

A Social Practice Account of Responsible Persons

Cheshire Calhoun
Arizona State University

1. Accountability Responsibility

Morally responsible agency marks a distinctive status; it carries with it a particular sort of social and moral significance. An account of such agency ought to tell us about the nature of this status, this significance.—David Beglin¹

Introduction

Here is the question: “What is a responsible person?” My aims in taking up this question are two-fold. First, I aim to loosen the grip that a pervasive view of responsible persons has on philosophers. It’s the view that responsible persons are beings who can be held to account for failing to live up to normative expectations, which is to say, they are liable to blame. It’s not that I think this view is wholly wrong. Accountability, in some sense, is part of being a responsible person, although I’ll be rejecting the identification of accountability with liability to blame and suggesting that there’s more to accountability than such liability. More importantly, being accountable is not all there is to being a responsible person. Second, I aim to describe in some detail a more expansive conception of what a responsible person is, of what count as the signature ways of treating persons as responsible (what Strawsonians call “responsibility practices”), and the range of attitudes through which we recognize others as responsible persons. I hope you will find my descriptions utterly familiar from your everyday life with other people. In short, one might say that the goal here is to disrupt entrenched philosophical intuitions about

¹ David Beglin, “Two Strawsonian Strategies for Accounting for Morally Responsible Agency,” *Philosophical Studies* 177 (2020): 2341-2364, 2361.

what an account of responsible persons *should* look like in order to capture everyday understandings of what responsible persons *are* like.

The expansive conception of responsible persons that I'll be developing distinguishes three distinct dimensions of responsible persons. Responsible persons are, first of all, accountability responsible in the familiar (to philosophers) sense of being capable of living up to normative expectations. Second, they are compliance responsible, which is to say *in fact* disposed to live up to minimal normative expectations so that many of our normative expectations of responsible persons are also predictive ones. Finally, they are responsibility-takers; they are capable of taking, and are at least sometimes disposed to take, the initiative to do good things that they are not morally required to do. My three lectures will take up each of these dimensions in turn.

Before taking up the first of this trio—accountability responsibility—let me lay more of my cards on the table, starting with my use of phrase “responsible person.” Philosophers tend to talk either about moral responsibility or about morally responsible agency. I avoid these more familiar terms because of their very strong association with the project of figuring out who we can properly make *demands* on to show us a suitable level of regard or respect and who we can thus *hold accountable* should they fail to do so. I don't want to bias the investigation into responsible persons from the get-go. I also avoid talk about specifically *moral* expectations, and thus *moral* responsibility for meeting them, in favor of the broader notion of *normative* expectations. Normative expectations cover not only clearly moral ones, but also expectations having to do with etiquette, job responsibilities, the proper ways of doing things such as queuing in line, and so on.

I intend my alternative term, “responsible person,” to draw attention to three points that will be important in what follows: “responsible person” is a *status*; that status is *cross-temporal*; and it is a *default* status in social life.

To have a status is to have a rank in some order of statuses. For example, philosophers are already used to thinking of “moral person” as a status and take that status to be an especially important and dignified one. For any status, it will be important to ask how we should treat beings with that status, what attitudes toward them are or are not acceptable, and how we can insult them by not treating them or by not having attitudes toward them that befit their status. Kant, for example, thought that contempt was not an attitude we should ever have toward those with the status “moral person.”

The idea that “responsible person” is a status is not entirely unfamiliar. Toddlers and cats, we might say, lack the status “responsible person.” An advantage of focusing on “responsible person” as a status is that invites us to think about why anyone would *want* this status and would value being recognized and treated as a responsible person and feel aggrieved if not. The idea that this status is something we might prize is not perspicuous when accounts of responsibility emphasize holding other people to account in ways they will no doubt find unpleasant.² It’s hard to see why anyone would want this status except as a kind of admission price for others’ willing interactions.³ Moreover, treating our interest in responsibility as primarily an interest in holding others to account shifts attention to the victim’s valuable status as a *moral person* who deserves

² Susan Wolf’s *Freedom Within Reason* is an especially notable exception. Throughout, her emphasis is on what she calls the “status of a responsible being” or the “status of responsibility.”

³ So, Steven Bero, for example, argues that taking responsibility by, e.g., expressing contrition and apologizing, is important to us because it assures others that we are eligible for meaningful relationships 2020 (“Holding Responsible and Taking Responsibility” *Law and Philosophy* 39, no. 3 (2020): 263-296); and Mark Alfano argues that we voluntarily accept the burden of potential sanction by taking on responsibilities in order to be seen by others as “worthy partners for future cooperative endeavors” (“Towards a Genealogy of Forward-Looking Responsibility,” *The Monist* 104 (2021): 498-509, 502).

to have their moral personhood recognized in responsible persons' behavior. The agent's own valuable status as a responsible person thus disappears from view.

Nevertheless, the idea that being a responsible person is a valuable status isn't wholly unfamiliar. In Kant's retributivist thinking, not to hold people accountable to the moral and civil law is to fail to recognize and appropriately treat them as having the moral status "person." Thus, the status "responsible person" is valuable because it is a status only moral persons have.

Peter Strawson, by connecting being a responsible person with being viewed from the participant attitude, also suggests that the status "responsible person" is something to be prized. Were we viewed merely from what he calls the "objective attitude," we would be for others merely objects to be managed by pressing the right causal levers.⁴ Regarded from the participant attitude, we have for others the distinctive status of being fellow participants in social life and the terminus of interpersonal exchanges. To be regarded and treated as a participant, rather than an object, he thought, just is to be regarded and treated as a responsible person. Although Strawson's emphasis was on our unwillingness—indeed, our likely inability—to give up the idea that others have the status "responsible person," it seems equally true that we ourselves would be unwilling to give up our own status as responsible persons who are fit for interpersonal engagement within social practices.

Assuming that "responsible person" is a valuable status, we can inquire how we should and conventionally do treat persons with that status. Strawson helpfully drew attention to our *responsibility practices*. Although he, and subsequent Strawsonians, took responsibility practices to concern the ways we hold people to account and excuse or temporarily exempt from blame, I will be using "responsibility practices" to refer to the broad spectrum of ways that we treat

⁴ P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-28.

people as having the status “responsible person” with particular emphasis on the ways that persons with that status might value being treated and sometimes demand to be treated.

Assuming that “responsible person” is a valuable status, we can also inquire into the attitudes that it is appropriate to have toward responsible persons. Strawson and Strawsonians have focused on what Strawson called “reactive” attitudes with an overwhelming focus on negative reactive attitudes like resentment and indignation and an occasional nod to positive attitudes like gratitude. Because, as I’ll argue, not all of the central attitudes toward responsible persons are *reactive* attitudes that look backward at what has been done, I’ll instead use the descriptor “responsibility-recognizing” attitude. Since the social recognition of persons’ status as responsible persons occurs by way of both the expression of responsibility-recognizing attitudes and responsibility practices of treating them in distinctive ways, failures to extend those attitudes and treatments constitute a distinctive set of status insults.

As a status, being a responsible person is something that one is *cross-temporally* in the same way one has the statuses “adult,” “middle class,” or “moral person” cross-temporally. Even if we are not responsible for particular actions--we are excused or temporarily exempted from responsibility—we retain the status “responsible person.” Significantly, the status “responsible person” is a *default* status in social life. Within everyday life, we do not first look for evidence that those we interact with deserve the status “responsible persons.” They are simply presumed to have this status. Of course, we do not presume but instead look for evidence that they are conscientious, dedicated, especially trustworthy people—that is, that they are responsible persons in the sense of having a virtuous character trait. But a status is a not a character trait. Strawson thought that it is a central and inextinguishable feature of social life that we adopt the participant attitude toward other people—we see them as the terminus of interpersonal

interaction rather than merely as objects to be managed. The participant attitude is a deep and constitutive feature of human social life, one we would be unwilling and likely unable to give up as a general attitude toward others. The participant attitude is thus an attitude of regarding others as having, by default, the status of fellow social participant, which is to say, the status of responsible person. In coming to a conference, in hiring baby-sitters, in sitting peacefully on a train with others, we do not first ask ourselves what evidence there is for regarding all of the people we interact with as social participants with the status “responsible person.” We *assume* they are and are to be treated as such. Where evidence is needed is for our judgments that, in the case of particular individuals, it is a mistake to see and treat them as responsible participants.

So here is a more refined version of my initial question: What does the default, cross-temporal status “responsible person” amount to, and in particular, what competencies ground having that status? How should we treat and what attitudes should we have toward individuals who have that default, cross-temporal status? What count as status insults to responsible persons?

Method

In being concerned with understanding the conception of responsible persons embedded in everyday social life, our responsibility practices, and responsibility-recognizing attitudes, my methodological approach to responsibility falls within the Strawsonian tradition. But it differs in several important ways. I said in the beginning that I intended to avoid expressions like “morally responsible agency” because I do not want to bias the inquiry from the get-go. It can make a methodological and substantive difference whether we begin by focusing on moral responsibility and morally responsible agency as is typically done, or whether we begin by focusing on the status of responsible person. “Moral responsibility” and “morally responsible agency” naturally

invite us to think about what people are responsible, and thus accountable, *for*: What kind of respect or regard do they owe us? What can we demand from them? When are we licensed to reactive negatively toward—to blame, shun, punish—those who fail to deliver what we normatively expect? The inquiry into moral responsibility thus, equally naturally, becomes an inquiry into the capacities and features that someone must have if we can properly expect respect or regard from them, can press specific normative demands, and can appropriately hold them responsible and blame them.

If one starts by focusing on responsibility for actual or potential failures to meet normative expectations, it is natural to make the following assumptions about responsible persons, all of which should sound familiar, but all of which I think are mistaken:

1. *The capacities and features of responsible persons are all and only those that license blaming attitudes and holding to account for wrongdoing absent an acceptable excuse or temporary exemption.*⁵ If a feature or capacity is not necessary for blaming attitudes to be generally licensed, it is not a feature or capacity constitutive of being a responsible being.⁶ The focal contrast, then, is between those who are *liable* (even if sometimes excused or temporarily exempted) and those who are completely *exempted* from liability to blame.
2. *The Strawsonian participant attitude just is the attitude of seeing others as beings of whom we can have normative expectations, and on whom we can make demands, for a*

⁵ Excuses presuppose that a person presently has the requisite capacities but that some factor interferes with their expression in norm-complying action; for example, the person was pushed or in ignorance of relevant facts. Temporary exemption presupposes that the person standardly has the requisite capacities but they are inoperative due to some factor; for example, the person is suffering a temporary psychotic break.

⁶ Jules Holroyd calls this the “liability assumption: that to be a responsible agent is to be liable to praise or blameworthiness” (“Two Ways of Socializing Moral Responsibility: Circumstantialism versus Scaffolded-Responsiveness,” in *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility*, eds. Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, Marina Oshana [New York: Oxford University Press, 2018], 137-162, 153.)

certain kind of regard, goodwill, or respect that recognizes our own status as moral persons.

3. *All responsibility-recognizing attitudes react to blameworthy failures to live up to normative expectations (resentment and indignation) and (in most Strawsonian accounts) to creditworthy exceedings of those expectations (praise, gratitude), and so are properly called “reactive attitudes.”*
4. *Responsibility practices are all and only practices of holding accountable for—or excusing or temporarily exempting from accountability for—actions that fail to meet our normative expectations or (again, on most accounts) that exceed them.*

So familiar is this way of proceeding and these four assumptions that you might be mystified as to what else a responsible person could be, or how there could be a *responsibility* practice that is not about holding responsible, or how attitudes fundamentally different from resentment and indignation could be responsibility-recognizing attitudes.

This mystification about what else a responsible person, responsibility practices, and responsibility-recognizing attitudes could be, is not, I think, because there is no other conception of responsible persons, responsibility practices, and responsibility-recognizing attitudes embedded in our everyday interactions with other people within a huge variety of social practices. Indeed, as I suggested in the beginning, one of my goals is to remind you of the much richer, more complexly three-dimensional conception of responsible persons that ordinary people in ordinary social life have. Rather, the sense of mystery, at least for those of us heavily influenced by Strawson, arises from uncritically adopting Strawson’s specific concern about responsibility and his specific methodological approach of looking first to *responsibility* practices rather than to social practices generally.

In his enormously influential essay, “Freedom and Resentment,” Strawson does not take up the general question “What is a responsible person?” Rather, he begins from a very specific concern with responsibility. That concern is with the *propriety of holding* people responsible given uncertainty about what the metaphysical facts are: is determinism true or do people have metaphysically free will? When we hold people responsible, we do unpleasant things to them: blame them, shun them, even jail them. We also demand that they do unpleasant things: feel guilty and remorseful, apologize, make restitution, undertake character reform. We need a justification for doing these things. For the determinist, holding responsible by blaming or punishing must be justified by its utility in altering future behavior. For the libertarian, holding responsible can only be justified if blame or punishment is deserved; and desert depends on the metaphysical freedom of individuals—they could have done otherwise. Neither approach seems adequate. The determinist must see individuals as simply objects to be managed by pulling the right causal levers, and thus must exit the participant attitude. Libertarians, while retaining the participant attitude, must rely on an unverifiable, and potentially incoherent, assumption of contra-causal freedom. It is as an intervention into the debate between libertarians and determinists about the propriety of holding responsible that Strawson offers his responsibility-practice account of responsibility. His influential insight was that the accountability of individuals, and practices of holding accountable, do not depend on the truth of any metaphysical view, either determinism or contra-causal freedom. Rather, because practices of holding accountable are essential parts of taking the participant attitude toward others—an attitude that no matter what the metaphysical facts are, we are unwilling to abandon—we should treat those practices as constitutive of our conception of responsible persons. However, by *starting* from a specific concern with the propriety of holding responsible, we never get a chance to ask, “Is

liability to being held accountable all there is to being a responsible person, and are practices connected with holding to account the only responsibility practices?”

Although justifying moral condemnation and punishment is certainly *a* concern we have about responsibility, we need to be open to the thought that individuals’ status as responsible persons also matters for reasons *other than* our interest in pressing demands. Mightn’t we also be interested in who can be *predictively* expected to comply with the basic norms that structure social practices? And mightn’t we also be interested in who we can *call on* to volunteer to take on new responsibilities?

