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PART I

CP1

ON WHAT RESPECT IS

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Abstract

Philip Pettit develops an account of the fundamental nature and basis of respect. Pettit's "conversive" theory of respect draws on the fact that our unique command of language provides us with a "special means of mutual influence," making us accessible to each other's understanding. Our conversive nature is necessarily accompanied by some shared standards for what ought to count as reasons for believing something, and for what one ought to desire or intend. To act respectfully is to act from a robust commitment to treat you as a conversive partner, to present you with reasons for forming beliefs and intentions, rather than just trying to elicit these through any means that are causally effective.

Keywords

conversive, communication, respect, reasons, standards, robust

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A Conversive Theory of Respect

C2

Philip Pettit

Introduction

C2.S1

C2.P1 This essay offers an account of respect in the generic sense in which we may be called upon to respect one another as equals: to have respect for one another and to treat one another respectfully.[1] I take this ideal to require that we respect others equally on the grounds that they count in an independent sense as equals. Such an ideal contrasts with the respect or esteem we might give to someone for their success or effort in a certain domain of activity like science or sport; with the respect or acknowledgement we feel is due to all of those in a particular area, such as medical research; and, of course, with the sort of respect or deference that a Mafia boss might require us to demonstrate.[2]

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[1] Having respect for another may seem to be a matter of attitude, treating another respectfully a matter of behavior but, as argued in the first section, treating someone respectfully requires acting out of a suitable attitude or disposition; the respect I give you when I treat you in that way is a disposition-dependent effect (Pettit 2018b).

[2] Respect in this sense is closely related to what is often called by other names such as "appraisal-respect" or "recognition", see (Darwall 1977; Honneth 1996; McBride 2013).

C2.P2 There are two conditions that should be satisfied by any overall account of what it is to give respect in that general sense (Pettit 2019). The first, analytical condition is that it should answer to commonly shared assumptions about respect to the point where the candidate it proposes does look like a deserver of the name: a suitable referent for the ordinary concept of respect. And the second, theoretical condition is that the candidate proposed should be a unified, suitably grounded kind of behavior; otherwise it will hardly pass muster as a significant normative kind.

C2.P3 This essay sketches an account of respect that is designed to meet these conditions; for reasons that appear in the last section, I describe it as a conversive theory. The focus is entirely on respect as an ethical ideal for how we as individuals should behave, not as a political ideal for how we as a community and state should act in imposing law on citizens, as all states do, in identifying the sort of law we should impose, and in relating to people in other societies. While the ideal is relevant in both contexts, we shall be concerned here only with the ethical.

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C2.P4 The essay is in three parts. In the first section, I introduce a brisk, analytical account of the various sorts of behavior or treatment that may count as respect-giving, under our ordinary concept of generic respect. Next, by way of background, I sketch a philosophical anthropology that makes much of the fact that we are conversational animals and can relate to one another in a manner inaccessible to other species. And then, in the third section, I draw on this anthropology to identify a conversive form of treatment that answers to our ordinary concept of respect, yet constitutes a significant normative kind: it explains the unity in the behaviors associated with respect and provides a plausible ground for the demand that we should respect one another as equals.

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C2.S2 # 1. The Ordinary Concept of Respect

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C2.P5 When we speak of respect in the generic sense—the sense in which we may be called upon to respect one another as equals—then we presumably share a cluster of assumptions about the sort of behavior that respect dictates, and share them as a matter of common awareness: we each work with the assumptions, expect each to work with them, expect each to expect this, and so on (Lewis 1969). Otherwise we would be speaking at cross purposes.

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C2.P6 The most basic assumption governing respect is the commonplace that it represents an important and appealing ideal for how we should treat one another, and we shall return to this at various points. Other assumptions show up in our habits of argument rather than as commonplaces and need some reflection to excavate. They are of three distinct kinds, relating to the constituency of agents among whom respect can be given and enjoyed; the modality in which behavior must deliver respect; and the sorts of behavior that respect rules out: the sorts that count as disrespectful. There is no commonly accepted assumption, it seems to me, as to what respect rules in, even respect at its best, and any satisfactory theory must deal with this if it is to represent respect as a significant normative kind.

C2.S3 1.1 Constituency Assumptions

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C2.P7 A first constituency assumption about respect suggests that only human beings can give or enjoy respect as equals. This is plausible in view of the fact that while we are undoubtedly obliged to treat other animals well, and while other animals can certainly enjoy that treatment, how we treat them can scarcely be cast as respecting them, let alone respecting them as equals with us. If it did, then it would not be a joke or an insult to say that I respect you as I respect my dog.

C2.P8 Can all human beings give and enjoy respect as equals, so that an all-claim figures alongside the only-claim as a second constituency assumption? Ordinary usage does not rule clearly on

this. In a common way of speaking, yes: we are often told we should respect people as equals independently of their level of development or capacity: that we should respect even the unborn in this way. But if respect is something that we can give to all human beings, regardless of age or ability, then it cannot be a very demanding form of treatment, contrary to the basic assumption that the ideal is normatively important and appealing.

C2.P9 In order to make respect as equals for all into a normatively demanding ideal, in accordance with this assumption, it makes sense to limit it to those, broadly speaking, who are adult and able-minded. Thus, the constituency assumptions would be, not that respect can be given and enjoyed amongst all and only human beings, but that it can be given and enjoyed amongst all and only those human beings who count as adult and able-minded.

