingless blame is impermissible or inappropriate.[10] So if hypocrites lack standing to self-blame, then all else equal, a hypocrite would have to *regain* the standing to self-blame in order to permissibly self-blame. But one cannot permissibly self-blame if one must first engage in self-blame in order to regain the standing to do so. In short, if hypocrites lack the standing to self-blame, as ME and TNS imply, then it's difficult to see how they could ever permissibly do what they need to in order to regain that standing. Call this the *Bootstrapping Problem*.

The Bootstrapping Problem seems to arise only because of the claim that hypocrites lack the standing to self-blame. For this reason, one might be tempted to simply deny that hypocrites lack the standing to self-blame and thereby avoid the problem. But it's difficult to see how one can deny that hypocrites lack the standing to *self*-blame if one accepts that hypocrites lack the standing to blame *others*. And, of course, virtually all parties agree on the latter claim.

Taking inspiration from terms coined by McKenna (2008), proponents of ME and TNS can meet this challenge either with a "soft-line" reply or a "hard-line" reply. A soft-line reply maintains that hypocrites lack the standing to blame *others*, but denies that hypocrites lack the standing to self-blame due to some relevant difference. A hard-line reply accepts both, maintaining symmetry across blame of others and self-blame.

Todd and Rabern lay out the most obvious soft-line reply:

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10. The "all else equal" clause differentiates our view from King's Orthodox View (2019) discussed in footnote 8. There may be other morally relevant considerations that might make blame permissible or appropriate even if it is standingless. As we write elsewhere, "the consequences of not blaming *S* may be so dire that it is appropriate for *R* to blame *S* for violating *N* even if *R* lacks the standing to blame *S* for this violation" (2018: 199, n. 2). To illustrate, given his role in inciting the violent riots at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, Donald Trump plausibly lacked the standing to blame the rioters. Yet given the consequences of not publicly condemning them, it was permissible for him to do so despite his lack of standing. *Supposing there are no other weighty moral considerations at play*, however, standingless blame is inappropriate.

> One might think the diagnosis here is simple: standing to blame is not a
> relation one could lack towards oneself, and thus the consequent of the
> non-hypocrisy condition must build in the disjunct "unless the blamer is
> the blamee" (i.e., unless x = y). This would, of course, immediately block
> the application of the non-hypocrisy norm to *oneself*—and thus immedi-
> ately block our paradox from arising. (2022: 112)

This restriction aims to draw a distinction between the standing to blame oth-
ers and the standing to blame oneself. But as Todd and Rabern point out, there
seems to be no motivation for this restriction *except* that it would (if true) solve
the problem. Without independent motivation, this sort of soft-line reply is *ad
hoc*, as would be parallel revisions that proponents of ME and TNS might make
to their own non-hypocrisy conditions.

This illustrates that the task for a soft-line reply is to draw a *principled* dis-
tinction between the standing to blame others and the standing to blame oneself,
yet a principled distinction will be hard to come by. The arguments offered by
proponents of ME and TNS identify a relation between an agent's attitudes (e.g.,
commitments, dispositions, etc.) and the relevant norm as what grounds under-
mined standing. For this reason, the scope of undermined standing (i.e., what
one lacks the standing to do) is determined by the *norm*, not by who is being
blamed for violations of that norm. So, insofar as the relevant norm can be vio-
lated by others or by oneself, an agent who lacks standing to blame with respect
to some norm lacks the standing to blame *anyone* who violates that norm. In light
of this, it seems that a hard-line reply to the Bootstrapping Problem is the most
promising route for ME and TNS. In what follows, we turn our attention to how
these views can accept that hypocrites lack the standing to blame both others *and*
themselves. Although critics might suggest that the latter claim is counterintui-
tive, we show that this simply isn't the case.

First, notice that, unlike Todd and Rabern's IHB, characterizations of hypoc-
risy offered by proponents of ME and TNS are considerably more nuanced, and
tend to focus on an agent's *dispositions*. For example, in previous work, we write:

> being hypocritical with respect to blame is a matter of . . . having a dispo-
> sition to blame others for a violation of some norm N but lacking a dis-
> position to blame oneself for violations of N without having a justifiable
> reason for this difference. (2019a: 546–47)

Benjamin Rossi, a proponent of TNS, also defends a dispositional account of
hypocrisy: "R is, without good reason, not disposed to accept blame from oth-
ers for failing to respond appropriately to N; and R is disposed to communi-
cate commitment to N" (2018: 563). Todd's characterization of the commitment

required for non-hypocrisy is arguably dispositional in nature, as well: "[the commitment] consists, minimally, in endorsement of the value as a genuine value, together with at least some degree of motivation to act in accordance with the value" (2019: 355).[11] Lastly, Riedener explicitly identifies dispositional elements in what it means to take a norm seriously (2019: 197).

