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Taking Demands Out of Blame

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1. Introduction

There are multiple accounts of the nature of blame. For example, according to George Sher, blame is a set of behavioral and attitudinal dispositions that have their source in a belief-desire pair: the belief that someone has acted badly and the desire that the one blamed not have done what she did or not have the character traits she has. Thomas Scanlon argues that to blame is to change one's comportment toward another in acknowledgment of the fact that she has done something to impair your relationship with her. A third account finds its origin in Peter Strawson's seminal work "Freedom and Resentment" and has since been widely endorsed by theorists such as R. Jay Wallace, Susan Wolf, and Stephen Darwall. On this view, I blame another when I respond to her conduct with resentment, indignation, or disapprobation; that is, I blame another when I respond to her wrongdoing with a negative reactive emotion. This view, the reactive attitudes account of blame, is the focus of this paper.

Anyone who takes even a cursory look at the reactive attitudes literature would be struck by how frequently theorists discuss *demands*. Strawson told us that the reactive attitudes "are associated with," "involve," "express," and "rest on and reflect" demands (1962, pp. 84, 85, 90). Those inspired by Strawson have taken up this theme with a vengeance. Gary Watson suggests, "The negative reactive attitudes express a *moral* demand, a demand for reasonable regard" (2004, p. 229). According to Darwall, "Resentment doesn't represent its object as simply contravening one's will, but as contravening some justified demand" (2006, p. 81). And Margaret Urban Walker

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claims, “When we express and direct our resentment or indignation at a norm violator, we demand some rectifying response from the one who is perceived as out of bounds” (2006, p. 26). These remarks represent only a small sample of the demand language that pervades the reactive attitudes literature.¹

The idea that demands are a key constituent of any analysis of the negative reactive attitudes is rarely challenged, enjoying a freedom from scrutiny uncommon in philosophy. The literature on the negative reactive attitudes proceeds as if their connection to demands is too obvious to merit skepticism.

I think this is a deep mistake, and in this paper I press on this orthodox view. I argue that there are, broadly speaking, three ways in which the term ‘demand’ is used in discussions of the negative reactive attitudes; each, I argue, is problematic. First, theorists of blame link the negative reactive attitudes to demands understood as a model or metaphor for the standing requirements of morality. In so doing they suggest that the negative reactive attitudes are at home in the deontic but not evaluative realm. This picture is problematic. Second, theorists put the term ‘demand’ to its other paradigmatic use: demand as a particular kind of speech act. ‘Demand’ is used in this way when it is claimed that to feel or express resentment, indignation, or disapprobation is to implicitly demand something. I show that this view is untenable. Third, the term ‘demand’ is used loosely or figuratively to point to the fact that the negative reactive attitudes seek a response. This use of ‘demand’ is, to my mind, correct so far as it goes. Nonetheless I argue that it is infelicitous in this context.

I conclude by showing how little we have to lose by taking demands out of the attitudes associated with blame. To so reject demands is not to deny that the negative reactive attitudes are forms of moral address, or that demands can serve to hold responsible, or that wrongdoing warrants a unique response from the moral community.

2. From Demands to Morally Untoward Actions

Many theorists have emphasized the relationship between the reactive attitudes and demands understood as a model or metaphor for the requirements of morality. For example, Strawson tells us that when we respond to another with a negative reactive attitude we “view him as a member of the moral community; only as one who has offended against its demands” (1962, p. 90). Watson suggests that “the negative reactive attitudes come into play only when the basic demand has been flouted or rejected” (2004, p. 234). He also tells us that

¹ For other examples, see Hieronymi (2004), McGeer (2011), McKenna (1998), Shoemaker (2007, 2011), Smith (2008b), and Wallace (1994, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011).

the “reactive attitudes depend upon an interpretation of conduct. If you are resentful when jostled in a crowd, you will see the other’s behavior as rude, contemptuous, disrespectful, self-preoccupied, or heedless: in short, as manifesting attitudes contrary to the basic demand for reasonable regard” (p. 223). Consider also the following comments from Wallace, keeping in mind that for him the terms ‘moral demand,’ ‘moral obligation,’ ‘moral requirement,’ and ‘moral expectation’ are all used interchangeably (1994, pp. 22, 38). The negative reactive emotions are “focused emotional responses to the violation of moral obligations that we accept” (p. 69). The content of the negative reactive attitudes “is given by the thought that a person has violated moral requirements that we accept, requirements that structure our interactions with people in the social world” (Wallace 2010, p. 323). Given that, for Darwall, to violate a moral obligation is to violate a moral demand (2010b, pp. 151, 156; 2010a, p. 35), he too links the negative reactive attitudes to demands: “The connection between the concepts of moral obligation and wrong (on the one hand) and the reactive attitude of blame (on the other) is then this: What is morally wrong is what is blameworthy—that is, what is warrantably blamed, if the action is done without an excuse” (2010b, pp. 142–43).

For Wallace, then, a negative reactive attitude is a “response” to a violation of a moral demand. Watson and Strawson add that the negative reactive attitudes depend on or involve “an interpretation” of another’s conduct or “viewing” the person as having violated a moral demand. The negative reactive attitudes are not, that is, knee-jerk responses to another’s wrongdoing; rather they involve cognitions, and more specifically they, like all emotions, involve a construal of their object under an evaluative guise.² Just as fear of the ice involves a construal of the ice as dangerous and feeling pride about passing the bar exam involves construing one’s passing as reflecting well on oneself, so too do resentment, indignation, and disapprobation involve construing another as having violated a moral demand.³

Though there are a number of different accounts of the relationship between an emotion and its corresponding construal, for many contemporary emotion theorists, including Wallace, the relevant construal is at least partly constitutive of the emotion.⁴ For Wallace, the negative reactive attitudes are in part constituted by one’s construal of another as having violated a demand. What’s more, once we have in hand the conceptual content of the negative reactive emotions, we also have in hand their warrant or fittingness conditions.

² See, for example, de Sousa (1987, 2004), Helm (1994), Nussbaum (2001), Roberts (1988), Sherman (1997), Solomon (1973), Stocker and Hegeman (1996), and Taylor (1985).

³ The fear of ice example is from Stocker (1983, 1987), and the bar exam example is borrowed from Elisa Hurley.