C2.P10 Does limiting respect to the adult and able-minded serve other human beings badly? Does it count as objectionable on that count? Not necessarily. Consistently with limiting respect in this way, we can and endorse two plausible prescriptions that help to make the limitation more palatable. First, in determining the demands of respect with an individual or set of individuals of whom we know little in advance, we should always make a default assumption that they are adult and able-minded. And second, where we reject that default—where we opt out of the assumption that the people involved are suitably adult and able-minded—we should treat them in a manner that approximates as closely as possible to what respect as equals requires.[3]

[3] For a critique of qualifying the assumption in this way, see (Wolterstorff 2008: ch. 15). One issue that is ignored in this book is whether unborn children or fetuses should be treated as subjects of the state and how far they make demands on the state, particularly when those demands may conflict with the demands of the mother.

C2.P11 The claim, then, is that respect as equals, whatever behavior it involves, can be given and enjoyed among all, and among only, adult, able-minded human beings, or similar agents. While they may be subject to certain biases, blind spots, and obsessions, those to whom we give respect, and those from whom we expect respect, must generally live up to the expectations we hold of adult and able-minded human beings.

C2.P12 Do the all-claim and the only-claim exhaust the constituency assumptions relevant with respect? Well, there is a third assumption that might be added, although arguably it is implicit in the first two. This is the assumption that as an ideal of behavior, respecting others as equals is naturally taken as an ideal, not just for how I should treat you, or of how you should treat me, but of how we should treat each another. The ideal presents as an ideal of mutuality or reciprocity: an ideal, as we have been putting it, for how we adult, able-minded human beings should treat one another.

C2.P13 One question before moving on. Can respect be given by and to the corporate bodies that human beings form—the group agents that they constitute (List and Pettit 2011)—as well as by and to adult, able-minded individuals? Since they consist in individuals organized to act together in an open-ended range of contexts, corporate bodies will certainly have the same capacity as their individual members to give respect as equals to individuals. But because they are organizations of individuals, it is hard to see how respecting them as equals could come apart from respecting the members. And if it could—if the respect given to an organization might require failing to respect its members, or any other individuals—it is hard to see why the claim of the organization should trump that of the members. Thus, we may restrict the appropriate targets

of respect to adult, able-minded human beings—or strictly to any agents who are suitably similar—without any serious loss of generality.[4]

C2.S4

1.2 Modality Assumptions

C2.P14

Whatever behavior is involved in giving you respect as the equal of others, we would not respect you if we delivered that behavior opportunistically: that is, because it was convenient at the time, because you happened to please us on that occasion, because we were feeling good about the world, because it was a religious or national festival, or anything of that fortuitous sort. In order to give or show you respect, we need to deliver the respectful behavior just when some central conditions that make it appropriate are realized, and independently of variations in collateral conditions like those illustrated. We need to deliver it, not just in the actual situation, but robustly over circumstances where the central conditions remain in place, and other conditions—by definition, other collateral conditions—vary in no matter what manner.

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[4] What is required by respect in relation to corporate bodies, or among corporate bodies, will be fixed by what it requires in relation to individuals; whatever it requires on that front—say, whatever rights it requires us to give those bodies—will be something required as a means of respecting individuals. If respect for individuals is to be equal, however—if it is to constitute respect for individuals as equals in some independent regard—then that is likely to put severe constraints on the rights that we give corporate bodies. For the rights we grant them as a matter of respect will have to allow us to respect all relevant individuals as equals, where these include those outside such organizations as well as those within. Thus, we should not give rights to any corporate bodies that would disturb the equality we seek in our respect for individuals; see (Pettit 2015b).

C2.P15 The respect we give one another is a robustly demanding good in the way in which the friendship I may give you is robustly demanding. I do not give you friendship if I display friendly behavior, but only contingently on that being in my own interest, or to the advantage of a third party, or even for the good of humanity as a whole. I might count as a fair-weather friend but only in a sense in which that means a fake friend: someone who is not really a friend. Similarly, I do not give you respect if I offer you a suitable form of respect-related behavior, but only contingently on my convenience, your congeniality, or the alignment of the stars. Fair-weather respect, like fair-weather friendship, is fake: it is not an instance of respect at all.

C2.P16 Thus, if I give you friendship or respect on a given occasion, then it must be the case, not only that I behave in a manner characteristic of friendship or respect, but that I would still have done so had things remained the same in the conditions central to friendship or respect, varying only in collateral conditions. Each good is robustly or modally demanding in the sense of requiring not just that I act in such and such a way in actual circumstances but that I would have still acted that way under various counterfactual scenarios.

C2.P17 What are the conditions central to friendship or respect? Presumably, in the case of friendship: that you are a friend, by common criteria, who needs or seeks my help; that I have the capacity to deliver the assistance that you require; and that such assistance does not breach intuitively more important demands. And by parallel in the case of respect: that you are an adult, able-minded human being; that I have the capacity to deliver the behavior associated with respect; and that behaving in that way towards you is not trumped by the call of a greater good—say, that of saving some innocent lives.

C2.P18 Summing up this modality requirement, then, we can give you respect as an equal only insofar as we treat you in the way associated with respect, whatever that is; and only insofar as

we deliver that treatment robustly over the presence of conditions central to respect, and regardless of variation in other, collateral conditions. Or, putting the claim otherwise, we must deliver the required treatment whenever the reasons for respect are present—you are an adult, able-minded human being—and there is no excuse or justification for not doing so: no excuse that a lack of capacity would provide, no justification that a trumping good would furnish.

C2.P19 The modality assumptions we have been looking at imply that if I give you respect on a given occasion then I must act out of responsiveness to reasons of respect—if you like, out of a respectful disposition—at least when there is no compelling excuse or justification for not doing so. This in turn means that I must act intentionally when I do this: not out of a compulsive habit, for example, and not because I am chronically mistaken about who you are. If I behaved towards you on a non-intentional basis then I would not robustly act as required: I would not act robustly over variations on the situation where you remain an adult, able-minded human being, where there is nothing to block my capacity to act and no trumping good that would argue for my not acting in that way.

