

# Self to Self

## *Selected Essays*

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## Don't Worry, Feel Guilty

### Introduction: The Worry

One can feel guilty without thinking that one actually is guilty of moral wrongdoing. For example, one can feel guilty about eating an ice cream or skipping aerobics, even if one doesn't take a moralistic view of self-indulgence. And one can feel guilty about things that aren't one's doing at all, as in the case of survivor's guilt about being spared some catastrophe suffered by others. Guilt without perceived wrongdoing may of course be irrational, but I think it is sometimes rational, and I want to explore how it can be.

If guilt were essentially a feeling about having done something morally wrong, then feeling guilty about self-indulgence or survival would of course be irrational. The only reason why I can conceive of guilt's being rational in these cases is that I think the emotion need not involve any judgment or perception of immorality. But I also think that the emotion of guilt must involve a judgment or perception whose content is normative in a more general sense. In particular, I believe that guilt requires a sense of *normative vulnerability*, which I would define as follows.

At the bottom of normative vulnerability is the sense of being somehow unjustified, of having nothing to say for oneself. But feeling unjustified in some respect does not by itself amount to feeling guilty, since one doesn't feel guilty, for instance, about beliefs or assertions for which one

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is aware of having no justification. Guilt arises only when the sense of *indefensibility* yields a sense of being defenceless against negative responses of some kind, variously thought to include blame, resentment, retaliation, or punishment, though their precise nature remains to be specified by a philosophical account of the emotion. One feels defenceless against these responses in the sense of having no claim or entitlement to be spared from them, because they are warranted. One thus feels defenceless in a normative sense.

The concept of normative vulnerability helps to explain why guilt is a feeling of both anxiety and diminished self-worth. The anxiety comes from feeling oneself exposed to something untoward. The sense of diminished self-worth comes from conceiving of that exposure as a matter of being stripped of a claim or entitlement.

Any attempt to analyze guilt as lacking at least this much normative content is bound to fail, in my opinion. The most promising attempt of this kind, to my knowledge, is Freud's analysis of guilt, which focuses on the element of anxiety at the expense of the normative element. According to Freud, a guilty mind is anxious about the prospect of being punished by an internalized figure of authority, the super-ego. Freud notably avoids saying that this punishment is viewed in normative terms, as warranted. As I have argued elsewhere, however, this omission threatens to leave a gap in Freud's analysis of guilt, since anxiety that was merely about harsh treatment from a controlling figure might amount to nothing more than fear of a bully.<sup>1</sup> Unlike brute fear, guilt has a concessive or self-deprecatory quality, by virtue of which it disposes one neither to flee nor to fight but merely to hang one's head or to cringe. And the only way to read this aspect of guilt into Freud's analysis, I have argued, is to imagine that his description of being punished by an authority is, in fact, the description under which the guilty mind itself grasps the object of its anxiety – namely, as punishment administered with proper authorization. When thus reinterpreted, Freud's analysis ends up crediting the subject of guilt with a sense that his punishment is somehow warranted.

The resulting analysis raises a worry about the rationality of guilt even in cases of admitted wrongdoing, since it implies that such guilt is rational only if there really is some justification for punishing wrongdoers. If there is no justification for punishment, then it cannot be warranted, and so

<sup>1</sup> I argue for this claim at length in 'A Rational Superego' (Chapter 6 in the present volume).

one would be irrational to feel vulnerable on that score. The worry is that punishment is difficult to justify. The most persuasive justifications apply to punishment carried out by a legitimate state for the violation of valid laws. But guilt is felt on the basis of wrongs that are not and could not reasonably be subject to legal punishment – the breaking of intimate promises, minor injuries to people’s feelings, and so on. Feeling guilty about private wrongs could perhaps involve the mistake or the phantasy that they are crimes punishable by law, but then guilt would be ripe for debunking. If guilt about wrongdoing is to be vindicated as rational, then wrongdoing must genuinely warrant that to which guilt makes one feel normatively vulnerable; and I do not see how the private wrongs of adults can make one normatively vulnerable to punishment.

