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RECOVERING LOST GOODNESS
Shame, Guilt, and Self-Empathy

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In this paper, I explore self-empathy as a component in the healing of moral injury in war. I have written recently on this subject, in *The Untold War,* and in particular, on how soldiers experience guilt as a response to good and bad moral luck, such as surviving buddies or causing their deaths by accident (Sherman, 2010). This kind of guilt is obviously not restricted to war, but war provides an important and timely context for studying it. Imposing guilt on oneself, I argue, is a way of taking responsibility, even if one overimposes it. It can be morally fitting and admirable, even when not justified or warranted. In some cases, it is a way of defending against a harder-to-uncover feeling of shame. Understanding better the notion of moral recovery is urgent. By some counts, the number of suicides in the U.S. military during recent years has exceeded that of deaths due to combat. The issue deserves public attention and an exploration of psychological and philosophical concepts that may be part of reversing the trend.

Keywords: self-empathy, shame, guilt, soldiers, PTSD

My subject concerns understanding self-empathy as a component in the healing of moral injury. The moral injuries I have in mind have to do with guilt, specifically subjective guilt that doesn't accurately track culpability, and the crippling shame that that guilt often covers up. I have written recently on this subject, in *The Untold War,* and in particular, on how soldiers experience guilt as a response to good and bad moral luck, such as surviving buddies or causing their deaths by accident (Sherman, 2010). This kind of guilt is obviously not restricted to war, but war provides an important and timely context for studying it. Imposing guilt on oneself, I argue, is a way of taking responsibility, even if one overimposes it. It can be morally fitting and admirable, even when epistemically

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ill-fitting (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000). In some cases, it is a way of defending against a harder-to-uncover feeling of falling short of one's ideal.

I want to revisit the theme of moral wounds in war and the idea of recovering a sense of lost goodness—if that is not too romantic a notion—through self-empathy. By and large, philosophers have dwelt on the negative emotions of self-appraisal, and less so, with some notable exceptions, on getting beyond these feelings.[1] However, understanding the notion of recovery is not just academic. By some counts, the number of suicides in the U.S. military during recent years has exceeded that of deaths due to combat.[2] The issue deserves public attention and an exploration of concepts that may be part of reversing the trend.

I begin with two soldiers' stories of shame, one contemporary, another ancient. I then turn to the idea of guilt as a mask for shame, and finally come to self-empathy. Throughout, I weave my account with narratives as a way to probe concretely the phenomenology of moral emotions.

The Wounds of Shame: A Contemporary Story

Army Major Jeffrey Hall deployed to Iraq twice, commanding infantry and artillery units—at the time, at the rank of Captain—near Baghdad and Fallujah. He signed up for the Army at 17, and at 40, despite having implemented versions of COIN (counterinsurgency operations) in those last deployments, serving as mayor of a local advisory council of elders, painting schools, laying sewers, outfitting scores of children with shoes (who, never having worn them before, had no clue that shoes, or their feet, had a right and a left), and risking life to bring food and medical care to families in need, he still thinks what he should do in armed conflict, and what he is good at and trained to do as a soldier, is engage and destroy an enemy.

And yet that was not what his war in Iraq was about. Once Baghdad fell in 2003, he found himself deep in softer and more cultural methods of warfare, often inadequately supported and unclear of the cause or mission. He often felt betrayed by his command, and as a result, he, in turn, was forced to betray those who counted on him. Stateside, he was

[1] For some important philosophical work on guilt and shame, see Williams (1993); Taylor (1985); Morris (1976); Deigh (1999); Murphy (1999); Velleman (2001); Velleman (2003); Nussbaum (2001); Deonna & Teroni (2008 & 2011). For insightful work on uncovering masked shame in psychoanalytic treatment, see especially Lansky (1992, 1995, 2003, 2004, & 2007) and Lewis (1971). On self-forgiveness, which can be a part of getting beyond emotions of self-reproach, see Goldie (2011) commenting on Griswold (2007). For an influential account of positive psychology and its shift from a clinical discourse focused on pathology and deficit to one based on asset, see Martin Seligman, most recently Seligman (2011). He has helped design the Army's new resilience program, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (http://csf.army.mil). For a discussion of his project with the military, see "Soldiers of Optimism," by Tom Bartlett in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Oct. 30, 2011. For recent philosophical work on hope, see Martin (2008 & 2010).

[2] The services reported 434 suicides by those on active duty in 2010 and 381 in 2009 (see http://www.congress.org/news/2011/01/24/more_troops_lost_to_suicide). Getting accurate figures is a vexed problem, and the services vary as to whether they include in the number reservists who kill themselves when they are not on active duty. Also, these numbers do not include the veteran population; the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs tracks suicides of only those who have been enrolled in their system. For fuller discussion and recommendations, see the policy brief of the Center for New American Security, *Losing the Battle: The Challenge of Military Suicide*, released November 1, 2011 (http://www.cnas.org/losingthebattle and http://www.cnas.org/events/7178/multimedia/video).

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diagnosed with severe, near suicidal posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and with the support of his wife and his commander at home, sought treatment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As he puts it, "You have to understand. My PTSD had everything to do with moral injury. It was not from killing, or seeing bodies severed or blown up. It was from betrayal, from moral betrayal." In referring to moral injury, Hall was using a term of art that the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and military behavioral health units now use, as Brett Litz and Jonathan Shay make clear in their recent work and in essays in this special issue (Litz et al., 2009; Maguen & Litz, 2012; Nash, Krantz, Stein, Westphal & Litz, 2011; Litz, 2014; Shay, 1994, 2002, Shay, 2014).