⁴ See, for example, Solomon (1973, 2004), Nussbaum (2001), Stocker and Hegeman (1996), Goldie (2000), Greenspan (1981), de Sousa (1987, 2004), Roberts (1988).

An emotion is warranted or fitting just in case it construes the world as it actually is. (One's fear of the ice is warranted if the ice is in fact dangerous, and one's pride about passing the bar exam is fitting just in case passing the bar exam reflects well on the person.) The resentment, indignation or disapprobation one feels toward another is thus warranted just in case that person has in fact violated a moral demand. If she has not violated a demand—that is, if she is innocent of wrongdoing—resentment and the like are not fitting.⁵

Thus far I have been at pains to distinguish the various ways in which demands understood as standing moral requirements have featured in discussions of the negative reactive attitudes. Such reactive attitudes have been described as a response to, as involving a construal of, and as being warranted by the violation of a demand. I have drawn these various distinctions not because the difference among these claims is of the utmost importance but rather to illustrate that theorists' commitment to the tight relationship between the negative reactive attitudes and demands runs deep. The plurality of claims made sends a clear message: demands qua standing moral requirement are the kind of normative material with which the negative reactive attitudes are concerned.

For all that, I think it is a misguided impulse. When theorists use the term 'demand' as a model or a metaphor for standing moral requirements, they are using it to pick out what it is *wrong* to do. The reason is easy to see: demands *understood as speech acts* are a ubiquitous part of everyday life, and they, where legitimate, make it the case that the target, absent exculpatory justification, is wrong not to do as demanded. In other words, where legitimate, demands qua speech act place on their target a deontic burden. For just this reason, many

⁵ Wallace makes one more claim that is worth noting. For Wallace, the connection between resentment, indignation, and so on and the demands of morality is essential to understanding what it means to have an attitude of holding others morally responsible. He explains, "[T]here is an essential connection between the reactive attitudes and a distinct form of evaluation, or quasi-evaluation, that I refer to as holding a person to an expectation (or demand)" (1994, p. 19). Here Wallace is not directly describing the negative reactive attitudes; rather, he is explicating the attitude or stance that leaves us susceptible to them, that is, the stance of holding someone to a demand or moral requirement. According to Wallace, to adopt this stance just is to be susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes when that person violates the relevant moral requirement.

This attitude is perhaps easiest to isolate when we think of cases in which we decide to forgo it. Imagine your partner routinely forgets your birthday. For the first few years of the relationship you held her to the norm of remembering one's partner's birthday, thus feeling and perhaps expressing resentment each year as your birthday came and went without notice. But as the years went on, you decided to spare yourself the inevitable birthday emotional distress and quarrel. Your partner, you concluded, is lovely in every other respect; it is in your best interest and that of the relationship to let go of this one. Letting go did not mean that you rid yourself of the *belief* that she ought to remember your birthday; you believe that she should. Rather letting go amounted to jettisoning the attitude of holding her to the norm of remembering your birthday. With this attitude discarded, you are no longer susceptible to feeling and thus expressing resentment when she forgets your birthday. As a result, your birthday now comes and goes in relative peace.

use the term ‘demand’ to refer to moral requirements understood as the deontic burdens of morality.

What’s more, theorists, especially Darwall and Wallace, use the term ‘demand’ not just to indicate the morally deontic but specifically to contrast the deontic with the evaluative. For both Darwall and Wallace, the moral realm is rich, including not just morally right and wrong actions but also good and bad actions—the morally commendatory and discommendatory. When they use the term ‘demand,’ they are invoking the distinction between the deontic and evaluative realms, indicating a shift out of the broader realm of moral value into the narrower domain of the *required*, the *forbidden*—the *wrong* (Darwall 2010a, pp. 31, 35; Wallace 1994, pp. 37, 38).

When theorists link the negative reactive attitudes to demands, then, they are identifying them as creatures of the deontic and not of the evaluative realm. But while it is certainly true that resentment, indignation, and disapprobation are responses to, involve a construal of, and are warranted by moral wrongs, is it really that obvious that the same cannot be said of these attitudes and moral bad?

Consider, for example, the following scenario: You are a graduate student and you have a paper due in exactly twenty hours. Your plan is to stay seated at your desk typing away until the paper is finished. It just so happens that you have three library books due today, and though it would not be the end of the world if you failed to return them on time, your roommate, another graduate student, is headed to campus. You ask her if she will return your books for you. She says no. She refuses, not because she won’t be near the library and her day is jam-packed, but simply because she doesn’t feel like it. You react with resentment: you bite your tongue, but you think to yourself, “What a jerk!”⁶

Given the details of the case, it does not seem that this is a favor the roommate is *required* to do; that is, it is something of a stretch to characterize the roommate’s refusal as, strictly speaking, *wrong*. At the same time, her refusal is far from morally neutral: it certainly comes at a cost to both the roommate relationship and more broadly to the moral relationship of mutual regard. And while this cost is not the sort to render the refusal wrong, it arguably renders it bad. But if this is right, and if resentment in this case is apt—as it certainly seems to be—then this vignette speaks against the claim that the negative reactive attitudes live exclusively in the deontic realm.

But we need not rely on these intuitions to show that the negative reactive attitudes have a place in the evaluative realm. Reflection suggests that we should *expect* moral bad to have an interpersonal footprint—a pragmatic upshot in our moral psychological states and attitudes. Whatever else we say

I address how the argument of this section affects our understanding of the stance that leaves us susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes in note 11.

⁶ I borrow this example from Driver (1992).

about morally bad actions, it is clear that they have moral significance for us. Add to this the fact that it is via our moral psychological states and attitudes that creatures like us take up or register matters of moral import, and it becomes natural to expect the moral bad to have a pragmatic upshot.

Wallace would be the first to admit this, but on his picture the moral emotional reactions associated with bad are not resentment, indignation, and disapprobation; rather they are moral sentiments of some other kind (1994, pp. 63–64). As far I can tell, his only reason for thinking this is that he has antecedently defined the negative reactive attitudes in terms of the deontic. And he has done this because for him the negative reactive attitudes are key components of our practices of holding responsible, and these practices, he contends, are intuitively about the concepts of moral obligation, moral right, and moral wrong (p. 52). But absent the intuition that holding responsible is exclusively about the deontic, Wallace's position on the moral sentiments associated with bad seems unmotivated.

