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# CAN IT BE OR FEEL RIGHT TO HATE? ON THE APPROPRIATENESS AND FITTINGNESS OF HATRED

**ABSTRACT**

What exactly is wrong with hating others? However deep-seated the intuition, when it comes to spelling out the reasons for why hatred is inappropriate, the literature is rather meager and confusing. In this paper, I attempt to be more precise by distinguishing two senses in which hatred is inappropriate, a moral and a non-moral one. First, I critically discuss the central current proposals defending the possibility of morally appropriate hatred in the face of serious wrongs or evil perpetrators and show that they are all based on a problematic assumption, which I call the 'reality of evil agents assumption'. I then turn to the issue of non-moral emotional appropriateness and sketch a novel, focus-based account of fittingness. Next, I outline the distinctive affective intentionality of hatred, suggesting that hatred, unlike most other antagonistic emotions, has an overgeneralizing and indeterminate affective focus. Against this background, I argue that hatred cannot be fitting. Due to the indeterminacy of its focus, hatred fails to pick out those evaluative features of the intentional object that would really matter to the emoters. I close with some tentative remarks on the possibility of appropriate hatred towards corporate or group agents.

## Introduction

Are there any circumstances under which it may be right to hate others? And even if hatred may not be morally justified, might there still be a sense in which hatred is not just an understandable reaction but indeed 'feels right'? These are the two central questions I wish to address in this paper. Intuitively, it never seems quite right to hate, and the centuries long history of religious and moral prohibitions against hatred, up to contemporary political legislations against hate-speech and hate-crime, seem to corroborate this intuition. With very few exceptions from the philosophical tradition and a handful contemporary authors, philosophers tend to share this intuition. I will not contest this intuition either, hence my position will be conservative in this regard: Against the

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few dissidents who aim to carve out a place for justified hatred, even if only a tightly delimited one, and whom I critically discuss below, I too will argue that it can never be right to harbor hatred. But what exactly is wrong about hatred? However broad the consensus, when it comes to spelling out the reasons for why hatred is inappropriate, the literature is rather meager and often confusing.

Here, I aim to be more precise and discuss what exactly it is that makes hatred an inappropriate affective reaction or attitude.[1] Adapting D'Arms' and Jacobson's (2000) seminal proposal, I shall distinguish between two different senses of inappropriateness, a broadly normative or moral and a non-moral one. In light of this distinction, the above two guiding questions can be accordingly rendered already somewhat more precise: First, the question is whether there is any relevant moral sense in which it may be right to have the sentiment, while the second – which has been virtually off the radar in discussions on the appropriateness of hatred – is whether the sentiment can ever be 'fitting', or whether hatred can, in a sense to be further specified, accurately disclose its object as having those evaluative features that merit a hateful affective response.

I will argue that neither is the case: unlike many other emotions and sentiments, including antagonistic ones such as resentment, anger or contempt, standard forms of hatred are not only morally inappropriate but also, and necessarily so, unfitting. I say 'standard' forms, because I conjecture that there is a specific form of hatred that may turn out to be morally appropriate, namely hatred towards institutional or corporate entities and certain group agents. Importantly, as we shall see, the inappropriateness of hatred in the second sense of 'unfittingness' is not owed to normative or moral considerations or its disruptive social or political effects. Rather, it is due to the peculiar affective intentionality of hatred. And yet, the ways in which hatred is wrong (inappropriate) and in which it is not right (unfitting) mirror each other. Indeed, specifying the reason why hatred is essentially unfitting, allows specifying the reasons for why it is morally inappropriate.

This is how I will proceed: First, I will critically discuss some central current proposals which fathom the possibility of morally appropriate hatred in the face of serious wrongs or evil perpetrators. I will then turn to the issue of fittingness. Here, I will sketch an original, focus-based account of fittingness. Next, I will outline the distinctive affective intentionality of hatred, suggesting that hatred, unlike anger, contempt and many other antagonistic emotions, has an overgeneralizing and ultimately indeterminate affective focus. Against this background, I will argue that hatred – for the structural reason of the indeterminacy of its focus – cannot be fitting. Hatred fails to appropriately pick out those evaluative features of the intentional object that would really matter to the emoters. I will close with some very tentative remarks on the possibility of appropriate forms of collective and intergroup hatred.

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1    For reasons of simplicity, in this paper, I will not discuss in detail which affective phenomenon (emotion, sentiment, emotional disposition, etc.) hatred is. I will assume that hatred is an affective antagonistic attitude and determine its affective-intentional structure in the last section. For more on this issue, see Szanto 2020.

## 1. The Moral Appropriateness of Hatred, or Why Hatred Cannot Be Right

Let's then start with the issue of the appropriateness of emotions in terms of their moral, or, more broadly, socio-normative function. If we ask for the appropriateness of hatred in this sense, we want to know whether it can ever be ethical to hate, and if not, why it is morally wrong to have, maintain, let alone nourish hatred toward others. In the broader sense of socio-normative function we can also ask what, if anything, an emotion is socially, politically, etc. 'good for'. Regarding hatred, we may for example want to know whether it has any legitimate corrective or retributive social or political function, as many other hostile emotions like anger, blame, resentment, indignation or contempt.

Now, there are only very few philosophers who want to reserve a place for morally justified or appropriate forms of hatred. In fact, there are altogether not more than a handful of authors who address the issue of the appropriateness of hatred explicitly, although the literature has been recently growing. And it is probably no coincidence that almost all who engage in this discussion endorse a fairly liberal stance, arguing for the rationality or moral defensibility of hatred, albeit only under very special circumstances.[2] However, it seems to me that the moral justification of certain forms of hatred relies in most cases on an equally liberal approach to demarcate hatred from cognate but distinct hostile emotions, such as anger, resentment, moral outrage or contempt.

But such a liberal approach proves problematic, since it blurs the familiar and decisive distinction between hostile emotions such as anger or resentment on the one hand, and hatred, on the other: whereas the former are affective reactions to specific harms or particular actions issuing, and typically do not target the wrongdoer as such (I resent your betrayal, not necessarily you as such), hatred is directed globally at persons, or personal traits, ideologies or persons as proxies for social groups (I come back to that latter point in sect. 2). Anger, resentment or contempt, and hatred also have very different goals: in the former cases, the aim is to signal wrongs to others with a view to corrective measures, alleviating the specific negative features or actions issuing from the wrongdoer, whereas in hatred, the aim is a total elimination of or seclusion from the target.[3] I shall show that most defenders of the morality of hatred, while they *principally* acknowledge the importance of these distinctions either overtly or covertly, ultimately fail to account for them.

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2    With different reasons for defending hatred in certain cases as morally permissible or even demanded, the following authors, most of whom I discuss below in some detail, hold such liberal positions: Murphy, Hampton 1988; Elster 2004; Brudholm 2008, 2020; Brudholm, Johansen Schepelern 2018; Murphy 2016, and most recently Brogaard 2020. For the only account I am aware of that explicitly argues *against* the appropriateness of hatred from a philosophy of emotions perspective (beyond Schmid 2020, whom I also discuss below), see Vendrell Ferran forthcoming.
3    There are, however, intriguing dynamics between hatred and these hostile emotions, and in particular contempt and resentment. Indeed, though these latter emotions are

## 1. Moral Hatred? The Retributive Idea

Among those who cautiously aim at a rehabilitation of the moral value of certain forms of hatred, Jeffrey Murphy and Gene Hampton stand out. In a series of individually authored papers, conjoined in their book *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Murphy and Hampton 1988), they make the case for what Murphy calls "retributive" and Hampton "moral hatred". Murphy claims that there are certain grave circumstances, where hatred against ultra-abusive perpetrators (torturers, rapists, racist murderers, etc.), is not only psychologically understandable but can, albeit only "in principle", be a morally appropriate response to the harm. This is the gist of the retributive idea of moral hatred. Let's look at it more closely.

Most generally, morally appropriate forms of retributive hatred amount to a justified desire that perpetrators of harm get the punishment they morally deserve. Accordingly, the important point is to specify the sense in which the harm is of *moral* relevance, or a *wrong* (ibid.: 52). Wrongs are harms, in which victims are harmed in the sense of being "morally injured" (Murphy and Hampton 1988: chap. 1). Moral injury issues not from mere "wrongdoings [that] threaten or produce physical or psychological damage, or damage to our careers, interests or families" (ibid.: 43). As Hampton points out, victims are not merely "insulted" or "demeaned", "in the sense that [they are] forced to endure treatment" that they – subjectively – perceive as "too low" for them. The sort of moral injury that merits, and may justify, hatred, is such that the victim is "degraded" or "diminished" in the stronger sense of "literally lowered in value" (ibid.: 45). As Hampton specifies, a person A literally degrades, and hence wrongs, another person B, if A intentionally treats B "in a way that is objectively demeaning" or "disrespectful of [B's] worth" (ibid.: 52).