In addition to approaching responsibility from the perspective of a specific concern with justifying punitive responses to wrongdoers, Strawson also recommended a specific methodological strategy. We are to begin from the “facts as we know them” given our experience of social life with others and then *derive* the conception of responsible persons from those facts. Which facts? If one’s concern is with the propriety of holding others to account, as Strawson’s was and subsequent Strawsonians’ have been, the facts are facts about those attitudes and responsibility practices relevant to holding others to account—resentment, indignation, and practices of subjecting to and excusing or exempting from blame. It might seem obvious that these just are the only social facts as we know them that concern responsibility. However, that obviousness is, I suggest, a function not only of the fact that these are responsibility-recognizing attitudes and practices but also a function of their *salience* to conscious awareness. Resentment and indignation are emotionally felt, and often intensely so. The practices of holding to account—blaming, punishing, demanding apologies, exhorting to better behavior, and so on—are also highly salient to conscious awareness. Such practices involve our *deliberately doing* something, and moreover something that will be unpleasant for the miscreant. Even the

acceptance of excuses and extension of temporary exemptions are things typically done after reflection on the evidence.

However, there is no reason to think that, because a set of attitudes and practices are *salient to conscious awareness*, that set is necessarily coextensive with the complete set of responsibility recognizing attitudes and practices. Suppose that some responsibility-recognizing attitudes and practices are not salient in this way. Perhaps some responsibility-recognizing attitudes are neither felt emotions nor reactions to specific misbehaviors. Perhaps instead they are taken-for-granted, automatic, and thus unnoticed attitudinal stances. And perhaps some responsibility practices involve *not* doing anything and in such a way that we don't even notice that there's something we are not doing. This would mean, first, that an account of responsible persons derived only from salient attitudes and practices may be incomplete. Second, and perhaps more worrisomely, the prospects of *deriving* an account of responsible persons from "the facts as we know them" may not work. Instead, we may need to proceed in reverse order by trying to get a fix on the conception of responsible persons embedded in social life and using that as a guide to identifying responsibility-recognizing attitudes and practices that are not salient to conscious awareness.

Anticipating the second lecture, *the* most pervasive attitude toward responsible persons in everyday life within reasonably well-functioning social practices is basic trust. I don't mean trust in specific individuals—the kind of trust you might decide to invest or find that over the course of repeated interactions you have come to invest. I mean a generalized and default trust that most of the people, largely strangers, that you interact with in assorted everyday social practices--such as sharing trains, shopping at stores, using the library, attending conferences—both know what the basic normative expectations within those social practices are and will in fact comply with them. This is the kind of trust that, as Annette Baier observed, is like the air we breathe and is

noticed only in its disorienting absence.⁷ The responsibility practices that go along with such trust in others' routine compliance with minimal practice norms are exactly what you'd expect—not checking up on people, not taking self-protective measures, not installing surveillance cameras, not insisting on contracts, and so on. We are highly unlikely to notice the things we *don't* do that are nevertheless an important part of treating others as responsible persons.

Given this, I adopt the methodological strategy of starting from social practices generally—not practices of responsibility specifically. We can then ask, what conception of a responsible person is embedded in our social practices? I will argue that it is a complex conception of responsible persons as accountability responsible, compliance responsible, and responsibility takers.

Accountability Responsibility

Strawson took accountability responsibility to rest on the capacity to manifest goodwill in one's attitudes and actions. More recently, many suggest the basic capacity requisite for accountability responsibility is reasons-responsiveness, which plausibly includes capacity to understand normative concepts, to detect normatively relevant considerations, and to deliberate and govern one's actions in light of normatively relevant considerations.⁸ Such a capacity might also rely on emotional capacities like identifying empathy with the effects of one's actions on others.⁹ This, I hope, sounds both familiar and acceptable as a general description of

⁷ Annette Baier, "Trust and Antitrust," *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 231-260.

⁸ See for example, R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Manuel R. Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). The reader should feel free to substitute in their preferred account of the capacities requisite for accountability responsibility.

⁹ David Shoemaker, "Empathic Self-Control" in *The Philosophy & Science of Self-Control*, ed. Alfred Mele (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), and "Moral Address, Moral Responsibility and the Boundaries of Moral Community," *Ethics* 118, no. 1 (2007): 70-108.

accountability responsible persons' capacities. My aim is not to defend a particular, precisified account, but just to get in view the general conception of an accountability responsible person.

It is, however, important to be clear on what “capacity” means here. Given that the capacities are ones that make one *accountability responsible*, it is very tempting to think that this must be a *realized capacity*. How could anyone be an accountability responsible person who is not *in fact* sensitive to morally relevant considerations but just has a bare, developable but undeveloped capacity? The thought is especially tempting, indeed it seems inevitable, if one accepts the truth of the first assumption I mentioned earlier: that the capacities and features of responsible persons are all and only those that *license* blaming attitudes and holding to account for wrongdoing in the absence of some special excuse. So, let's think about exactly what it might mean to equate being an accountability responsible person with having a realized capacity for reason-responsiveness. To require that the capacity must be *fully* realized sets the standard for being an accountability responsible person too high. Quite possibly no one meets the idealized standard of being responsive to all normatively relevant considerations. While people might generally be expected to be sensitive to very general and very important considerations (e.g., causing unnecessary pain or humiliation), a large part of our capacity to live up to normative expectations depends on familiarity with specific, local contexts and practices—for example, with the dress norms for different occasions, or the dinner behavior norms in just this family, or standards for ethical medical practice--and this will require quite specific sensitivities.

Avoiding idealizations, one might preserve the connection between being accountability responsible and having realized capacities by adopting Manuel Vargas's circumstantialist approach.¹⁰ On his view, we should not think of a responsible person—what he calls “morally

¹⁰ Vargas, *Building Better Beings*.

responsible agency”—as a cross-situational, and by implication cross-temporal, status. If being an accountability responsible person is to license blaming, then the person’s capacity for detecting normatively relevant considerations must be *realized*. But since we only have realized capacities with respect to some considerations in some types of situations, it follows that we sometimes are and sometimes are not accountability responsible persons. We are, that is, not merely excused (which presupposes that we *are* accountability responsible persons¹¹), we are totally exempted in some contexts, similar to the way toddlers and cats are exempted in all contexts.

On Vargas’s view, as I’ve said, we must give up the idea that the status “responsible person” is a cross-situational and thus generally *cross-temporal* status. We must also give up the idea that it is a *default* status. After all, whether one is a responsible person or not will vary by context, so we shouldn’t presume that individuals are responsible persons across contexts.

Adopting Vargas’s circumstantialist view seems exactly right on condition that one accepts three of the four assumptions I mentioned at the outset of this lecture. Re-stated in simplified form, those three are:

1. The capacities of responsible persons are all and only those that *license* blaming attitudes and holding to account.
2. To regard others as fellow participants is to see them as beings on whom we can make *demands*.

¹¹ To be excused, is to be in the type of situation to whose normatively relevant features we typically are sensitive—as he puts it, in nearby possible worlds we are reasons-responsive in this type of situation—and our failure to be reasons-responsive on this occasion does not show an absence of good will.

3. Responsibility-recognizing attitudes react to blameworthy failures to live up to normative expectations (resentment and indignation) or to creditworthy exceedings of those expectations (praise, gratitude).

If what having the status “responsible person” gets you is just liability to blame, others’ demands, and resentment, there’s nothing to be lost by sometimes, perhaps often, not having the status “responsible person” and quite a bit to be gained. Who, after all, wants to have demands pressed upon them and be blamed and resented? More to Vargas’s point, it would be *unfair* to subject people to these things in circumstances where they lacked the realized capacity to understand the relevant norms, to pick up on normatively relevant considerations, and to motivate themselves to comply with those normative expectations they did understand and whose relevance they did pick up on.

The following might seem a perfect example of why being a responsible person should depend on realized capacities, that is, *actual* reasons-responsiveness.

One of our graduate students came from China to live in the U.S. for the first time and study philosophy. By her own account, vast amounts of ordinary everyday normative expectations, including how to properly queue in a grocery store, were entirely unknown to her. Other normative expectations, for example, that one should greet people with a “hello” or display exaggerated (in her view) facial expressions, while known, seemed ridiculous and thus had no motivational grip on her. Often, she could not interpret others’ facial expressions or conversational comments, and thus had no idea whether there was anything of normative significance in them. She couldn’t be constantly asking people “What do you mean by that?” Nor could she rely on having a cultural interpreter with her everywhere she went to act as a norm-explainer and surrogate consideration-detector. And in any case, some normative expectations

like the “hello” greeting norm continued to seem ridiculous no matter how their significance was explained (maybe it is thought to be polite, but why have this politeness norm at all?). Lacking many realized capacities for reasons-responsiveness in the U.S., it seems to follow that she frequently does not have the status “responsible person” in the U.S. even though she generally has that status in China.

This was not her view. She took umbrage at philosophers’ accounts of responsibility that entailed that, in the U.S. context, she (often) ceased to have the status “responsible person” and thus (often) fell into a category shared by infants, pets, and psychopaths.

What could be her grounds for complaint? It certainly seems inappropriate to hold her to account and blame her for violating normative expectations that were unknown to her or that, because of their alienness, had no motivational grip on her. But if we accept the three assumptions I mentioned and the reasonableness of blame being tied only to realized capacities, what possible grounds for complaint could she have? How could she think she nevertheless had the status responsible person? And what could it mean to treat her as an accountability responsible person if she wasn’t eligible for being blamed, having her actions resented, and having demands pressed upon her through all the ways we hold people to account?

Here is how her complaint might be pressed. “Accountability responsible person” is an important and valuable status. True, it sometimes makes us vulnerable to all of the unpleasant responsibility practices involved in being held to account: being criticized to our faces and behind our backs, ostracized, punished, pressed to apologize, make amends, labor at character reform, and the like. But responsibility practices and responsibility-recognizing attitudes include more than practices of holding to account. Think for example, of workplaces that institute diversity training—what aptly used to be called “sensitivity” training—or that educate hiring

committees about how the application and interview process can be structured to reduce the effects of implicit bias. Or think about the enormous amount of work shouldered by members of all sorts of subordinated social groups to educate their wider communities about what the normatively important considerations are, why they are important, and what the new normative expectations should be. These sorts of educative efforts need not, and often don't, presuppose past blameworthiness of their targets, but simply the *developable* capacity to become sensitized to a wider range of normative reasons. In the future, they can do better. In the future, they will be held to account. Thus, one important, and very common, way we treat people as accountability responsible persons is by making the effort to improve their knowledge of norms and sensitivity to normative considerations.

Practices devoted to improving normative competence presume not a realized but a *developable* capacity that makes it worthwhile to engage with others in these ways. To be a responsible person is to be the kind of being who, with help, can *become* sensitive to a wider range of reasons. This is the conception of accountability responsible persons that Victoria McGeer develops in presenting her scaffolding-responsiveness conception of responsible persons.¹² The relevant capacity is, in McGeer's nice phrase, "accordian-like" and expands through exchanges as intelligent people receive and adjust to feedback. She argues that the only capacity for moral reasons-responsiveness required to be an accountability responsible person (to use my term) is "a susceptibility to the scaffolding power of reactive attitudes experienced as a form of moral address."¹³ That is, they need only have "whatever it takes to be *sensitizable* to the

¹² Victoria McGeer, "Scaffolding Agency: A Proleptic Account of the Reactive Attitudes," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 27 (2019): 301-323. She describes this as a skill-based capacity that comes in degrees. See also her "Building a Better Theory of Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 172 (2015): 2635-2649.

¹³ McGeer, "Scaffolding Agency," 315.

kind of reasons present at the time of their action, in part by way of the exhortatory effects of (ex-post) reactive scaffolding.”¹⁴

Importantly, I would add, to say that an accountability responsible person is “sensitizable to the kind of reasons present at the time of their action” is not to say that they are sensitizable to what *we* think are the reasons present at the time of action. An accountability responsible person is not necessarily one who *ought* to be receptive to the hortatory and other efforts made to sensitize them to what some “we” take the relevant normative considerations to be. In virtue of having different sensitivities, acquired in very different contexts or through their own reflective efforts, accountability responsible persons sometimes have reason to resist and challenge others’ taken for granted normative expectations. They can reveal and protest the exclusionary effect of too firmly insisting on norms designed for an insider “we.” They can take “us” to task for the uncharitableness of our interpretation of outsiders’ lack of conformity to what “we” normatively expect (as, for example, when “we” write them off as backward or misguided). They can press upon us, as we pressed upon them, reasons for acting differently in the future, including reasons for revising particular social norms, such as our “hello” greeting norm.

This last observation points to yet another aspect of accountability responsibility. In narrowly focusing on the practices and attitudes by which we hold others to account, it’s easy to overlook that holding accountable is a two-way street. The capacities possessed by others that make possible holding them to account are the very ones that enable them to hold us to account. We treat people as accountability responsible persons in part by being receptive to their own efforts to hold us to account and to scaffold our existing sensitivities. It is an unfortunate feature of hierarchical societies that the moral power to hold to account gets unequally distributed. In

¹⁴ Ibid.

Vanessa Carbonell's words, "the marginalized person's moral demand is *ignored, misinterpreted, underestimated, rejected, or silenced*" as a result, for example, of the operation of discrediting stereotypes.¹⁵ Or it may take thousands protesting on behalf of the claims of a single individual or family in order to get responsive uptake.¹⁶ "*Claimant injustice*," as she says, "occurs when social prejudices or structural inequalities undermine an agent's ability to engage in felicitous moral address—to make moral claims, to call out wrongdoing, to judge or condemn others for their action, to hold responsible, to seek redress, to blame or punish, or to participate in any of the social practices associated with the participant and vicarious reactive attitudes."¹⁷

But it is not just social inequality that undermines being treated as a responsible person who can hold others to account. Inability to hold to account is also an unfortunate effect of simply being an outsider to a social practice whose normative expectations are well-entrenched, broadly shared, and have a taken-for-granted legitimacy, so that those who object are written off as simply ignorant. The misfortune in both cases is that responsible persons are treated as less than fully responsible persons on the grounds that they lack what it takes to sensitize others. The misfortune is also that those who could be sensitized by others who are better positioned to detect defects in existing normative expectations fail to profit from those others' educational efforts.