Freud thinks that the authority figure envisioned in guilt is an internalization of the parent who disciplined the subject when he was a child. But if an adult conceives of himself as having done something that would have warranted parental discipline when he was a child, then he will have no grounds for anxiety in the present; and if he conceives of himself as warranting parental discipline in the present, then he is simply confused. He may of course entertain the phantasy that he is back in childhood facing an angry parent, and this phantasy may even cause him real anxiety. But this anxiety would evaporate under reflection on the facts about who he really is and where he really stands. Unless he can rationally think of punishment as warranted, a sense of normative vulnerability to it will be irrational.

Freud is not worried about this possibility, because he is not interested in vindicating human emotions as rational. He is satisfied to show that they are intelligible in light of external circumstances as viewed through phantasies, misplaced memories, and other sources of distortion. But moral philosophers are inclined to worry about the rationality of an emotion such as guilt. And I have undertaken to consider the rationality of this emotion in cases involving no moral judgment, where feelings of normative vulnerability are even less likely to make sense.

I will approach these problematic cases by way of the less problematic case of guilt felt about perceived wrongdoing. I will propose an unfavourable response other than punishment to which perceived wrongdoing can make one *feel* normatively vulnerable by causing one to *be* vulnerable in that sense, so that the feeling is at least potentially rational. I will then turn to the cases in which guilt is felt about matters other than wrongdoing. One of these cases will lead me to consider yet a third response that may be the object of anxiety in guilt. The result will be a

disjunctive analysis of the emotion, as a sense of normative vulnerability to any one of several unfavourable responses.

### Guilt About Wrongdoing

Freud sometimes gives a slightly different analysis of guilt, saying that it is anxiety over having alienated the internalized parent's love.<sup>2</sup> Freud doesn't clearly distinguish between this analysis and the one based on punishment, since he suggests that the loss of parental love is anxiety-provoking because it will lead to harsh treatment of the sort that makes for punishment. But Freud's conception of love is hopelessly consequentialist, in my opinion, and should be discarded.<sup>3</sup> The result of discarding it will be, at least initially, to divide his conception of guilt into two independent conceptions, one tracing the constitutive anxiety to anticipated punishment and the other tracing it to the anticipated loss of love.

The latter analysis of guilt is plausible on phenomenological grounds. Typically, the only specific danger that alarms a guilty mind is the danger of discovery, which is alarming because it would lead to whatever contingency is the ultimate object of anxiety. Beyond discovery, however, the prospect looming before a guilty mind is extremely vague: no very specific contingency is clearly in view. Discovery must therefore be expected to yield something nebulously conceived, and this expectation must provoke a fairly unfocussed anxiety. The subject of guilt fears a generalized loss of security, as if discovery would leave him standing on shaky ground. Such insecurity is precisely what a child would fear at the prospect of losing his parents' love. Having done something that might alienate them, he would vividly fear their discovering it, but only because he would then expect banishment to a no-man's-land of which he has no more than vague apprehensions.

As before, however, we have to wonder whose love the guilty-minded adult is afraid of losing, and why he should be afraid of losing it. Surely, an adult doesn't think that his mother will stop loving him, after all these years, simply because he has cheated on his taxes. If, alternatively, his feeling of guilt is a revival of anxiety that he felt about his parents when he was a child, then it is simply misplaced. And he is unlikely to think

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey et al. (eds.) (London: the Hogarth Press), vol. 21, 59–145, p. 124. See also *Outline of Psychoanalysis*, S. E. 23: 205.

<sup>3</sup> See my "Love as a Moral Emotion" (Chapter 4 in the present volume).

that there is any love to be lost from the tax-collector – or, if there is, that there would be much harm in losing it.

