

Philosophy *of* Medicine

Analysis

Trauma and Diachronic Reasons-Responsive Moral Responsibility

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Abstract

This paper develops a taxonomy of trauma-related disruptions for responsibility assessment within a reasons-responsive framework. It identifies four disruptions: epistemic freezing, foreshortened future, narrative foreclosure, and loss of epistemic access to others. These are domain-sensitive impairments in the exercise of agency, not global losses of standing capacities. Understood this way, assessment can distinguish episodic excuse, mitigation, and domain-restricted responsibility. The taxonomy extends existing reasons-responsive accounts. Such accounts can absorb each disruption once it has been identified, but they do not supply the means of identifying or distinguishing them.

1. Introduction

Psychological trauma can affect memory and temporal orientation (Van der Kolk 2015; Ratcliffe et al. 2014, 9). It can also affect self-relation and social trust (Herman 1994; Luyten et al. 2020, 89). These effects can persist, shaping how people deliberate, act, and regulate their conduct over time (Ratcliffe et al. 2014; Şar 2017). Moral responsibility theory has paid little sustained attention to trauma. Where trauma appears, it tends to be handled through one of two approaches. It is treated either as an episodic loss of control, warranting an excuse for a particular action, or as a general impairment of agency that threatens moral responsibility as a standing status. Both approaches obscure the patterned and domain-sensitive ways in which trauma can disrupt the exercise of agency while leaving many responsibility-relevant capacities intact.

Reasons-responsive accounts of moral responsibility provide a natural framework for addressing this issue. On these views, responsibility is grounded in standing capacities for diachronic self-governance (Wallace 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 1998; Smith 2004). Agents remain morally responsible as long as they retain the capacity, assessed over time, to differentiate reasons, identify possible actions, deliberate among them, and follow through on the outcome of deliberation. Ordinary responsibility practices already reflect this structure by distinguishing episodic excuse for particular actions from loss of responsibility as a standing status (Wallace 1994, 118, 155). The challenge is to describe and assess trauma-related disruptions while distinguishing the uneven exercise of agency from global incapacity.



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This paper develops a taxonomy of trauma-related disruptions for responsibility assessment within a reasons-responsive framework. Drawing on psychological and phenomenological research, it identifies four recurrent disruption types: epistemic freezing, a sense of foreshortened future, narrative foreclosure, and loss of epistemic access to others. These disruptions alter how reasons are taken up, how actions are perceived as available, and how deliberation unfolds across time. These changes are patterned and domain-sensitive, often linked to particular cues.

The central claim is that these trauma-related disruptions impair the exercise of agency while leaving the standing capacities that ground moral responsibility intact. Traumatized individuals often continue to recognize reasons, regulate their conduct, and act intentionally across time within at least some domains of practical life, even while experiencing severe breakdowns in others (Van der Kolk 2015; Şar 2017). Making these patterns explicit allows responsibility assessment to distinguish more precisely between episodic excuse, mitigation, and domain-restricted responsibility.

The taxonomy extends existing reasons-responsive accounts. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza attach responsibility to the mechanism issuing in action, so assessment can vary across contexts (1998, 46). Angela M. Smith's rational relations view treats entrenched and even reflectively disavowed attitudes as expressions of an agent's evaluative outlook (2004, 331, 347). Each account can assess a trauma-related disruption once it has been identified. The taxonomy identifies the disruptions that these accounts presuppose in assessing responsibility.

The paper identifies and classifies trauma-related disruptions for use in existing accounts of moral responsibility. Its taxonomy is intended to support assessment across reasons-responsive approaches without adjudicating among them.

Section 2 clarifies the reasons-responsive framework and the sense of diachronic self-governance presupposed by the taxonomy. Section 3 develops the four trauma-related disruption types and explains how each affects reasons-uptake, action-identification, deliberation, and follow-through while remaining compatible with the persistence of standing capacities for moral responsibility. Section 4 explains when excuse, mitigation, and domain-restricted responsibility may be appropriate.

