

Beyond Belief: Toward a Theory of the Reactive Attitudes

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Abstract: Most moral theorists agree that it is one thing to *believe that* someone has slighted you and another to *resent* her for the insult; one thing to believe that someone did you a favor and another to feel gratitude toward her for her kindness. While all of these ways of responding to another's conduct are forms of moral appraisal, the reactive attitudes are said to 'go beyond' beliefs in some way. We think this claim is adequately explained only when we take seriously the fact that reactive attitudes are *emotions*. In this paper, we appeal to insights of the emotions literature to highlight one key way in which reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs: beliefs about a person and her morally significant conduct merely *ascribe* to the person the property of having performed a morally significant action, while reactive attitudes are ways of *experiencing* that person as having performed a morally significant action. We then suggest that appreciating this is a crucial first step toward understanding why reactive emotions play roles in our practices around responsibility that beliefs do not.

I. Introduction

It is widely agreed among moral theorists that it is one thing to *believe that* someone has slighted you and quite another to *resent* her for the insult. It is one thing to believe that someone has victimized another, and quite another to feel indignation towards him for his transgression. These ways of responding to another's conduct are all, to be sure, forms of moral appraisal, but it is often said that the retributive emotions (paradigmatically, resentment and indignation) 'go beyond' beliefs in some way. Most often, theorists say that while beliefs 'merely describe' something like the situation of a person having committed some moral offense, retributive emotions, as forms blame, go beyond mere description.

While this claim is most often made on behalf of retributive emotions, it can as well be made about their positive counterparts, reactive

emotions such as gratitude and approval. These, too, are forms of moral appraisal that go beyond beliefs about another's good conduct—in this case, forms of *praise*. After all, it is one thing to believe that another did you a good turn and quite another to feel gratitude toward her for doing so. It is one thing to believe that someone exceeded her obligations toward a third party, and another to approve of her in light of her willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Thus, the positive and negative reactive attitudes—praise and blame—are of a piece in this respect: they are forms of moral appraisal that go beyond mere beliefs. This at least partly explains why, though they tend to focus on the negative reactive emotions, most theorists take the class of reactive attitudes to include both positive and negative attitudes, to include, paradigmatically, not just resentment, indignation, and disapproval, but also gratitude and approval or approbation.¹

This much seems exactly right, and relatively uncontroversial. But the above claims bring to the fore an obvious question: how do reactive attitudes *go beyond* beliefs? Or again, how do reactive attitudes go beyond mere description? If a reactive attitude (gratitude) and a belief (that she did me a good turn) are both responses to a friend's kindness, just how does the former response go beyond the latter?²

We think that it is only when we take seriously the fact that reactive attitudes are *emotions* that we can make adequate progress toward answering these questions. Our aim in this paper is to appeal directly to

1 Wallace (1994) is an exception here.

2 Philosophers who theorize about the nature of belief might object to the characterization of beliefs as mental states that 'merely describe.' They will argue that this is far too thin a notion of belief, that beliefs are much richer and more complex mental states. In characterizing beliefs as we do, we are simply following the emotions literature, and the reactive attitudes literature more specifically. Since the aim of our paper is to unpack the widely made claim that the reactive emotions go beyond beliefs *understood as mental states that merely describe*, this is a natural way for us to proceed here. Those who object to such a view of belief should read our paper as explicating how reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs, but more simply how reactive attitudes play a role that goes beyond the role of mere description.

the insights of the emotions literature—a literature too often neglected in discussions of the reactive attitudes³—to explain one key way in which reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs. Specifically, we argue that beliefs about a person and her morally significant conduct merely *ascribe* to the person the property of having performed a morally significant action, while reactive attitudes toward her, as emotions, are ways of *experiencing* that person as instantiating the property of having performed a morally significant action. We then suggest that appreciating this fact is a crucial first step toward understanding why the reactive emotions play roles in our practices around responsibility that beliefs do not.⁴

We proceed as follows. In Section II, we argue that the picture of the reactive attitudes most prominent in the current literature—namely the picture that connects them to demands—does not illuminate how reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs. In Section III, we draw on the philosophical literature on emotions to explain that beliefs and emotions are two distinct modes of recognizing a feature of the world in evaluative terms. In Section IV, we apply these insights to the reactive emotions and their corresponding beliefs. In Section V, we take a crucial first step toward explaining why the reactive emotions are, but beliefs are not, ways of *holding* another accountable for her conduct.

II. Reactive attitudes and demands

To our knowledge, no one has taken the question of how reactive emotions go beyond their corresponding beliefs—our guiding

³ An important exception here is the work of Lucy Allais (2008a and 2008b).

⁴ Let us be clear at the outset that, in this paper, we highlight only one among many differences one might find between beliefs and emotions. We focus on the difference we do because it is the one we take to be *most* relevant to understanding the claim in the literature that reactive attitudes ‘go beyond’ beliefs, and because this ‘going beyond’ explains why the former play roles in our practices around moral responsibility that the latter do not. But we do not claim that this is the only distinction that might be relevant to understanding how and why reactive emotions are central to such practices. For an insightful discussion of another key difference between reactive emotions and beliefs—namely, that reactive emotions are more *rationaly optional*, in the face of evidence, than beliefs—see Allais (2008b).

question—head on. Theorists do, however, frequently discuss the nature of the reactive attitudes. The dominant trend is to understand the reactive attitudes by connecting them to demands. Its prominence suggests that this characterization of the reactive attitudes might prove fruitful to us here. In this section we explore whether the connection between reactive attitudes and demands helps to illuminate how the reactive emotions go beyond their corresponding beliefs. We ultimately argue that it does not.

