“Fairness, Sanctions, and Condemnation.”

Abstract:

I will press an often overlooked question: Why does the fairness of a sanction require an adequate opportunity to avoid it? By pressing this question, I believe I have come to better understand something that has long puzzled me, namely, what philosophers (and others) might have in mind when they talk about “true moral responsibility,” or the “condemnatory force” of moral blame, or perhaps even “basic desert.” In presenting this understanding of “condemnation” or of “basic desert,” I am presenting an idea that I do not, myself, endorse—one to which I am, myself, opposed. I present and defend it, hoping that, if what I say accurately captures what people have in mind, it will also show how easily condemnation or desert, in this sense, can be left behind.