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Praise as Moral Address

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Introduction

Following Gary Watson, a range of Strawsonian theorists of moral responsibility understand the praise- and blame-manifesting reactive attitudes to be ‘incipient forms of communication’ or ‘forms of moral address’ (Watson 2004 [1987]: 229–31). These theorists tend to identify *demand* as the relevant form of address.¹ Stephen Darwall, for example, writes that ‘reactive attitudes implicitly address *demands*. They invariably involve “an *expectation of, and demand for*” certain conduct from one another’ (Darwall 2007: 118). David Shoemaker similarly claims that ‘our practices in voicing the praise and blame expressive of holding someone morally responsible, in the paradigm case, consist of an interplay between at least two agents, *one who addresses a moral demand to the other via the praise or blame* and the other who ostensibly hears, understands, and either accepts or rejects the demand’ (Shoemaker 2007: 70, italics added). The appeal of this ‘demand-focused’ view of the reactive attitudes—which has clear roots in Peter Strawson’s claims that reactive attitudes ‘involve, or express, a certain sort of demand for inter-personal regard’, or that there is a ‘demand for good will or regard which is reflected in our ordinary reactive attitudes’ (Strawson 2003 [1962]: 85, 78)—is understandable in light of the Strawsonian effort of articulating a view of moral responsibility based not in the abstract metaphysics of determinism and free will, but in our social practices of mutually holding one another to norms.²

¹ See Wallace (1994, 2019); Watson (2004 [1987], 2004 [1996], 2011); Darwall (2006, 2012); Shoemaker (2011, 2013, 2015); McKenna (2012, 2013); Helm (2017).

² Not all Strawsonians adopt the Watsonian-cum-Strawsonian view that reactive attitudes are forms of moral address. See, e.g. Fischer and Ravizza (1998); Russell (2004); Brink and Nelkin (2013); Graham (2014); Rosen (2015); Carlsson (2017); Portmore (2019). Others still take the reactive attitudes to be forms of address but deny that demands are central (or even characteristic of *blame*’s form of address); see Macnamara (2013, 2015); Mason (2017).

While there is disagreement about what it is exactly for blame-manifesting attitudes to address demands, the idea that blame targets the blameworthy agent *demandingly* seems to capture an important feature of our practices of moral blame. In blaming another, one does not merely suggest, or flag it as an option, that the blameworthy agent attend to his culpable action; one communicates that *he must* do so. With praise, things are different. Gratitude and approbation, the paradigmatic other-directed reactive attitudes of praise, do not seem to demand anything of their targets. This is not a novel thought. In a relatively early response to ‘Freedom and Resentment’, Jonathan Bennett (1980: 42) writes: ‘I doubt if “demand” really covers all the ground: I can find no place for it in describing such undisappointed reactive feelings as those of gratitude [. . .].’ Even if demands have *something* to do with praise—perhaps demands (referring to *what can be morally demanded of others*) figure in the contents of praise attitudes, as they would if praise represents one to have exceeded a normative demand (Darwall 2006: 73; McKenna 2012: 8, 49; Shoemaker 2013: 117; Helm 2017: 53)—this does not make it any more plausible that in praising a praiseworthy agent I am *making a demand* of her.³

Moral address can intuitively take a range of forms beyond that of demand, e.g. urging, advising, promising, inviting, requesting. In claiming that ‘holding responsible requires the intelligibility of moral address . . . [where] a condition of such address is that the other be seen as a potential moral interlocutor’, Watson (1987: 235) seems to avail himself of range of candidate forms of moral address. Demand, being a familiar and credible notion in moral and legal theory, understandably presented itself as an attractive home for the Strawsonian view. But a larger home is necessary, at least if we hope to accommodate a fuller range of reactive attitudes. To this end, and building on work that is sympathetic to the communicative view yet skeptical of the prospects for the demand-focused conception to elucidate our praising responses (Macnamara 2013; Mason 2017; Telech 2020), this chapter seeks to identify the form of address lying at the heart of our praise-manifesting reactive attitudes.

The view that the reactive attitudes are ‘forms of moral address’ gets articulated in a range of ways by different philosophers. For example, Darwall (2006: 75) describes reactive attitudes as ‘*quasi*-speech act[s]’, for like speech acts, the reactive attitudes presuppose for their success that the

³ For other versions of this kind of point, see Macnamara (2011, 2013); Russell (2013); Eshleman (2014); King (2014); Martin (2014).

addressor and addressee be suitably related and that the addressee possess capacities requisite to understand and respond to the meaning of the address. Sometimes the reactive attitudes are taken to be communicative in that these emotions are constituted in part by a *motivational tendency* to address the target of the attitude in a particular way (Shoemaker 2015: 104). We need not settle here on the details of the communicative view, for my interlocuters in what follows already endorse (or are at least sympathetic to) some version of the communicative view of the reactive attitudes. The broad agreement among them (and myself) allows me to operate at a level of generality that passes over important questions concerning *how exactly* the reactive attitudes are communicative.

In what follows I take for granted that the reactive attitudes are forms of moral address in that they: (i) seek uptake from their addressee; (ii) in seeking uptake they presuppose their target's possession of certain agential (e.g. cognitive and motivational) capacities requisite for giving moral address uptake; (iii) carry normative force, i.e. when valid, the address provides its addressee with a (defeasible) normative reason for uptake. For the purposes of this chapter, commitment to the 'communicative view of the reactive attitudes' entails acceptance of some version of (i)–(iii).⁴ Whichever way one understands blame's demands will dictate filling in the details of (i)–(iii) in some (more or less) determinate manner, which can then serve as a guide in filling in the corresponding details for a communicative view of praise.

My aim is to advance a broadly Strawsonian, communicative, view of moral praise according to which our praise-manifesting reactive attitudes are incipient forms of moral invitation. I proceed by attending to approbation and gratitude. The communicative nature of the latter has been noted by Strawsonians and others (e.g. Berger 1975; Smith 1976 [1759] II.III.10; Herman 2012: 406; Shoemaker 2013: 117; Darwall 2019). Gratitude calls for a response from its addressee, but this 'call' lacks the imperatival force of demand. I propose that praise-manifesting reactive attitudes are profitably construed as addressing their targets with moral invitations to jointly value the praiseworthy agent's manifestation of good will. Moral invitations, like moral demands, provide their addressees with reasons to 'do something' (*because* so directed), but their reason-giving force is of a gentler,

⁴ So, views of blame as *protest* (Hieronymi 2001, 2019; Talbert 2012; Smith 2013) are not for our purposes communicative views, for protest seeks not uptake from its target, but rather has as its function (something like) one's *standing up for* the victim. A complication: Smith's (2013: 43) brand of the protest view incorporates a communicative element.

non-binding, sort. For, the addressee of an invitation is directed to do something *desirable, with the inviter* (Geis 1995: 113). In particular, she is invited to engage in a form of joint valuation that is at once a way of accepting credit.

