

## MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BLAME (pp 41-48 of Velasquez 6th edition)

“A judgement about a person’s moral responsibility for a wrongful injury is a judgement about the extent to which the person deserves blame or punishment, or should pay restitution for the injury” (41)

We *excuse* people from blame, for example, if they are ignorant of the effects of their action

“A person is morally responsible for an injury or wrong if: (1) the person caused or helped cause it, or failed to prevent it when he could and should have; and (2) the person did so knowing what he or she was doing; and (3) the person did so of his own free will” (42)

Two completely *excusing conditions*: (i) ignorance and (ii) inability to change the action.

**Important exception:** The ignorance (i) cannot be deliberate or negligent

***Ignorance of fact*** excuses a person, since moral obligation requires the freedom to choose, and this can’t be done without the facts

***Ignorance of moral standards*** for similar reasons

Some sources of inability: lack of power, skill, resources, opportunity to act. The constraint can be physical or psychological

“Inability eliminates responsibility because...a person cannot have any moral obligation to do (or forbear from doing) something over which the person has no control” (49)

**Mitigating factors:** “(a) circumstances that leave a person *uncertain* but not altogether unsure about what he or she is doing (these affect the person’s knowledge); (b) circumstances that make it *difficult* but not impossible for the person to avoid doing it (these affect the person’s freedom); and (c) circumstances that minimize but do not completely remove a person’s *involvement* in an act (these affect the degree to which the person actually caused or helped to cause the wrongful injury)

that is, uncertainty, difficulty and minimal involvement are mitigating factors

Mitigating factors can lessen blame depending on how serious the injury or wrong was: the greater the wrong, the less the above factors mitigate blame

Using others to help me commit a wrong doesn’t mitigate responsibility