### *Forfeiting Trust*

Something that the guilty-minded adult might realistically anticipate losing, however, is trust; and the loss of trust results in the kind of nebulous vulnerability that might arouse the anxiety constitutive of guilt. Losing trust is indeed a kind of banishment to a vaguely imagined no-man's-land – a status that would strike the subject as inherently dangerous without posing particular, specifiable dangers. Losing trust, like losing love, would leave him out in the cold.

Consider the familiar strategy for dealing with iterated prisoners' dilemmas.<sup>4</sup> The strategy is to co-operate with others until they fail to co-operate, and then to withhold co-operation from them until they have resumed co-operating. This strategy requires a player to classify his fellow players as co-operators or non-co-operators, on the basis of their most recent behaviour, and then to co-operate or not with them, accordingly. If most of the players adopt this strategy, then any player who makes an unco-operative move can expect to lose his reputation as a co-operator – which would be, in effect, to lose the trust of his fellow players, who would then stop co-operating with him. His anxiety about having warranted this response might then constitute a feeling of guilt for his own failure to co-operate.

This kind of anxiety might account for guilt about wrongdoing if the moral choices in life were one long series of prisoners' dilemmas, to which morality was the co-operative solution. In that case, being a co-operator would consist in treating others morally, and a reputation for being a co-operator would elicit moral treatment from others in return. Conversely,

<sup>4</sup> The prisoners' dilemma gets its name from the following philosophical fiction. Two prisoners are questioned separately, under suspicion of having committed a crime together. Each is offered the following plea bargain: if he gives testimony against the other, his sentence (whatever it otherwise would have been) will be reduced by one year; if he is convicted on the other's testimony, his sentence will be increased by two years. Each person will benefit from giving testimony against the other, no matter what the other does; but if both avail themselves of this benefit, each will be harmed by the other's testimony, and the harm will be greater than the benefit of testifying.

The discussion in the text refers to 'iterated' prisoners' dilemmas – that is, a series of decision problems of the same form, as would confront a pair of hapless recidivists who were repeatedly caught and offered the same bargain. This series of decision problems is often described as a game, in which the prisoners are "players" who make successive "moves." In the context of this discussion, 'co-operating' is defined in relation to the other prisoner, rather than the authorities – that is, as withholding one's testimony.

wrongdoing would jeopardize one's reputation for co-operating and justify others in retaliating with similar wrongs. Anxiety about thus having forfeited their trust would correspond to the feeling of guilt for wrongdoing.

This account of guilt has its points, but it needs some adjustment. It characterizes guilt as a feeling of normative vulnerability to retaliatory wrongdoing, and so it vindicates this feeling as rational only if such vulnerability is real, because retaliatory wrongdoing is indeed warranted. But retaliatory wrongdoing isn't warranted: morality is not a co-operative scheme from which wrongdoers can justly be excluded. So if guilt is anxiety about having forfeited trust, the trust at stake cannot be represented by inclusion in the moral scheme.

### *Forms of Trust*

The trust that is forfeited by wrongdoing is expressed, not in moral treatment, which is owed to the trustworthy and untrustworthy alike, but in morally optional transactions that depend on mutual assumptions of good will. One is obligated not to lie even to a liar; what one doesn't owe to a liar is credence.

*Attitudinal trust.* In verbal communication, one person utters a sentence with the intention of thereby giving others reason to believe it, via their recognition of that very intention. This communicative intention necessarily depends on being recognized as a good intention. Its being recognized by the hearers as the intention to give them reason to believe wouldn't actually give them reason to believe unless they assumed that it was based on the speaker's own awareness of such a reason. If communication wasn't assumed by the hearers to be well-intended in this sense, it wouldn't succeed; and so if the speaker didn't assume that it would meet with that assumption, he wouldn't be in a position to intend it, in the first place. These mutual assumptions of communicative good will are the rational infrastructure of conversation.