An invitational view of reactive praise provides a useful lens for theorizing the capacities agents must possess to be fittingly praised. For praise's invitations presuppose their addressee's ability to give moral invitation uptake, i.e. to accept credit from another, in feeling and communicating one's pride in the value for another of one's manifestation of good will. This ability to accept invitations presupposes that the agent is able to understand and be motivated by the normative considerations of which praise's invitations are reflective. Since praise's invitations are communicatively successful when the praiser and praisee jointly value the praiseworthy agent's action, the invitational view also renders intelligible the ways in which praise tends towards the enhancement of relationships, and otherwise benefits the praisee. Additionally, the interest-promoting nature of invitation renders the invitational view of praise amendable to the view, endorsed by some proponents of the communicative view, that to be morally responsible for some action entails one's *deserving* certain forms of response or treatment. In outlining the contributions it affords for understanding reactive praise, a case is made for adding *moral invitation* to our repertoire of concepts of moral address, and, in particular, for identifying moral invitation as the form of address characteristic of reactive praise.

I proceed as follows. In Section 7.1, I clarify the sense of 'praise' at issue. In Section 7.2, I propose that praise's invitations are a species of directed invitation that presupposes its target's having manifested good will (*regard*). I introduce terminology in Section 7.2.1 to characterize the subset of manifestations of good will that are the fitting targets of praise's invitations. Section 7.2.2 argues that moral invitation seeks uptake in the addressee's 'directed pride', and that successful uptake of reactive praise gives rise to instances of joint valuing between the praiser and the praisee. By attending to two characteristic ways that moral invitations can fail, Section 7.2.3 highlights the agential capacities presupposed by reactive praise. In Section 7.3, I turn to the normativity of praise's invitations. First, Section 7.3.1 maintains that praise's invitations are directives; they provide their addressees with discretionary reason to do as directed. Next, I propose in Section 7.3.2 that praise's invitational nature can help us understand the way in which praise tends both to benefit the praisee and to build and enhance relationships among members of the moral community. Before concluding, I identify

the way in which the invitational view is amendable to (without presupposing) the view that susceptibility to reactive attitudes implies desert of interest-affecting responses.

7.1 Reactive praise

In the sense of interest to me, to ‘praise’ someone for some action is, at a minimum, to positively evaluate and take non-instrumental satisfaction in their performance of that action, *and* on that basis to be motivated to respond positively toward the praisee.⁵ While it might be possible to praise an agent for some action without therein feeling a positively valenced emotion toward that agent for her action, it is no accident that, following Strawson (1962) positive reactive attitudes like approbation and gratitude are often identified as vehicles of praise (Macnamara 2011, 2013; McKenna 2012; Russell 2013; Shoemaker 2013, 2015; Eshleman 2014; Martin 2014; Rosen 2015; Björnsson 2017; Helm 2017; Coates 2019). Though the English word, ‘praise’, suggests overt acts, Strawsonians treat interpersonal attitudes like approbation and gratitude as ways of emotionally responding to the moral meaning of praiseworthy actions, and as such, as ways of responding to agents with praise. As Coleen Macnamara (2011: 84) puts it, ‘when I feel gratitude when my friend does me a favor, admiration when my sister volunteers at a soup kitchen, or approval when I witness a stranger perform a small act of kindness, I am praising my friend, my sister, and the stranger.’ While gratitude positively evaluates and takes satisfaction in an agent’s acting well *toward oneself*, approbation positively evaluates and takes satisfaction in an agent’s acting well *toward another*.⁶ On this type of view, gratitude and approbation are the personal and vicarious

⁵ There may be other forms of praise, ones lacking this internal connection to responses to, and treatment of, the praiseworthy agent, e.g. the praise involved in what is sometimes called responsibility in the *attributability* sense (Watson 2004 [1996]; Shoemaker 2011, 2015). On a prominent version of the attributability view, actions are attributable to us in virtue of revealing the quality of our characters. To praise an agent for an action, on this kind of view, is to view that action as a manifestation of an *excellence* of the agent’s character.

⁶ This is not to deny that one can, in principle, feel approbation in response to another’s laudable treatment of oneself. Extending a distinction from Darwall (2012) between individual and representative authority, we can say that if I evaluate my benefactor’s action impersonally, I may—like any other ‘representative’ of the moral community—feel approbation. Still, given the salience of its ‘being *me*’ that was treated with praiseworthy regard, gratitude is likely to at least be the dominant response for the beneficiary.

counterparts, respectively, to resentment and indignation, the emotions of other-directed blame.

While Strawsonians anchor praise and blame in reactive emotions, they understand *expressions* of reactive attitudes as ways of praising or blaming, too. As Macnamara (2015: 546–7) writes, ‘We blame both when we express our resentment (“You jerk!”) and when we keep it buried in our hearts. We praise both when we approve of another and when we express this approval (“That was a lovely thing to do”).’ Views on which reactive attitudes are communicative might point to a motivational link between the reactive attitudes and their expression that explains why both attitudes and actions can count as praise and blame: praise- and blame-manifesting actions are expressive of praise- and blame-manifesting attitudes that are partly *constituted* by the motivation to act in a manner characteristic of the attitude type. For theorists who take blame-manifesting attitudes to address demands, this will be a *demanding manner* (where the content of the demand may include, ‘acknowledge your wrongdoing (*of me*) [resentment]/(*of him/her/them*) [indignation]’). It is the goal of this chapter to provide an answer to the question, *how do the praise-manifesting attitudes address their targets?*

For some responsibility theorists, the kind of praise in question can be labeled ‘accountability praise’. Although talk of ‘holding accountable’ associated with accountability is idiomatically better suited to blame, if the relevant form of ‘holding’ is that secured by features peculiar to a class of reactive attitudes and their expression, there may be no real barrier to theorizing about ‘accountability praise’, nor of speaking of ‘holding praise-worthy’ or ‘holding “to praise”’ (McKenna 2012: 37). Still, I won’t insist here on the label, ‘accountability praise’. ‘Reactive praise’ will suffice for my purposes. For my aim is primarily to identify the form of address that lies at the heart of the communicative praise associated with the reactive attitudes of gratitude and approbation, however we are to situate this kind of praise within our broader theory (/theories) of moral responsibility.