2. Reasons-Responsive Moral Responsibility and Diachronic Self-Governance

On reasons-responsive accounts, moral responsibility is grounded in an agent's standing capacities for self-governance across time (Wallace 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 1998; Smith 2004). Responsibility depends on whether an agent possesses the capacities required to guide action in light of reasons, with possession assessed across time. These capacities include the ability to differentiate reasons for and against an action, identify possible courses of action, deliberate among them, and follow through on the outcome of deliberation over time (Fischer and Ravizza 1998; Smith 2004).

A central feature of this framework is the distinction between possession of capacity and its exercise in particular contexts. Agents may fail to deliberate well, misidentify reasons, or act under conditions of impaired control in specific situations while remaining morally responsible agents overall (Kennett 2007, 94–95). Standing capacity is assessed over a period appropriate to an agent's practical life (Wallace 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 1998).

Periodic lapses, local breakdowns, or context-sensitive impairments are therefore compatible with continued responsibility as long as the relevant capacities remain operative across time in at least some domains.

This reasons-responsive structure underwrites ordinary responsibility practices that distinguish episodic excuse for particular actions from loss of responsibility as a standing status. An agent may be excused for what they do under conditions of acute threat, compulsion, or psychological disruption without thereby losing responsibility for their conduct more generally. The distinction allows responsibility assessment to identify the duration and scope of impairments underlying failures of control (Wallace 1994, 171).

Diachronic self-governance, as understood here, does not require uniform coherence, stable long-term planning, or continuous self-transparency across all contexts. It requires only that agents retain the capacity to regulate their conduct over time by responding to reasons they take to bear on what they should do. This regulation may be uneven, fragile, or restricted to certain domains of practical life while still grounding responsibility as a standing status (Fischer and Ravizza 1998).

The question is how impairments in deliberation, planning, self-relation, and social engagement should be assessed within a framework that distinguishes the exercise of agency from the standing capacities that ground moral responsibility. Reasons-responsive accounts supply the normative structure for responsibility assessment and appear to accommodate sustained, domain-sensitive impairment. Fischer and Ravizza require only that the mechanism issuing in action is the agent's own and moderately reasons-responsive (1998, 46). Smith's rational relations view concerns attributability and requires only that an attitude stand in the right relation to the agent's evaluative judgments (2004, 332, 346). Both accounts allow for uneven exercise of agency.

These accounts can accommodate a disruption once it has been identified. Applying the mechanism-based account to trauma requires saying which mechanism issued in the action. Fischer and Ravizza concede that they cannot say in general how mechanisms are individuated; they presuppose that an intuitively natural mechanism is available in each case (1998, 47). Trauma removes that assurance. Cue-triggered avoidance can be described as the agent's ordinary practical mechanism working on distorted inputs, or as a distinct mechanism that is not reasons-responsive. The two descriptions support opposite assessments. The theory does not choose between them. Sorting disruptions by the component of self-governance affected helps specify the mechanism to be assessed.

3. Trauma-Related Disruptions and Responsibility Assessment

The taxonomy isolates recurrent patterns through which trauma alters how reasons are taken up and acted upon across time. The four disruption types are selected because each disrupts diachronic self-governance in a distinct way, so assessment can track impairment without presupposing global incapacity.

Trauma-related disruptions do not typically operate as uniform or global impairments of agency. They tend to be cue-linked and domain-sensitive: Agents may experience severe disruption in some practical contexts while continuing to regulate their conduct, recognize reasons, and act intentionally in others. Neurobiological research on traumatic stress supports this pattern by showing that reminders of threat often activate trauma-related impairments selectively (Bremner 2006).

Domain sensitivity takes two forms. A disruption may be context-bound, activated by a class of cues or settings and dormant outside them, as when dissociative responses arise in crowded public settings and not elsewhere. Or it may be reason-restricted, present across contexts but affecting only a class of reasons, as when evidence about a group's trustworthiness fails to register wherever it is met, while the agent's responsiveness to other evidence is unchanged. The two are independent, and a disruption may be restricted in both ways. The distinction matters because an impairment may be complete within its range while leaving the agent unimpaired outside it. Assessment must identify the range of contexts or reasons affected.