Theorists connect the reactive attitudes to demands in at least four different ways. First, reactive attitudes are said to be warranted or justified when someone has violated a demand (i.e., a norm), or, in the case of positive reactive attitudes, gone above or beyond the demand in some way. In this vein, consider what Stephen Darwall (2006) says about gratitude: ‘Gratitude is like forgiveness in being parasitic on legitimate claims or expectations. We are appropriately grateful when people benefit us or act as we wish when we lack any relevant claim or expectation of them’ (73).

A second suggestion is that the reactive attitudes rest on and reflect the *psychological attitude* of demanding, or to use R. Jay Wallace’s terminology, the psychological attitude of ‘holding someone to an expectation’ or ‘making a demand’ (1994, 21). The idea here is that for someone to take up the psychological attitude of demanding that another ϕ is for her to be susceptible to feeling resentment or indignation if that person does not ϕ . Arguably, this idea is also found in Peter Strawson’s seminal work introducing the reactive attitudes, ‘Freedom and Resentment’ (1974), where he says that, ‘the making of the demand is the proneness to such attitudes’ (63).

A third connection often made between reactive attitudes and demands is the claim that reactive attitudes are paradigmatically *expressed* in demands. In ‘Responsibility and the Limits of Evil’ (1993), Gary Watson writes,

The reactive attitudes are incipient forms of communication, though not in the sense that resentment *et al.* are usually communicated; very often, in fact,

they are not. *Rather, the most appropriate and direct expression of resentment is to address the other with a complaint and a demand* (127, emphasis added).

Fourth and finally, theorists such as Darwall and Angela Smith claim that the reactive attitudes themselves, prior to or independent of their *expression*, implicitly address demands (Darwall 2007, 114, n. 6.; see also 2006, 9; Smith 2008). On this view to *experience* a reactive attitude toward someone *is* to demand something of or from her. To use one of Darwall's favorite examples, when I feel resentment toward you for stepping on my foot, I am *in so doing* demanding that you get off of it.

To summarize, the four connections the literature makes between reactive attitudes and demands are: 1) that reactive attitudes are warranted by standing demands (the warrant connection); 2) that the psychological attitude of demanding that someone ϕ leaves us susceptible to having the reactive attitudes when she doesn't ϕ (the susceptibility connection); 3) that reactive attitude are paradigmatically expressed in or by demands (the paradigmatic expression connection); and 4) that reactive attitudes are themselves silent demands (the silent demands connection).

Do any of these four accounts suggest a persuasive picture of how the reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs?

We can dispense with the warrant connection rather quickly. It does not tell us how reactive attitudes go *beyond* beliefs. Beliefs about another's conduct having violated a demand are also warranted by standing demands—they are in this sense 'parasitic on demands' in just the same way that reactive attitudes are.

Moving on, it turns out that though each of the other three connections may provide some insight about the nature of reactive attitudes, none are unhelpful for our particular purposes here, and for the same reason: they leave the positive reactive attitudes, such as moral approval and gratitude, out of their respective accounts.

To see why, let us start with the susceptibility connection. Wallace, the theorist who most carefully elucidates this connection between reactive attitudes and demands, explicitly says that there is no 'presumptive

connection' between the psychological attitude of demanding that someone ϕ and having *positive* reactive attitudes such as gratitude or approval when she ϕ s (meeting our demand) or somehow goes above and beyond ϕ ing (exceeding our demand), though there *is* such a connection between demanding that someone ϕ and having negative reactive attitudes when she fails to ϕ (2008, 176).

Smith (2008) makes a similar claim while discussing the silent demand connection. As she puts it, 'This feature of negative moral appraisal is more difficult to extend to its positive analogue' (381). We think Wallace and Smith are responding to a real feature of the phenomenology of positive reactive emotions like gratitude. My susceptibility to gratitude seems to be independent of my adoption of the psychological attitude of demanding anything of another. Rather, what first and foremost leaves me susceptible to gratitude is *caring* about another's display of good will towards me.⁵ Moreover, when I feel gratitude toward you for the kindness you have shown or a favor done, can it really be said that I am demanding something of you? Demanding what, exactly? Feeling gratitude toward someone just does not involve anything like addressing demands, claims, or requests to her.

Let us turn, finally, to the paradigmatic expression connection. While resentment and indignation may, as Watson and others have suggested, be paradigmatically expressed in demands, not so with the positive reactive emotions. The paradigmatic expression of gratitude is 'thank you'; of approval something like, 'that was a lovely thing to do.' Neither of these sorts of expressions, nor others we might think of as giving voice to our gratitude or approbation, seems to have anything to do with demands.

