Canadian Journal of Philosophy (2026), 56: e16, 1–17
doi:10.1017/can.2026.10105

SYMPOSIUM ARTICLE

The Compound Relational Structure of Moral Claim-Rights

Simon Căbulea May

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA
Email: smay@fsu.edu

Abstract
Moral claim-rights possess three important relational features: *direction*, *standing*, and *status*. I set out an analysis of the structure of moral claim-rights that accounts for these three features. The compound relational account I defend comprises two theses. The *independence thesis* denies any entailment between the first two features of claim-rights—direction and standing are two conceptually independent normative relations. The *integration thesis* asserts that moral claim-rights consist in the substantive justificatory union of these two relations. The third feature of claim-rights inheres in the nature of this union.

Keywords: moral claim-rights; directed duties; moral demands; moral status; Feinberg; Joel

1. Introduction

A claim-right is a party's right that someone else act in some way. If Rita has a claim-right, another person must have a correlative duty. But a claim-right entails more than just a duty. Dudley might have a duty to send a book to Rita's address without her (or anyone else) holding a correlative claim-right against him. Claim-rights consist in a normative relation between the duty-bearing agent and the right-holding party. An account of the nature of claim-rights must explain why it is this party who holds a right correlative to the duty, rather than some other party (if any party at all).

I assume here that the moral claim-rights standardly held by and against ordinarily competent individuals have three important features: (1) *direction*, (2) *standing*, and (3) *status*. Each feature consists in a specific normative relation between the right-holder and the duty-bearer:

If A holds a moral claim-right against B that B ϕ, then:

(1) B has a moral duty to ϕ that is directed towards (or owed to) A in that B would wrong A by violating (i.e., wrongfully infringing) the duty;
(2) B is morally accountable to A for discharging a duty to ϕ in that A has the moral standing to demand its performance; and
(3) A *possesses* a moral status as an end in that B has a moral reason to ϕ just for A's sake.

First, if Rita has a moral right that Dudley send her the book, he would wrong her by refusing to part with it. Second, one point of asserting Rita's right is to assert that she may insist that Dudley honour his duty. She should not have to plead with him as if she were not entitled to receive the book. And third, since mere instruments cannot possess rights, Rita possesses a status or dignity as a person of non-instrumental moral importance. She is a being for whose sake other agents can have moral reasons to act. It matters whether Dudley respects her rights only because she matters.

© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Inc. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the same Creative Commons licence is used to distribute the re-used or adapted article and the original article is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press or the rights holder(s) must be obtained prior to any commercial use.

My aim here is to set out an analysis of the structure of moral claim-rights that accounts for the three standard features. The compound relational account I defend comprises two theses. The *independence thesis* denies any entailment between the first two features of claim-rights—direction and standing are two conceptually independent normative relations.[1] The *integration thesis* asserts that moral claim-rights consist in the substantive justificatory union of these two relations. The third feature of claim-rights, I argue, inheres in the nature of this union.

Independence. Direction and standing are conceptually independent normative relations in that:

(1) *The fact that A* has moral standing to demand that *B* discharge a moral duty to ϕ does not entail that *B*'s duty to ϕ is directed towards *A*, and
(2) *The fact that B* owes a moral duty to ϕ to *A* does not entail that *A* has any moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ.

Integration. For *A* to hold a moral claim-right against *B* that *B* ϕ is for it to be the case that:

(1) *B* has a moral duty to ϕ that is directed towards *A*;
(2) *A* has the moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ; and
(3) the direction of *B*'s duty in (1) justifies *A*'s standing in (2).

In essence, for Rita to hold a moral claim-right against Dudley is for her to have the moral standing to demand that he discharge a moral duty because he owes that duty to her. A claim-right may be a normative relation between the right-holder and duty-bearer, but it is not an elemental relation. Rather, it is a compound of two other normative relations between the parties. The right-holder and duty-bearer are bound by a moral rope, so to speak, that consists of these distinct intertwined strands.

My discussion is limited in three ways. First, my concern is the nature of moral claim-rights, rather than claim-rights generally. Rights in other normative domains need not have exactly equivalent features, or unite these features in the same way, even if they must generally be at least very similar to moral rights. There is no reason to assume that the logic of moral concepts must correspond precisely to the logic of their legal or conventional counterparts.

Second, I focus on the moral claim-rights at the core of our rights practice: those held by and against individual people who interact in society as ordinarily competent and responsible agents. There may be non-standard cases where the three features are not all present in the same way, but where it is plausible to ascribe claim-rights in virtue of some overall similarity with paradigm instances.[2] The point of this restriction is to ensure that features of crucial importance in the core of the practice are not obscured or ignored by tailoring the analysis to fit peripheral cases.

Third, I discuss the three features only as necessary to support the independence and integration theses. The two theses are compatible with different theories about what determines the direction of a moral duty, for instance.[3] A comprehensive theory of claim-rights should set out the differences (if any) between claim-rights in different normative domains, extend the analysis as needed to non-standard cases, and incorporate full theories of the three features.

In Section 2, I discuss how direction, standing, and status figure in Joel Feinberg's (1970) account of Nowheresville, a society in which the inhabitants hold no rights against each other.[4] In Section 3, I

[1] Brendan de Kenessey (2024) defends a similar (but not identical) distinction between two different concepts of relational obligation: the *constraint relation* (which roughly corresponds to direction) and the *accountability relation* (which roughly corresponds to standing).

[2] For instance, if infants are to possess moral claim-rights, some modification of the second feature may be required. If so, the most obvious solution is that some or other competent adult should have the standing to make demands on behalf of the right-holder. (Hart, 1982, 184, allows for a similar proxy relationship in his will theory of legal rights.)

[3] I discuss control, demand, and interest theories of direction in May (2015).

[4] All page references are to Feinberg (1970) unless otherwise specified.

defend the first part of the independence thesis. The Nowheresvillians do not owe duties to one another, but this does not mean they lack any kind of standing to press demands against each other. In Section 4, I defend the second part of the independence thesis. A moral practice can allow that one person owes a duty to another without supposing that the latter has any standing whatsoever to demand its performance. Section 5 generalizes this possibility. I set out an example of a different society without interpersonal rights. The citizens of Unreal City recognize that they owe duties to each other but not that they have any standing to demand that these duties be discharged. Nowheresville and Unreal City are both morally deficient. Neither practice properly respects its individual members, albeit in different ways. The remainder of the article defends the integration thesis. In Section 6, I set out a constraint on accounts of directed duties: the direction of a moral duty towards a person must be grounded in some way in that person's moral status as an end. In Section 7, I argue that the moral deficit in Unreal City cannot be remedied simply by the introduction of standing since that would not, in itself, require any change in its citizens' conception of their moral status. The integration thesis avoids this problem. If Rita's standing to demand that Dudley send the book is justified by the fact that he owes his duty to her, and the direction of this duty is in turn grounded in her moral status, then both elements of Rita's claim-right ultimately reflect her dignity as an end.

