

Charitable Matching and Moral Credit

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Abstract:

When charitable matching occurs, both the person initially offering the matching donation and the person taking up the offer may well feel they have done something better than if they had donated on their own without matching. They may well feel they deserve some credit for the matched donation as well as their own. Can they both be right? Natural assumptions about charitable matching lead to puzzles that are challenging to resolve in a satisfactory way.

Keywords: charitable giving; charitable matching; moral responsibility; moral credit

Many large charities will sometimes offer opportunities to have your donations matched by a beneficiary. For example, a philanthropist might arrange with the charity that the first \$10,000 donated by others will be matched dollar for dollar by the donor as that donor's gift to the charity. In turn, the charity then announces this to potential donors (often without even specifying who is doing the matching). Sometimes donors will even offer 2:1 or 3:1 matching, so that if you donate \$100 the relevant donors will donate \$200 or \$300 to the same cause. I have donated to take advantage of matching of this sort in the past, as I'm sure have many others. But on reflection, this should strike us as puzzling.

When I make a donation that is matched in this way, I am inclined to think I have done more good than if I had made an unmatched donation. This thought, like other thoughts about the good of charitable giving, has two strands, I take it. One is a thought about how much good comes about as a result of the donation: we could take the total amount extra the charity receives as some sort of proxy for this, though of course that proxy is only rough. The other strand is a thought about what good I get credit for. Amounts charities receive go up and down, but it is only when I donate, or others donate on my behalf, that *I* have done good

through donating. It is connected to the issue, not just of the outcome of the activities of the charity, but what part of the outcome I am causally responsible for.

The credit associated with this second sort of "doing good" is a kind of moral credit, it seems to me, rather than e.g. social credit. When giving I am not usually very concerned about how others judge me for it, and indeed many people give in ways that neither their social circles nor the ultimate beneficiaries know about the gift. (Presumably people working at the charities could look up a name of a donor in their records, but people are not normally donating to incur some credit with the charity either.) This is not to say we should approach charity as some sort of point-scoring exercise in which we build up some secular equivalent of karma. The main reasons to give, it seems to me, are provided by the good a charity does, at least in many cases. Still, I would rather be responsible for more good than less: and my donations being matched by another giver seems to be a "force multiplier" for this.¹

Things become a little more puzzling when we consider the moral situation of the person who has offered to match through the charity. (Let us call this person the "matcher", for the sake of a label, and the person who takes up the offer to match the "donor", though of course both parties end up donating and so both are donors in the usual sense.) The matcher plausibly does something good over and above what she would have done if she had just donated the same amount of money without any matching arrangement. She gets some additional credit

¹ I do not want to offer any specific analysis of this moral credit. I do think it is usefully distinguished from the "warm glow" from giving, or whatever positive affective states giving sometimes produces. (See Elster 2011). While we sometimes no doubt have positive feelings when giving to charity, the desire that I do good with my giving presumably does not reduce to the desire to trigger these feelings. Sometimes, for example, I do not feel good after giving (I may feel e.g. guilty for not doing so more often), but my desire to be responsible for some good being done has still be satisfied even without the feelings. Moral credit for giving to charity may be very similar to the "moral credit" for voting for a good candidate explored by Goldman 1999. It may also be connected to praiseworthiness, though praiseworthiness may be a more complex matter: if I do the bare minimum, morally speaking, I deserve some moral credit for what I did, but perhaps do not deserve praise for it. And if I do 80% of the bare minimum, I deserve more moral credit than if I did nothing, but again my action may not be praiseworthy.

for the donor's donation too, especially if she has reason to think she prompted it, or some of it, or if the offer to match was part of the reason the donor gave. But now it can feel like some double-counting has gone on. The donor has taken some of the credit for the matching, and the matcher has taken some of the credit for the matched donation: but we did not lower the credit for either of the amounts of money they gave directly, for either party. It is as if, by some alchemy, a total donation across the two parties of e.g. \$200 has somehow become morally like a higher amount.