Thus, sophisticated versions of ME or TNS are concerned not merely with the hypocrite's *blame*, but more specifically their *dispositions* (e.g., to blame oneself and others equally, to comply with norms, to accept blame, etc.). To see one motivation for this, suppose lovers Cato and Danae are both blameworthy of infidelity and unapologetic about their guilt. Cato is unaware of Danae's affair, so her friend warns her: "When Cato finds out, he'll be furious with you." It would be perfectly reasonable for Danae to respond, "He has no *right* to blame me," since hypocrites like Cato lack the standing to blame others *before* they blame. On the view that hypocritical blaming *itself* undermines a hypocrite's standing, Cato wouldn't lack the standing to blame Danae until he actually hypocritically blamed her. Alternatively, if it's the *disposition* to blame others hypocritically that undermines one's standing (as we maintain), or a preexisting lack of commitment to the relevant values or norms (as Todd, Rossi, and Riedener maintain), then it can be explained why the hypocrite lacks the standing to blame others *before* the hypocrite actually engages in blame (Fritz & Miller 2019a: 556). Cato's disposition to blame Danae but not himself for infidelity may involve an implicit rejection of the moral equality of persons, or a lack of sufficient commitment to the values undergirding norms against infidelity, either of which may (depending upon which account is correct) undermine his standing *before* he actually engages in hypocritical blame.

Given these more sophisticated approaches to the relationship between hypocrisy and the standing to blame, we can explain why the Bootstrapping Problem needn't arise for ME or TNS. The allegedly problematic claim in question is:

(HSB) Hypocrites lack the standing to self-blame.

The reason that HSB appears to be implausible is because one may take it to imply the following *subjunctive* claim:

(HSBS) Were the hypocrite to blame themselves, then their self-blame would lack standing.

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11. Notably, Todd also explicitly highlights the importance of dispositions in identifying hypocrisy (2019: 360).

Indeed, one might be tempted to think that HSB and HSBS are equivalent, and thus that the latter follows trivially from the former. Although HSBS *is* counterintuitive, it doesn't follow from HSB on a dispositional account. In order to regain standing, the hypocrite needn't first engage in *actually* blaming themselves (notably, this mistaken suggestion is what gives rise to the Bootstrapping Problem). Instead, the hypocrite needs only to develop the relevant *disposition* prior to blaming. ME requires that the hypocrite first develop the disposition to blame themselves equally (Fritz & Miller 2018: 129ff), and TNS only requires a similar disposition or set of dispositions (e.g., to comply with the norm, to blame oneself for violations of the norm, etc.). If the hypocrite were to develop the relevant disposition(s), they would no longer be hypocritical and thereby would regain standing. As such, if they were to blame themselves then they would have the standing to do so. So, HSB doesn't imply HSBS.

Notably, the fact that HSB doesn't entail HSBS isn't a mere technicality; it's not simply that there are *exceptional* cases in which an agent who lacks the standing to blame themselves might then subsequently regain the standing to self-blame prior to doing so. Rather, the fact that HSB doesn't entail HSBS reflects a *regularity*: that the hypocrite would develop the disposition to blame themselves equally is precisely what we would expect to occur (in most cases) along the way to blaming oneself equally. Importantly, the thought that the hypocrite should blame themselves involves a richer expectation. When someone who was previously a hypocrite comes to blame themselves equally, we expect their self-blame to reflect a change in the person's underlying attitudes regarding the relevant norm, and not merely that the agent somehow managed to muster up self-blame in a one-off fluke. Appreciating this point should highlight that HSB isn't particularly counterintuitive, even if HSBS is.