Hampton marks off hatred that responds to such moral injury and may hence be morally justified ("*moral hatred*") from two other forms of hatred: a non-moral one, "*simple" hatred*, and an irrational one, "*malicious or spiteful hatred*".[4] Simple hatred is "a strong aversion" towards a person or an object, which are "perceived as profoundly unpleasant", and where the emotional response is "accompanied by the wish to see the odious thing removed or eliminated" (ibid.: 60–61). As most philosophers of hatred, Hampton rightly points to the essential link between the aversive emotional response and its telos to physically eliminate or socially exclude the target (I come back to that shortly). But by contending that non-personal entities such as spinach or the weather can be intentional objects of hatred properly speaking, her account flies in the face of most philosophers of hatred, with whom I for one side also.

always triggered by, and typically also only target, specific deeds or features of others, if suitably enough repeated, they can eventually encompass the target's overall personality and thus become entangled with hatred. See also Landweer 2020, and regarding the interconnections between forms of disparagement and hatred, Szanto 2021.

4    For a recent original and alternative taxonomy of different forms of hatred, including normative ones, see Vendrell Ferran forthcoming.

Be it as it may, malicious or spiteful hatred is different from simple hatred in this regard: it can only be directed towards persons, not towards physical entities, but neither towards social facts or actions or deeds committed by a person (e.g., crime). It amounts to a personal animosity, that "one tends to feel towards those who have personally brought harm to one (where that harm may or may not be a moral wrong)" (ibid.: 61). Moreover, it nurses grudge against the wrongdoer, and spite or malice when she in turn is harmed or demeaned. As such, the telos of this form of hatred is not so much the elimination as the diminishing of the (self-)worth of the wrongdoer and the competitive advantage in terms of power or status that one gains by this.[5] According to Hampton, malicious hatred is typically preceded by resentment and strategically used, when resentment is of no avail to restore one's own battered self-worth (see ibid.: 62). But even in this "strategic" or instrumental sense, malicious hatred is not appropriate, since it becomes eventually a self-defeating and hence irrational strategy, analogous to Nietzsche's (or Scheler's) account of Ressentiment, as Hampton rightly argues. In that sense then malicious hatred is a "wrong" or a "vice" (ibid.: 78), albeit, *pace* Murphy's later characterization (ibid.: 88), not in the moral sense, as precisely moral hatred.

Moral hatred, for Hampton, responds not to the moral injustice one suffers from another person and targets in the first instance not the perpetrator as such but, rather, the immorality that this person embraces. As Hampton puts it, it "is an aversion to someone who has identified himself with an immoral cause or practice, prompted by moral indignation and accompanied by the wish to triumph over him and his cause or practice in the name of some fundamental moral principle or objective, most notably justice" (ibid.: 61). As we shall see, this distinction between hating an evil person as such or her evil character, on the one hand, and hating her evil actions or immoral principles on the other, will turn out to be decisive for the issue of the moral appropriateness of hatred. For, Hampton, however, this distinction is not as clear-cut as it seems (and as it is for other authors). Though moral hatred does not primarily target "the person so much as the immoral principles with which he has identified himself", these wrong principles "get entangled up with" and corrupt her character, such that hating the former means hating the latter (ibid.).

This entanglement notwithstanding, moral hatred is instrumentally and morally appropriate or "potent" not because it targets the evilness of a person, aims to hurt her or diminish her worth – even if, like malicious hatred, and due to the entanglement of the wrongdoer's character with the immoral cause she embraces, moral hatred, too, might be accompanied by a wish to "bring down" the "vainglorious status" of the opponent and "is delighted if she succeeds" (ibid.: 82). But the key difference between moral and malicious hatred is that the moral hater's reasons for feeling so are not based on self-defeating, vicious spite, nor does the moral hater aim at "bringing down a person some

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5    For an alternative view regarding this issue, see Vendrell Ferran forthcoming.

ranking ladder". Rather, the moral hater's reasons to hate are based on more noble, and precisely moral, grounds. As Hampton explains:

> the moral hater also desires to hurt [the wrongdoer] as a way of deterring his evil cause. [However,] the punishment becomes a way not only to defeat the wrongdoer in order to annul the message of his crime but also to express opposition to (and deter) this enemy of (what she takes to be) morality. And she takes satisfaction in the wrongdoer's suffering, not only because she welcomes the way in which it annuls the demeaning message of his crime, but also because she sees it as a personal defeat for this enemy of morality. (Murphy, Hampton 1988: 146–147)

Importantly, Hampton maintains that all this is compatible with a "high respect" for the wrongdoer as a person or "as the *opponent* of the moral cause". Indeed, "as in any normal competition", she claims that "the more they respect the hated ones *as* opponents [...], the more they enjoy prevailing over them, especially when their victory is for something as important as morality" (ibid.: 81).

Now, Murphy aims to show that what he conceives of as "retributive hatred" "combines elements of [Hampton's] moral and malicious hatred". For Murphy, the retribution for moral injury typically contains the "desire to hurt another, to bring him low" (i.e., the spiteful element); but, in contrast to Hampton, this "is not [...] always motivated by the competitive desire to appear better than that person in some way." Rather, Murphy suggests, "such a desire is motivated by feelings that are at least partly retributive in nature – e.g., feelings that another person's current level of well-being is undeserved or ill-gotten (perhaps at one's own expense) and that a reduction in that well-being will simply represent his getting his just deserts". This reduction aims not at bringing down the other "on some morally irrelevant scale of comparison" but at restoring "the proper moral balance of whatever goods are in question" (ibid.: 89).

Retributive hatred may then not only be "therapeutic for the victim" but, indeed, morally appropriate (ibid.: 90). Yet, Murphy is quick to emphasize that it is only "in principle vindicated and justified". In order for retributive hatred to be "ever *in fact* justified", Murphy acknowledges that we would need a "pure and clear case" of evil. But given that we might "never be in a position to know if we are confronted with one" such clear case – Hampton's 'pure rottenness' (see below) – it remains a "bad *policy* to exhibit the [hateful] response" (ibid.: 96). Murphy brings to bear a series of arguments to show that if retributive hatred becomes a routine response to, in fact, moral wrongs, it poses a number of problems, and hence must be rigorously "restrained" (108); all things considered, it ought better not be endorsed. Drawing on Kant, for instance, he points to our limited capacities to conclusively judge that "we know enough [of the evilness of another] to hate" and thus cautions against hate on *epistemological* grounds (ibid.: 99). He also mentions Kant's *moral* cautions against hate of evil, referring to one's own moral imperfection or impurity, and Rawls' idea of "luck on the natural and social lottery" (ibid.: 100–101). Developing thoughts from such various authors as Hegel, Nietzsche, Spinoza and Adam Smith, he provides further *moral-psychological* reasons "why persons may sometimes fail

to act out their retributive hatred": the "impossibility" or the "too costliness" "to get  even", without corrupting or "consuming" oneself,[6] and also points to considerations of "moral decency", which imposes that the victim ought rather "settle for less than perfect or no retribution at all." (ibid.: 104–107). To conclude, even if justified, retributive hatred can never be morally or socially required, nor virtuous to bear, and, in fact, almost everything speaks against it.

Do Murphy or Hampton then succeed in restituting the moral appropriateness of hatred? My answer mirrors Murphy's caution and is a qualified 'no'. On the one hand, they do succeed to show that we must distinguish in a more nuanced way than usual potentially appropriate from clearly inappropriate forms of hatred; on the other hand, they both fail to convince of the need to introduce a concept of moral hatred that would be sufficiently demarcated from other morally justified, and indeed sometimes morally required, antagonistic affective stances such as moral disgust, anger, indignation or resentment.[7]

More specifically, Murphy is right that it is very understandable in certain circumstances to desire to hate; and it is certainly also true that "one may not be a (morally) bad person" in doing so, or that it may not be a "vice of character" as Murphy in a later essay (2016) claims; still, he concedes that eventually it morally and psychologically corrupts individuals and societies if acting upon the desire to hurt the wrongdoer in retributive hatred becomes a norm.[8] Moreover, for all that morally matters, Murphy actually discards any appropriate function of hatred. Finally, all he says about it seems rather to concern the moral psychology of hatred and the socio-moral 'policies' that we ought to consider in restraining its use than the morality of the sentiment properly speaking. For deciding upon the morality of the sentiment, the issue is whether hatred can appropriately be directed at evil actions as distinct from the evilness of the perpetrators (see more below) or track some moral principles above and beyond the injury suffered by the victim (as Hampton, in turn, points out).

