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# On Moral Pride as Taking Responsibility for the Good

## I. INTRODUCTION

In “Freedom and Resentment,” P.F. Strawson introduced the “reactive attitudes” as attitudes to which we are prone in response to a moral agent’s expressed quality of will.<sup>1</sup> Theorists have since represented a subset of those attitudes as modes of holding agents responsible.<sup>2</sup> To resent another for some wrongdoing—or again, to experience moral indignation toward her—is to hold her responsible for the act. To experience guilt, on the other hand, is to hold oneself responsible. Importantly, on many accounts, we can also hold ourselves and others responsible for morally good actions.<sup>3</sup> Though the locution sounds a bit odd, in experiencing gratitude

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1. P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 187–211.

2. See, for examples, Gary Watson, “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme,” in *Agency and Answerability: Selected Essays* (Clarendon Press: 2004), 219–59, R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), Stephen Darwall, *The Second Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Coleen Macnamara, “Holding Others Responsible,” *Philosophical Studies* 152, no. 1 (2011): 81–102, Victoria McGeer, “Co-reactive Attitudes and the Making of Moral Community,” in *Emotions, Imagination, and Moral Reasoning*, eds. Robyn Langdon and Catriona Mackenzie (New York: Psychology Press, 2012), Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), David Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), and Bennett W. Helm, *Communities of Respect: Grounding Responsibility, Authority, and Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

3. See, for examples, Macnamara, “Holding Others Responsible,” McKenna, *Conversations and Responsibility*, Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, and Helm, *Communities of Respect*.

toward my neighbor for helping me move, I, in some sense, “hold him responsible” for his supererogatory act. And just as gratitude is the positive analog of resentment, there would seem to be a positive analog of guilt as well. Theorists have variously referred to this attitude as moral self-congratulations, moral self-approbation, and (a kind of) moral pride.<sup>4</sup> The point is that, whatever we decide to call it, there is a distinctive attitude by which we hold ourselves responsible—or perhaps better, *take responsibility*—for morally good conduct. It is this attitude that I am concerned to examine here.

Consider, for example, Ada, who, shortly after meeting Fay, a single mother and recently unhoused hurricane evacuee, opens her home to Fay and her daughter while the family attempts to resettle. Although she helped Fay and her daughter for their sakes as opposed to her own, Ada anticipated feeling, and does indeed feel, good about helping them.<sup>5</sup> If asked, Ada would acknowledge that her act was morally praiseworthy, but she does not seek praise, reward, or moral credit from others. She does not boast about her act, feel superior to others on account of it, or dwell excessively on the act’s (or her own) goodness. Yet, Ada does, in an important sense, feel good about herself as the agent who did the good deed. She embraces the act as her doing and emotionally appreciates its positive significance for her, as well as for Fay and her daughter. Ada

4. Watson, “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil,” McGeer, “Co-reactive Attitudes,” and Daniel Telech, “Praise as Moral Address,” in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vol. 7, ed. David Shoemaker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 154–81 identify (a kind of) moral “pride” as a reactive attitude. Jonathan Bennett, “Accountability (II),” in *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes: Perspectives on P.F. Strawson’s “Freedom and Resentment,”* eds. Michael McKenna and Paul Russell (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2000), employs the term “self-congratulations” to describe the self-directed praising reactive attitude. And Helm, *Communities of Respect* and Coleen Macnamara, “‘Screw You!’ & ‘Thank You,’” *Philosophical Studies* 165, no. 3 (2013): 893–914 and Coleen Macnamara, “Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90, no. 3 (2015): 546–69, each use the term “self-approbation.”

5. Unsurprisingly, research suggests that we often feel good upon performing altruistic acts. For helpful discussion of what psychologists sometimes refer to as the “helper’s high,” see Allan Luks, “The Helper’s High: Volunteering Makes People Feel Good, Physically and Emotionally,” *Psychology Today* 22, no. 10 (1988): 39–42 and Melanie Rudd, Jennifer Aaker, and Michael I. Norton, “Getting the most out of giving: Concretely framing a prosocial goal maximizes happiness,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 54 (2014): 11–42.

experiences what we might think of as a kind of pride, and in relating to her act in this way, she relates to herself as morally responsible for its performance.

While a handful of theorists identify and discuss (what I will call) moral pride as the appropriate response to another's expression of gratitude or moral approval, a sustained treatment of the nature and value of the attitude in our responsibility practices remains elusive. As for why moral pride has gone undertheorized, a quick review of the responsibility literature suggests a ready explanation. Reactive attitudes theorists are largely concerned with our responses to the moral demand to treat one another with due regard and good will. Resentment, the paradigm reactive attitude, serves to hold members of the moral community accountable for unjustified ill will, and so, too, do the blaming attitudes of indignation and guilt. Gratitude and moral approval at once represent a meaningful apprehension of another's good will and a virtuous display of one's own in response. As a self-praising attitude, moral pride neither enforces adherence to moral obligations, nor richly recognizes and returns the good will of others. It is not obvious, then, whether and how it serves the functions typically attributed to reactive attitudes, nor is it clear why we should think taking responsibility for good conduct has much moral import. But while this assessment explains the relative neglect of moral pride in the responsibility literature, it also underscores the need to bring this somewhat obscure attitude into sharper focus. In what follows, I endeavor to advance this end, offering a novel analysis of the structure and role of moral pride in our responsibility practices.

In Section II, I begin the task of specifying moral pride, distinguishing the attitude from related phenomena. In Section III, I review relevant characterizations in the moral address literature, and I argue that a moral address approach to understanding moral pride yields important insights but also faces substantive limitations. In Section IV, I develop and defend a view on which moral pride is a particular kind of "holding engagement" in which one engages with the value of one's own performance of a morally good act. The relevant holding engagement involves both the affirmation of the act as an expression of one's agency and a rich, emotional acknowledgement of how the act reflects on oneself as the action's author. In Section V, I articulate the distinctive roles and interpersonal significance of moral pride as a self-praising attitude. In Section VI, I conclude. I argue that just as it matters to us that moral agents hold themselves

responsible for moral wrongdoings, so, too, do we have reason to care about whether and how they take responsibility for the good.

## II. FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

I use the term “moral pride” to denote the positively valenced, affective attitude by which agents take responsibility for their own morally praiseworthy conduct.<sup>6</sup> Consider, for examples, the attitude(s) we might expect from a busy driver who delays her own plans to assist a stranger with a flat tire, a man who donates his kidney to save an ill friend, or again, a woman who opens her home to a struggling hurricane evacuee. In each case, it would seem natural for the relevant agent to recognize the good they have done, to feel good that another has benefitted from their action, and, in some sense, to feel good about themselves on account of having performed their good deed. Responses of this sort, in which the agent emotionally acknowledges and endorses her own good action, are characteristic of moral pride.

I suspect that moral pride, while rather common, is easily confused with related, but importantly different phenomena. As a first step toward specifying the attitude, then, we need to disentangle moral pride from some of its familiar relatives, including (merely) feeling pleased with oneself, moral self-esteem, and moral hubris. In service of sharpening these distinctions, I will preface them by elucidating some of the murkier aspects of moral pride as I have described it—namely, the particular mode of “taking responsibility” that it represents and the evaluative status of the conduct to which it (fittingly) responds.