One incident stands out. In his first deployment in 2003, a civilian family driving home from church in Bagdad's Mansour district crossed a cordon and got caught in the crossfire of a U.S. attack on a high-value target. Hall's unit didn't carry out the attack, but he was near the scene at the time. The mother and son were evacuated from the car, though died shortly thereafter. The father was instantly killed, his body parts strewn over the road. Hall and a buddy gathered up the fragments and rolled them up in a rug that they then loaded onto an ambulance. "It was collateral damage that happens and that is probably justified in war," Hall says philosophically. "The car just turned a corner at the wrong place at the wrong time." But in his mind, what followed was not at all justified or unavoidable, and it is that aftermath that unraveled him.

Shortly after the accident, Hall got orders from his battalion headquarters to find the surviving family members and begin to make amends. He found the home and a young daughter and elderly uncle who had stepped in as guardian. Over Chai, the family made it clear that what they wanted most was the return of the bodies for a prompt burial. Hall set to work, but his efforts were stymied at every turn. His battalion was partnered with the Coalition Provisional Agency (CPA), Paul Bremer's American occupation administration set up to govern Iraq after the fall of Baghdad. Incompetence, by many accounts, ran deep (Chandrasekaran, 2006). Hoping to cut through the bureaucracy, Hall drove to the morgue himself and located the bodies. But the CPA wouldn't release them without official paperwork authorized and signed by the Iraqi Ministry of Health. So began the wait for over a month for the bodies.

In the meantime, Hall's commander called to inform him that the CPA had issued solace money for the family. With cautious excitement, Hall drove to battalion headquarters to pick up the money; finally, he'd have something positive to show the uncle and daughter. He was speechless when he opened the envelope and counted the bills. It was a piddling $750. He let his commander know how he felt: "Sir, they lost a father, a mother, and a son. And a car that is probably as important to them as the other losses." He handed the money back to the commander in disgust: "You go pay them with this!" The commander, cocooned for much of the war inside Sadam's former palace in the Green Zone, was unmoved. Hall had an unequivocal order to deliver the money.

And so he did. In silence, he handed the uncle the envelope and watched as he counted the bills before flinging them to the ground. "I deserve whatever this man does," Hall recalls thinking. "If he slaps me in my face, I will take it. I will just take it." But the uncle just stood up, turned his back to Hall, and walked out of the room, the money still strewn on the floor. With the young girl's eyes glued on him, Hall put on his helmet, snapped his chinstrap, and left the house, covered in shame.

But the ordeal, and the shame, wouldn't end. The bodies were finally returned to the family, unembalmed and rotted beyond recognition by the scorching desert heat. The family had one last request of Hall. They needed death certificates to finalize the burial. And so Hall returned to the Ministry of Health and was given the certificates. On each was

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stamped in bold red letters: "ENEMY." "Can't you give me something that doesn't have 'enemy' stamped on it?" Hall beseeched. "No," the official curtly replied. "They are enemies. They are considered enemies."

Hall's story verges on the comedic, but the comedy barely lightens the profound moral injury he suffered. Disarmed of much of his usual arsenal as a warrior, more than ever he needed to be able to trust his own basic goodness and have some assurance that he could compassionately help these noncombatants caught in war. However much a part of the just conduct of a soldier to minimize collateral damage in war and ameliorate its effects, for Hall, the duty was more basic; it was an intimate duty to a family he had come to know and care for. He felt thoroughly impotent in the role. He felt profoundly betrayed by his command and coalition and humiliated that their massive incompetence forced him to betray innocents who had suffered so grievously. When he says the injury was worse and more lasting than what he suffered from seeing the detritus of war for three years, what he means, in part, is that the betrayal by his command put him in a position of feeling trapped and helpless, much more powerless and captive than he had ever felt in facing enemy fire. He was stripped defenseless, with nowhere to go. That shame haunted him until one day, back home on base, he simply couldn't put his combat boots on. It was at that point that a new, far more benign commander got him help.

Ajax's Shame and Prior's Guilt

I met Major Hall at a reading of Sophocles' *Ajax,* performed by the Theater of War before a mostly military audience. We were both on a discussion panel after the play. The play is another story of shame, with disastrous outcome. Ajax is stripped of his time, his honor, and his status when the Greek chiefs vote to award Achilles' armor, a prize given to the best fighter, to Odysseus rather than to him, despite his legendary status. Ajax was "the bulwark of the Achaeans" in their fight against Troy, "giant" in size, "powerful and well-built," "the giant god of battle," unrivaled as a fighter (Homer, 1990, *Iliad* Book 3, lines 270–290; Book 7, lines 242–332). In a famed duel with Hector, he is easily the victor. His own warrior mettle is storied, god-like, but so too is his father's. He is the son of Telamon, who battled the Trojans alongside Heracles and who, for his mettle, was awarded the Trojan king's daughter, Hesione, as a war bride. Upon the betrayal, Ajax goes ballistic. He has been nakedly shamed before his peers. The fall is steep and public.

In Ajax's case, the shock and shame of losing a prize comparable to his father's becomes part of a more generalized, psychological break. He has lost all face before those who matter: "I will return from Troy having earned nothing. How could he [my father, Telamon] stand to even look at me?"(Sophocles, 2007, lines 464–5). In a pique of blazing rage, he sets out to take revenge on Odysseus and his troops and to prove, once and for all, his unmatched skill as a swordsman. But, the goddess Athena blinds him and he flails his sword in the dark, mistaking barnyard animals for his rival. He "hacked at this chief and that chief," recounts Athena. And after tiring of the slaughter, he took the rest of the beasts captive and tortured them. Ajax "comes to" in a bloodbath of butchered carcasses and mutilated livestock. He mocks the sight of himself.