Finally, while aspects of the invitational view may prove applicable to the praise directed to agents for non-moral feats (e.g. aesthetic, epistemic, athletic), I am concerned with the kind of praise directed toward others for manifestations of quality of regard. My topic, reactive praise, is a variety of moral praise. Finally, without denying that sense may be made of the idea that reflexive praise involves a form of *self-address* (namely, self-invitation), I argue only for the claim that *other-directed* praise is fruitfully understood on the model of invitation. The praisee’s first-personal uptake of another’s

praise will be an important part of the account given, but I leave the question of self-address for another time.⁷

7.2 Praise and moral invitation

I propose that approbation and gratitude, being praise-manifesting reactive attitudes, address moral invitations to their addressees, where these are invitations to jointly value what the praiseworthy agent's manifestation of regard meant for the praising agent. As an invitation is a type of directive address, it is conceptually connected to the response it seeks, i.e. the addressee's *acceptance*. As I specify below, since praise's invitations are backward-looking responses that presuppose their target's *meriting* credit, to accept praise is to accept credit from the praiser. While the invitation to take credit paradigmatically comes in the form of approbation and gratitude, its acceptance consists in the addressee's emotionally registering, by feeling a type of *pride* about, the significance of her action for the inviter. As approbation (like gratitude) is an affective way of valuing a manifestation of good will that seeks an affective valuing response from the addressee, i.e. directed pride—where both attitudes are about the same action from different perspectives—its invitation finds communicative success in *jointly valuing* the significance of the initial action. Now, to substantiate these claims.

Moral invitations are a species of *directed* invitation. In contrast to general invitations, like those for the 10th Annual Evangeline Country Music Festival, to which '[e]veryone is invited for an enjoyable country music weekend',⁸ reactive praise's invitations are addressed to a particular individual (or individuals). That moral invitations are personally directed in this way is entailed by their being backward-looking responses that presuppose their target's meriting credit for some manifestation of good will. That is, the invitation targets the addressee on the basis of the perceived praiseworthiness of the action it is about.

This backward-looking feature distinguishes "moral invitation", in my technical sense, from other kinds of directed invitations that may be of moral importance, e.g. those perhaps issued in the making of a promise. That is, it is sometimes held that in promising another to perform some

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, then, "praise" designates reactive praise of the other-directed variety.

⁸ "Tenth Annual"

action, one invites the (prospective) promisee to trust the promisor (e.g. Shiffrin 2008; Pink 2009; Marusic 2015). While promises will typically be made in response to *something* the prospective promisee did (and so may be ‘backward-looking’ in this trivial sense), they are not, like ‘moral invitations’, necessarily ways of *recognizing* their addressee’s morally significant conduct. Moral invitations recognize their addressee’s conduct in that they represent their addressee to have done something that (or, in a way that presupposes that she) merits credit. Something close to the relevant sense of invitation is captured in ordinary language through locutions of the form: ‘S is invited to E in recognition of A’, as in: ‘Reuben was invited [to the Royal Wedding] in recognition of his work within the deaf community and for raising awareness of the issues facing Deaf children.’⁹

7.2.1 Invitations and laudatory standards

Like the invitation Reuben receives, moral invitations recognize something significant in their target’s conduct. They represent their target as, in some way, having done *something good*. An account of the formal object of praise should tell us, in more determinate terms, how reactive praise represents its target. Praise, I have said, represents another to have manifested good quality of regard (or benevolence). But reactive praise is presumably reserved for a subset of such benevolent manifestations. After all, one’s smile, greeting, or wave might manifest good quality of regard, but they are not obviously the fitting objects of approbation or gratitude. Similarly, one’s manner of sitting might manifest *poor quality of regard* (indifference, malevolence, and everything in between) without being a fitting target of reactive blame. To specify the proper objects of blaming attitudes, Strawsonians employ the term ‘demand’ to refer to the normative consideration that is flouted when an agent’s conduct renders blame fitting.¹⁰ When an agent is praiseworthy, she too will be worthy of praise in virtue of how she acted or omitted (/manifested good will) relative to *some* norm. It is not my goal here to provide an account of this norm (or group of norms). For now, in order to fix terminology to distinguish the subset of manifestations of good will that are

⁹ British Deaf News (2018).

¹⁰ There is disagreement about whether ‘moral demand’ should be understood in *deontic* terms, as per Wallace (1994) and Darwall (2006, 2012), or more capaciously, to include actions that are morally *bad* but not wrong, as per Macnamara (2011), McKenna (2012) and Shoemaker (2015).

fitting targets of praise, we can employ as a placeholder the term ‘laudable standard’, so that the class of morally praiseworthy actions—fitting objects of praise’s invitations—are manifestations of good will that reach a laudable standard.¹¹ Perhaps one’s meeting a laudatory standard entails one’s having exceeded a moral obligation (or acted supererogatorily), perhaps not. I put this issue aside.¹² Finally, though my focus here is on responses through which we recognize agents to *have reached* a laudable standard, we can also speak of *prospective invitations* that we sometimes direct, *ex ante*, toward agents capable of meeting (/aspiring toward) such standards, with the hope that they do so.¹³

Praise, then, represents the addressee to have manifested good will in a way that reaches a laudable standard, i.e. to have acted laudably. Of course, the praisee might not in fact have acted laudably, but that just means that praise can be unfitting. Similarly, Reuben might be invited to X in recognition of Y, though he failed to do Y or though his Y-ing was not worthy of recognition.