Let us explicitly compare two cases. In the first one, Anandi and Boris donate \$100 each to the same charity, without either trying to influence the other to do so. In the second case, Anandi offers through the charity to match the next \$100 donation, Boris notices and donates the next \$100, and Anandi keeps her commitment to match. In these two cases the amount of good done, in the first sense I mentioned, appears to be the same: in both cases \$200 reached the charity. In the second case, on the face of it, Anandi can feel as if she deserves some credit for Boris's donation, since Anandi offered the matching that Boris took up, and Boris can feel as if he deserves some credit for Anandi's, since Boris's donation was the condition that triggered Anandi's. However, in the second case, Anandi should also feel she deserves full credit for the \$100 she donated herself, and likewise with Boris and his \$100. Could this be right?

It can certainly be the case that sometimes one person deserves some credit for another's donation. There are all sorts of ways we can spend our time and efforts to encourage others to give, and sometimes the credit might go primarily to someone else, as when Andrew owes Ben money, but Ben tells Andrew to give it to charity instead. Sometimes two people deserve some credit for each other's donations, as when people collaborate on researching which

charity serves their charitable intentions before both donating, or when a group encourage each other to give to a cause, or in some of the cases where a joint activity earns extra money that is then donated. But plausibly in typical cases where the help is roughly symmetric, both sides do not deserve *more* credit than if they had donated the money off their own bat without assistance.

There are a range of special cases that might make a difference here. One is where a donor offers to match donations, but across a range of charities in such a way that *which* charity the money goes to depends on where I donate. I might have a fairly straightforward reason to take the donor up on her offer in order to direct her donations from charities I think are less good to charities I think are better. Another is when employers match donations of employees—this could be seen as partly a way of benefiting an employee as well as a charity, it may be useful for building trust in an organisation, etc.² Matching between individuals based on personal relationships between them more generally introduces complicating factors too. Finally, and most trickily, there is the issue of what is going on, morally speaking, when states give tax deductions for charitable giving of various sorts. (Including cases like the UK's "gift aid", where one can waive the right to deduct a charitable gift from one's taxable income in return for the state giving additional money to the charity you have donated to.) Is the state merely exempting some income from its demands? Is it in effect giving to the target charity indirectly? Is it assisting its taxpayers in their project of charitable giving? Is it doing all of these things?

2 There is empirical evidence that these charitable matching schemes increase the amount of effort employees put in to their work more than rival forms of compensation, giving employers an additional self-interested reason for offering charitable matching: see Douthit et. al. 2022. While this result may give employers a reason to offer charitable matching as part of their employee benefit packages, it also gives us another reason to treat matching by employers as a special case.

There are other, more specific, special cases that give donors special reasons to match. One is where some charitable aim is all-or-nothing. There is not much point having the money to put up half a memorial, or to pay for half a medical operation. In situations like these, especially in cases where our donation plus the matching would put the fundraising "over the top" to reach the required amount, it can make good sense to donate only when the funds are matched. Another is when donations are part of some educative role, as when parents and small children donate together as part of the parent trying to inculcate charitable giving in their child.

In all of the cases discussed in the previous two paragraphs, there are *prima facie* reasons for taking advantage of matching (or partial matching) that go beyond those present in the simple case. For tractability, then, let us focus on the simple case where the matching is not by someone standing in a special relationship to the donor, and is not motivated by anything personal about the donor. Further, let us consider simple cases where the matcher is not choosing between charities to donate to based on the amount matched, or at least the donor being matched has no reason to think the matcher is behaving that way.