> Look at the valiant man! The brave heart!
> The one who unflinchingly faced the enemy!
> You see the great deeds I have done to harmless beasts?
> Oh, the ridicule runs riot against me! (Sophocles, 2007, lines 364–367)

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There is ironic distance, but it fails to insulate (Goldie, 2007, 2011, Woodruff, 2011. Ajax's self-evaluation couldn't be more unforgiving. True, here he seems to look on at himself as someone in the past. But his past is not *past*. It consumes him in the present. He is damned in his eyes. He has lost his prize—his warrior eminence—and now his wits. In an unparalleled moment in Greek tragedy, this great Greek general falls on his sword on stage. In this particular staging of the play, before a community that knows suicide all too intimately, the scene brought a hush like few moments I have known in theater. Ajax was in the room, in Hall and in many others, who felt they had first lost their identity as warriors and then their good name.

Here, the work of psychoanalyst Melvin Lansky is pertinent and well worth revisiting. Lansky, who has worked extensively with Vietnam War veterans, writes insightfully of stages that lead up to a violent, impulsive act, such as suicide, and the role of shame as a precipitant (Lansky, 1995, p.1086). Though in this article, Lansky's direct subject matter is not Sophocles' *Ajax*, the stages he describes have clear correlates in the play, as I briefly limn here.

- Turbulence and shame from a "narcissistic wound" that exposes "limitations." So Ajax is passed over for the all-critical prize.
- A "dissociative" break that may follow the upsurge of shame. "In more protracted cases, the patient often reports a disorganized, fragile, paranoid state of mind." In our play, there is madness induced by a god: "Never in your right mind/ Would you, Telamon's son,/ Go so far as to slaughter livestock./The gods must have driven him mad!" sings the Chorus (Sophocles, 2007, *Ajax*, lines 182–185). "I can darken the sharpest eyes," Athena boasts to Odysseus (line 85).
- An impulsive act in the dissociative stage, with the impulsive actor "oblivious" to its consequences. Ajax is in a delusional state: "He thought he was bathing his hands in your blood," Athena tells Odysseus (line 43).
- The agent's "reaction to the act," often "conscious remorse or guilt" that can mask the shame of dissociating and of the impulsive act. "You see the great deeds I have done to harmless animals," bemoans Ajax as he surveys the massacre he executed (lines 366–367).
- Guilt that covers the paralytic shame. So Ajax's wife, Tecmessa, reports: "He has been laid low by this evil. He won't eat or drink or say anything. He just sits in the midst of his butchery" (lines 320–325).
- A tenuous and manipulated reaching out to loved ones in response to the intimidation of self-harming. So Ajax demands that Tecmessa bring to him their son for a final encounter: "Lift him up to me here. The sight of fresh blood will not frighten him—not if he is truly his father's son. Now he must begin to be broken in and hardened to the ways of his father" (lines 545–550). In Ajax's case, shame piles on shame—the barnyard massacre on top of the loss of prize—leading to the final, irrevocable act.

The experience of shame, as these vignettes—ancient and contemporary—show, is about being seen and about having nowhere to hide (Williams, 1993). Greek etymology is a reminder. *Aidôs*, (the Greek word for shame) is related to *aidoia*, genitals. To be ashamed is to be caught without your fig leaf. The audience can be real or imagined. When Aristotle says, "eyes are upon you," he should not be read literally (Aristotle, 1984, *Rhetoric* II.6, pp. 1384a35–1384b1); that is how shame *feels*. In some cases, shame can be too toxic to be consciously experienced, screened as the more socially respectable and

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manageable feeling of guilt with its presumption of a discrete act of wrongdoing and promise of redemption through moral repair (Lansky, 1995, 2003, & 2007). Indeed, perhaps one way to think of certain instances of epistemically ill-fitting, or irrational, guilt are as substitutes for shame, sublimations of a sort. An Army commander who loses a private due to an accidental blast of a turret gun on an army vehicle may not be culpably negligent, though he feels horrific and unabated guilt.

This is a case of what I call "accident guilt" in *The Untold War* (Sherman, 2010, pp. 89–110). In the specific case I have in mind, the commander, Captain John Prior, approved, with the advice of his team of engineers, the use of a Marine replacement battery for the Army's Bradley fighting vehicle. What no one foresaw was that turning on the ignition would now cause the current to jump to the turret and automatically fire the gun. The blast scooped out the face of a young private, Joseph Mayek. Prior watched as 10 medics rushed into the scene and tried, unsuccessfully, to save Mayek's life. Prior tells me, several years later:

> The aftermath of that was the guilt of the situation because I'm the one who placed the vehicles; I'm the one who set the security. Like most accidents, I'm not in jail right now. Clearly I wasn't egregiously responsible. Still, I dealt with and still deal with the guilt of having cost him his life essentially.

After a lengthy investigation, the mechanical cause of the misfire was pinpointed to the amperage of the replacement battery. Though the Marine battery had the same voltage as the original Army battery, the amperage was different, and that turned out to be all-critical. In this case, the guilt Prior has subsequently felt may be morally fitting and admirable, though not strictly speaking objectively fitting, given the actual facts of moral responsibility. Prior is well aware of this and so, in a way, his guilt is "recalcitrant." That is, the belief or appraisal that grounds the feeling is in conflict with another belief or appraisal he holds that he was not at fault in causing the accident.

What Prior feels is that he *should have* been able to take care of his soldiers better, or as we might put it, that he less than perfectly fulfilled his imperfect duty of care. As an imperfect duty, there is typically "playroom" for how and how much one fulfills the duty, but Prior viewed the duty as having to be fulfilled perfectly. (The term is Immanuel Kant's (Baron, 1995). He famously leaves "playroom" (*Spielraum*) for the degree to which we are to fulfill imperfect duties of end, such as beneficence to others.). So cast, the feeling has more the color of shame than guilt, the shame of falling short of an ideal that captures for him his responsibilities of office and role.[3] But given the context and the fact that a unit member was killed in a noncombat action, in "friendly fire" on his watch, the more palpable presentation of this negative wave of self-reproach is like culpable guilt for a negligent omission. Guilt brings with it concrete opportunities for moral repair—to the mother of the dead soldier, to soldiers who lost their good buddy, or to unit members who need reassurance that a similar accident will not be repeated. Shame may bring moral repair as well, in terms of reinstating oneself, but it may be, by its very nature, more self-regarding than other-regarding. That is, it doesn't necessarily involve real or apparent transgressions against others in the way that guilt does.