To be clear, our point here is not to deny that that positive and negative reactive attitudes are all, *in some way*, connected to demands—the warrant connection arguably captures the positive attitudes just as well as the negative ones. Nor is it to deny that various connections to

⁵ Watson (1993) hints at this when he says, 'Many of the reactive attitudes reflect a basic demand (on oneself and others, for oneself and others), whereas others (for example, gratitude) directly express the basic concern' (122, n. 4).

demands are key features of reactive attitudes as a class. Our point is rather that exploring these connections will not advance our understanding of how reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs. We think that both positive and negative reactive emotions go beyond beliefs, and go beyond them *in the same way*. Therefore, on our view, no picture of the reactive attitudes will be satisfying if it has trouble explaining how positive reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs, or if it suggests that the positive and negative attitudes go beyond beliefs in different ways.

III. Emotions and their corresponding beliefs

In the previous section, we argued that a demand account of the reactive attitudes will not help us to see how reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs. In order to make progress, then, we will focus on a feature that all reactive attitudes—positive *and* negative—share: namely, that they are *emotions*. The rest of the paper is concerned with arguing that there is enormous conceptual progress to be made when we take the emotional character of reactive attitudes seriously. In this section, we highlight some claims from the emotions literature; in the next, we show that these claims are crucial for understanding just how reactive attitudes go beyond beliefs.

Emotions are ways of recognizing or apprehending certain features of the world *under an evaluative guise*: they involve evaluating or appraising the features of the world they are about (de Sousa 1987 and 2004; Helm 1994; Nussbaum 2001; Roberts 1988; Sherman 1997; Smith 2005; Solomon 1973; Stocker 1996; Taylor 1985). When Amanda is grieving over the death of her mother, John is afraid of the patch of ice he is approaching, and Kevin feels proud of his recent successes at work, Amanda, John, and Kevin are each apprehending a feature of the world in evaluative terms: Amanda is recognizing her mother's death as a terrible *loss*, John the ice as *dangerous*, and Kevin his recent successes at work as *reflecting positively on him*.⁶

⁶ The fear of ice example is from Stocker (1983 and 1987).

Emotions are of course not the only way of recognizing a feature of the world in evaluative terms. Amanda might also *believe* that her mother's death is a great loss to her, John *believe* that the ice he is approaching is dangerous, and Kevin *believe* that his recent successes at work reflect positively on him. In these cases, too, Amanda, John, and Kevin are recognizing the feature of the world in evaluative terms.

As the above examples suggest, it is possible for a particular emotion and a particular belief to recognize the very same feature of the world, and to recognize it in the same evaluative terms. John's fear of the ice and his belief that the ice is dangerous both recognize the ice to be a threat to his well-being. The grief Amanda feels when her beloved mother dies, and the belief that the death of her mother is a terrible loss to her, are both ways of recognizing the death of her mother *as* a terrible loss.

However, emotion theorists point to a key difference between emotions and what we will call their corresponding beliefs. While both John's fear of the ice and his belief that the ice is dangerous are ways of recognizing the ice as dangerous (i.e., as a threat to his well-being), they are different ways of recognizing it as dangerous, or, better, they are different *modes of recognition* (Bartky 1990; Calhoun 2003; Pritchard 1991, Ch. 3; Dillon 1997; Stocker 1983 and 1987).

To elucidate this distinction, it will be helpful to consider an analogy. Imagine that you are at the Museum of Modern Art, and you encounter a pointillist painting. After staring at it for a while, you have an 'aha' moment, and suddenly *see* the dots *as* the face of Marilyn Monroe. Suppose you return to the Museum a year later and immediately set out for the room with the Marilyn painting, eager to show it to the friend who is with you. But much to your surprise and frustration, this time, for some reason, you just cannot seem to find Marilyn's face in the dots. You still *believe that this is a picture of Marilyn Monroe*, but you can no longer *see* Marilyn in it.⁷ What emotions theorists suggest (even if they do not all

7 For this example, we are indebted to Little (1997).

put it exactly like this) is that the difference between believing that the ice is a threat to your well being and being afraid of the ice, or believing that the death of your mother is a great loss to you and feeling grief, is in important respects akin to the difference between believing that the picture is a picture of Marilyn Monroe and actually seeing Marilyn Monroe in it.

When I believe that the painting has Marilyn Monroe in it and thereby recognize that the painting has the property of being of Marilyn Monroe, I am *ascribing* to the painting the property of *being of Marilyn Monroe*. But, arguably, when I see the dots as Marilyn Monroe—when I recognize her in the picture directly—I am not merely ascribing the property to the painting: rather, I am having an immediate *experience* of the property, that is, of Marilyn, in it. I am, for lack of a better way of putting it, first-personally experiencing the picture's 'Marilyn-ness.' Ascribing a property to some object or situation is an activity from which I can be rather detached—the object, and the property, are over there, and I am over here, as it were. But when, on the other hand, I *see* and hence immediately experience the property, *I* am much more directly and immediately implicated or involved—the property comes home to me in an immediate way.