2. Nowheresville

Feinberg argues that to have a right is to have a valid claim against another person.[5] To have such a claim is to be in a position to do something, namely to claim or demand the performance of the action that is owed (253). Since the inhabitants of Nowheresville do not have any rights, they do not hold any claims against each other and are therefore never in a position to demand anything owed to them.[6] The absence of this activity in turn accounts for the moral deficit between their society and ours.

(1) Apart from the absence of rights, Nowheresville is much like our own normative world. The inhabitants possess a sense of desert and recognize familiar virtues such as pity, compassion, and benevolence (243, 245). They also recognize duties as mandatory norms governing their actions. They do not, however, regard these duties as owed to other individuals. Instead, they are purely modal items that specify what the inhabitants must do: Norris must press a button at a certain time; Nora must then pull a lever; and so on.

What exactly does a duty's direction add to its deontic modality or mandatory force? Feinberg treats directed duties as identical to rights: Rita's right against Dudley and Dudley's duty to Rita "are precisely the same relation seen from two different vantage points, as inextricably linked as the two sides of the same coin" (249–250).[7] But this explication of directed duties does not help explain the nature of rights without circularity. Feinberg also articulates the difference between purely modal and directed duties in terms of the concept of wronging. King David violates a duty by orchestrating Uriah's death in battle, and so does something wrong. But since he does not owe this duty to the Hittite himself, David does not wrong him. If he wrongs anyone, it is God alone (247; 2 Samuel 11–12). I stipulate the following equivalence:

[5]A claim is valid if it is justified by the rules of the relevant normative system (255). I assume in what follows that this qualification is always met.

[6]An alternative characterization is that rights are absent from the Nowheresvillians' moral code, rather than from their moral reality as such. The philosophical upshot remains the same.

[7]The term "claim-right" derives from W. N. Hohfeld's (1913) analysis of legal rights (although he does not use that precise term himself). Hohfeld stipulates that claims—or rights "in the strict sense" (Hohfeld, 1913, 30)—and duties are the same relation, just viewed from the parties' respective positions. It is nevertheless common for rights theorists to avoid this stipulation. See, for example, Sumner (1987, 19–20), Wenar (2013, 214), and Wallace (2019, 201–210). What matters is not terminology but the nature of the moral phenomena at the core of our rights practice, whatever their label.

> *B*'s moral duty to ϕ is directed towards (or owed to) *A* if and only if *B* would wrong *A* by violating (i.e., wrongfully infringing) the duty.[8]

The Nowheresvillians therefore understand what it is to do wrong, but they have no notion of wronging one another. They may be dismayed when wrongfully harmed, but they feel no personal resentment towards the agent. They express acknowledgment of their own wrongdoing through open statements of contrition rather than apologies directed towards particular individuals: "I'm sorry I did wrong" rather than "I'm sorry I wronged you."

Perhaps it is essential to a duty that it be owed to some or other party, and that there are therefore no purely modal duties (Wallace, 2019, 47–54). This would not mean that there can be no duties in Nowheresville after all. Feinberg supposes that a sovereign monopoly of rights stands above the inhabitants and holds rights against them. In this case, all duties in Nowheresville are owed to the monopoly. The Nowheresvillians themselves still hold no rights against one another.

(2) The distinctive use of rights, Feinberg states, "is to be claimed, demanded, affirmed, insisted upon" (252). A demand is more than a request. If Rita asks for the book, she might suggest that Dudley should send it to her. But if Rita demands the book, she conveys that he must send it. Moral demands have the same modality as moral duties. The most salient implication of the absence of interpersonal rights in Nowheresville concerns this manner of interpersonal engagement (249). Feinberg distinguishes two ways in which right-holders typically demand or claim their rights: *performative* and *propositional claiming.*

Performative claiming is *making claim to* the action one is owed. This has two hallmarks: limited standing and normative upshot. First, only some people may make claim to a particular thing. If third-party Thelma has no right that Dudley send the book to Rita, she may not make claim to his action. Second, the act has normative consequences when properly performed by the appropriate individuals. If Rita instructs Dudley to send her the book, he must either comply with her instruction or propose some other solution.

Right-holders engage in propositional claiming when they *claim that* they have rights. The hallmark of this activity is its characteristic manner. "To claim that one has rights is to make an assertion that one has them … in such a manner as to demand or insist that they be recognized" (251). If Dudley neglects to send her the book, Rita would be in a position to send a stern letter of complaint to his employers, indignantly claiming that her right has not been respected, with the expectation that they do something to remedy the matter.

(3) On Feinberg's view, if Rita holds a claim-right against Dudley, "it is for [her] sake that [he] has a duty to act … and not merely for some extraneous reason unrelated to [her]" (Feinberg, 1992, 189). If Dudley eventually sends the book to Rita because he wishes to respect her right, he accepts a moral reason to act for her sake. Since the Nowheresvillians recognize the moral virtues of benevolence and compassion, they also accept moral reasons to act simply for each other's sake: it is considerate to check in with one's elderly neighbor, generous to send an expensive birthday present to one's friend, kind to donate a kidney to one's sibling, and so on. They therefore do not deny their non-instrumental moral importance as ends. The key difference is that Norris never regards what he does for Nora's sake as mandatory. His moral reasons to be generous or kind to her do not have the modality of obligations—they are *shoulds* not *musts.* The Nowheresvillians' self-conception as ends is therefore sharply disconnected from their sense of duty. It is this separation that is revealed by the absence of performative and propositional claiming of rights. Since Nora is never herself the source

[8]This explication of direction in terms of wronging is widely (but not universally) shared. See, for example, Thompson (2004), Darwall (2013), Wenar (2013), May (2015), Cruft (2019), and Wallace (2019). However, see Cornell (2015) and Martin (2021) for different uses. Margaret Gilbert's (2018, 2025) use also differs from mine insofar as she defines the direction of obligations in terms of the standing to demand an action.

of Norris's duties, she has no standing to press demands against him on her own behalf.[9] The Nowheresvillians may have some sense of their moral status as ends, then, but they do not fully respect this status:

> [I]t is claiming that gives rights their special moral significance. … Having rights enables us to "stand up like men," to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone. To think of oneself as the holder of rights is not to be unduly but properly proud, to have that minimal self-respect that is necessary to be worthy of the love and esteem of others. … To respect a person, … or to think of him as possessed of human dignity, simply is to think of him as a potential maker of claims. (252)

3. Standing without Direction

Nowheresville exemplifies the first part of the independence thesis:

(1) *The fact that A* has moral standing to demand that *B* discharge a moral duty to ϕ does not entail that *B*'s duty to ϕ is directed towards *A*.