[3] For an intersubjective approach to treating traumatized American soldiers in Iraq whose trauma left them with profound shame and isolation, see Navy psychiatrist Russell Carr's work, especially (Carr, 2011).

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In pointing to the complex and camouflaged nature of this emotion, I am not suggesting that such guilt is in any way manipulated, a contrivance that allows for a contrition that might not otherwise be possible. Rather, I am suggesting that feelings of guilt can easily eclipse feelings of shame and when the shame isn't obvious or manifest, we may be too quick, both as self-judges and judges of others, to think that what we feel is misplaced or epistemically irrational. As shame, the feeling is all too epistemically fitting, whether manifest or not—Prior did fall short of an implicit image of himself as a commander who was to take care of his troops. Moreover, the idea of seeing oneself as a leader who should have been able to avoid this kind of malfunction on his watch is not that far-fetched or grandiose; at least, it does not seem overidealized to me in the way perhaps thinking one can avoid enemy-inflicted combat death is. Epistemically fitting shame, in this regard, seems more permissive than epistemically fitting guilt and we should be less quick to call it "irrational." Still, shame of this sort can linger far too long, particularly when held next to or underneath guilt, and be self-destructive. That is precisely why it is important to try to unmask it, differentiate it, and find ways to own and tolerate it. Self-empathy plays a role.

Recalcitrant Emotions and Uncertainty

Before I come to self-empathy, I want to say a few brief words about the notion of recalcitrant emotion. Consider Michael Brady's view of recalcitrant fear. "In a recalcitrant bout of fear, S is primed to act on and assent to her construal of her situation as dangerous, but does not act on or assent to this construal, believing instead that her situation is *not* dangerous." There is a waste of cognitive resources here, says Brady. "Recalcitrant emotions therefore involve the mobilization of cognitive resources in the service of a question that has, by the subject's own lights, *already been answered*" (italics added; Brady, 2007, p. 427; also, Brady, 2006, 2008). The waste of resources means that attention is taken away from factors that *are* relevant to one's situation and invested, instead, in an inclination to seek more confirmation of an evaluation one doesn't believe.[4]

But sometimes—and I suspect often in difficult cases—feeling guilt involves an *open* question of an individual's moral responsibility. One simply may not have settled the matter as to whether he or she is fully off the hook. There is lingering doubt and enough harsh self-judgment to keep the question alive. It is not so much that the individual has an "incoherent evaluative profile" as Brady (2009, p. 14) puts it, or a conflict of evaluations and the potential wrongness of what one did. It is that a person becomes and remains

[4] Brady is eager to put forth a neojudgmentalist view of emotions that steers a middle course between imputing too much irrationality to the subject of recalcitrant emotions and too little. On his view, the subject of irrational emotion does not hold two conflicting beliefs, as strict judgmentalists argue. Rather, the subject holds a construal and a belief, but the construal, while falling short of a belief is not simply "arational;" it has deep cognitive teeth, in that it *inclines* the subject to expend limited cognitive resources wastefully and hence take epistemic missteps. Thus, Brady is a neojudgmentalist who still can impute a fair degree of irrationality to the subject of recalcitrant emotions. See Brady (2009, p. 429). In a related piece, Brady argues that recalcitrant emotions are somewhat analogous to cognitively impenetrable visual illusions, but not strictly so. The arational perception—say, that the stick appears bent when we know it is straight, unlike the "recalcitrant" construal (say of phobic fear)—lacks cognitive teeth. The visual illusions do not "capture and consume" our attention; the illusions don't persist and waste our cognitive resources (see Brady, 2007).

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genuinely uncertain, not sure what to believe about his or her moral responsibility given the question of causal involvement, whether an individual could have or should have known the consequences of his or her actions (as in Prior's case, in replacing the battery) or could have or should have found a more graceful way out of complicity (as in Hall's case, in betraying the civilian family through the bureaucratic operations of his command chain).[5] There are shadows of doubt, not a flat-out conflict of evaluation in the way there is, for instance, in the case of a knowing phobic who walks onto a plane and immediately becomes frightened, evaluating the upcoming flight as dangerous, although she in fact believes the situation poses no threats. Recalcitrance often comes in shades—it is a spectral notion, with unstable or ambivalent emotions occupying points on a continuum.

In the case of subjective guilt, to call it "irrational" or recalcitrant can be dismissive, encouraging us to overlook the genuine figuring out that is often part of the psychological process of healthy ownership of moral responsibility. That process may include an investigative sorting of the facts of the matter: a psychological "working-through" (what Freud called *Durcharbeitung*)[6] of the conflicts, investments, and losses; an acceptance, which is often a part of this kind of reflection, of the limits of agency; and an openness to feeling new emotions, such as grief, sorrow, and self-empathy, based on new evaluations, once self-reproach lifts its grip. As such, subjective guilt may have deep connectivity to a range of epistemically appropriate feelings that we come to only indirectly, after first experiencing guilt and then surmounting it.

An example illustrates the point. Again, the details are important for capturing the contours of the moral phenomenology. Tom Fiebrandt served in Iraq between July 2001 and December 2005. At 21, he was a young sergeant and a team leader of a group of intelligence analysts attached to an Army cavalry squadron of 410 men in Tal Afar, a desert town not far from Mosul, about 40 miles from the Syrian border. As cavalry, his unit served as the "eyes and ears" of the battalion, collecting and sorting intelligence critical for a dynamic picture of the current battlefield. The unit was a "bridge" between those inside and outside the wire, with Fiebrandt himself spending much of his time outside, talking to troops and locals, and drawing and redrawing a visual, first-hand picture of the vicinity and its dangers. He knew how tall buildings were on different streets, where snipers could lurk, where you did and didn't want to be. He became the point guy that noncommissioned officers and officers alike turned to get their information. As he put it, with modesty but candor, his superiors "had confidence in his competence."