6. I follow Gary Watson (among others), in referring to the self-directed, praising reactive attitude(s) as a kind of “pride.” However, I do so with some reluctance. Pride, a notoriously multivocal concept, is sometimes used to refer to shame’s positive analog—an attitude we might take toward, for examples, a loved one, an ability, or a trait. As will become clear in what follows, the notion that I employ here is a species of agentive (or action-oriented) pride that is meant to capture the positive analog of guilt rather than shame. This usage and distinction are recognized in psychological research on pride. See June Price Tangney, Jeff Stuewig, and Debra J. Mashek, “Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 58 (2007): 360–61; cf. Neil McLatchie and Jared Piazza, “Moral Pride: Benefits and Challenges of Experiencing Pride and Expressing Pride in One’s Moral Achievements,” in *The Moral Psychology of Pride*, eds. J. Adam Carter and Emma C. Gordon (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 143–67. Though little hangs on the label, I chose “moral pride” partly because it, better than alternatives like “self-approbation,” helps capture the social significance and identity-related elements internal to the relevant attitude.

Some might balk at the idea that one can hold oneself responsible, or take responsibility for one's conduct, by way of an affective attitude. After all, calls for others to take responsibility (usually for wrongdoings) are often calls, not for attitudes, but for certain types of *action*—e.g., publicly acknowledging fault, making reparations for damage, and accepting punishment. Still, attitudes like guilt and moral pride might represent significant modes of taking responsibility, even if they are not the only, or even primary, modes called for on a particular occasion. To help motivate this idea, suppose that in an unsuccessful attempt to secure a seat on a train, a fellow boarder intentionally knocks you aside, causing severe injury to your foot. Suppose further that the pushy passenger declines to apologize, explaining, "I admit fault for injuring you, will fully compensate you for any needed medical care, and will accept, without protest, any further compensatory or punitive measures justly assigned to me. But if by apology, you mean a sincere expression of guilt, I can't offer that. I just don't *feel bad* about my moral offenses, but I agree that shoving you was wrong, and I vow not to repeat the offense." On some views, even if you took the pushy passenger to be sincere, you might still reasonably judge that, in some crucial sense, he does not hold himself responsible for wronging you. As these views have it, an attitude of guilt is not just a natural concomitant of holding oneself accountable for wrongdoing, but (partly) constitutive of this practice, insofar as it is a rich way of experiencing oneself as, rather than merely believing oneself to be, responsible for an offense.<sup>7</sup> If this rings true, then some asymmetries notwithstanding, we can imagine parallel cases of taking responsibility for good deeds. While claiming credit and accepting reward for one's praiseworthy actions are familiar responsibility practices, one might think that fully taking responsibility for one's good action involves the sort of experiential uptake represented by moral pride. Of course, this view admits of disagreement and requires further discussion and defense—some of which I will offer here—but for now, it

7. See Elisa A. Hurley and Coleen Macnamara, "Beyond Belief: Toward a Theory of the Reactive Attitudes," *Philosophical Papers* 39, no. 3 (2011): 373–99, Coleen Macnamara, "Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency," in *The Nature of Moral Responsibility: New Essays*, eds. Randolph Clarke, Michael McKenna, and Angela M. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), David Shoemaker, "Moral Address, Moral Responsibility, and the Boundaries of Moral Community," *Ethics* 118, no. 1 (2007): 70–108, and Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 110, on the importance of affective uptake for holding responsible and taking responsibility.

should suffice to have in hand a working notion of what attitudinal modes of taking responsibility look like and how they (are often thought to) differ from related modes.

Moral pride is not just a mode of taking responsibility, but it is an attitude that tracks and fittingly responds to one's own morally praiseworthy conduct. Morally praiseworthy conduct is good, but not just any act that we might casually call "good" will qualify. To see this, consider mere moral right-doing. If moral right-doing amounts to no more than acting permissibly (or avoiding wrongdoing), then such acts will not be appropriate occasions for moral pride. Although we might agree that it is a good thing that I, say, feed my pets, pay the gardener for services rendered, and refrain from striking my neighbor, such conduct is not, without further explanation, especially praiseworthy. But matters seem different when I, for example, help a stranger push his broken-down vehicle to the repair station or donate a kidney to help a friend survive an illness—now, some degree of moral pride seems quite fitting. Specifying exactly what counts as a praiseworthy action is a complicated issue that I will not resolve here, but as a start, we can say that conduct that is good in the sense befitting moral pride has a kind of significance that is not reducible to mere adherence to a moral requirement.<sup>8</sup>

As a positive, self-regarding emotional attitude, moral pride shares family resemblances with other related, but importantly different, affective phenomena. For example, moral pride might call to mind a feeling of being pleased or satisfied with oneself upon doing a good deed. But to say that one feels "pleased with oneself" might mean only that one experiences a shallow, momentary sense of self-satisfaction or reflexive pleasure upon performing the relevant act. If moral pride is to play a substantive role in the practice of taking responsibility, it cannot be identified with such thin sentiments. While moral pride is an emotional attitude, it is one with cognitively sophisticated intentional content and a rich moral

8. While *mere* adherence to a moral requirement will not suffice for praiseworthiness, I leave open the possibility that where it is exceedingly difficult for an agent to meet a moral demand, her doing so might count as a morally praiseworthy action. I suspect, however, that in many cases where we praise others for doing difficult but morally required acts, what we find praiseworthy are not their actions per se, but some quality of character (e.g., resilience, tenacity, etc.). See Dana Kay Nelkin, "Difficulty and Degrees of Moral Praiseworthiness and Blameworthiness," *Noûs* 50, no. 2 (2016): 356–78 for illuminating discussion of the relationship between an act's difficulty and its praiseworthiness (and blameworthiness).

phenomenology. Minimally, one's moral pride construes oneself as having performed a good act for moral reasons and involves, to some extent, apprehending the act's significance for oneself and other impacted parties.

Relatedly, the type of pride constitutive of moral pride should not be confused with self-esteem or what we might regard as the positive analog of shame. The latter attitude involves a more global assessment of the self and may be elicited in response to associations and characteristics for which one is not responsible.<sup>9</sup> Some, for example, might feel (a kind of) pride on account of having a family name associated with an extensive history of charity and activism. Even if they have done little in the way of good deeds themselves, they may feel as though their own moral worth or identity is somehow enhanced by their ancestors' praiseworthy actions. The sense of pride at issue in this paper, however, should be viewed not as the positive analog of shame, but as the positive analog of guilt. On many accounts, guilt, unlike shame, is fittingly experienced only in response to exercises of one's own agency and need not involve feeling as though one is a bad person on account of one's wrongdoing.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, (the relevant sense of) moral pride responds to one's own praiseworthy action without necessarily seeing it as bearing significantly on one's worth, self-esteem, or overall "goodness."

Finally, we should avoid equating moral pride with conceit or hubris. Consider the man who, upon paying for his colleague's lunch, boastfully drones on about his generosity compared to other moral agents. This person manifests moral *arrogance*; his self-aggrandizing attitude is offensive. But we need not construe moral pride in this way. Psychologists often

9. See Shawn Tinghao Wang, "Shame and the Scope of Moral Accountability," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2021): 544–64 for an interesting discussion and defense of shame's role in moral accountability.

10. In distinguishing shame from guilt, Gabriele Taylor writes, "feelings of guilt are localized in a way in which feelings of shame are not; they concern themselves with the wrong done, not with the kind of person one thinks one is." Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 89. Soon after, she notes that "when feeling guilty but not when feeling shame I must think myself responsible for the relevant state of affairs." *Ibid.*, 90–91. For useful distinctions between guilt and shame in psychology research, see June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), chap. 2, and Jessica L. Tracy and Richard W. Robins, "The Self in Self-Conscious Emotions: A Cognitive Appraisal Approach," in *The Self-Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*, eds. Jessica L. Tracey, Richard W. Robins, and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 3–20.

distinguish hubristic pride from healthier forms of achievement-oriented pride, where the latter recognizes without overstating the value of the agent's act.<sup>11</sup> Paradigm instances of moral pride are best understood in similar terms. Upon performing a morally praiseworthy act, an agent experiences an attitude through which she construes herself as having done a good thing, where the affective tone and measure correspond (at least roughly) to the quality of the act.

