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ARTICLE

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Revisiting Response-Dependent Responsibility

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Abstract

Response-dependence about moral responsibility argues that someone is morally responsible if and only if, *and because*, they're an appropriate target of reactive attitudes. But if we can be partially morally responsible, and if reactive attitudes are too coarse-grained to register small differences in normatively significant features of agents, then response-dependence is false. Shawn Wang dubs this the "Granularity Challenge." This article rejects the second premise of the Granularity Challenge. Human emotions are fine-grained enough to register small differences in normatively significant features of agents. One illustrative example of this, I argue, is how children *gradually emerge* as partially responsible agents.

Résumé

L'argument de la dépendance à la réponse en matière de responsabilité morale soutient qu'une personne est moralement responsable si, et seulement si elle est une cible appropriée d'attitudes réactives, *et* en vertu du fait qu'elle l'est. Cependant, si nous pouvons être partiellement moralement responsables, et si les attitudes réactives sont trop grossières pour tenir compte de différences mineures dans les caractéristiques normativement significatives des agents, alors la dépendance à la réponse est fausse. Shawn Wang appelle cela le « défi de la granularité ». Cet article rejette la deuxième prémisse du défi de la granularité. Les émotions humaines sont suffisamment fines pour enregistrer de petites différences dans les caractéristiques normativement significatives des agents. Je soutiens qu'un exemple illustratif de cela est la manière dont les enfants émergent *graduellement* comme agents partiellement responsables.

Keywords: moral responsibility; blame; anger; fittingness; response-dependence; reactive attitudes

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> Rehearsals insensibly modulate towards true performances. The punishment of a child is both like and unlike the punishment of an adult.
> — P. F. Strawson (1962/2003, p. 88)

1. Introduction

Response-dependent theories of moral responsibility argue that someone is morally responsible if and only if, *and because*, they are an appropriate target of reactive attitudes. In other words, facts about moral responsibility are always fully grounded in facts about the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. But if we can be partially morally responsible to greater or lesser degrees, and if reactive attitudes are too coarse-grained to register small differences in normatively significant features of agents, then response-dependence about moral responsibility is false. Shawn Wang (2022) dubs this the "Granularity Challenge."

This article develops a case for rejecting the second premise of the Granularity Challenge. In Section 2, I begin by comparing response-independence and response-dependence as metanormative theories of responsibility. My focus there is how response-dependent theories are inspired by P. F. Strawson's (1962/2003) argument for compatibilism. Then, I turn to David Shoemaker's (2017, 2020, 2022) argument for response-dependence that appeals to fitting-attitude theories of value in metaethics. After that, I discuss some examples to motivate the Granularity Challenge. Section 3 introduces an undertheorized aspect of Strawson's argument — the "half-suspension" of reactive attitudes with the objective stance. Sections 4 and 5 advance my argument against premise two of the Granularity Challenge. Human emotions are fine-grained enough to register small differences in normatively significant features of agents. One illustrative example of this, I'll argue, is how children *gradually emerge* as partially responsible agents.

2. The Granularity Challenge

Many philosophers working on moral responsibility accept what I'll call

> **Strawson's Thesis:** Someone is morally responsible for some wrong act A if and only if they are an appropriate target of reactive attitudes regarding A.[1]

Strawson's Thesis posits an extensional equivalence between facts on either side of the biconditional. One major dispute (or, in Shoemaker's terminology, a "faultline") that has developed between so-called "response-independent" and "response-dependent" theories of moral responsibility is which side of the biconditional in Strawson's Thesis has explanatory priority (see Shoemaker, 2020, pp. 217–221). Response-independence about responsibility is popular among compatibilists in the canonical debate about free will and determinism. Advocates of this view argue that the left side of the biconditional has explanatory priority: Someone is an appropriate target

[1] See Shoemaker (2020, p. 218). Throughout the article, I'll occasionally drop the mention of the wrong act. Wang remains neutral about whether there is a Granularity Challenge for morally right or good acts.

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of reactive attitudes if and only if, *and because*, they are morally responsible.[2] To explain the left side of the biconditional in STRAWSON'S THESIS, then, they need to provide a unified theory of the substantial conditions for being morally responsible. For many classical compatibilists, for instance, someone is an appropriate target of reactive attitudes if and only if, *and because*, their wrong action happened voluntarily, knowingly, and it was under their control.