About 3 months before his deployment was up, he was ordered to take a few days of "R and R" in Qatar before returning to the States for a longer 2-week leave. Fiebrandt was reluctant to abandon the unit so close to the end of their deployment, but an order was an order and leave time was mandatory anyway. He was stressed of late, "bouncing inside

[5] See Aristotle's case of forced, mixed actions, "Nicomachean Ethics" (1984, III, 1). I should note that my view of so-called "irrational/recalcitrant" emotions is different from John Rawls' notion of "not proper" guilt feelings, and what he also calls "residue guilt feelings" (Rawls, 1971, pp. 481–482). He gives as an example a person who is raised to believe going to movies is sinful. He no longer believes that, but yet when he goes to the movies feels guilty. This notion doesn't leave room for those cases in which one is ambivalent or epistemically unsure about one's nonculpability. For a discussion of Rawls, see Wallace (1996, pp. 40–50).

[6] For use of the term by Freud, see "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," (1914) and his paper published twelve years later, "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1959) in Freud (1974).

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and outside the wire," as he put it, and at some level, he knew that a break was probably a good idea.

En route to Qatar, he learned that his unit was about to run a cordon and search operation in the southeast corner of town. Tal Afar had become a major smuggling hub, with weapons pouring in from unsecured borders with Syria. It was now time to flush out the weapon caches and insurgents with a strong show of troop forces and a door-to-door raid. What Fiebrandt didn't know was that as part of the preparation, one of the platoons, headed by Lt. Edens, a close friend, had been ordered to scout out a potential egress route at the backside of the city where a wall of troops could be mounted to block insurgents fleeing the raid into the desert. It was during this preparatory drive-through that an improvised explosive device (IED) struck Eden's vehicle, killing him and two others. Fiebrandt learned about the incident a few days after he arrived in Qatar. It hit him hard:

> What bothered me was that it was in an area that I knew very well. It was in a part of the city that you really had to see in order to visualize. And I had this lurking suspicion that my soldiers, who had never actually, personally been there, didn't really have a grasp on all the information that I felt I did. In some way, I almost felt responsible for not being there to provide them with the information that may have potentially resulted in a different outcome. So it is rough. It is a difficult thing for me to process . . . So here I was sitting by a pool, and I hear this. It was—I don't even know how to describe it. It was—devastating.

Had Fiebrandt been there, he is sure he would have recommended against Eden taking that road. He knew that the back area of the city was especially dangerous and that no unit vehicles had traveled down that road for good reason. He would have urged more reconnaissance on the routes and potential alternatives. "Whether or not I would have been successful in getting that to become the battle plan, I don't know." But given that he was relied on for this kind of information, he had a good chance of making the case. In his mind, he let down his command as well as his friend. What happened, as he puts it, "reflected poorly" on him. He "faults" himself for not being there, and though he is "frustrated" that his unit members "didn't have the same clout" as he did and couldn't "pick up the slack" in his absence, he doesn't fault them for failing to make the call.

It is significant that it is just this sense he has that he was the only individual who could have done the job, and that it was a job requiring constant vigilance, without gaps and breaks, that hounds him, and ultimately opens the way for self-exculpation. The fact that he didn't *choose* to take the leave—that he was acting on an order—only gets him so far. The real exculpation came 3–4 months after the incident, when his deployment was over and he reflected on the incident in connection with whether he should reenlist. He now sees somehow that the demand he put on himself to be quasi-omniscient, to keep constant vigil of the changing battlefield, as he puts it several times, without "gaps in his knowledge," is unsustainable. He reconstructs the thinking:

> Well, god, I thought to myself, if I am not here in a 2-week period of time and things go to hell in a hand basket . . . what is the situation going to be like when I get back, having been away longer? I am going to be less equipped to handle any further situations, because now I have a real gap in my knowledge. So all of this was coalescing at the same time, and it took me a while to sort of realize that I couldn't be the person that was there all the time. I could only be in one spot at a time. I could reenlist and I could stay in the job. But ultimately I am never going to cover the whole country. I was never going to be the one-stop intelligence analyst for the whole Army. Maybe my role was actually very small.

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Looking on from the outside, we might say, "Well, of course." However well Fiebrandt served in his role and however critical he was to the safety of his unit, he wasn't there that day, wasn't at fault for not being there that day, and wasn't at fault for not briefing in advance his unit about a mission that he didn't even know was going to take place. Yet for Fiebrandt, it was an epiphany to see that holding himself responsible was grandiose. It required too idealized a sense of his role responsibilities and duties, and too idealized a set of expectations and injunctions about how he was supposed to function. And yet the unreasonableness of the demands to which he held himself only dawned on him with time, when he realized their absurd implications—that he was expecting of himself something close to full omniscience and omnipresence, a constant vigil on the battlefield that could produce an accurate, automatically refreshed picture without gaps, breaks, and breaches. He chuckles as he thinks about the absurdity of it all and of the *reductio* that it took to get him to realize it. But, it is a tentative laugh. He still knows the pull of those expectations and what it is like to be in their grip. He may no longer endorse the evaluations so intimately related to the feelings, but when he says, "I kind of fault myself" and "I almost felt responsible for not being there," he still can put himself in the mindset of what it was like to endorse those evaluations and the feel their tugs. He has since moved on. But, he got there only through an honest moral struggle about what it means to be vigilant as an intelligence guy. There were epistemic finitudes and frailties that he had to accept, however they compromised his agency.