Now consider why someone's telling a lie warrants others in refusing to trust him on future occasions. One possibility would be that the lie betrays his lack of some truth-telling disposition without which others have no grounds for trusting his word. In that case, his consciousness of having told a lie would make him feel that he had warranted others in withdrawing their trust specifically from his word, and the resulting anxiety would have a specific content that might earn it the name of liar's guilt. But guilt about wrongdoing is not divisible into specific modes for specific wrongs – liar's guilt, thief's guilt, and so on. If it were, then



there would be modes of guilt only for common, repeatable wrongs that betrayed the lack of dispositions essential to warranting trust for various common purposes.

In reality, however, moral guilt is a unitary emotion, whose quality and content remain constant across many different occasions. Whatever serves as the object of anxiety in moral guilt should therefore be the same across different occasions for the emotion. If the object of anxiety is a loss of trust, then the trust at stake must be such as any guilty-minded subject can think of himself as having forfeited, by means of any wrongdoing. So what's at stake for the morally guilty mind must be the prospect of being regarded as well- or ill-intentioned *tout court* – of being simply included or simply excluded from the company of those who are recognized as persons of good will. Wrongdoing must be regarded as warranting a loss of trust, not because of any specific disposition that it might betray, but because it simply betrays a failure to consider the wrongness of the act or to be deterred by that consideration. And what such a failure warrants from others is a refusal to engage in any dealings that require a reliance on the wrongdoer's moral sensibility or motivation. The vague insecurity with which the guilty mind feels threatened must then be a general exclusion from optional dealings that depend on an assumption of good will.

This conception of guilt would explain why guilt tends to motivate acts of contrition and apology. Such acts are explicit expressions of the emotion, whose tendency to motivate them is therefore a tendency to motivate its own expression. The explanation of this tendency is that guilt seeks expression as a means of restoring generic trust. If the wrongdoer wants to regain acceptance as a person of good will, he must somehow demonstrate that the moral quality of his acts is indeed a motivationally effective consideration for him. Expressing a sense of guilt demonstrates that he is even now considering the moral quality of an act as justifying a loss of trust, and that he is hereby motivated by that consideration – too late on this occasion, of course, but in time to repair his ways for the future.

To accept the wrongdoer's apology, according to this conception, is to restore him to his previous position of trust, in effect readmitting him to the company of the well-intentioned. To forgive is not literally to forget, but it is to forget for practical purposes, to erase the practical consequences of the act's being remembered.

*Practical trust.* The practical consequences of losing trust can sometimes be described, in themselves, as a loss of trust, because they amount to the loss of what might be called practical trust. What I mean by 'practical

trust' can best be explained if trust is defined as reliance on someone's good will. Merely to assume that someone is well-intentioned is already to rely on his good will in an attitudinal sense; but one can also rely on his good will in a practical sense, by doing something that puts one at risk if his will is bad. What one does may be mental rather than physical, since it may consist in no more than believing another's communication, on the assumption that it is well-intentioned. The point is that assuming a communication to be well-intentioned is one step short of believing it, and the intervening step represents the difference between attitudinal and practical trust.

Practical trust often involves *entrusting* someone with something – one's credence, a task, a piece of property, a secret – on the assumption that it will be treated with good will. (That with which the trustee is entrusted can then be called a trust in yet a third sense of the term.) But that with which someone is entrusted, in receiving practical trust, may be quite intangible and hence difficult to identify.