In sum, the practices of responsibility through which we *treat* individuals as accountability responsible persons are not limited to practices of holding to account and excusing or temporarily exempting. They include efforts to improve others' normative knowledge and

¹⁵ Vanessa Carbonell, "Social Constraints on Moral Address," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 98, no. 1 (2019): 167-189, 178.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

sensitivities, giving a hearing to criticisms of and protests against “our” normative expectations, and being open to attempts to press upon us a different set of normative expectations. Thus, we should give up the assumption—number four on my original list—that what count as responsibility practices are all and only practices of holding accountable.

There are also non-blaming responsibility-recognizing attitudes.¹⁸ These may be expressed with some force. *Disapproval* is the most obvious—for example, disapproval of the normatively ignorant interloper’s misbehavior in a community to which they are not insiders; or disapproval of the normative gaffs occasioned by not being up to date on the nuances of avoiding racist, sexist, or transphobic behavior. There is also the *disappointment* one might feel and express toward those one hoped might perform better, but who, blamelessly fail to do so because they’re not “there yet” or the circumstances are too challenging.¹⁹ There is also a distinctive *puzzlement* invited by responsible persons’ failures to live up to “our” most routine, taken-for-granted normative expectations. One wonders what is going on or what the person means by these failures, and so asks.²⁰ There is also a recognitional attitude appropriately felt toward the *blameworthy* that does not involve blame. It is a kind of hopefulness that might be described as a

¹⁸ A point emphasized by Jules Holroyd in “Two Ways of Socializing Moral Responsibility: Circumstantialism versus Scaffolded-Responsiveness,” in *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility*, eds. Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, Marina Oshana (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 137-162.

¹⁹ Miranda Fricker contrasts the resentment of disappointment with the resentment of blame; disappointed resentment falls short of blame but registers an assessment that the person might have done morally better under difficult circumstances that exempt from blame (*Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 100-105). Adrienne M. Martin similarly discusses both normative hope that individuals will rise above challenging circumstances that would excuse failures to behave well and disappointment when individuals do not rise above those challenges (*How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*, [Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014], 129-131).

²⁰ Think, for example, of how puzzled at what’s going on you might have been had you been a subject in the famous Milgram experiment. The sociologist Harold Garfinkel designed experiments deliberately designed to provoke such puzzlement. In one experiment, his students’ task was to behave with the cool politeness of a mere boarder toward family members. While some family members adopted outraged, blaming attitudes (for example, at being called Mr___ by their own child), others were just baffled and asked if he or she was sick or had lost their job or was joking (“A Conception of and Experiments with ‘Trust’ as a Condition of Concerted Stable Actions,” in *Motivation and Social Interaction: Cognitive Determinants* ed. O.J. Harvey (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1963), pp. 187-238.

faith in humanity. By “faith in humanity” I do not have in mind a virtue of optimism, a belief in the inherent goodness and decency of persons, or a willingness to interpret others in the best light.²¹ It is rather a stance toward even the most reprobate of allowing that it remains an open possibility, even if remote, that they will improve. They are not to be written off and treated as hopelessly unimprovable.

In sum, we should give up the assumption—number three on my original list--that responsibility-recognizing attitudes always react to blameworthy failures to live up to normative expectations (resentment and indignation) and possibly creditworthy exceedings of those expectations (praise, gratitude).

The Chinese student’s complaint is now, I hope, comprehensible: However exempt from blame she might have been, she was not properly exempted from practices of responsibility that treat her as having a developable capacity to expand her sensitivity to normative reasons. Nor was she properly treated as someone unable to critique prevailing normative expectations and hold others to account for defects in their own sensitivities. It is the application of these practices of responsibility that she was still entitled to and that make having the status “responsible person” valuable.

The status “accountability responsible person” travels. It travels across contexts where one might be more or less familiar with, or even totally ignorant of, the context-relevant normative considerations. It does so in part because, as McGeer stresses, the status is not grounded (merely) in present realized capacities. It also travels because the requisite capacity is not tied to any particular socio-cultural understanding of the “correct” normative expectations.

²¹ For an account of faith in humanity as a virtue, see Ryan Preston-Roedder’s “Faith in Humanity,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 87, no. 3 (2013): 664-687; and “Three Varieties of Faith,” *Philosophical Topics* 46, no. 1 (2018): 173-199.

What doesn't travel is liability to blame. I agree with Vargas on this. The status "responsible person" can travel without liability to blame traveling precisely because they are not the same thing. There are two things here: the sometimes merely developable capacities requisite for being an accountability responsible person, and the realized capacities necessary for liability to blame. In short, accountability responsibility is not exclusively a matter of being liable to being held to account, blame, and resented.²²

But if to be accountability responsible is not *necessarily* to be liable to—that is, non-exempted from--blame, why call this *accountability* responsibility? Isn't liability to being *held to account* for normative failures via blame at the very heart of accountability responsibility? I indicated in the beginning that I aim to work out a conception of responsible persons that is tethered to the everyday conception of responsible persons that shapes our social interactions. In jettisoning the identification of being a responsible person with being liable to blame, haven't I departed from that aim?

I hope what I have said so far goes a considerable distance toward answering that question in the negative. But let me add this: there is a perfectly familiar, everyday notion of *holding* accountable that doesn't involve blame. "Holding accountable" ordinarily means two different things, not a single thing--preparedness to blame. To illustrate: I hold my students accountable for not plagiarizing. They are familiar with this normative expectation and at least some of the reasons why plagiarizing is bad. Should a student plagiarize, I hold them accountable by automatically failing them. But I also hold my students to performance standards for their papers. They ought, I think, to include thesis sentences, to logically well-order points, to define technical terms, and so on. I down grade them if they do not. But this usually does not

²² Jules Holroyd, in her superb essay, "Two Ways of Socializing Moral Responsibility," shows in detail the difficulties of retaining what she calls the *liability assumption* in an account of responsible agency.

involve blame, and the poorer grade is not a punishment. They are just learning what the writing standards are and how to execute them. Both failing students who plagiarize and downgrading students whose writing skills are not up to snuff hold students to normative expectations, but in different ways. As McGeer emphasizes, one sort of holding looks backward at what could and should have been done differently; the other looks forward to what can and should be done better in the future. The one “holding” presumes a realized capacity for meeting a normative expectation, the other “holding” presumes a developable capacity for meeting a normative expectation.

Conclusion

I’ve argued that the conception of an accountability responsible person is not reduceable to having the capacities that license blame. The capacities that license blame are *realized* capacities. Here I’ve agreed with Vargas. Sometimes accountability responsible persons have the requisite realized capacities to be liable to blame, sometimes they do not. I’ve agreed with McGeer that to be an accountability responsible person is to have “whatever it takes” for one’s sensitivities to normatively relevant considerations to be *developable*, sometimes through scaffolding interactions with others, sometimes through persons’ own critical reflections. And I’ve observed that realized capacities of accountability responsible persons entail a capacity to challenge *others’* normative understandings and hold *them* to account.

This conception of accountability responsible persons brings into view a wider range of responsibility practices—appropriate ways of treating accountability responsible persons—and a wider range of recognitional attitudes. It does so by not equating being accountability responsible with being liable to blame.

I've argued against any implicit or explicit assumption that accountability responsible persons will be "literate" in local norms. "Illiteracy" may exempt from blame but not from being treated as having developable capacities or from the standing to challenge local norms. Thus, I've suggested that "accountability responsible person" is not a *social* conception. The status "accountability responsible person" thus travels.

Finally, I hope I've indicated why 'accountability responsible person' is a valuable status. While people may not complain about not being resented or blamed, they might well take affront at being written off as uneducable, as enslaved Africans were under American slavery; they might well take affront at being written off as hopelessly irreformable, as criminal offenders may be during and after incarceration; and they might well take affront at being treated as though they lacked what it takes to hold others' accountable or to challenge the legitimacy of prevailing normative expectations.

2. Compliance Responsibility

A society's members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action—familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted—Harold Garfinkel²³

From Minimal Accountability Responsibility to Robust Compliance Responsibility

So far, I've been arguing that a familiar view equating accountability responsibility with liability to blame neither captures the full content of accountability responsibility nor the full range of practices and attitudes that recognize individuals as accountability responsible persons. Being accountability responsible, however, is only one of three distinct dimensions of being a responsible person. The second dimension is compliance responsibility.

By way of explaining why the compliance dimension of responsible persons is so important, let me begin by drawing attention both to the *minimalist* nature of conceiving of persons as accountability responsible and to the reasons why that minimalism is often obscured from view. To be an accountability responsible person, I argued, is to have what it takes to either in fact be liable to blame now or to be sensitizable so that the person could be liable to blame in the future, and with these, the capacity to blame or sensitize others. In short, the person has the (at least developable) capacity to live up to our normative expectations and to engage our own developable capacity to live up to their own normative expectations.

This is a minimalist conception, first, because having a realized capacity to live up to normative expectations does not mean that one will exercise it—and not just occasionally not exercise it, but routinely not do so. A person may persistently fail to behave with the most basic

²³ Harold Garfinkel, "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," *Social Problems* 11, no. 3 (1964): 225-250, 225.

common decency or avoid the most obviously unnecessary harm to others. Perhaps this is due to lazy inattentiveness, or self-indulgent concern with one's own pleasure and interests, or the arrogant thought that norms that apply to others don't apply to oneself, or hostility to some social group. The normatively reprobate do not thereby cease to be accountability responsible persons.

It is not just isolated individuals who may be persistently normatively disappointing. Within some social practices, there may be a widespread disposition to violate practice norms. This is particularly likely within practices where there are significant competitive rewards at stake—rewards of power, wealth, prestige, and the like. Under those conditions, the practice may continue functioning only in virtue of extensive surveillance and penalties that coerce participants' compliance with norms. We also need to keep in the mind more serious, pervasive failures to live up to normative expectations that occur under conditions of uncontrollable genocide, terrorist wars, widespread corruption, and the like. Individuals typically remain accountability responsible under these conditions. In short, being an accountability responsible person is compatible with being largely or entirely noncompliant with everyday normative expectations or compliant only because of effective detection and punitive mechanisms.

Regarding others as accountability responsible persons is, thus, not an *optimistic* stance. A normative expectation of good will is just that—normative. It is not an optimistic expectation that good behavior will normally be forthcoming. But nor is it pessimistic expectation that good behavior will likely not be forthcoming. A *normative* expectation is entirely independent of any beliefs about the likelihood or unlikelihood of others delivering what's normatively expected.

Second, I've been arguing that being an accountability responsible person does not presuppose normative literacy in any particular culture's norms or literacy in a particular

practice's norms.²⁴ Normative illiteracy exempts from liability to blame. It does not exempt from being treated as capable of meeting our normative expectations in the future or from the accountability responsible person's entitlement to challenge us to change those expectations. Thus, the conception of accountability responsible persons is not a *social* conception in the sense of presupposing prior socialization into "our" norm-governed practices. Accountability responsible persons need neither share normative understandings with us nor care about our norm-governed practices. Consider, by contrast, the following distinctly social conception of accountability responsibility offered by Bennett Helm:

to be accountable is to be answerable to others for upholding the norms of a certain type of community to which they all belong. Such communities...are communities of respect, in which the members both are jointly committed to some activity or project or way of life (and the norms that define that way of life) and have a kind of standing that each must acknowledge by showing proper respect to others.²⁵

This social conception of accountability responsibility relieves from both accountability and from being regarded and treated as an accountability responsible person anyone who is not party to "our" communal, joint commitment to a particular set of norms, either because they simply don't care about that joint commitment or because, as outsiders, they haven't been party to it in the first place. I hope the maximalism of this social conception of accountability responsibility strikes you as unacceptable. It exempts from accountability and liability to blame the normatively reprobate. It denies outsiders the status of responsible person and with that both

²⁴ My use of the term "normative literacy" is adapted from Barbara Herman's discussion of moral literacy in "Responsibility and Moral Competence" and "Can Virtue be Taught?" in her *Moral Literacy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Bennett W. Helm, "Accountability and Some Social Dimensions of Human Agency," *Philosophical Issues* 22(2012): 217-232, 218.

being treated as having a developable capacity and as having differently sensitized capacities employable in critiquing the normative content of “our” joint commitment. Instead, an appropriate, basic conception of responsible persons as accountability responsible is, and should be, minimalist, relying on a purely normative and non-social construal of “normative expectation” in order to capture in its net all those who plausibly *are* accountability responsible and should be treated as such.

The minimalism is obscured, I think, by a quite understandable predilection, when we think about accountability responsibility, to follow Strawson in focusing on the “facts as we know them.” What we know are largely facts about what it is like to regard and treat *fellow social participants* in our own, familiar everyday life as accountability responsible. Thus, the envisioned people who serve as paradigms of accountability responsible persons are our friends, family members, neighbors, colleagues, fellow transportation riders, politicians, chat room participants, and so on. They are, as Helm might say, members of our own communities of respect. They have been socialized into roughly the same set of social practices, with their associated norms, as we have. They have also been socialized into many of the same moral norms, including those of common decency, that we have. It’s thus reasonable to assume that those people are already largely sensitized to the same range of considerations that are normatively relevant in particular contexts as we are. Further, it’s reasonable to assume that the considerations they are not yet sensitized to are ones that are relatively easily within their reach. Thus, absent special evidence, it will usually be appropriate to hold them to account through blaming, either because they have likely culpably disappointed normative expectations or because the application of blame effectively speeds up the sensitization process.²⁶

²⁶ Victoria McGeer stresses the latter, more instrumental, role of blaming: “On the account I offer, the point and power of blame is to draw wrongdoers into a kind of exchange where they are perforce challenged to exercise their

Because our specific normative demands on those who are fellow social participants are perfectly intelligible to them, expressions of reactive attitudes, like resentment and indignation, may plausibly be thought of as *communicating* demands that participants are prepared by their social life together to *take up* and appropriately respond to (even if they don't always do so) with self-reactive attitudes like guilt and remorse, and reparative activities like apologizing and reforming. Among fellow social participants, the reactive attitudes may thus be appropriately thought of as having an essentially call-and-response structure.²⁷

Finally, and most importantly, it's reasonable to associate normative expectations of particular individuals with predictive expectations about how most will behave. Those who fail to live up to normative expectations fail to do what most others manage to in fact do. Think of familiar examples: the ungrateful gift recipient, the rude cashier, the insulting colleague, the unconscionably racist politician, the deceitful repairman, and so on. In normatively expecting them to behave better than they did, we have in the back of our minds the thought that it's just *normal* to behave better. The resentments of everyday life reflect not only assumptions about how people *ought* to behave, but also assumptions about how people generally do manage to behave. On this backdrop, talk about "normative expectations" covertly does double duty. It expresses a normative demand and implicitly invokes the normalcy of expecting that people in general *will* live up to that demand, at least with respect to the basics.

capacities as responsible agents, to reflect on what they have done, whether or not it is legitimate, and if it is not, to *take* responsibility for what they have done and for what they will do in the future" [McGeer, "Civilizing Blame" p. 180, in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*). Elsewhere she calls this "reactive scaffolding" ("Co-Reactive Attitudes and the Making of Moral Community," in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds. Robyn Langdon and Catriona Mackenzie (Princeton NJ: Routledge, 2012).