This domain-sensitive structure allows assessors to distinguish episodic excuse for actions performed under conditions of acute impairment, mitigation where agency is partially compromised, and domain-restricted responsibility where agents retain reasons-responsive control in some contexts but not others. Treating trauma-related disruption as eliminating responsibility by default would obscure these distinctions by collapsing an uneven exercise of agency into global incapacity.

The taxonomy tracks four components of diachronic self-governance: reasons-uptake, action-identification, deliberation, and follow-through. The four disruption types are distinguished by which component is most directly affected and how the impairment tends to be cued and distributed across domains. *Epistemic freezing* primarily distorts reasons-uptake by making certain threat-linked beliefs disproportionately salient and resistant to revision. *Foreshortened future* primarily compresses the temporal horizon of deliberation and follow-through by weakening the practical force of long-range reasons. *Narrative foreclosure* primarily disrupts the diachronic self-interpretation on which the uptake of long-range reasons depends, while leaving reasons-responsive regulation in concrete contexts intact. *Loss of epistemic access to others* primarily restricts the social support for reasons-uptake and action-identification, limiting deliberation in contexts involving distrust or institutional association.

3.1 Epistemic Freezing and Memory

Trauma can alter how beliefs are formed, maintained, and revised. One well-documented effect is epistemic freezing, a pattern in which certain beliefs associated with traumatic experience become rigid, highly resistant to counterevidence, and disproportionately action-guiding in particular contexts (Luyten et al. 2020, 91). This rigidity narrows how reasons are taken up and weighed in particular contexts while leaving other rational capacities intact.

Clinical models of post-traumatic stress disorder similarly emphasize the persistence of threat appraisals and difficulties in updating beliefs in response to disconfirming information, especially under cue-linked conditions (Ehlers and Clark 2000). This supports the interpretation of epistemic freezing as a context-sensitive impairment in reasons-uptake. Research on traumatic memory shows that experiences of extreme threat can be encoded in ways that separate affective and sensory content from broader contextual information. Some memories remain vivid and intrusive while losing their connection to the time or situation in which they arose. The result is flashbacks experienced as present rather than as past events (Van der Kolk 2015). In cases of early or repeated trauma, memory may fragment into sensory or emotional traces that are inaccessible except when

triggered, often eliciting involuntary fight-flight-freeze responses (Van der Kolk 2015, 177–178). These responses can temporarily overwhelm deliberation and inhibit ordinary control.

Epistemic freezing develops when beliefs formed in conditions of threat continue to structure practical reasoning long after the immediate danger has passed. Under traumatic conditions, attention narrows and certain beliefs become closely tied to the regulation of safety and risk. Because these beliefs are acquired in contexts where rapid response matters more than evaluating evidence, they tend to retain practical force even when countervailing information is available. As a result, particular beliefs can become difficult to revise in specific contexts while remaining open to revision elsewhere.

Epistemic freezing is typically domain-sensitive, though not always context-bound. A person who rigidly mistrusts a particular group after an assault carries that mistrust into every setting. The impairment is reason-restricted: Evidence about that group stops registering, while the same agent weighs evidence and deliberates responsibly about work, family, and financial decisions. The presence of epistemic freezing in one domain therefore does not imply a general inability to differentiate reasons or to revise beliefs elsewhere.

In cue-linked cases, epistemic freezing impairs reasons-uptake while leaving other deliberative capacities intact. Episodes in which belief rigidity bypasses deliberation can support episodic excuse, while continued sensitivity to reasons and intentional regulation in other domains supports ongoing responsibility within those domains. What is impaired is how reasons become salient under specific triggering conditions, not the standing capacity to deliberate and regulate conduct across time. Smith's account and Fischer and Ravizza's account can describe this pattern once it has been identified. For Smith, the rigid belief expresses an entrenched evaluative attitude that remains attributable despite conflicting with reflective judgment (2004, 346). For Fischer and Ravizza, the operative mechanism displays uneven responsiveness in cue-linked contexts while remaining the agent's own (1998, 73–75). Both descriptions apply equally to ordinary recalcitrant attitudes. The difference bears on assessment. A threat-linked belief is tied to a particular class of cues. Identifying the impairment in reasons-uptake and its triggering cues shows how the belief can be tracked and anticipated.