The Stoics address a related issue regarding intellectual virtues (Brennan, 2005). They warn that we have epistemic duties to be "nonprecipitous" and "noncareless" in our judgments about the world (Sherman & White, 2003), in part, so that we are not derailed by seductive impressions that are at the heart of unruly emotions. But in this case, with these emotions and the appraisals that are at their core, Fiebrandt wasn't precipitous or rash. The construal of himself, at fault or somehow derelict in his duties, was compelling, or at least compelling enough to block the counterevidence. Like many soldiers I have spoken with, Fiebrandt doesn't easily volunteer the word "guilt." His words are "fault" and "responsibility." But, it is clear that he is talking about self-blame.

I tell this story to illustrate a function of guilt as a way of working out the boundaries of moral responsibility. There is genuine *intellectual* figuring out. The emotion of guilt is not just recalcitrant in this case, with Fiebrandt seeking confirmation of a construal "despite believing that there *are* no genuine reasons in favor of that construal," as Brady would put it (Brady, 2009, p. 429). Fiebrandt is not sure what he believes, and he is not going to let himself off the hook until he is sure. The rub, of course, is that having "to be sure" quickly spirals into intellectualization and rationalization, an inventing of reasons. In short, it becomes primitive thinking that mixes rational processing with the illogicality of wishful/magical thinking and presumptions of omniscience. There are elements of this in Fiebrandt's thinking. (On a related note, a therapist who works with soldiers told me of a patient who homed in over and over again on the spot on Google maps that marked where he lost a buddy, working out how he could have prevented the death if he only took this route rather than that.)

So Fiebrandt left his post for R and R, without any inkling of the planned raid, and had no reason to inform his commanders of potential dangers. Yet he repeatedly put himself back in the reporting chain as if he knew, or should have known, what would become relevant only later. Similarly, there was little reason for him to have pointed out that particular street to Eden, though projecting forward he helps himself to what is now the salience of the knowledge and faults himself for failing to share it earlier. He faults himself for an epistemic stance he couldn't easily have had then.

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But my point is what Fiebrandt was going through wasn't *just* that. He was also thinking, as he put it: Was he like the homeowner who never quite got around to putting a fence around the backyard pool and then one day discovers a child has wandered into the pool and drowned? Or was he more like the cop who might have had helpful information but was legitimately off-duty at the moment and nowhere near the scene of danger? Even after absolving himself of responsibility for being omniscient and omnipresent, he questioned whether or not he was negligent. The sense of minimal culpability was not easy to dismiss. He thought he was more like the off-duty cop than the negligent homeowner, but accepting the analogy required a lengthy, psychological process of surmounting his self-reproach. It required accepting his limits and the bad luck of being up against them then. It required self-empathy.

Self-Empathy

Much has been written on empathy in the past three decades, so I will be brief in my summary as prelude to my current interests. (For an overview, see Sherman 1998a, 1998b, & 1998c).

Empathy is a term of fairly recent coinage. It came into usage at the turn of the 20th century with the translation by Titchner of the German word *Einfühlung*—to enter into a feeling, a term itself first used by Robert Vischer in 1873 in the context of the psychology of aesthetics and developed by Theodor Lipps in the context of how we know other minds (Lipps, 1903; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Titchener, 1909; Pigman, 1995; Freud, 1986, p. 325). Two prominent models of empathy have emerged in recent years as competitors in the psychological and philosophical literature. The first is empathy as vicarious arousal or contagion. The key historical figure is David Hume and his notion of sympathy, though what he means is what we now call empathy, as a mechanism that allows us to "catch" another person's affect. We know others' emotions by coming to feel qualitatively similar or congruent emotions. Hume's metaphor is intuitive: We are attached, as if by a cord, with movement at one end reverberating at the other, causing a fainter impression of the original feeling (Hume, 1968/1739, pp. 316–324). The second camp, led by Adam Smith, conceives of empathy in more robust, cognitive terms (Smith, 1976/1759). Empathy (again, "sympathy" is his term) is a process that engages imagination, requiring simulation and the taking up of roles or perspectives. We come to know another's emotions by trading places "in fancy," as Smith puts it, "beat time" with their hearts (Smith, 1976/1759, p. 51). But Smith insists that the swap is not only situational, but also dispositional (Williams, 1973). We not only stand in another's shoes, we try to become them in their shoes, to "enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person with him" (Smith, 1976/1759, p. 48).[7]

How do these models fare with respect to *self*-empathy, and in particular, its role in surmounting overly harsh self-reproach? One obvious worry for the contagion model is that it suggests a picture of empathy as a repetition of the same stuck, often intrusive feeling and risks retraumatization as a secondary effect of the repetition (even when the repetition is in the

[7] On the notion of "becoming" the other person and the therapeutic work of empathic resonance, the writing of psychoanalytic theorist, Heinz Kohut is highly instructive. (See Kohut, 1971, 1977, & 1984). Note, for Smith, there is an ultimate interest in moral judgment and the fittingness of the emotion, and this requires a bringing back of that empathetic connection "to one's own bosom" (Smith, 1976/1759, p. 141) in a way that can both facilitate moral insight and distort empathy with projection from our own home base.

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service of mastery and self-understanding).[8] The idea of emotional fixity or stubbornness is part of a more general worry Peter Goldie raises about the inbuilt biases of emotional construals. As he puts it, emotional subjects tend to confirm rather than disconfirm their evaluative construals:

> The feeling directed toward the object of the emotion, and the related perception of the object as having the [evaluative] property, tend to be idées fixes to which reason has to cohere. The phenomenon is a familiar one: when we are afraid, we tend unknowingly to seek out features of the object of our fear that will justify the fear. (Goldie, 2004, p. 99)

So, we have an epistemic tendency to build an "epistemic landscape" that coheres with an evaluation and its related feeling. We lock ourselves into a specific emotional take. Self-empathy, if a contagious re-experience of emotion, may exacerbate what we already feel and itself require intervention.