Over the past 30 years, several commentators have argued for reversing the explanatory direction in STRAWSON'S THESIS: Someone is morally responsible if and only if, *and because*, they are an appropriate target of reactive attitudes.[3] This general view is often called "response-dependence" about responsibility. Advocates of it take as their blueprint Strawson's (1962/2003) argument for compatibilism. Central to his descriptive account of human moral psychology is two "commonplaces" about us as social beings.[4] First, he emphasizes *how much we care* about whether people's actions reflect attitudes of goodwill or disregard towards us and others. Second, this general concern is manifest in demands or expectations for some degree of goodwill or regard. These demands or expectations are what reactive attitudes express. "The making of the demand," Strawson writes, "*is* the proneness to such attitudes" (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 90).

Strawson's account of moral psychology motivates two of his arguments for compatibilism. First, totally suppressing our reactive attitudes is psychologically impossible, since the reactive attitudes are so integral to human nature. Second, *even if we could totally suppress them*, doing so would be practically irrational due to the "gains and losses to human life" (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 83). This is why Strawson says his contemporaries *over-intellectualize* conceptual issues of the traditional free will debate in one way or another. As he writes: "The existence of the general framework of [reactive] attitudes itself is something we are given with the fact of human society. As a whole, it neither calls for, nor permits, an external 'rational' justification" (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 91). Some theoretical discovery like the truth or falsity of determinism neither could nor should undermine or justify our responsibility practices *as a whole*. Our practices aren't susceptible to that kind of wholesale rejection or justification because they are so integral to human sociality itself.

However, Strawson never provides an explicit argument for response-dependence about responsibility. He simply offers this descriptive account of human moral psychology. Thus, Shoemaker (2017, 2020, 2022) has recently developed a positive argument for response-dependence. His "burden-shifting" strategy begins with an analogy between two views:

FITTING RESPONSE-DEPENDENCE ABOUT THE FUNNY: Something is funny if and only if, *and because*, it merits amusement.

[2] See Brink (2021, Chapter 2), Brink and Nelkin (2013), Clarke and Rawling (2022), and Tappolet (2016, Chapter 4).

[3] See Beglin (2018, 2020), Bengston (2019), Coren (2023), D'Arms and Jacobson (2022), De Mesel (2022), De Mesel and Heyndels (2019), Menges (2017), Shoemaker (2017, 2020, 2022), Wallace (1994), and Watson (1987/2004a, 2014).

[4] Following Watson (2014), I'll call these aspects of human sociality the "basic concern" and "basic demand."

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> **Fitting Response-Dependence about the Blameworthy:** Someone is blameworthy (and hence accountable)[5] for some wrong act A if and only if, *and because*, they merit anger for A. (Shoemaker, 2017, pp. 487–490, 508–511)

The corresponding biconditional here is: Something is funny if and only if it merits amusement. Dispositional views say something is funny if and only if, *and because*, people are disposed to be amused by it under standard conditions. Since this view is implausible for several reasons (see Shoemaker, 2017, p. 485), another option is response-*independent* theories. These theories give the left side of the biconditional explanatory priority. The goal is to develop an account of the various properties that *the funny* consists in without making any constitutive reference to our amused responses. According to two leading theories, for example, something merits amusement if and only if, *and because*, it either involves an incongruity between expectations and experience (Clark, 1987), or the benign violation of some norm (McGraw & Warren, 2010).

Fitting Response-Dependence about the Funny says that merited amusement has explanatory priority over the property of *being funny*. What makes something funny is somehow a function of what merits our amusement. Yet some things do or don't merit amusement, regardless of our actual dispositions to be amused or not. To capture this normative dimension left out by the dispositional view, "merit" is glossed here as the relation of *fit*. Roughly speaking, fittingness is a name for "the relation in which a response stands to a feature of the world when that feature merits, or is worthy of, that response" (Howard & Rowland, 2022, p. 1). It is the relation in which fear stands to the fearsome, shame stands to the shameful, admiration stands to the admirable, and so on. Many advocates of "fitting-attitude" theories of value hold views consistent with Fitting Response-Dependence about the Funny. Facts about a joke being funny, they argue, are always fully grounded in facts that make amusement at that joke a merited response. And similar remarks are made about other emotions, such as fear, shame, admiration, and so on (see Howard, 2023a).