3.2 Foreshortened Future and Temporal Compression

Trauma can alter an agent's temporal orientation. One widely discussed effect is a sense of foreshortened future, in which the future is experienced as truncated, unreal, or lacking meaningful possibility (Ratcliffe et al. 2014, 9). The future may appear inaccessible or irrelevant to present deliberation, limiting the projects and plans the agent can envisage. This alteration affects how reasons are perceived and weighed by compressing the temporal horizon within which action is evaluated.

Phenomenological and psychological research suggests that traumatized agents often struggle to represent themselves as continuing subjects of future-directed agency. Past, present, and future may lose their ordinary integration, and practical orientation may narrow to immediate safety, survival, or short-term functioning (Ratcliffe 2008; Ratcliffe et al. 2014). When the future no longer figures as a stable point of reference, reasons that depend on long-range outcomes lose motivational force, and the temporal horizon within which reasons guide action narrows in a stable way.

For responsibility assessment within a reasons-responsive framework, the significance of this pattern lies in its selectivity. A foreshortened future can impair an agent's ability to form, sustain, or coordinate long-term plans without undermining the capacity to deliberate and act within constrained temporal frames. Agents may continue to make reasoned decisions about work, caregiving, treatment, or daily obligations while finding extended life-planning inaccessible. A survivor of a natural disaster may abandon career plans because the future seems meaningless yet remain able to plan daily tasks. The impairment concerns the scope and affective salience of future-directed reasons, not the basic capacity to deliberate over time, and treating it as global incapacity would conflate restricted planning horizons with loss of standing self-governance.

Temporal compression is neither universal among traumatized agents nor continuous in those who experience it. It varies with symptom severity, proximity to reminders, treatment, and circumstance. Where temporal compression occurs, its structure matters for assessment.

The assessment differs with the duration of the compression. Where compression is episodic, it can support excuse for failures of long-range coordination that occur within episodes. It also bears on what can reasonably be demanded in commitments that span periods when compression is likely to return. Where sustained, it supports mitigation for long-range projects, and it adjusts which projects the agent can be expected to enter. Neither case supports a global verdict since, in both, the capacity to deliberate within accessible frames remains intact.

Reasons-responsive accounts describe this narrowing without difficulty. Fischer and Ravizza can treat it as a temporally restricted pattern of reasons-responsiveness (1998, 69–75). Smith can treat it as a conflict in which attitudes tied to immediate safety override reflective judgments about more distant goods (2004). The two descriptions disagree about whether the agent weighed a long-range reason and gave it less weight or never had it available to weigh. Assessment turns on which is true. The taxonomy directs assessment to whether long-range reasons were available to the agent.

3.3 Narrative Foreclosure and Disrupted Self-Relation

Trauma can also disrupt an agent's relation to their own past and practical self-understanding (Kouvelis and Kangas 2021). One way this disruption manifests is through narrative foreclosure, the loss of access to a coherent or intelligible self-narrative that connects past, present, and future (Ratcliffe et al. 2014, 3). Narrative foreclosure disrupts self-narrative, which can fragment or become inaccessible while an agent retains the capacity for reasons-responsive action (Fabry 2026). Agents may experience their lives as divided into discontinuous segments or may feel cut off from earlier versions of themselves in ways that make long-term self-interpretation and identity continuity difficult to sustain (Ratcliffe et al. 2014, 8). Traumatic experiences such as sexual assault by a sibling can break a person's narrative structure. Exposure to the unimaginable in this way radically changes the person's conceptual understanding of what a sibling is, what family is, and what can happen to them at home.

Narrative foreclosure emerges when traumatic experiences resist integration into an agent's broader self-understanding. Events may remain difficult to interpret as part of a continuous life story, leaving agents without a stable narrative framework through which to

situate their past and future. Over time, this can weaken the role that self-narrative plays in organizing long-term commitments and identity-based deliberation. This disruption concerns how agents understand themselves across time, not their capacity to deliberate or act for reasons in concrete situations. As a result, narrative foreclosure can persist alongside intact reasons-responsive agency in everyday contexts.