One might wonder whether this talk of ‘moral invitation’ helps us understand the phenomenon at hand. Can we not make do with the simpler claim that praise involves *recognition* of another’s having acted laudably?¹⁴ In reply, I maintain that while praises *does* involve recognition, it does more than this. For blame, too, involves a kind of recognition, namely that another has acted culpably. That is, part of what blame does is register

¹¹ Whether some agent A’s action or omission meets a ‘laudatory standard’ in a given moral community might be determined in part by the comparison class of which A is a part. Additionally, on a suitably nuanced understanding of “manifestation of good will”, unwitting omissions might sometimes meet laudable standards. Just as one might be the fitting object of blame not only when one (i) acts/omits in a way that manifests ill will, but also when (ii) one’s act/omission manifests an *absence* of reasonably expected good will (Arpaly and Schroeder 2014: 168), so, too, one *might* be the fitting object of praise not only when one (a) acts/omits in a way that manifests good will, but also in some cases where (b) one’s act/omission manifests an *absence* of reasonably expected poor quality of will (/disregard). In speaking of ‘manifesting good will/regard’ in this chapter I don’t mean to exclude (b). I thank David Shoemaker for raising this point and Gunnar Björnsson for discussion.

¹² While praiseworthy actions often are those that exceed what can be demanded of the agent, this seems not to be necessary. And, even if praiseworthiness requires that one exceed a demand, praise and blame might be responsive to *different kinds of normative considerations*. Macnamara (2011: 92–3), for example, holds that praise responds not to the deontic (or rights-involving) significance of some action, but its evaluative significance, e.g. to its being kind, generous, or otherwise morally good. See also Eshleman (2014: 228).

¹³ See Martin (2014) on ‘normative hope’ and Mason (2017) on ‘non-jural’ normative expectation.

¹⁴ I thank two anonymous referees for raising, from different angles, this concern.

recognition of moral failure.¹⁵ My interlocutor, being a proponent of the communicative view, maintains that blame does more than this, however. In particular, he maintains that blame makes a demand of its target. As this demand involves (or presupposes) recognition of wrongdoing, reactive blame will both (i) represent (/recognize) the agent to have acted culpably and (ii) *make a demand* of the target (e.g. to apologize). Accordingly, we can describe blame as addressing *culpability-recognizing demands*. Now, it is true that praise involves recognition of laudability. But to say this, by the communicative theorist's lights, is not yet to say anything about the way in which praise is communicative.¹⁶ Presumably, praise does not direct laudability-recognizing *demands* (this, anyway, was assumed at the outset). But if it is to be included in a communicative view of the reactive attitudes, reactive praise should be intelligible as addressing its target *somehow*. My proposal is that praise addresses (laudability-recognizing) *invitations*. A source of support for this proposal can be found in the nature of the response sought by reactive praise.

7.2.2 The response moral invitation seeks

I have proposed that approbation and gratitude direct moral invitations to their targets, invitations to jointly value the meaning of the addressee's action for the praiser (the inviter). To make sense of this proposal we need to specify the kinds of valuing that the praiser and praisee engage in. The praiser initiates the valuing interaction, and his valuing of the laudable action comes in the form of approbation or gratitude. The praiser's approbation (or gratitude) invites the laudable agent to emotionally engage with the praiser's recognition of the action. What is sought, I maintain, is uptake in a *self-reactive* attitude that mirrors the content of the praiser's attitude (Strawson 1962: 71). Differently put, praise invites a kind of pride—*directed pride*.

Directed pride is an emotion to be sharply distinguished from the self-aggrandizing and arrogant responses sometimes associated with the 'vice of

¹⁵ 'Recognition' should be understood non-factively (perhaps something like 'recognizing *as*').

¹⁶ This is so given the assumption that the form of address proper to the blame-manifesting reactive attitudes is *demand*. Macnamara (2013) rejects this assumption and understands the recognition involved in reactive attitudes—or rather, their expression—as *itself communicative* (it seeks acknowledgement).

pride'. Though the emotion of pride *can* be felt to an excessive degree approximating arrogance, I take it that just as one can feel guilt—a pained acknowledgement of the meaning of one's wrongdoing for another—without manifesting a trait of being, say, self-disparaging, so, too, one can feel pride without manifesting the trait of being self-aggrandizing. Next, directed pride is a species of *agential pride*, pride about something that an agent has done (/omitted to do). As such, directed pride is to be contrasted with the non-agential pride one might feel about traits and dispositions not reflective of one's agency (e.g. one's naturally impeccable memory, one's heritage). Directed pride, however, is not to be identified with agential pride, or even agential pride about laudable action. For while directed pride is a reflexive attitude that is in an importance sense about one's own expression of agency, its evaluative focus is the meaning *for another* of one's manifestation of good will. That is, although directed pride is a *self-reactive* attitude, it is less a way of registering that one 'did the right thing', than of registering the significance for another of one's having 'righted' her. (A similar point is sometimes made about the reactive attitude of guilt, which is not so much about having *acted wrongly*, as about one's having *wronged another*.¹⁷) It is this focus on the praiser's evaluative perspective that secures directed pride's status as an interpersonal moral attitude. Sometimes the praiser's evaluative perspective will be easily accessible to the praisee, for this perspective may have been among the considerations that motivated her to meet the laudatory standard in the first place. At other times, access to the praiser's evaluative perspective may require some mental effort (e.g. where the laudatory action was performed long ago, or when one is praiseworthy for an unwitting omission (see footnote 11), etc.). In any case, in feeling directed pride one will be valuing one's action mediated by appreciation of what the manifestation of good will meant for the praiser.

In addition to feeling directed pride, acceptance of praise's invitation involves communicating one's acceptance, or 'discursively registering' (Macnamara 2013: 909) one's directed pride. In so doing, the praisee partakes in the social act of accepting credit for reaching a laudatory standard, reaffirming thereby her commitment to the standard's value. This need not

¹⁷ 'Righting' roughly corresponds to what Shoemaker (2013) calls *heighting*, where 'height' is a transitive verb that contrasts with 'slight'. As Shoemaker writes (2013: 117) '[t]o slight someone is to take him (his normative perspective, his interests) insufficiently seriously. For the opposite I will coin a phrase: to *height* someone is to take him (his normative perspective, his interests) *very seriously*. And as being slighted renders fitting anger, being heighted renders fitting gratitude.'

involve anything formal. Responses that might superficially appear to deflect expressions of praise—e.g. ‘don’t mention it’, ‘no problem’, ‘it was nothing’—are conventional ways of giving approbation and gratitude uptake. These normally count as ways of discursively registering praise’s invitations no less than do more explicit ways of expressing that one values the significance for another of one’s manifestation of good will (e.g. ‘I’m glad I was able to help’, ‘You are most welcome’).