By way of analogy, then, Shoemaker argues that we should analyze merited anger as the claim that anger is *fitting*.[6] This is the view he calls Fitting Response-Dependence about the Blameworthy. What determines the contours of *the blameworthy* as an evaluative category is that our properly functioning sense of responsibility makes certain objective properties but not others the anger-*makers* — the properties it's appropriate to respond to with anger. Control, knowledge, voluntariness, and quality of will are these anger-*makers* because they are the properties that tend to trigger our (properly functioning) sense of blaming anger.

But it is unclear how Shoemaker understands the relationship between fittingness and correctness. There are two possibilities: Fittingness either consists in attitudes satisfying standards or norms of correctness that are internal to those attitudes, or

[5] See Watson (1996/2004b) for the distinction between responsibility as accountability and attributability.

[6] Another option is to analyze *basic desert*, not *blameworthiness*, in terms of fitting anger (see McCormick, 2022).

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it is a matter of attitudes accurately representing their objects (see Howard & Rowland, 2022, pp. 12–13). Gideon Rosen (2015) calls the latter the "alethic view." Fitting fear, for example, accurately represents its object as *being fearsome*. Wang attributes the alethic view to Shoemaker. If this is right, moral anger would be fitting only when it accurately tracks properties that we tend to respond to with fitting anger. However, in a more recent article, Shoemaker appears to hold the former view. As he writes, "the relation between holding and being responsible is one of 'fittingness' — adhering to 'distinctive norms for attitudes of that kind'" (Shoemaker, 2022, p. 309). Indeed, the first account of fittingness helps explain why attempts at wholesale justification or rejection of our responsibility practices appeal to the "wrong kind" of reasons.[7] And the alethic view might face its own challenges.[8] However, I won't take a stand on these issues here.

In a recent article, Wang (2022) rejects the claim that facts about moral responsibility are always fully grounded in facts about the appropriateness of reactive attitudes. Here is his argument for what he calls the "Granularity Challenge":

(1) Facts about moral responsibility are *fine-grained*: We can be *partially* morally responsible to greater or lesser degrees.
(2) Facts about the appropriateness of reactive attitudes are *coarse-grained*: They don't have the granularity to register small differences in normativity relevant features of moral agents.
(3) (1) and (2) are true when the standard of granularity is held fixed.
(4) Conclusion: Response-dependence about responsibility is false. (Wang, 2022, p. 281)

The motivation for (1) begins with two desiderata about blame: We can (a) be morally blameworthy to different degrees, depending on how much blame we deserve, and (b) someone can deserve more or less blame, even when we hold fixed the degree to which their action is morally wrong (Wang, 2022, p. 278).[9] The truth of (a) and (b) is easily explained by (1). But it is unclear how (a) and (b) could be true when someone is *either* morally responsible *or* they aren't. Thus, (a) and (b) are inconsistent with the binary nature of the biconditional in Strawson's Thesis.

Wang's case for (2) begins with the following examples (Wang, 2022, p. 276–279). Heru is slightly less competent than Henry, and they both steal from Ann, so we can hold fixed the wrongness of their actions. We want to say that Heru is slightly less responsible than Henry, given their comparatively similar, though slightly different, capacities for moral competence. However, this normatively relevant difference between them cannot be captured by differences in reactive attitudes. Due to the limits of human psychology, Ann's emotional states don't have the granularity to register this slight difference in moral competence between Heru and Henry. Now consider the difference between an adult who is fully reasons-responsive and

[7] See, e.g., Darwall (2006, pp. 15–17, 65–66) and Watson (2014, pp. 21–24).
[8] Clarke and Rawling (2023) raise difficulties about the *proportionality* of blaming emotions, for example.
[9] See Graham (2014, pp. 403–407) for discussion of (a).