Fischer and Ravizza ground responsibility in guidance control (1998). Smith grounds it in the relation between an attitude and the agent's evaluative judgments and holds that fragmented and conflicting attitudes remain attributable (2004, 344, 348). An agent who cannot say who they were before an assault, or who they will be in five years, satisfies these conditions.

Foreclosure bears on responsibility in a narrower way. Some reasons have practical force only for an agent who can relate to themselves as continuous across time. A reason to complete a course of treatment, to keep a promise measured in years, or to sustain a relationship through a period of difficulty does not bear on the present moment considered alone. Its force depends on the agent's relation to the person who will later be bound by, or benefit from, what is undertaken now. Narrative foreclosure disrupts that relation, and such reasons arrive without practical weight.

The impairment concerns the uptake of reasons, with responsiveness to reasons already taken up remaining intact. Fischer and Ravizza hold that receptivity and reactivity are asymmetric: A very weak sort of reactivity is all that is required, while a stronger sort of receptivity is necessary (1998, 69–70). The mechanism must be regularly receptive, which they define as exhibiting an understandable pattern of reasons-recognition (1998, 71). A gap in what is recognized as a reason belongs to receptivity. Foreclosure narrows the range of reasons the agent can recognize while leaving the pattern of response within that range intact.

The impairment is the loss of self-relation that narrative disruption produces. An agent with a thin or disjointed self-narrative who can still relate to themselves as continuous across time falls outside this analysis. Foreclosure is also distinct from the foreshortened future discussed in 3.2, though the two often occur together. A foreshortened future concerns the availability of the future as a field of possibility. Foreclosure concerns the agent's relation to the person who would occupy it.

An agent may be unable to say who they are, who they were, or who they will become, while remaining capable of caring for others, maintaining routines, managing employment, or pursuing treatment in reasons-responsive ways. Section 4 applies this to a case.

3.4 Loss of Epistemic Access to Others

Trauma can also undermine an agent's epistemic access to others as sources of information, advice, and normative guidance. Repeated interpersonal trauma, including abuse, betrayal, or institutional failure, is often associated with enduring patterns of distrust that reshape how testimony, reassurance, and shared deliberation are taken up in practical reasoning (Ratcliffe et al. 2014, 7; Luyten et al. 2020, 89). In such cases, agents may become selectively or broadly unwilling to treat others as reliable sources of reasons for belief or action.

Loss of epistemic access to others often develops when reliance on particular people, roles, or institutions has been associated with harm or betrayal. Over time, agents may come to treat certain social sources of guidance as unreliable or unsafe, while continuing to rely

on others they trust. These learned expectations about vulnerability can sustain distrust of particular sources while leaving access to trusted sources intact.

Loss of epistemic access restricts the social sources from which reasons are recognized as authoritative while leaving other rational and deliberative capacities intact. Traumatized agents may discount the judgments of particular individuals, roles, or institutions that are associated with past harm, while continuing to deliberate responsibly within trusted relationships or familiar practical domains. A survivor of abuse may distrust medical professionals or authority figures while remaining responsive to reasons arising in family care, work responsibilities, or treatment contexts they have chosen to engage with. Moral responsibility does not require openness to all social sources of guidance or the capacity to participate fully in shared deliberation across every context. Traumatized agents frequently retain the necessary capacities even when social trust is narrowed or unevenly distributed. A veteran with repeated combat trauma may distrust community support services yet retain the ability to make responsible decisions in personal contexts, such as parenting.

Loss of epistemic access to others can excuse particular failures, especially those involving reliance on distrusted authorities, coordination with unfamiliar agents, or participation in institutions associated with prior harm. However, it does not eliminate responsibility for actions governed within domains where reasons-uptake remains intact. Ordinary responsibility practices already reflect this distinction by holding agents answerable for conduct within relationships and practices they can still sustain, while recognizing limits on what can reasonably be demanded in contexts of deep or justified distrust (Wallace 1994, 118).