To say that moral pride is at least sometimes fitting is not to deny that one might experience the attitude in excessive degrees or express it in untoward ways. Unchecked moral pride could turn into moral arrogance, and fitting moral pride may be expressed in ways that run afoul of cultural and social conventions. Even upon performing an extraordinarily virtuous act, it would be terribly off-putting were the agent to throw her arms in the air and shout, "Yes! I did it!" in response. Such a display might strike others as rudely competitive or as evidence that what appeared to be an altruistic act was actually motivated by a desire for reward or moral credit. It might be best to leave the attitude unexpressed, or, if prompted by others, to express one's moral pride in a restrained manner that evinces appropriate humility and respect.<sup>12</sup>

Traversing some of moral pride's family resemblances allows us to appreciate important distinctions and affords us a more informed, if still incomplete, picture of the attitude. As a mode of taking responsibility, moral pride has a richer affective profile and more complex intentional content than mere feelings of self-satisfaction or simpler reflexive pleasures, and it is fittingly felt only in response to one's own performance of a morally good action. As the positive analog of guilt rather than shame, it has a narrower agential structure and a more localized self-focus than moral self-esteem. Finally, while prudence often requires moderating its expression to avoid causing offense, moral pride is compatible with humility and need not manifest as hubris or arrogance. As a first pass, we can

11. See, for example, Jessica L Tracy and Richard W. Robins, "The Nature of Pride," in *The Self-Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*, eds. Jessica L. Tracey, Richard W. Robins, and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 263–82, and Tangney, Stuewig, and Macheek, "Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior," 16.

12. David Hume cautioned that though pride is a virtuous emotion, we should exercise restraint in expressing it to others to avoid causing offense. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 597. See also McLatchie and Piazza, "Moral Pride," for a contemporary treatment of the social complexities of expressing moral pride.



say that moral pride involves an experientially rich evaluative construal of oneself as having done something morally praiseworthy.

### III. MORAL PRIDE AND MORAL ADDRESS

With the preceding distinctions and preliminary sketch in hand, we are well-positioned to turn our attention toward a particular role that responsibility theorists sometimes attribute to (what I am calling) moral pride, namely, a role as the response sought by gratitude and moral approval. As I will argue, such characterizations are unable to provide a satisfactorily robust account of moral pride, but they do help lay the groundwork for such an account by furnishing us with constructive insights and useful caveats.

In examining the contours of what is sometimes called the reactive attitudes' "call-and-response structure," it is best to begin with Gary Watson's influential claim that reactive attitudes are plausibly construed as forms of moral address.<sup>13</sup> Watson writes, "The reactive attitudes are incipient forms of communication, though not in the sense that resentment et al. are usually communicated. . . Rather, the most appropriate and direct expression of resentment is to address the other with a complaint and a demand."<sup>14</sup> Watson suggested that resentment implicitly addresses an offender with a demand for due regard and good will, but if the offender is incapable of understanding the demand's content, or again, of recognizing the victim's authority to address the demand, then resentment is misplaced.<sup>15</sup> The offender is an ineligible target for moral address and so not appropriately held accountable for moral violations.

Drawing on and expanding Watson's earlier proposal, subsequent responsibility theorists sometimes characterize the demand internal to the reactive attitudes as calling for a certain response. Stephen Darwall, for example, offers a view on which resentment and indignation come with an "implicit RSVP," calling on addressees to acknowledge both their

13. See also Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135.

14. Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil," 265.

15. See Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil," 229–30, and Gary Watson, "The Trouble with Psychopaths," in *Reasons and Recognition: Essays on the Philosophy of T.M. Scanlon*, eds. R. Jay Wallace, Rahul Kumar, and Samuel Freeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 308–09.

blameworthiness and the addresser's authority to blame them.<sup>16</sup> An addressee can offer such acknowledgement by taking responsibility for her moral offense via a feeling of guilt. On this view, when one agent blames another who responds with guilt, the pair reciprocally recognize one another's authority and competence to address demands to agents (including themselves) in a way that constitutes holding agents accountable.<sup>17</sup>

Notably, some theorists argue that just as resentment and indignation call for their targets to feel guilt, other-regarding praising attitudes such as gratitude and moral approval call for their targets to experience a parallel self-approving attitude. Coleen Macnamara offers one of the earliest and most well-developed articulations of this view.<sup>18</sup> Macnamara diverges from other theorists in characterizing the form of address internal to reactive attitudes as a *recognitive* rather than a demand. A recognitive is a form of address that recognizes its target in a certain way and "calls on" the target to recognize herself in the same way. On this approach, my expressed resentment emotionally recognizes its target as having wronged me and calls on the target to recognize herself as having wronged me in a comparably rich, emotional manner—i.e., by feeling and expressing guilt. Similarly, my expressed gratitude recognizes its target as having done me a good turn, and the response it seeks is for its target to recognize herself as having done me a good turn by feeling and expressing moral self-approbation, or what I call here moral pride.<sup>19</sup> On Macnamara's account, expressions of gratitude and moral approval—and their tendency to elicit moral self-approbation in their targets—help to build and maintain the moral community, in large part, by encouraging further acts of kindness. She adduces this idea in support of an argument that a central function of (even unexpressed) other-regarding reactive attitudes is to elicit uptake in their targets in the form of parallel self-regarding attitudes.<sup>20</sup> Gratitude and moral approval, for example, have the function of eliciting moral self-approbation.

16. Darwall, *The Second Person Standpoint*, 145.

17. See *Ibid.*, 74–79.

18. See Macnamara, "'Screw You!' and 'Thank You,'" Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Cognitive Entities," and Macnamara, "Blame, Communication, and Morally Responsible Agency."

19. Macnamara, "'Screw You!' and 'Thank You,'" 908–09.

20. Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Cognitive Entities," 560–62.

Daniel Telech offers a similar model of the praising reactive attitudes' call-and-response structure. On his view, gratitude and moral approbation address their targets "with moral invitations to jointly value the praiseworthy agent's manifestation of good will."<sup>21</sup> As with any invitation, the response sought by other-praising reactive attitudes is the addressee's acceptance. In this case, acceptance ideally consists in experiencing and expressing (what Telech calls) "directed pride," a reflexive attitude whereby one emotionally registers the significance of one's act *for the praiser*, taking the praiser's evaluative perspective as its focus.<sup>22</sup> While the relevant invitation lacks the normative force of a demand, it nevertheless provides the addressee with a discretionary reason to accept and declining the invitation may be criticizable (if not wrong, perhaps ungracious or unkind).<sup>23</sup>

Finally, Bennett Helm also offers an account on which one's gratitude calls on one's benefactor to feel self-congratulation or self-approbation. On Helm's view, reactive attitudes exhibit a rationally interconnected structure, whereby their expression manifests a "caring commitment to," or again a form of "reverence for," a shared community.<sup>24</sup> What's more, the rational connections are both intrapersonal and interpersonal, as well as multi-directional. Other things being equal, my gratitude toward you for performing some good act rationally commits me to feeling moral self-approbation should I perform the same good deed. My gratitude is also rationally tied to the attitudes of others, calling on my benefactor to feel self-approbation and on witnesses to feel approbation toward my benefactor. Likewise, my benefactor's self-approbation can call on me and other

21. Telech, "Praise as Moral Address," 156.

22. See *Ibid.*, 164. I say "ideally" because Telech allows that one who has the capacity to experience directed pride in response to others' praise can accept the praiser's invitation by attending to her evaluative perspective in the called-for way without necessarily experiencing directed pride on that occasion. *Ibid.*, 172.

