

Abstract, "Free Will and the Asymmetrical Justifiability of Holding Morally Responsible"
unpublished manuscript

Ben Vilhauer, William Paterson University of New Jersey

This paper is about the intuition that blame requires a stronger justification than praise, an intuition highlighted by Susan Wolf. This intuition has important implications for the free will debate even if one does not follow Wolf in holding that there are different control conditions for praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. Even if the control condition is the same, the requirements for justifiably treating someone as satisfying the control condition in the contexts of blame and praise are different. Treating someone as satisfying it in the context of seriously harmful blaming practices is only justifiable if it cannot be reasonably doubted that he acted freely, but it is justifiable in the context of "costless" praise (i.e. praise that can be given at no significant cost to anyone) so long as it can be reasonably doubted that he did not act freely. Anyone who thinks the free will debate is truth-conducive must acknowledge that reasonable doubt is possible in both these cases.