Feinberg does claim that "Nowheresvillians, even when discriminated against invidiously, or left without the things they need, or otherwise badly treated, do not think to leap to their feet and make righteous demands against one another" (249). This may suggest that they do not press demands against each other at all. But this suggestion is misleading. What the Nowheresvillians lack is the standing to demand the performance of duties *owed to them*. They may hold others accountable, but not on their own behalf (Adams, 1987, 81). For instance, although individuals in positions of authority do not hold any rights against their subordinates, they are empowered to create obligations and penalize transgressions (249). Nothing prevents those in charge from righteously demanding compliance with the rules they have enacted. Indeed, their accountability practices may include an elaborate network of authority relations defining the conditions under which each duty may be demanded and by whom. This network is organized on the basis of some principle—say, the efficient administration of public order—that itself presupposes no interpersonal directed duty. Nora may get to insist that Norris press the button (and he that she pull the lever) because that arrangement has good consequences, but neither has standing to press demands in their own right.

It is not uncommon for third parties to have standing to demand that agents honour the duties they owe to other people. For example, fellow restaurant diners may insist that parents not violently discipline their child. In this case, it is the child who is wronged by the violence because it is the child who is harmed. The function of the parents' duty is straightforwardly to protect the child rather than the other diners—it may have the latter effect, but that is not why it exists (Wright, 1973).[10] But a duty need not be owed to a person with standing to demand its performance even when the duty's function is to avoid harm to that same person.

Consider the moral perspective of Alexey Zudin, the central character in Alexander Tarasov-Rodionov's novel *Chocolate*.[11] Zudin is the chairman of a local Cheka branch during the Russian Civil War and a dedicated Bolshevik. He takes pity on the alluring Yelena Valts after she is arrested

[9] In John Rawls's language, Nora may be the source of non-mandatory moral reasons for Norris, but she is not a "self-originating source of valid claims" (Rawls, 1980, 543–544).

[10] If the bystanders are wronged themselves—perhaps because the spectacle of child abuse is deeply unpleasant—this is incidental to their standing to demand that the child not be mistreated. I assume that moral duties may have multiple functions, some of which may be ancillary to others.

[11] *Chocolate* is neither a great work of literature nor a work of compelling moral insight. Its philosophical value lies in its articulation of a moral perspective consistent with the absence of rights in Nowheresville. Originally published in 1922, the novel was reprinted several times in the Soviet Union before its author was executed during Stalin's purges in 1938 (Graham, 1983).

in a raid on a gathering of known counter-revolutionaries. Concluding that she attended the gathering only as a courtesan and is therefore a victim of exploitation, Zudin orders her release and employs her as a secretary in his office. This moment of kindness is his undoing. As a secretary in the Cheka branch, Valts discovers that a months-old order to release a prisoner has been overlooked in the chaos of the war. Pretending to act as Zudin's agent, she extorts a bribe from the prisoner's wealthy family to effect his release. Rumors of impropriety spread about the city. The unsuspecting Zudin is arrested and tried by his Chekist comrades. They conclude that although he is guilty of nothing more than an error of judgment, he must still be executed. The White Guards threaten the city, and its workers must be persuaded to join the battle against them. Releasing Zudin would reinforce their suspicions of Bolshevik corruption and thereby endanger the revolution. Comrade Tkacheyev explains the tribunal's decision to their prisoner:

> "The whole great cause of fighting for the happiness of millions of people, all that has already been gained with so many sacrifices, so much effort, with the suffering and blood of several generations, right here and now all of this will turn to smoke, burst like a soap bubble, because of the childish carelessness of one unfortunate comrade who grew tired, who tore himself away from the masses, and who quite forgot who he was and where he was! Tell me, what shall we do with him, so we may save our great cause?"
>
> "Kill him," Zudin said in a strained, muffled voice.
>
> "Yes, kill him," Tkacheyev confirmed. "And so we are killing you to save our cause, knowing that you understand all this …" (1933, 254–255)

Zudin accepts the need for his execution—the novel ends with him impatiently waiting to perform this last service for the revolution. In this matter, he is merely a tool of the Party and can hold no rights against it. If his death would serve the cause, it is his duty to die. The question of his guilt or innocence is simply irrelevant.[12]

From Zudin's perspective, Valts has violated a number of obligations:

(i) The duty to not abuse a position of trust for personal gain;
(ii) The duty to not bring the Party into disrepute with the workers;
(iii) The duty to not falsely implicate a Party official in an illicit scheme; etc.

Although Zudin's attitude towards Valts is one of dismissive contempt, he expresses no personal resentment towards her for the harm she has done him by violating the third of these duties. This duty functions to protect the reputation of upstanding Party officials—in this case, Zudin himself. A duty with that function is justified, however, only because harming the reputation of an official would in turn be detrimental to the Party. The interests of the official are only instrumentally valuable. Valts has not wronged Zudin himself by necessitating his execution—a personal apology from her would be absurdly misdirected.[13] If she has wronged anyone by depriving the Party of a valuable cadre, it could only be the proletarian masses as a whole.

Nevertheless, Zudin certainly thinks he has (or at least had) standing to demand that Valts comply with her duties. His failure as a Bolshevik has been his lapse in holding her accountable. As an experienced revolutionary, he has had the moral authority to chastise her for her earlier improprieties; as her office superior, he has had the institutional authority to terminate her appointment; and as an officer of the Cheka, he has had the legal authority to have her imprisoned

[12]Nor does Zudin think relevant the guilt or innocence of the many people he has had executed over the course of the Red Terror.

[13]As it happens, Tkacheyev mentions that Valts herself has already been shot (1933, 259).

or executed for crimes against the People. The essential difference with Feinberg's performative and propositional claiming of rights is that none of the underlying duties are owed to Zudin.[14]

Zudin's moral perspective clearly differs profoundly from one that acknowledges individual moral rights. From the latter perspective, one might well deny that Valts has any moral duty to avoid implicating Party officials or that the ruthless Zudin has any moral standing to press demands against her. But this profound difference is the point of the example. Feinberg's methodological principle is to clarify the nature and value of rights by considering an alternative normative practice in which the inhabitants hold no rights. The same principle applies to the present example (and to the examples below). It is irrelevant what moral duties or standing people in the two characters' positions would actually have—what matters is the duties and standing they have within the alternative moral system.

4. Direction without Standing

The argument thus far suggests that directed duties are the key element of claim-rights. On this view, interpersonal claim-rights may exist in Nowheresville once and only once the possibility of interpersonal wronging is introduced. As noted, Feinberg treats rights and directed duties as identical (249–250). It is certainly possible to define claim-rights as identical (or at least logically equivalent) to directed duties. But then the possession of a claim-right would not itself mean that the right-holder is in any position to engage in performative and propositional claiming. This is because direction does not entail standing. In this section, I defend the second part of the independence thesis:

(2) *The fact that B* owes a moral duty to ϕ to *A* does not entail that *A* has any moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ.