Let us apply this to the example of fear. John's believing that the ice is dangerous can be understood as a matter of his *ascribing* to the ice the property of being dangerous, just as believing the painting to be of Marilyn is a matter of ascribing the property of being of Marilyn to the picture. When John ascribes to the ice the property of being a threat to his well being, he is making a kind of descriptive claim or judgment about the ice, namely, that it is a threat (Hieronymi 2004, 123-24). We might say that in having such a belief, he is *describing* the ice as a threat. And, analogously to my belief about the Marilyn picture, in so doing John keeps the (purported) fact that the ice is a threat to his well-being at arm's length. He does not let it modify him or his way of being in the world in any way except insofar as he adds a belief about the ice's threat to him to his mental economy.

In contrast, when John is afraid of the ice, the ice's dangerousness comes home to him in a much more immediate way, just as the Marilynness of the picture does when I see Marilyn in it. That is, when John is afraid of the ice, he is *taking up* or *taking in* the ice's threat to him; he is *engaged* with or by the feature of dangerousness of the ice (Stocker 1987). But what, one might ask, does it mean to say that the ice's dangerousness comes home to him in an immediate way, or is taken up by him? What exactly is it for him to 'engage with' the ice's dangerousness? To answer these questions we must now translate the metaphors into more concrete terms.

Emotions theorists often argue that our emotions are in part constituted by features of our *comportment* in or with regard to the world (Bartky 1990; Solomon 2004). While this, too, is rather metaphorical, theorists elaborate by claiming that *patterns of salience, tendencies of interpretation, and orientations of the will* are constitutive of being in an emotion state (Calhoun 2003; de Sousa 1987; Roberts 1988; Rorty 1980; Jones 1996; Oakley 1992; Sherman 1997). Using the example grief, let us take each constitutive element of emotions in turn, starting with patterns of salience.

Part of what it is to be in an emotional state is to have one's surroundings or circumstances appear to one in a particular way, with certain features coming to the fore, and others fading into the background. If, for example, I am grieving over the death of my mother, I will be especially attuned to features of my environment that remind me of her. I may be looking in my jewelry box for a pair of earrings to put on—something I have done every day of my adult life—but today I will be stopped dead in my tracks when I see the necklace my mother gave me on my wedding day, my attention riveted (Sherman 1997, 39). Consider how Justin Oakley (1992) puts the point: 'The person who has enduring grief for his lost mother ... is not merely sensitized to particular features of situations which "set off" his grief. Rather, his grief guides his attention to various motherly scenes and colors his perceptions of those scenes' (13).

Emotions are not just constituted by patterns of salience—by what we notice—but also by how we interpret the features of the world that we notice (de Sousa 2004; Little 1995 and 1998). For example, when I am not grieving I might notice that the plant on my windowsill has died, and see it as an eyesore or as evidence that I do not have a green thumb. But when I am grieving, the dead plant is one more piece of evidence that everything I care about in the world dies, or that all good things in my life will be taken from me, and indeed my inclination towards this interpretation partly constitutes my state of grief.

Finally, and perhaps most familiarly, emotions are constituted in part by motivational profiles. It is a familiar point that ‘we act *out of* compassion, *out of* friendliness, *out of* sympathy’ (Sherman 1997, 49, emphasis added). Part of being in an emotional state is being moved to act or respond in certain characteristic ways. To be grieving is to be drained of the motivation to engage in many of the activities that normally make up one’s day. One will have to drag oneself to work or to the gym. It will take a monumental effort to overcome the desire to leave the dishes in the sink, to let the laundry pile up. On the other hand, depending on one’s temperament, grief might involve an inclination to reminisce about the loved one who has died, or seek the company of others who are also grieving the loss of that same person. All of these motivational tendencies are part of the package that make up one’s experience of grief.

In short, then, to have an emotion about some feature of the world is for one’s comportment in the world to change because of that feature, where that change of comportment is comprised of modifications in one’s patterns of salience, tendencies of interpretation, and motivational profile.

With this in mind, let us return again to John’s response to the dangerous ice. John might simply believe that the ice is dangerous—as we said above, when he does, he ascribes the property of being dangerous to the ice, or describes it as being a threat to his well-being. But he might also take in the ice’s dangerousness in a more robust way,

letting it modify him in more than the minimal sense of adding a new belief to his mental economy. That is, he might let it change his *comportment* towards the ice, where this means that his attention will be riveted to the ice; he will interpret particularly shiny parts of the ice not as pretty, or merely as a noted change in texture, but rather as places to avoid placing a foot. He will approach the ice with new caution and care, and so on. In other words, he will take up a stance of vigilance toward the ice. This change in comportment is, a kind of *experience*. Specifically, it is an experience of *the ice's threat to him*.

We can now see what emotion theorists mean when they say that that emotions and beliefs are two different modes of recognizing (purported) facts. Beliefs recognize a feature of the world as instantiating an evaluative property by ascribing that property to the feature. In contrast, emotions recognize a feature of the world as instantiating such a property by experiencing the property in that feature of the world. Moreover, we have now uncovered a key way in which emotions go beyond their corresponding beliefs. In merely ascribing a property to the feature of the world, our beliefs keep the feature of the world conceived in evaluative terms at a distance from us. When we recognize the evaluative significance of the world via an emotion, we instead are affected by that evaluative significance in a much deeper way: we let it permeate and modify our very way of being in the world (Bartky 1990).