²⁷ See, for example, Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press); Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Coleen Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90 (2015): 546-569.

There's nothing wrong with this association between normative expectations and general predictive expectations in everyday life. Indeed, as I'll argue in this lecture, I think it's central to our everyday conception of responsible persons that our normative expectations of them are also predictive expectations. But it's important not to build that association into a conception of *accountability* responsible persons. That is a ground-floor conception of responsible persons: if you're going to regard and treat others as responsible persons *at all*, you have to think of them as accountability responsible. It's inappropriate at this ground-floor level, however, to bring in more substantive assumptions about them that would make it generally true of responsible persons that they will in fact live up to normative expectations and that those who don't are outliers. And that is because, as I've said, an acceptable conception of accountability responsible persons needs to apply to the normatively reprobate, the stranger to a culture or practice's norms, the participants in practices that remain viable only through effective detection and penalties, and members of societies that have broken down to the point of genocide or rampant corruption.

If accountability is a minimalist, ground-floor conception of responsible persons, we will need a more robust conception of responsible persons to capture the conception of responsible persons embedded in our everyday social interactions with fellow participants in decently functioning social practices.

Compliance Responsibility

Daily participation in social practices relies on a more robust conception of responsible persons than mere accountability responsibility. Social life largely proceeds on the assumption that it won't be necessary to press normative demands on others by blaming or by calling upon enforcement mechanisms. Similarly social life largely proceeds on the assumption that it isn't

necessary to explain what the normative expectations are or to make efforts to sensitize others to normatively relevant considerations in the situations in which they find themselves.

Think about hiring a plumber, riding on a bus, going to restaurants, making use of the library, working in your place of employment, receiving postal deliveries, and teaching or taking a class. In all of these, you participate in a variety of established norm-structured practices with which you are deeply familiar and assume others as well. You are, and you assume the plumber, bus riders, diners, restaurant staff, library patrons, work colleagues, mail person, and class members will, for the most part behave as they should.

The default presumption in everyday social life is not just that those we interact with *can* learn and *can* comply with normative expectations. The default presumption is that they *have already* learned what's normatively expected and are *disposed to comply* with those expectations—at least the most basic ones. Thus, the *expectations* to which we are prepared to hold people to account, are not just *normative* expectations about how people *ought* to behave. They are also *empirical, predictive expectations* about how people largely *will* behave. Put a bit differently, normatively expected behavior is just *normal* behavior. Thus, the default presumption is that social participants are compliance responsible persons. Any minimally well-functioning social practice operates via this default presumption.

Compliance responsible persons are minimally well-formed social agents, largely fit to be self-directed fellow participants in social life. They do not need to be carefully overseen or coercively managed. This *is* a social conception of responsible persons. The compliance responsibility dimension of responsible persons is acquired through socialization and social experience in which individuals learn at least the most basic norms structuring the practices in which they participate. The normative expectations at issue are the norms structuring established

social practices. The norms, whatever the independent legitimacy they might or might not have, are fundamentally *social* norms. We might say that a norm is a social norm when there is broadly shared understanding of the norm (at least among participants in the practice that is structured by that norm); broadly shared empirical expectations that the norm will generally be followed; and broadly shared understanding that, regardless of what individuals might personally think about the legitimacy of the norm, it is nevertheless *socially* normative, specifying what ought to be done by social participants and what is socially sanctionable behavior.²⁸

Since the aim is to capture a *default* presumption of being a responsible person, it's important not to exaggerate the disposition to comply with socially normative expectations. The compliance responsible person is at least a *minimally* well-formed agent, which is to say that they understand and are disposed to comply with *basic* normative expectations operative within the specific social practices (for example, of academia or of bus-riding) in which they participate as well as basic normative expectations operative within social interaction generally. Basic normative expectations may concern either the *constitutive* norms of practices or non-constitutive norms that are socially understood as matters of *common decency*. Constitutive norms are practice-defining: If one is to count as participating in a particular practice *at all*, one must comply with the practice defining norms. For example, that customers must pay for items they take out of a store and cashiers must return change for anything more than the actual price

²⁸ I have found Cristina Bicchieri's extensive work on social norms very helpful, but have departed from her account of what a social norm is by not making it a necessary condition for a social norm that individuals have a *conditional* preference to follow it. She thinks that what distinguishes personal from social norms is that individuals are willing to follow social norms *only on the conditions* that they expect a sufficient number of others to follow it and believe a sufficient number of others think that it ought to be followed and are willing to apply sanctions. I do not follow her on this point because an aim of childhood and adult socialization as well as social conversations and negotiations about what the norms should be is to provide individuals with reasons for thinking the norm is a legitimate one, that is to say, a norm to which adherence should not be conditional in the way Bicchieri describes. See, Cristina Bicchieri, *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) and *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

of the item are constitutive norms of shopping. Someone who takes items without paying for them is not shopping, but shoplifting. A clerk who does not return change for payments exceeding the item's cost is not clerking, but expropriating customers' money.

The sociologist, Harold Garfinkel, constructed a series of "breaching" experiments both to determine what the constitutive norms of various social practices are as well as to discover how individuals respond to violations of constitutive rules. In one of his experiments, he directed his students to behave in their family home as a boarder would, using formal modes of address (Mr... and Mrs...) to parents, avoiding getting personal (for example, not helping themselves to a snack), conducting themselves in a "circumspect and polite fashion," and speaking only when spoken to. Such behavior violated the constitutive norms for familial interactions. It elicited not only indignation and blaming accusations of being "mean, inconsiderate, selfish, nasty, or impolite," but also bewilderment about what was going on and efforts to find some explanation for this norm-violating behavior (Was the student sick? Had he lost his job?).²⁹

Of course, not all normative expectations concern constitutive norms. There are, for example, many things one ought not to do while grocery shopping, among them, leave one's shopping cart helter-skelter in parking spaces rather than in the provided carrels, replace unwanted items from one's cart on the wrong shelf, comment negatively on what is in other shoppers' carts, allow one's children to run wild in the aisles, and talk on the phone while the cashier is trying to check you out. If one does any of these things, one is still shopping, just not in a considerate way. Garfinkel called these non-constitutive practice norms "preferential rules." Many normative expectations concern preferential rather than constitutive rules. But not all preferential rules have the same status. Some are norms of common decency—the most basic

²⁹ Harold Garfinkel, "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," *Social Problems* 11, no. 3 (1964): 225-250, 232.

norms that any minimally well-formed social participant should be able to manage to comply with. Which rules have this status may shift over time and there may, obviously, be social disagreement about what is a matter of mere common decency and what a matter of more elevated normative expectation. One possible test of a norm of common decency is how difficult it would be for an average social participant to bring themselves to violate the rule. “Don’t negatively comment on other’s purchases” might be among those. Other examples of norms of common decency would include not only prohibitions on intentionally and severely harming others, but also the expectation that a “hello” greeting will be returned rather than ignored and, in the U.S., the expectation that guests will not smoke in one’s house unless given permission.³⁰

The expectation of accountability responsible persons is, as I’ve said, purely normative and based on the default presumption that individuals have at least a developable, if not realized, capacity to be reasons responsive. The expectation of compliance responsible persons within ongoing social practices is both normative and predictive based on the default presumption that responsible persons have a realized capacity to be reasons-responsive to basic social norms and are disposed to comply with those norms.

But exactly how should we understand the basis of that disposition to comply? Since what we are after is a conception of *responsible* persons, the disposition cannot be based solely on desires to avoid social sanction. Effective surveillance to detect norm violation and threat of significantly deterrent penalties may produce widespread, reliable compliance. Such measures, however, respond to the absence of, and substitute for, compliance *responsibility*. But, equally, since what we are after is a *default* conception, the disposition to comply cannot require a

³⁰ Although not entirely satisfying, I will leave open the question of how, more specifically, to describe the line between constitutive norms and norms of common decency on the one hand and more “elevated” norms.

voluntary, deliberation-based, reflective decision to accept social norms' authority as both Bennett Helm (in my earlier quote) and Margaret Gilbert suggest. Gilbert for example, claims that the normativity of a social rule arises from a joint commitment in which the parties to that commitment "*together impose a constraint* on each of the parties with respect to what it is open to him to do, rationally speaking, in the future."³¹ In short, while mere fear of sanction disconnects compliance from the agent's sense of the normativity of social norms, joint commitment idealizes the moral psychology behind the typical social participant's compliance.

The basis of the disposition to comply, I suggest, is instead to be found in what socialization into norm-structured practices provides us. As Cristina Bicchieri observes, socialization and social experience produce familiarity with possible categorizations of situations--for example, as a family dinner, as highway driving, as a professional exchange--and with scripts for how to proceed, including social norms to be followed, within categorized situations.³² In learning scripts for how to proceed, one acquires competency within various social practices. Some of that learning is through explicit instruction, as when children are taught to be polite and considerate or when employees are given job specific codes of conduct or diversity training. Some of what is learned is just absorbed in routine social experiences exposing one to what is normally done or not done by others. Some is acquired in conversations with friends and peers about what is to be done ("Did I tip enough?" "Is one supposed to bring a gift?") as well as from blaming and praising reactions to one's normative performance. The result of acquiring social knowledge about how to proceed is practical "know-how." As James D. Wallace puts it, "Practices are activities guided by a shared body of practical knowledge—

³¹ Margaret Gilbert, "Social Convention Revisited," *Topoi* 27 (2008): 5-16, 13.

³² Cristina Bicchieri, *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

knowledge of how to pursue the activity. Knowledge of how to do something is normative; it is knowledge of how to do it *properly*, knowledge of better rather than worse ways of doing things.”³³ Or, to use Barbara Herman’s descriptor, the acquisition of social knowledge about how one ought to proceed constitutes “moral literacy,” or more generally, normative literacy, analogous to becoming fluent in a language.³⁴

Once a situation is categorized, the norm-encoded script for it is typically automatically activated and norm compliant behavior flows naturally from one’s grasp of the situation. While norm-conforming behavior can, and sometimes does, follow a deliberative route, much of the time it follows an heuristic one. “According to the heuristic route, norm compliance is an automatic response to situational cues that focus our attention on a particular norm, rather than a conscious decision to give priority to normative considerations.”³⁵ Library patrons, for example, need not deliberate about whether to tear useful pages out of reference books or whether to shout to their friends across the library. Having acquired a script, practical know-how, or normative literacy with respect to library behavior, the minimally well-formed social participant simply does the “to be done” in this situation. Or think back to Garfinkel’s breaching experiment involving students behaving like boarders in their own family homes. It takes no special motivation—either of self-interest or commitment to a norm—to refer to one’s parents as “mom” or “dad” rather than Mr. or Mrs. Jones. The competent social participant’s “commitment to motivated compliance consists of his grasp of and subscription to the ‘natural facts of life in society.’”³⁶ It was the students’ seeming loss, during the breaching experiment, of their grasp of

³³ James D. Wallace, *Norms and Practices* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 11.

³⁴ Herman, “Responsibility and Moral Competence” and “Can Virtue be Taught?”.

³⁵ Bicchieri, *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5.

³⁶ Garfinkel, “Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities.”

the natural facts of family life that the parents found so baffling and disturbing. Barbara Herman nicely describes the automatic norm compliance we expect of the normatively literate:

For morality to perform its central function of securing routine action, moral concepts and features of character need to be acquired in the ongoing process of moral education so that a morally literate agent is able to recognize and respond to what is morally salient in the routine circumstances she encounters... This is, for the most part, nondeliberative. Like the spatially competent agent's ability to move through ordinary doorways without performing any geometric calculations, the morally literate agent moves among persons without the need to think whether she should or could shove them aside, use their body parts for this or that good cause, or tell the truth when asked the time of day.³⁷

To say that socialization equips social participants with what they need in order to routinely comply with social norms is not to say that a “grasp of the ‘natural facts of social life’” is the only thing motivating norm compliance. One consequence of acquiring practice know-how and normative literacy is sensitivity to the fact that violations are likely to be met with such social sanctions as expressed blame, negative gossip, cooled social relations, spoiled reputation, formal penalties, and the like. Thus, aversion to social penalty has *some* motivational role to play. Similarly, empathy with the effects of norm violation on others (for example, with the bewilderment and hurt the parents of Garfinkel's students felt) has *some* role to play. Similarly, desires to fit in and belong have *some* motivational role to play,³⁸ as do being moved by the thought that others are counting on the agent's compliance³⁹ and by reverence for the community and respect for its norms.⁴⁰ The point here is that the disposition to comply with basic normative expectations is grounded first and foremost in simply grasping how social life works; but that

³⁷ Herman, “Morality and Everyday Life,” 31.

³⁸ Victor Fernandez Castro and Elisabeth Pacherie argue that the need to belong explains why we care about others' opinions of us and are later motivated by social expectations, reputational considerations, and social emotions (“Joint Actions, Commitments, and the Need to Belong,” *Synthese* 198 (2021): 7597–7626).

³⁹ Karen Jones, “But I Was Counting on You!” in *The Philosophy of Trust*, eds. Paul Faulkner and Thomas Simpson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) and “Trust as an Affective Attitude,” *Ethics* 107 (1996): 4-25.