Similar worries emerge for the simulation view of empathy for it would require that we take up, again, the very perspective from which we are trying to free ourselves. In the cases I detailed above, the emotional subject's focus is framed by guilt and shame that "capture and consume attention" (Brady, 2009)[9]. Self-empathy requires dwelling again in that perspective and, so, re-experiencing the same emotions. In the case of traumatic emotions, it may also involve retraumatization.

These objections may be limited, but they make clear that if a notion of self-empathy is to be part of a model of emotional and moral growth, something more than simulating and re-experiencing traumatic events and emotions (whether through narration or other representational forms, e.g., artwork or dance) is required. Here, not surprisingly, the notion of empathy in psychotherapy is helpful. Arguably, psychotherapy of various stripes and psychodynamic models depend on patients revisiting and reliving painful emotions, and in the context of an empathetic listener who can bear compassionate witness to the pain through various interventions and gentle corrections of bias, interpretations, and reframing, can help break the repetition and defenses. The therapist's empathy involves the "tracking" of a patient's emotion, sometimes through his or her own congruent reenactments or countertransferences (Chused, 1991; McLaughlin, 1991), other times more cognitively. But, it also involves a conveyed sympathy of sorts—compassion, trust, rapport, and a nonjudgmental stance that help to build a "working alliance" (Greenson, 1967). Empathy, in this context, involves access, but also benevolence, distance, and rootedness in a shared task. That stance is both protective and transformative, helping the patient safely to remember, revisit, and feel painful reactions to traumatic events, as well as reconstruing what happened in ways that may involve fairer self-judgment and less rigid notions of success and failure, which ultimately would help loosen self-destructive feelings.

[8] See Freud on repetition compulsion in his "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (Freud, 1955). Also included in the symptoms of posttraumatic stress are intrusive recollections. For a very helpful discussion of posttraumatic stress and its treatment, see Wilson, Friedman, & Lindy, 2001). Note, there has been a move afoot, recently with momentum from the Army, to drop the "D" in PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) because of the stigmatizing effect of the term. Jonathan Shay has long argued that service members returning from war with limb losses do no have "limb disorders." Why should those returning from war with psychological stress have disorders? There are other terminological shifts aimed to "normalize" the response to stress. For a history of PTSD and its inclusion in the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual* in (DSM-III, 1980), see Herman (1992).

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All this is relatively familiar. Less familiar is the notion of self-empathy and what role it can play in moral healing, not as a competitor or replacement for second-person empathy and its role in formal or informal therapy, but as something in addition that has an important place in its own right. One way to think about self-empathy is as a derivative notion. It is a first personal stance in which the paradigm is the second personal case. In some cases, an individual may come to self-empathy by internalizing a second personal instance of it, as when she or he learns a measure of self-empathy through the empathy of a therapist. In this case, the patient may internalize another's stance. But he or she may also internalize the stance that she or he takes toward others. So a rape victim in a support group may come to feel self-empathy only after first feeling empathy toward others who were similarly victimized. "Oh my, God, that's what happened to me," she might come to say.[9] The recognition of experiences similar to her own and the ensuing empathy toward others may enable her now to look at herself through new eyes. Second-person empathy, both the giving and receiving of it, may thus prepare a sufferer for first-person empathy; one gains an outside perspective of the self, a perspective that is qualitatively different from the punishing and shaming stance that has held the individual hostage. Veteran support groups may similarly enable self-empathy through the validating experience of empathizing and being empathized with.

Similarly, candid discussions with rape victims (inside and outside the military) may help many service members process their own traumas and vice versa. The idea that a person cannot possibly understand war trauma unless he or she has been in battle is defensive and belies the work of moral imagination in building inter- and intrapsychic empathy. This, I believe, is one of the critical lessons to be learned from those like Jessica Stern, who writes in this volume on "PTSD: Policy Issues." Herself the victim of a horrific rape as a 15-year old in Concord, Massachusetts (Stern, 2010) and of the subsequent trauma and denial, she has gone on to work with military and security communities in ways that bridge the military/civilian divide and rebut the idea that a soldier has a different kind of psyche from the rest of us.

In thinking about self-empathy, it is useful to turn to Aristotle's remarks about self-love (or self-friendship) in "Nicomachean Ethics" (NE) IX.8 (Aristotle, 1984). He is aware that the idea of self-love may be a bit strained, because it requires that we stand both as subject and object toward ourselves, but more important, because it connotes a problematic sort of selfishness. However, there is room for a good kind of self-love, he insists, that is, the capacity of a self to listen to reason with equanimity. He associates this kind of self-love with nobility and the sacrifice characteristic of reason's excellence, which is practical wisdom or virtue, and contrasts it with the baser kind of self-love that involves taking material advantage for oneself (Aristotle, 1984, NE IX.8).

In the soldiers' stories that are my focus, there is no shortage of nobility and sacrifice. If anything, that aspiration for virtue is too hard-driving, giving way to too much self-punishment when luck runs out. Still, Aristotle's idea of finding the right way to befriend oneself is useful here. The best kind of friendship—that of character friendship, he tells us— is an arena for character critique and moral growth (NE IX.12 1172a, pp. 10–11; Sherman, 1995, pp. 187–239), which like all friendship, requires positive feelings (*philêsis*) toward one's object and feelings of goodwill (*eunoia).*

Self-empathy, as I am imagining it, involves a similar kind of self-friendship and requires a minimal measure of good will or compassion. I am also imagining it in the

[9] I thank Susan Brison for this point.