IV. Reactive attitudes as experiences of others' morally significant conduct

With these lessons about one key difference between emotions, generally, and their corresponding beliefs in hand, we are now in a position to turn to an exploration of the differences between the reactive attitudes and *their* corresponding beliefs. But first, let us start with what they have in common.

Like all emotions, reactive attitudes are ways of recognizing some feature of the world under an evaluative guise. They recognize persons (the feature of the world) as having done something morally significant:

something good, bad, right or wrong (the evaluative guise). My resentment of you for sharing my confidences with someone else recognizes you as having injured or offended me. My gratitude toward you for giving me timely feedback on my draft recognizes you as having done me a favor. Reactive emotions, too, have corresponding beliefs—beliefs, that, by definition, recognize the same feature of the world under the same evaluative terms. Thus, I may also believe that you injured me by sharing my confidences with someone else, or believe that you did me a favor.

In a well-functioning moral agent, the reactive attitudes and their corresponding beliefs recognize features of the world that are of *significance* to her. It matters to a well-functioning moral agent whether others perform morally good or bad, right or wrong actions. That is, others' morally significant actions have *import* to or for her because they impinge on something that she cares about, namely, the values that lie at the heart of morality.⁸ For example, the well-functioning moral agent cares about the well-being of others; situations in which one person treats another with disrespect—for instance, insults another—therefore impinge negatively on what such an agent values. On the other hand, situations in which a person meets or exceeds the moral norms the well-functioning moral agent cares about—for instance, where someone does a kindness for another—positively impinge on what the agent values, and therefore will have a different kind of import for her.

Both reactive attitudes and their corresponding beliefs are modes of recognizing a person as having performed a morally significant act, something that has import for the well-functioning moral agent; but of course the lesson of the previous section is that reactive attitudes and beliefs are *different* modes of recognition. When I recognize someone as having performed a morally significant action by coming to have a belief about her doing so, I am *ascribing* to her the property of having done something morally good or bad, right or wrong. I am making a

⁸ The phrase 'the values that lie at the heart of morality' is from Wallace (Forthcoming b).

descriptive claim or judgment about her in light of her conduct: that she is someone who has done something morally significant. However, when I recognize her via a reactive attitude, I am *experiencing* her as having done something good, bad, right, or wrong. That is, there will be characteristic changes in my comportment—in my attentional, interpretational, and motivational profiles.

To illustrate, compare Beth believing that her husband George is not doing his fair share of the household tasks, and her resenting him for it. If what we have said so far is correct, then, when Beth believes George is not doing his fair share, she is ascribing to him the property of not valuing her work or contribution to the household properly. In merely ascribing to him this property, Beth is keeping the (purported) fact of George devaluing her at arm's length: it in no way modifies Beth except insofar as she has added a new belief to her mental economy.

In contrast, when Beth *resents* George, the fact that he is not doing his fair share, the fact that he is not valuing her properly comes home to her in a much more immediate way. In resenting him, she has what we might call first-personal practical uptake of George's not doing his fair share. She *experiences* George as someone who is not valuing her properly or treating her in the way she deserves. She is now oriented toward him in a cooler, less friendly, more combative way, which manifest in the following sorts of ways. George's bad qualities capture her attention; she is quick to notice his clothes on the floor, his dirty coffee cups on the table. She is inclined to interpret things he does as further insults or signs that he disrespects her or devalues her contributions to the household; she takes his suggestion that they spend all day Saturday frolicking in the park, for example, as just another instance of him thinking that the house cleans itself, or that the groceries magically appear in the refrigerator. And finally she is poised to lay into him for the slightest perceived infraction—she is like a fuse ready to be lit when it comes to him and the house. All she needs is to see his clothes on the floor, or his dirty coffee cup on the table, and she is off and running about his laziness and lack of respect.

In short then, Beth's resentment of George goes beyond her belief that George is not doing his fair share insofar as her resentment does more than merely ascribe to George the property of not doing his share. To resent him is to be affected by his conduct in a deep way: the significance of his conduct resonates with her, and her very way of being in the world towards George alters.

One of the virtues of this account is that it is able to capture the positive reactive attitudes, and do so without making them the neglected cousins of the negative attitudes. The positive reactive attitudes go beyond their corresponding belief in just the same way as the negative attitudes do. Compare, for example, coming to believe that your friend Marc stepped up to the plate to help someone, and feeling approbation or approval toward him for doing this good deed. Your approval of Marc goes beyond your belief in just the same way that Beth's resentment of George goes beyond her belief. When you approve of Marc, you recognize him as having done a good deed for another, and you do so by *experiencing him as* having done a good turn. This experience is, once again, constituted by changes in your comportment towards Marc. In this case you are more *warmly* oriented toward him. It is Marc's good qualities that capture your attention, and his bad ones that fade into the background; you are ready to interpret other deeds of his, even those that don't end up helping anyone, as well meaning. You are inclined to help him in return, or to tell him that that was a lovely thing to do. Your approval of Marc for his good deed is like Beth's resentment of George in that it is a way of being deeply and practically affected by the import of another's having performed a piece of morally significant conduct.