What's more, reflection on the nature of bad and wrong in conjunction with Wallace's own (and, I would argue, correct) description of the negative reactive attitudes suggests that the fit between these attitudes and bad is as tight as that between these attitudes and wrong. Morally bad and morally wrong action share a core element: both thwart the values at the heart of morality.⁷ To be sure, determining when the thwarting of moral values warrants the label of 'bad' as opposed to 'wrong' is a difficult, complicated matter. Nor is it immediately clear what difference the distinction between bad and wrong makes from the perspective of the moral agent deliberating about how to act. I myself endorse Margaret Little's (forthcoming) view that while wrong action necessarily betrays some weak will, deficiency of discernment, or difficulty in deliberating on part of the agent, bad action need not. But the fact that the distinction between bad and wrong brings to the fore deep and difficult philosophical questions should not obscure the point that concerns us here: namely, that bad and wrong action are bad and wrong because they thwart values at the heart of morality. With this in mind, consider Wallace's apt description of the reactive attitudes:

To respond to wrongdoing with one of these reactive emotions is a way of being exercised by immorality, taking it to heart that the values around which our common social life is organized have been flouted or undermined. A disposition to respond emotionally to immorality in these ways is a sign that one cares about the values at the heart of morality. One does not merely acknowledge that it is valuable to relate to people on a basis of respect and regard; one values this way of relating to people, with the emotional vulnerability that is characteristic of the broader phenomenon

⁷ I borrowed the lovely phrase "values at the heart of morality" from Wallace (2010, p. 324).

of valuing on occasions when what one cares about has been damaged or insulted in some way (2010, pp. 323–24).

According to Wallace, we are susceptible to the reactive attitudes in virtue of caring about the values at the heart of morality, and the negative reactive attitudes are simply our way of taking to heart, or becoming exercised by, the fact that the values we care about have been thwarted in some way. But if this is a correct description of the negative reactive attitudes, and if it is true, as I suggested earlier, that both morally wrong and morally bad actions thwart the values at the heart of morality, then the negative reactive attitudes are properly thought of as responses to both morally wrong and morally bad actions.

To be sure, one might continue to insist that negative reactive attitudes have a privileged connection to demands and thus wrong. Some, for example, reject the existence of moral bad. If one holds that bad exists in other normative realms, the aesthetic or epistemic, for instance, but not in the moral realm, then it is obvious that the *moral* negative reactive attitudes live solely in the deontic realm. They have, as it were, nowhere else to go.

Or one might be led to the view that negative reactive attitudes are warranted only in the case of wrongdoing because one construes these attitudes as being heavy-handed in some way. As I will explain in detail in the next section, Darwall maintains that reactive attitudes are tacit demands qua speech act. For Darwall, then, resentment, indignation, and so on are heavy-handed insofar as they are an exercise of authority over another. For Darwall, this is an authority we simply do not possess unless another's action rises to the level of wrong. But one need not think the reactive attitudes are tacit demands to think that they are heavy-handed. The tendency in the literature is to model the reactive attitudes on sanctions—and sanctions are weighty in their own right.⁸ If reactive attitudes are sanctions, then arguably to deserve such a punitive response one must act in a way that is wrong and not just bad.

But it is far from clear either that the above metaethical view is correct or that the negative reactive attitudes are in fact heavy handed. The claim that there is no moral bad is a controversial metaethical claim. And the view that the negative reactive attitudes are properly modeled on either demands qua speech act or sanction is far from obviously true. I object to the demand qua speech act view in the next section. Thus, for now it suffices to notice that there is something deeply counterintuitive about construing the *unexpressed* reactive attitudes as sanctions. In “Two Faces of Responsibility,” Watson expresses this sentiment in a question: “[H]ow is being subject to a blaming attitude a sanction?” (1996, p. 238).⁹ Perhaps it makes most sense to move away from modeling the reactive

⁸ Those who construe the reactive attitudes as sanctions include Strawson (1962), Watson (1996), and Shoemaker (2011).

⁹ Also see Shoemaker (2011, p. 617).

attitudes on punishments and sanctions and address them in their own right: as the moral psychological phenomena that they are.¹⁰ Doing this might reveal them as having, metaphorically speaking, a rather light touch.

None of this is to say that at the end of the day one might not reasonably conclude that the negative reactive attitudes have a privileged connection to demands and thus wrongdoing. My point here is simply that absent some prior controversial theoretical commitment, this claim appears unmotivated. From the perspective of moral psychology, it seems highly plausible that the negative reactive attitudes are connected to the morally untoward in general and not exclusively to violation of demands.¹¹

3. Demands qua Speech Act

Another way in which theorists have linked the negative reactive attitudes to demands takes us into the territory of speech acts. It's a familiar idea that we can do many things with words: we can *ask a question*, *warn* our hiking companion of the tree branch falling toward her head, *invite* a friend to a party, *assert* that a tree branch is falling, and, most important for us here, we can issue *demands*. To my children I bark, "Clean your room!" To the stranger on the bus, "Get off my foot!" Demands are among the many kinds of speech acts we perform.

In *The Second-Person Standpoint* and subsequent writings, Darwall frequently draws on speech act theory in the course of discussing the reactive attitudes (see, e.g., 2006, pp. 3–4, 52–54, 75–76, 265–66). More specifically, he identifies the reactive attitudes as forms of moral address, meaning that they are speech acts or "quasi speech acts," and in particular that they are implicit demands:

¹⁰ I have argued elsewhere that when we start with the idea that the reactive attitudes are emotions we are led to the view that both the expressed and the unexpressed reactive attitudes are at bottom modes of recognizing another as having done something good, bad, right, or wrong. This view of the reactive emotions is not incompatible with the idea that they are responses to both wrong and bad. See Hurley and Macnamara (2010) and Macnamara (forthcoming).