Restricted epistemic access can coexist with continued recognition of reasons and obligations. Even when agents withdraw from shared deliberative practices, they continue to operate with evaluative standards, reasons for action, and expectations of conduct. They may rely more heavily on internal deliberation, habitual regulation, or a narrow set of trusted interlocutors, but this reorganization does not amount to a loss of self-governance. The impairment concerns the range of social inputs available for deliberation, not the possession of the capacities that ground reasons-responsive responsibility.

Both accounts can describe this restriction. Smith can treat trauma-linked distrust as part of the agent's evaluative orientation toward others, and so as attributable (2004, 341–342). Fischer and Ravizza can treat it as a mechanism selectively receptive to some sources of reasons and not others (1998, 69–71). Treating distrust as an expression of the agent's evaluative outlook can encourage an inference from attributability to blameworthiness. Attributability applies equally to a considered judgment that an institution is unreliable and to a learned expectation about vulnerability that persists whether or not the agent endorses it. Identifying the impairment as a restriction on the social routes through which reasons are taken up keeps the two apart.

4. Responsibility Assessment Using the Taxonomy

Because the disruptions analyzed in section 3 are cue-linked and domain-sensitive, accurate responsibility assessment requires attention to the cues and contexts in which agency is impaired.

Without a way to distinguish these disruptions, assessors can make several recurring errors. The same behavior can suggest different assessments depending on whether the assessor attends to triggering cues, temporal compression, or domain restriction.

First, the cue-blindness error. A stable class of cues triggers an impairment in the exercise of agency. The assessor interprets the resulting behavior as evidence of a general trait-level incapacity or vice. This error is tempting because the same outward behavior can recur reliably, and reliability is often taken as evidence of a standing condition that generalizes across contexts.

Second, the domain-collapse error. When an agent functions competently in one practical domain and breaks down in another, the assessor assumes that capacities transfer across domains without restriction and therefore treats the breakdown as blameworthy avoidance or as a refusal to deliberate. This error is tempting because ordinary responsibility practice often treats competence as portable, and because the agent's intact performance elsewhere can lead the assessor to interpret impairment in another domain as a choice. The error has a second form that is harder to see. Where the impairment is reason-restricted rather than context-bound, there is no intact domain standing beside an impaired one for the assessor to compare. Portability is instead inferred from the agent's general competence in weighing evidence.

Third, the time-horizon error. Temporal compression weakens the practical force of long-range reasons, restricting deliberation and regulation to a short temporal window. The assessor interprets the resulting failures of long-range coordination as weakness of will or lack of concern for future reasons. This error is tempting because the agent can still anticipate near-term consequences and can still engage in purposive action, so it is easy to assume that long-range reasons are equally available.

Fourth, the continuity error. An agent may sustain obligations within accessible temporal frames while failing at commitments whose practical force depends on relating to themselves as continuous across time. Impaired uptake of reasons that depend on that self-relation contributes to these failures. The assessor interprets them as unreliability or bad faith. This error is tempting because reliability over shorter frames looks like evidence that the capacity is available over longer ones, and because failures of long-range commitment are readily read as character defects.

These errors can lead assessors to misjudge when episodic excuse, mitigation, or domain-restricted responsibility is appropriate. The taxonomy directs the assessor to identify whether the disruption is cue-linked, whether it is domain-restricted, and which component of diachronic self-governance is most directly affected.

Three examples illustrate these errors.

Example 1: Public-space avoidance

An agent reliably avoids crowded transit, cancels plans that require public travel, and becomes agitated when pressured to attend large gatherings. The same outward pattern can be read as episodic panic that excuses each instance while leaving the broader structure invisible. It can also be read as global incapacity that suspends standing responsibility across the agent's practical life. It can also be read as blameworthy avoidance when the assessor assumes that the agent's reasons-recognition and control in other domains should transfer without restriction. The taxonomy identifies the triggering cues that matter for assessment. In crowded settings, epistemic freezing and dissociation can bypass ordinary

deliberation and support episodic excuse. Outside those settings, the agent may remain reasons-responsive and capable of self-regulation across time in caregiving, work, and household domains. On this reading, standing responsibility persists within accessible domains. Repair-focused expectations concern tracking cues and preventing foreseeable harms within those domains.