Despite the fact that this picture has the virtue of giving the very same account of positive and negative reactive attitudes, one might still feel some residual doubt about its adequacy. The source of this reluctance may be the fact that, in practice, coming to have beliefs about another person's morally significant conduct will lead to practical changes in comportment very like the ones we say constitute the having

of reactive attitudes. After all, it matters to a well-functioning moral agent that others performs good, bad, right, or wrong actions. It has import for her because in so acting, others impinge on something that the agent cares about, on the values that lie at the heart of morality. The fact that the well-functioning moral agent cares about others' conduct suggests that when she comes to *believe* that someone has done something morally significant, that belief will lead to practical changes similar to those that are constitutive of the reactive attitudes—for instance, changes in the way the agent comports herself with regard to the moral offender or exemplar. The healthy moral agent is not just going to sit by and make descriptive judgments about what is happening—that is, add a new belief to her mental economy and go on her merry way. Rather, the beliefs about the morally significant conduct will, in all likelihood, lead to practical changes in her way of being in the world.

The story of Beth and George is an excellent illustration of this point. If Beth believes that George is not doing his fair share around the house, it is not likely that she will stop at merely ascribing to George this property—though she may try, in order to keep the peace. At the end of the day, given that she cares about being respected and valued in the household, her beliefs that he is not doing his fair share are likely going to lead to changes in her comportment towards him, to changes, specifically, in her attentional, interpretive, and motivational profile with respect to him.

We wholeheartedly agree that if someone comes to have beliefs about a feature of the world that is not a matter of indifference to her—as beliefs about another's good or bad, right or wrong actions are not a matter of indifference to the well-functioning moral agent—then coming to the beliefs will in all likelihood lead to practical changes, changes in the way she is toward the world. After all, if I *believe* that someone has insulted me (and assuming I fully understand what an 'insult' is), then in practice I am very likely going to modify my comportment toward her as

a consequence.⁹ Crucially, though, this leaves in place the conceptual point we are making. Our point is that the relevant practical changes in comportment are *constitutive* of having reactive attitudes, whereas they are not constitutive of, or internal to, having beliefs. Those changes are perhaps a practical *consequence* of having the belief; they may even stand in certain normative or conceptual relationships to the having of such beliefs. But it is one thing to have an attitude that just is a change of comportment; it is another to have an attitude that might, or even will likely, lead to subsequent changes in comportment. This difference is important, because it helps to account for why reactive attitudes play roles in our practices of responsibility their corresponding beliefs do not. Let us turn to these matters now.

V. From attributing responsibility to holding accountable

It is widely agreed that both beliefs and reactive emotions are ways of *attributing* responsibility to someone, where this is a matter of taking something to be true of her. Obviously, when Mary believes that John is responsible for stealing the scarf, Mary is attributing responsibility to John—she is doing so explicitly. But sometimes, we attribute responsibility as a presupposition of other beliefs we have. For instance, if Luke believes that Meghan is *blameworthy* for insulting Ellie, Luke is in so doing attributing responsibility to Meghan. After all, a precondition of Luke's belief is his assumption that Meghan is responsible for her action—in thinking her blameworthy, he assumes this is true of her. In short, there are number of different beliefs that we might form about another person and her conduct that involve taking it to be true of her that she is responsible for that conduct.

When we have reactive attitudes toward someone—when we respond to her morally significant conduct with resentment, indignation, approval, or gratitude—we are also attributing responsibility to her.

⁹ Wallace (Forthcoming a) makes a similar point about Scanlon's (2008) account of blame. Our thanks to Angela Smith for pointing out that we needed to deal with this issue, and to Joshua Hollowell for fruitful conversations about these matters.

Reactive attitudes are forms of praise and blame, and it should be obvious that we praise or blame others only for conduct we take them to be responsible for: we do not, for example, feel approval of someone for conduct that we do not take to be attributable to her. Having a reactive attitude toward her presupposes an attribution of responsibility for the same reason that having a belief about that person's praise- or blameworthiness does: both praise and blame, and beliefs about praise- and blameworthiness, are only appropriately directed toward those of whom we already take it to be true that they are responsible.

More deeply, when you respond to another with a reactive emotion, you are, as it were, taking her conduct as a reason to change your comportment toward her—it is the impetus, and explanation, for your comporting yourself towards her in a new way. Her conduct would only be a reason for you to change your comportment toward *her* if her conduct redounded to her, was attributable to her—if it was, as some put it, expressive of her agency.¹⁰ In other words, her conduct is only a reason to change how you are in the world toward her if she is responsible for that conduct—if it flows from her in the right sort of way (Allais 2008a, 15). Thus, in responding to another with reactive emotions, you are taking it to be true of her that she is responsible for her conduct.

However, a number of theorists claim for the reactive attitudes a further role in our practices around moral responsibility, a role they do not claim for beliefs. It is often said that our reactive attitudes not only attribute responsibility to their targets, but that they also do something that extends beyond this: like punishment, reproofs, rewards, and accolades, reactive attitudes are ways of *holding another accountable* for her conduct (Smith 2007; Watson 1996). Moreover, most think that this is true of the reactive emotions regardless of whether or not they are expressed.

10 We are indebted for this idea to Lucy Allais (2008a), though she uses it to make a different point: if the way we see someone is not affected by her actions, it is hard to see how we *can* be seeing her actions as flowing *from her*, and therefore how we can be seeing her as an agent (15).