The foregoing suggests that, contrary to what Todd and Rabern maintain, the Bootstrapping Problem does depend upon their more idiosyncratic formulation of the non-hypocrisy condition, and not other, standard formulations of the non-hypocrisy condition. Although this might lead one to wonder whether Todd and Rabern have simply overlooked the nuances of the views they discuss, they are aware of the possible reply we have offered to the Bootstrapping Problem: "Perhaps when I myself am a violator of *N*, it isn't my *actually blaming* myself for violating *N* that suffices for my standing to blame with respect to *N*, but instead my being *disposed* to blame myself that suffices for my standing" (2022: 115). Nevertheless, they maintain that this proposed solution fails to avoid the Bootstrapping Problem, offering the following rejoinder:

> Having the right to φ is a conceptually prior necessary condition on its being appropriate for one to be *disposed to* φ. In other words, just as one cannot render it appropriate for one to φ precisely by φ-ing, so similarly

one cannot render it appropriate to φ by becoming *disposed to* φ. It first must be appropriate for one to φ; *then* it may be appropriate for one to be *disposed* to φ. (2022: 115)

We are unpersuaded by this rejoinder for a few reasons. First, it's not clear what argument is being offered here. The rejoinder consists of three assertions, and it's not clear how each one is supported or related to the others. It may even be that Todd and Rabern take all of these assertions to be equivalent. It's suggested that the first two are, but this itself is less than clear.

Second, the rejoinder shifts from discussion about the standing (or right) to blame to talk of appropriateness. Reminiscent of our remarks in Section 2.1, Todd and Rabern may be relying on the contested assumption that the standing (or right) to φ is necessary and sufficient for the appropriateness of φ.[12] So, even if we were to accept their assertions, they would entail that our solution to the Bootstrapping Problem fails only if this contested assumption is correct. This is particularly so because none of the three claims directly contradict our solution (i.e., that one can regain the *standing* or *right* to blame by developing the relevant dispositions).

Fair enough, one might say. But surely there's at least *some* intuitive tension between our solution and the claims Todd and Rabern make. Take the first claim of the rejoinder, formulated as follows:

(RAD) Having a right to φ is required for it to be *appropriate* to be disposed to φ.

While this doesn't *contradict* our solution, it may still cause trouble for it. Our solution is that one can regain the standing (or right) to blame by developing the relevant dispositions. But, if RAD is true, then having the right to blame is a *prerequisite* to the appropriateness of having the relevant dispositions. If so, then our solution seems to imply that, in order to regain the standing (or right) to blame, one would have to *inappropriately* develop those dispositions. Perhaps something like this is what Todd and Rabern have in mind when offering their rejoinder.

If so, however, it's mistaken. Even if RAD is true, φ must be held fixed throughout. The relevant instance of φ in this context is presumably *blame*, or perhaps *self-blame*. But neither TNS nor ME are committed to the idea that one can regain the standing to blame (or self-blame) by becoming disposed to blame

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12. Notice that the first claim of their rejoinder may itself seem to be a statement of such an assumption, but instead it's an assumption about the relationship between the standing to φ and the appropriateness of *being disposed* to φ.

(or self-blame). As proponents of ME, we claim that one can regain the standing to blame for violations of *N* by developing the disposition to blame *equally* for violations of *N*. But blaming for a violation of *N* is not identical to blaming *equally* for violations of *N* (hypocritical blamers are textbook illustrations that this is so). And proponents of TNS might maintain that one can regain the standing to blame for violations of *N* by developing the disposition to *comply* with *N*, or perhaps the disposition to *accept* blame for *N*. But blaming for violations of *N* is obviously different from *complying* with *N* or *accepting* blame for *N*. So, even the truth of RAD wouldn't cause trouble for the dispositional solution. In sum, Todd and Rabern's rejoinder does nothing to demonstrate that the dispositional solution to the Bootstrapping Problem fails.

For good measure, though, it's worth noting that there are plausible parallels to claims undergirding the dispositional solution. For example, our view about regaining standing can be understood as the idea that the right to blame can be regained by developing the disposition to blame *fairly*. We can see a plausible parallel to this in the idea that a parent doesn't have the right to praise one of their two children for some bit of good behavior that both committed unless the parent is prepared to praise both (supposing there are no relevant differences between the two). Or take another parallel: a teacher doesn't have the right to reward one student with some commendation for their classroom performance unless they are prepared to reward *all* students who have performed similarly. While it's beyond the scope of this paper to offer defenses of these parallel claims, their intuitive plausibility lends additional credence to the claim that one can regain the standing to blame by developing relevant dispositions.