⁴⁰ Helm, “Accountability and Some Social Dimensions of Human Agency.”

disposition is compatible with a complex of motivations including desire to avoid sanctions, empathetic identification, the need to belong, taking “I am counting on you” as a direct reason for action, reverence for the community and its norms, and even reflective acceptance of the legitimacy of a normative expectation. Any one or ones of these motivations may be more or less centrally motivating on any particular occasion.

Compliance Responsibility-Recognizing Attitudes

So far, I have focused on the normative-cum-predictive expectations associated with regarding others as compliance responsible persons as well as on the nature of being compliance responsible. But just as there are distinctive responsibility-recognizing attitudes connected with accountability responsibility, so there is a distinctive responsibility-recognizing attitude associated with compliance responsibility. That attitude is not *reactive* to what has been done, and thus the Strawsonian terminology of “reactive attitude” is not appropriate. The central compliance-responsibility-recognizing attitude is prospective, basic (or default) trust.

Philosophers have for the most part focused their attention on the non-default form of trust where trust is a matter of (conscious or unconscious) *accepted* vulnerability to harm by particular others. Such trust is *invested*, wisely or unwisely, in particular people and is typically the *outcome* of social experience with those persons.⁴¹ Non-default, selective trust emerges under conditions where norm compliance can't be presumed and thus there is some question about whether others will or will not live up to normative expectations. This may be because the norm

⁴¹Some philosophers have, however, explored more basic and default forms of trust. See for example, Johnny Brennan, “Recognition Trust,” *Philosophical Studies*, 178 (2021): 3799-3818; Lawrence Thomas, “Trust and Survival: Securing a Vision of the Good Society,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (1989): 34-41; Ryan Preston-Roedder, “Civic Trust,” *Philosopher's Imprint* 17, no. 4 (2017): 1-22; Margaret Urban Walker, “Damages to Trust,” in her *Moral Repair* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2006) ch. 3; Annette Baier “Trust and Anti-Trust,” *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 231-260.

in question is not a basic norm or because a practice is not well-functioning (instead depending on coercive management of participants) or because the normal background context of the practice has changed so as to introduce uncertainty about how to proceed or so as to introduce atypical self-interested motivations (as for example occurred for shopping practices in the pandemic that resulted in individual buyers wiping out supplies and private sellers charging extortionate prices).

Decently functioning social practices, however, proceed on the presumption that participants are minimally competent social actors. They are capable of engaging in a practice *at all* precisely because they understand and comply with the constitutive rules that define the practice; and they contribute to the willing co-participation of all precisely because they understand and comply with norms of common decency. In short, decently functioning social practices proceed on the presumption that participants are compliance responsible persons.

Thus, vulnerability need not be “accepted” nor trust “invested.” Rather, as Trudy Govier puts it,

One person trusts another in that she confidently expects the other to produce or respect the normal, desired events—what Garfinkel calls reproducing the ‘normative order of events.’ Trusting in this context amounts to confidently expecting the other to act in an appropriate way. What is appropriate is defined by social custom and presumes no knowledge of the people trusted. It emerges from social experience. This is how ‘everybody does it,’ as we have simply learned. It is how ‘people like us behave.’⁴²

She calls this default trust “scatter trust” because it is scattered across individuals who participate in social practices, most of whom we do not know, for example, all those people involved in the food production, food safety certification, and food service industries whose competent performance we take for granted when we eat at restaurants. In adopting a stance, or attitude, of default and scatter trust, we recognize others as compliance responsible persons.

⁴² Trudy Govier, *Social Trust and Human Communities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 110.

In her landmark essay, “Trust and Antitrust,” Annette Baier reminds us of how pervasive reliance on others’ actual, even if possibly minimal, good will in fact is and how very different our social life would be if we did not “inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere, and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted.”⁴³ Assuming at least minimally well-functioning social practices, we trust strangers to give correct directions, not to take advantage of us when we fall asleep on trains and planes, trust patrons to pay for what they take from shops, trust employees to do what they are hired to do, trust people to return what they have borrowed, and trust enemies not to fire when arms are put down and a white flag is raised.⁴⁴

While default trust is a prospective rather than reactive attitude, a special form of the reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation recognize compliance responsibility. Think back, once again, to Garfinkel’s breaching experiment where students behaved like boarders in their family homes. Their doing so provoked “astonishment, bewilderment, shock, anxiety, embarrassment, and anger.”⁴⁵ Family members responded by saying things like “What’s gotten into you!?” and “Are you out of your mind or are you just stupid?” We are all familiar similar expressions: “What were you thinking?” “I can’t believe you just said (did) that,” and tellingly, “Didn’t your mama teach you...?” Infractions of basic norms elicit a distinctive kind of incredulous resentment that such an infraction on the part of a competent social actor could have taken place at all. To make sense of how a presumed compliance responsible person could be doing such things, some family members treated the behavior, at least at first, as a comedy routine. Others tried to make sense of the behavior by speculating that the student was sick, or

⁴³ Annette Baier, “Trust and Antitrust,” *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 231-260, 234.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 239 and 250.

⁴⁵ Harold Garfinkel, “A Conception of and Experiments with ‘Trust’ as a Condition of Concerted Stable Actions,” in *Motivation and Social Interaction: Cognitive Determinants* ed. O.J. Harvey (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1963), pp. 187-238, 226.

overworked, or had had a fight with their fiancé, thus volunteering excuses or exemptions.⁴⁶ In short, resentments are not of a piece. Some react simply to the violation of a *normative* expectation. Others react to the violation of a *normative-cum-predictive* expectation.

There is also an important connection between the responsibility-recognizing attitudes connected with accountability responsibility—resentment, indignation, guilt, shame—and compliance responsibility. Strawsonians often take the “reactive attitudes” toward failures to meet normative expectations—resentment and indignation—to have a call-and-response structure.⁴⁷ Expressed resentment and indignation communicate normative demands (or at least the fact of norm violation) and call upon the norm violator to give uptake to those demands through self-reactive attitudes of guilt and shame and to respond in appropriate ways, for example, by apologizing, making amends, and undertaking character form. The work that gets done through expressed resentment and indignation is not just the retributive work of giving people the condemnation they deserve. It is also the instrumental, agency-improving work of getting people to take seriously their norm violations and take responsibility for repairing the damage they have done and repairing their own character.⁴⁸ Central to improving agency is that the recipient of resentful and indignant calls *get the normative message* and not just a coercive threat of social reprisal.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁴⁷ Coleen Macnamara, “Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90, no. 3 (May 2015): 546-569.

⁴⁸ Coleen Macnamara, “‘Screw you!’ & ‘Thank you!’,” *Philosophical Studies* 165 (2013): 893-914; Manuel Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Victoria McGeer, “Scaffolding Agency: A Proleptic Account of the Reactive Attitudes,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2019): 301-323 and “Building a Better Theory of Responsibility,” *Philosophical Studies* 172, no. 10 (2017): 2635-2649.

But as I said in the last lecture, accountability responsible persons include those who have the realized capacity to detect and act on normatively relevant considerations but who just don't care to do so and those whose capacities are developable but not yet realized. That is, accountability responsible persons may be either unwilling or unable to give expressed blame the normal uptake. For those individuals, expressed resentment and indignation lacks a call-*and-response* structure. At most the unwilling can be pressured into better behavior through threat of social sanction, and the outsider to "our" social norms can be educated about what the norms are and possibly also pressured into better behavior through threat of social exclusion. But in neither case is a normative-cum-predictive expectation of uptake in guilt or shame or expectation of self-initiated (that is, non-coerced or pressured) efforts to apologize, make amends, and reform appropriate.

Resentment and indignation have a real call-and-response structure and some realistic claim to being useful in improving agency only among those who share normative understandings and on whom those understandings typically have some motivational hold—in short, only in social worlds where individuals are both accountability and compliance responsible. Herbert Fingarette observed that "to appeal at all, we must always, finally, appeal to some acknowledged responsibility, perhaps tacitly accepted, but in any case some responsibility which the individual does accept, something for which, and in the spirit of which, he cares. Ultimately, we make this deepest and broadest appeal to the person as a responsible person—then we must wait."⁴⁹ Compliance responsible persons at least care about living up to familiar,

⁴⁹ Herbert Fingarette, "Responsibility," *Mind* 75, no. 297 (1966): 73-74.

basic normative expectations. They thus have a cognitive and motivational groundwork for having their normative competency expanded through practices of holding responsible.⁵⁰

Compliance Responsibility Recognizing Practices

Given that the expectation of compliance responsible persons is a normative *cum predictive one* and that the compliance-responsibility-recognizing attitude is default trust that social participants will behave as they ought by living up to basic normative expectations, it should be unsurprising that the relevant responsibility practices involving not-doings. We treat people as compliance responsible persons by not subjecting them to surveillance, not checking up to see if they are doing what they are supposed to be doing, not reminding them of what they've promised to do, not doing self-protective things like requiring formal contracts, and not avoiding them for fear of what they might do. We leave compliance responsible people alone and trust that they will manage to do, on their own steam, what is normal for competent social participants to do.

In discussing accountability responsibility practices, I indicated that there are distinctive ways of insulting people by not treating them as accountability responsible. While no one probably minds not being held to account, they might well take affront at being written off as hopelessly uneducable or hopelessly irreformable, thus not the kind of being who could come, with others' help, to be fit to participate in norm-governed practices. This is the insult enslaved Africans received under American slavery and that criminal offenders may receive during and after incarceration. Accountability responsible persons may also take affront at being treated as

⁵⁰ See Victoria McGeer, "Building a Better Theory of Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 172, no. 10 (2015): 2635-2649.

though they lacked what it takes to hold others' accountable or to challenge the legitimacy of prevailing normative expectations.

Treating fellow social participants as though they were not compliance responsible persons is similarly insulting. As Jason D'Cruz observes, "Distrust is deeply dishonoring, and distrust without warrant risks insulting, demoralizing, and disempowering";⁵¹ and "in settings in which trusting behavior is the norm and distrusting behavior is therefore conspicuous, the risk of marginalization and dishonor represents significant, even dramatic losses for the party who is wrongly distrusted and for the relationship as well."⁵² Among fellow social participants, trust that others will comply with basic normative expectations *is* the norm since it amounts to trusting that others are *bona fide* social participants *at all*. The particular dishonor of not being trusted to comply with constitutive rules and norms of common decency is the dishonor of having one's status as a compliance responsible person denied. This is the insult that Black individuals receive when they are treated with suspicion in also sorts of social practices--driving while Black, shopping while Black, and so on. Although less insulting because not connected with prejudicial stereotypes, this is the insult one might expect telemarketers to experience when their calls are routinely monitored for "quality control" as though they cannot be trusted to execute their basic job responsibilities. It's the insult I experienced when Walmart instituted spot checks of shopping carts and receipts as patrons exited the building as though patrons could not be trusted to be shopping rather than shoplifting. It's the insult that many of us may feel at being subjected to ever more elaborate performance reports and performance assessments as though, again, we cannot be trusted to know and do our jobs.

⁵¹ Jason D'Cruz, "Humble Trust," *Philosophical Studies* 176 (2019): 933-953, 934

⁵² *Ibid.*, 941.

However necessary distrustful monitoring may be or seem to be both for the profitability of businesses and for the protection of others from the possibly untrustworthy, the expansion of distrustful monitoring threatens to erode the infrastructure that supports compliance responsibility. On the one hand, as D’Cruz suggests, it risks undermining motivation to comply (“Why should I bother if this is how I’m going to be treated?”). On the other hand, monitoring, along with public reminders of basic norms, risk suggesting that there is not in fact general compliance with a norm, and thus it is not in fact basic.⁵³

Responsibility practices include something else besides not doing what, if done, would signal distrust: giving the benefit of the doubt when those presumed to be compliance responsible appear to be violating normative expectations.⁵⁴ There must be some misunderstanding that could be resolved, or it’s just a joke, or there must be some excuse.⁵⁵ Here, too, there is opportunity for insult. To be accused of violating basic normative expectations is a serious matter. It amounts to being regarded as an unfit social participant and thus lacking the status “compliance responsible person.” To be immediately accused of norm violation, rather than given the benefit of the doubt, is to be treated as someone of whom basically good behavior was not empirically expected in the first place. One was not presumed to have the status compliance responsible person.

⁵³ Bicchieri notes that “perhaps just sending a normative message may be interpreted as a sign that people usually do not conform to the desired behavior, encouraging transgressions” (*Norms in the Wild*, 152). See also Jules Holroyd’s discussion of empirical evidence that threats and rewards undermine compliance (“A Communicative Conception of Moral Appraisal,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 10 (2007): 267-278).

⁵⁴ Anne Warfield Rawls and Gary David, “Accountably Other: Trust, Reciprocity and Exclusion in a Context of Situated Practice,” *Human Studies* 28 (2006): 469-497.

⁵⁵ Karen Stohr devotes a chapter in her *Minding the Gap* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) to what she calls “throwing the veil of philanthropy” by constructing charitable narratives of persons’ past, present, and future behavior. What I’m suggesting here is that it’s part of treating people as compliance responsible that the veil of philanthropy is initially thrown and tested before blaming people for violating basic norms.

Qualifications

Lest all this talk about compliance sound a bit too rosy, let me add some qualifications. The default presumption that participants are compliance responsible is a presumption that they will comply with *the most basic* normative expectations—what I’ve called constitutive norms and norms of common decency. Compliance with constitutive norms is necessary for participating in the practice at all, since constitutive norms are practice-defining (recall that someone who pockets goods in a store isn’t shopping); and willing participation in practices with others is, plausibly, dependent on being treated with common decency. So, what’s presumed is basic social competence, not compliance with more “elevated” norms and certainly not virtue.

Further, the default presumption that fellow social participants are compliance responsible is perfectly compatible with thinking that *some* social participants aren’t compliance responsible persons at all.⁵⁶ It is also compatible with recognizing that some social participants will not be compliance responsible with respect to particular practices: they may be cultural outsiders who have not been trained into “our” norms; or they may be not-yet-socialized novices to a practice (for example, the medical student not yet socialized into the norm-structured practice of medicine); or they may simply be outsiders to a practice (for example, the non-Catholic attendant at a Catholic mass).