Consider again the trust involved in communication, as expressed by the various senses of the verbs 'to listen' and 'to hear.' To listen is always to attend in a way that makes one susceptible to hearing. But there are many kinds of hearing: hearing that consists in merely detecting sounds; hearing that consists in understanding sounds as words uttered with communicative intent; hearing that consists in weighing a communication as a possible reason for belief; hearing that consists in believing on the basis of that reason; hearing that consists in taking the belief to heart, as a basis for action; and perhaps further, or intervening, levels of hearing. At each level one can listen without actually hearing, and one can hear at one level without listening at the next. (That's why it can make sense to say either 'He listened but he didn't hear' or 'He heard but he didn't listen.') Beginning at the third level, listening becomes a form of practical trust. Attending to a communication in a way that makes one susceptible to regarding it as reason to believe; attending to it as a reason in a way that makes one susceptible to believing; attending to the resulting belief in a way that makes one susceptible to taking it as reason for acting – all of these ways of listening entail practical reliance on the speaker's good will.

With what does one entrust a speaker by listening to him in one of these ways? What one entrusts him with, obviously, is one's susceptibility to hearing in the corresponding senses. (That's why listening is aptly called 'lending an ear.') And since one's susceptibility to hearing, in all of these senses, includes one's susceptibility to his words regarded as reasons for

belief and action, listening to him can entail entrusting him with nothing less than one's mind, or indeed with oneself. One entrusts a speaker with oneself by placing one's beliefs and actions under the influence of his words in a way that puts one at risk if his will is bad.

Another example of entrusting oneself to others is the formation of shared intentions.<sup>5</sup> A shared intention is formed by the pooling of individual intentions each of which is conditional on the others.

Each agent has an individual intention of the form 'I'm willing if you are,' and the agents 'pool' these intentions by expressing them so that, as all can see, the stated conditions on the intentions have been satisfied and the agents are now jointly committed to acting. Contributing to the pool of intentions doesn't necessarily require saying 'I'm willing if you are' in so many words, since the requisite intention can be expressed tacitly – for example, by holding out a hand in readiness to shake. But even a tacit contribution entails entrusting oneself to others, first, because their decision whether to reciprocate will determine whether one's intention becomes a positive commitment to act; and second, because that commitment will then be a commitment to do something whose point depends on whether they abide by their reciprocal commitment.

Even without joining a shared intention, one can do things whose point depends on the actions of others, and these shared activities may barely differ from actions based on shared intentions. Whether an extended hand is a signal of a willingness to shake if the other is willing, or the beginning of an actual handshake whose consummation is left up to the other, depends on subtle differences of expectation, resolution, timing, eye contact, momentum, and so on; and in the end, its status may be indeterminate. Whether or not one expresses an antecedent intention, however, doing one's part in a shared activity puts one at the other's disposal, by leaving the success of one's activity up to him.

*Losing Practical Trust: A Form of Punishment*

Withdrawing practical trust from someone thus entails refusing to do anything with him, in the sense of 'with' that applies to shared rather than parallel activities. It also entails not listening to him and hence not

<sup>5</sup> See my 'How to Share an Intention,' in *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 200–220. My conception of shared intention is based on the theory of Margaret Gilbert (see Gilbert's *On Social Facts* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992]).

conversing with him, either. In short, withdrawing practical trust from someone entails excluding him from social interaction.

To exclude someone from social interaction is to shun him, at least to some extent, and shunning is a form of punishment. As I have explained, Freud thinks that anxiety about being punished will develop out of a child's anxiety about losing his parents' love, because the child will expect unloving parents to deal out harsh treatment of the sort in which punishment is generally thought to consist. But anxiety about losing trust, rather than love, may already amount to anxiety about being punished, if the trust at stake is practical trust, the loss of which amounts to being shunned.

Shunning sounds like an archaic and perhaps barbaric form of punishment, but in fact it is practiced by liberal-minded parents of the post-Spockian era, in the form of the 'time-out.' When parents require a child to take a time-out, they exclude him from the conversation and shared activities of the family, precisely on the grounds that he cannot be trusted to participate. The rationale of the time-out is not that the child deserves the suffering that accompanies this punishment; it's that the child's misbehaviour warrants the withdrawal of trust in which the punishment consists. Enlightened parents will convey to the child that his exclusion from the family circle is not intended to make him suffer but only to put the family out of the reach of untrustworthy hands. Of course, they will also convey that he will be readmitted to the family circle as soon as he shows himself ready to be governed by a good will. And, finally, they will convey their confidence in the child's ability to be governed by a good will – a confidence that underlies their respect for the child and perhaps even their love.