It is sometimes inappropriate for a person to demand the performance of a duty he is owed. Two plausible examples concern gratitude and hypocrisy (Wallace, 2019, 201–205; Kamm, 2021, 91). First, Bertha may owe thanks to Benjamin for his generous birthday present, but her expression of gratitude is meaningful only when it is freely given. Some duties cannot be demanded without that defeating the point of the duty. Second, if Brock routinely breaks his promises to his friends, he cannot insist without hypocrisy that they keep their promises to him. He is in no position to berate them for misdeeds he commits himself. But neither of these two examples shows that there is no conceptual entailment from direction to standing at all.

First, a person does not have standing to demand an action only when it would be appropriate for him to do so: the standing itself is one thing, the act of demanding quite another. For Benjamin to have standing to demand that Bertha discharge her duty is for her to be in a kind of moral accountability relation with him. Should she violate her duty, his moral position would change: other things being equal, he would become permitted or empowered to respond to her wrongdoing by acting in some way contrary to her interests.[15] For example, as Bertha's friend, Benjamin might

[14]Feinberg discusses an example from Malraux's *Man's Fate*, another novel about communist revolutionaries (244–245): Katov, a Soviet agent in Shanghai, awaits execution by burning in a steam engine furnace, along with two Chinese insurrectionists. Rather than use his cyanide tablet himself, he gives it to his terrified comrades to spare them from a grisly death (Malraux, 1934, 313–328). As Feinberg notes, however, if Katov acts from any sense of moral duty, it is not a duty that anyone could demand of him. Moreover, Katov seems to be inspired by the human dignity of his comrades themselves (1934, 324), whereas Zudin does not plausibly believe that Valts should be similarly inspired by his human dignity.

[15]The change in Benjamin's moral position need not be contrary to Bertha's interests all things considered—she may fare better on the whole without Benjamin's involvement in her life. Moreover, it may not always be apparent what precise normative shift has occurred. In many cases, the change may not be sufficient to make it permissible for the agent's duty to be enforced.

ordinarily have a duty to include her in their social group's regular gathering. But her failure to thank him for his generosity could make it permissible for him to rescind her invitation. Although not significantly contrary to Bertha's interests, this petty sanction nevertheless presupposes the principle that she is accountable to Benjamin. A moral demand does not just articulate a moral duty in the imperative mood. If it is true that an agent must perform an action, anyone can assert that truth regardless of their relation to the duty-bearer. A moral demand conveys, in addition, a kind of ultimatum: "Discharge your duty (or else my moral position will change in some way you might not like)!"[16] Not just anyone bears this relation to the duty-bearer. What matters for standing is whether the implication expressed in the ultimatum is true, not whether it is appropriate for the person to convey it. This supports the following *adverse normative change constraint* as a necessary condition of moral standing:

> *A* has the moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ only if, other things being equal, *B*'s violation of a moral duty to ϕ would trigger a normative change in *A*'s moral position that is in some respect contrary to *B*'s interests.[17]

Second, the moral standing to demand the performance of a duty can sometimes be forfeited or waived. Brock would be in a position to insist that his friends keep their promises but for his own wrongful behaviour. If he were true to his word, his relation to his friends would be akin to that between Benjamin and Bertha. In this case, there may still be a conceptual entailment from direction to standing, albeit one that allows for its alienation. But the independence thesis denies that there is any conceptual entailment from direction to standing at all.

Consider the moral practice represented in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. The novel's narrator is Stevens, the butler of Darlington Hall. One evening in the mid-1930s, Lord Darlington lets one of his fascist guests subject Stevens to a humiliating series of technical questions about contemporary political issues. The guest's goal is to demonstrate the abject ignorance of the lower classes, presently represented by the butler, and thereby illustrate the absurdity of democratic government. Stevens can only repeatedly respond that he is unable to be of assistance in the matter. As he continues the story:

> I had … all but forgotten the episode by the following morning, when Lord Darlington came into the billiard room while I was up on a step-ladder dusting portraits, and said:
>
> "Look here, Stevens, it was dreadful. The ordeal we put you through last night."
>
> I paused in what I was doing and said: "Not at all sir. I was only too happy to be of service."
>
> "It was quite dreadful. We'd all had rather too good a dinner, I fancy. Please accept my apologies."
>
> "Thank you, sir. But I am happy to assure you I was not unduly inconvenienced." (Ishiguro, 1989, 196–197)

Darlington appreciates that he has violated a moral duty to not let his guests demean his servants. Moreover, he recognizes that he owes this duty to his employees—Darlington apologizes to Stevens himself and does not merely inform the butler of his regretful state of mind. In his aristocratic moral perspective, a gentleman must always treat those of a lesser class with fairness and decency. After all, servants are not slaves to be abused as their master sees fit, nor tools to be utilized in accordance with rules imposed by some external authority. Rather, they have some non-instrumental moral importance as persons, and that modest share of dignity is reflected in the duties of *noblesse oblige*.

[16] I describe moral demands as implicit ultimatums in May (2013).

[17] Note that this necessary condition is compatible with the assertion that the Nowheresvillians have standing to hold each other accountable because it does not assume that *B*'s moral duties are owed to anyone (although they may well be).

Whether Darlington thinks that Stevens has any moral standing to demand that he not be demeaned by his employer's guests is another matter entirely. In Feinberg's terms, Stevens is in no position to leap to his feet, look his employer in the eye, suppose himself his lordship's equal, and righteously insist on more respectful treatment. The adverse normative change constraint is not met: the butler's existing duties of interaction with his employer have not been affected to the latter's disadvantage, nor has he become empowered to impose any duty of compensation on his employer. Instead, the butler's duty is to reject the suggestion that he has been at all inconvenienced. For Stevens to express resentment at his treatment, or even to accept Darlington's apology without explicit demurral, would be to rise above his station by adopting an attitude of moral scrutiny towards the great man he serves.[18] Darlington may accept his moral accountability to his fellow peers, but he does not acknowledge any general accountability to his social inferiors.[19] In the aristocratic moral perspective, after all, servants are still servants.

Stevens's position is unlike Benjamin's. Darlington's duty can be meaningfully demanded—employees in more egalitarian workplaces often insist that they not be subjected to humiliating treatment. Stevens's position is also unlike Brock's. Stevens has not forfeited standing through some misdeed. It would be unthinkably impertinent, rather than hypocritical, for him to protest his treatment with indignation. Nor has Stevens waived standing by willingly accepting employment as Darlington's butler. This suggestion fails to appreciate the deep-rootedness of the class system in which the characters are embedded. It assumes that Stevens's lack of standing stems merely from his ethic of loyal service—his job—rather than from his lower social class—his station.[20] That view is a caricature of the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the two, as if Stevens were akin to a waiter in a democratic society who must sometimes deal politely with rude and belligerent diners but who resumes a position of moral standing at the end of the shift.[21]

An objection to this example of direction without standing states that Darlington's duty cannot really be owed to Stevens if the butler does lack standing to hold him accountable. His apology is just a matter of ingrained social protocol—the done thing—rather than a genuine expression of his awareness that he has wronged his employee. Apologies can indeed perform several functions in a moral practice—they do not always express that the recipient has been wronged.[22] Nevertheless,

[18]May Stevens *believe* that he has been wronged, even if he must *say* that he has not? As I read the novel, Stevens does not (and perhaps cannot) confront this question at all. He relates the incident with the guest as an illustration of his conception of the dignity of loyal service, in opposition to the misguided idealistic opinion that "any butler with serious aspirations should make it his business to be forever reappraising his employer—scrutinizing the latter's motives, analyzing the implications of his views" (1989, 199–200). Nevertheless, if Stevens were called on to provide some instruction in gentlemanly ethics to Darlington's godson Reginald, for instance, his guidance would certainly include the principle that Reginald can owe his employees an obligation to protect them from demeaning treatment. To deny that principle would be to take issue, albeit implicitly, with his lordship's own moral understanding.