In addition, the default presumption is not that compliance responsible persons are flawlessly compliant, just for the most part so. Given that a presumption of compliance responsibility doesn’t entail that everyone always does comply with constitutive norms and norms of common decency, taking precautionary measures may be prudent especially when the

⁵⁶ Something similar is true for the default presumption that people are accountability responsible. That presumption is compatible with some, for example, psychopaths, turning out not to be.

stakes are high. So, shopkeepers install security cameras, airports search bags and persons, tourists wear money-belts, women avoid walking alone at night on city streets, Blacks avoid police interaction, internet sellers request CVV numbers, potential employers conduct background checks, and transactions may proceed only on the basis of enforceable contracts.

It's also important to keep in mind that the range of norms that count as basic vary from practice to practice. The *basic* normative expectations within friendships or monastic life may differ substantially from the basic normative expectations for using public transportation or engaging in professional politics. What is a mere matter of common decency among friends may well not be among strangers. I've not meant to suggest that there's some single standard for common decency that applies universally to all social participants (although there are surely *some* norms that do apply nearly universally, such as prohibitions against murder). The claim has only been that if a practice is decently (i.e., non-coercively) functioning, the default presumption must be that practice participants are compliance responsible with respect to whatever constitutive norms and norms of common decency apply to that practice.

I have also not meant to be suggesting that basic practice norms are necessarily ones that, from a critically reflective, non-participant stance, we would regard as *legitimate*. The norms structuring practices, especially in hierarchically-structured societies, can be defective. The constitutive norms and norms of common decency may concern only "insiders" or "privileged groups." So, for example, the scope of the constitutive norm of policing that police not murder citizens may not extend to some social groups. The Black Lives Matter movement responded to this kind of defect in U.S. policing practice. Similarly the #MeToo movement responded to the failure to include a prohibition against sexual assault among the constitutive or common decency norms in many practices. What this means is that basic trust in *compliance* is not the same thing

as trusting practitioners not to injure or wrong those who fall outside of the scope of its basic practice norms.

Finally, I've not meant to suggest that *all* of our social practices operate on the presumption that participants are compliance responsible. It is possible, though very costly, to keep a social practice afloat among non-compliance responsible people. Institute enough surveillance mechanisms and punitive sanctions and compliance can be coerced. But the larger the number of social practices in which no default presumption of compliance responsibility operates, the more one might be inclined to say that social life has broken down. In short, it would not be possible to have anything resembling the social life characteristic of decently functioning societies absent a default presumption that people are compliance responsible.

Conclusion

I began by pointing out that a number of features that are often thought important to being a responsible person are not features of being accountability responsible. Those include a presumption that fellow participants in social practices have a basic normative literacy such that many of our normative expectations about how people ought to behave are also predictive expectations about how typical social participants will behave. Given basic normative literacy, the attitudes and practices by which we hold people responsible have a call-and-response structure. We call on people to live up to normative expectations with which they are familiar and expect that such calls will generally receive uptake. Also given basic normative literacy, it will generally be true that those who disappoint our normative expectations will be liable to blame.

Because accountability responsibility is a “ground floor,” non-social conception of responsible persons, we need to add a second dimension of responsibility to capture the way we think about responsible persons within shared norm-structured social practices. Socialization and social experience produce social participants who are compliance responsible in the sense that they are familiar with and largely disposed to comply with basic social norms. In our everyday life together, we simply assume that fellow social participants are compliance responsible. “Compliance responsible person” is thus a *default* status assigned to fellow social participants.

Focusing on compliance responsibility brought into view a distinctive set of responsibility-recognizing attitudes and responsibility-recognizing practices, and with those, distinctive ways of insulting people by not recognizing their status as compliance responsible persons.

3. Taking Responsibility

...it seems worrisome to account for morally responsible agency in terms of only some of the ways we engage people (including ourselves) as responsible agents, in terms of only some of the attitudes that characterize our responsibility practices—David Beglin⁵⁷

The guiding idea of these lectures is that if we want to understand responsibility, including the full range of our responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes and the distinctive ways that responsible persons can be insulted, we should begin by examining what it means to have the *status* ‘responsible’ person rather than by examining more specifically what it means to be responsible *for* a particular action or consequence. Thinking about responsibility *for* naturally invites us to focus on responsible persons’ vulnerability to blame and general answerability for deeds that appear to violate normative expectations. That in turn invites us to focus on those responsible persons who share a normative community with us and thus who might sensibly be called upon to render an account that we can understand and sensibly blamed for normative failures that they can understand.

Thinking about responsibility *for* also naturally invites us to think about responsible persons primarily as people who can *fail* to meet our expectations, rather than as people who generally *meet* our basic expectations and can be trusted to do so.

The result is that we miss out on important ways that we interact with those who are not yet part of our normative community as nevertheless responsible persons. We also miss out on the most commonplace ways that we interact with those who are part of our normative community and who, having been socialized into it, generally comply with its basic norms. A related result is that the negative reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation come to occupy

⁵⁷ David Beglin, “Two Strawsonian Strategies for Accounting for Morally Responsible Agency,” *Philosophical Studies* 177, no. 8: 2341-2364.

an unduly prominent place in accounts of responsibility, as do blaming and sanctioning treatments. A central aim of the first two lectures was to draw attention to responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes that are in fact central to interacting with others as responsible persons even if they are not perspicuous from the point of view of thinking about persons' responsibility for normative derelictions.

Although significantly departing from Strawsonian approaches to responsibility—with their stress on answerability, liability to blame, normative demands, and so on—I've meant to leave in place Strawson's central insight, namely, that we are invested in responsibility because we are social beings whose lives are oriented around participating with others in norm-structured practices. We thus have a basic concern that we be able to share social practices with others and thus a basic concern with the capacities that, actually or potentially, fit the persons around us to be social fellows.

A second dimension of the Strawsonian approach that I've meant to leave in place is methodological. If we want to understand responsibility, we need to begin by reflecting on what social life with others is like rather than beginning from metaphysical views about contra-causal freedom or determinism. Taking up this idea, I've suggested that we should attend to the *default* status of being a responsible person that our social interactions with others presuppose. Those social interactions will typically be within ongoing social practices within a shared normative community—but not always, since there will also be outsiders both to our larger normative community and to practice-specific communities with whom we also engage as responsible persons.

So far, I have not questioned the standard assumption that being a responsible person is entirely a matter having the capacities that fit one to stand under *obligation*--that is, to be subject

to normative expectations. I have just made adjustments to that view, emphasizing that the relevant capacities may be merely developable, and emphasizing the automaticity of much norm-compliant behavior within ongoing social practices. Those adjustments meant substantially enlarging the range of responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes. But, nevertheless, the core underlying thought that responsibility and obligation go hand in glove remains the same. The idea that to be a responsible person is to be liable to blame for failure to do what one is obliged to do is also largely preserved. Even if we hopefully attempt to scaffold not-yet-(fully)-developed reasons-responsiveness, resentment is waiting in the wings once the scaffolding is complete, ready to emerge when norm violations occur. Even if we trustingly taking compliance with basic norms for granted, resentment is waiting in the wings ready to emerge should norm violations occur.

There is however this potential difficulty with tying responsibility so tightly to obligation: People often elect to do good things that are normatively optional. Indeed, as I'll elaborate shortly, the social world we are familiar with is pervasively structured around such elections. There are also responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes associated with good-doings. To mention only a few: asking for volunteers, sending thank you notes, and feeling and expressing appreciation and gratitude.

Accommodating Positive Reactive Attitudes

A number of philosophers, including myself, have already raised doubts that what Strawsonians call “positive reactive attitudes”—appreciation, gratitude, praise, admiration, approbation—fit models of reactive attitudes developed specifically to capture distinctive features of blaming attitudes like resentment and indignation whose expressions hold people to

normative expectations that have been disappointed.⁵⁸ A conception of responsible persons designed to explain what licenses resentment and indignation may not be the conception we need to explain the appropriateness of appreciation and gratitude.

Initially it might seem as though resentment and appreciation (to pick focal negative and positive attitudes) are entirely symmetrical. Resentment recognizes responsibility for *failures* to meet normative expectations. Appreciation recognizes responsibility for *exceeding* normative expectations. So, both refer to normative expectation. But I don't think much hay can be made of this fact.

'Obligation,' when used synonymously with our everyday normative-cum-predictive notion of normative expectation is a social concept. It is the concept of what one person may properly demand of others within a shared normative community, where a community might be an entire society, a neighborhood, members of an occupation, and so on. Similarly, the normatively optional—the supererogatory—is a social concept. It is the concept of what we may not properly demand of others despite its being a good thing to do.⁵⁹ Actual social worlds will vary in what they take to be demandable versus optional and how much of persons' behavior is subject to demands versus how much is left to voluntary election. In principle, a social world might regard nothing as optional other than selection among equally weighted obligations. By our lights, this would be an overly demanding world. In principle, a social world might regard

⁵⁸ Daniel Telech, "Demanding More of Strawsonian Accountability Theory," *European Journal of Philosophy* 28 (2020): 926-941; Andrew S. Eschleman, "Worthy of Praise: Responsibility and Better-than-Minimally-Decent Agency," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vol. 2, eds. David Schoemaker and Neal Tognazzini (New York: OUP, 2015); Cheshire Calhoun, "Appreciating Responsible Persons," in *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, vol. 11 (New York: OUP, 2022); Coleen Macnamara, "'Screw You!' and 'Thank You!'," *Philosophical Studies* 165, no. 3 (2013): 893-914 and "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90, no. 3 (2015): 546-569.

⁵⁹ Michael Ferry, "Beyond Obligation: Reasons and Supererogation," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 77 (2015): 49-65; D. K. Levy, "Assimilating Supererogation," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 77 (2015): 227-242.

nothing as demandable. Perhaps a community of people who are especially good judges of what would be good to do and who are highly motivated to do it might see no point in making normative demands on each other. These observations suggest two things. First, the normatively optional does not make *essential* reference to obligation. That is, it is not necessarily a notion of exceeding obligation. The community of highly motivated good judges might appreciate and feel grateful for each other's various elections of good things to do without conceiving of these good deeds as exceeding normative expectations. Second, ordinary social worlds take the range of good things that might be done and draw a line: on one side are the *non-optional*; on the other are the *non-obligatory*. Whenever societies engage in such line drawing, *both* sides of the line make some reference to their opposite side. So, not much hay can be made of the fact that the normatively optional (in the sense of supererogatory) *exceeds normative expectations*.

In short, the fact that, in typical societies, the normatively optional exceeds normative expectations is not by itself a reason to think that resentment and appreciation share a similar structure. It might nevertheless be true that they do. If so, they would embody the same conception of 'responsible person.' That means that whatever capacities we conclude responsible persons must have to be subject to resentment will be the very same capacities responsible persons must have to be subject to appreciation. There would then be no point in paying special attention to the positive responsibility-recognizing attitudes, since they will tell us nothing about the nature of being a responsible person that we hadn't already learned by attending to negative attitudes.

But does appreciation simply mirror the structure of resentment? Here is a simplified, but I think recognizably Strawsonian, account of resentment: Resentment (1) is a response to others' failure to live up to normative expectations; (2) incipiently communicates demands concerning

what was originally expected but not received as well as demands for appropriate responsive behavior to this failure;⁶⁰ and (3) comes with an “implicit RSVP”⁶¹ for uptake of these demands in such self-reactive attitudes as guilt, remorse, and shame, as well as in reparative actions. Resentment, thus described, has a complex communicative structure. It seems evident enough why it should. Failures to meet normative expectations are serious matters. They fail to treat persons with the regard or respect owed to them and thus are intrinsically insulting. They also threaten the smooth functioning of social practices on which we, as social beings, depend. It’s thus important to underscore for the norm violator exactly what was normatively expected, and possibly also why it was. Once attention has been brought to the fact of norm violation, additional demands can be explicitly pressed or implicitly made: demands to acknowledge fault, apologize, make amends, engage in whatever reform is necessary so that the violation doesn’t happen again, and so on. The point of making such demands is, of course, to get the norm violator to respond appropriately, hence the importance of communicative uptake in self-reactive attitudes and subsequent reparative activity.

Obviously, appreciation and gratitude don’t have this exact same structure since they are responses to good action that is not normatively expectable, and thus demands won’t figure into those attitudes. But they might have the same *general* communicative structure of (1) being a response to normative performance, (2) being incipiently communicative, and (3) coming with an RSVP for uptake of that communication.

⁶⁰ As Coleen Macnamara has argued, even if resentment isn’t always expressed, the attitude is “for communicating” in much the way that an unsent email is for communicating or a “no trespassing sign” in the local hardware is for communicating (“Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities”). This is what I mean by “incipiently communicates.”

⁶¹ The phrase is Darwall’s (*The Second-Person Standpoint*).

Both Coleen Macnamara and David Telech spell out how such an account of, respectively, gratitude and praise might go. Macnamara argues that gratitude *recognizes* the positive moral import of what was done and expressions of gratitude are recognitive speech acts. Gratitude seeks uptake of that recognition in the target's coming to see herself as she is seen and thus to feel self-approbation.⁶² Self-approbation motivates communicating receipt of the message by, for example, saying "You're welcome." Self-approbation also motivates doing more good things that build relationships and bind the moral community together (analogous to the reparative activities motivated by guilt). Telech proposes something similar. Praise communicates the significance for the praiser of what was done and issues an *invitation*.⁶³ The invitation is to accept credit from the praiser and join the praiser in *jointly valuing* the praisee's act. The praisee gives emotional uptake to that invitation by feeling self-directed pride and by such discursive communicative responses as "You're welcome!" or "I'm happy to have helped" (analogous to apologies).

While we learn something about the *varieties* of moral address and responses to that address by attending to gratitude and praise (in particular, moral address includes recognitives and invitations), we don't learn anything about the nature of responsible persons that we hadn't already learned from an examination of resentment. For Macnamara and Telech, both the positive and the negative reactive attitudes presuppose that responsible persons have the requisite capacities for engaging in the discursive and behavioral exchanges characteristic of *accountability* responsible agents. Expressed resentment holds accountable agents *to account* for misdeeds by communicating that they need to acknowledge their misdeeds (in feelings of guilt,

⁶² Macnamara, "Reactive Attitudes as Communicative Entities" and "'Screw You!' and 'Thank you!'"