C2.P20 But the robustness assumptions also mean that I must act willingly or voluntarily in delivering the behavior associated with respect. I will act intentionally in doing something X insofar as I do so on the basis of suitable beliefs about X and suitable desires for something that answers to those beliefs. But I will act willingly or voluntarily only if I do not do so for want, as it seems, of a comparatively acceptable alternative: I do not do so only because of regarding the apparent alternatives as unacceptable. On a plausible analysis of the idea, such alternatives will

be unacceptable to the extent that, by ordinary criteria, they are so costly that I could not plausibly be held responsible—commended or censured—for choosing X instead.[5]

C2.P21 The reason I must act willingly as well as intentionally in delivering the behavior associated with respect is that, as in the intentionality case, the unwilling or involuntary delivery of that behavior would not be suitably robust. If unwilling, then I act towards you in that way only because I take the apparent alternatives to be comparatively unacceptable. But that means that I might not act in that way under variations to the actual circumstances in which the alternatives become acceptable, even attractive. It means that in acting in the manner associated with respect, I do so quite contingently on the absence of a suitable alternative, and not in the robust manner that respect requires.

C2.P22 In the ordinary case where I willingly behave towards you as respect requires, there will be comparatively acceptable alternatives that I turn my back on: alternatives in which I treat you badly. But it is worth noticing that even if there are no such alternatives—even if, for example, any failure to behave appropriately would attract a legal penalty—still I may willingly or

[5] This account of voluntariness converges in many respects with that of (Olsaretti 2004) but not in all. First, it requires only that there be a comparatively acceptable alternative option; this allows for the fact that as between two equally unacceptable options—say, the options in Sophie's choice—I will voluntarily choose whichever one I select. Second, the account relies on the practice of holding someone responsible in order to determine whether a burden or other factor should count as making an alternative unacceptable. And third, the account allows the alternative to be merely apparent, in order to license Frankfurt's (1969) observation that I might reasonably be blamed for doing something objectionable—and I might be taken to have acted voluntarily—just so long as I thought, perhaps mistakenly, that there was an acceptable alternative.

voluntarily give you the benefit of that behavior. I will do so insofar as it is not the absence of an acceptable alternative that prompts my action but the reasons of respect to which I am responsive.

C2.P23 One final observation, before leaving this topic. Giving you respect intentionally and willingly does not require that I exercise deliberative control over what I do, thinking explicitly about the pros and cons and opting willingly for the required behavior. I may act on the basis of an unthinking habit or disposition—on the basis of an unreflective sensitivity to reasons of respect—and yet act intentionally and willingly. I will do so if I manifest the disposition under a suitable, standby, or virtual form of intentional control.

C2.P24 I would enjoy standby control under three conditions. One, the disposition issues spontaneously in suitable behavior when I register the relevant considerations—in the case of respect, that you are an adult, able-minded human being—and when there is no compelling excuse or justification for not acting on them; I do not think about any other considerations, pro or con. Two, a red flag would normally go up—a prompt would catch my attention—if other considerations were relevant: if something was likely to get in the way of the action or, more plausibly, if there were trumping goods that the action would jeopardize. Three, I would respond to a red flag of that kind by rethinking the situation and acting as deliberation supports.

C2.P25 Suppose, for example, that when considerations of respect argue for truthfulness, I am disposed unthinkingly to tell the truth to anyone seeking information. I would still tell the truth intentionally and willingly in such a case, if the manifestation of the disposition were conditional on the absence of a red flag; if I was disposed to think again on noticing such a prompt and to tell the truth only if doing so was well supported by untrumped reasons on which I remain capable of acting. Thus, I would balk if it appeared that the person asking me about the whereabouts of a

friend was a would-be murderer: the request would raise a red flag, directing me to the trumping good of saving life, and prompting me to think again about what to do.

C2.S5

2. Behavioral Assumptions

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C2.P26

The behaviors that respect rules out, by common assumption, fall into two broad categories that are quite different from each another. If we are to count as respecting you then, first, we should not intrude in various ways within an area that by shared, perhaps legally enunciated criteria—these may be culturally variable—is a domain of personal choice; and second, we should not demote you in any of a number of ways to what by received—but perhaps also variable—criteria is a second-class status.[6] The first sort of disrespectful behavior involves restriction, as we may put it, the second relegation.

C2.P27

Before turning to the distinction between restrictive and relegating behavior, however, we should notice that there are three conditions that such behavior must satisfy, if it is to count as disrespectful. The first is that it should be voluntarily imposed, the second that it should be involuntarily undergone, and the third that it is not perpetrated in punishment or retaliation, under locally accepted standards, for a recognized offense of some sort.

C2.P28

Having stipulated that the behavior of giving you respect on any occasion must be voluntary, it follows that in order to be disrespectful, our behavior on that occasion must also be voluntary; each option, the one respectful and the other not, must be comparatively acceptable to a degree that gives us a choice between them. Where being respectful requires the robust delivery of

[6] The law will identify the domain of personal choice in any culture insofar as it establishes our basic, protected liberties (Pettit 2012; 2014).

suitable behavior, however, being disrespectful does not require robustness of a parallel kind. It merely requires a failure to provide respect robustly and that failure may be contingent on quite specific conditions: it may occur, for example, only because of a contingent impulse or temptation that we suffer.[7]

C2.P29 But not only must any form of behavior be voluntarily imposed by the offender, if it is to count as disrespectful; in addition, it must not be voluntarily permitted by the subject: in that sense, it must be involuntarily undergone. If you choose to submit to the behavior in question, and do so willingly—refusing is a comparatively acceptable alternative—then I can hardly be said to act disrespectfully in delivering that behavior. *Injuria non fit volenti*, in an old legal mantra: no wrong is done to someone who willingly agrees to it—or at least agrees to it at the time, not on some past, potentially regretted occasion.

