

# *Department of Philosophy Colloquium*

*Derk Pereboom*



*Cornell University*

*will present a talk entitled*

*“Styles of Blame and Social Equilibria”*

**Abstract:** “Blame Italian Style,” Susan Wolf contends, against Tim Scanlon, that angry blame in personal relationships need not involve holding attitudes that reflect impairment of those relationships. I agree with Wolf on this point, but caution restraint. Samuel Reis-Dennis proposes that angry blame is justified not by giving wrongdoers what they deserve, but by its role in social ecology, specifically through maintaining a social equilibrium. I accept this view, and I argue that while blame Italian style may realize one such equilibrium, there are other viable equilibria, in particular those realized by less volatile styles of blame that we find in cultures worldwide. Such differing equilibria result from the fact that despite its benefits, expression of anger also has costs, and a practice of holding responsible that involves greater limitations on expression of anger can avoid those costs, while the loss of its benefits can be offset at least to some degree by other elements of the practice. Such equilibria feature sets of socialized norms for expressing and limiting expressions of anger, and participants with varying temperaments playing different social roles. This conclusion contrasts with the universalism about the practice of holding responsible that we find in P. F. Strawson’s account.

**November 3, 2023, at 3:30 pm**

**Room #7191 H.C. White Hall**