¹¹ Recall that Wallace is unique insofar as he brings our attention to the stance that leaves us susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes—what he describes as the stance of *holding someone to a demand*. I agree that there is a stance that leaves us susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes and that this stance is a crucial component of the moral psychology of our practices of holding responsible. However, insofar as there is reason to think that the negative reactive attitudes are warranted by the entire class of morally untoward actions, there is room for skepticism about Wallace's *description* of this stance. If the negative reactive attitudes are plausibly construed as responses not just to violations of *deontic* normative material but also to *evaluative* normative material, then the stance of holding another to a *demand* will not leave us susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes in all the cases in which they are warranted. If I hold John to the deontic burdens he faces and not similarly to the evaluative burdens, then while I will be susceptible to a negative reactive attitude in cases of wrong action, I will not be similarly susceptible in cases of bad action.

What gives Strawson's discussion of reactive attitudes its special relevance to the issue of free will is that reactive attitudes invariably address demands, and, as Gary Watson notes, there are "constraints on moral address" that must be presupposed as felicity conditions of addressing a demand (Watson 1987b: 263, 264). . . . [T]he capacity to recognize and act on second-personal reasons is, I am claiming, a felicity condition of moral address's having its distinctive "illocutionary force" (that is, making it the distinctive speech act it is) (Austin 1962). (Darwall 2007, p. 120)

On Darwall's account, then, the negative reactive attitudes, whatever else they might be, are implicit demands. For Darwall, this holds for both the expressed and unexpressed reactive attitudes: "If you *express* resentment to someone for not moving his foot from on top of yours, you implicitly demand that he do so" (2006, p. 76, my italics), and "in *feeling* resentment or moral blame toward someone for stepping on your feet, you implicitly demand that he not do so, answer for having done so, and so on" (2010c, p. 219, my italics).

While there is strong evidence that Darwall regards both the expressed and the unexpressed negative reactive attitudes as implicit demands, his view on the propositional content of these demands is not similarly clear. It is not clear what he thinks the negative reactive attitudes are demands *for*. He never explicitly takes up questions about propositional content. Perhaps this is because his broader project of arguing for the second-personal nature of morality requires only that the reactive attitudes make demands—not that they make this or that particular demand.

But the quotes above are suggestive; there are two views on propositional content that Darwall might seriously entertain. The first is what I will call the "standing moral requirement" view, the second, the "acknowledgment of fault" view. Both of these views have some initial plausibility.

We can easily remedy this problem by broadening Wallace's description of the stance. If the negative reactive attitudes are warranted by the entire class of morally untoward actions, then the stance that leaves us susceptible to these attitudes is not the stance of holding another to a demand but rather the stance of holding another to the range of normative material the violation of which renders an action morally untoward.

What's more, Wallace is inclined to refer to the stance that leaves us susceptible to the reactive attitudes not just as the stance of holding someone to a demand but also as the "psychological stance of demanding" (1994, p. 22). But if the stance that leaves us susceptible to the negative reactive attitudes is the stance of holding another to the range of normative material that renders an action morally untoward, then it is infelicitous to refer to this stance as the psychological stance of demanding. We need a more inclusive term.

My inclination is to use the term 'normative expectation' to refer to the stance that leaves us susceptible to the reactive attitudes. Wallace uses the term 'normative expectation' to refer to standing moral requirements (1994, p. 22), thus I am urging a use that diverges from his. One point in my favor is that my use honors, in a way that Wallace's does not, the fact that 'normative expectation' is in the first instance a psychological term.

The standing moral requirement view piggybacks on the idea that the negative reactive attitudes are intimately connected to demands understood as standing moral requirements. As we saw in the previous section, theorists claim that resentment, indignation, and disapprobation are responses to, involve a construal of, and are warranted by the violation of a demand qua standing moral requirement. The standing moral requirement view of content merely pushes the connection between a negative reactive attitude and the moral requirement with which it is correlated one step further: it claims that the negative reactive attitudes, as it were, give voice to or issue the demand that underwrites them. Most precisely, on this view the content of the demand constitutive of the negative reactive attitude mirrors the content of the standing moral requirement whose violation prompted it. To be sure, the fact that resentment, indignation, and disapprobation are responses to, involve a construal of, or are warranted by a particular demand qua moral requirement does not *entail* that they themselves issue a demand, let alone a demand with the same content. But the already tight connection between the negative reactive attitudes and standing moral requirements renders this view of content plausible.¹²

On the acknowledgment of fault view, a negative reactive attitude is a tacit demand that its target acknowledge her fault, where this includes both feeling guilt and expressing it via apology and amends.¹³ The plausibility of this account of the content comes into view when we remind ourselves that there is a certain sort of propriety in the target of a demand doing as the propositional content directs. Thus to say that the negative reactive attitudes demand that their target feel guilt and express it via apology and amends is to suggest that it is in some sense appropriate for the target to respond in this way.

This sentiment finds considerable support in the literature. For example, Walker (2006, pp. 125, 138) and Shoemaker (2007, pp. 91, 100) join Darwall in countenancing this idea. What's more, it is quite intuitive. There is, after all, nothing as satisfying as having one's blame met with a sincere apology and reparations. Such a response tends to dissipate even intense feelings of resentment or indignation. Further, wrongdoing creates rifts in relationships, straining and tearing the fabric of the moral community. If we are going to stay together, these rifts need to be repaired. Repair happens when those who have done wrong take up and make good on their faults by feeling guilt and expressing it via apology and amends.¹⁴ The fact that acknowledging one's fault has the potential to catalyze moral repair certainly suggests that there is a propriety in a negative reactive attitude being met with this response.

¹² For evidence that Darwall holds this view see Darwall (2010b, p. 155; 2006, p. 76; 2010c, p. 219).

¹³ For evidence that Darwall holds this view see Darwall (2006, pp. 71, 79, 85–86, 112; 2010a, p. 37; 2011, p. 331).

¹⁴ See Walker (2006) for a thorough treatment of the concept of moral repair.

But while both the standing moral requirement and acknowledgment of fault views have initial plausibility, they do not, I will argue, stand up to scrutiny. More broadly, in the remainder of this section I identify a number of problems for the idea that the negative reactive attitudes are tacit demandings. I argue that problems arise at three different levels: first at the level of the bare claim that they are speech acts, second with the claim that they are a specific kind of speech act—namely, a demand—and third at the level of propositional content. Importantly, these critiques hold even if it is correct to confine resentment, indignation, and the like to the deontic realm.