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someone who is less than fully reasons-responsive (such as young children or the mentally impaired). Other things being equal, we would resent the former more than the latter for the same wrong acts. Thus, reactive attitudes can only register different degrees of moral responsibility in the latter types of cases (at the "coarse-grained" level) but not in the former types of cases (at the "fine-grained" level). This is illustrated by what Wang calls the Thesis of Limited Information Registration: "human emotions […] only track potentially responsibility-relevant factors, such as moral competence [or reasons-responsiveness, or quality of will], in a fairly coarse-grained manner" (Wang, 2022, p. 276). Response-dependence is much less attractive, then, unless patterns in reactive attitudes can reflect how these substantial conditions affect degrees of responsibility at both levels. Finally, (3) is required to explain this comparative mismatch between different measures of granularity.

Thus, response-dependent theories of responsibility must somehow be revised to pass this granularity test. In the remainder of this article, I propose one way of doing so.

3. How to Half-Suspend Reactive Attitudes

Above I mentioned two of Strawson's arguments for compatibilism. His third argument, often called the "argument from exculpation," rests on a distinction between two kinds of circumstances where we tend to withdraw or suspend our reactive attitudes: excuses and exemptions. Section 2 concluded with an example of the latter. Exemptions happen either when someone acts under abnormal circumstances, or when someone's own psychological abnormality renders them incapable of participating in ordinary interpersonal relationships. Excuses happen when we find out that there was no degree of ill will or disregard on the agent's part. We come to find out that someone was pushed, that it was an accident, or that they were unaware of what they were doing. Excuses allow us to continue viewing the agent from the participant stance as an appropriate target of our blaming and praising reactive attitudes. Exemptions involve adopting what Strawson calls the "objective" stance by either temporarily or more permanently viewing the agent as an inappropriate target of our reactive attitudes.

Parental and therapeutic relationships are oft-cited examples of the second subgroup of exemptions used to draw a comparison between objective and participant stances. But there is a widespread tendency of emphasizing Strawson's remarks about how these two points of view tend to be profoundly opposed. In Section IV of "Freedom and Resentment," Strawson says he "must deal here in crude dichotomies and ignore the ever-interesting and ever-illuminating varieties of case" (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 79). Indeed, in a recent article Neil Campbell and I (2024) argue that the tendency to present the objective and participant stances as necessarily opposed fails to heed Strawson's own warning that his crude comparison between them is "as grossly crude as it is central" (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 88). Later on, in Section V, Strawson takes pains to mitigate these crude comparisons. He does so by describing these ever-interesting varieties of case in terms of a *half*-suspension of reactive attitudes, rather than a thoroughgoing retreat into objectivity of attitude.

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He also clearly acknowledges cases where we can occupy the participant and objective stances simultaneously by *straddling* both of them.

Interestingly, Strawson's two examples, which he *reintroduces* to make these observations, are parental and therapeutic relationships. Describing parental relationships, he writes:

> Thus parents and others concerned with the care and upbringing of young children cannot have to their charges either kind of attitude in a pure or unqualified form. They are dealing with creatures who are potentially and increasingly capable both of holding, and being objects of, the full range of human and moral attitudes, but are not yet truly capable of either. The treatment of such creatures must therefore represent a kind of compromise, constantly shifting in one direction, between objectivity of attitude and developed human attitudes. Rehearsals insensibly modulate towards true performances. The punishment of a child is both like and unlike the punishment of an adult. (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 88)

When describing therapeutic relationships, he also mentions similar phenomena in terms of a "half-suspension" of reactive attitudes:

> Again, consider — a very different matter — the strain in the attitude of a psychoanalyst to his patient. *His* objectivity of attitude, *his* suspension of ordinary moral reactive attitudes, is profoundly modified by the fact that the aim of the enterprise is to make such suspension unnecessary or less necessary. Here we may and do naturally speak of restoring the agent's freedom. But here the restoring of freedom means bringing it about that the agent's behaviour shall be intelligible in terms of conscious purposes rather than in terms only of unconscious purposes. *This* is the object of the enterprise; and it is in so far as *this* object is attained that the suspension, or half-suspension, of ordinary moral attitudes is deemed no longer necessary or appropriate. And in this we see once again the *irrelevance* of that concept of "being determined" which must be the central concept of determinism. (Strawson, 1962/2003, pp. 88–89)