23. *Ibid.*, 171.

24. Bennett W. Helm, "Accountability and Some Social Dimensions of Human Agency," *Philosophical Issues* 22, no. 1 (2012): 229. Here, Helm characterizes the reactive attitudes' calls as "part of the demand that we mutually recognize each other's standing as a member of the community." *Ibid.*, 224. In later work, Helm stresses that the attitudes themselves do not address demands but are best understood as calls for "fellowship in a community of respect" concerned with "interpersonal affirmation of communal norms." Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 64-65; Bennett W. Helm, "Gratitude and Norms: On the Social Function of Gratitude," in *The Moral Psychology of Gratitude*, eds. Robert Roberts and Daniel Telech (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 183-92.

witnesses to feel parallel other-regarding reactive attitudes.<sup>25</sup> This pattern of emotional responses serves to affirm communal norms and respect for one another as fellow community members who both are bound by the relevant norms and have the authority to hold each other responsible for upholding them. Other things being equal, when the relevant calls and responses fail to align, something is rationally amiss, and we do not respond as we ought.<sup>26</sup>

While the preceding theorists do not aim to offer an account of moral pride per se, their views, both individually and in combination, suggest a potentially interesting framework for discerning the attitude's structure and significance. Moral pride is, perhaps among other things, an apt response to expressions of other-regarding praising reactive attitudes, such as gratitude and moral approval. In interpreting the communicative architecture of reactive attitudes in terms of recognitives rather than demands, Macnamara affords self-praise a natural and explicitly interpersonal role in our responsibility practices. Moral pride, at least sometimes, answers a call to (emotionally) recognize oneself as the caller recognizes her, i.e., as morally responsible for doing someone a good turn. Repetition of this call-and-response pattern builds moral community by motivating further benevolent acts. Telech's account suggests an emotionally richer and still more active interpersonal role for moral pride as the response to an invitation to co-value the agent's good deed, focusing on the act's significance for the inviter. Other things being equal, failing to respond with moral pride (or with some similar substitute) when so invited may be insulting. Helm offers a picture on which moral pride might play an even more dynamic communal role, as not only a response to another's call to affirm one's commitment to the relevant value, but as its own call to others to act (or feel) in kind by, for example, experiencing an appropriate other-regarding attitude. On this view, moral pride is part of a rationally

25. See Helm, "Accountability and Some Social Dimensions," 221–25; Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 60–65; and Helm, "Gratitude and Norms," 182–83.

26. See Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 61–65, and Helm, "Gratitude and Norms," 182–83. It is worth noting that John Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), McGeer, "Co-Reactive Attitudes," 304, and David Shoemaker, "Qualities of Will," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 30, no. 1–2 (2013): 117–19 also gesture at a role for moral pride, or some similar attitude, as the response sought by gratitude in certain contexts. For an argument against this view, see Stephen Darwall, "Gratitude as a Second-Personal Attitude (of the Heart)," in *The Moral Psychology of Gratitude*, ed. Robert Roberts (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 147–49.

interconnected network of reactive attitudes by which we collectively express respect for a shared community and hold agents accountable for upholding its norms. When one does not feel moral pride in the relevant circumstances, or when one's moral pride fails to elicit parallel commitment affirmations in others, this suggests a potential rational failure of some sort.

Although the preceding views furnish us with a variety of ways that we might cash out moral pride's psychological complexity and interpersonal roles, their insights do not neatly extend to a more general account of moral pride.<sup>27</sup> Notice first that in understanding moral pride exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of its role as the response to *another's* call, we would miss central cases of the phenomenon. Sometimes we experience moral pride without being prompted by another. Perhaps there is no (responsive) beneficiary or other witness present. A satisfactory account of moral pride should be able to capture and explain instances that occur absent another's prior, praising call.

Even so, we can profit from analyzing the significance of moral pride within the reactive attitudes' dialogical structure. Plausibly, it does matter to us when we praise another for a good deed and their responses suggest that they do not experience themselves in a parallel way. It seems unlikely, though, that the concern is best (or at least fully) understood in terms of our praise failing to fulfill one of its functions. Nor does the worry seem adequately captured by the suggestion that the praisee has disrespected us or irrationally failed to affirm their commitment to communal norms. A satisfying account of moral pride's interpersonal significance should be able to explain how and why what often matters to us in praising another, in the sense of holding her responsible, concerns how the praisee regards *herself* in relation to her good action. Responsiveness to others and to communal norms are relevant here, but we should avoid articulating moral pride's value in terms that background its significance for the attitude-bearer.

Lastly, while the preceding views suggest various ways of interpreting moral pride's affective structure, none seem equipped to provide a

27. This is not a defect of the relevant views, which, as their theorists note, are not intended to offer independent accounts of moral pride. Interestingly, Macnamara, "'Screw You!' and 'Thank You,'" Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities," and Telech, "Praise as Moral Address," explicitly state that their focus is *other*-regarding reactive attitudes.

sufficiently thorough and robust view of the attitude. Macnamara represents self-approration as a form of emotional recognition. This seems right, but as Macnamara acknowledges, many, if not all, emotions are forms of affective recognition. If moral pride is also a mode of “holding oneself responsible,” it likely has a more complex affective structure than simple emotions such as joy and fear. Telech’s approach, which identifies (a version of) moral pride as a kind of joint valuing, might lead too far in the opposite direction. His particular notion of valuing involves an entanglement with a second subject whose perspective has priority. Many ordinary experiences of moral pride seem to lack this type of hierarchical evaluative structure. Drawing on Helm’s view, we might understand moral pride as occupying a position in a network of rationally interconnected emotions that constitutes a kind of care for one’s community. But while experiences of moral pride likely are partial manifestations of caring, describing the relevant type of caring exclusively in terms of communal reverence would obscure central respects in which subjects of moral pride emotionally relate to themselves.

In sum, a moral address approach to understanding moral pride affords us instructive insights on which to build, and it helpfully highlights areas in need of further development. We need an account of moral pride that accommodates instances of moral pride that occur absent another’s praise, foregrounds the agent as a constituent object of the attitude, and represents the attitude’s affective structure and interpersonal significance in terms that reflect its status as a mode of taking moral responsibility for the good.

#### IV. MORAL PRIDE AS AN AFFECTIVE HOLDING ENGAGEMENT

On the view I will propose, moral pride is helpfully construed as a (particular sort of) “holding engagement” in which one engages with the value of one’s own performance of a morally good act. As I will argue, experiences of moral pride help structure the attitude-bearer’s identity as an agent of good. In this section, I unpack the relevant notion of an affective holding engagement, and I articulate how the attitude, in affirming both the distinctive quality of the act as one’s own and one’s recognition of the act as good, contributes to the agent’s moral identity.

Recall that moral pride is typically regarded as a form of affective recognition, but as I suggested above, it seems importantly different from many

simpler emotions like fear, which also represent their targets in evaluative terms. To see this more clearly, consider the intentionality (or object-directedness) of fear.<sup>28</sup> Fear construes its target as dangerous or threatening. Notice that there is a wide range of fitting candidates for fear's target. I might fear a burglar, a rattlesnake, a bomb, a virus, a hurricane, financial ruin, and so forth. But not all affective attitudes are like this. As we have seen, so-called reactive attitudes, including moral pride, are fittingly directed only toward agents. What's more, they involve positive or negative moral evaluations of an agent in light of conduct for which that agent is deemed responsible.