3. Problem #2: Hypercrites and the Standing to Blame Others

A different way that self-blame might seem to create trouble for ME and TNS is in the degree to which someone blames themselves compared to the degree to which they blame others. While hypocritical blamers blame others more severely than they blame themselves, we can also imagine complementary agents engaging in what Lippert-Rasmussen calls *hypercrisy*:

> Hypercrisy is when a blamer blames herself in a disproportionately severe way for her relatively minor faults in the presence of relevant others whose much graver faults she either completely ignores or blames the others for, but to a degree which is disproportionately mild in view of the severe self-blame she subjects herself to and the relative mildness of her own faults (2020: 668).

For example, Adrian may severely blame himself for stealing $10 from someone wealthy while only mildly disapproving of Beth stealing everything an impoverished person owns (Lippert-Rasmussen 2020: 668). Adrian is a hypercrite. Yet unlike the hypocrite, Lippert-Rasmussen maintains that outside of extreme cases, the hypercrite maintains the standing to blame others: "Surely Beth cannot dismiss Adrian's mild disapproval on the ground that, owing to his hypercrisy, he has no standing to blame her" (2020: 668).[13]

We suspect that many will share Lippert-Rasmussen's intuitions about a hypercrite like Adrian. It may indeed seem odd to insist that hypercrites like Adrian lack the standing to blame others for whatever fault with respect to which they are hypercritical. Yet as Lippert-Rasmussen points out, ME, at least, must indeed insist on the hypercrite's undermined standing: "If the hypocrite implicitly denies moral equality of persons by implicitly affirming her own elevated moral standing, then so does the hypercrite, by implicitly affirming her own lowly standing relative to other persons" (2020: 668). This would seem to put proponents of ME in hot water, then. ME implies that both hypocrites and hypercrites lack the standing to blame. But many will want to deny the latter implication. If the hypocritical blamer loses their standing but the hypercritical blamer does not, and both deny the moral equality of persons, then clearly it isn't the moral equality of persons doing the relevant work explaining why standing is undermined (Lippert-Rasmussen 2020: 668). So much the worse for ME, one might think.

Some might be tempted to abandon ME in favor of TNS, then. Lippert-Rasmussen suggests this approach, in fact, pointing out that hypocrites "are not really serious about the norm which they blame others for not complying with" (2020: 672). How do we know they aren't serious about these norms? Because they seem "relatively unconcerned about their own violations of the norm" (2020: 672). This lack of seriousness about norms, he thinks, and not the moral equality of persons, can explain why hypocrites lack the standing to blame. Yet as Hannah Tierney deftly points out, Lippert-Rasmussen's own hypercrite creates a problem for TNS as well. Hypercrites don't blame others (or at least, don't blame them much) for violating a norm, even though they blame themselves more severely (Tierney 2021: 265). One might say they seem relatively unconcerned about the norm violations of *others*. But then, they don't really take these norms seriously after all. Thus, even TNS must say that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others, because what undermines standing is a failure to take norms seriously, and hypercrites, just like hypocrites, fail to take some norm seriously by not blaming to the appropriate degree (see Tierney 2021: 265).

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13. Lippert-Rasmussen allows that if one is a hypercrite due to a failure to generally understand blame, one may lack standing to blame.

It is worth pointing out that the proponent of TNS might reply to Tierney's argument by saying that the hypercrite could take the norm seriously in others after all. Perhaps they blame others the appropriate amount for their norm violations, and they just blame themselves far too harshly for those same violations. If so, it might seem less plausible that the hypercrite fails to take norms seriously; if anything, they take them *too* seriously. Of course, this would be a departure from how someone like Lippert-Rasmussen originally understood hypercrites, given his case with Adrian and Beth. Adrian only mildly disapproved of Beth stealing everything that an impoverished person owns (2020: 668), which certainly seems an insufficient response. Nevertheless, suppose Adrian blames Beth the appropriate amount for stealing from the impoverished person, but engages in outlandish (but genuine) self-flagellation for stealing $10 himself. Can we really say that Adrian does not take the norm of stealing seriously such that it has undermined his standing?

We think that we can say this. Taking a norm seriously may sometimes involve not blaming *enough*, but it might also involve not blaming *too much*. Taking a norm seriously, one might maintain, requires appreciating its moral seriousness in relation to other norms and responding appropriately. Someone who lies in order to defraud and ruin another may deserve a great deal of angry, berating blame. Someone who tells a relatively minor but nevertheless unjustified lie may deserve slight reproach. It would be a mistake to think that as long as someone is always administering the highest level of angry, berating blame for all instances of lying, they are taking that norm seriously. Taking the norm seriously requires appreciating that there are varying degrees of wrongness within the norm violation, and so some violations call for more blame than others. If this response seems plausible, then even significantly altering what it means to be a hypercrite to accommodate Tierney's criticism will not save TNS from the same fate as ME. But even if this response is not convincing, proponents of TNS will only be able to explain why a small subset of hypercrites—those who blame others to the appropriate degree but blame themselves more severely—do not lack the standing to blame others. They will have to accept that hypercrites like Adrian, who go easy on others but not themselves, still lack the standing to blame, given such hypercrites' apparent lack of commitment to the relevant norms.