C2.P30 The third condition that restriction or relegation must satisfy if it to count as disrespectful is that it is not imposed as a form of punishment or retaliation, according to locally accepted standards, for a previous offense. Assuming the punishment is not extremely unjust, by our lights—say, because of the injustice of the law or because of a genuine mistake in the proceeding against the offender—it would be hard for us to cast it as disrespectful.

C2.P31 Back now to restrictive and relegating behavior. What forms of behavior on our part would count as restrictive in a way that is hostile to respecting you? In one way or another, they are all forms of what is often described as interference. We may interfere with you in a choice, whether

[7] This is an instance of a general asymmetry between good and evil (Pettit 2015a) and explains why it is easier to force someone to display a lack of respect than it is to force them to display respect.

overtly or covertly, in any of three ways: by *removing* an option from the choice; by *replacing* the option by an alternative; or by *misrepresenting* the options to you (Pettit 2014: ch. 2).

C2.P32 These modes of interference each cover a great variety of ways in which we may restrict you. Thus, we may remove an option from a choice in a particularly drastic way by incapacitating you from choosing anything—at the limit, killing you—by undermining your deliberative capacity, by pre-empting you in making the choice on your behalf (Shiffrin 2000), or by giving the choice to a third person as in the paradigmatically paternalist query: "Does he take sugar?" Again, we may replace an option, whether covertly or overtly, by imposing or threatening a penalty or even by forcibly imposing a reward. And we may misrepresent an option by deceiving you about relevant facets of the world, by making a bluff but still credible threat, or by manipulating in some way your perception or understanding of how things stand.

C2.P33 It is worth noting that these sorts of restriction or interference contrast with some other modes of influencing you that do not have the same disrespectful character. The main example is the offer, as when we offer you a reward for taking one or another option in the choice. Provided that this really is a reward that you may accept or reject, as you wish, and provided it does not mesmerize you in the manner of a drink offered to an alcoholic—it does not undermine your deliberative capacity—such an offer will increase the options available to you in the choice and can hardly count as restricting you disrespectfully.

C2.P34 Another mode of influencing you that is not strictly disrespectful, although it has an underhand character, is the nudge, as it has been called (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Nudging involves organizing the options in a choice so as to increase the likelihood of your making a particular choice, without removing, replacing, or misrepresenting any option. Thus, we may give you a choice between X and Y in which the default is X and you have to opt out of that

default to select Y, or in which the default is Y and you have to opt out of it in order to select X. People tend to go with the default option, and so we may nudge you to choose one or the other by setting up the options appropriately. Would nudging you in that way amount to disrespect? Not, plausibly, under two conditions: we have no alternative but to establish one default structure or the other; and we do not mislead you by the structure we establish: we do not suggest, for example, that the default option carries no risk of danger, when actually it does.

C2.P35 The second broad mode of behavior that respect rules out is relegation, as we called it. The prime example here is where we boycott or shun or ostracize you, abjuring any sort of exchange or interaction. If we do this voluntarily, without your consent, and not by way of imposing an accepted form of punishment or retaliation, then we will certainly count by ordinary criteria as behaving disrespectfully towards you. We will deny you a place in community with us, treating you as unworthy of acceptance.

C2.P36 Short of outright ostracism, we may relegate you in any of a range of ways. We may cast you or treat you in a reified or commodified fashion, say as merely an object of sexual interest. We may expose you to ridicule, humiliating you publicly. We may just speak about you to others as if you weren't there in the way traditional masters treated servants and slaves. Or we may slander you, with or without your knowledge, in a manner that is likely to compromise how you relate to others. There is no end to the different, nuanced ways in which we may behave disrespectfully without actually interfering in any of your choices.

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C2.P37 One striking, perhaps surprising way in which we may relegate you reflects the commonly made remark that blaming another for what they did, showing resentment or indignation at their behavior, is actually a way of respecting them. It treats that person, after all, as someone there is hope of redeeming: someone whose behavior is not something to which we just have to reconcile

ourselves. If this is so, then we may behave disrespectfully towards you by treating you as beneath contempt: beneath a threshold such that, as we believe, there is no point, certainly no reformatory point, in censuring you—or of course commending you—for your actions.

C2.P38 Do we relegate you, and treat you disrespectfully, if we discriminate against you and in favor of others? The answer takes one form if we take the "we" to refer to us as several individuals, as in the ethical theory at the focus of this paper, and another if we take it to refer to us as a community, acting in political organization though a state. As individuals we may discriminate in favor of our family or friends, without counting as disrespectful of those we neglect; this is because many of the roles we assume as individuals involve a partiality to a selected few. But as a community we are under a presumptive obligation to treat citizens equally and in that role we would certainly show disrespect by certain forms of discrimination. This is worth noting, although we do not pursue it further in this essay, where the focus is on ethics rather than politics.

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C2.P39 The upshot of this discussion is that, under the ordinary concept of generic respect, it rules out two sorts of behavior, restrictive and relegating, at least when they are voluntarily pursued, and involuntarily undergone. But two notes in conclusion.

C2.P40 The first is that the sort of restriction and relegation outlawed by the notion of respect may be retail or wholesale in character. It may be practiced against an individual in their own right or it may be practiced against one or more individuals—and effectively against a group—in virtue of a common identity, whether of gender, religion, ethnicity, or whatever. We may treat you disrespectfully in this manner in virtue of treating anyone of your identity in that way.