In the simple case, the donor and the matcher may know very little about each other, especially if the donor only knows about the matching because of an announcement by the charity e.g. on the charity's website. So very little of the good done by matching, in these cases, is due to the pleasure of joint activity with a friend or improvement of a relationship. Does a donor, or matcher, have special reason to give in these circumstances, and do they deserve any moral credit for the other's donation without a equivalent diminution of credit for their own?³

3 In searching for justifications for charitable matching, I do not intend to be dismissing the option that charitable matching is a mistake out of hand. Indeed, if there is no good reason for charitable matching, it might well be a mistake, though on the other hand if there is a good justification for the practice it need not

Possible Explanations

A first natural thought is that the donor deserves extra credit because it is likely that more money will be given to the charity if the donor takes advantage of an offer to match than if the donor donated at a time when there was no such offer. By offering to match a charitable donation, the matcher might catch a donor's attention, and the offer might lead to the donor's making a donation. Since the matcher would like more money to be donated to the charity rather than less, the matching offer serves the matcher's charitable goal. It can look a similar way from the donor's perspective as well. The donor might think that the matcher will not donate her "matching" contribution unless the donor donates: so by making his contribution, he ensures twice as much reaches the charity than might otherwise.

One complication with this account, for both the matcher and the donor, is that each might suspect that the other would have donated anyway. In the case of the donor's suspicion of the matcher, this looks well-founded in typical cases, since matchers for big charities are likely to be matched by someone else if the particular donor does not donate. But a matcher, too, might suspect that many donors were planning to donate to the charity anyway, and that a particular match is likely to be matching a donation that was going to happen anyway. In such cases, the donation and matching do not result in more donations overall.

But suppose we are dealing with a case where both the matcher and donor would not have donated their amounts without the matching being on offer and being taken up. In such a

be. Karnofsky 2015 is one person who argues charitable matching is a mistake. One concern he has is about the risk of matching leading people to make donations that could be better targeted elsewhere. Whether or not matching is worthwhile remains an interesting question even if we stipulate that the charitable donation to be matched is going to the best cause, however that may be spelled out. Another concern is it would be better, or at least as good, for both parties to unconditionally donate to the appropriate charity, which has some affinities with the problem explored in this paper, though Karnofsky's focus (reasonably enough) seems to be on what strategy will do the most good, rather than questions of moral credit.

case, we have an understandable reason for the two to engage in matching behaviour: their reason to serve the ends of the charity gives them a derivative reason to see to it that the charity is given more rather than less, since they can do this at relatively little additional inconvenience.

The main puzzle that remains, in this scenario, is why it seems to both the matcher and the donor that they have each done more good, or deserve more moral credit, than if each had made their donation without any matching arrangement. The total amount donated is double what it would have been if either had donated in isolation. (And is better by the entire joint amount than the outcome where neither donates.) But the total amount donated is not to the sole credit of either. It would be natural to think that they share the credit for the total amount equally: that is, they each deserve half the credit for the entire amount donated. While they deserve more credit than if they had kept the money in their pockets, and, given that they would only donate if the other did, more credit than if the *other* had not donated, it is hard to see how they each could merit more credit than if they had resiliently been willing to donate on their own without the motivational push. If they do think of themselves as having done better than this, it suggests they think they deserve some credit for the other's donation (since it was contingent on theirs), but neglect to consider the fact that the other deserves some of the credit for theirs, since their disposition to donate was also contingent in that way. Is this an illusion, brought about perhaps by our tendency to see ourselves as entirely the authors of our actions while others are swayed by circumstance? Or can we vindicate the thought that both deserve more credit than if they had independently and resiliently donated their amount without the involvement of the other?

In real-life cases of donation matching it is rarely clear to both parties that the other would not have donated without the matching. This is particularly true when a charity advertises that a matcher is standing by: the matcher and donor enticed by the match may never meet and have no very firm views about the other. Still, one or the other, or perhaps both, might think that at least the *probability* of the other donating extra is increased by their own gift, and were this true this plausibly gives each a reason to match, given the aim they each have to assist the ends of the charity. We would be left with a puzzle about why *both* feel they have done better than if they just resolutely donated without the matching arrangement, though, without needing the prompt.