Let's start with the claim that the negative reactive attitudes are speech acts. This first point is a simple one. While it certainly seems right to characterize *expressions* of resentment, indignation, and disapprobation as speech acts, the same cannot be said of *unexpressed* resentment, indignation, and disapprobation. It is difficult to see how an emotion that remains buried in one's heart can be appropriately characterized as a speech act. To be sure, Darwall calls them "quasi speech acts," but to identify them as such is simply to mark the awkwardness of identifying them as speech acts; it does nothing to explain it away.

A second strike against the demand qua speech act view is that the ethics of negative reactive attitudes and demands come apart: the former do not require authority and the latter do. Imagine that you promised to meet your friend for dinner on Friday night, but that before Friday rolls around someone you have had your eye on for *forever* asks you out on a date: dinner and a party Friday night. It just so happens that this dreamy date and your engagement with your friend fall on the same night, so you tell your suitor that you will probably be able to go but that you need to make sure. You quickly call up your friend, tell her your exciting news, and ask her to release you from your promise. You say, "We can do dinner some other time. You know how much this date means to me!" To your surprise your friend, for no good reason, refuses to release you. You are quickly besieged by resentment—resentment that seems, given the history of the friendship and the importance to you of the event, to be warranted. You know your friend has every right to refuse, but this date means a lot to you. You can have dinner with her on Saturday night; it's not as if Friday night is her birthday or something. But while you think your resentment is fitting, you know you do not have the authority to demand that she release you from your promise. This is simply part of the logic of promising. Once you make a promise, the promisee is in charge of whether you will be released or not. It is not for you to decide and certainly not for you to command.

Consider another case. You are on a crowded train and you witness the following: An elderly couple enters the car, clearly anxious at the thought of not sitting together. Seeing only scattered single seats, they politely ask a passenger a few rows in front of you if he would be willing to move so that they can sit together. He says no. He is polite enough, but no is his answer. Witnessing this scene fills you with indignation—indignation that, given the elderly

couple's predicament, you think is warranted. "What a jerk," you think. "What is wrong with people!" To be sure, moving would be an inconvenience, but only a small one, and it would be a great help to the elderly couple. But just as you know that indignation is warranted, you know that you do not have the authority to demand that he move. It is, after all, his seat, his to give or keep. He sat in it first, and on the train it is first come, first serve. If you got up and demanded that he move, he would likely respond by saying, "Who the heck do you think you are? You can't demand that I move. This is my seat!" And you know he would be right.¹⁵

In both these cases unexpressed negative reactive attitudes seem in order and demands do not. If you share my intuitions about these cases it is likely because you take the reactive attitudes seriously as *emotions*. Let me explain.

When Mary legitimately demands that Sarah ϕ , she makes it the case that Sarah must ϕ *because she said so*. In other words, in legitimately issuing a demand to Sarah, Mary normatively subordinates Sarah's will to her own. But to do something like this is to exercise a normative power. This sort of power requires normative authority—precisely the kind of authority that the sergeant has with respect to his soldiers but you arguably lack in the promise and train cases.

Emotions, in contrast, do not require normative authority, and the reason is easy to see. Emotions are not first and foremost about subordinating another's will to one's own; rather they are, as we saw in the previous section, modes of recognizing a feature of the world under an evaluative guise. Modes of recognition simply do not require normative authority.

Of course, this is not to deny that emotions are subject to various norms of correctness. It is widely agreed that emotions can be assessed in terms of a variety of norms. First there are what one might think of as internal norms, that is, norms that are indexed to the kind of thing the emotions are: forms of recognition. Emotions are assessed as fitting or not or as warranted or not, where this just tracks whether or not the emotion recognizes the world as it actually is. Our emotions, though, are open to a further level of assessment. They, like our actions and character, are subject to moral and prudential norms.¹⁶ Warranted emotions are not, then, necessarily beyond reproach. For example, one's amusement at an objectively funny racist joke is fitting, but nonetheless morally untoward due to its racist content.¹⁷ Your resentment toward someone who has in fact done wrong may nonetheless be morally

¹⁵ I borrow this example from Driver (1992).

¹⁶ It is also true that legitimate demands can violate moral and prudential norms. Though the sergeant may possess the authority to demand that his soldier drop and give him fifty, it would be morally inappropriate for him to issue this demand when he is a guest at the soldier's wedding. I am indebted to Maggie Little for this example.

¹⁷ This example is from D'Arms and Jacobson (2000).

untoward because of your hypocrisy, that is, because you are an unrepentant violator of the precise norms to which you are holding your target.

On my view, to take reactive attitudes seriously as emotions is to see them as sharing key features with emotions in general. Importantly, this involves seeing the reactive attitudes as subject to the same standards of correctness as all other emotions. But if this is what it means to take reactive attitudes seriously as emotions, we can see why doing so leads to the conclusion that in the above scenarios resentment and indignation are appropriate even though you lack the authority to demand. What is relevant to the assessment of your resentment and indignation is, first, whether their target has in fact done something wrong (or bad) and, second, whether your resentment and indignation square with moral and prudential norms.¹⁸ In both respects, your resentment and indignation fit the bill: your friend and the man on the train have both done something wrong (or bad), and there is no indication that your emotions violated a moral or prudential norm.¹⁹

Just as unexpressed resentment, indignation, and disapprobation do not require authority, so too with *expressions* of these emotions. The promise case is an excellent illustration of this. It seems appropriate for you not only to feel resentment toward your friend but also to express this resentment to her—despite the fact that you clearly lack the authority to demand.

The train case may seem different. While it seems perfectly appropriate for you to feel indignation, expressing it is another matter. But while the inappropriateness of both demands and expressing indignation seems to speak against my view, reflection suggests otherwise. To turn this apparent difficulty into a solid objection would require showing that expressing indignation is inappropriate because you lack the authority to express it and not for some other reason—say, because you should mind your own business or, to put it another way, because expressing indignation here would violate a norm of privacy.

We can see that it is the norm of privacy rather than lack of authority that renders your expression of indignation inappropriate by considering a variation on the train case. Imagine that the man who refuses the elderly couple is a good friend of yours. In this case, expressing indignation could very well be appropriate. We often legitimately call out our friends for just this sort of infraction. At the same time, though, friendship does not alter the economy of authority. It is still his seat to give or keep.