C2.P41 The second note worth adding is that while respect rules out actual restriction or relegation in how we treat those with whom we have contact, it also imposes requirements in the case of

persons whom we have no opportunity to restrict or relegate. We can't be said to behave respectfully towards them, just because the absence of opportunity ensures that we don't actually impose restriction or relegation on them. But still, we can be said to respect them insofar as we meet a further condition. This is that we robustly avoid restricting or relegating them. Even in this no-contact case, respect rules out something: holding an attitude of disrespect and not being disposed to avoid restriction and relegation, should the opportunity for imposing them arise. Thus, in line with common assumptions, that we can give disrespectful or respectful treatment, not just to people with whom we actually interact, but also to people with whom it is unlikely we ever will.

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C2.S6

3. A Philosophical Anthropology

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3.1 A Starting Point

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C2.S7

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The constituency, behavior, and robustness assumptions about respect give us constraints that we may expect any theory of respect to satisfy: any theory, that is, which deserves to be called a theory of respect, as distinct from a theory of something else. But where to start in generating potential candidates for satisfiers of those assumptions? Where to find the materials out of which we might hope to generate an account that makes respect into a significant normative kind?

C2.P43

Whatever makes it possible for us adult and able-minded human beings to give and receive respect, it is something that marks us off from other animals. For, as we have seen, the constituency assumptions imply that whereas this is possible between us, it is not possible for other animals, even animals of impressive cognitive abilities and appealing social dispositions. We should certainly treat other animals well, by any plausible account of normative demands,

and we should take account of their environmental requirements. But such a concern for animal welfare, so the assumption goes, does not amount to a concern for showing them respect.

C2.P44 What is it about human beings, then, that makes it possible for us to give and enjoy respect as equals? The feature of human beings that marks us off most sharply from other species is the fact that we communicate with one another in a distinctive manner, and do so by means of recursive, indefinitely flexible languages. However sophisticated communication is in other species, and whatever the intricacies of the symbols it deploys, it lacks the characteristic features of communication in natural language (Scott-Phillips 2015). This suggests that we should look at language and communication to see whether it is our being conversational creatures that makes respect relevant.

C2.P45 We human beings often use language in ways that are not primarily communicative, as when we make jokes or trade insults. Such uses of language presuppose more standard communication, however, and our focus will be on language that is primarily communicative. But we often use communicative language in a strategic, even deceptive fashion, seeking to advance our own ends, while pretending to be cooperative speakers. That would only be possible, however, if in the general run we were cooperative speakers, and we may concentrate here on such cooperative as well as communicative exchange. A good word for such exchange is the older word "converse" and a good name for speakers who are cooperative in that manner is "conversive."

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C2.S8 ## 3.2 Intentional, Overt Communication

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C2.P46 In conversive communication, you and I intentionally and manifestly transmit information, or what we as speakers take to be information, by means of conventional words that are organized under conventional rules. The information I convey in such an act may be about our shared

world or about one or other of my attitudes towards that world: about a belief, for example, a preference, or an intention. On a now standard style of analysis of communication, I use my words with the primary intention of conveying that information to an audience; and with the secondary intention of achieving that result by making my primary intention salient to them: by getting them to infer its presence (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Grice 1989). Moreover, I do all of this in an overt manner, which does not hide what is going on and thereby enable me to deny later that I acted on such an intention (Strawson 1964; Neale 1992: 550).

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C2.P47 The provision against hiding what is going on, and indeed the role of the primary and secondary intentions, can be explained by example. Consider a case where I intend you to recognize that I want you to refill my glass with wine, as in the primary intention; and, acting on the secondary intention, I put the glass where you cannot help but notice that it is empty, thereby conveying my primary intention. But I do this in a way that gives me deniability, should I be accused of looking for another drink. I get across the message that I want more wine, and that I want you to recognize and presumably respond to this desire, but I do so in a way that hides the fact that I am messaging you. Wanting to maintain the facade of being more or less indifferent to alcohol or of not being someone who would pressure a host, I suppress the fact that I am sending you that message.

C2.P48 This example suggests that in conversive communication, unlike this example, I not only act on the primary and secondary intentions mentioned; I do so in a way that does not hide those intentions. In full dress mode, I may want the intentions to be a matter of common awareness or common ground: to be such that each of us is in a position to be aware of the intentions, in a position to be aware that each is aware of them, and so on in the usual hierarchy (Lewis 1969).

C2.P49 There is no evidence that other animals pursue this sort of communication, let alone that they do so in the infinitely nuanced ways that language makes possible.[8] This suggests the possibility that it may be access to communication in natural language that makes human beings into subjects among whom respect has a natural place.

C2.P50 The suggestion is supported by the range of capacities that, as it turns out, language ensures we must have. As we will now see, language enables us human beings to make up our own minds, not just to have our minds made up for us unconsciously in a way that we cannot monitor or control. And as a result of that effect, language provides us with a special means of mutual influence, enabling us to communicate our minds in a way that makes us conversable—that is, accessible to one another's understanding—and in a commissive manner that makes us highly credible as interlocutors.

C2.S9 4. Making up Our Minds

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C2.P51 Given how it has been favored in natural and social selection, language presumably works reliably as a means of communicating our attitudes towards one another. Thus, when you or I carefully and truthfully make an assertion about what is the case, we must normally have or form the corresponding belief; and equally when we make a careful, truthful assertion about what seems attractive or imperative, we must normally have the corresponding preference or intention. There must be a general congruence between word and mind.

[8] As Richard Moore (2017) argues, however, it may be that non-human animals can do something—say, make a gesture—that adumbrates human communication.

C2.P52 When we make such assertions we will presumably rely on the data at our disposal in the case of belief, the relevant desiderata—the sorts of properties we find moving—in the case of preference and intention; we will not generally do so by seeking to scan and report on the attitudes directly. And so, given the congruence of word and mind, the exercise of registering those data and desiderata must generally be matched by the existence of corresponding attitudes, whether or not it calls the attitudes into existence.