⁶³ Daniel Telech, "Praise as Moral Address," in *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*, vol. 7, ed. David Shoemaker (New York: OUP, forthcoming).

shame, remorse) and to do something in response to that acknowledgment (apologize, repair the harm). Analogously, expressed gratitude holds accountable agents *to account* for good deeds by communicating that they need to acknowledge their good deeds (in feelings of pride, self-approbation) and to do something in response to that acknowledgment (say “You’re welcome,” do community building, join the praiser in valuing the deed).

I don’t think this is right. Pressing gratitude and praise into the mold of accountability holding moral-address-and-responsive-uptake. No doubt some expressions of gratitude and praise aim to get the agent to appreciate what a good thing she’s done and to feel pride and self-approbation. Sometimes the person who has done a good thing doesn’t realize quite how good a thing they’ve done. In that case, praise might indeed invite the praisee to upgrade their assessment, thereby coming to see themselves as they are seen and to jointly value what they have done. Such upgraded assessment might well result in intensified pride. But this is an odd view of what gratitude and praise in general are like. To see this, note that *resentment* aims to get the norm violator to see themselves as they are seen, because norm violation is motivated by such things as inattention, self-interest, and sometimes plain indifference to others’ interests. Thus, norm violators simply aren’t paying sufficient attention to the normatively relevant features of their actions. Moral address calls those features to attention. By contrast, those who exceed normative expectations typically elect to do so precisely because doing more seems a good thing. They are not inattentive to the normatively relevant features of what they do, and they do not need the goodness of their actions brought to their attention through others’ cognitives or invitations to jointly value. Indeed, they deserve gratitude or praise only if their election springs from some sensitivity to the goodness of what they do. We can agree that

expressions of gratitude and praise do *something*. But what they don't generally do is focus the target's attention on something they weren't already aware of in the first place.

So, construing expressions of gratitude as attention-focusing moral address seems strained. So too does construing them as aiming for *emotional* uptake. Having elected to do good, the agent already has grounds for pride and self-approbation. So, the agent's emotional "uptake" typically precedes communicative exchanges; it is not reasonably an aimed-for effect of them. Indeed, I suspect it's more common for people to complain that their good deeds, of whose goodness they are well aware, haven't received proper uptake via *others'* emotional responses of gratitude and appreciation.

The idea that gratitude and praise aim for *behavioral* uptake seems equally strained. Etiquette norms may require or advise acknowledging thanks with "You're welcome" or minimizing the act with "Think nothing of it" so as not to burden others with a duty of grateful repayment. It's hard to see how either discursive response centrally concerns acknowledging that the person has got the message that she's done something good. "You're welcome" and "Think nothing of it" simply aren't analogous to "I'm sorry"; the latter *does* convey "message received." In addition, aiming to get uptake of grateful messages in *more* good deeds, motivated by self-approbation, seems distinctly *ungrateful* (and possibly manipulative).

If positive reactive attitudes don't easily fit the communicative model designed for negative reactive attitudes that recognize *accountability*, perhaps they don't embody the same conception—or as I would say, *dimension*—of being a responsible person. This is what I propose: Just as basic trust recognizes others as *compliance responsible* persons, gratitude, appreciation, and the like recognize actions that befit *responsibility taking* kinds of beings. I turn now to the third dimension of being a responsible person: responsibility taking.

Responsibility Taking and Social Practices

One might be skeptical of the idea that being a responsibility taker is part of the default status ‘responsible person.’ To take responsibility—as I am using this phrase—is to elect to do good things that are not normatively expectable. One might think such elections do not depend on being just a responsible person, but on some added extra that some responsible persons bring to the table. They are virtuous in some way. Perhaps they are especially concerned with others’ welfare. Perhaps they are especially conscientious about doing their duty and so regularly end up doing more than required—they have the virtue of being highly responsible persons. Or perhaps they personally value particular ends, like the success of an academic program or a political campaign, and so are willing to take on responsibility for promoting those ends and to execute those assumed responsibilities in especially diligent, time-consuming, and creative ways. They are, as we might say, personally committed. In addition, talk about the *supererogatory* invites reflection on rare paragons of supererogatory behavior—saints and heroes—and to suppose that those who exceed normative expectations in less flashy ways (like doing favors) similarly have a something-extra in them besides just being responsible persons. And so, once again, we might think that, if we want to understand what it means to have the default status responsible person, we should focus on the baseline capacities for standing under normative expectations—capacities connected with resentment and basic trust.

But now consider this fact about social life as we know it: In everyday social life together, we take for granted not only that social participants have what it takes live up to participate in norm-structured social practices, but also that they are disposed to and sometimes will elect to promote the goods that those practices serve in ways that aren’t required by existing norms. That presumption is *pervasively* built into our social practices. Member organizations like

churches, clubs, and public radio corporations rely, in part, on the users of their services voluntarily contributing money or labor. Charitable organizations serving the needs of some group—such as food pantries, homeless shelters, animal rescue organizations, and international humanitarian aid organizations—similarly rely on donations of money and labor. Public-good providing institutions like public libraries, museums, and national parks rely on volunteers to give talks and tours. Formalized groups that engage in political advocacy, like campaign organizations, the National Rifle Association, and the Humane Society Legislative Fund, rely on economic contributions and volunteer labor as well. All these groups take for granted that *appealing* for funds and volunteers is a productive thing to do.

Not only do many organizations rely on voluntary contributions of money and labor to support their work, but many places of employment distribute tasks among their employees by asking for volunteers rather than mandating that specific employees add these tasks to their existing job duties. Think for example of how common it is in academia to ask for volunteers to serve on various committees, or to oversee some new initiative. Such requests may be general calls for volunteers or directed appeals of the form “Would you be willing to be the one who...?”

In the domain of academia, some functions essential to academic life get done entirely by making requests that no one is obligated to accept. Among those essential functions are manuscript reviewing and serving as an external referee for tenure and promotion cases, and in many countries, giving uncompensated lectures at other institutions.

Perhaps one of the most important assumptions made across social life is that those charged with the responsibility to look after something will typically not be so stingy with their time and energy as to do merely the bare minimum necessary to discharge their responsibilities. Parents have the responsibility to look after their children, graduate directors the responsibility to

look after graduate programs, pet owners the responsibility to look after their pets, and employees to look after what falls within their purview even when it is not part of their formal job duties. What counts as satisfying the *demandable* normative expectations for satisfactory execution of these responsibilities is much lower than the performance we often assume most will deliver.

Finally, there's the realm of everyday interpersonal interaction between both strangers and intimates where we feel free to ask for favors, ask for directions, ask for help carrying things, ask for advice, and, in the case of the impoverished, ask for money on the streets. We simply do a lot of *asking* of other people to do things they aren't under obligation to do.

What is striking about all this is that we simply assume that requesting, appealing, and relying on others to do more than the required minimum makes sense. So we arrange our norm-structured practices in such a way as to leave many of the things that make for successful social life together up to individual election. In short, the social practices we are familiar with aren't just norm-structured; they are norm-*and-election* structured. Social practices need not take this form. They might have been designed for a society of beings who are merely fit for living up to normative expectations and nothing more. Successful social life together would then be achieved by vastly expanding the domain of the normatively expected so that virtually all of what needs doing is either a matter of standing obligation or special assignment. And, where we currently recognize imperfect duties to promote valuable ends on some occasions and in some ways, we would instead perfect those imperfect duties by converting them into normative expectations.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Alan Buchanan argues that there are good reasons for sometimes perfecting imperfect duties, such as the way the indeterminateness of what is to be done encourages moral laxity, the reluctance to promote good ends when there's lack of assurance that others will do likewise, and the inefficiencies produced by leaving what is to be done up to individual judgment ("Perfecting Imperfect Duties: Collective Action to Create Moral Obligations," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1996): 27-42).

It's sometimes said that the reason for *not* arranging society this way is that it's important to preserve a realm of free action in which individuals make autonomous choices, free from the influence of threat of sanctions. Michael Ferry, for example, observes that "if every moral ought were properly enforceable by means of demands and punitive moral sanctions, very few of our significant decisions would be off-limits, and our range of truly free choice would be severely restricted."⁶⁵ But this isn't a convincing reason for having partially election-structured social practices, since absent a responsibility-taking population much of what ought to get done wouldn't get done via free election. To my mind, the fundamental reason for creating a realm of the normatively optional is that not doing so would insultingly treat responsible persons as though they lacked an important dimension of being a responsible person.

In sum, we have a variety of reasons for thinking that there is a third dimension to the default status 'responsible person' that concerns being capable of and sometimes disposed to take responsibility by electing to promote good ends in ways that aren't normatively expected. First, there are the positive responsibility-recognizing attitudes of appreciation, gratitude, praise, admiration, and approbation. These are ordinary, commonplace attitudes. But they do not fit the communicative model of negative reactive attitudes that hold miscreants accountable. That is some reason to think they embody a different conception of 'responsible person' than those connected with accountability. Second, social life as we know it is pervasively structured around the presumption that social participants are responsibility takers. This includes socially drawing a line between the normatively expected and the normatively optional. Third, and relatedly, social practices make use of a set of *prospective* responsibility-recognizing practices: asking for volunteers, making appeals, issuing directed invitations and requests, asking for favors or help,

⁶⁵ Ferry, "Beyond Obligation," 63.

relying on those who have responsibilities to look after some good to do more than the bare minimum. Those prospective responsibility-recognizing practices are connected with a prospective responsibility-recognizing attitude: hope. It is a hope that when we call on them to volunteer, to donate, to do favors, to join social movements, they will have adopted or be willing to adopt a particular good as something they are willing to take responsibility for promoting. It is a hope that in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities, they will value the goods served by those responsibilities enough to do more than is minimally required.

Practices that recognize responsibility having been taken are also very much part of social life as we know it. These include not only the interpersonal ones of saying “Thank you,” “I appreciate it,” “What a lovely thing to do,” and the like. They also include a wide array of institutionalized recognitions. The U.S. recognizes an enormous number of days, weeks, and months dedicated to appreciating the good that individuals electively do, including exceeding the normative expectations of particular jobs and roles: Teacher Appreciation Week, Martin Luther King, Jr. day, Veteran’s day, Customer Service Week, National Non-Profit day, National Volunteer Week, Employee Appreciation day, Mother’s and Father’s day. Journals publish “In Appreciation” essays for former journal editors. Businesses bestow service awards and merit raises on employees for doing more than required. Memorial eulogies mention the deceased’s positive contributions. These are all institutionalized occasions for expressing the responsibility-recognizing attitudes of appreciation, gratitude, praise, approbation, and admiration.

Responsibility Taking

Perhaps the strongest reason for thinking that responsibility taking is part of the default status of being a responsible person is simply the oddity of there being responsible persons fit to

participate in norm-structured practices who don't also have the capacity and disposition to promote goods in non-required ways. Social practices arise because there are things we collectively value. Consider the huge array of social practices oriented around the goods of family life, health, play, safety, transmission of knowledge, social inclusion, and access to income and other material resources. The good of play, for example, underwrites such practices as puzzle working, playing games, practicing sports, producing and marketing toys, holding professional and amateur competitions, employing and being employed as a trainer, and establishing recreational centers and athletic camps.

Practice norms specify what people are to do in order to realize or promote a particular good. For example, the point of both norms governing hospital practices (such as doctors' and nurses' job responsibilities and medical codes of ethics) and the etiquette norm of covering your mouth when you sneeze is to secure the good of health. If we assume that social participants are able and disposed to conform to the norms of social practices, we surely equally assume they can understand the goods served by those practices. That is, they can understand the *point* of being normatively expected to behave in particular ways. If they grasp the point of what they are required to do, they have what it takes to see that they could also *take* responsibility for promoting that point in ways that aren't required by practice norms. It is thus difficult to imagine social participants who are fit to participate in the *required* aspects of norm-structured practices who aren't also equipped to promote the practice's underlying good in *non-required* ways.

Perhaps the most familiar ways of doing so are to do more things than your job or role requires and to execute what you are required to do in more diligent, time-consuming, creative, or taxing ways than is minimally required. Teachers are required to create educational classes. Some teachers elect to take webinars on improving teaching and choose to implement the latest

pedagogical techniques even though taking such webinars and employing the latest pedagogical techniques aren't required for the job. In doing so, they take responsibility for seeing to it that students are well educated. One can also take responsibility for promoting a good by *staying* in a burdensome job that one could quit. Many health care workers elected to stay in jobs that had become highly risky and involved longer hours during the Covid pandemic rather than quit. They took responsibility for seeing to it that the sick were cared for.

Another way of taking responsibility is to volunteer to, or respond to a direct request to, take on a new responsibility, agreeing, for example, to see to it that the new pet gets walked or that specific students are mentored, or promising to help a friend move. Responsibility can also be taken without making agreements or promises. The essayist, David Sedaris, for example, became even more famous when he elected to spend three to eight hours a day picking up litter. He didn't promise to do this or continue doing it. Activists in the BLM movement took responsibility for challenging police practices; and activists in the MeToo# movement took responsibility for publicizing and calling out sexual harassment. More simply, one might take responsibility for others' welfare by stopping to help obviously lost tourists. In all of these cases, there is something that needs doing in order to promote a good. Responsibility takers answer the question "Who is to do what *someone* needs to do?" by affirming "I will!" They self-assign responsibilities.

Taking responsibility is important to our social life together because existing practices often do an imperfect job at securing the goods that explain why we have those practices in the first place. That imperfect job may be a result of the fact that we don't have a sufficiently expansive set of practices. Think, for example, of the various practices in a graduate program aimed at student success—classes, supervised independent study, mentoring, reading groups, job

placement services. But a particular graduate program may not have a practice of offering workshops on how to publish. Expanding the range of practices aimed at student success depends on someone taking responsibility for changing how things are done.