¹⁸ To be clear, when I say that the negative reactive attitudes do not require authority, I do not mean to imply that they do not require *standing*. They do. On my view, to say that the negative reactive emotions require standing is simply a shorthand way of claiming that they can be warranted or unwarranted and that in feeling them we can violate various moral and prudential norms.

¹⁹ This brings out the fact that to identify negative reactive emotions as demands is to identify them as subject to modes of assessment to which no other emotions are subject. To my mind, this is an awfully big bullet to bite. To be sure, the reactive emotions are special—they are special insofar as they are key constituents in our practices of holding responsible. However, they can be special in this way without running roughshod over their status as emotions.

It should not be that surprising that expressions of the reactive attitudes do not require the authority distinctive of demands. Demands are a unique kind of speech act. As I emphasized earlier, demands make it the case that their target must do as demanded because it was demanded. To demand is to make another's will an instrument of your own. There are countless other speech acts—invitations, pleas, assertions, and conjectures, to name a few—that are not heavy-handed in the way that demands are and thus do not require the authority that demands do. The above scenarios merely point to the fact that on matters of authority, expressions of the reactive attitudes join most other speech acts.

My final critique of the demands qua speech act view draws on a point made earlier, namely, that there is a certain sort of propriety in the target of a demand doing as the propositional content directs. We can now put this point more precisely: demands seek compliance, which is simply to say that demands are fully successful as the kind of thing they are just in case their target does as demanded because she was so demanded. To be sure, there are what one might think of as diminished forms of success. For example, if I demand that my children clean their room, and they do so for some other reason than because I demanded it, then my demand is partially successful. Technically put, in this case my children have conformed to but not complied with my demand. And it is true that conformity falls short of rendering a demand fully successful even if the demander herself is perfectly satisfied with conformity. What satisfies the demander is one thing, and what satisfies the demand is another. While I may want my children to clean their room—not caring one bit about their reasons for doing so—my demand is not so laid back: it, as it were, wants my children to clean their room and do so *because it was demanded* (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, p. 14).

But if this is what demands want, then both the moral requirement view and the acknowledging fault view of content are problematic. The former suggests an implausible account of the response sought by the negative reactive attitudes, and the latter suggests that the negative reactive attitudes make an unintelligible demand.

Recall that on the moral requirement view, the content of the demand constitutive of a negative reactive attitude mirrors the content of the standing moral requirement that underwrites it. This implies that a negative reactive attitude is fully successful just in case the target of that attitude complies with the demand the flouting of which prompted the attitude. To see why this is a problematic account of the success conditions, consider the following example. Imagine that I intentionally trip you, and you feel resentment and express that resentment to me. When I trip you, I violate a moral requirement: Don't intentionally trip others. On the moral requirement view of content, when you feel and express your resentment, you, as it were, give voice to this moral requirement. Your resentment makes a demand with the same content as the demand I violated. When you resent me, you are, in essence, demanding

that I not intentionally trip you. What this implies is that your resentment will be fully successful just in case I respond by not intentionally tripping you because you so demanded.

But when you consider the fact that I have already tripped you, options for complying with your demand are rather limited. I cannot comply with respect to the offending action, since it is already in the past; it is not as though I can change the past so that I never tripped you. Future compliance, of course, is possible; I can refrain from tripping you in the future. But while we can agree that this would be a good thing, such forbearance is not a satisfying account of the response resentment seeks. It is highly implausible that my merely not intentionally tripping you in the future renders your expression of resentment successful. If you take me to task for tripping you and I respond simply by saying “Okay, I won’t trip you in the future,” my guess is that you would be taken aback. What about the fact that I have already tripped you? Resentment is a response to a past wrong, and whatever else we say about the response it seeks, it needs to be at least in part about this past wrong. An account of the content of the demand constitutive of the negative reactive attitudes that entails that the success-constituting response is as thoroughly forward-looking as “Okay, I won’t intentionally trip you in the future” is hard to swallow. The defining response to resentment must involve a backward-looking element.²⁰

This critique of the moral requirement view points us directly toward the acknowledgment of fault account of content. If the negative reactive attitudes demand that their target feel guilt and express it via apology and amends, then these attitudes are fully successful when their target feels and expresses guilt because it was so demanded. This response *is* suitably backward-looking. When we feel guilt and express it via apology and amends we appropriately redress the wrong that gave rise to resentment, indignation, or disapprobation.

But while the acknowledgment of fault view plausibly captures the response sought by the negative reactive attitudes, it fails because it implies that these attitudes are constituted by an unintelligible demand.

As we saw earlier, an agent issues a felicitous demand only if she possesses the requisite authority. The mugger’s demand that I hand over my wallet is infelicitous because the mugger lacks the requisite authority. But, strictly speaking, not all infelicities stem from a lack of authority. A demand can be infelicitous because the target of the demand is incapable either of understanding or of complying with the demand. These are, to use Watson’s phrase, “constraints on moral address” (1987b, p. 229). When a demand is infelicitous because the target is incapable of understanding or complying with the demand, the demand is said to be unintelligible.

The emotional component of acknowledging one’s fault—that is, feeling guilt—is simply not the sort of thing that can be intelligibly demanded of another.

²⁰ See Talbert (2012) for another objection to the moral requirement view of content.

To comply with a demand, one must do as directed because it was directed. But feeling guilt is not something we can do at the direction of another. We can no more bring it about that we feel genuine guilt on command than we can bring it about that we digest our food on command. With guilt we can, as it were, go through the motions; feigning guilt is possible, of course, but *feigning* guilt is not what is demanded of us. We can also work to develop our capacity for and sensitivity to guilt; emotions are susceptible to this sort of “indirect” control. What we cannot do is will the genuine feeling of guilt as a response to another’s authority.²¹

But perhaps the demand view is salvageable. What if we simply take guilt out of the equation? Perhaps the negative reactive attitudes demand not that their target feel guilt and express it but rather that they simply apologize and make amends. No guilt, no problem.

