



The Trouble with Blame: Victims, Perpetrators, and Responsibility

Sharon Lamb

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Blame society. Blame a bad upbringing. Blame the circumstances. Blame the victim--she may even blame herself. But what about the perpetrator? When the blame is all assigned, will anyone be left to take responsibility?

This powerful book takes up the disturbing topic of victimization and blame as a pathology of our time and its consequences for personal responsibility. By probing the psychological dynamics of victims and perpetrators of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence, Sharon Lamb seeks to answer some crucial questions: How do victims become victims and sometimes perpetrators? How can we break the psychological circle of perpetrators blaming others and victims blaming themselves? How do victims and perpetrators view their actions and reactions? And how does our social response to them facilitate patterns of excuse?

With clarity and compassion, Lamb examines the theories, excuses, and psychotherapies that strip both victims of their power and perpetrators of their agency--and thus deprive them of the means to human dignity, healing, and reparation. She shows how the current practice of painting victims as pure innocents may actually help perpetrators of abuse to shirk responsibility for their actions; they too can claim to be victims in their own right, passive and will-less in their wrongdoing.

The Trouble with Blame clarifies the social cost (quickly becoming so apparent) of letting perpetrators off too easily, and points out the dangers of over-emphasizing victimization, two problems which eclipse our dire need for accountability and recovery.

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