Example 2: Institutional distrust

An agent refuses to engage with medical professionals, declines to report harms to authorities, and avoids institutional settings associated with past betrayal, while maintaining reliable care for a child and stable work routines. The pattern can be read as obstinacy or irrationality and therefore as blameworthy. It can also be read as a broad social incapacity that supports global excuse. The taxonomy clarifies the relevant mechanism. Loss of epistemic access to others restricts which social sources the agent can rely on for reasons, often according to institutional association and trust. Here, mitigation may be appropriate in contexts that require reliance on distrusted sources, while responsibility remains intact within relationships and practices the agent can still sustain. The assessor errs by assuming that the agent's intact functioning elsewhere establishes an equal capacity to engage with institutions.

Example 3: Abandoned long-range commitments

An agent reliably meets daily and weekly obligations, such as caring for a child and arriving at work. Yet the agent repeatedly abandons commitments measured in years, such as a training program, a repayment plan, or a course of treatment, without deciding to abandon them or being able to explain why. The pattern can be read as unreliability or bad faith and therefore as blameworthy. It can also be read as an incapacity broad enough to suspend standing responsibility, a reading the daily record contradicts. The taxonomy clarifies the relevant mechanism. Narrative foreclosure disrupts the self-relation on which the practical force of long-range commitments depends. Mitigation may be appropriate for the abandoned commitments, and responsibility remains intact within the frames the agent can sustain. Where circumstances allow, the agent should be expected to divide commitments into shorter stages whose reasons remain available. The assessor errs by treating reliability over days and weeks as evidence that reasons binding across years are equally available.

In each of these examples, the tempting mistake is generated by treating observable regularity as global, treating competence as portable across domains, and treating short-range purposive action as evidence that long-range reasons remain practically forceful. The taxonomy supplies a corrective by locating impairment at the level of reasons-uptake, action-identification, deliberation, or follow-through, and by requiring that assessment track cue linking and domain restriction before moving to global conclusions about standing responsibility.

The taxonomy supports more precise assessment within reasons-responsive accounts by clarifying how standing capacities can persist unevenly across time and context, and by showing where episodic excuse, mitigation, and domain restriction are most plausibly located under sustained psychological disruption.

5. Conclusion

This paper develops a taxonomy of trauma-related disruptions for responsibility assessment within reasons-responsive accounts. Epistemic freezing, a sense of foreshortened future, narrative foreclosure, and loss of epistemic access to others are analyzed as stable and recurrent patterns that affect how reasons are taken up, how actions are perceived as available, and how deliberation unfolds across time.

The analysis identifies these disruptions as domain-sensitive impairments in the exercise of agency. Trauma can excuse particular actions, support mitigation, and narrow the contexts in which self-governance can reasonably be expected. At the same time, these disruptions do not typically eliminate an agent's capacity to recognize reasons, regulate conduct, and act intentionally across time within at least some domains of practical life. Responsibility assessment therefore requires attention to how agency is exercised and constrained in particular contexts.

By making these patterns explicit, the taxonomy clarifies how responsibility judgments can distinguish episodic excuse, mitigation, and domain-restricted responsibility without treating trauma as a general exemption from responsibility. The taxonomy offers a way to describe and assess agency under nonideal conditions across reasons-responsive approaches. It extends existing reasons-responsive accounts by supplying the identification they presuppose.

Trauma can produce enduring disruptions in emotional experience and the experience of time (Stolorow 2015). These disruptions make trauma a revealing case for examining how particular capacities for agency can remain impaired while others continue to function. Tracking the contexts, reasons, and cues involved allows assessors to identify the particular limits that psychological impairment places on agency. The taxonomy thus provides a shared vocabulary for assessing responsibility in cases involving trauma while preserving the distinction between impaired exercise of agency and loss of responsibility as a standing status.

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