Hampton for her part fails to adequately account for the distinction between the (im)moral properties of the principles or actions, on the one hand, and the character or personality features of the hated ones, on the other. Part of the reason has to do with her use of very unfortunate metaphors here: Not only does she compare the mentioned entanglement of the wrongdoer's personality and her immoral principles with the "way a cancer can get mixed up with the healthy cells of one's body" (ibid.); she also describes the eventually corrupted, or 'evil', character as of persons who "seem irredeemably 'rotten'",

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6    Similarly, Brudholm (and as we shall see Scheler) cautions: "even appropriately directed hatred and anger damage or brutalize their holder. If this is plausible, it creates an additional problem for the ethics of urging other people to hate". (Brudholm 2020: 83)
7    The literature on the pro-social and pro-moral or normative functions of antagonistic emotions is vast by now, see for references Szanto and Slaby 2020, and a recent further article Wallace 2019.
8    Murphy specifies in this essay (2016) again the restrictions on the part of the hater, but also warns that even if appropriately constrained to morally justified cases, retributive hatred doesn't make hater a more virtuous person either of course.

or "totally without goodness" (e.g., Hitler or Stalin; ibid.: 80–81). And it is these cases that she conceives as the paradigm targets of the most extreme form of moral hatred, a form of hatred that "comes in degrees", according to degree of the graveness of the assessment of the moral status of the person, her "rot", as she puts it (ibid.: 81). Moreover, Hampton plays down the fact that the proper telos of hatred is really to eliminate the target, as she acknowledges for "simple hatred". But this telos is arguably incompatible with "respecting the opponent", as if in a "competition" or match for the "moral excellence" (ibid.: 81).

It is these two latter issues which Hampton fails to adequately tackle–the telos of hatred to eliminate its target and the alleged evilness of its target–that I now want to look at. I shall show how they need to be treated carefully, as they turn out to be decisive on whether or not we accept the moral appropriateness of hatred.

## 2. The Reality of Evil Problem

In a recent paper, Brudholm (2020) shows how these two issues are interlinked but need to be treated separately for assessing the appropriateness of hatred. He starts by referring to the following Aristotelian definition of hate by Elster: "Hatred is the emotion that A feels toward B if he believes that B has an evil character. The action-tendency is to cause B to cease to exist or otherwise be rendered harmless, for instance by permanent expulsion" (Elster 2004: 230). Brudholm suggests that Elster's definition is useful for salvaging a sense in which hatred can be rationally and morally appropriate[9] for two reasons: first, "because it does not presume that hatred is always a vice or always a matter of prejudice", and, second, because it shows that hatred is distinct from all other affective responses, in that the belief of the evilness of the target and the desire or action-tendency to eliminate the perceived evil, need to be treated separately (Brudholm 2020: 79). Now, the key point for Brudholm is that only if we take into account these two characteristics (the negative appraisal of the target as evil and the wish to eliminate it), can we capture the distinctiveness of hatred. For, as Brudholm points out,

> it is possible to believe that B has an evil character and *not* wish that B would cease to exist (one may feel fear or horror or maybe compassion). And it is possible to participate in acts of elimination or expulsion without believing that the target has an evil character (recall, for example, the works of Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman). (Brudholm 2020: 79)

I contend that Brudholm is right here. But this flies in the face of Elster's – and Hampton's – characterization of the hated *person* as evil, or the reference to the wrongdoer' evil *character*.[10]

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9    See also his other work to this effect, Brudholm 2008; Brudholm, Johansen Schepelern 2018.

10    Note that Brudholm also holds that there are forms of hatred which "appear" or are "located" "beyond subjects", such as hate speech, (hateful) laws, institution,

Similar problems arise for the most recent defense of the appropriateness and rationality of so-called "critical hatred" proposed by Brogaard (2020). In her book-length analysis of hatred, Brogaard boldly aims to pave the way for conceiving of hatred as a potential "gateway to moral vision" (Brogaard 2020: xii). She distinguishes the "deplorable and insupportable" form of "dehumanizing hatred" (ibid.: 113) from hatred without dehumanization or "critical hatred".[11] Dehumanizing hatred fundamentally disrespects its targets as fellow human beings and conceives of them as *ab ovo* excluded from participation in the moral community. This type of hatred is typically all-consuming, all-destructive, precisely "inhuman", and "pointless" (ibid.: 92); moreover, it is also irrational, namely in the basic psychological sense that it "interfere[s] with one's ability to function optimally" (ibid.: 39, 112). Interestingly, Brogaard claims that dehumanizing haters dehumanize themselves by virtue of harboring a dehumanizing stance and their according "inability or unwillingness to play by the rules of society". Thus, they "become non-participants in the moral community" themselves and "are in need of sanction, treatment, or training" (ibid.: 93–94).

Markedly different is critical hatred. According to Brogaard it is both morally and socio-normatively appropriate and "helps monitor and safeguard" shared (moral and non-moral) normative ideals and values; if "temperate", it is also reasons-responsive or rational. Brogaard's argument for the appropriateness of such critical hate is based on the following two assumptions: first, she holds that hatred is fitting, when it properly targets and reacts to the hated subjects' "evil", "malevolence", "wickedness" or "depravity" as the source of the wrongdoing in question, and not just to her wronging and wrong *actions* (ibid.: 112–113). Indeed, she argues that only hatred is fitting in the face of extreme forms of agent-depravity – not other reactive attitudes such as anger, blame, indignation or resentment, which would not be a strong enough response. And the reason for that has to do with her second assumption, the claim that the evil or depravity of the targeted agents "reflects" their dehumanizing arrogance and "abdominal beliefs about hierarchies of humans".

Critical hatred, according to Brogaard, functions as an expression of a "form of disrespect for the [evildoer's] arrogance [...] rather than merely being a disapproval of the wrongful act". If the harms are of a dehumanizing kind, issuing

monuments, violence, or a whole society (ibid.: 80); it is not quite clear whether Brudholm means by this that hatred can be directed not only at *individual* persons, but also at institutional or social entities, which supervene, nonetheless upon (groups of) persons (which is a valid claim in my view; see Szanto 2020), or, whether he means that hatred can be both *issuing from* and *targeting non-personal* institutional entities or social facts (which I would reject). At any rate, as we shall see in the last section, accounting for the possibility of institutional or group agents being proper targets of hatred is of central importance for the appropriateness of hatred.

11    For another influential account of *non*-dehumanizing, but not necessarily critical, forms of hatred and, in particular, misogynistic hatred, see Manne 2017. For careful further work discussing the dehumanization mechanisms at work (and not at work) in hatred, see Brudholm and Lang 2020, and Haslam and Murphy 2020.

from the hatred of the evil perpetrator, any other affective reaction, say, blame, would just "silently approve" them (Brogaard, 2020, 113). Critical hatred is thus an appropriate, and indeed the only appropriate, response to dehumanizing hatred. But Brogaard goes a step further. She holds that even in the face of any "significant" – but not necessarily morally relevant – offense in interpersonal relationships, where clearly no dehumanization takes place, critical hatred may also be appropriate, since it represents a more "effective means of engendering guilt" and behavioral change in the target than blame or resentment (ibid.). Unfortunately, she fails to provide concrete examples for the relevant sort of offenses, and in fact, throughout the book, her numerous real-life examples are only illustrative of the dehumanizing haters that critical hatred, in her view, can best counteract.

The function of critical hatred vis-à-vis *non*-dehumanizing hatred seems also problematic if we follow – as I for one do – a broadly accepted definition of hatred as precisely not aiming at specific corrective measures as other reactive attitudes but ultimately at the social eradication or even physical elimination of its target. Again, it seems to me that hatred thus conceived, and whether or not critical or tempered, risks losing its distinctive nature compared to other, appropriate – and sufficient –reactive attitudes. As we shall see in the next section, hatred is a lingering, often life-long held and little malleable affective attitude, and as such it typically poisons relationships; more often than not, the expression of episodic anger or concrete blame would rather be restorative.

But even if we grant that the proper aim of hatred is to express disrespect rather than a more extreme form of exclusion (which again risks aligning it all-too squarely with other reactive attitudes), there is another, and more deeply problematic assumption in Brogaard's account: the assumption that the targets of appropriate hatred as such, or their character, are deprived, malevolent or evil.