C2.P53 This congruence between speech acts and mental attitudes is bound to be salient to all and implies that as we can intentionally set out to determine what to say, reflecting on data or desiderata, so at the same time we can set out to determine what attitude to hold. And that in turn means that we can make up our minds about what to believe on some question, what to prefer among certain scenarios, what to intend and choose among certain options, and so on.

C2.P54 We cannot decide to believe that p, of course, but we can decide whether or not to form an attitude of belief towards the proposition. We can decide to research and think about the data relevant to whether we should assert sincerely that p or that not p—whether or not we should assent to the proposition or its negation—or should reserve judgment. And in deciding about what, if anything, to assent to, we decide about what, if anything, to believe. Equally we can decide to research and think about the desiderata relevant to whether we should sincerely express a preference for A over B or an intention to do X rather than not-X.

Commented [KR4]: As we always have 'not p', should we have 'not X' here?

C2.P55 On all these fronts, then, we can make up our minds intentionally and do not have to rely exclusively on the automatic and unconscious updating of our attitudes. We will depend on such updating in our unthinking moments, of course, and these may consume most of our lives. But apparently unlike other animals, we can often suspend that sub-personal process and intentionally seek to let the data or desiderata prompt beliefs or desires or intentions in us.

5. From Conversive to Conversable

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C2.S10

C2.P56 That language is functional not only implies that we can make up our minds. It implies in addition that the words we use, the sentences we form, and the utterances we make bear more or less common meanings and are employed to common purposes, being constrained by community-wide conventions; otherwise there could be no reliable communication (Lewis 1969). This in turn means that we can establish shared standards governing what data make a given, commonly understood assertion—and the corresponding belief—intelligible and defensible. And it is surely inevitable that we will establish standards of this kind.

C2.P57 This is inevitable, at least, on the plausible assumption that there are data that govern what we can assert defensibly—these we try to track in being careful about what we say—and that what is defensible for me is defensible for you: that the same data should push us, if we are careful, in the same direction. With common standards of this cognitive kind in play, we will be in a position to prove ourselves conversable: capable of being moved by one another's testimony to register novel data or to take more care over data already recognized.

C2.P58 What holds for data and belief is also likely to hold for desiderata and preference, and indeed for desiderata and intention. Even when we differ in particular tastes and feelings, the relative uniformity of human nature suggests that at some level there will be a commonality in our motivating attitudes. If you have a taste for wine and I a taste for beer, there will be at least this commonality between us: that we are each motivated to prefer the drink that answers to our particular palate. And in other cases, the uniformity of human nature suggests that there may be an even more basic commonality in place: that as you are moved, for example, by a property like security or excitement, fidelity or honesty, esteem or fame—as that property plays a role in leading you to prefer bearers to otherwise similar non-bearers—so the same is likely to be true of

me. Such commonalities being available, it is intelligible that as we establish standards of conversability in response to data, so we will establish standards of conversability in response to desiderata.

C2.P59 It is not only intelligible that we should establish standards of conversability in attitudes of belief, preference, and intention, and indeed in other attitudes too; there is also evidence that we actually do this, recognizing suitable standards as a matter of common awareness. That evidence consists in the fact that we take a very distinctive attitude to those who do not conform to certain standards: those who prove unconversable. Let someone hold that an elderly aunt is a communist but be unable to provide a shred of evidence or data in support, and we will take the claim as an aberration, or doubt their very rationality: doubt that they can be reached by any sort of demonstration or testimony, however compelling (Dennett 1979). Let someone claim to want a saucer of mud but be utterly incapable of citing anything about that object, or the use they might make of it, that might constitute a plausible desideratum, and we will have a similar reaction (Anscombe 1957).

C2.P60 With common standards of mutual conversability in place, we can aspire to help one another to make up our minds as well as making up our own. I can enter conversation or discourse in which I put novel data or desiderata before you, or draw attention to the unnoticed implications of existing data or desiderata, thereby hoping to change your mind. And as I can do this for you, so you can do it for me. We achieve a position in which we can combine our efforts and form a common mind on various theoretical issues of belief, various practical issues of preference and intention.

C2.S11 ## 6. From Conversable to Commissive

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C2.P61 But language does even more than enable us to make up our own minds and help us to make up our minds together. It also enables us to recognize that as conversable subjects we can communicate our minds to one another with a very special authority. When I make up my mind that something is the case, that something is attractive, or that something is the thing to do, I can know my mind—I can know what I believe or prefer or intend—just in virtue of knowing what I do in assenting to the associated proposition or proposal. And, assuming that I perform that act of assent with care—assuming that I attend fully to the data or desiderata on offer—I will have excellent grounds for taking myself to have the corresponding belief or preference or intention.[9]

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C2.P62 Given this practical mode in which I can know what I believe or prefer or intend, I can speak with a special authority on the presence of such a state. I do not have to rely on scanning my own mind introspectively, or on looking like an observer at what I say or do. I do not have to review such evidence about my own mind, as I might have to review the evidence about the mind of another, and do not run the risk of getting that evidence wrong: that is, of being misled by the mind I survey. Hence, I am in a position to convey the attitudes I hold without reporting on them as I might have to report on the attitudes of another.

C2.P63 Were I to report on my attitudes as I might report on the attitudes of another, then there would be two salient ways in which I might later excuse a misreport, seeking to get you not to discount me as an interlocutor: seeking to avoid a reputational loss that might have costly implications for me in future relationships with you or your associates. I might explain that my

[9] On the assumption that I can know the nature of the sort of mental act involved, see Pettit (2016; 2018a).

mind had been misleading, as evidence is always likely to be misleading. Or I might explain that I changed my mind since speaking with you.