My goal isn't to develop an account of the half-suspension of reactive attitudes. However, there are two important insights that I will highlight here.[10] The first is that Strawson appears to think therapeutic and parental relationships involve gradually progressing away from *some* degree of objectivity towards fully participant or engaged attitudes. Neither young children nor some patients in therapy are viewed as *entirely appropriate* targets of the full weight and range of reactive attitudes. Yet the

[10] These insights are borrowed from the account of half-suspension in Campbell and Carty (2024). Our account draws on a multidimensional model of the participant stance. Campbell and Scharoun (2016) have also discussed Strawson's remarks about half-suspension. They draw on Goldman's (2014) multidimensional model to defend Pereboom's (2014) free will scepticism, or the "containment policy," from Shabo's (2012) "inseparability thesis."

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way parents treat maturing children, or the way therapists treat their patients, isn't *completely* objective either.

But, while parenting and therapy are both paradigm examples of half-suspension, Strawson clearly introduces them as importantly different. The straddling of attitudes in parental relationships involves a gradual progression from complete objectivity towards wholly participant attitudes. In therapeutic relationships, however, the straddling of attitudes is more localized. While a therapist's attitude *is* objective, their patient must be treated as a responsible agent who, with the proper guidance and cooperation, can modify their own behaviour. Jonathan Bennett (1980) makes similar observations in his negative formulation of the reactive attitudes. He contrasts them with a form of teleological inquiry — an effort to understand *how someone works* — which is associated with the objective stance. Reactive attitudes are ways of viewing others that *do not* involve teleological inquiry. However, Bennett confesses to fail to see any conflict between teleological inquiry and reactive attitudes. For example, he says that therapists are engaged in teleological inquiry and yet remain personally engaged with their patient because they "treat […] [the] patient as a person — a person who needs help" (Bennett, 1980, p. 35).[11]

Children, by contrast, aren't morally responsible *at all* when they are born. But if we were to start holding very young children or the severely mentally ill responsible, then it appears they *would be fully* responsible. Some suggest that this leads to a *reductio* for Strawson's theory. It is more plausible, they argue, that our practices would somehow be mistaken.[12] According to Audun Benjamin Bengston (2019) and Daniel Coren (2023), however, there is a more plausible view of how children are held responsible. As Coren puts it, "moral agents […] *gradually emerge* from inappropriate objects of resentment and the full range of reactive attitudes into, eventually, appropriate objects of those attitudes" (Coren, 2023, p. 57, my emphasis). From the time they are born, young children gradually emerge as partially morally responsible agents if and only if, *and because*, they gradually emerge as increasingly appropriate targets of reactive attitudes.[13] This is why a parent's "rehearsals" of holding them responsible must "insensibly modulate" from being wholly objective towards "true performances" involving the full weight and range of reactive attitudes.

The second important insight is that examples of half-suspension aren't limited to parental and therapeutic relationships. Indeed, after emphasizing the variety of interpersonal relationships we can share, Strawson says that the "range and intensity of our *reactive* attitudes towards goodwill, its absence or its opposite vary no less

[11] But Bennett misinterprets Strawson as intending "to exclude therapist-patient working relations" (Bennett, 1980, p. 35) from the sorts of relationships linked to reactive attitudes. See Campbell and Carty (2024, pp. 121–122).

[12] See, e.g., Ekstrom (2000, p. 148), Fischer and Ravizza (1993, pp. 17–19), Nelkin (2011, p. 28), and Todd (2016).

[13] While this interpretation of Strawson's view of parenting is approached with different theoretical commitments and aims, Bengston and Coren hold variants of it. Beglin (2018) provides a similar line of response to Todd (but see footnote 18 below). Neither Bengston nor Coren use the terms "response-dependence," "straddling," or "half-suspension," but they both defend Strawson's claim that facts about the appropriateness of reactive attitudes determine facts about responsibility. Campbell and I (2024) agree that children gradually emerge as morally responsible agents. However, we don't explicitly discuss the response-dependent aspect of Strawson's view.