Call this 'the evil agent assumption'. It underlies her more fundamental suggestion to the effect that critical hate is the only appropriate "form of disrespect" towards *dehumanizers'* deep-rooted and total disrespect of others (and which I find otherwise intriguing). To be sure, Brogaard aims, more explicitly than Hampton or Elster, to underscore her evil agent assumption. But, in my view, she fails to do so. After a brief dismissal of the so-called 'situationist' challenge regarding any stable and substantial character traits, without much argument, we end with Brogaard's presumption that there are "good" and there are "bad people", and that the – vague enough – colloquial term 'acting out of character', irrespective of fortunate or unfortunate situations, has a valid sense (ibid.: 110–111). But that there is such a valid sense has been seriously challenged, and not just by situationists or by critics of Arendt's notorious 'banality of evil' discussion, which Brogaard too reviews, to wit, in a subchapter entitled *The Reality of Evil* (ibid.: 169–177).[12]

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12    See for overviews of 'evil-skepticism' Russell 2006 and Schmid 2020. Brogaard's argument heavily relies on a variety of social psychological and psychopathological research, purportedly establishing that there are "sinister inclinations of the 10–15 percent of the general population who have dark personality traits" (ibid.: 175) of the kind

### 3. The Argument from Evil Agents versus Evil Acts

At this point then we face the serious problem, lurking behind the above discussed accounts all along: namely how to account for the perceived 'evil' in hatred of evil. In particular, the issue is how to distinguish between hatred of the evilness of a person or agent as such, and specific evil features or her allegedly evil actions – a distinction that Brogaard too acknowledges.

In his incisive paper, *Hate of Evil*, Schmid (2020) addresses this problem head-on. He starts with the observation that Aristotle and Aquinas viewed hate of evil indeed as "virtuous" or "praiseworthy" (see for references Schmid 2000: 564). But hatred, according to Schmid, unlike, say, anger or indignation, no longer figures among the appropriate condemnations of moral wrongs. We have just seen that not all agree today, but Schmid's point seems still to hold, if we apply the robust conceptualization of hatred of evil that Schmid endorses, and which I share: namely the one which conceives of hatred as an "absolute enmity" that "pushes towards annihilation and eradication" of an "evildoer" (ibid.).

Schmid's sustained argument against hatred of evil, and by the same token moral or critical hatred, proceeds as follows: First, he maintains that hatred, rather than "*recognizing* moral wrongs", only "*makes*" or aggravates evil – indeed, evil is just "the excrescence of hatred" (ibid.). Here, Schmid briefly mentions the classical phenomenologist Scheler, who argues that hatred – rather than having any corrective or retributive function – "ideologically distorts our moral concepts of true righteousness" (ibid.).[13] Moreover, hatred makes

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pathological narcissists, people with borderline personality disorder or psychopaths exhibit, and which, at their most extreme, are manifest in serial rapists, genocidal killers, etc. For obvious reasons, I will refrain here from discussing whether hatred really is an appropriate, let alone the 'best', response to psychopathological disorders of the dehumanizing and violent kind at stake, and instead discuss the issue of hatred of evil from a more general, moral-psychological point of view. Brogaard also provides an extended discussion of (dehumanizing) hate itself as a character trait (chap. 4, 115–156), but this discussion doesn't furnish much independent ammunition to her anti-situationist core assumption regarding the 'reality of evil' either. For more critical remarks on Brogaard's account, see below in the footnotes 28 and 29.

13    It's worth looking at the passages where Scheler shows *why* hatred actually fails to grasp moral wrongs (as the evil they are), a point that he elaborates in his *Sympathy* (1913/26), and not in his *Ressentiment* book (1912/1915). For Scheler, the reason has to do with the specific (lack of) affective intentionality of hatred (and love). According to Scheler, hatred lacks the intentionality of so-called "value-feelings". Rather, hatred is a sort of immediate affective reaction to its object, thus lacking the function of other proper emotions (or value-feelings), namely that of assessing the value of the intentional object or a making a "value-*judgement*" (*Wert*-beurteilung) (Scheler 1913/1926, 151–152). Moreover, Scheler mentions another important reason why hatred poisons moral discourse and behavior. Hatred "remains fixated" (*verharrt*) on its targets and objects, and the attitude will not change, even in the face of eventual praiseworthy actions of the other. This resonates with the idea, stressed also by most contemporary authors, that hatred doesn't aim at correcting others' behavior or character (ibid.: 150). I have discussed this mechanism in Szanto 2020 in terms of the tendency of hatred to 'sediment' and 'habitualize' itself in the affective lives of individuals (and groups).

evil worse, insofar as it continuously devaluates its object or *seeks out* their allegedly hateworthy features. Ultimately, hatred thus leads to what Scheler (1912/19), similarly to Hampton's Nietzschean conception, elaborates as the self-deceptive affective mechanism of *Ressentiment*.[14]

Schmid then critically discusses various attempts in the wake of recent "evil-revivalism" (Russel 2006) to "whitewash" evil. He argues that all attempts to vouchsafe a sense of the concept of evil that is not reducible to other "conceptions of moral wrongs, such as 'bad', 'mean' or 'unfair'" fail (ibid.: 565). Next, Schmid considers Aristoteles' and Aquinas' ideas on the 'generalizing' tendency of hatred, whereby, say, hate of crime, generalizes to hatred of those committing crime. Schmid shows that this idea doesn't help hate of evil defenders either, since such Aristotelian 'generalizing' hatred doesn't target the wrongdoers as (evil) members of an evil kind or class (criminals), but specific *kinds of actions* (criminal behavior) (ibid.: 568–569). Against this background, Schmid suggests taking a closer look at the distinction between *agent*-hatred (or hatred of individual persons) and hatred of *actions*. Could this offer ammunition to defenders of the morality of hate of evil? Schmid's negative conclusion builds on considerations from Kolnai and Augustine, who (like Hampton) concede that this distinction is not always clear-cut. Sometimes people act out of their character or based on 'who they are' (ibid.: 571), and sometimes it is just this that corrupts their actions. But still, what the distinction between agents and their actions shows is that while hating others for what ('evil') they *do* (and pleading for capital punishment on that basis) is a morally altogether different (though not necessarily justified) matter from hating them for whatever features they *have*, or what they *are* (as in racial, etc., hate crime).[15]

I agree with Schmid on all counts in his rejection of morally appropriate hate of evil, and indeed on the indefeasibility of the very concept of a hate of *evil*. In particular, I think that Schmid makes a crucial move in the debate by systematically distinguishing agent- and action-targeted hatred. But Schmid surprisingly sidelines an additional, and I take it, one of the core, reasons why that distinction doesn't provide enough grist for the mill of defenders of moral hatred. I'm thinking of one[16] of the core features of the generalization involved in hatred, namely the global way it devaluates the target as hateworthy or evil. As we have seen, hatred targets not specific, allegedly evil, deeds or characteristics of agents, which it aims to reform or change, but totally condemns agents as unchangeably bad ('evil'), and aims at their elimination.[17] Now, my point is

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14    Indeed, as Scheler notes in the *Sympathy*-book (Scheler 1913/1926: 150), the more the other is hated the more her fortune will make the hater despair, a mirror-mechanism of malicious hatred or spite in Ressentiment.

15    On Aristotle, and in particular Aquinas' and Kolnai's, cogent but still different accounts of the collective generalization tendency in hatred, see more in my paper Szanto 2020; see also the incisive analysis in Hadreas 2007.

16    I will discuss another feature of this generalization in the next section.

17    In the next section, I will also specify this feature in terms of the blurry focus of hatred, an aspect of which is that the targets are stereotypically generalized, which Schmid too discusses.

that even if we were to distinguish forms of moral condemnation that are ac-
tion- from those that are agent-targeted, only the latter would count as hate
(granted, as we should, that hatred never only targets specific actions). Still,
the general conclusion of Schmid's argument holds: In standard cases, hatred
of evil ought be dismissed as an appropriate (moral) concept, since it always
"implicates in a particularly problematic stereotypical way" hate of personal
agents (ibid.: 572).

As we will see in the concluding section, Schmid doesn't stop short at this
negative verdict. Rather, he ponders the possibility of another, morally justi-
fied, form of hatred. However, such hatred is not person-directed but rather
targets corporate or group agents. But before we turn to the issue of moral-
ly justified corporate hatred, I want to discuss why standard (non-corporate)
forms of hatred cannot be fitting either.

## II. The Fittingness of Hatred, or Why Hatred Cannot Feel Right

### 1. Emotional Fittingness: The Standard Picture

The fittingness of an emotion, we heard, is orthogonal to its appropriateness
in terms of any normative or moral considerations. As we will see in a mo-
ment, there are different ways of how to cash out exactly what fittingness is,
depending on whether one endorses some realism or neo-sentimentalism about
values. In fact, the very motivation of introducing the notion of fittingness of
emotions stems from the aim to disambiguate the notion of appropriateness in
the core thesis of the metaethical theory of neo-sentimentalism, a thesis that
D'Arms and Jacobson call the "response dependency thesis" (RDT). According
to RDT, there is an essential normative dependency between evaluative con-
cepts or properties and emotional responses, such that "to think that X has
some evaluative property Φ is to think it appropriate to feel F in response to
X" (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000b: 729). For example, to think that your behav-
ior is shameful is to think that you, *rightly*, *ought* to be ashamed of it, where
'rightly' means that your feeling ashamed is the appropriate response to your
behavior or that it is "merited" and "rational" in the face of it (see D'Arms and
Jacobson 2000a: 70).