Importantly, not all affective attitudes that are (often) associated with evaluations of morally responsible agency target their objects in the same way. To see this, consider the following two responses to a creepy crossing guard shouting insults at pedestrians as they cross an intersection. Diane, the first pedestrian, responds to the crossing guard's insults by judging that his actions reflect and speak poorly of his character, and she feels disdain toward him as she rushes by. She suspects that he is responsible for his actions insofar as they speak for him (rather than, say, resulting from delusions or hypnosis). But as she sees the matter, his act does not speak *to her* in a way that merits engagement with him as a fellow moral agent. In contrast, when the crossing guard insults Rita, another passing pedestrian, she responds with resentment. Like Diane, Rita judges that the crossing guard's disrespectful actions are attributable to him in such a way that they are aptly considered expressive of his agency. But unlike Diane's response, Rita's attitude is not merely a judgment and an associated negative affect, but her resentment is a way of relating to the crossing guard's actions and attitudes as bearing on the integrity of the moral community, the maintenance of which she claims a role in preserving. In adopting the adversarial stance constitutive of resentment, she ascribes to the crossing guard (and his blameworthy act) a kind of normative significance for her that is absent from Diane's response.

Following one prominent approach in the blame literature, we might capture the difference between Rita's and Diane's attitudes in terms of the

28. See Bennett W. Helm, "Emotions as Evaluative Feelings," *Emotion Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 248–55, and Andrea Scarantino and Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2021), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotion/>, for helpful discussion on the intentionality of emotions.

distinction between attributability blame and accountability blame.<sup>29</sup> Attributability blame attributes a bad or wrong action to some agent in virtue of her action reflecting some relatively “deep” aspect of her agency (variously described as her real self, her character, or her will). Accountability blame, on the other hand, holds agents to account for flouting moral demands. We might say, then, that Diane’s attitude is an instance of attributability blame, while Rita’s attitude is one of accountability blame. Though the attributability/accountability distinction is notoriously fraught, it strikes me as one plausible way of characterizing the pedestrians’ respective attitudes.<sup>30</sup> Here, however, I want to emphasize a different distinction. On my view, Rita’s resentment, but not Diane’s disdain, constitutes an affective holding engagement. Not all affective holding engagements serve to hold agents responsible, but some, including (but not limited to) resentment and moral pride, do.

We can think of an affective holding engagement as an emotional stance that treats its target as an active subject in one or more of one’s substantive normative projects.<sup>31</sup> Most, if not all, projects are normative in

29. See Gary Watson, “Two Faces of Responsibility,” *Philosophical Topics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 227–48, and Watson, “The Trouble with Psychopaths,” for discussion of what he calls two “faces” of responsibility. David Shoemaker, who posits a third “answerability” face or type of responsibility, explicitly associates disdain with attributability responsibility and resentment with accountability responsibility. Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, 35.

30. Some theorists deny that being responsible in the accountability sense is necessary for being held responsible via reactive attitudes like resentment. See, Pamela Hieronymi, “The Force and Fairness of Blame,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 18, (2004) 115–48, Angela M. Smith, “Responsibility as Answerability,” *Inquiry* 58, no. 2 (2015): 99–126, and Matthew Talbert, “Moral Competence, Moral Blame, and Protest,” *Journal of Ethics* 16 (2012): 89–109. Among those who associate being an appropriate target of resentment with the accountability face, there remains disagreement about who counts as attributability-responsible versus accountability-responsible. See, for examples, Watson, “The Trouble with Psychopaths,” Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*, and Dana Kay Nelkin, “Psychopaths, Incurable Racists, and the Faces of Responsibility,” *Ethics* 125, no. 2 (2015): 357–90. Because praising attitudes do not obviously involve demands, some question whether they can hold responsible in the accountability sense. Matt King, “Two Faces of Desert,” *Philosophical Studies* 169, no. 3 (2014): 401–24.

31. The use of “holding” here should not be understood as “holding to” (a demand), but as an interactive stance arising from one’s seeing, or holding, an agent in a certain light. For discussion of this sort of stance in the forgiveness literature, see Lucy Allais, “Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2008): 52–58, Lucy Allais, “Feeling Blame and Feeling Forgiveness,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy and Psychology of Forgiveness*, eds. Glen Pettigrove and Robert Enright (London: Routledge, 2023), 217–18, and Monique Wonderly, “Forgiving, Committing, and Un-Forgiving,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 104, no. 2 (2022): 484.



the sense that they are constrained by aims and standards that determine the project's success. Substantive normative projects, however, aim at the maintenance and promotion of values, values the force and function of which depend on uptake from certain individuals (active subjects). As moral agents, one of our collective projects is the maintenance and promotion of moral values.<sup>32</sup> The project's progress is determined by our fellow moral agents' and our own uptake of the relevant values.

To be an active subject in a substantive normative project is to be situated such that one's attitudes and actions bear directly on the project's progression. For example, while someone outside the moral community might convince a morally responsible agent to perform a morally significant action, only moral agents have the status of active subjects in the moral domain. Their actions bear on how the project goes (whether and how the relevant values are maintained, promoted, or thwarted) in a way that those of moral outsiders do not.

In an affective holding engagement, one *treats* the target as an active subject in one's normative project, engaging with the agential value reflected in the target's action or attitudes.<sup>33</sup> Such treatment need not

32. Not all substantive normative projects are of the moral variety. Initiating and sustaining an interpersonal love relationship, for example, is a normative project that aims at the maintenance and promotion of relationship-specific values. Here, project success is determined in part by both the lover's and beloved's uptake of the relevant values. While some substantive normative projects are long-term affairs, others are more localized. For example, investing in another's willingness to extend her agency in service of one's own ends is a project of some kinds of trust, in which for a limited time and in a limited domain, we enjoy others to support and promote our personal values and commitments. These projects rely on the responsiveness of other agents, whom we hope will see our dependency and our value as fellow agents, as reasons to act as trusted. For instructive discussion of trust's normative structure, see Karen Jones, "Trustworthiness," *Ethics* 123, no. 1 (2012): 61–85, Darwall, "Trust as a Second-Personal Attitude," and Emma Duncan, "The Normative Burdens of Trust," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vol. 12, ed. Mark Timmons (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 149–69.

33. This type of "treatment" shares commonalities with other familiar notions in the responsibility literature. One such notion is Strawson's "participant attitude," a stance of "involvement or participation in a human relationship" that treats the target as eligible for responsibility-sensitive emotions. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 52. I focus on the target's ability to make a direct, significant impact on one's normative project because it might be that some with whom we do not stand in ordinary relationships (and toward whom we often take the objective stance) are appropriate targets of certain kinds of affective holding engagements. A non-moral agent, for example, may be an appropriate target of some types of trust. R. Jay Wallace's stance of holding someone to a normative expectation, which construes its target as subject to a demand and renders the attitude-bearer susceptible to blaming

involve an explicit conception of one's own normative project, much less conscious attention to the target's particular position with respect to it. We often have and make moves within important projects without noticing them as such, instead attending to more localized aims while the broader teleological significance of our acts and attitudes remains phenomenologically backgrounded. Think here of the various stances, actions, and reactions partly constitutive of the project of parenting. Although rich and textured, they often occur smoothly and almost automatically, without attending to the belief that the agent has a project in which she and others play roles. The aptness of "project" nomenclature might not become apparent until (or unless) one reflects on whether and how what one has done coheres with a larger set of interconnected aims internal to one's conception of good parenting.

