

Skorupski, John. *The Domain of Reasons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, xxxii + 525 pp. Cloth, \$55.00 –

John Skorupski's *The Domain of Reasons* concerns the normative as such. Skorupski aims to provide a unified theory of normativity that gives it a central place in a vast range of philosophical issues. Taking inspiration from Kant and Wittgenstein, he claims that his overall approach is a critical one: it aims to preserve common sense views about normativity against skepticism without making use of metaphysically-heavy realism or idealism.

Skorupski's project involves three components: (A) defining the fundamental normative concept, which he calls a 'reason relation,' (B) showing that a wide variety of philosophical notions can be analyzed in terms of reason relations, and (C) addressing potential metanormative worries about reason relations. I will summarize each component and conclude with a few comments.

(A) Skorupski claims that there are three fundamental types of reasons: reasons to believe (epistemic reasons), reasons to act (practical reasons), and reasons to feel (evaluative reasons). Though he thinks there are important connections between these, Skorupski denies that any of them reduces to any other. The concept he is chiefly interested in, though, is that of a reason relation. These are relations that hold between facts, times, degrees of strength, actors, actors' responses, and (for epistemic reasons) the set of facts the agents could know. Most contexts, Skorupski holds, do not require articulation of all of the relata. An example of a fully-articulated epistemic reason relation might be: In Obama's epistemic field, the fact that the Republicans can filibuster this session is a reason of degree of strength 5 for Obama to believe that new gun legislation will not pass.

(B) Armed with the notion of a reason relation, Skorupski spends the majority of the book arguing that a surprising number of philosophical notions can be reduced to that of

reason relations. He uses practical and evaluative reasons to explain moral goodness and badness (in a broadly sentimentalist vein), personal goodness and badness, and justice (among others). Epistemic reason relations are used to explain the notions of analyticity, evidence, modality, abstracta, and concept-possession/rule-following. In addition, Skorupski claims that all synthetic a priori propositions are ultimately about reason relations, and that apperception, spontaneity, autonomy, and even thought and personhood are ultimately a matter of responding to reasons. This amounts to a holistic argument for the reality and importance of reason relations.

(C) In the final part of the book, Skorupski attempts to carve out an approach somewhere between contemporary realism and anti-realism about the normative, which he also calls an ‘irrealist’ view. Central to his approach is a rejection of any correspondence view of truth. While facts about reason relations do not correspond to mind-independent reality, Skorupski claims, one need not be a non-cognitivist or non-naturalist about them, and can grant them an objective status that distinguishes them from fictional objects. Alongside these metaphysical issues, Skorupski also aims to explain the epistemology of reason relations. This explanation relies on a version of the Kantian distinction between spontaneity and receptivity, and in so doing, ties reason relations intimately to the nature of the mind. We know reason relations, Skorupski claims, via a spontaneous judgment that something is reason-supported. In addition, he claims (with a nod towards Hegel), that our first-person judgments must be tested against the normative responses of others in our cognitive community.

I conclude with three comments.

(1) Skorupski’s analysis of modal concepts appears circular. Skorupski analyzes the impossible as what there is sufficient epistemic reason to exclude, and the possible as what is

not impossible. Yet one of his relata for epistemic reason relations is an agent's epistemic field, which is the set of facts the agent *can* know. The latter seems clearly modal.

(2) Skorupski holds that we experience our spontaneity (and so our disposition to recognize reasons) first-personally. He claims that while (a la Kant) a spontaneous judgment is one that comes from our nature, the notion of spontaneity is not (contra Kant) a causal one. Moreover, he seems to agree with Kant that that a judgment is not spontaneous if it was caused by contingent psychological facts. It therefore seems that a spontaneous judgment, on Skorupski's view, could only be an uncaused event, undermining his claim to naturalism.

(3) Skorupski appeals to agent-neutral reasons several of his analyses. In the final chapter, however, he grants that we can imagine encountering other cognitive communities who spontaneously recognize radically different reasons than we do, and that this encounter could warrant us in accepting that there are other sets of norms beyond our own. If so, then it seems that all reasons are in fact community-relative, and so not fully agent-neutral.

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