Given the backward-looking nature of praise’s invitations, acceptance of praise is a way of accepting credit for what one did, from the praiser. While one can ‘take credit’ for an action independently of another’s praise, *accepting credit* is an interpersonal activity presupposing a moral invitation, a giving of credit. As the inviting and the accepting are both ways of valuing the same thing (from different perspectives), communicatively successful praise will consist in *jointly* valuing (and typically, given the nature of the emotions involved, *taking joy in*) the significance of the praiseworthy agent’s action.¹⁸ Successfully expressed praise thus gives rise to a relation wherein the praiser and praisee are engaged in *valuing together*, or ‘co-valuing’, the praiseworthy agent’s action. For, when praise is accepted, receiving uptake in the addressee’s directed pride, the praiser and praisee mutually recognize one another as *standing for* a common value.¹⁹ As their co-valuing is irreducible to their valuing severally—which can obtain independently of reactive praise—co-valuing can be understood as ‘the valuational counterpart to shared agency’ (Callard 2018: 130).²⁰ Co-valuing of this sort *may* (and often will) include actions that convey the relevant attitudes, but other-directed intentions are inessential to the phenomenon, as one need not intend to express one’s attitude in order to do so.²¹

To make this talk of co-valuing more concrete, suppose Lorenz praises his neighbor, a retired lawyer named Adrian, for Adrian’s generosity in

¹⁸ Elinor Mason (2019: 108) makes a similar point.

¹⁹ In some cases this sharing may be partial, e.g. where the praisee and praiser have non-identical conceptions of (what is nonetheless) the same value. (How to determine what degree of valuational overlap is sufficient for co-valuing, I do not know.) I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

²⁰ Since praise involves *non-instrumental* satisfaction in the action valued, the sense of co-valuing I discuss is importantly different from what Bratman (albeit tentatively) calls ‘shared valuing’; the latter has its basis in shared policies, which are devised for the purposes of interpersonal coordination and as such, might be valued only instrumentally (Bratman 2007: 303–7). What Hedahl and Huebner (2018) call shared valuing comes closer to what I mean by co-valuing.

²¹ That is, co-valuing is an agential phenomenon that includes non-volitional responses among its core features. I take this to be true of valuing generally; see Scheffler (2010).

volunteering several days per week to provide legal resources and advice to refugees seeking asylum. Lorenz is moved by Adrian's good will, which resonates with him particularly given his family history. It is not difficult to imagine Lorenz expressing his approbation by saying something like, 'I think what you're doing is really wonderful. I remember when my family moved here . . .' Here, Lorenz invites Adrian to take credit for his laudatory action, from his perspective on the determinate value that underlies Adrian's laudatory action. Lorenz's praise reflects the significance for him of Adrian's action, and as such it is an invitation that takes the salient elements of Lorenz's evaluation (reflective of the meaning of the action *for him*) as the ground on which to jointly value the action. In a certain sense, then, Lorenz offers to *host* the co-valuing. Supposing Adrian accepts Lorenz's invitation, he will do so partly on the terms specified by Lorenz's way of valuing Adrian's action. Given the nature of the attitudes involved, when approbation (or gratitude) finds uptake in directed pride, the praiser and praisee come to *value together* the initial action, and do so on the terms specified by the praiser's invitation. But although successful praise involves both praiser and praisee affirming a common value, and although the praiser hosts the praising interaction in the above sense, the invitation has a special kind of significance for the praisee, in virtue of its being a way of recognizing *her* praiseworthy action. It is, in a sense, a moral celebration held *for her*.

Talk of 'celebration' here should not be taken literally. Indeed, some ways of celebrating (and otherwise publicly recognizing) an agent's moral achievement will not count as communicative praise. Imagine a celebratory event in which community members unite to commemorate moral heroes past, primarily as a way of affirming their shared history and promoting group solidarity. Though this event will involve public recognition of laudatory actions, to the extent that this recognition does not seek uptake from the praiseworthy agents, it will not be an instance of praise in the moral address sense of interest to the communicative theorist.²²

7.2.3 Failed invitations

Praise is communicatively successful when its invitation receives uptake in the acceptance of credit constituted by the praiseworthy agent's discursively

²² This kind of solidarity-promoting celebration might be better conceptualized as the positive analogue of something like protest. See footnote 4.

registered directed pride, therein giving rise to co-valuation. Or rather, this is what it is for praise to be (i) *fully successful* (ii) qua moral address. We can imagine cases in which praise's invitation is understood as such, but where, for one reason or another, receipt of this invitation fails to eventuate in directed pride. More generally, we can come up with an array of less-than-fully successful instances of invitational praise. The 'failed invitations' I discuss below are failures in the stronger sense that they are wholly unsuccessful. Second, talk of praise's 'success' here is limited to its success qua *form of address*. Reactive praise may have functions other than that of moral address, and there are certainly other standards by which we can assess any given praise-manifesting attitude as successful (e.g. forward-looking standards).²³

Praise's invitational success requires that the addressee have certain capacities, chief among which is the capacity to accept credit via directed pride, and by extension, to understand the laudatory standards that praise's invitation represents one to have met. Since we can be benefitted by persons whose benefitting actions are not manifestations of benevolence—and so, do not meet a laudatory standard, despite initial appearances—some *apparently* praiseworthy actions might fail to warrant moral invitation. This may be because the benefitting agent lacks the capacity to understand (and participate in the practice of) moral invitation. A month-old child might benefit me (suppose his crying awakens me, enabling me to avoid missing an important deadline) and while it is psychologically possible that I construe his crying to have been benevolently motivated, any reactive praise that I express toward the baby will fail to receive proper uptake owing to the baby's lacking the abovementioned capacities. The baby is not *reachable* by moral invitations; he is incapable of understanding the standards to which moral invitations respond and so cannot accept credit.²⁴ Agents who lack

²³ Praise plausibly also has a social function of *signaling* to members of the community that the praiser is committed to the value underlying the action praised, and, as such, that she is prepared to, e.g. act in a manner consistent with the value, reliably 'give credit where credit is due', etc. For a recently advanced costly signaling account of *blame*, see Shoemaker and Vargas (2019). Additionally, it may be that certain positive reactive attitudes have functions other than those they possess in virtue of being responses of praise. For example, Darwall's (2019) category of 'second-personal attitudes of the heart' identifies in gratitude a kind of function that is lacking in approbation (but present in other non-praising attitudes, like trust).