Just as an explicit conception of a person as an active subject in one's normative project is not necessary for an affective holding engagement, nor is it sufficient. One might believe a target to be an active subject in the relevant sense without treating her as such. The emotional stance constitutive of an affective holding engagement is not merely a judgment or

attitudes is also related (Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, 20), and so, too, is Darwall's characterization of the second-personal stance within relations of mutual accountability. Darwall, *The Second Person Standpoint*, 24. I take it that both stances represent affective holding engagements, but the notion I employ here is broader and not exclusively tied to holding, or addressing, demands. One might think of affective holding engagements as involving other forms of address. It is not clear to me, though, that *all* affective holding engagements address reasons or call for dialogical responses. They do, however, involve engaging with an individual's agency, affording it a role in shaping one's own normative attitudes. In this respect, I find particularly relevant David Shoemaker's description of accountability reactive attitudes as ways of taking their target's perspective seriously, or as "bearing weight on one's own deliberative perspective." David Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 97. David Beglin makes a similar point when he writes, "to take someone seriously as a fellow participant in the kinds of relations that characterize ordinary moral life is to ascribe a kind of interpersonal significance to their view of what matters." David Beglin, "Unconditional Forgiveness and Normative Condescension," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vol. 7, ed. David Shoemaker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 270. Finally, my notion of an affective holding engagement shares some overlap with Robert Wallace's notion of accountability as "basically concerned directed engagement." Wallace describes the relevant attitudes as confronting their targets as "'on the hook' for their own actions insofar as these actions are indicators of inner attitudes and feelings about which we care." Robert Wallace, "A Puzzle Concerning Gratitude and Accountability," *The Journal of Ethics* 26, no. 3 (2022): 471. Although we cash out the relevant type of engagement differently, I suspect that we are pointing to similar phenomena.

assessment of the targeted agent (or her actions), but it implicates the agent in a particular kind of normative relationship. Rita, for example, does not merely believe the crossing guard is blameworthy, but in blaming via resentment, she adopts an adversarial stance toward him in which she presses his normative position with respect to her and her project. She affords his actions and attitudes a role in shaping her own moral actions and attitudes, responding to him as a fellow moral agent and potential moral interlocutor. Notice that Diane's attitude does not constitute this type of treatment. The difference here resembles that of judging someone lovable versus loving them, judging someone trustworthy versus trusting them, and judging someone praiseworthy versus praising them via attitudes like gratitude and moral pride. Unlike mere judgments of value, (certain types of) trust, love, and praise engage with the relevant value, affording the agent's acts and attitudes a kind of significance in one's normative comportment.

My claim is that moral pride is helpfully construed as an affective holding engagement. Like Rita's resentment, moral pride is an emotional stance that engages with or treats its target as an active subject in the attitude-bearer's substantive normative project. We can add to this that just as in Rita's case, the relevant project is the maintenance and promotion of moral values. However, unlike resentment's other-regarding adversarial stance, moral pride is a self-regarding stance in which one endorses one's own action. While Rita "stands against" another's blameworthy action, the person who experiences moral pride "stands behind" her own praiseworthy action, attributing a distinctive kind of significance to her agency. So understood, moral pride is not just a sentiment-laden judgment that a morally praiseworthy act is attributable to oneself, but it constitutes a way of engaging with, or relating to, oneself as a morally responsible agent.

One might worry that this understanding of moral pride is vacuous, since it is not clear how we can avoid treating ourselves as active subjects in our own normative projects. But I think our responses to our own good deed-doings sometimes do fall short of this sort of treatment. First, an agent may become alienated from her normative project, such that though she sincerely claims *to have* the values that constitute a particular project, she is unable to see her own actions as enacting, promoting, or reflecting them.<sup>34</sup>

34. See Cheshire Calhoun, "Losing Oneself," in *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, eds. Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins (New York: Routledge: 2008) for an illuminating and persuasive illustration of this phenomenon.

A moral agent in this position may fail to register her own act or to appreciate its goodness. Or again, we might imagine a person who believes that her action made a positive contribution to the moral community, but who fails to respond affectively to the significance of the act and her role in performing it. The person in this scenario may recognize her agential contribution as valuable without experiencing it as such or actively engaging with that value.<sup>35</sup>

Moral pride is not just a stance that one takes toward oneself, but rather an engagement with agential value that targets one's own performance of a morally good action. Its objects include both oneself and the relevant act. In experiencing moral pride, the agent affectively recognizes her action as morally good. In addition, she affirms the act as an expression of her agency, acknowledging and accepting how the act reflects on her as the action's author. Earlier, I urged that individual instances of moral pride need not represent the agent as good in some global or thoroughgoing sense. Moral pride is compatible with, for example, having an all-things-considered poor opinion of one's own character. This, though, is not to say that individual instances of moral pride play *no* role in aiding the constitution of the agent's moral identity.

Consider that, as psychologists have noted, instances of achievement-oriented (non-moral) pride are distinct from, but lay the groundwork for, an individual's self-esteem and social identity.<sup>36</sup> Here, I posit a parallel role for moral pride. In owning the affirmations and acknowledgments internal to moral pride, the attitude-bearer implies something about what she takes herself to stand for and the normative ideals toward which she aspires. Stable patterns of moral pride serve to mark out those values that the agent espouses and sees herself as responsible for (and capable of)

35. Robin S. Dillon, "Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political," *Ethics* 107, no. 2 (1997): 226–49 makes a related point about self-respect, noting a distinction between belief and more robust forms of recognition. She distinguishes intellectual recognition from what she calls experiential recognition, where the latter involves affective uptake of the relevant value. On Dillon's view, there is a sense in which a person who merely has intellectual understanding of her worth—i.e., true beliefs about it from which she can reason—does not *really* understand it. The kind of understanding at the heart of self-valuing is experiential.

36. Tracy and Robins, "The Nature of Pride." See also Jaqueline Taylor, "Moral Sentiment and the Sources of Moral Identity," in *Morality and the Emotions*, ed. Carla Bagnoli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 257–74 for an illuminating Humean account of how praising emotions, including pride, contribute to the formation of one's moral identity and moral competence. Importantly, Taylor is working with a different conception of moral pride, which she identifies with moral self-esteem.

promoting and enacting. Assuming the individual instances of moral pride that constitute the pattern are fitting and unequivocally endorsed by the agent, such patterns establish her competence, self-conception, and status as an agent of good. I take it that these are important aspects of the agent's moral identity.<sup>37</sup>

The term *agent of good* may sound strange, but I use it to pick out a familiar idea. In addition to being shaped by our dispositions to commit (or to refrain from committing) moral wrongdoings—or again our dispositions to enforce (or to refrain from enforcing) norms that address moral violations—our moral identities are also concerned with our participation in, and attitudes toward, good deed-doing.<sup>38</sup> Complying with and enforcing moral demands is one way to help maintain and promote moral values, but it is not the only way. We also advance our moral project when we engage constructively with value, as when we build moral relationships and perform morally valuable acts that exceed what others can reasonably demand of us. One's status as an agent of good, in the relevant sense, depends on whether and to what extent one sees oneself, and inhabits one's role, as an agent who values and performs acts that exceed minimally decent behavior. When we own the relevant actions and take up their evaluative reflections on us as significant and action-guiding, we help to establish who we are as moral agents.