For an adult, the loss of practical trust often entails no more than being met with fixed smiles and deaf ears, treatment that is outwardly nothing like being sent to one's room or made to sit in the corner. But a guilty-minded adult can still recognize that, in forfeiting trust, he has warranted treatment that would have been formalized as a punishment when he was a child, and this recognition is a rational counterpart to the phantasy attributed to him by Freud, that he is even now a child facing punishment from an internalized parent. Thus, the present analysis of guilt, as anxiety about having forfeited trust, can serve as a rationalist revision of Freud's analysis. According to this revision, guilt is anxiety about having warranted a kind of treatment that is sometimes formalized as punishment.

## Guilt Without Wrongdoing

I now turn to a consideration of guilt that is not about perceived wrongdoing. My first example is the guilt that we sometimes feel about being self-indulgent, by breaking a diet or shirking exercise. I'll call it self-disciplinary guilt. My second example will be so-called survivor guilt, which will lead me to consider a different analysis of the emotion.

*Self-Disciplinary Guilt*

I think that Kant has the right account of self-disciplinary guilt. For Kant, actions fail to be well-intentioned when they are performed for reasons that cannot be universalized; and reasons resist universalization because they must be regarded as applying either just to ourselves or, as Kant puts it, 'just for this once.'<sup>6</sup> I suspect that reasons regarded as applying just for this once are the basis for failures of self-discipline, which involve making one-time exceptions to some regimen to which we are otherwise committed. These actions violate the Categorical Imperative and therefore count, in Kantian terms, as violations of duty – specifically, of duties to ourselves. When we fail to be self-disciplined, we cheat ourselves in some way.

But why do we feel guilty about cheating ourselves, if guilt is anxiety about having forfeited trust? Whose trust do we forfeit by eating a second dessert?

The answer, to begin with, is that we forfeit our own trust, by undermining our grounds for relying on the commitments we make to ourselves. If we cannot count on ourselves to stick with a diet, then we cannot accept the commitment we make to ourselves in starting one, and then we cannot honestly claim to be on a diet, in the first place. Indeed, every future-directed plan that we make entails a commitment on which we ourselves must be able to rely in deliberating about related matters.<sup>7</sup> A loss of self-trust can therefore undermine our ability to organize and coordinate our activities over time – a consequence that is certainly a proper object of anxiety.

What's more, the violation of commitments warrants a loss of trust from people other than those to whom the commitments were made. If we break our word to one person, we provide grounds for distrust not

<sup>6</sup> *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), 91 (p. 424 in the Royal Prussian Academy edition).

<sup>7</sup> See Michael Bratman's *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

only to him but to others who might consider relying on our good will. And grounds for distrust are similarly generalizable even from instances of breaking our word to ourselves. Insofar as we are un-self-disciplined, we are unreliable, and insofar as we are unreliable, we are untrustworthy. Self-disciplinary guilt can therefore be a genuine and rational form of the emotion.

Of course, this account of self-disciplinary guilt, if followed to its Kantian conclusion, implies that failures of self-discipline are moral wrongs, because they are violations of the Categorical Imperative. Strictly speaking, then, the account does not show the rationality of guilt in the absence of perceived wrongdoing. Yet the moral status of Kantian duties to oneself, and of the corresponding wrongs, is not taken seriously by many present-day readers of Kant. The region carved out by the Categorical Imperative is not what is currently regarded as the moral realm. What I have argued is that it is nevertheless a region in which guilt can be rational.

#### *Survivor Guilt*

Let me turn, then, to survivor guilt, which is felt by those who have survived catastrophes that others have not. There may be an argument for the rationality of survivor guilt, but it would require a different analysis of guilt altogether. I will therefore make a brief digression, to explore this alternative analysis.