²⁴ Non-accidentally, the baby will also be unable to give others credit via moral invitation (though she may be pleased by what others do). I take it that being morally responsible for one's conduct (or at least, fully so) entails the ability to emotionally hold oneself, and others, responsible. See Russell (2004), who calls this the 'condition of moral sense'. Put in terms of blame's form of moral address, the strategy is one of, as Watson puts it (2004 [1987]: 228–9),

the capacity to understand praise's invitations and thereby to participate in our praise practices are standardly *exempt* from reactive praise.²⁵

Are the capacities without which one is exempt from reactive praise the same as those without which one is exempt from reactive blame? They might be, as a matter of psychological fact, but they are conceptually distinct. At least, I think I can imagine an agent for whom laudable standards have no motivational bearing, but who is nonetheless motivated to avoid wronging and slighting others. Further, if praise and blame are ultimately sensitive to different kinds of normative considerations, e.g. evaluative and deontic, respectively (Macnamara 2011; Eshleman 2014), agents might in fact possess the capacities requisite for reactive praise but not reactive blame (or possess the capacities to different extents). Justin Coates (2019: 168) has recently argued that toddlers may be the proper objects of praise-manifesting attitudes like gratitude, even when they are not yet proper objects of blaming attitudes.²⁶ This, Coates argues, is because *incipient competence* in some domain is sufficient for meriting praise, while a general and consistent capacity to understand and be motivated by the relevant considerations in a domain is necessary for blame to be merited. And, toddlers' benefitting actions can display 'incipient appreciation for others' moral significance' (Coates 2019: 167). Given the scalar nature of evaluative concepts, this asymmetry in depth of capacity requisite for praise and blame might track a difference in the kinds of normative considerations that must be grasped to merit praise and blame, respectively. The toddler, in his incipient capacity to grasp some varieties of moral goodness, might be able to understand and be motivated to act in genuinely kind ways. But, it may be that some richer forms of

'constru[ing] the exempting conditions as indications of the constraints on intelligible moral demand'. See also Darwall (2006: 79); McKenna (2012: 81–2); Shoemaker (2015: 189 n16).

²⁵ Is it not possible for an agent to act in a way that meets a laudatory standard yet, for one reason or another, be unable to give uptake to moral invitation? This will be difficult to deny if it is cognitively more demanding to give praise's invitations discursive uptake than it is to manifest laudatory quality of regard. At present, I can only register my view that a complete account of communicative praise ought to inform us not only of the conditions under which agents are *exempt* from reactive praise, but also of the nature and norms of marginal agency within our invitational praise practices. (See Shoemaker 2015 for pioneering work.) Thanks to Andreas Brekke Carlsson and Daniel Story for raising this point.

²⁶ Stout (2020) makes a similar point and suggests, too, that owing to their fledgling moral capacities, young children are subject to lower 'laudatory standards'.

goodness, e.g. those of heroism, are yet beyond him. In that case, in directing approbation and gratitude toward these aspiring members of the moral community, we may be (less and less proleptically) inviting them further into the community of responsible agents.²⁷

Praise's invitations can fail in another way. The agent may be capable of manifesting laudably good will, but behave in circumstances that undermine her being the fitting target of moral invitation. Despite appearing to act in a way that fulfills a laudatory standard, her act will fail to merit moral invitation if it is performed under circumstances that preclude its being a manifestation of good regard, e.g. by being performed from ignorance, involuntarily, out of duress, under hypnosis. Here the target is an intelligible addressee of moral invitation, but the circumstances are such that prospective praisers have reason to block (or rescind) the kind of invitation naturally issued in circumstances of the sort. With blame, these correspond to cases in which the blamee has an *excuse*, or acts from *excusing conditions*. We can call conditions that temporarily undermine an otherwise responsible agent's meriting moral invitation, *overlooking conditions*. When Larry trips on his inanelong shoelaces, and in so doing accidentally 'tackles' a belligerent passenger who poses a threat to the safety of those onboard, Larry behaves from overlooking conditions.²⁸ For although his behavior benefits those onboard and would be the fitting target of praise were it the laudatory manifestation of regard that it appears to be, the non-voluntariness of this benefit is such that others have reason to overlook it in their practices of moral invitation. When, falsely but understandably believing Larry to have manifested good will, the other passengers respond with a grateful ovation, Larry is the addressee of an undeserved moral invitation. Unlike the exempt agent, Larry is capable of understanding the relevant laudatory standards and invitations they merit, and so he can *decline* the moral invitation. He can also *accept*, in which case he unfittingly takes credit for the non-laudatory benefit.

²⁷ On the idea that we 'scaffold the moral agency of others', see McGeer (2012: 9; 2018). See also Vargas (2013).

²⁸ David et al. (2011) (03:21–05:26).

7.3 The normativity of moral invitation

7.3.1 Invitations as directives

If praise-manifesting attitudes sought uptake *only* in the sense that these attitudes satisfy their etiological function by eliciting a certain kind of response in their target, the normativity of reactive praise would be left out of the picture. My fear (or that of the infant or the gibbon) might in this sense seek uptake in the fear of conspecifics within the immediate environment, but reactive attitudes seem to seek a response in a further sense. In seeking a response, they seem to put *normative pressure* on others to respond as called for. At least, when the communicative theorist says that reactive blame makes a *moral demand* of its target, they are not claiming (only or primarily) that ‘blame satisfies its internal aim when it receives uptake’. Part of what it is for these demands to be forms of moral address is that they are, when valid, *reason-giving*. Indeed, in being blamed, blame-worthy agents are presumably given not merely *a reason* to respond, but an imperatival reason. In this sense, blame seeks a response in a particularly stringent form: compliance.

Now, praise’s invitations don’t seek compliance. Invitations lack the imperatival force of demands. But, directives other than demands can have reason-giving force. To make a valid request, for example, is not simply to point out an option available to the addressee and express a preference about it, but ordinarily to *give someone a reason* to do as requested.²⁹ Suppose you request the use of your acquaintance’s bike. This request does not have the force of a demand—and so, can be rejected on grounds that would not suffice for rejecting a valid demand to use the bike. The acquaintance has some non-trivial discretion over whether to do as requested.³⁰ Nevertheless, *simply preferring that you not use it* may be an inadequate reason to reject your request. While rejecting your request on these grounds might not be wrong, in the sense of violating a *right* of yours to the bike’s

²⁹ Ordinarily, but not necessarily. When a request is made that another fulfill some (e.g. promissory) obligation already owed to the requester, it’s not obvious that the request provides the addressee with further reason to do as obligated. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this example.