Notice that this notion of moral pride meets many of the desiderata outlined at the end of the previous section. It accommodates instances that are not elicited by another's praise, allowing that moral pride can be a direct response to one's own performance of a morally good act without being mediated through or prompted by the praise of another. Notice, too, that in focusing on act ownership and agential identity, this account foregrounds the position of, and import for, the attitude-bearer in experiences of moral pride. Also, understanding moral pride as an affective

37. I leave open whether (some varieties) of non-moral pride might constitute affective holding engagements. Imagine, for example, an agent who experiences a kind of pride upon contributing to his own beauty (or to the beauty of another person or object). Via this attitude, the agent might treat himself as an active participant in a project central to his identity—say, that of maintaining and promoting esthetic values. This type of treatment would involve affectively affirming the (esthetic) significance of his act and how it reflects on him as the agent who performed it. I thank an anonymous reviewer from *Philosophy & Public Affairs* for raising this possibility.

38. See also Wallace on “agents of good will.” Wallace, “A Puzzle Concerning Gratitude and Accountability,” 17.

holding engagement represents the attitude in terms that reflect its status as a dynamic mode of taking moral responsibility for the good.

#### V. THE INTERPERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MORAL PRIDE

I have offered a view on which moral pride is a particular way of engaging with the agential value of one's own morally good conduct. In experiencing moral pride, the agent claims the act (appreciating its reflection on her) and imbues it with her stamp of approval, endorsing it as good. What's more, she treats her performance of the action, along with her endorsement of it, as meaningful moves in a moral project, thereby enacting a substantive role in that project's progression. Over time, these experiences give shape to her identity as an agent of good. On this picture, it is clear why moral pride matters for the agent who experiences it. Now, I will consider how and why one's experience of moral pride should matter to others.

Let us begin with a case inspired by actual events.

*Train Rescue.* Raul is awaiting a train at the subway station when he sees Greg fall from the platform onto the tracks. Raul doesn't know Greg but suspects that the young man is having a seizure. He rushes to Greg's aid, trying to help him back onto the platform, but Greg continues to seize and falls back onto the tracks. As the train barrels toward them, Raul realizes that the train conductor will be unable to stop before reaching their position. Knowing that he would have to leave Greg to reach the platform in time, Raul pins Greg down in the tracks' middle gutter, protecting him as the train car passes just above their heads. Both men narrowly survive the ordeal, and Greg, whose seizure has passed, expresses his gratitude to Raul, who replies, "It was nothing."<sup>39</sup>

39. See Cara Buckley, "Man Is Rescued by Stranger on Subway Tracks," *New York Times*, January 3, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/03/nyregion/03life.html>, for the actual story of how Wesley Autrey saved a young man who had fallen onto the subway tracks. While the details of the rescue in this case closely resemble that of Autrey's, the exchange following the rescue is completely fictionalized.

Suppose that after further conversation, Greg is dismayed to learn that Raul's response is not just a modest gesture but a sincere indication that he feels no moral pride on account of his action.

Some might find Greg's dismay misguided. After all, many who have performed heroically altruistic acts insist that as they see it, they did not do anything particularly praiseworthy but only what they felt was *right*, and we often find such expressions morally admirable.<sup>40</sup> There are at least two points worth making on Greg's behalf. First, it is likely that many who make such remarks do feel moral pride but moderate its expression to accord with social norms. Perhaps, then, what we really find admirable is a refusal to engage in moral bragging even (especially?) when one feels justified moral pride. Second, finding Raul's lack of moral pride admirable insofar as it evinces a genuine, rare type of selflessness is consistent with finding it worrying for other reasons. An absence of moral pride upon performing an extraordinarily praiseworthy act might suggest, for example, that the agent holds others to unreasonably high moral standards (or condescendingly believes that such acts, though morally required for him, would be supererogatory for others in relevantly similar conditions). Or again, one might think that while a lack of moral pride is refreshingly selfless, it nonetheless reflects an impoverished view of the moral features of one's situation.<sup>41</sup> Not everyone will agree but I take it that, other things being equal, it is reasonable for Greg to find Raul's attitude concerning. To glean a clearer view of moral pride's interpersonal significance, it will be helpful to examine and compare candidate justifying explanations for Greg's concern.

Recall that on some accounts, when one responds to another's gratitude with sincere moral pride, the pair become united in jointly affirming

40. Consider, for example, that in detailing her interviews with people who performed acts that many would deem heroic (e.g., risking their own safety to rescue Jewish people from the Nazis during World War II), Kristen Renwick Monroe noted, "Altruists' descriptions of what they did suggest over and over that they considered their altruism only 'normal' behavior." Kristen Renwick Monroe, *The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 208. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer from *Philosophy & Public Affairs* for this reference and for prompting me to address this phenomenon.

41. For a parallel case, imagine a victim of a grave wrong who feels no resentment toward her offender. We might at once both admire her remarkably rare forgivingness and find her lack of moral resentment concerning—perhaps reflecting a lack of self-respect or a failure to hold her offender accountable as she ought to do.

their commitment to certain values. One might suspect that an agent who experiences no moral pride on account of his good act fails to fully appreciate some value that we, as members of the moral community, have a stake in him appreciating. As we have seen, two such candidates for the relevant values include the moral values reflected in the beneficent act and/or one's regard or respect for the beneficiary (or the moral community more broadly). Perhaps, then, Greg might worry that because Raul does not experience moral pride, he does not have much regard for the institution of morality or for Greg, as the person whose life he saved. Since fully appreciating values is not exclusively reflected in one's actions but also in how one feels with respect to those actions, this would seem to be a reasonable worry. At least, it *would* seem to be a reasonable worry if Raul felt no positive feelings whatsoever about his act. Suppose, though, that Raul explains that though he feels no moral pride, he does feel warmly attached to the moral values internal to his action, pleased that those values were promoted on this occasion, and joyous both that the moral community benefitted and that Greg's life in particular was saved. Presumably, putting matters this way should help to assuage some of Greg's worries. Even if we agree that some emotional uptake is required for fully appreciating the relevant values, it is not clear why we should insist on uptake in the form of moral pride specifically.

One possibility is that Greg is disturbed by what he sees as an insulting rejection of his gratitude. After all, part of properly valuing Greg as a moral patient and respecting him as a fellow moral agent (and so, as a potential moral interlocutor) is taking his gratitude seriously. Greg would be right to expect Raul to acknowledge his gratitude, but it is not obvious that moral pride should be necessary to fulfill this expectation. If, for example, Raul sincerely accepts Greg's gratitude, it is unclear what would be left for moral pride to do. What we need, then, is to isolate some distinctive feature of moral pride and to show why it should matter to Greg.

A promising proposal, I think, is that what Raul fails to fully appreciate is the significance of his role in the good that was done. Greg might think it important that Raul acknowledge not only that a good act took place, but that *he* (Raul) performed the good act and the fact that he did so means something. So construed, such acknowledgement is not solely a matter of being appropriately responsive to Greg's expressed gratitude or properly valuing Greg (or the moral community), but a matter of how Raul relates to himself with respect to his own good action. This is the



distinctive province of moral pride as an affective holding engagement by which one takes responsibility for one's morally praiseworthy conduct.

As with the preceding candidate explanations, one might doubt that moral pride is necessary for the relevant task. Suppose, for example, that Raul explicitly acknowledges that in acting as he did, his exercise of agency made an important contribution to the moral community and that he feels good about it. Might this suffice for the relevant type of affective holding engagement by which one acknowledges responsibility for a morally good action? I doubt that it would. Recall that in a self-directed affective holding engagement, one appreciates and affirms the significance of one's act and how it reflects on oneself as the agent's author. Presumably, Greg and other witnesses think that what Raul did was not just important but morally *praiseworthy*. If they are right, then insofar as Raul does not recognize his act as praiseworthy, he does not fully appreciate the moral significance of his act and its reflection on him.