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widely" (Strawson, 1962/2003, pp. 76–77). It would be implausible to claim that *all* sorts of interpersonal relationships involve the same degree of emotional engagement, or lack of objectivity. Parental and therapeutic relationships are clearly two among many "ever-interesting and ever-illuminating varieties of case" Strawson wants to draw our attention to by initially comparing the objective and participant stances in an overly "crude" manner (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 79). It is more plausible that cases of half-suspension occupy various mid-points — or, as Strawson puts it, a "penumbral" territory (Strawson, 1962/2003, p. 88) — between emotional responses that range from *completely* participant to *completely* objective.

4. Rescuing Response-Dependence

Drawing on these observations about the half-suspension of reactive attitudes, I'll now build my case for rejecting premise two of the Granularity Challenge. My argument proceeds as follows:

(1) Facts about moral responsibility are fine-grained: We can be *partially* morally responsible to greater or lesser degrees.
(2) Facts about our basic concerns for quality of will in different interpersonal relationships ground the facts about the "appropriateness" or "fittingness" of our reactive attitudes.
(3) Certain components of human emotions — like attention, bodily feeling, action tendencies, or (for reactive attitudes) basic concerns for quality of will — can come in fairly fine-grained degrees.
(4) **Strawson's Degree Thesis:** Someone is blameworthy (for some wrong act A) to degree D if and only if, *and because*, they are an appropriate target of reactive attitudes to degree D (regarding A).
(5) Corresponding degrees of intensity of reactive attitudes and of the basic concern that underlies them can be determined by the degree to which those reactive attitudes are half-suspended with an objective point of view.
(6) Conclusion: Human emotions are fine-grained enough to register small differences in normatively relevant features of moral agents, and parental relationships are an illustrative example of this.

I accept (1) for the same reasons as Wang. Additionally, I'll argue below that the biconditional Fitting Response-Dependence about Responsibility inherits from Strawson's Thesis should be modified into (4) in my argument. (2) is an uncontroversial premise, since this claim is widely accepted as Strawson's view. As Coren writes:

> Strawson's compatibilism is generally taken to run as follows: the facts about appropriateness or fittingness of our reactive attitudes ground the facts of responsibility. Our basic concerns about good and ill will in interpersonal relationships (such as parenting) ground the fittingness of our attitudes. Those concerns are primitive in human life. In particular, those concerns would remain intact in human life despite a theoretical acceptance of determinism. So, determinism is irrelevant to responsibility. (Coren, 2023, p. 56)

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According to Strawson, for example, it would not follow from the truth of determinism that *everyone* is somehow incapable of participating in interpersonal relationships. In other words, determinism being true neither would, nor should, convince us to permanently exempt *everyone* by constantly viewing them objectively.[14]

Wang draws on empirical evidence as indirect support for rejecting premise (3) in my argument. According to Lisa Barrett's (2006) work on self-reports of emotions, our limited ability to describe our emotional experiences in precise terms indirectly motivates the claim that there are, at most, only coarse-grained differences between emotions. Indeed, as Wang acknowledges, whether a lack of fine-grained distinctions in self-reports of emotion is due to our limited vocabulary is a difficult question (Wang, 2022, p. 278). But, even without a clear answer to that question, I still think that premise (3) enjoys indirect empirical support.

Laura Silva (2023) has recently defended a version of (3), though she does not extend its scope to reactive attitudes.[15] Silva argues that remarkable precision and differences in literary accounts of emotions suggest that we at least have a capacity to register fine-grained degrees in emotional experience with considerable detail. Fine-grained differences in emotions, she argues, consist in covarying fine-grained differences in their components — such as feeling, attention, representation, or action tendencies. To support this claim, she turns to the empirical work of Dominic A. Evans et al. (2019). Their study shows that the properties of a threat (its size, speed, distance to safety, etc.) closely correlate with fine-grained differences in action tendencies for fear responses. Consider the contrast between instances of fear towards a large bear and a small yet venomous snake. If there were no such fine-grained differences, our fear responses would unreliably direct us to safety. So, the scale for degrees of intensity of emotions is more fine-grained than Wang suggests. Indeed, these observations are also compatible with the idea that, generally speaking, the fitting intensity of an emotion like fear, shame, or admiration covaries with how fearsome, how shameful, or how admirable its object is.[16]