Another potential explanation for the additional good that matching does is that it lets both parties be part of a bigger project of doing good. Feeling part of something worthwhile that goes beyond oneself is important to many people in many areas of their life, whether that larger project involves a family, a company, a profession, a nation, or even a sports team. A joint project between one matcher and one donor is not normally as large or as enduring as these other wholes of which we are part, but transitory collaboration in a joint project that does moral good is worthwhile too. Half a dozen motorists who stop to band together to push a stranger's car out of the mud might only work together for a few minutes, but if they successfully get the stranger's car back on the road, they can each feel satisfied with a collective job well done.

This explanation of the appeal of matching is naturally seen as *not* explaining this appeal because of greater moral credit for matching, but in terms of the appeal of joint action to do good, over and above the appeal of action to do a proportionally smaller amount of good on

one's own. Perhaps not every philanthropist feels this appeal, but enough of us want to do good as a joint activity with others that it might vindicate offering and taking up matching.

The main problem with this explanation is that donations to charities have this feature to basically the same extent even without matching. A major charity like Oxfam or UNICEF handles hundreds of millions of dollars a year, and does good on a scale that dwarfs what most givers could do on their own. Without matching, Boris's \$100 makes him part of an enormous effort millions of times larger, and with matching, Boris's contribution is still the same sized part of that large effort. He can think about it, if he likes, as being half of the double-sized effort he and Anandi jointly produce, but it is hard to see why that would make him any larger a part of the overall effort. Unless we think that Boris somehow deserves a larger portion of the credit for the *overall* effort due to the matching, his contribution being part of something much larger than his own effort does not seem to explain any particular virtue of matching in a case like this. If there is something desirable about joint-credit for a larger charitable gift, it looks like Boris deserves joint-credit for the entire operations of the charity. But the joint-credit due to Boris is plausibly the same whether or not he and Anandi match their gifts to the large charity.

A referee notes that being part of a small joint-effort might be more appealing than a large-charity-wide effort: matching with one other person, even if a stranger, might be psychologically satisfying in a way that contributing a small drop to Oxfam's river might not. Perhaps this is part of the psychological story. Whether it gives Boris a reason to match with Anandi, beyond seeking any satisfaction he might derive, is a harder question to answer. Perhaps it does give Boris such a reason, if Boris wants to do good in small groups but is left cold by being a minuscule part of an effort of thousands. (And perhaps many of us want this,

given the kinds of social animals we are.) Or perhaps it is better seen as a mere "framing effect" that reflects a limitation of Boris's ability to appreciate that he is already involved in a great joint activity that yields immense good: and if he could properly appreciate that, the matching would leave him cold.

One final option is a little more pessimistic. It is that if both sides were clear-headed and rational there would be no reason to do charitable matching, but thinking that charitable matching is somehow desirable for clear-headed and rational donors is a natural mistake to make. *Given* that donors are likely to find charitable matching appealing, matchers may offer matching donations in the reasonable expectation that it makes others more likely to donate rather than not. The reason matchers have would then be to take advantage of a natural mistake. We might worry, if this were so, whether matchers were being manipulative, taking advantage of irrationality in donors: but at least it would be in a good cause.

There is another twist possible in this pessimistic story. It gives matchers a good reason to offer to match (at least if there is nothing too objectionable about taking advantage of a misapprehension in this way). But it might give *matchees* a good reason to take part in matching as well. Suppose I, a donor, realise that I find donating when there is matching appealing. I want to make donating as psychologically easy on myself as possible (both for my own wellbeing, and to make it more sure that I create and keep a habit of donating). If I recognise this about myself, I have a reason to seek out matching for my donations: and that reason is given by my psychological setup, *whether or not* I have an independent reason to seek to have my donations matched.