One might think that Raul could appreciate his moral praiseworthiness without experiencing moral pride. Imagine, for example, that instead of moral pride, Raul experiences a generic, more general form of praise—something akin to the moral approval he would feel toward a fellow agent who committed the same good act, only with himself as the object. This orientation may sound attractive to those who are resistant to the idea that pride can be a morally positive attitude, but it is not clear how it could suffice for fully appreciating one's distinctive connection to one's own act. To see this, imagine a wrongdoer who, rather than feeling guilt, feels a general sense of indignation, or moral disapproval, toward herself. The person who feels this way seems to distance herself from her own agency in a peculiar fashion. There is something significant about recognizing oneself as the wrongdoer.<sup>42</sup> The fact that *I* did the deed, that it was *mine*, should be relevant to the emotional character of my attitude. So too, with praise. An attitude of generic, self-directed moral approval seems too detached to facilitate owning one's action in the way that taking

42. Charles Griswold notes that while we do feel indignation toward others who wrong us, resentment adds an element of self-respect, indicating not just that the offender's action is not to be done, but specifically that it is not to be done *to you*. Charles Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45. My claim is that just as there is a kind of import associated with being the target (victim/beneficiary) of a morally significant act, so too is there a special import attached to being the act's agent.

responsibility requires. Moral pride, then, may be necessary for fully taking up the significance of one's own agency in the performance of good.

One still might wonder why Greg (and we) should be so invested in how other moral agents relate to themselves. One helpful answer, I think, concerns the reasons we have to care about other agents' moral identities. Recall from the previous section that experiences of moral pride help to determine and reflect what one stands for and how one engages with value, important aspects of an agent's moral identity. I care about your moral identity in part because as a moral agent, your interventions in the moral community have a special significance for me. Your contributions can shape and strengthen certain values, helping to secure their status in our community. In this way, how you relate to your moral project matters to me because your project is ours. What's more, as a fellow moral agent, your evaluative attitudes—even self-directed attitudes—might bear on what and how I do, or should, value.

Plausibly, one's moral identity is partly constituted by whether and to what extent one can experientially recognize the status and import of a morally significant act as one's own. An agent who lacked this ability would likely be unable to understand the distinctive value attached to another's act in virtue of that act being *hers*.<sup>43</sup> In other words, facility with agential value often requires an understanding of what it means to inhabit one's role in the moral community by embracing an act as one's own and acknowledging how it reflects on oneself. The fact that a morally significant act is one's own gives it a special kind of agential import both for the moral community and for the relevant agent. Being able to take responsibility for both the wrong and the good, then, seems like an important dimension of moral competence.

Returning to *Train Rescue*, Raul's self-directed attitude toward his good deed has implications for how Greg should understand Raul's act and how the pair can relate to one another with respect to it. Contra Greg's expectation, Raul's attitude suggests that either he does not think his act praiseworthy (but perhaps merely "right" or minimally decent) or that he

43. It is hard to imagine, for example, how a person in this condition could properly and fully hold another responsible via gratitude. Thanks to Dana Nelkin for prompting me to highlight this point.

does not endorse the act as his own in the relevant sense.<sup>44</sup> If Raul does not regard his act as praiseworthy, his assessment would imply, among other things, that Greg was wrong to praise him, that he would be morally required to act as Raul did were he in a similar position, and that he would be mistaken in attributing special significance to Raul's act on account of it being something he did not *have to* do. Understandably, such views might not sit well with Greg. If, on the other hand, Raul views his act as praiseworthy but, say, refuses to self-evaluate for his own good deeds (perhaps instead focusing on the good of others), Greg might worry that, in failing to engage with how his own acts reflect on him, Raul is ill-positioned to appreciate the agential import of others' morally significant actions. We need not suppose that Greg wants Raul to spend hours reveling in his praiseworthiness, but that he wants Raul to acknowledge it—in the same affectively rich way one acknowledges one's blameworthiness through guilt. Just as via guilt, one affectively acknowledges one's accountability to others, moral pride is a mode of affectively acknowledging other important relations in which one stands to the moral community. Think here of one's roles in engaging constructively with moral value, promoting and strengthening the moral community, and forging certain meaningful relationships.<sup>45</sup> The point, then, is that given their (seemingly) dissonant understandings of the values at stake, we might expect Greg and Raul to have trouble co-navigating their moral terrain.

I take it that this explanation would make sense of Greg's dismay and capture an important aspect of moral pride's interpersonal significance. Importantly, the explanation implies neither that Raul's lack of moral pride constitutes a wrong against Greg nor that Raul is morally criticizable. Isolated incidents in which one does not feel moral pride in response to

44. Endorsing his act in the relevant sense need not require Raul to feel the same *degree* of moral pride as that of Greg's gratitude. As Dana Kay Nelkin, "How Much to Blame? An Asymmetry between the Norms of Self-Blame and Other-Blame," in *Self-Blame and Moral Responsibility*, ed. Andreas Brekke Carlsson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 97–116 shows, there are interesting asymmetries between the degrees of self-blame and other-blame that may be appropriate in a given situation. Praise might admit of parallel asymmetries, though these would likely tilt in the opposite direction.

45. These roles are often undertaken by doing good beyond what others can reasonably demand of us, and such roles, like their negative counterparts, constitute an important aspect of moral engagement. While adhering to and enforcing moral obligations might be necessary to make life livable, the sort of actions we think proper objects of moral praise seem to be the very ones that help make life worth living.

one's good deed doing need not be problematic, as there may be localized situational factors that explain and justify the attitude's absence. If, for example, a closer examination of the case revealed that Raul's act was not really praiseworthy, then his lack of moral pride would be fitting.<sup>46</sup> Also, even granting that his act was morally praiseworthy, if Raul's shock at having narrowly escaped death or his preoccupation with Greg's safety temporarily inhibited his experience of moral pride, we need not find his attitude concerning. A global incapacity for moral pride, however, would suggest diminished competence with respect to an important dimension of moral agency. The ability to fully take up the significance of how one's good act attaches to and reflects on oneself as the agent who performed the act helps to facilitate a healthy relationship not only to one's own good deeds but to other moral agents engaged in community building and promoting the good.

## VI. CONCLUSION

I have argued that moral pride is usefully construed as a rich form of emotional engagement by which agents own their morally good conduct and affectively take up the significance those actions have both for the agents themselves (as the actions' authors) and for other members of the moral community. Experiences of moral pride help to reflect one's own understanding of the good and what one stands for, or *who one is*, as a moral agent. While one's moral pride need not be elicited by another agent's gratitude, it is easy to see why gratitude might call for it as a response. My gratitude represents my benefactor as someone who can help strengthen and secure moral values by enacting and endorsing them. Her moral attitudes and interventions can impact how I understand the values at stake in her actions and the progression of the moral project that we are bound to navigate together. But if she cannot fully appreciate the distinctive significance of her own agency, then it would be difficult to see how she can fully take up the significance of others' agency. Such an impairment would likely compromise the meaning of her own acts and her interaction with other agents.

46. Suppose, for example, we learn that Raul has many young children depending on him and a history of physical inaptitude that gave him good reason to think his involvement would hinder rather than help Greg's situation.

Here, then, is the picture I want to leave us with. We in the moral community are connected to the values that undergird it. Our mutual affirmation of those values helps to secure their place in moral life. In this sense, we are also connected to each other. It is important to us to be on the same moral page, so to speak, because we write much of the story together. Being attached in the right way to one's conduct has import for how one understands and relates to other agents (and to their conduct). This is true for one's wrongdoings, and it is no less true with respect to the good.