³⁰ That the normativity of requests is discretionary is the standard view. See Raz (1975: 83; 1988: 36–7; 2009: 14–15); Enoch (2011, 2014); Lewis (2018). But see also Cupit (1994) and Gläser (2019).

use, it may nonetheless be a morally objectionable response to a valid request.³¹

Requests are particularly relevant here for the following reason: invitation is plausibly a species of request. This, anyway, is true of the kind of invitation at issue: directed invitation.³² Consider formal expressions of invitation that we sometimes employ: ‘you are cordially requested to join us in celebrating . . .’, ‘we cordially request your attendance at . . .’. These invitations do not merely *offer* their addressee a place at the events in question; they ask one to join. Being requests of a special sort, valid invitations provide their addressees with discretionary reason to do as directed. They give their addressee reason to ‘do something,’ because invited. Though the reasons issued are of a gentler kind than those provided by valid demands, invitations nonetheless possess genuine normative force. For although invitations importantly differ from non-invitational requests in paradigmatically directing their addressees to do something *desirable* (Geis 1995: 113), enjoyability doesn’t entail electivity. Valid invitations, as Martin (2019: 11) notes, ‘carry with them a certain legitimate pressure to accept, where the invitee needs a good reason to refuse (beyond say “I don’t feel like it”):. Although the invitation may be declined without generating the kind of normative burden incurred by shirking a demand, acceptance and denial are not, normatively speaking, on a par. It might not ordinarily be wrong to fail to accept a valid invitation, but it may be otherwise criticizable, e.g. as ungracious, conceited, unkind.’³³

One might worry about this talk of directive reasons (and possible criticizability for *failing*) to accept praise’s invitations. After all, on the present proposal, praise provides the addressee with directive reason for an emotion (directed pride). But, the worry goes, we cannot simply *choose* to have some emotion in response to a directive. Nevertheless, while feeling directed

³¹ Whether a given request is valid (i.e. its gives rise to a practical reason for the addressee) is typically dependent on the nature of the relationship within which it is issued. A request from one’s mentee may give one reason not provided by the otherwise identical request uttered by a stranger. But this holds true of imperatival directives, too. See Enoch (2011: 7). This point can help with the intuition that it can sometimes be wrong to fail to accept a valid request. In declining a request, one might, for instance, violate a relationship-dependent duty, e.g. a duty of friendship.

³² The pragmatics of request are admittedly importantly different from those of invitation. For example, in contrast to the requestee, the invitee is not normally understood to do the addressor a *favor* in accepting (nor do inviters want invitees to view invitations in these terms). See Kukla (2018).

³³ For related discussion concerning reasons for action, see Dancy (2004: 103) and Little and Macnamara (2017).

pride is not itself within our direct voluntary control, many felicitous directives are for responses that include non-voluntary components. For example, one cannot will himself to have a change in skin tone, but assuming he is a ‘tunable’ agent, one can nonetheless comply with the command to get a suntan. Analogously (though no analogy is perfect), although one cannot will himself to feel directed pride, assuming he is a normatively competent agent—responsive to the interpersonal norms (or ‘laudatory standards’) that are the normative stuff of moral praiseworthiness—he will (absent special circumstances) be able to accept praise’s invitations. For, being a normatively competent agent, the praisee will have the ability to direct his attention in the called-for way to the inviter’s evaluative perspective on the praiseworthy action. While one’s attending thus isn’t guaranteed to translate into directed pride, assuming the praisee possesses the capacity to feel directed pride in response to others’ praise (without which he will not be the fitting target of praise in the first place), the praisee will have the capacity to accept praise’s invitations.³⁴ We can imagine (perhaps with some difficulty) a conceited agent who cares about manifesting laudatory quality of regard (and does so, for the right reasons)—and so *is* the fitting target of reactive praise, but who routinely ignores the moral invitations that others direct him in praise. In his case, however, the praisee will effectively be refusing others’ invitations for co-valuation.

Why, though, *would one* decline an invitation of fitting praise? If credit is due, why not accept credit? One important reason can be found in an earlier mentioned feature of directed invitation, one that distinguishes it from non-invitational request: the inviter *hosts*. It is an important part of invitational view that what is sought is not only that the praiseworthy agent take credit, but *accept credit from the praiser*. We can imagine cases in which facts about a given praiser undermine (in the praisee’s eyes or in reality, or both) the reason that the praisee has to accept credit. Even if the praisee is praiseworthy and takes the praise to be sincere, if the praiser lacks a certain kind of commitment to the value underlying the praiseworthy action, the praisee may be in a position to reasonably ignore or rebuff *that praiser’s* praise. For, the praiser may be in no position to host an interaction of co-valuing for which praise is an invitation.³⁵

³⁴ Additionally, this is no objection to the invitational view as such (nor one the communicative theorist is in a position to raise), given that blame, on the communicative view, demands from the culpable agent a response that involves guilt or remorse.

³⁵ That is, the praising agent might lack the *standing to praise* (Telech ms.).

The idea that, in directing another with a laudability-recognizing invitation, the praiser offers to host an interaction of co-valuing may help us understand something further, namely why it may be disrespectful for a praiseworthy agent to seek to accept credit prior to being invited to do so. In offering to host, the inviter provides the invitee with permission to do that which the invitee is directed to do, e.g. to show up at another's home with the expectation of a meal and company, in the case of a dinner invitation. In light of the consideration that invitations are permission-giving directives, then, imagine an agent who manifests good will and proceeds to say (unsarcastically, sincerely), 'you're welcome!' or 'I'm happy to have helped' etc., *independently of others'* praise. Though this agent *does* merit praise, in purporting to accept credit independently of sensitivity to others' evaluative perspectives on his action, as expressed in praise's invitations, this credit-taker ignores the social meaning of his manifestation of good will. Though he is correct in representing himself as worthy of moral invitation, by valuing his action without concern for the perspectives of those (albeit positively) affected, he not only behaves unconventionally, but arguably disrespects (or at least gives insufficient weight to) others as reason-giving participants of the moral community.³⁶