The inclusion of the reactive attitudes in the list of ways that we hold another accountable cries out for explanation, especially in light of the exclusion of beliefs from that list. Punishment, reproofs, rewards, and accolades are all outward actions or forms of interaction with others. They are concrete ways of meting out (good and bad) consequences to another for her behavior; they are all ‘doings-to’ another. Why should we lump in with them unexpressed resentment and approval and their relatives, mental states that remain buried in one’s heart, that never see the light of day? Shouldn’t reactive emotions, given that they are mental states, instead fall with beliefs as precisely *not* being ways of holding another accountable?

If we had a theory of holding another accountable ready to hand, answering these questions would be straightforward. We would simply articulate what holding another accountable amounts to, and show how the reactive emotions do and beliefs do not meet the outlined criteria. Unfortunately, there is no received theory of what lies at the core of holding another accountable. In fact, we would argue that it seems like the best way to make progress toward a theory of holding accountable is to look closely at what theorists tend to agree are the paradigmatic ways of holding another accountable—namely, punishment, reproofs, rewards, accolades, and *reactive attitudes*—and figure out what they all have in common.

We think that the work we have done here enables us to take a crucial first step toward understanding why beliefs do not and reactive emotions do belong in a class with punishment, reproofs, rewards, and accolades. Most broadly put, reactive attitudes, like the concrete forms of holding accountable, are *practical responses* to the import of another’s having performed a piece of morally significant conduct *that are directed toward the actor*. Beliefs are neither practical nor directed. Let us elaborate.

Start with the claim that reactive emotions are *practical responses* to the import of another’s having performed a piece of morally significant conduct. It is this aspect of the reactive attitudes that we emphasized in the previous section. Reactive emotions, we said, are forms of

comportment. To respond to another's conduct with reactive emotions involves a modification of oneself, a change in the way one is in the world. It involves, in other words, a practical change. To be sure, the reactive attitudes are not practical in precisely the same sense as punishment, rewards, reproofs, or accolades: when we respond to the import of another's morally significant conduct with punishment, rewards, reproofs, or accolades, we are meeting her conduct with an explicit action that doles out concrete consequences for her, the author of that conduct. We urge that reactive attitudes are nevertheless practical ways of meeting another's conduct. When we respond to another's conduct with reactive emotions, we now see and interpret her differently than we did before, and are motivated to engage her in myriad of new ways. This is a practical response to her conduct—we are now oriented toward her in a different way: our relationship to her has been changed.

Implicit in our discussion of the reactive emotions in the previous sections is also the idea that reactive emotions are forms of *comportment* that are *directed*.¹¹ What we mean by this is that the patterns of salience, tendencies of interpretation, and motivational propensities that in part constitute one's reactive emotions are oriented specifically toward the agent who performed the morally significant conduct, as opposed to the world more generally. To illustrate, consider the contrast with grief, an emotion that is not directed. When I am feeling grief over the loss of my mother, my mind or attention, and my will, are not thereby reoriented toward any particular object in the world; rather, my grief seems to be constituted by an overall, or more global, reorientation to the world. Something of deep value to me has been lost; there is a sense in which I have lost a part of myself, something integral to my life as whole. And thus my experience of this import changes my whole perspective on the world. *Everything* is colored by my grief; my whole mental and physical economy changes—the *whole world* looks bleak; my will to do *anything* is

11 Wallace (Forthcoming b) also claims that they are directed, but does not unpack what this means.

sapped. No particular thing is picked out as the focus of the attention, interpretational, and motivational patterns—the comportment—that characterize my grief.

When, by contrast, I feel gratitude toward someone, I am reoriented toward *her*: it is primarily my interpretations of *her* and *her* conduct that are affected, and I am motivated to say thank you to *her*, disposed to return the favor to *her*, and the like. This is not, of course, to say that my gratitude might not ‘leak’ into other aspects of my attention or motivation: my gratitude toward *her* for the favor done may color the way I see the behavior of others for the day, interpreting what would otherwise strike me as minor irritations as charming human follies, for example. The point, however, is that in feeling gratitude my attention, interpretive tendencies, and will are primarily, or in the first instance, directed toward the agent who did me a good turn.

The same can be said for all the reactive attitudes. To experience an agent as having done something morally good or bad, right or wrong, is, in the normal case, to see *her* as having done something that impinges on something you value (namely, one of the values at the heart of morality). It is to be expected that experiencing an agent as impinging on something that you value would amount to reorienting yourself toward *that person*—she is after all the one who is either threatening or promoting something that is of value to you. If she has promoted what you value, then it makes sense that you would reorient yourself toward *her* in certain circumscribed ways—to now see *her* as a friend or ally and be drawn toward *her*, to interpret further actions on *her* part in charitable ways, and be attuned to occasions to reciprocate, as well as motivated to do so. On the other hand, if someone has harmed or threatened something that you value, then it makes sense that you would reorient yourself toward *him* in opposite ways. Your way of being toward *him* will be cooler, less friendly, less open. You will certainly read *his* next action less charitably; you will be particularly attuned to further insults, and perhaps vigilant for opportunities to strike back, or demand an apology.