C2.P64 The fact, manifest on all sides, that I do not have to rely on evidence about my own mind to be able to convey my attitudes—the fact that I can know those attitudes in virtue of having made up my mind about them—means that I can speak with a special authority about them. I can avow a belief or a desire or an intention, as we may say, rather than merely reporting it. I can choose to convey the attitude in a manner that communicates that I am not making that claim just on the basis of introspective or behavioral evidence; and that I am therefore foreclosing the possibility that I might later excuse a miscommunication by saying that I was misled about my own mind. Among the salient excuses, the only explanation that will be available to me is to claim, however plausibly, that I changed my mind since speaking. Thus, I will be in a position to communicate my attitudes to you on the basis of an assurance about them that a third person could not feel.

C2.P65 You will have a special reason to trust what I say in such an avowal. By choosing to avow the attitude I will have chosen to raise the reputational stakes. For, as a matter accessible to common awareness, I will have exposed myself to a greater chance of reputational loss than if I had played safe and made clear that I was reporting it: I will have put aside the possibility of explaining a miscommunication by invoking the misleading-mind excuse. And by choosing to raise the stakes, exposing myself to a greater chance of loss, I will have made my words more credible. I will have given you special reason to trust me when I speak for myself in the manner of an avowal.

C2.P66 Not only may I raise the stakes in communicating my attitudes by choosing to avow them. With intentions, I may go even further and choose to put aside the changed-mind excuse as well. I may not just avow an intention to be in my usual place beside you at tonight's football game,

which would allow me to excuse a failure to turn up by explaining that I changed my mind. I may pledge the intention by using the words associated with promises as distinct from predictions: by saying "You can depend on me; I'll be there" or indeed "I promise or pledge to be there." Conscious that a pledge will activate the desideratum of wanting to prove myself a person whose word is reliable, I can rely on that very desideratum to keep me faithful to the pledge.[10]

C2.P67 If I pledge the intention to be at the game—if I pledge, equivalently, to act on the intention—I will manifestly put aside the possibility of appealing to the changed-mind as the well as the misleading-mind excuse for not turning up. I may still be able to excuse a failure to turn up by appealing to a practical as distinct from an epistemic excuse, as in claiming that I broke a leg and cannot be held responsible for the failure. But going beyond a report or an avowal to a pledge can make your assurance doubly, if not triply assured, foreclosing standard epistemic excuses; it can enable you generally to take me at my word: a word, as we say in the case of pledges, that I will have given you.

C2.P68 These observations about how we may communicate our attitudes to one another imply that not only are we conversable as subjects, we are also commissive. Not only can we aspire to make up one another's minds, we can also rely on being able to communicate our attitudes credibly, raising the stakes in the sort of commitment exemplified by avowals and pledges. In those cases, we do not speak about ourselves in the manner of detached reporters who can readily excuse any failure of communication. We speak for ourselves in a way that puts our reputation on the line

[10] I will not be able to pledge a belief or preference, for I can rely on myself to maintain a belief or a preference only if I can rely on the world—which I will not be able to do—to keep the data and desiderata relevant to such an attitude in place.

and makes us capable of getting one another to rely on our respective words and to build relationships on the basis of that mutual trust.

C2.S12

7. Towards a Theory of Respect

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C2.S13

7.1 Conversive Exchange

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C2.P69

The considerations rehearsed in the last section direct us to a distinctive form of influence that we human beings can seek and exercise over one another. This is the influence that we seek in converse with one another.

C2.P70

Conversing with you involves inviting you to form this or that attitude, or perform this or that action, on the basis of the data or desiderata we bring to your attention and the commitments we make to holding corresponding attitudes. In those overtures, we communicate things about the world, ideally in search of agreement, and commissively back ourselves to display corresponding attitudes: this, on pain of bearing a special cost for proving to have miscommunicated them. And in doing that, of course, we manifestly seek and expect reciprocation and, in the event of difference or distrust, negotiation about any issues that divide us.

C2.P71

Consider how a conversive exchange is likely to evolve. I assert that something is the case, thereby avowing the belief that that is so, and invite you implicitly to go along, treating the proposition as something avowed in our common name. If you go along, that will presumably be because you have access to some confirming—or at least, to no infirming—evidence, so that the ground for thinking things are thus and so firms up as common ground. Assuming you do go along, you or I may then seek to add to that common ground, making a further assertion and

inviting the other to go along with it in turn and thereby build up a body of co-avowed beliefs. And if you or I do not go along at any point, then the objection raised will prompt us to retreat to a less contentious claim on which we converge, and then to explore how far we may take it as the starting point for extending the common ground. All going well, we may expect to end up with a picture of things that we commonly endorse.

C2.P72 Conversive exchange is likely to involve, not just the attempt to build up a shared, well-tested view of the world, but also, in parallel, an attempt to establish mutual understanding and reliance between us, and to initiate or maintain some common projects. Apart from avowing various beliefs in asserting would-be facts about the world, I will also be likely to avow certain desires and intentions, as we converse with one another, and even to pledge myself to various intentions and actions. And in doing this, I will give you reason to treat this communication about myself as credible, and to rely on my preserving the attitudes conveyed. If you respond with reciprocal commitments, whether in accepting my claims or negotiating about details, then the prospect is that we will be able to achieve a degree of mutual reliance and relationship that is to the benefit of each.[11]

C2.P73 Converse, as these brief comments indicate, holds out the win-win prospect of long-term, mutually beneficial coordination, on the basis of relatively firm and common ground, whether among couples or multiples of individuals. And yet it can materialize, assuming the exchange is not contaminated by other elements, on a voluntary, take-it-or-leave it basis, without anyone

[11] This characterization of conversive exchange, which is elaborated in Pettit 2018a, builds on Robert Stalnaker's work on assertion (1978), and David Lewis's on score-keeping in a language game (1983: ch. 13). For some imaginative applications and developments of the approach shared between Lewis and Stalnaker, see Langton (2009), including the chapter jointly written with Caroline West.

attempting to give others little or no choice in the matter: this, for example, by making various options comparatively unacceptable.