[19]Darlington's moral accountability to Stevens is limited rather than non-existent. The butler has the moral standing to demand that Darlington observe various basic moral duties: e.g., that his private possessions not be destroyed, that he not be used as target practice for the shooting party's amusement, and so on. Violations of these duties would not just wrong Stevens; they would entirely change the nature of the relationship between the two.

[20]Stevens is embarrassed when he realizes that his anecdotes of meeting important politicians in the pre-war era suggest to the patrons of a village pub that he is a gentleman himself, and hence entitled to their respectful and solicitous deference. This entitlement is a normative feature of their class society, not something that arises from employment relations alone.

[21]Feinberg uses the example of tipping in his discussion of desert. A waiter might deserve a good tip without having any standing to demand it. In this case, the tip is a mere gratuity, not an obligation owed to the waiter. In contrast, New York cab drivers adopt a more egalitarian perspective insofar as they demand tips as a matter of right (246). Neither of these two cases captures the relationship between Darlington and Stevens. Consider how Stevens needs time to interpret the mild teasing of his new American employer, Mr. Farraday, not as uncouth and ungentlemanly, but as premised on an assumption of the butler's standing to participate in banter. This is a profoundly (and awkwardly) different employment relationship: Stevens works for Farraday, but he served Darlington.

[22]For example, the captain of a sports team might apologize to their supporters for losing an important match. The team may have let the fans down, but they have not thereby wronged them. This is because they have not violated any duty by failing to live up to the desired standard of excellence.

there is no reason why the apology Darlington extends to Stevens is necessarily insincere or differs, as an apology, from those he would extend to his fellow members of the ruling class. Darlington appreciates that he has been unfair to Stevens just as he might be unfair to an opposing captain on the cricket pitch or a defeated enemy on the battlefield. If anything, Stevens's lack of standing only aggravates the wrong Darlington does him by failing to stop his guest's egregious behaviour.

I conclude that within their moral practice, the direction of Darlington's duty towards Stevens does not mean that the butler has any (even alienable) moral standing to hold the aristocrat accountable for its performance. It is one thing to be owed a moral duty and another thing to be in a moral position to demand that it be discharged. The two normative relations are conceptually independent of each other.

5. Unreal City

The relation between Stevens and Darlington (i.e., direction without standing) inverts the relation between Zudin and Valts (i.e., standing without direction). Feinberg's Nowheresville generalizes the Zudin-Valts nexus. Its denizens cannot wrong each other, but may still hold each other accountable for the duties they owe to the sovereign monopoly. A corresponding generalization of the Stevens-Darlington nexus requires a different example of a normative world without claim-rights.

Consider Unreal City—a society broadly similar to our own except that its citizens have no moral standing to hold each other accountable for their duties.[23] Each person recognizes various kinds of moral reasons for action. Some of these reasons are non-mandatory—the citizens help elderly pedestrians cross busy roads, join search parties for missing children, and donate kidneys to strangers in need. These actions are seen as virtuous but not obligatory. The citizens also recognize moral reasons with mandatory force. Some actions must be performed and others must not. They do not consider whether they should steal from their colleagues or assassinate people they dislike. Reasons to perform such actions are excluded from practical deliberation (Raz, 1975, 73–76). On those relatively infrequent occasions when they do violate a moral obligation, the citizens usually feel guilty and not just disappointed in themselves.

On the whole, the Unreal Citizens are somewhat more scrupulous about their moral reasons for action than the inhabitants of our normative world are about theirs. The distinctive feature of the society is that its citizens never think to make moral demands of each other. A citizen's violation of a duty never triggers the required adverse normative change in any other citizen's position. Suppose Ulysses has a duty to press a button and Ursula has a duty to then pull a lever. Ursula is keen to observe whether Ulysses presses the button, partly because that triggers her own duty and partly because his action will protect her from harm. Despite this interest in his action, neither of the two believes that it could be any of her moral business to insist that he act as required—the thought does not occur to them. Ulysses's inaction might sadden Ursula profoundly, but she would not become righteously angry or admonish him for his lapse. Her existing duties of interaction with him would remain unaffected: it would not become permissible for her to impose any sanction on him in response to his transgression, nor would she become empowered to create a duty to sanction him on the part of anyone else. Ulysses is no more accountable to Ursula than Darlington is to Stevens.

There are three salient differences between Unreal City and Darlington Hall. First, the citizens are not embedded in any class hierarchy. Ursula does not lack standing to demand that Ulysses press the button because of any inferior social position. Their relationship is symmetrical—he lacks standing to demand that she pull the lever in just the same way. Holding one another accountable is simply not part of their moral practice, rather than something they structure in accordance with social rank. Second, the citizens are quite open with each other in their conversations about

[23] I take the society's name from T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," with its image of a fog-wrapped crowd of disassociated people moving across London Bridge, each with their eyes fixed before their feet.

morality. Precisely because nothing Ursula says to Ulysses could be interpreted as a demand, she is comparatively free to offer her ethical advice and criticism without overstepping the mark. Because they are very thoughtful about their moral reasons for action, such conversations are often valued as sources of philosophical insight and perspective. Third, despite their non-hierarchical social order and relatively uninhibited discourse, the citizens are, in one respect, even more disconnected from each other than are the people in the normative world of Darlington Hall. That society may be a thoroughly defective moral community, with its stunted and asymmetric accountability relations, but Unreal City is no moral community at all. The citizens may frequently affect and occasionally advise each other, but they never press each other to do the right thing. Since it is difficult to form meaningful personal relationships without mutual expectations, the citizens keep to themselves for the most part. They lead fundamentally isolated moral lives. It is an eerily solitary dystopia.

Like the Nowheresvillians, the Unreal Citizens do not engage in any performative and propositional claiming of rights. But the underlying reason for this similarity is quite different. Nora cannot demand that Norris respect her rights because their society recognizes no duties directed towards other individuals. In contrast, Ursula cannot demand that Ulysses respect her rights because their society has no practice of holding other individuals accountable. Importantly, despite the absence of this practice, the citizens recognize that they owe duties to each other. Much as Darlington believes he has wronged Stevens, Ulysses believes that he would wrong Ursula by not pressing the button. His recognition of her non-instrumental moral importance means that she occupies a special place in his practical deliberation: he understands that he must press the button for her sake. Ulysses differentiates between Ursula and the various other people who might be affected by his action. She alone has this significance for him, and she alone provides the rationale for his action.