Consider an analogy. It is often suspected that celebrity endorsements for advertised products work through some irrational mechanism: that some movie star or athlete eats the same breakfast cereal as me, or drinks the same coffee as me, does not give me much reason to suppose I have made superior cereal or coffee choices, especially when I know the celebrity is being well-paid to consume on camera. However, suppose I recognise about myself that I get good feelings from noticing celebrities consuming the same products as me: I feel belonging, or being part of an elite group, or more photogenic, or whatever it is that makes people feel good when they observe celebrities using their favourite products. Desiring *that good feeling* gives me a reason to consume in line with my favourite celebrities, to seek out news of which of the great and good share my cereal preferences, and so on. An originally irrational mechanism can be bootstrapped to yield a genuine reason for the behaviour the mechanism inclines me towards.

The fact that people in fact like their donations matched, and plausibly are more likely to donate when there is matching, can give both matchers and donors reasons to engage in the practice, *even if* the source of that donor preference is a misapprehension. A similar mechanism may work on the other side of the transaction as well. If matchers find matching desirable, even if because of a misapprehension, that gives donors a reason to take advantage of matching offers, and may indirectly give matchers a reason to offer matching rather than just donating unconditionally.⁴

4 Those matchers interested in psychological effects on donors may do better to achieve their goals by making an unconditional donation to their preferred charity and having that donation announced in subsequent solicitations: Huck and Rasul 2011 and Adena and Huck 2017 give evidence to suggest that matching donations "crowd out" donations from donors in a way that a publicised unconditional donation does not, leading to higher overall amounts donated using this latter strategy.

Credit for Another's Deeds

This tension in how we are inclined to think about charitable matching may be the tip of an iceberg. We recognise intellectually that our actions are influenced by the actions of many others: they do a lot to create the environment in which we make choices, and education, examples, peer pressure, etc. can all influence what we end up deciding to do, as well as whether those decisions result in successful action. Nevertheless, we tend to feel primarily responsible for our actions: perhaps very few of the things I did yesterday were actions I would have performed if my upbringing had been different enough, but that by itself does not mean that e.g. my parents deserve the bulk of credit or discredit for my actions yesterday.

On the other hand, many of us hold ourselves largely responsible for the actions of others that we directly influence. While most people would not blame their parents for their own day-to-day actions, some parents might feel very responsible for the day-to-day actions of even their adult children. If I convince someone to change a university system that is causing unnecessary stress or harm to students, I am inclined to feel I deserve credit for the subsequent good the change does. (It might be gauche to *claim* the credit in front of others, of course.) On the other hand, if I successfully push for a change that ends up worsening stress or harm to students, I feel responsible, even if I brought about that change by convincing someone else to implement it. "Success has a thousand fathers", or at least a thousand parents, not just because some people are less than scrupulous about what they take credit for, but also because we tend to take credit for beneficial actions we deliberately influence, but tend not to think about how much we have to share the credit of our own beneficial actions with others who influence us.

These generalisations are very broad brush, and of course sometimes we blame others for the results of particular actions of ours, or give them the credit for that matter; and we sometimes exonerate ourselves from blame for the actions of others that we influence, or deny that we deserve any credit for an action we influenced. Still, if there is an asymmetry between *how much* credit we give to others for our actions versus how much credit we give ourselves for others actions, that could help explain the psychology of gift matching. Gift matching leads both the matcher and the donor to think of themselves as deserving most of the credit for the combined amount. As people of goodwill, preferring to be responsible for more good rather than less, we find that prospect appealing. I would rather be mostly responsible for \$200 going to charity than entirely responsible for \$100 going to charity. (Even though the idea that I am "entirely responsible" for any good deed I do may fall apart under scrutiny when we reflect on the scaffolding my parents, society, friends etc. provide for my moral development and opportunities.)

This bias would be hard to vindicate, since it would be hard to endorse both the matcher's and donor's sense that they deserve most of the credit for the joint amount donated. So the psychological explanation of the appeal of matching might have to appeal to a mistake in attributions of credit, even if it is a natural one. This is compatible with thinking that this natural mistake *could* be bootstrapped into a genuine reason for both to engage in matching behaviour, as argued in the previous section. By analogy, some people self-consciously consume as the celebrities do on TV for the psychological benefits that accrue, but I suspect that most of the effect of advertisements showing celebrities consuming various products exploit non-rational processes in consumers to increase sales. The actual route to consumer decisions may be non-rational or even irrational, even if consumers could in principle bootstrap themselves into rational imitation.