Of course, survivors may feel guilty because they accuse themselves of wrongdoing – of having exerted too little effort to save others, or too much effort to save themselves. They may also accuse themselves of indulging in immoral thoughts and feelings – for example, relief that others died in their place. These instances of guilt on the part of survivors can be accounted for by the foregoing analysis of guilt. But I am using the term ‘survivor guilt’ to denote guilt experienced about the mere fact of having survived, which cannot be regarded as wrong or as warranting the loss of trust.

Survivor guilt would be rational, however, if guilt were anxiety about having warranted resentment rather than the withdrawal of trust. Just as the victim of wrongdoing feels resentment against the wrongdoer, so the victim of misfortune often feels resentment against those who are more fortunate. Hence a survivor, like a wrongdoer, can be anxious about the prospect of being resented. And if resentment were warranted against both, then both could rationally be anxious about having warranted

resentment, and survivor guilt would be just as rational as guilt about wrongdoing.

A possible objection to this analysis would be that resentment about another's good fortune is a modification of envy, whereas the resentment about wrongdoing is a modification of anger. But I see no reason why survivor guilt and moral guilt could not be two distinct species of the same emotion, precisely by virtue of consisting in anxiety about having warranted two distinct species of resentment. Indeed, anger and envy rise to the level of resentment under similar conditions – namely, when tinged with the bitterness that accompanies a sense of injustice. One can be envied even if one's good fortune is acknowledged to be deserved; only if it is regarded as undeserved, however, will envy turn into resentment. One can incur anger by causing harms accidentally or through the vicissitudes of fair-play; anger will turn into resentment only if the harms one causes are thought to be unjust. Thus, envious resentment and angry resentment form a natural pair of emotions embittered by a sense of injustice.

Another objection to the proposed analysis would be that envy is never warranted at all, especially not when it rises to the level of resentment. But why shouldn't envy be warranted? I can imagine saying that envy is pointless, counter-productive, and even potentially vicious. But I cannot imagine claiming that the victims of misfortune have no grounds for envying those who are more fortunate, or for resenting those whose good fortune is undeserved; and so I have to admit that a beneficiary of good fortune may rationally feel anxiety about providing others with grounds for resentment.

Yet a third objection would be that if someone is literally a survivor, then the victims of the corresponding misfortune are dead and hence in no position to resent him. But third parties can feel resentment on behalf of the deceased, a resentment that can only be sharpened by the thought that its proper subjects are no longer alive to feel it. And a survivor can rationally feel anxiety about providing grounds for such vicarious or sympathetic resentment.

### Conclusion: Don't Worry

So is guilt about distrust or is it about resentment? I don't know what would count as the right answer to this question. Surely, we feel anxiety about having warranted both of these reactions, and both are warranted by wrongdoing as well as by related matters, which include failures of self-discipline, in the case of distrust, and undeserved disparities of fortune,

in the case of resentment. The term 'guilt' is applied to anxiety about all of these reactions, and there seem to be no grounds for ruling any of these applications incorrect.

I therefore conclude that guilt is a family of emotions, including anxiety about having warranted not only distrust but also angry or envious resentment and perhaps other, related reactions as well. This conclusion helps to explain the confusion we often feel about whether guilt is appropriate. We often criticize ourselves for feeling guilty when, as we say, we have nothing to feel guilty about. But we shouldn't criticize ourselves for having no grounds for distrust-anxiety or angry-resentment-anxiety, if what we're feeling is envious-resentment-anxiety instead. The fact that we haven't wronged anyone doesn't necessarily show that we have no grounds for feeling guilty; it may show only that we need to interpret our feelings more carefully, as anxiety about warranting envious resentment rather than anger or distrust.

Correctly interpreting our emotions can thus alleviate our worries about feeling guilty. What a relief.