But, to repeat, independent of one's metaphysical or metaethical creden-
tials (neo-sentimentalist, value-realist or other), and however one spells out
fittingness, the assessment of the fittingness of an emotion must be treated
altogether separately from the assessment of its morality or normative func-
tion. Indeed, as D'Arms and Jacobson put in their stage-setting paper, tellingly
entitled *The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions*, it would
constitute a "fallacious inference" – i.e., committing the moralistic fallacy – if
one were "to infer the claim that it would be morally objectionable to feel F
toward X, that therefore F is not a fitting response to X" (D'Arms and Jacob-
son 2000a: 75). If this is correct–and I initially follow their assumption–ha-
tred could in principle be a fitting attitude, even if we establish that there is

no morally appropriate hatred or that hatred has no normative (retributive, political or other) function.[18]

To begin understanding what fittingness is, it is helpful to revisit the different senses of appropriateness introduced by D'Arms and Jacobson. Above and beyond the distinction between moral appropriateness and non-moral fittingness they distinguish two further notions of appropriateness, establishing a fourfold distinction:

> One can ask a prudential question, whether it is good for you to feel F; or a moral question, whether it is right to feel F; or one can ask the all-in question of practical reason, whether F is what to feel, all things considered. But none of these questions is equivalent to the question of whether F is fitting in the sense relevant to whether its object X is Φ. (D'Arms, Jacobson 2000a: 71)

First, then, we have appropriateness in terms of prudential considerations. For example, you'd better not be overtly amused about your supervisor's embarrassing presentation when you need her support for a hiring process. It's simply not very clever to do so. In a limited instrumental sense, such prudential considerations are considerations in the light of your practical reasoning about your emotional behavior, given specific circumstances and your practical goals. You don't need to listen to full-blown 'reasons of the heart'; it will be enough to appropriately regulate and modulate your emotional experience and maybe just to modulate your emotional expression and still covertly delight in your musings. We have a more robust sense of practical rationality in cases where the question of whether you should better (not) have and express certain emotions goes beyond purely prudential considerations and involve also moral ones. This is the third question from the quote, or whether, all things considered, i.e., moral and prudential 'things', a certain emotion is one you ought (better not) to feel. An illustrative case in point would be to laugh at a funeral

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18    Notice that D'Arms and Jacobson don't mention hatred at any point in their paper. They discuss the fittingness of several other emotions and sentiments, including moral and social emotions such as envy or shame, as well as emotions that are responses to evaluative properties that are normally considered to be morally irrelevant, such as being fearsome or funny. In one of their articles, D'Arms and Jacobson (2010c) explicitly state that the fitting attitude theory of values "does not aspire" to account for just any evaluative properties or "to give an all-encompassing theory of value or an account of generic goodness", but rather of very specific ones (listed above) and which they call, because of their essential connection to particular sentiments upon which they depend, "sentimental values" (2010c: 587). (Whether funniness is indeed morally irrelevant or neutral has of course been contested, most recently by An and Kaiyuan 2021). I, in turn, will gloss over the fittingness of particular other sentiments and emotions and focus on hatred, which is, as we shall see, distinctive in being structurally unfitting. It seems that hatred only shares this with Ressentiment. I take Ressentiment, however, not to be an emotion or sentiment, but rather an emotional mechanism transforming certain initial emotions or sentiments (shame and envy) into others, notably into contempt and hatred. For a cognate but different notion of fanaticism as an "affective mechanism", see my paper Szanto forthcoming.

of a common friend, when somebody slips and falls into the grave. If you are inclined to be amused by slapstick, you might find this situation tragicomically funny, but it still seems both wrong to be amused and also not reasonable. At the very least, you will be embarrassed or ashamed of yourself and you might eventually lose your friends, who will likely – and arguably rightly – find you distasteful, disrespectful, immature or uncontrolled.

'Feeling the right thing', morally speaking, sits in-between these two types, purely instrumental and all-things-considered appropriateness. Sticking to the thorny issue of humor and amusement, and following D'Arms' and Jacobson's paradigm, consider a sexist or racist joke. Given ordinary (contemporary liberal, etc.) moral sentiments, it's certainly not appropriate to find such jokes funny, and yet, without being a misogynist or racist, you might do so. It's tricky what that means or what it implies, not just for a theory of the fittingness of emotions, but also for any theory of humor. And our non-misogynist or non-racist flies in the face of a standard neo-sentimentalist view on amusement, according to which a joke is not funny, if one has some (moral or other) reasons not to feel amused by it.[19] But be it as it may, there still seems to be at least something to the intuition that we can, and maybe should, distinguish between the funniness and the appropriateness of a joke (and so for other emotions). It is anyway this intuition that sets the stage for introducing the notion of fittingness for D'Arms and Jacobson.

What, then, is fittingness? For a start, consider what I have said at the beginning: fittingness concerns the question whether an emotion accurately presents its object as having the evaluative properties that the emotion pertains to disclose to the emoter. But this is still almost hopelessly vague. We can be somewhat more precise in following D'Arms and Jacobson and distinguish two dimensions of fittingness, namely concerning the "shape" and the "size" of an emotional reaction.

According to its *shape* an emotion is fitting if the object that the emotion appraises has the specific evaluative features that the emotion pertains to present.[20] According to its *size*, an emotion is fitting or unfitting if the emotional reaction is an overreaction or not. Regarding its shape, envy would be unfitting, for example, if you continue to envy the success of a person, when the success in question turns out to be a chimera of an imposter or the other is regarded unanimously by your peers as less successful than yourself. Regarding its size, the emotion is unfitting if your envy is overconsuming, such that it robs you of properly appreciating any other goods which you otherwise value dearly. Or your burning envy might simply be an "overreaction" in the sense that the

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19    See An and Kaiyuan 2021, who provide a helpful critical discussion of D'Arms' and Jacobson's paradigm case of morally inappropriate jokes as cases in point for distinguishing fittingness.
20    Below, I will specify what exactly I mean by 'object' and 'evaluative properties' in terms of the familiar distinction between the target, the formal object and the focus of emotions.

other's success really is just minimally bigger than yours, and your envious ruminations about petty advantages over you is by no means warranted. Now, envy seems to be already a complex enough emotion for assessing its fittingness in such simplified terms (see also D'Arms and Jacobson 2000a: 73–74), but hatred seems even more complex. What, then, could it mean that hatred is fitting according to its shape or size?

According to the standard picture presented so far, hatred would be a fitting response to a person or persons P in shape, if P, as such, as a whole person or group, would have the evaluative property (or, as I will say later, the formal object) of being hate-worthy or evil, and the hateful affective reaction would be proportional in size, as it were, to those properties.

But referring to the fittingness of hatred in terms of its *shape* surely doesn't help us further; not only because, as we have seen, it is highly controversial how to conceptualize the 'hate-worthiness' or 'evil' of a person. 'Evil' seems not to be a valid attribute or an informative ascription to a person as such, as there seems no fact of the matter to decide whether a given person is hateworthy as such. Finally, defining the fittingness of an emotion in terms of the object of emotion meriting the respective emotional response is dangerously circular[21], unless of course we presuppose a robust realism regarding evaluative properties–which then would or would not be instantiated in certain persons, irrespective of any according emotional response. But in the case of hatred, this seems even more problematic than for any other emotional response: it would ultimately boil down to claiming that some people, or people of a certain kind, or of certain types of deeds, etc. (e.g., rapists), have innate or unchangeable hateful properties as character traits, which again is a deeply problematic and unconvincing claim.

Maybe we should then rather focus on the considerations regarding the *size* of the hateful reaction, in order to assess its fittingness, and sidestep considerations of its shape. Unfortunately, this won't help either. Thus, we might, for instance, arguably question whether a burning, all-consuming, life-long harboring of hatred or even a vengeful act of murder are in any way proportional to some insult to one's 'honor' or some other minor harm issuing from the

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21    In critically discussing a series of related papers by D'Arms and Jacobson, Salmela (2014: 150–156) makes a similar point: "D'Arms' and Jacobson's recommended strategy to locate reasons of fit by articulating 'differences in how each emotion presents some feature of the world to us when we are in its grip' (D'Arms, Jacobson 2000b: 746) is unsatisfactory. Being in the grip of emotion does not guarantee that the subject is "in the right context with respect to the value in question" (D'Arms, Jacobson 2006: 114). Indeed, this seems to be the case only when the emotion is felt for reasons of the right kind. But if the right context and reasons of fit can be identified only interchangeably, the account remains uninformative and circular, or "elliptical" as D'Arms and Jacobson (ibid.) put it". (Salmela 2014: 156) For a related, succinct critical discussion of D'Arms' and Jacobson's account of fittingness as being ultimately underdetermined and running into analogous problems as perceptualist theories of emotions, when these latter assume that emotional experiences provide reasons to take our emotional evaluations at face value, see also Brady 2013: 114–116.

hated subject. But, in fact, one may wonder whether hatred can ever be proportionally fitting properly speaking, since hatred, as we have seen, ultimately aims for the social or physical elimination of the target. Hatred in this respect is again quite unlike garden-variety or 'simple' emotions such as the fear of a dog, but also unlike virtually all reactive attitudes and socio-moral emotions such as pride, shame, envy, resentment, indignation, hurt feelings, feelings of forgiveness or gratitude. For all these emotions, we can legitimately ask if they are proportional, and if not, readily criticize others' carelessness, oversensitivity, self-indulgence, hybris or other unproportional affective dispositions.