Practices may also do an imperfect job at securing their underlying good because they lack or fail to properly enforce norms that are important to securing the good. Police practice, for example, may not preclude potentially lethal behavior, or may fail to properly enforce existing norms precluding lethal police behavior. The good of citizen safety thus fails to be adequately secured. In such cases, individuals (for example, whistle blowers) and groups (for example, the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements) may take responsibility for effecting changes to practice norms.

Even the best practices will not make all of the possible ways of promoting its good a matter of obligation. Norms directing people as to what they are required to do simply don't cover all that it is good to do.

Obviously, it is no part of our *default* conception of social participants as responsible persons that they *will* take responsibility for promoting specific goods,⁶⁶ and certainly not that they will take responsibility on *all* occasions where they might. Nevertheless, our social life together, at least as we know it, proceeds on the *appellative*⁶⁷-*cum-predictive expectation* that social participants are capable of electing to promote the good and will elect to do so on at least

⁶⁶ This is a generalization to which there can be local, practice-specific exceptions. Leaders of organization may be selected precisely because they are responsibility takers, and service organizations may be largely governed by norms of responsibility-taking. A more demanding default conception may thus apply to leaders and members of practices devoted to service.

⁶⁷ I take this term from Michelle Mason, who distinguishes between normative demands and aretaic “appeals to comport oneself in the manner befitting” some ideal, e.g., of various special relationships (“Reactive Attitudes and Second-Personal Address,” in *Ethical Sentimentalism*, eds. Remy Debes and Karsten Stueber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 153-170, 156. She has something a bit different in mind than I do, since her aim is to capture the resentments we feel toward those who “violate” ideals (167).

some occasions. They have the capacity to appreciate the goods underlying particular practices and to adopt those goods as their own ends; they also have the cognitive capacity to see how a good might be promoted in ways that are not required and thus to use their own discretionary judgment.

Although having responsibilities is a burden, being fully recognized as a responsible person means being granted the option of taking on responsibilities. One way of insulting responsible persons is to omit them from requests to volunteer or to persistently rebuff their offers to help when others' offers are accepted. This is the insult sometimes suffered by the elderly. There is also the insult of pressuring responsible persons to electively do good by misrepresenting the elective deed as normatively expected. For example, Alley Cat Allies, a cat rescue organization, began issuing pink "overdue" notices to its supporters who had failed to "renew their memberships." Similarly, non-profit board members are often asked to make meaningful voluntary contributions that are simultaneously described as expected of all board members. More commonly, responsible persons experience the insult of not having their responsibility taking publicly acknowledged and appreciated. Their elective efforts to do good things they weren't obligated to do gets ignored, dismissed as their simply satisfying personal desires or needs, or misconstrued as merely fulfilling normative expectations.

That both being recognized by and recognizing others as responsibility taking kinds of beings matters helps explain why people so often offer what appear to be excuses or justifications for declining invitations and appeals to do what is in fact normatively optional. "No"--and worse yet, "No, I don't want to"--seem inappropriate responses to invitations, requests, and appeals. But if the invitation, request, or appeal is to do the normatively optional, why aren't these appropriate? Why offer instead "I'm sorry, I can't," "I already gave," and the

like? One possibility is that people often mistake the normatively optional for the normatively required, and so aim to deflect blame with excuses and justifications. But then we must suppose that such confusion is widespread. Another possibility is that people are being insincere in offering excuses or justifications, knowing full well they need not do so. But then why do others, who also know full well that the requested behavior is optional, play along with insincere excuses and justifications? More plausibly, Gregory Trianowsky suggests that offering excuses reflects concern with appearing to fall short of what the fully virtuous person would do.⁶⁸ As Michael Ferry suggests, omitting the supererogatory “may still be seen as a kind of moral failure from the perspective of those reasons that directly recommend the act,”⁶⁹ in which case, excuses and justifications might deflect criticism for failing to do what one ought, even if what one ought is not required. There might, however, be something simpler and more basic at stake that motivates the offering and acceptance of excuses and justification where none are necessary. The offering sends the message “I understand the good at stake, and my declining shouldn’t be taken as evidence that I’m not a responsibility taking kind of being who is unable to appreciate the good and elect to promote it.” Accepting the unnecessary excuse or justification, returns a message of acknowledgment of one’s status as a responsibility-taking kind of being. It’s not one’s *virtue* that needs defending, but one’s default status as a responsible person.

Conclusion

I’ve argued that our social practices are pervasively structured on the presumption that social participants have the capacity and disposition to elect to promote the good that underwrites

⁶⁸ Gregory Trianowsky, “Supererogation, Wrongdoing and Vice: On the Autonomy of the Ethics of Virtue,” *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 26-40.

⁶⁹ Ferry, “Beyond Obligation,” 62.

those practices in non-required ways. I've drawn attention to practices and attitudes that recognize others, both prospectively and retrospectively, as responsibility-taking kinds of beings. The aim was to make plausible the claim that the *default* status 'responsible person' includes being a responsibility taker. While it is true that those who take responsibility sometimes display noteworthy virtues—of generosity, compassion, conscientiousness, and so on—I have not argued that the default presumption is that social participants are virtuous agents. Rather, I have argued that the default presumption is that social participants are sufficiently capable of appreciating the goods served by norm-structured practices, have sufficient motivation to adopt some of those goods as personal ends, and have sufficient cognitive capacity to see how those goods might be promoted in non-required ways for it to make sense to organize social life so that only some promotion of the good is normatively expected and much left normatively optional. Issuing invitations, requests, and appeals, and expressing gratitude and appreciation are, I've suggested, responsibility-recognizing practices. The so-called positive reactive attitudes are not, I have argued, just the positive just the positive counterpart to negative attitudes like resentment and indignation that recognize accountability responsibility. Instead, they acknowledge a distinctive dimension of being a responsible person, namely being a responsibility taker.

Summary Conclusion

In these three lectures, I've adopted a quasi-Strawsonian methodology, by suggesting that we start from the facts as we know them about what it is like to engage with others as fellow social participants. I have, however, rejected the strategy of focusing narrowly on what it is like to hold others accountable within a shared normative community. That focus is too narrow because some of our engaged interactions are with others who are not party to our shared

normative community. It is also too narrow because our responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes considerably exceed those involved in holding others responsible for failures to live up to normative expectations. As part of shifting attention from responsible persons' liability to blame, I've suggested that we focus on 'responsible person' as a valuable status that individuals might *want* to have and feel insulted by not being treated as having.

Because some of our responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes are not cognitively salient, I've recommended beginning from the question "What default conception of 'responsible person' do our social practices presuppose?" I've proposed that the default conception of responsible person presupposed by our norm-structured social practices is three-dimensional. Responsible persons are accountability responsible, compliance responsible, and responsibility takers.

Because these are three distinct dimensions with distinct sets of responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes, one might wonder what unifies my proposed conception of responsible persons.

This unification question is not unique to my proposal. Strawsonians in general confront the unification question whenever they try to explain why the long list of reactive attitudes originally proposed by Strawson all count as reactive attitudes towards responsible persons. Besides resentment and indignation, Strawson mentions, gratitude, forgiveness, love, hurt feelings, and in general all of those interpersonal reactions to not only others' goodwill and its absence, but to others' *affection* and *esteem* and their absence.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-28, 5.

If we are to derive the conception of responsible person from our ordinary interpersonal attitudes, we certainly could begin from the full list of attitudes reacting to others' goodwill, affection, and esteem. But this is not at all a promising method for getting at a conception of responsible persons. On the one hand, as some have argued, there doesn't seem to be anything that *unifies* the variety of interpersonal responses to others' goodwill, affection, and esteem from which we could derive a conception of responsibility.⁷¹ What might reciprocated affection or hurt feelings at overhearing an unflattering remark never intended for our ears have in common with resentment and indignation? Worse, why should the heterogenous collection of emotional responses arising from *interpersonal* life with others all be taken as responses to others' status as *responsible* persons? In the face of this, the options appear to be either to rely only on those attitudes and their associated practices that obviously concern *holding* people responsible--resentment, indignation, and guilt--thereby securing not only a unified account of what makes an attitude a reactive attitude, but also a unified account of the capacities that make a person a responsible person.⁷² Or we rely on the full range of interpersonal responses and simply aggregate all the different agential capacities implicated in different reactive attitudes, giving up on the idea of a unified account.⁷³ Or we conclude that "responsibility...is too fractured a notion to merit unified investigation," and indeed that some of the fractured parts—such as whatever we would say about hurt feelings as a response to responsible persons—bears virtually no

⁷¹ R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); David Shoemaker, "Hurt Feelings," *Journal of Philosophy* 116, no. 3 (2019):125-148; Beglin, "Two Strawsonian Strategies."

⁷² Wallace proposes restricting reactive attitudes in this way in *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*.

⁷³ Beglin mentions the aggregative approach as an option for Strawsonians who derive an account of responsible persons from reflecting on the reactive attitudes, although he thinks it's a bad option ("Two Strawsonian Strategies," 10).

resemblance to any familiar notion of responsibility.⁷⁴ As I've argued in this lecture, even if we limit ourselves to the negative reactive attitudes of resentment and indignation and the positive reactive attitudes of appreciation, gratitude, praise, approbation, and admiration, I don't think it's possible to provide a *single* account of the conception of responsible person presupposed by both positive and negative reactive attitudes. In short, I think we should concede that our conception of responsible persons is complex and multidimensional.

Even if the unification question is not unique to my account, it's still a challenge: Why think the three dimensions are dimensions of a single thing—being a responsible person? One option, which I think is a good one, is that there is an underlying concern that unifies the three dimensions.⁷⁵ Strawson himself suggested that the underlying concern is with others' goodwill and ill will or indifference. Certainly, it's possible to see our concerns with others' capacities to live up to normative expectations, to be compliance responsible, and to take responsibility as reflecting an underlying concern with the good will (and absence of ill will or indifference) of those with whom we engage as participants in an actually or potentially shared normative community.

But I think we can do better than this vague reference to good will and ill will. The underlying concern is with the possibility of sharing social practices with others. It is a feature of shared social practices that (a) they are norm-structured—thus we are concerned with capacities that enable individuals to be governed by those norms; (b) they are decently functioning only if some degree of automatic and routine compliance is present-- thus we are concerned with participants' normative literacy; and (c) the norms themselves are justified by the goods they

⁷⁴ Shoemaker, "Hurt Feelings," 147.

⁷⁵ Beglin ("Two Strawsonian Strategies") argues for the importance of identifying the underlying concern. I have not, however, adopted his tentative proposal for what that concern is.

promote--thus we are concerned with their capacity to promote those goods in non-required ways. In short, we are concerned with identifying and properly interacting with those who can comply with norms, who are disposed to comply at least with basic norms, and who can advance the goods underwriting social practices in ways that aren't already specified. Given this complex concern, we should expect complexity in the conception of responsible persons and in the responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes. Indeed, the account I've offered makes salient a much wider range of responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes and thus captures more of the richness of what Strawson called "the participant attitude." The account does so without shoehorning all responsibility-recognizing practices and attitudes into a single model of what a responsibility-recognizing practice or attitude must be like. Some, for example, have a communicative structure, others do not.

In addition to wondering what unifies the three dimensions of the default status 'responsible person' that I've suggested, one might wonder whether the three dimensions could come apart. Might one be only partially a responsible person? I think the answer to this question is "yes."

First, one might be merely accountability responsible and neither compliance responsible nor a responsibility taker. This is because being accountability responsible does not depend on being part of a shared normative community. One might thus be accountability responsible but be unfamiliar with both the norms structuring social practices and the goods they serve. If you are an outsider to a normative community—whether that be a whole society or a particular social practice, you will not share the relevant normative understandings and will not have been socialized into them. Thus, it is possible to be accountability responsible without being

compliance responsible within a particular society or a particular practice. Being unfamiliar with the relevant society or practice, you would also not be equipped to be a responsibility taker.

Second, it's possible for someone to be trained into automatic compliance with normative expectations without having the cognitive capacities to discern what value is served by particular practices or to discern what, outside of the standard normative expectations, might serve to promote that value. Children, I assume are to some extent accountability and compliance responsible before they are equipped to take responsibility.

Third and more speculatively, someone could be a kind of visionary, keenly devoted to promoting some good, say, social justice, that some of our practices serve but on whom social norms have little to no hold because the individual is invested in thinking for herself about how best to promote those goods. So, someone might be a responsibility taker but not compliance responsible within practices where social justice is at stake.

Finally, as I suggested earlier in this lecture, it's conceivable that there be normative communities in which *nothing* is normatively expected, but rather all is left to participants' election. Any dividing line between the normatively expected (what might be demanded by social participants) and the normatively optional (what is good but not demandable) is a social artifact. I see no reason to think that any possible society must operate with this distinction between the demandable and the not-demandable. A society of well-behaved agents might find that what needs to get done in fact gets done without normative expectations and their associated sanctions. Indeed, one might think that friendships and love relationships largely operate this way, and possibly some religious communities.

That the three dimensions of being a responsible person can come apart in this way is, I think, I virtue of my account. The account captures default presumptions about fellow social

practitioners in social life as we know it. Social engagement within the practices with which we are familiar presuppose all three dimensions of responsible persons. But it also allows us to say why outsiders to our practices and young children should be engaged with as responsible persons rather than merely as objects to be managed. It does so by recognizing that some responsible persons may be merely accountability responsible because, not being part of our shared normative community or being very young, they can only be addressed as developable agents; and older children who may have reached the stage of being compliance responsible, may not yet have grasped the underlying goods served by norm-structured practices or have the cognitive capacities for discerning how those goods might be promoted in non-required ways. Of less importance, but still significant, I think we want any account of responsible persons to include societies composed of well-behaving individuals for whom having demandable normative expectations is unnecessary and all that ought to be done can be left to voluntary election.

I'll close with a final virtue of the account of responsibility I've offered. I have not approached the topic of responsibility in the usual way by focusing on what is requisite for being responsible *for* particular actions. Instead, I've focused on having the valuable *status* 'responsible person.' That meant shifting from thinking of responsible persons primarily as beings who might deserve sanctions to thinking of them as beings *worthy* of responses befitting their valuable status. The shift is from thinking about what we as offended parties might be *entitled to do to* responsible persons to thinking about how we might *offend responsible persons* themselves by insultingly treating them as though they were not, or not fully, responsible persons.