This, I want to urge, is not a suitable solution. The key reason is that on this view, the negative reactive attitudes are fully successful when they receive an insincere apology. To be sure, sometimes the person who feels resentment, indignation, or disapprobation would find even an insincere apology satisfying. Likewise it certainly seems true that a negative reactive attitude has achieved a degree of success in eliciting an insincere apology. But as we saw earlier, what a demander finds fully satisfying is one thing, and what fully satisfies the demand is another. And again, partial success is one thing and full success another. For the demand view of the reactive attitudes to succeed, it needs to be true that the negative reactive attitudes are *fully* successful when they are met with an insincere apology (and amends); this, though, seems implausible. To say that an apology is insincere is to mark it as hollow, that is, as defective in some way. And if the reactive attitudes are at all successful when they meet with a defective apology it is hard to see why they would not be more successful when they receive the real deal.²²

Thus once we take seriously various features of demands—that they are speech acts, that they require authority, and that they seek compliance—we see that the demand qua speech act view of the negative reactive attitudes faces far more serious problems than were immediately apparent.

4. Seeking a Response

As we saw in the previous section, identifying the negative reactive attitudes as demands qua speech act implies that they seek a response. But as with any implication, the denial of the antecedent does not entail the denial of the consequent. The negative reactive attitudes need not be demands—or even

²¹ For additional objections to Darwall’s characterization of the reactive attitudes see Wallace (2007).

²² For an excellent analysis of apologies see Smith (2008).

for that matter speech acts at all—to be the sort of thing that seeks a response from their target. ‘Demand’ is used in its third and final way to point to the fact that the negative reactive attitudes seek a response.

In this section I argue that Walker uses ‘demand’ in precisely this way.²³ Consider the following quotes: “When we express and direct our resentment or indignation at a norm violator, we demand some rectifying response from the one who is perceived as out of bounds” (Walker 2006, p. 26). “Resentment and indignation in particular express a finding of *fault* of others and a *demand* on them for an appropriate response” (p. 25).²⁴ It is tempting to read Walker as simply echoing Darwall’s position, that is, as endorsing the demand qua speech act view. But examination of these quotes in the context of her work as a whole gives us strong reason to resist this temptation. First, as I mentioned in the previous section, one of the main reasons to attribute the demand qua speech act view to Darwall is his frequent invocation of speech act theory. But Walker’s work makes no mention of speech act theory. Second and more important, Walker does not exclusively or even predominantly use the language of demands when discussing the reactive attitudes and their sought response.

Consider the following passages from Walker: “[R]esentment not only sends a message but *invites* a response” (2006, p. 114, my italics; see also p. 134). “[R]esentment both expresses a sense of wrong and *calls out* to others for recognition and a reparative response” (p. 136, my italics; see also p. 138). “It is surely correct that resentment of serious wrong, experienced or expressed by victims or others, *requires* a response” (p. 138, my italics). “Resentment at serious wrong, then, *deserves* responses from wrongdoers” (p. 138, my italics).

It is clear from these passages that Walker holds that there is a crucial relationship between the reactive attitudes and their responses—a sentiment that, interestingly enough, is championed throughout the reactive attitudes literature.²⁵ But while Walker unquestionably takes the negative reactive attitudes to

²³ Strictly speaking, Walker holds that the negative reactive attitudes seek a response not just from their target but also from the wider community. While numerous theorists posit a relationship between the negative reactive attitudes and a response from their target (see note 26), Walker stands alone in positing a relationship between these attitudes and the wider community. Since I focus on Walker primarily because she is representative of a broader trend in the literature, I focus solely on her claim that the negative reactive attitudes seek a response from their target.

²⁴ For additional passages in which Walker speaks of resentment’s demands see her 2008 (pp. 140, 143, 149).

²⁵ Some theorists employ precisely the locutions Walker does. Smith, McGeer, and Darwall all characterize the reactive attitudes as “calling for” or “calling upon” the target to respond (Smith 2008b, p. 281; McGeer 2011, p. 303; Darwall 2006, pp. 145, 170). But theorists such as Darwall, Shoemaker, and McGeer also deploy other terms. Darwall describes the reactive attitudes as *seeking* a response (2011, p. 331). Shoemaker tells us that a reactive attitude is “an emotional address, *urging* the wrongdoer to feel what I feel as a result of his wrongdoing and then subsequently to feel the guilt or remorse (at having caused that feeling) which I expect to motivate him to cease his wrongdoing” (2007, p. 51). And according to McGeer, the reactive attitudes “serve to elicit a response,” and their “aim is to elicit such responses” (2011, pp. 304, 316).

be importantly connected to a response from their target, it is not yet clear what she thinks this connection amounts to. What, in other words, is she getting at when she says that the negative reactive attitudes “demand” or “invite” or “call for” or “require” or “deserve” a response?

I propose that Walker is claiming that the negative reactive attitudes are fully successful just in case they elicit a response from their target. Each of the terms she uses to describe the relationship between the reactive attitudes and their defining responses can be read as pointing to this sentiment.

Start with “reactive attitudes *deserve* a response.” Read most broadly, this means that there is a certain sort of propriety in the reactive attitudes’ receiving a response or that there is something normatively correct in the target’s replying. Insofar as success carries with it the notion of propriety or normativity, the phrase “reactive attitudes deserve a response” is simply a more general way of putting the claim that negative reactive attitudes are fully successful just in case the target responds.

The claims that the reactive attitudes “demand,” “call for,” and “require” a response also point to the idea of success conditions. Each of these terms can be used to indicate that one thing is in need of another: parenting demands patience; trees require sunlight; philosophy calls for dedication. Walker arguably uses these terms in much the same way to suggest that the negative reactive attitudes are “in need of” a response—that is, that they need a response for success.

But there is another way to interpret the claims that the negative reactive attitudes “demand,” “call for,” or “require” a response. This second interpretation, like the first, points to the idea of success conditions, and this interpretation has the added benefit of being equally illuminative of the claim that “the reactive attitudes *invite* a response.”

The terms ‘demand’ and ‘invite’ can be used to refer to two distinct speech acts. But while it is one thing to demand and another to invite, both of these speech acts are of the same general kind: both are directives, that is, speech acts that aim at getting another to do something. ‘Require’ and ‘call for’ can also be used to refer to a speech act; these terms, though, refer to directives generically rather than particular kinds of directives. Thus ‘require’ and ‘call for’ are often used interchangeably with one another and with ‘demand’ and ‘invite.’