Having said this, as we shall see, an accordingly revised conception of the proportionality of the affective reaction, or fittingness in terms of 'size', will be an important element to consider when evaluating the (un)fittingness of hatred.

## 2. A Revised, Focus-based Account of Fittingness

Critics of the fittingness account of values and the according conception of the fittingness of emotions have pointed to a number of problems in the account. Chiefly among them figures the complaint that it is uninformative and, in particular, circular.[22] One of the little-mentioned, but I contend serious, worries has to do with the circularity charge; but the worry I have in mind goes beyond the usually mentioned charge that it is not clear how we could ever avoid the circularity in the standard account of fittingness, without covertly presupposing or overtly endorsing a rather robust, and as such metaphysically all-too costly version of value-realism.[23] Obviously, I cannot settle this issue here.

Instead, I want to reformulate and sharpen D'Arms and Jacobsen's notion of fittingness of emotion in a way that doesn't carry such unnecessary metaphysical burden. Against what might be called the 'formal object account of fittingness', I want to bring into relief, in broad-brushed strokes anyway, an alternative version, which might be called the 'focus-based account of fittingness'.

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22    See footnote above, as well as reviews of the discussion in Jacobson 2011, Deonna and Teroni 2012 (esp. Chap. 4) and Deonna and Teroni forthcoming.
23    Note that I am not claiming, nor do I want to just allege here, that D'Arms and Jacobson or any other rational sentimentalist would presume any form of value-realism. Quite the contrary, as we have seen, rational sentimentalism aims precisely at providing an alternative to a realist, response-*in*dependent, account of value. All I'm saying is that most attempts to solve the circularity problem of rational sentimentalism are at pains in eluding such realist presumptions, while remaining informative of how to assess the fittingness between our emotions and the evaluative properties they respond to (i.e., providing standards of fittingness), and for that reason, they typically just sidestep the issue. One telling passage of how this issue is side-stepped is a note by Brady (2013: 14) in his otherwise exemplarily thorough account of the epistemic role of emotions, where he raises "the large and difficult question of the nature of values" and value realism with regard to the rational sentimentalism of D'Arms and Jacobson—just to leave it at that. For one of the few helpful critical discussions of the fittingness attitude in relation to value-realism, see Deonna and Teroni 2012, who, to be sure, endorse a robust value-realism.

Specifically, I want to suggest defining the standards of fittingness neither by appeal to the evaluative properties of an emotion being ('objectively') thus-and-so (or 'shape'-fittingness), nor by appeal to the emotion's 'proportionality' in terms of the intensity or grade of the affective response to those properties (or 'size'-fittingness), and, which moreover, are neutral vis-à-vis any (neo-sentimentalist, Schelerian, or other) forms of value-realism.[24]

The general idea of the focus-based account of fittingness is this: In order to assess whether an emotion is fitting, we should not ask whether the object of the emotion has the evaluative properties that the emotion pertains to disclose, as the standard view has it; rather, we ought to assess whether the affective focus of an emotion picks out *those* evaluative properties of *that* object *that really matter to the subject* of the given emotion, to wit, 'matter' in a way that can, in turn, be assessed by looking at the emotional *commitment* that the subject has to the focus of the emotion. This is a subtle, but all-decisive difference, I contend. In order to appreciate the difference between the two formulations, however, we need to get a clear grip on the notion of the 'focus' of an emotion and the so-called 'focal commitment' of an emoter, notions that I borrow from the seminal work of Helm (see esp. Helm 2001, 2009, 2017).

To begin with, the focus of an emotion must be distinguished both from its target and its so-called 'formal object'. The target of an emotion is the object eliciting the emotional reaction (e.g., the hated person or group of persons), while the formal object is the evaluative property attributed to the target, and which individuates the given type of emotion, distinguishing it from other emotions that may be directed upon the same target (say 'dangerousness' or 'threat' in the case of fear, or, more controversially as we have seen, the alleged 'evilness' in the case of hatred). But, surely, not all dangerous objects are feared by all subjects or in all cases, and not all *ought* to be, rationally, feared either. To use the typical, and oversimplifying, toy-example: if the lion is behind bars in the zoo it ought not, and under normal circumstances will not, elicit fear, nor merit a fearful reaction. But formal objects of emotions are only 'formal' and need to gain some affective weight, as it were, so that the target object really *matters* for the emoter, is of emotional *import* or affectively *concerns* her.

And here is where the notion of 'focus' comes into play. The affective weight of a formal object is determined by how the target is carved out against the background of what matters to the emoter, and this is indicated precisely by an emotion's focus. The focus of an emotion can be characterized as the background

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24    Salmela helpfully formulates the essential connection between the notion of formal object of an emotion and fittingness and points out how the very notion of formal object of an emotion has been introduced by some precisely in order to provide standards of fittingness. As he concisely puts it: "In order to qualify as a standard of fittingness, a formal object cannot be a property that every token emotion of the same type ascribes to its particular object [...]. Fear, for instance, is fitting only if its object *merits* fear by being dangerous; not merely frightening or fearsome or scary. Therefore, the formal object of fear is the property of being dangerous rather than the property of being frightening".

object of concern that links the evaluative property to the target and, hence, is definitive of the formal object of the emotion. In other words, and viewed from the perspective of *subjective salience*, the focus is what normally renders intelligible how and why the target has the affective significance for the emoter it has, or why the emotion has the formal object it has.

What, then, means 'focal commitment'? Helm developed this original notion together with the notion of the 'rationality of import' of an emotion, or the way in which the given object of an emotion ought to *matter* to the emoter. The basic idea is that emotions place a certain normative, but not necessarily moral, pressure upon their subjects to affectively comply with the concerns that elicit their emotions. In other words, emotions involve a normative commitment to their focus. That implies that if you have a given emotion about an object or event X, you ought to or ought not to have certain *other* emotions that involve the same focus as X. Moreover, being committed to the import that certain emotions have for you, implies that you are *prepared to act* according to the "circumstances [in which] that focus is harmed or benefited in a noteworthy way" (Helm 2017: 39).

A key assumption behind this normative construal of emotions is that there are "rational interconnections" between different emotions with the *same* focus. Emotions are not isolated mental states, but rather holistically embedded into more or less coherent, "rational patterns" of import (see, e.g., Helm 2001: 70). Thus, Helm defines what rationally "warrants" a given emotion, or the standards of fittingness, in terms of these rational patterns that hold between different emotions with the same focus and the according focal commitments: "the broader pattern of other emotions with a common focus defined by the focal commitments is rational in that belonging to the pattern is a necessary condition of the warrant of particular emotions" (ibid.) On the other hand, "a failure to have this pattern of other emotions in the relevant circumstances is to undermine this commitment to import", which means that your emotional response would be unfitting.

To illustrate: if you are genuinely proud of the achievement of your daughter at a certain competition, you *ought* not feel annoyed to go to the celebration of her victory (assuming that the celebration and your presence there is something she values). Otherwise, there would be something rationally and normatively wrong with one of those emotions (pride or annoyance), insofar as they are interconnected by the same focus: the import that the wellbeing of your daughter has for you. You also ought to be prepared to act on this focal commitment and entertain certain desires, say, desiring and making plans to attend her next important tournament and hoping that she wins again.

In summary, we can provide the standards of the fittingness of emotions according to the focus-based account, by the following definition:[25]

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25    See for a similar, but less demanding, and indeed somewhat underspecified, definition of the "warrants of an emotion" in Helm 2009: 251. For a recent normative (and anti-representationalist) account of the fittingness of emotions, see Naar forthcoming.

An emotion E is fitting, if and only if

(1) the target, eliciting E is appropriately related to the focus, such that the focus renders the evaluation of the target in terms of the formal object of E intelligible, and

(2) S is committed to the focus of E, such that in circumstances in which the target is harmed or benefited in a noteworthy way S is disposed to feel those and only those other emotion(s) E⋆ that are rationally interconnected to the focus of E.