7.3.2 Praise, benefit, desert

Reactive blame is often understood to raise questions of desert (or deserv- ingness). To begin to determine whether the same may hold of reactive praise, let's spend a moment considering what it is for blame to be subject to questions of desert. On a version of this idea found in Watson (1996), because blaming responses characteristically affect the *interests of* the blamee, blame's appropriateness depends on its being deserved. Blaming responses characteristically affect one's interests in a particular way, i.e. adversely—or harm the blamee (Feinberg 1986; Wallace 1994; Watson 2004 [1996]; Bennett 2002: 151–2; Rosen 2004; McKenna 2012: 134–41). It is

³⁶ This may indicate an asymmetry between praise and blame. There is often nothing wrong with the wrongdoer's feeling and expressing guilt before being blamed; doing so may even be commendable. (Of course, if the agent's 'unprompted guilt' *excludes* others' contributions to his perspective on the social meaning of his act, this, too, will be objectionable.) This may be partly because blame's address (unlike that of praise) reflects a *previously disregarded* normative consideration, one that perhaps persists in modified form after the wrongdoing. On this point, see Gardner (2007: 33), also Nelkin (2015: 363).

not implausible that blame characteristically harms the blamee partly in virtue of blame's form of address, i.e. moral demand. This seems to be what McKenna claims in writing that '*As a conversational expression of moral expectations and demands*, blame is liable to harm the blameworthy party by impeding her ability to enjoy and sustain normal interpersonal relationships, by interfering in her personal life, and by emotionally unsettling her' (McKenna 2012: 200, italics added). Though there may be features of blame that harm the blamee independently of their being expressive of moral demand, part of what the blamee plausibly deserves in being worthy of blame is the special kind of harm characteristic of blame's demands. Blame's demands look back, through the pained perspective of the wronged agent, to an action of the addressee that manifested disregard. Insofar as one cares about the moral significance of one's actions for other agents, one's being the addressee of this kind of demand will understandably have moral psychological weight for one.³⁷ In the absence of this kind of weight, it is not clear why there should be something painful in the sheer acknowledgement of one's having wronged another. The further negative treatment often associated with reactive blame might derive its distinctive moral painfulness from its being expressive of (and not simply caused by) the valid moral demands of blame. If that's right, when blame manifests itself through sanction-like responses, the pain of these responses, too, might be moral pain in light of one's acknowledgement of (the gravity of) the moral demand expressed in that treatment.

I do not presuppose the view that part of what it is to be blameworthy in the reactive sense is for one to be a deserving target of blame's interest-affecting demands. But, for those sympathetic to this kind of desert thesis, the invitational view has resources available for a corresponding interest-affecting desert thesis for praise.³⁸ For it is not implausible that the invitational nature of praise is such that praise characteristically promotes the

³⁷ See McKenna (2012: 167).

³⁸ The relevant kind of desert here is sometimes understood to be 'basic desert', such that if an agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy in the basic desert sense, he deserves praise or blame *just because* he performed the action (under the relevant conditions) and 'not, for example, merely by virtue of consequentialist or contractualist considerations' (Pereboom 2014: 2; see also Pereboom 2001; cf. Feinberg 1986; McKenna 2019: 155). See McKenna (2012) for discussion of views on which interest affecting responses of praise and blame can be deserved in a non-basic sense. The desert involved in being deserving of praise or blame can be understood in thinner terms. For example, one's deserving blame or praise might be understood in terms of one's being the *fitting target* of some blame- or praise-manifesting emotion, such that that the evaluation made by that emotion is correct (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000). See also Shoemaker (2015: 220–2).

interests of, or *benefits*, the person praised. For, on the basis of being recognized to have met a laudatory standard, the praisee is given reason to partake in an interaction in which they are valued, in some determinate way disclosed to them by the reason-giver, for their meeting of that standard. Consider some of the characteristic ways in which the invitations of praise are manifested. Gestures of friendliness, increased trust, greater sympathy, etc., may all be ways in which praise's moral invitations are expressed. Though these kinds of social goods might be valued by the egoist or the flattery-seeker purely for their instrumental or hedonic value, they have a distinctive kind of moral value for those that care about the interests and perspectives of others (for their own sake). These responses not only benefit the praisee, as might some natural event; they express another's caring recognition of one's own ways of regarding others. As such, one will ordinarily not only feel pleased, but gratified in being the recipient of another's deserved moral invitation.³⁹ Directed pride, as I have characterized it is a way of feeling thus gratified. As we desire not only to be praised but to be *deservedly* praised—relative to standards we ourselves value—deserved praise holds out the promise of being seen and treated as one holds dear.

With the invitational view of praise in hand, the communicative theorist who endorses a desert thesis can maintain that while being blameworthy in the relevant sense entails that one deserves the harm associated with blame's demands, so too, being praiseworthy entails that one deserves the benefit associated with praise's invitations. It should be clear that praise's interest-promoting qualities do not depend on the praiser's intending to benefit the praiseworthy agent. They are attributable, rather, to the ways in which our moral psychologies orient us toward those whom we perceive as the fitting targets of responses like approbation and gratitude. It is no accident that we tend to grow warmer toward those whom we have occasion to admire, and be grateful to. Since the invitations of praise, at a minimum, aim to *bring together* the praiser and praisee, in the sense of calling the praisee to jointly value what her manifestation of good will meant for the praiser, praise's invitations will unsurprisingly serve to form and strengthen our various interpersonal relationships.

³⁹ Thanks to David Shoemaker for suggesting "gratification" in this context.

Conclusion

Moral invitation, I have argued, is among the forms of moral address we issue and recognize as responsible agents. Moral invitation, further, is plausibly the form of address lying at the heart of our praise-manifesting reactive attitudes. By illustrating the promise of an invitational conception of reactive praise for elucidating features of our responsibility practices often occluded by moral demands, I have mounted a case for identifying moral invitation as the form of address proper to our praise-manifesting reactive attitudes. On the view commended by broadening thus our conceptual repertoire, it remains true that ‘holding responsible requires the intelligibility of moral address . . . [where] a condition of such address is that the other be seen as a potential moral interlocutor’ (Watson 1987: 235). It turns out, however, that we belong to a communicatively richer moral community than we may have supposed, one whose members are capable of addressing one another (and being addressed) in multiple registers, demandingly and invitingly. Moral demands are essential to facilitating the moral repair required to mend our various relationships, and the moral community thereby. Moral invitations, I propose, are essential to facilitating the formation and strengthening of our various relationships, and the moral community thereby.⁴⁰

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