Even if ME and TNS can successfully avoid the Bootstrapping Problem of self-blame, then, they seem unable to avoid the charge that the same justification for why the hypocrite lacks the standing to blame will also undermine the hypercrite's standing to blame. Yet is this charge all that problematic? We argue that it is not. Upon consideration, there is no good reason to think that the hypercrite has the standing to blame others, and there is good, independently motivated reason to think the hypercrite lacks it.

Start with the first point, that there is no good reason to think that the hypercrite has the standing to blame others. While many of us may initially hear the case of Adrian and Beth and think that Adrian clearly has the standing to blame Beth, what can support this intuition? Lippert-Rasmussen himself offers no justification. And indeed, it's hard to see what justification there could be that would not be *ad hoc*. After all, the challenge here is not simply to show that the hypercrite maintains the standing to blame others, but to offer an explanation for this that does not also imply that the *hypocrite* maintains the standing to blame others. Lippert-Rasmussen suggested TNS could do this, but as Tierney points out, it cannot. Without such justification on offer, all we have is a bare intuition for an asymmetry without any justification or explanation for that intuition.

To be sure, intuitions can be valuable, and we don't mean to suggest otherwise. But it is also unrealistic to think that we can or should accommodate all intuitions into some theory—especially if there are independently motivated arguments that would rule out the veracity of such intuitions. And this is precisely what we have in the case of ME and TNS. Each view is implicitly committed to the hard-line response, that there is symmetry between hypocrites and hypercrites, using independently motivated arguments. Once we appreciate these arguments, the initial intuition about hypercrites may weaken in the face of a dearth of similar justifying support.

Begin with ME. As we have shown above, proponents of ME have offered arguments for why hypocrites lack the standing to blame others that are rooted in dispositions. Lippert-Rasmussen does not engage with any particular arguments for ME because he wishes to avoid the details of particular views. Yet when suitably modified for hypercrites, the dispositional argument for ME would imply that hypercrites like Adrian do not in fact have standing. Just as hypocrites disregard the moral equality of others by blaming themselves less severely than others (or not at all) for the same fault, Adrian's less severe blame of Beth is an instance of disregard for his own moral equality. But to reject the moral equality of persons is to implicitly reject the very ground of one's right to blame, which in turn results in a forfeiture of that right (Fritz & Miller 2018: 125–27; 2019a: 547–50). If the conclusion that the hypercrite lacks the standing to blame is an intolerable one, it is not enough to merely point out the implication. One must show where in the argument things have gone wrong. But if the argument seems sound, then we should embrace the implication that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others after all.

It's also important to point out that appreciating the argument that proponents of ME have offered may weaken the strength of the intuition that hypercrites do not lack the standing to blame others. Consider first the intuitive idea that hypocrites lack the standing to blame others. Hypocrites may be disposed to blame themselves less severely than others for some norm violation without a morally relevant difference. According to ME, their disposition to blame themselves less severely implies disrespect for *others* (given their moral equality with

others). But no one has the right to disrespect others by going easier on oneself, as it were. So, when hypocrites blame themselves less severely, their blame is standingless. They lack the standing to blame *anyone* for the relevant norm violation, themselves included, until their dispositions are appropriately altered.

Now consider hypercrites who have the disposition to blame others less severely than themselves without a morally relevant difference. Here, too, it's reasonable to think that hypercrites lack the standing to blame others if they are disposed to blame others less severely than themselves: their disposition to blame others less severely implies disrespect for *themselves* (given their own moral equality with others). But no one has the right to disrespect oneself in this way. So, when hypercrites blame others less severely, their blame is standingless. They lack the standing to blame *anyone* for the relevant norm violation until their dispositions are appropriately altered.