Suppose Ulysses does violate his duty. Ursula witnesses this transgression and suffers its detrimental consequences, as do other people. In addition, Ursula is uniquely disrespected by Ulysses's wrongdoing. She feels an intensely personal kind of sadness unlike that felt by the bystanders. This is because Ulysses's action expresses something about her moral importance that it does not express about the importance of the other people: it seems that he fails to press the button because Ursula in particular does not matter enough to him. Once Ulysses comes to appreciate what he has done, his guilty feeling is oriented towards Ursula rather than towards the others. He does not merely announce his contrition to all curious onlookers. Rather, he apologizes directly to Ursula so that he can disavow the attitude that his wrongdoing specifically conveyed about her. But at no point does Ulysses think of himself as morally accountable to Ursula, nor does he consider any hypothetical moral demand that she might make of him. She might appreciate and acknowledge his apology but has no concept of either accepting or rejecting it. Ulysses's directed duty towards Ursula gives her no sturdy "moral furniture" to stand upon as a right-holder. She has an entirely passive role as the person to whom he owes his duty and to whom he extends his apology.

Three objections can be raised against the possibility of direction without standing in Unreal City. The first objection states that accountability relations must exist if people are to have duties (Darwall, 2006). If no one can demand that Ulysses press the button, it may be something he should do, but not something he must do. The Darlington Hall example escapes this problem because Darlington can be held accountable by people of a similar rank, and this may be sufficient to explain why he is obligated to protect his servants from demeaning treatment. But if the Unreal Citizens do not hold each other accountable at all, on this view, there is nowhere for the mandatory force or modality of duties to enter their normative world.

The answer to this objection is much the same as the answer to the objection that rights must exist in Nowheresville. If it is essential to a duty that it can be demanded by someone, we can imagine that a sovereign monopoly of accountability stands apart from the common citizens, passing judgment on their transgressions. In this case, Ulysses's moral reason is mandatory because this monopoly has standing to demand that he press the button. The citizens do not mediate each

other's relationship with the monopoly (although they are not averse to discussing what judgments it might reach). Each person answers to its authority in a private confessional.

The second objection states that violations of duties must trigger changes in how other people are permitted or empowered to act if Unreal City is to function at all. For example, if Ulysses were to threaten other citizens with violence, at some point it must surely become morally possible for them to take forcible steps to stop him. These steps would be contrary to Ulysses's interests insofar as they directly or indirectly impede his agency. But if the moral position of the other citizens does change in response to wrongdoing, the adverse normative change constraint is satisfied. In this case, it is no longer clear that the citizens of Unreal City really do lack standing to press demands against each other.

The answer to this objection extends the description of the accountability monopoly. At no point are the citizens themselves permitted to use force against other citizens in response to wrongdoing. When necessary, the monopoly sends out robotic drones to ensure order and stability in the city. These remarkably efficient automata are remote prostheses of the monopoly's agency, not persons in their own right. The citizens never demand that the monopoly release the drones—it just does. They still play no active role in enforcing each other's duties.

The third objection states that the lack of interpersonal accountability in Unreal City must mean that their duties are not genuinely owed to each other. Ulysses does not actually wrong Ursula—instead, he does wrong by violating an obligation that is merely more about her (in some vague sense) than about anyone else. The peculiar orientation of his duty towards her is just a pale facsimile of direction.

The answer to this objection is the same as the answer to the corresponding objection in the Darlington Hall example. Darlington's apology to his butler does not differ, as an apology, from those he would extend to social peers who do have the standing to hold him accountable. Nor does Ulysses's apology to Ursula differ in kind from the one Darlington extends to Stevens. If anything, the absence of interpersonal demands in Unreal City deepens Ulysses's feeling of guilt and makes his apology to her all the more urgent. He must be especially scrupulous about discharging his duties precisely because no other person has the standing to check his behaviour. Moreover, the possibility of wronging another person accentuates the disconnection created by the lack of interpersonal accountability. That the citizens owe each other duties may narrow the moral distance between them in some manner, but the fact that these duties can never be reciprocated by correlative demands just makes the citizens' underlying sense of moral isolation all the more acute.

6. Status and Direction

Zudin's moral perspective fails to respect individuals as ends insofar as it treats them as mere tools of the cause. The Nowheresvillians recognize their moral status as ends insofar as they accept reasons of virtue to act for each other's sake. But Nowheresville is a deficient world because this recognition is sharply disconnected from their sense of duty. Darlington treats Stevens as the source of a moral duty but does not acknowledge his equal moral status. If he were to respect Stevens properly, he would appreciate their shared humanity beneath the ribands and tinsel of rank and accept the butler's standing to press demands against him. Unreal City eliminates the inequality in Darlington Hall but does so by levelling down to a state where no one is fully respected. The citizens understand what it is to wrong someone, and so Ulysses respects Ursula in a way that Norris does not respect Nora. But the citizens do not properly respect their own moral status. This is because they do not grasp what being owed a duty should mean for their own moral agency. Although they are active as moral agents insofar as they are subject to duties, they are entirely passive within their world's rudimentary accountability practice.

Suppose that both Nowheresville and Unreal City learn about claim-rights and wish to include them in their moral practices. Some changes will have to take place in each society, and these changes must satisfy two conditions. The *transformation condition* asserts that the changes must

mark a genuine normative shift rather than a purely cosmetic makeover. The inhabitants cannot enact rights simply by announcing their existence, as if there were only a nominal difference between their worlds and ours. The *recognition condition* asserts that if the changes are to help remedy the deficit in respect in the two societies, they must incorporate some development in how individuals recognize their own non-instrumental moral importance. The charge against the two worlds is not the absence of the concept of claim-rights as such, but what that absence means about how the inhabitants understand their dignity as ends. Any putative claim-rights introduced without this underlying revision would be counterfeit coin. In the remainder of this section, I discuss the connection between direction and status.[24] In the next section, I turn to the connection between standing and status.

The grounds of direction are the facts in virtue of which an agent owes a duty to one party rather than another. These are the facts that make it the case that Dudley would wrong Rita rather than third-party Thelma by not sending the book.[25] Suppose that a duty is directed towards a person in virtue of the role played by her interests in the duty's justification.[26] Thus, Dudley owes his duty to Rita because her interest in receiving the book is an essential part of the explanation of the duty's existence. Since Thelma's interests form no part of the reason for Dudley's duty, it is not directed towards her. On this theory of direction, the Nowheresvillians cannot presently regard the protection of an individual's interests as the function of any duty. The duties must instead exist purely for the sake of the sovereign rights monopoly, the maintenance of social order, the value of tradition, or so forth. The introduction of interpersonal directed duties requires that the Nowheresvillians change their understanding of how their duties are justified. This change need not have much impact on what they are obligated to do: Norris must still press the button, Nora pull the lever, and so forth. But it will affect why these actions must be performed: Norris must press the button because that prevents harm to Nora.