Fitting emotions, then, are those where the focus renders it clear *that* and *how* the object of an emotion *affectively matters* or has actual import to the subject, so my central claim in this section. In the next section, I will present a brief argument to the effect that hatred, or at least paradigm instances of it, do not meet *either* of these two requirements and hence cannot be fitting according to the focus-based account. As it turns out, an analysis of specific focus of hatred shows that the reason for why hatred is unfitting just mirrors the reason for why it is moral inappropriate. In this respect, too, hatred is distinctive; for no other (antagonistic or pro-social) emotion is there such an equivalence between unfittingness and inappropriateness.

## 3. The Focus-Based Argument against Fittingness of Hatred

My focus-based argument against the fittingness of hatred capitalizes on the specific affective intentionality, and in particular the specific focus of hatred, which I have elaborated in detail in my paper *In Hate We Trust: The Collectivization and Habitualization of Hatred* (Szanto 2020), and which I will summarize here. In the paper, I have argued that the distinctiveness of hatred is not owing to some especially salient or intensive *phenomenology* of the affective attitude, but rather to its *affective intentionality*. Hatred indeed exhibits a certain personal and existential 'affective investment' in the attitude, an investment that is atypically strong compared to other emotions (Kolnai 1936). It draws one globally into the aversive relation. This mirrors the often-mentioned 'global' evaluation of the target of hatred as hateworthy, which is independent of particular evil features or actions. Yet, there is nothing special, as it were, about what it is like to *feel* hatred. On the contrary, haters don't feel anything *particular* when they hate, or, better, anything particular *towards a particular* target. This is so, I have argued, because the affective focus of hatred is essentially indeterminate or blurred.

Consider, for example, hatred directed towards refugees. Typically, such hatred is not focused on individual refugees, but neither is its focus on heterogeneous refugee-groups. Rather, the focus tends to be on the putatively endangered ethnic or cultural homogeneity of the host country, some readily

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For another recent critical discussion of representationalist claims implicitly or explicitly involved in the fittingness of emotions analysis, see Ballard 2021.

invoked 'Judeo-Christian' tradition, or an allegedly unambiguous Western liberal Enlightenment heritage. But even if the focus of hatred is *prima facie* more directly related to specific targets, the connection between what matters to the haters and what the targets allegedly endanger is more apparent than real. This is not only the result of the stereotypical overgeneralization of the targets as evil but also of an overgeneralization of the *threat* to what matters or of the overgeneralization of *our shared concerns*. Think of separating refugees, say, into 'deserving', educated dissidents fleeing war-torn Syria, who can potentially be integrated into 'our' supposedly homogenous value-system, from unwaveringly misogynic, Islamist fanatics, who pose an imminent threat to 'our women'). In any case, the focus seems uninformative as to how the targets (individual refugees or refugee-groups) are related to the formal object (their hate-worthiness).[26] This is what I mean by 'blurry'.

More precisely, there are two correlated mechanisms in hatred that blur the focus: first, the formal object is indeterminate because hatred picks out its targets all-too globally (taken to be 'evil', or 'hateworthy as such'); second, the very targets are not fixed but shifting – namely between individuals, groups, generalized social types, or proxies for groups (*the* refugees, women, Jews, etc.). Thus, the blurriness of the focus correlates with an indeterminacy regarding the attribution of hateworthy properties: they tend to be at once attributed to individuals and stereotyped proxies or social types. The 'locus' of the formal object remains ever unfixed. This is clearest in contexts of intergroup antagonism, but it can also be evidenced when individuals target other individuals in the stereotyped fashion characteristic of hatred (e.g., a justly or prematurely convicted Afghan refugee as a 'born rapist'). I have specified this tendency to overgeneralize the hateworthy properties as a form of 'collectivization', whereby the formal object of hatred oscillates between (stereotyped) individuals and proxies of hateworthy groups.[27]

But if the focus of hatred is blurred, in the sense that the targets are of no clear import for the haters, from where does hatred then derive its extreme force, a force that can motivate its subject even to murder or genocide? I have argued that, short of a clear affective focus, haters derive the extreme affective powers of the attitude not in reaction to any specific features or actions of the targets or from some phenomenological properties of the attitude, but rather from a sheer commitment to the attitude itself; haters simply commit themselves to the aversive attitude. Moreover, particularly in intergroup contexts, what reinforces the individual haters' attitudes and lends them additional affective powers is a sense of togetherness with their fellow haters. Haters turn

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26    For an incisive elaboration of further ways in which the target and the focus can come apart in hatred, and in particular the case where the target is not identifying with the group that the hater attributes to her, see Cvejić's commentary in this journal (Cvejić 2021).
27    Again, this is particularly prevalent in political or intergroup contexts, but as suggested in the first part of this paper, there is an analogous overgeneralization also in interpersonal hatred, whenever the target is globally assessed as 'evil'.

to their fellows' commitment to hate. And this is the other side of the 'collectivization' tendency, inherent in hatred. In hating overgeneralized, unspecified others, and thus in default of concrete targets that affectively really matter, we commit ourselves to the attitude *together*. Finally, I have argued that in sharing this commitment to hate with others, hatred often becomes entrenched as a 'shared habitus'.

Now, if this argument regarding the lack of a determinate affective-intentional focus in hatred goes through, hatred cannot be fitting according to my focus-based account. For one, the target eliciting hatred is not appropriately related to the focus, such that the focus renders the evaluation of the target as hateworthy intelligible. In other words, it is not clear why the targets have the affective significance for the emoter they purportedly have (being hateworthy or evil), or why the emotion has the formal object (hate-worthiness) it is supposed to have. Thus, the above standard for fittingness (1) is not met. But the second standard, the focal commitment requirement, is not met either: haters are not, and indeed, given the blurred focus, *cannot* be, properly committed to the focus of hate. Surely, they may, as the requirement (2) states, be disposed to feel certain other emotions if the target is harmed or benefited. For example, haters may maliciously revel in the expulsion of refugees from the country or hope for even stricter immigration laws. But their focal commitment is not determined by the rational interconnections between these emotions. Rather, definitive of their commitment is that they commit themselves to the aversive attitude by simply endorsing or maintaining it (together with others).[28]

## Concluding Remarks: Why Hatred of Group Agents Can Be Appropriate

I have argued that hatred can neither be morally appropriate nor fitting. The main reason why hatred cannot be morally appropriate has to do with the reality of evil agent assumption. Defenders of the morality of hate are faced with a dilemma: Either they convince the evil sceptic that there really is such a thing as evil agents, in the face of which only hatred is appropriate; or they bite the bullet and concede that hatred really has no distinctive formal object (namely hateworthy evil agents as opposed to morally wrong acts), and hence hatred can only be at best gradually distinguished from cognate antagonistic emotions such as anger, resentment or contempt. But as far as I can see, we cannot accept either horn of the dilemma and retain a convincing account of the distinctive affective intentionality of hatred. And in this account lies the

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28    It should be clear by now that this directly flies in the face of Brogaard's definition of hatred as having a "dual focus": (a) the "target's envisioned past or future evildoing"; and (b) "the target's assumed malevolent character" (Brogaard 2020, 158). Brogaard seems to suggest that hatred is fitting if both these focal aspects are appropriately met. But Brogaard doesn't explicitly distinguish moral appropriateness and the fittingness of emotions, and indeed at places, where she more or less synonymously speaks of the irrationality and the immorality of hatred (e.g., ibid.: 112 and 167), seems to confuse the two.

reason why hatred cannot be fitting either. I have argued that the affective intentionality of hatred is distinguished ironically by the fact that its focus is typically blurred or indeterminate. Hence, given my focus-based account of fittingness, hatred can never be fitting.

Indeed, we can now see how the inappropriateness and unfittingness of specifically hatred are essentially interrelated. Hatred is *not* inappropriate *because* it is unfitting, nor the other way around, and the two issues must be treated separately. However, the main reason why hatred is morally inappropriate (because it targets its objects as globally evil) just mirrors the reason why it is unfitting (because of hatred's collectivizing and overgeneralizing nature). Moreover, appreciating the latter reasons helps clarifying the former.[29]

But is that all there is? Is hatred then never of any (normative, moral or political) avail? I want to conclude this paper by tentatively pointing to a form of hatred that may be fitting and morally appropriate, and in certain cases, indeed be morally required, namely towards certain group agents and corporations. I follow here the lead of Schmid (2020). As mentioned, Schmid doesn't stop short at concluding that hate of evil cannot be appropriate when it concerns individual agents. At the end of his paper, he raises the prospect for a type of *agent*-hatred that might indeed be justified, and in fact "laudable":

> Perhaps there is a point that can be made with regards to some types of deficient *group agents* – there seems to be nothing wrong in putting out of existence corporations and institutions that are systematically geared towards the bad and are organized in a way that makes them unsuited for reform. It might be righteous and laudable to hate *them* – if the members are not implicated in hate of group agents [...]. (Schmid 2020: 572)

I concur with Schmid, but I would go even further and contend that hate of evil group agents of this sort is not only supererogatory ("righteous and laudable"), but we indeed may be morally required to hate certain evil group agents or institutions and corporations that systematically inflict significant harm to individual persons of flesh and blood or groups of such. Given a clear focus (the threatened well-being of those persons), such hatred would arguably also be fitting. All that would be necessary to ensure is, as Schmid highlights, that members "are not implicated" as evil in the global assessment of the group agents or corporation as such. But given robust, non-aggregative or non-summative accounts of corporate agency available (e.g., List and Pettit 2011; cf. Szanto 2014), this is, conceptually at least, not all too challenging.