At this point, some may press the idea that no one has the right to disrespect oneself. Do we really have obligations to ourselves? Insofar as we have obligations to all persons in virtue of the fact that they are persons, we therefore have obligations to *ourselves* qua persons.[14] But, one might object, even if we do have obligations to ourselves, wouldn't we (being *ourselves*) have the authority to simply *waive* those duties, thus granting ourselves the right to disrespect ourselves? A brief answer is that, although some duties may be waivable by an individual (e.g., the duty not to enter one's private residence), others may not be (e.g., the duty not to treat one cruelly, the duty not to kill someone without sufficient reason, etc.).

Of course, one might maintain, along the lines laid out by Stephen Darwall (2006), that moral obligations are themselves *second-personal*, and on these grounds conclude that moral obligations are always obligations to *other* persons. Paul Schofield (2019), however, argues that Darwall's account doesn't in fact require other persons to ground obligations. Instead, an individual person can occupy distinct *perspectives* in virtue of having distinct practical identities, each with their own interests, ends, and reasons. As Schofield writes, "because a person occupies these multiple perspectives generated by her practical identities, she's able to relate to herself second-personally at a single moment, making second-personal demands from the perspective of one practical identity and acknowledging them from the perspective of another" (2019: 224). Furthermore, while *some* practical identities may be sheddable (e.g., being a philosopher), some are had essentially (i.e., human person). Drawing upon Christine Korsgaard's (1996) work on practical identity, Schofield explains:

> An individual's identity as a human being—her identity as a reflective, rational animal—is not contingent and it's not possible for her to shed it.

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14. Kant (1996) makes this point, though of course, one need not be a Kantian to accept this.

854 · *Kyle G. Fritz & Daniel Miller*

> This identity is one that a person has by virtue of her very being. Thus, any demands or obligations that flow from this identity are ones that a person cannot simply jettison by disowning it. Demands placed upon persons by their practical identity qua human beings are inescapable. (2019: 227)

While the foregoing considerations are certainly not decisive, they lend at least some plausibility to the idea that one can have unwaivable obligations to oneself, and thus that one might lack the right to disrespect oneself qua human person. In turn, they weaken the intuition that the hypercrite does not lack the standing to blame others, though there will undoubtedly be some residue left from this intuition that is hard to shake. Nevertheless, until something more has been offered against the independently motivated argument for ME, merely relying on the intuition is insufficient.

Something similar can be said for TNS. Here, we must be brief, because proponents of TNS have not offered an argument explaining *why* failing to take norms seriously would undermine standing. As we mentioned above, Todd, a proponent of TNS, suggests it is simply a fundamental truth (2019: 372). Yet there is something compelling about the idea that if one is not sufficiently serious about a norm, one is not entitled to blame others for violations of that norm. And as Tierney has already shown, hypocrites *and* hypercrites plausibly fail to take a norm seriously, though whose norm violation they fail to take seriously may be different. Not blaming others very much for their norm violations when one blames oneself much more for the same violations suggests such a failure to take the norm seriously. And so, if there is some further explanation for why failing to take a norm seriously undermines the hypocrite's standing to blame, and if the hypercrite also fails to take a norm seriously, then the hypercrite also lacks the standing to blame others.

Of course, it is certainly possible that one could offer an independently motivated explanation that shows not only why hypocrites lack the standing to blame others, but also why hypercrites do not lack the standing to blame others. If such a soft-line response is proposed, then the hard-line strategy would need to be reevaluated in comparison. But we should do so only in light of an argument, not merely on the basis of bare intuition.

4. Conclusion

The recent shift of focus to self-blame raises underexplored questions that any complete account of the standing to blame must be able to answer. While the leading accounts were not developed with these questions in mind, they nevertheless have the resources to offer principled answers to questions concerning

Ergo • vol. 8, no. 54 • 2021

self-blame. As a result, if there is reason to abandon ME or TNS, these new concerns regarding self-blame don't provide it.

Even so, the shift in attention to self-blame in the literature is a welcome one. After all, hypocrites themselves don't pay enough attention to self-blame. Neither have theorists working on standing and hypocrisy. While we don't believe that this shift has revealed any fundamental flaws in ME or TNS, it does highlight that accommodating self-blame should be a desideratum for any alternatives to these accounts. It also opens fruitful avenues regarding the nature of standing and the self.[15] Although we have suggested that there can be standing conditions on self-blame, perhaps those partial to the soft-line response will ultimately be able to offer an argument to the contrary. If so, this could have drastic implications for the literature. Although we have not fully addressed this issue here, we have only ourselves to blame.

Acknowledgements

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15. Robyn Repko Waller seems to be among the first to express doubt about standing with respect to oneself (2020: 593–94).

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