The Charity Multiplier

Suppose it is somehow better, morally speaking, to donate to a worthy cause when one's donation will be matched, versus just donating without an expectation that this will lead to any matching. Suppose also that being a donor *offering* matching is better than being a donor who donates without this. This is how many of us are inclined to think about things, at least before the puzzle above is raised. Perhaps one of the thoughts above about how this might be the case can be vindicated, or perhaps there is some other reason besides the ones I consider that explains why making matched donations is better, in most cases, than unmatched ones.

If we do get more moral credit for being a successful matcher or matchee, we have an opportunity to do great good through matching. Consider a new charity, the Charity Multiplier. It has some worthy aim in view: providing malaria nets for those in malarial environments, or reforesting environmentally degraded land, or running a soup kitchen, or whatever. Let us suppose this new charity does the things it is supposed to do well: it is efficient, not corrupt, evidence based, etc. What makes Charity Multiplier stand out is how it handles matched donations. It advertises that every donor who donates e.g. \$100 promises to match *every* other donor who donates at least that amount. If there are 101 donors, each knows there are *100 other donors* matching the amount they donate. Each gets the credit, not only for their \$100 donated but for \$10 000 matched!

This, surely, is a bridge too far: we cannot generate this much moral credit from an administrative manoeuvre like this. But it may be fruitful to examine why. Plausibly, whatever extra credit we get for matched donations in this case must be distributed among the people who are getting their donations matched: if I am matched with 100 others, it is as if

they get matching credit proportionate to \$1 from my donation (i.e. roughly as much as if someone promised to donate \$1 if a donor gives \$100). Deriving this plausible credit distribution thought from general principles would be difficult. On the face of it, donating \$100 to the Charity Multiplier in these circumstances looks like it should be roughly the same as if a single person offered to "over-match" my \$100 donation with a \$10000 donation. Why would it matter very much whether my matcher was a single person, a consortium, or even a limited stock company? (If a company offers to match my \$100 donation with a \$1000 one, do I have to look up its stock register to see how many shareholders it has, and so how much credit I get for donating?)

I fear our ordinary thinking about charitable matching is confused.⁵ We seem to think that we often deserve additional credit for incentivising others to do good, but often do not think the credit for our own actions is impaired when others have incentivised those actions. But we recoil from thinking we deserve vastly more credit in the charity multiplier case. If our ordinary thinking is confused, I hope it is the kind of virtuous confusion that enables us to bootstrap initially mistaken tendencies into additional charitable giving. Perhaps even something like the Charity Multiplier, with the paradoxical mechanism made a little less obvious, could be the means of driving new charitable giving to worthy causes.

Generalisations of the Puzzle

There is something strange in our ideas about who deserves the moral credit in cases of matching: on the one hand we think both the matcher and the donor do something better

5 A referee suggests that thinking 100 matches is better than 99, which is better than 98, etc. in the Charity Matching case is much more defensible if we think there are diminishing returns (to moral credit or whatever) from each new matcher. It may be that this makes the thought more palatable, especially if the returns after 3 or 4 matches are small, but it still strikes me as absurd that this repackaging of ordinary multiple-donor charity would yield significantly more moral credit than e.g. there being two or three matchers. Those who do not think there is anything absurd about the thought that the Charity Matching case confers significantly more moral credit on donors may of course rightly be unmoved by this section.

when donations are matched, and on the other we are inclined to think that boosting *both* is somehow double-counting: two people each resolutely giving \$100 is roughly the same as two people arranging that each gives \$100 through a donation-and-matching agreement.

