

**SITUATIONS OF EXCUSES.** Resentment is a reaction to a kind of behaviour that results in some form of offence or injury of the other party. When can we be excused for our behaviour that provoked resentment? When, that is, can we expect to discredit the reactive attitude that the injured party develops?

There are two sorts of cases that provide grounds for excuses. (a) One can plead ignorance or clumsiness. Here we say that the agent's attitude, his character as a whole, is not disqualified from being the object of resentment. It is merely that it was *misrepresented* by an outward action. To develop resentment in this case is to misjudge the agent's character. (b) One can plead temporary derangement or general mental incapacity. Here the agency itself becomes an inappropriate object of reactive attitudes. So far as resentment is directed at the attitudes of the offending party, it loses its ground completely. In the first subgroup we put the cases where the circumstances were abnormal for the person involved, temporary at best. In the second group we have cases where the person under normal circumstances

**IMPACT OF DETERMINISM.** How does the thesis of determinism on these possibilities of excuses? One might think that, with determinism on board, we should abandon the attitude of resentment wholesale. But this, Strawson insists, has never been claimed on behalf of determinism. To abandon resentment can be motivated by the assumption of universal good will, not of determinism. And if we sometimes do suspend our resentment, we do that because abnormality (in any of the senses above) reigns in specific cases. We do not do that because we assume it is a universal condition.

**POSSIBILITY OF OUTLOOK CHANGE.** Still, even if this uniform change in resentment (or in other reactive attitudes generally) has not been attempted, one might ask whether it can be attempted—as a result of learning more fact about human nature and adopting determinism across the board. This, Strawson claims, would not be possible, unless we also give up the basic conception of 'inter-personal relationships'. Some aspects of these relationships, on some occasions, can be examined and revised, or discarded. But the system as a whole can never be subject to review. It is what makes human life human.

Might we not ask nevertheless whether it would be *rational* to effect a change in our outlook in the light of metaphysical or scientific commitment to determinism? Strawson answers that it is not in our 'nature' to make such a change. Hence it is an idle proposal to begin with.

**ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHERS.** Is it possible to extend the analysis of reactive attitudes to the situations where we react to interactions between two other people? Here we may speak of indignation (in the case of injury inflicted). Indignation is completely analogous to resentment. Finally, we can isolate the reactive attitudes in the situations where demands are made on us. Here the analogues of resentment can be shame and guilt.

It is of course possible to try to imagine a world in which resentment is felt, but not indignation. This is the world of a moral solipsist. It is barely a 'conceptual possibility'. Such an individual would have to imagine himself being a privileged centre of the moral universe. In general, the reasoning done above with regard to resentment can be paraphrased for the cases of its analogues.

**THE ERRORS OF THE PESSIMIST AND OF THE OPTIMIST.** The optimist does not realise that a vital element of our practices is lost when punishments are confined to improvement of the future. Condemnation and responsibility are absent from the optimist's picture, and that is how the optimist is exposed to the attacks of the pessimist. Yet the pessimist demands from us to accept metaphysical commitments in return for restoring the missing elements (depending on the kind of the pessimist, this acceptance is either taken at face value, or else leads to a contradiction, a *reductio ad absurdum*).

The pessimist's demand can be resisted if we remember that reactive attitudes cannot be given up. Or rather, they can be give up, but only on the pain of abolishing human society as a whole. The attitudes themselves are the ultimate fact that grounds social practices such as punishment.