To sharpen this claim, consider again the diametrically opposing view, held by Brogaard. Brogaard holds that while personal (critical) hatred can be morally appropriate "collective" or "joint hatred" hate typically, though not in principle, is not.[30] Brogaard rightly distinguishes "collective" from "group hate". Group

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29    Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helping me to see this point more clearly.
30    Incidentally, Brogaard attributes two claims to my earlier paper summarized above, one of which I do not address in that paper at all (though I do argue for it here), and the

hate, for Brogaard, is "hatred towards oppressed groups", whereas collective hate is based on the "joint commitment to feel" or "to acting as if they would feel something together" (Brogaard 2020: 162–163) and is "of the sort seen in organized hate groups" (ibid.: 160), such as white supremacists.  Brogaard's argument against the morality of group hate, however, seems to me utterly unconvincing, though illuminative of the reasons why I, with Schmid, hold the contrary. She claims that "although organized hate groups are disseminating hatred and encouraging violence against the hated group, it doesn't follow that all members of such groups are evil or malevolent". She cites the Nazi Oscar Schindler as "a paradigm example of a member of an organized hate group who wasn't evil" (ibid.: 168). However, this example just shows why hatred of hate groups and other dehumanizing corporations may, *pace* Brogaard, be precisely appropriate. For, why shouldn't we wish and aim for the elimination of the *group* of haters, even if we, just for the reasons Brogaard mentions, should indeed not aim for the elimination of all, and in fact none, of their *members*. To put it differently, why should we exempt the Nazis–as an organized political group or party–from our hate, just because there seems to have been some (arguably very few) just members of the National Socialist party?

    This then is a case of group hatred which is, arguably, morally appropriate and fitting: the target, *viz.* the specific (evil) group, is properly carved out relative to the focus, *viz.* the well-being of certain threatened minorities. But in thinking further along these lines, we can readily find cases of group hatred which are fitting, but – from a certain moral point of view – for the wrong reasons (e.g., hatred of specific progressive democratic institutions by far-right activists), as well as cases where, in turn, hating group agents might be morally appropriate – given the political sensibilities of many – but unfitting due to the blurred or overgeneralized focus (e.g., hate of unrestricted global capitalism ruining the lives of hundreds of millions and fueling climate change).[31] This again shows how the issue of appropriateness and fittingness–though interrelated–still need to be clearly distinguished.

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other which I explicitly reject, as should also be clear from the summary. She writes: "Collective hate is not typically a rational attitude either. Contrary to what philosopher Thomas Szanto has argued, this is not because collective hate takes the form of joint commitment and therefore isn't a genuinely affective attitude. Rather, collective hate tends to be irrational because it tends to target marginalized or stigmatized social groups." (ibid.: 168). As should be clear by now (and also by my initial argument in Szanto 2020), I *do* think that hatred is a genuinely affective attitude, even if, what lends hate its affective weight isn't what supposedly (genuinely) matters to the subjects. But I principally agree with Brogaard's view regarding why what she calls "collective hate" is typically unfitting (though, again, I do not speak of the "irrationality" of hatred, neither here nor there). In fact, in Szanto 2020, I make very similar points to this effect. Finally, I should mention that my notion of joint commitment in the 'collectivizing' hatred I discuss here and in Szanto 2020, explicitly and significantly departs from the Gilbertian notion (e.g., Gilbert 2013) that Brogaard draws on.

31    Thanks again to an anonymous reviewer for clarifying these points.

Now, whether *collective* hate in Brogaard's sense, and in particular inter-group hatred could be appropriate (and fitting) is another, more complicated, matter and I can here only conjecture that there might be appropriate cases.

So, what would it mean that groups appropriately commit themselves to hating other groups or corporate agents? To spell out exactly what it would mean, we would need, first, an account of how to delineate collective forms of hatred that targets individual members of groups or (stereotyped) proxies – which, for the reasons provided, cannot not be appropriate – from collective hate of *group or corporate* agents. Secondly, we would need an account of the normativity and appropriateness of collective emotions, an account, I obviously cannot attempt to provide here.[32]

Let me just try to give you an idea of what the appropriateness conditions for collective hatred might be *ex negativo*, by way of stating what would *not* suffice. Joint commitment to hate cannot be appropriate if the affective-normative standards are set only in terms of norms of exclusion, forging hate communities and making them ever more cohesive, by simply bringing them into opposition to their targets.[33] A code of honor is only one obvious form of such an affective-normative standard that facilitates discrimination and exclusion. More nuanced and impactful is what Hochschild (1983) called "feeling rules". Through such internalized norms, we sanction ourselves and control which emotions we feel and when we (should) feel and (should) express. In this context, Hochschild has recently introduced the helpful notion of "deep stories" (Hochschild 2016): internalized narratives about how we (ought to) feel given our political identifications and loyalties to particular sociocultural and political issues. The mentioned lack of an actual *personal* affective concern in the face of the targets of hatred can be readily compensated by drawing on such a nebulous but robust fund of emotion rules of semi-institutionalized hate communities, shared codes of exclusion, and aversive affective narratives. Moreover, such a shared 'obligation' to hate generates a normative order that sanctions the haters themselves if they affectively deviate from their hate community or show too little commitment to hatred. This is what essentially happens in the above-described collectivization and sedimentation of hatred.

In contrast, the least we can say of appropriate forms of collective hate of group or corporate agents is that we ought to jointly commit ourselves to hate in a way that makes it clear why it is of clear import *for our community* to eliminate hateworthy group agents, or in a way that would make clear the affective focus of *our* hatred. In that specific sense, already hinted at by Aristoteles[34],

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32    I have provided the bare bones of this latter account in various other publications, generally regarding collective emotions, in Szanto 2015, and, in particular, regarding robust political emotions (collective forms of hatred would be an instance here), in Szanto, Slaby 2020, and Szanto, Osler 2021.

33    Drawing on Ahmed (2004/2014), I have spelled out this dynamic in terms of what I call "negative dialectics", in Szanto 2020 and Szanto 2021.

34    At passages that have received significantly less attention than his brief analysis of the above-mentioned generalizing tendency in hate in the *Rhetoric* (1382a1–1382a16), notably in his *Politics* (1312b19–1312b34) and the *Economics* (1353b20–1353b26).

hatred might not only be appropriate but also qualify as a fitting and, what is more, a truly political emotion.

## Acknowledgments

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Tomas Santo

## Može li biti ispravno ili se osećati ispravno da se mrzi. O prikladnosti i podesnosti mržnje

### Apstrakt

Šta je zapravo pogrešno u mržnji prema drugima? Bez obzira na dubinu intuicije, literatura je ipak oskudna i konfuzna kada treba da se navedu razlozi za neprikladnost mržnje. U ovom članku pokušaću da budem precizniji razlikujući dva smisla prema kojima je mržnja neprikladna, moralni i vanmoralni. Prvo ću kritički razmatrati glavne savremene pozicije koje zagovaraju mogućnost moralne prikladnosti mržnje u slučaju ozbiljno rđavih ili zlih počinilaca. Pokušaću da pokažem da su svi oni zasnovani na problematičnoj pretpostavci koju nazivam „pretpostavka o realnosti zlih aktera". Nakon toga ću se pozabaviti problemom vanmoralne emocionalne prikladnosti i ocrtaću novo, na fokusu zasnovano objašnjenje podesnosti. Zatim ću predstaviti karakterističnu afektivnu intencionalnost mržnje, pri čemu sugerišem da mržnja, za razliku od drugih antagonističkih emocija, ima prekomerno uopštavajući i neodređen afektivni fokus. Imajući to u vidu argumentovaću da mržnja ne može da bude podesna. S obzirom na neodređenost svog fokusa mržnja ne može da prati evaluativna svojstva intencionalnog objekta koja bi zaista imala značaja za osobu koja doživljava emociju. Tekst zaključujem s provizornom napomenom o mogućnosti prikladne mržnje prema korporacijskim i grupnim akterima.

Ključne reči: mržnja, moralna mržnja, moralnost emocija, antagonističke emocije, realnost zla, dehumanizacija, emocionalna podesnost, teorija vrednosti podesnog stava, afektivna intencionalnost, korporacijski i grupni akteri