It should be noted that donation matching is not the only area of charitable giving where double-counting may be going on. Some charities promise that 100% of donated funds from typical donors will go to relief, with administrative costs paid for in another way (e.g. by specific donors willing to spend 100% of their donation on administrative costs). Two examples are the Against Malaria Fund (AMF) which promises that 100% of certain kinds of donations go to buying anti-malaria nets; and Give Directly, which promises 100% of certain kinds of donations are passed on to recipients. This makes typical donors feel that their donation has gone further, but the donors providing support for administration costs take themselves to have done something morally worthy as well, by facilitating the first class of donations. In the AMF case, for example, 100% of the donation goes to insecticide-treated bed nets, with e.g. \$500 going to buy 250 nets. But the average cost to AMF of purchasing and delivering the bed net to where it is needed is significantly more than that when one includes an appropriate share of its overall administrative budget, post distribution surveys, etc. A typical donor thinks of themselves as deserving the credit for 100% of the bed nets associated with her donation. But the donors who contribute to administration costs also see themselves as deserving some credit for the donations they facilitate, and so, indirectly, for the nets that are ultimately distributed. So there is potentially a similar kind of double-counting, at least in one direction: the facilitator takes themselves to deserve some significant part of the moral credit for the distributed nets (though obviously not all), while the typical donor takes themselves to deserve the full moral credit, or near full moral credit, for the nets associated with their donation.

Some readers may feel that these problems of potential double-counting are due to our ideas about moral credit, and will seek to locate an error there. There is likely to be more to it than that, however. Similar puzzles seem to arise even without considerations of credit or merit. Some donors claim to be indifferent to the moral status of their donations: some philosophers, for example, dismiss morality as an illusion, but still care about the suffering of others. A moral nihilist philosopher sending money to famine relief may find the offer of a matching donation appealing: but, if she is clear-headed, she will not do so because of some anticipated moral credit.

Or to take another case, consider donations to relatively morally neutral causes. Suppose a movie I would like to see is being crowd-funded, but in a way where my donations only affect how early it will appear, but not whether the movie will appear at all. (Perhaps the director is doing post-production in her spare time, but donations in relatively small increments will allow her to take fewer hours at her part-time job and put those towards finishing the movie.) I would still likely find the prospect of my donation to the movie being matched to be appealing, and I might find it appealing to offer to match the donations of others. And this is so *even if* I think it is relatively morally neutral whether the movie is finished sooner or later, or whether I get to see it sooner or later. Whatever explains this phenomenon, it does not seem to be primarily attitudes to moral credit *per se*.

Given the effect does not rely on the moral stakes of an outcome, it is likely to lie in how we think about causal impact, and particularly how to divide up "how much" of a cause is due to each contribution to a joint effect. Perhaps there is some incoherence here in how we think about contributions to outcomes where we influence others as well as contribute ourselves.

The cases discussed by Bernstein 2017 may also suggest that there is wider incoherence in how we think of proportioning causal contributions to outcomes among agents. Demirtas 2022 also shows that it is difficult to connect our judgements about level of causal contributions to an outcome, on the one hand, to how much moral responsibility we bear for that outcome, on the other. While Demirtas is talking about praiseworthiness (or blameworthiness), similar arguments to his would presumably apply to moral credit. If there is a systematic asymmetry of how much credit we think we should get versus how much credit we attribute to others for outcomes we jointly contribute to, this looks like a different incoherence in our attitudes to moral credit to those suggested by Bernstein's and Demirtas's discussions.

Conclusion

Even if there are incoherences in our approach to charitable matching and related practices, that does not make our practice indefensible: we may choose to exploit our odd attitude to offering and accepting matching, given that we have it. If this is the best that can be done, we should perhaps be more willing to give to the causes we support resolutely, and not bother with offering matching or taking up offers of matching, except in special circumstances. But perhaps there is a vindication of matching to be found in other considerations: it is hard to shake the feeling that it makes sense as it stands, though as I have shown finding that sense is elusive.⁶

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