My case for extending (3) to reactive attitudes draws on the idea that there can be fine-grained degrees of expressions of basic concern. Coren (2023) has recently defended this claim in his account of parenting. He agrees that the biconditional in Strawson's Thesis should be modified into something like (4) Strawson's Degree Thesis. As Coren writes, "Strawson argues that the degree to which an agent is responsible must match the degree to which she is an appropriate target of blaming or praising attitudes" (Coren, 2023, p. 59). This modified version of the biconditional, he argues, does a better job than Strawson's Thesis of explaining (3). One clear example is how children gradually emerge as morally responsible in the context of parental relationships. Over time, there are many fine-grained adjustments in exactly *how much* we are

[14] See, e.g., Hieronymi (2021, Chapter 1) and McKenna and Pereboom (2016, pp. 132–135).

[15] Advocates of (3) may also appeal to Tappolet's (2020, pp. 261–262) argument from the fineness of grain, one of six arguments for the role of non-conceptual representation in her perceptual theory of emotion.

[16] See, e.g., D'Arms (2022, p. 107) and Howard (2023b, p. 82). Following D'Arms and Jacobson's (2000, pp. 73–74) terminology, the issue here is whether an emotion is unfitting regarding its "size" because it is either an underreaction or overreaction to the degree of value possessed by its object.

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concerned about a child's quality of will towards us and others in the moral community. As Coren puts it:

> our basic concerns, of which our responsibility attitudes and practices are expressions, come in fine-grained degrees — we neither treat children and other developing agents as clearly inappropriate targets of any reactive attitudes, but we also see children as clearly inappropriate targets for the full weight and range of reactive attitudes. (Coren, 2023, p. 59)

As we saw above, the different degrees of intensity of reactive attitudes vary *no less widely* than the many interpersonal relationships we share. This provides further motivation for the claim that there are fine-grained degrees of basic concerns underlying those reactive attitudes. Having modified Strawson's Thesis into (4) Strawson's Degree Thesis, then, the resulting account does more justice to the Strawsonian compatibilist framework: Facts about the appropriateness of our reactive attitudes are grounded in facts about our basic concerns for quality of will, and furthermore, the former facts are what ground facts about moral responsibility. This explains why children gradually emerge as partially morally responsible agents if and only if, *and because*, they gradually emerge as increasingly appropriate targets of reactive attitudes and practices that express our basic concerns for their quality of will.

Finally, when parents hold children *partially* responsible by half-suspending their reactive attitudes, this involves fine-grained degrees of basic concern. Furthermore, the fitting intensity of reactive attitudes can correspond with the intensity of the fine-grained degrees of basic concern underlying those attitudes. Premise (5) explains these possibilities. The corresponding intensities can be explained by the degree to which those reactive attitudes and our basic concerns underling them are half-suspended with the objective stance. If this is right, then these cases are *prima facie* counterexamples for premise two of the Granularity Challenge. One might worry that fine-grained differences in action tendencies, basic concern, or other components of emotion don't *always* lead to corresponding intensities of reactive attitudes. But I haven't defended that claim. Instead, I've argued for the weaker claim that they *sometimes can.*[17]

5. Conclusion

According to the Granularity Challenge, if we can be partially morally responsible to greater or lesser degrees, and if reactive attitudes are too coarse-grained to register small differences in normatively significant features of agents, then response-dependence about moral responsibility is false. My goal in this article was to build a case for rejecting premise two of the Granularity Challenge. Human emotions are fine-grained enough to register small differences in normatively relevant features of agents. One illustrative example of this, I've argued, is how children gradually emerge as partially morally responsible agents in the context of parenting. To be clear, I haven't suggested that

[17] See Clarke and Rawling (2023) for further discussion of the stronger claim.

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Shoemaker's argument is the most promising way of developing response-dependence as a metanormative theory of responsibility.[18] Nonetheless, I hope this article inspires further discussion about how to rescue these theories from the Granularity Challenge.

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[18] For example, I take no stand on whether to locate response-dependence about responsibility at the level of facts about the appropriateness of reactive attitudes, as Shoemaker argues, or at the level of basic concern itself, as Beglin (2018, 2020) argues. I lack the space here to consider the merits of each view in more detail. But a place to start would be whether they avoid the issues facing two strategies Wang rejects (Wang, 2022, pp. 281–282).

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