As it stands, the interest theory is inadequate. It satisfies the transformation condition because the change in the Nowheresvillians' understanding of the justification of their duties is a genuine normative shift. But the theory does not satisfy the recognition condition. This is because it allows that Nora's interests may have a purely instrumental significance in the justification of Norris's duty.[27] Perhaps he must prevent harm to her only because that amuses the sovereign rights monopoly. In this case, the relationship between Norris and Nora remains analogous to that between Valts and Zudin. The function of Valts's duty to avoid implicating Zudin is to protect his reputation as a Party official. But this function is entirely instrumental to protecting the Party. Valts would not respect Zudin himself just by recognizing his strategic position in the cause. The same point holds in Nowheresville. Norris does not change how he conceives of Nora's non-instrumental moral importance merely because he recognizes the fact that avoiding harm to her has good consequences.

The interest theory can be modified to satisfy the recognition condition. The modified theory states that a moral duty is directed towards a person in virtue of the non-instrumental role played by her interests in the duty's justification. Thus, Dudley owes it to Rita to send the book because the benefit to her is in itself the primary reason for the duty, quite apart from any further good that benefit may do. This modification makes a significant difference in Nowheresville because it eliminates the disconnection between moral status and duty. Norris can only owe his duty to Nora

[24]My argument in this section draws on May (2012).

[25]And likewise for Darlington's duty to Stevens and Ulysses's duty to Ursula. I assume for simplicity here that it is the same type of facts in each case, although the best theory of direction might allow different types of facts to ground the direction of different types of duty.

[26]This account of direction is adapted from Joseph Raz's (1984) interest theory of rights.

[27]Gopal Sreenivasan objects that Raz's interest theory of rights "instrumentalizes the individual's status as a right-holder" (Sreenivasan, 2005, 266) because it allows the right-holder's interests to play a purely instrumental role in the duty's justification.

if the benefit to her is in itself the primary reason for the duty, independently of its instrumental value. He must therefore revise how he conceives of her moral status as an end, and so the recognition condition is satisfied.

The interest theory states that the grounds of a duty's direction towards a person are facts about how her interests justify the duty. The non-instrumental version of this theory satisfies the recognition condition because it takes the person's moral status as an end as part of these grounds. Other theories assert that the direction of a duty to a person is determined by facts other than how her interests figure in the duty's justification. But these theories can still satisfy the recognition condition in exactly the same way. Whatever else they may count as grounds, if the person's moral status as an end plays some ineliminable role in determining the direction of duties owed to her, then Norris cannot come to recognize that he owes Nora a duty without revising his conception of how she matters. This supports the following *moral status constraint* on the direction of moral duties:

> If *B* owes *A* (rather than *C* or *D*, etc.) a moral duty to ϕ, then *B*'s duty is directed towards *A* (and not *C* or *D*, etc.) in virtue of a set of facts that entail that *A* has moral status as an end.

Since my present concern is the structure of moral claim-rights, I set aside further elaboration and evaluation of different theories of direction. In what follows, I assume only that the best theory satisfies the moral status constraint.

7. Status and Standing

Conjunction. A straightforward conjunction thesis asserts that moral claim-rights exist once standing is added to direction:

For *A* to hold a moral claim-right against *B* that *B* ϕ is for it to be the case that:

(1) *B* has a moral duty to ϕ that is directed towards *A*, and
(2) *A* has the moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ.

This thesis incorporates all three standard features of moral claim-rights. If the moral status constraint is satisfied, the direction of the duty in (1) ensures that the possession of a claim-right always reflects the right-holder's status as an end. Her standing in (2) transforms the duty she is owed into something she can actively claim. The thesis is accordingly a plausible view. Nevertheless, I do not believe it to be a successful account of what it is to have a moral claim-right. Consider the changes that would be required by the introduction of claim-rights to Unreal City. The conjunction thesis satisfies the transformation condition, since the Unreal Citizens must adopt a new practice of holding each other accountable. This would mark a genuine normative shift rather than a purely nominal change. But the conjunction thesis does not satisfy the recognition condition. This is because it does not require that the Unreal Citizens revise how they conceive of their own moral importance. The conjunction thesis therefore does not explain how the introduction of claim-rights would offer a genuine remedy for the deficit in respect in Unreal City.

Suppose that settlers from Unreal City establish a new town, Midway Junction. As in the parent city, the inhabitants owe duties to each other but have no standing to press demands. Over the years, it proves increasingly difficult for the inhabitants to be held morally accountable by the original monopoly. The channels of communication are too frequently disrupted, and the drones have too far to travel. A radical innovation is instituted: the monopoly designates one of the settlers as a surrogate authority. For the first time, an ordinary inhabitant of their world acquires standing to demand that another person discharge a duty. The new sheriff's normative position now changes when any of the settlers violates an obligation—he gets to punish transgressions and enforce order when necessary. But he finds his new responsibility overwhelming, so he looks for a better alternative. Inspired by the accountability system in the nearby Nowheresville, he begins to appoint

deputies to share in the workload. Before long, everyone in Midway Junction has been incorporated into the new system. Each resident is now understood to have moral standing to demand that some other residents discharge some range of duties. The sheriff eventually dies, and no one is needed to replace him. The new social convention is organized on the same basis as the original model in Nowheresville, say, the efficient administration of public order. In consequence, the principle that determines whether one person gets to press a particular demand against another makes no reference to the direction of the inhabitants' duties.

Suppose Miguel has a moral duty to press a button that he owes to Miranda, just as Ulysses owes his corresponding duty to Ursula. The emigration of the settlers from Unreal City to Midway Junction has changed nothing about how their duties are directed. Coincidentally, Miranda has standing to demand that Miguel press the button. She has this standing for just the same reason that Nora gets to insist that Norris discharge his corresponding duty. The importation of Nowheresville's system of accountability to Midway Junction has changed nothing about how it is organized. Nora and Miranda both have standing because that arrangement has good consequences. Neither has standing on her own behalf. Since nothing about Nora's moral status as an end is presupposed by her standing in Nowheresville, Miguel can acknowledge that he is accountable to Miranda without that requiring him to revise his conception of how she matters. Thus, the recognition condition is not satisfied—Miguel has no more respect for Miranda than Ulysses has for Ursula.