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service of moral growth. It is not just self-kindness, though, or a going-gentle-on-oneself. In the cases I have in mind, it is earned as a counterweight to overbearing self-judgment. This helps deflect the image of self-empathy (or self-compassion) as a kind of cheap self-esteem, a narcissism or self-absorption that can lead to downgrading others in order to inflate one's own self-image (Neff, 2003). I am not thinking of self-empathy as a kind of contrived *boost* to a deprecated sense of self, nor am I thinking of self-empathy as a belittling of self, a putting of self in its place, as Cicero redacts the Epicurean teaching: these are "the restrictions under which all humans live," (*Tusculan Disputations*; TD 3.77; in Cicero, 2002), "you are not the only one to have this happen," (TD 3.78), "to endure these things is human" (TD 3.34). Rather, I am thinking of it as a an emotion or attitude that predisposes one to a fairer self-assessment, especially, in the cases I have focused on, in which luck, accident, and power ceded to others squeeze out one's moral efficacy or cast doubt on one's goodness. Self-respect doesn't quite get at this idea, for its underlying notion is that one is not servile or subordinate to others, but rather an equal among equals. A person may have no doubt about that, stand in no need of its reaffirmation, and yet still need a fairer hearing about whether "could-have-dones" entail "should-have-dones" in the case of guilt, or about how fixed or severe the damage done to the self is in negative self-evaluation in the case of shame.

In addition, self-empathy presupposes a capacity to take up a perspective toward the self that allows for narrative distance. Peter Goldie has written insightfully about a "narratable" conception of self:

> We are able to deploy in thought and feeling a narratable conception of oneself: with a narratable past, which one now remembers, interprets, and evaluates in various ways; with a present; and with a narratable future, about which one can make plans, have hopes an aspirations, and so on. This conception of oneself is the narrative sense of self. (Goldie, 2011, p. 87)

The stance is essentially ironic. We see ourselves in the past or future as if from an external perspective, "in effect seeing oneself as another" (Goldie, 2011, p. 87). This creates an evaluative and epistemic gap essential to irony: "One now knows what one did not know then; . . . one can now take an evaluative stance which differs from the stance that one then took" (Goldie, 2011, p. 87).

My notion of self-empathy adds to this narratable conception of self an ability to see from beyond or outside without radical dissociation or alienation from the old self and its ways of seeing and feeling. In this sense, self-empathy allows for self-reintegration, rather than reinvention or radical conversion. Though one may have psychologically and emotionally moved on, one can still remember how one saw and felt things and be affected, even if slightly, in some such way. As I am imagining it, in a case like Prior's, he can still feel a bit of the bite of the old guilt. It doesn't rattle him any longer, but in narrating the story, he is nonetheless affected by the remembering, in some way as he once was. That is not all he feels with respect to the events. He now sees circumstances far more completely and his emotions reflect those changed appraisals. But, it is not just that he is now *tolerating* what he used to feel or think or *accepting* and *owning* it for what it was, as therapists might put it. He also knows how it feels, as if in muscle memory. That is a part of his self-empathy. Similarly, in Hall's case, we can imagine him experiencing a flush of shame as he retells the story and brings to mind the faces of the father and daughter or hears the commander's intonation as he gives him the order to deliver the envelope. The shame is no longer intrusive and paralyzing, as it is in posttraumatic stress;

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rather, it is accessible. Self-empathy, as I am using the term, in addition to a compassionate, less judging regard, involves this kind of affective, empathic access.[10]

Obviously, the degree of access will depend on how changed a person's psychological make-up has become. Access exists along a continuum. When the narrative distance is great, an individual may be able to remember only coldly and cognitively, with little emotional valence (Strawson, 2004). He or she is no longer much "alive" to how circumstances felt then. At this extreme, a limit to self-empathy has been reached, at least for a while.

Self-Forgiveness

Before concluding, I would like to say a few very brief words about self-forgiveness. It might be argued that what I am really after in appealing to self-empathy is an attitude of forgiveness toward self. But, self-forgiveness is an ill-fitting notion when there is no real intentional wrongdoing for which to demand forgiveness from self or others, as in the case of subjective guilt. As a more general idea of foreswearing anger and blame, it may have its place in the surmounting of self-reproach, irrespective of whether that reproach is deserved or not (Calhoun, 1992; Roberts, 2003; Griswold, 2007; Goldie, 2011). But even if it does, self-forgiveness doesn't expose the psychological mechanism I have been exploring, of surmounting certain emotions with compassion while preserving empathic access to them. And why is that access important or worth preserving? I suspect it is because I don't believe that difficult conflicts and the emotions that express them are ever so completely resolved that all residue of such conflicts disappear. Self-empathy is a way of remaining attuned to those tugs and pulls as they morph into new shapes on new landscapes. It is a compassionate form of keeping self-vigil.

That said, we may also need self-empathy in cases in which we have, in fact, transgressed or acted morally wrongly, and forgiveness toward self or from others, but it doesn't seem enough or quite right, perhaps because the wrongdoing was so heinous. Self-empathy may also be appropriate when self-forgiveness might seem premature or too much like cheap vindication or excuses. The guilt and shame felt still seem appropriate but so, too, do empathetic understanding and compassion for the self who erred.

Conclusion

I have asked us to look seriously at moral injuries, especially those in which we do no intentional wrong, yet feel as if we have betrayed others and ourselves, and suggest that shame is, at times, more fitting than guilt. Soldiers know these moral wounds well. They routinely impose moral responsibility on themselves in the face of factors that make light of their own agency, whether fluke accident, the tyranny of bureaucracy, public indiffer-

[10] See Schechtman (2001), whose work I came upon in revising this paper. She invokes Richard Wollheim's (1984) notion of "event memory" (p. 106) as discussed in *The Thread of Life*, which, as she explains, "is not a cold cognitive relation to the past, but one which is thoroughly infused with affect" (p. 248). Wollheim, when describing his World War II soldier years, recalls driving by mistake into German lines in August, 1944. Having described the event and the memory of it, he says, "and as I remember feeling those feelings, the sense of loss, the sense of terror, the sense of being on my own, the upsurge of rebellion against my fate, come over me, so that I am affected by them in some such way as I was when I felt them on that remote summer night."

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ence, spotty intelligence, or all too lethal high-tech and low-tech weaponry. Moral luck morally injures. And it begs for healing, in part, through the consolations of self-empathy that allow for affectively alive ownership of the past and future.

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