The reactive emotions' directedness is a feature they share with the concrete forms of holding accountable. To be sure, punishment, rewards, reproofs, and accolades are directed in a slightly different way than are the reactive emotions. Punishing or rewarding is something we clearly *do to a person*: I punish you for (your) stealing and I reward you for your selfless sacrifice—likewise with reproofs and accolades.¹² These are paradigmatically things we *do to another*: I reprove you by yelling *at you*, 'How could you have stolen the scarf? That is totally unacceptable! How would you feel if someone stole *your* scarf!?' And I praise you by saying *to you*, or writing you a note that says, 'That was a lovely thing to do; you are so kind.' While these types of practical response to another for her morally significant conduct are more active 'doings' than are the reactive attitudes, they all take the author of the morally significant conduct as their *target* in the same way that reactive attitudes do.

Reactive emotions, then, share two key features with other paradigm forms of holding accountable: being practical and being directed. As we suggested above, these are two features that beliefs do not possess. The fact that beliefs are not practical should be obvious; beliefs are part of the theoretical domain.¹³ The claim that beliefs are not directed, however, deserves discussion.

In saying that beliefs are not directed, we are not denying that beliefs have intentional objects—that is, we are not denying that beliefs are *about* features of the world. But being directed toward something in the

12 It might be suggested that accolades, or expressions of praise, for conduct need not be directed, or at least not directed toward the author of the conduct: after all, when you do me a favor, I can 'sing your praises' to your friends, rather than interacting directly with you. We agree that this is one way we speak of praise. But we are suggesting that when accolades or expressions of praise are thought of specifically as ways of *holding accountable*, then they are directed at the author of the laudable action. This is the sense of accolades, or expressions of praise, that we mean.

13 This is not to deny that having beliefs may have practical consequences, or even that their having such consequences is a part of understanding what they are. But the internal or constitutive aim or function of belief is a theoretical one (See Velleman 2000).

world, in the sense we mean it, is different from having an object.¹⁴ The difference is most clearly seen by looking again at emotions that have objects but are not in our sense directed. Consider again the grief you feel when your beloved mother dies. As with all emotions, in feeling grief you are apprehending a feature of the world under an evaluative guise. In this case you are recognizing the death of your mother as a terrible loss to you. The death of your mother, construed as a terrible loss, is the intentional object of your grief; it is the feature of the world that your emotion is *about*. But while your grief has an object, it is not directed, as we explained above. The change in comportment that constitutes your grief it is not focused on or oriented toward anything in particular. *Everything* is colored by your grief: your motivation *in general* is sapped. It is in that sense that we say mean the emotion is not directed.

Beliefs about another having performed a piece of morally significant conduct are like grief and other non-directed emotions in that they have an intentional object (for the beliefs in question, this object is the person instantiating the property of having performed a piece of morally significant conduct), but they are not directed. My belief about Mary having performed a piece of morally significant conduct is about Mary and her conduct, but it is not in our sense directed *toward* Mary. Indeed, how could it be? Beliefs, unlike emotions, are not constituted by patterns of salience, tendencies of interpretation, and orientations of the will. Thus *there is nothing to direct or orient* toward Mary. In other words, beliefs are not even the right sort of thing to be directed in the sense that we mean.

In short then, beliefs do not and reactive attitudes do share with paradigmatic forms of holding accountable the features of being practical responses and being directed. Understanding this, we

14 Of course, people often speak about the 'intentional directedness' of mental states like beliefs; but what they mean by this is just that beliefs have intentional objects, that beliefs are about things in the world. Our notion of directedness should therefore be distinguished from the standard notion of 'intentional directedness.' As we have indicated, we mean directedness to refer to a kind of *practical orientation toward*, something that is distinct from a mental state's aboutness.

suggest, is a crucial first step toward making sense of the claim that beliefs are not and reactive emotions are, like punishment, reproofs, rewards, and accolades, ways of holding another accountable for her conduct.¹⁵

In this paper we have emphasized the emotionality of the reactive attitudes. But we do not take ourselves to have given a full account of the reactive attitudes here. In our view, a full picture of this class of attitudes must not only take seriously the fact that they are emotions, but must also explain why and how they are *forms of moral address*. This is a deep puzzle in its own right: how can reactive attitudes be forms of *address* if they are unexpressed? Answering this question is a project for another day. Until we unpack what it means to say that unexpressed reactive attitudes are forms of moral address, we will not be in a position to fully explain why reactive attitudes serve to hold another accountable for her conduct. But if what we have argued here is persuasive, then we are one step closer to understanding why reactive attitudes play such a special role in our moral lives.¹⁶

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15 We do not take ourselves to have articulated anything like a set of necessary and sufficient conditions something must meet in order to count as a way of holding another accountable. There are likely a number of practical, directed responses to another's morally significant conduct that are *not* forms of holding another responsible, for example, asking someone to explain (not justify) her conduct, or helping someone to reform her ways.

16 Our sincerest thanks to Angela Smith, Lucy Allais, Gary Watson, and Chris Franklin for their helpful feedback on earlier versions of this paper. We owe special debts of gratitude to Maggie Little and Joshua Hollowell for engaging us in countless conversations on these topics and for their tireless reading of drafts.

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