I have claimed that the citizens of Unreal City do not properly respect their own moral status because they do not grasp what being owed a duty should mean for their own moral agency. This deficit in respect must be remedied if the citizens are to acquire genuine moral claim-rights. An objection in defence of the conjunction thesis denies that any such deficit exists. Unreal City may be a defective normative world in many ways, the objection states, but the relationship between Ulysses and Ursula is no less respectful than that between Dudley and Rita. There is therefore no need for the introduction of standing in Midway Junction to satisfy the recognition condition. It may be that Darlington does not respect Stevens properly, but this is because their moral relationship is unequal. Since Unreal City is not hierarchical, it already remedies the deficit in respect in Darlington Hall. Thus, there is no reason to deny that Miranda holds a genuine moral claim-right against Miguel.

The objection is plausible but not compelling. Recall Feinberg's claim that Nowheresville is deficient not just in respect for others but in self-respect. Nora's moral status as an end has no special significance for what Norris is obligated to do (although it does have significance for the virtuous actions he might perform for her sake). In addition, Nora's moral status as an end also has no special significance for what Nora herself has reason to do (beyond occasional requests for supererogatory assistance). The first of these problems is remedied in Unreal City, but the second is not. Ursula may have reason to assert that Ulysses owes his duty to her. But so might anyone else—there is nothing special about her in that regard. Ursula is merely a passive witness to her own non-instrumental moral importance. If it is true that to think of oneself as a right-holder is to be "properly proud" (252), this disconnection between Ursula's moral status and her own moral agency should be eliminated. Ursula must revise how she conceives of her own dignity, and so the recognition condition must be satisfied. Since the shift to Midway Junction does not satisfy the condition, the conjunction thesis is inadequate.

The integration thesis states that Dudley owes his duty to Rita and that she may demand that he discharge this duty. In addition, the thesis states that these two relations are substantively integrated:

(3) The direction of *B*'s moral duty to ϕ towards *A* justifies *A*'s moral standing to demand that *B* ϕ.

This integration means that Rita is in a position to demand that Dudley send her the book *because* he owes this duty to her. Since the direction of Dudley's duty is grounded in Rita's moral status as an end, and her standing is predicated on this direction, the disconnection between status and agency is eliminated. Rita's non-instrumental moral importance has significance for her moral agency

because it underpins her standing to insist that Dudley send her the book. Unlike both Nora and Miranda, Rita has this standing on her own behalf and in her own right. The integration thesis therefore satisfies the recognition condition. Both components of Rita's claim-right reflect her dignity.

8. Conclusion

The independence thesis states that direction and standing are conceptually independent normative relations—neither one entails the other. I have advanced two necessary conditions for the presence of these relations. The moral status constraint states that a person can be owed a moral duty only in virtue of facts that entail her non-instrumental moral importance. The adverse normative change constraint states that a person has standing to demand the performance of a moral duty only if its violation would affect her moral position to the duty-bearer's disadvantage.

The integration thesis states that the moral claim-rights standardly held by and against individuals consist in the substantive justificatory union of direction and standing. This thesis identifies the three societies—Nowheresville, Unreal City, and Midway Junction—as moral practices without genuine interpersonal claim-rights. The first lacks direction, the second lacks standing, and the third lacks the required substantive union. The thesis also explains why the introduction of moral claim-rights to any of the three societies should go some way in remedying a deficit in respect.[28]

Simon Cabulea May is Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. His current research concerns the nature of rights.

References

Adams, D. M. (1987). Feinberg on claiming claims. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 21(1), 79–85. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00135532.

Cornell, N. (2015). Wrongs, rights, and third parties. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 43(2), 109–143. https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12054.

Cruft, R. (2019). *Human rights, ownership, and the individual*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198793366.001.0001.

Darwall, S. (2006). *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*. Cambridge University Press.

Darwall, S. (2013). Bipolar obligation. In S. Darwall, *Morality, authority, and law: Essays in second-personal ethics I*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199662586.003.0002.

De Kenessey, B. (2024). Two concepts of directed obligation. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 109(3), 913–938. https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.13083.

Feinberg, J. (1992). The social importance of moral rights. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6, 175–198. https://doi.org/10.2307/2214244.

Feinberg, J. (1970). The nature and value of rights. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 4(4), 243–260. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00137935.

Gilbert, M. (2018). *Rights and demands: A foundational inquiry*. Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, M. (2025). Rights and demands: A response to Kamm. *Law and Philosophy*, 44(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-024-09519-y.

Graham, S. (1983). On literary guard: The case of Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov. *Slavonic and East European Review*, 61(2), 169–183.

Hart, H. L. A. (1982). Legal rights. In H. L. A. Hart, *Essays on Bentham*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198254683.003.0008.

Hohfeld, W. N. (1913). Some fundamental legal conceptions as applied in judicial reasoning. *Yale Law Journal*, 23(1), 16–59. https://doi.org/10.2307/785533.

Ishiguro, K. (1989). *The remains of the day*. Alfred A. Knopf.

[28]Earlier versions of this article were presented in Bled, New Orleans, Stirling, Tallahassee, Toronto, and Vancouver. I'm grateful to the audiences on those occasions for their feedback and especially to Rowan Cruft for his comments on the penultimate draft.

Kamm, F. M. (2021). A note on Margaret Gilbert's *Rights and demands*. *Law and Philosophy*, 40(1), 89–95. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-020-09397-0.
Malraux, A. (1934). *Man's fate*. Trans. H. Chevalier. Random House.
Martin, A. (2021). Personal bonds: Directed obligations without rights. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 102(1), 65–86. https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12620.
May, S. C. (2012). Moral status and the direction of duties. *Ethics*, 123(1), 113–128. https://doi.org/10.1086/667835.
May, S. C. (2013). What we may demand of each other. *Analysis*, 73(3), 554–563. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/ant051.
May, S. C. (2015). Directed duties. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(8), 523–532. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12239.
Rawls, J. (1980). Kantian constructivism in moral theory. *Journal of Philosophy*, 77(9), 515–572. https://doi.org/10.2307/2025790.
Raz, J. (1975). *Practical reason and norms*. Oxford University Press.
Raz, J. (1984). On the nature of rights. *Mind*, XCIII(370), 194–214. https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/XCIII.370.194.
Sreenivasan, G. (2005). A hybrid theory of claim-rights. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 25(2), 257–274. https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqi013.
Sumner, L. W. (1987). *The moral foundations of rights*. Oxford University Press.
Tarasov-Rodionov, A. (1933). *Chocolate*. Trans. C. Malamuth. William Heineman.
Thompson, M. (2004). What is it to wrong someone? A puzzle about justice. In R. J. Wallace *et al.* (Eds.), *Reason and value: Themes from the philosophy of Joseph Raz*, Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199261888.003.0014.
Wallace, R. J. (2019). *The moral nexus*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691172170.001.0001.
Wenar, L. (2013). The nature of claim-rights. *Ethics*, 123(2), 202–229. https://doi.org/10.1086/668707.
Wright, L. (1973). Functions. *Philosophical Review*, 82(2), 139–168. https://doi.org/10.2307/2183766.

Cite this article: May, S. C. 2026. The Compound Relational Structure of Moral Claim-Rights. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 56: e16, 1–17, doi:10.1017/can.2026.10105