Thus we might read Walker as suggesting that, figuratively speaking, the negative reactive attitudes issue a directive. In other words, she might be, as it were, anthropomorphizing the negative reactive attitudes. It is when we consider the point of this anthropomorphization that we see the connection to success conditions. The fact that Mary demands that Joe ϕ is a reliable indicator that Mary aims for Joe to ϕ . This is just an instance of the broader point that people’s actions are often reliable indicators of their aims. What this suggests is that anthropomorphizing something by characterizing it as acting in

various ways can serve to convey the anthropomorphized object's aim. Just as we can read a person's aims off her actions, we can read the aims of the anthropomorphized object off its actions. It is possible, then, that in depicting the negative reactive attitudes as demanding, inviting, calling for, and requiring a response, Walker is trying to convey that they aim at a response. But this leads us directly to success conditions. If the negative reactive attitudes aim at a response, then they are fully successful as the kind of thing they are only if they receive the response aimed at.

If this last interpretation of Walker is correct, then like Darwall, she uses 'demand' to refer to a speech act. But unlike Darwall, she is using the term figuratively, and for her, 'demand' is simply a stand-in for a generic directive. Darwall, in other words, is using the term 'demand' literally and specifically, in contrast to Walker's figurative and generic usage.

To my mind, there is nothing illicit, strictly speaking, about Walker's use of 'demand.' In fact, I endorse the claim that negative reactive attitudes are fully successful just in case they receive a response from their target. That said, I do think it is infelicitous to use the term 'demand' to express this important point. The phrase "reactive attitudes demand a response" does not convey this point with an optimum level of precision and clarity. And while this would not be a decisive strike against a turn of phrase in most contexts, it approximates such a strike here, insofar as this context renders "reactive attitudes demand a response" ripe for misinterpretations. And these points hold even if I have misinterpreted Walker's position on the relationship between the negative reactive attitudes and their response. Whatever relationship the phrase "the negative reactive attitudes demand a response" is pointing to, there is bound to be a more precise rendering and, more important, a way of expressing it that does not invite misinterpretation.

5. Conclusion

Even those who find what I have said thus far compelling may be reluctant to take the demands out of negative reactive attitudes in the ways I have suggested. There are those who may be committed to the idea that the negative reactive attitudes are forms of moral address, or to the idea that demanding is a way of holding responsible, or to the idea that wrongdoing merits some unique response from the moral community. These theorists may worry that taking the demands out of the negative reactive attitudes will require them to abandon these strongly held beliefs. I conclude by showing that these concerns are unwarranted.

Let's start with moral address. The negative reactive attitudes can be forms of moral address even if they are not demands qua speech act. To see this, we

simply need to bring to mind the fact that many kinds of speech acts constitute forms of address: questions, invitations, hails, recommendations, and entreaties all fit the bill. It is possible that the expressed negative reactive attitudes are aptly assimilated to one of these speech acts. In fact, I have argued elsewhere that they share quite a bit in common with the hail. Whereas a hail—“Hi, Mary” or “Hello, Joe”—recognizes its target as Mary or Joe, an expressed negative reactive attitude recognizes its target as having done something wrong (or bad) (Macnamara Forthcoming).

What’s more, much depends on what being a form of moral address consists in. Address is arguably a functionally specified concept, such that something is a form of address if it seeks a response. If this is the case, then the negative reactive attitudes need not be speech acts at all to count as forms of moral address. It need only be the case that we can’t understand the negative reactive attitudes as the kind of thing they are without understanding that they are successful just in case they receive the reply they seek.²⁶ If the unexpressed reactive attitudes are forms of address in this sense, they are forms of moral address in much the same way as an unent invitation.

Turn now to demanding as a way of holding responsible. To reject the demand qua speech act view is not to reject the claim that demanding that another do as she ought is a way of holding her responsible. It is possible that the negative reactive attitudes and their expressions constitute one way of holding responsible, and demanding constitutes another. In fact, I have elsewhere argued for precisely this view (Macnamara 2011). On my view, our practice of holding another responsible has both a backward-looking face that includes the negative reactive attitudes and their expressions and a forward-looking face that includes demanding that another do as she ought. We demand that another do as she ought not in response to actual moral violations—this is the domain of blame—but rather in response to threatened infractions. Sometimes we anticipate that someone might flout a moral requirement, and when we do, we might hold her responsible before wrongdoing commences.

To see what I am getting at, consider the following. In college my housemates and I decided that we would not buy household food; each person agreed to buy her own food and not to dip into the others’ stashes. Even though everyone was well aware of the food rules, incidents of late-night looting were commonplace, and leftover pizza was the most vulnerable foodstuff. One night my roommate Norah was up late studying and ordered a pizza—a large pizza in fact, specifically with the intention of having the leftovers for breakfast the next day. As Norah was going to bed, worrying about whether her pizza would be in the fridge in the morning, she decided to take control: she put a Post-it note on her pizza box that read “NO TOUCHY.” In her own clever way Norah demanded that we, her roommates, do as we ought: she demanded that we

²⁶ See Kukla and Lance (2009) for an example of an argument for this view of address.

keep our late-night looting hands off her pizza. On my view, in doing this she held us responsible, not in response to a violation but to forestall one.

Finally, one can concede that negative reactive attitudes are connected not just to wrong but also to bad and still hold that violations of deontic normative material warrant a unique response. Arguably the negative reactive attitudes and their expressions are not the only form of blame. On my own view, for example, there are the negative reactive attitudes and their expressions on the one hand, and what I would call “enforcement blame” on the other. Enforcement blame is like demands qua speech act and unlike the negative reactive attitudes in that it involves an element of subordination and thus requires authority. Enforcement blame is, then, demand-like but not strictly speaking a demand. Enforcement blame, on my view, is connected exclusively to the deontic realm: it is the distinctive pragmatic upshot of wrongdoing.

The point of this concluding section is, of course, not to convince you that moral address is a functionally specified concept, or that there exist two distinct forms of blame—one at home in both the evaluative and deontic realms and the other limited to the deontic—or that blaming another is one way of holding responsible, and demanding that someone do as she ought is another way. Rather, the point is simply to show that there is conceptual space between the claim that demands are an essential element of any analysis of the negative reactive attitudes and claims about moral address, holding responsible, and blame’s relationship to the deontic realm.