C2.P74 Conversive exchange enables human beings—or at least adult and able-minded human beings—to influence one another in a manner that is just not possible with other animals. Since it is a form of mutually beneficial, unforced influence it has obvious appeal. And that raises a salient possibility. Might conversive exchange provide us with the material out of which to build a theory that makes respect into a significant normal kind? We now explore that question by looking, first, at whether conversive exchange is sufficient for respect and, second, at whether it is necessary.

C2.S14 8. Is Converse Sufficient for Respect?

C2.P75 If we treat you conversively, do we therefore give you respect? The question needs to be explored in light of the assumptions built into the ordinary concept of respect, as listed in the first section. These are: the basic assumption that respect is an important and appealing relationship and then the three sets of assumption bearing respectively on the constituency, the modality, and the behavior associated with respect.

C2.P76 In treating you conversively, we will certainly treat you in a manner that has normative appeal, to take the basic assumption. We will offer you a form of treatment that has two powerfully attractive features. First, it elicits the responses sought only insofar as you are willing to give those responses on an unforced, voluntary basis. And second, it promises to establish firm and common ground between us, to give us reliable access to one another's attitudes, and thereby to facilitate various forms of coordination and relationship.

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C2.P77 If we treat you conversively, to move to the constituency assumptions, will we treat you in a way that presupposes that both we and you are adult, able-minded human beings? Yes, of course. It is only adult, able-minded communicators, after all, who are going to be capable of giving or enjoying conversive interaction. All such agents, moreover, are going to be capable of this, so that the all-assumption is satisfied as well as the only-assumption. And so too is the third, mutuality assumption: if conversive behavior is appealing, then mutually conversive behavior is bound to be appealing as well; indeed, it is not clear that converse in the strict sense is even appropriate in dealing with someone who does not offer responses.

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C2.P78 If we treat you conversively, however, we may do so in a way that fails the modality assumptions. For while we can hardly converse with you without acting intentionally and in the normal case voluntarily, we can certainly converse without doing so robustly. We may be prepared to treat you conversively only when that appeals on collateral grounds: only when it is in our interest, it serves some independent project we espouse, or whatever. We may not be ready to treat you in that way just on the basis that: first, you are an adult, able-minded human being; second, we are capable of acting conversively towards you; and, third, the appeal of converse is not eclipsed by a more important consideration.

C2.P79 But while opportunistic converse is not sufficient for respect, we can easily rectify the shortfall. We can stipulate that the conversive treatment that suffices for respect must satisfy a suitable robustness condition. That stipulation need not be arbitrary, as Hegel's tale of the master and the slave indicates. The master cannot relate to the slave in the conversive, reciprocal manner he envisages because, as a matter available in common to each, no conversive overture could satisfy robustness. It will be clear to each that as a master he is liable at any point where he disagrees with the slave to exit the rules of the conversive game and employ force or threat

instead. And that being so, the slave is going to have to watch what he or she says and make sure to keep the master sweet, in which case the interaction is no longer properly conversive.

C2.P80 We stipulate here that the treatment we provide for one another, acting as individuals, must be suitably robust. But can this requirement be satisfied in the absence of a suitable rule of law, limiting the power of someone like the master in Hegel's example? Can it be satisfied in the absence of a suitable political order? Almost certainly not, since however well-disposed they are, those with the sort of power approximating that of Hegel's master may not be able to renounce that power reliably: certainly not reliably enough to make the renunciation credible to those against whom it can be used. That argues that we as a community or state must act to support interpersonal respect by introducing laws that guard against the power of such figures. In line with our general practice in this paper, however, we ignore that political issue here.

C2.P81 Coming now to behavioral assumptions, the question is this: If we treat you in a robustly conversive way, is that sufficient for giving you respect? Does it rule out restricting your personal choices or relegating you in status? Yes, I shall argue, it does.

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C2.P82 Any social practice whatsoever, including the practice of converse, will rule out various activities in either or both of two ways: by precluding them as inconsistent with its presumptive goal or by prohibiting them on the basis of its rules. Consider the example of law. The law precludes arbitrary decision-making, because the point of law by almost all accounts is to make public decisions conform to general patterns, not to be generated in an ad hoc way. But the law prohibits other activities in quite a distinct sense—that in which the rules of the law indict

them—and in that sense it may not explicitly prohibit arbitrary decision-making by the authorities.[12]

C2.P83 Conversive practice precludes various forms of restriction or interference, because of its presumptive rationale in allowing a form of mutual influence that is voluntarily endorsed by participants. Thus, it obviously precludes our removing a particular option from among those in the range of your personal choice, as in the exercise of force. And it precludes our imposing a penalty on an option, or threatening to do so in order to put you off it. True, in communicating such a threat, we rely partly on conversive measures but taken as a whole the intervention is precluded by conversive exchange; it is inimical to the voluntariness that converse embodies.

C2.P84 As conversive practice precludes these forms of restriction, so it precludes various forms of relegation too. Conversing with you you precludes boycotting or shunning or ostracizing you. It precludes reifying or commodifying you, as in treating you as just an object of sexual interest. It precludes publicly humiliating you. And, of course, it precludes putting you beyond the reach of censure and commendation, since that means refusing to treat you as someone who can be held to their commitments. Such activities, like the restrictive initiatives illustrated, are simply incompatible with conversive purposes.

C2.P85 Like any social practice, conversive exchange is going to introduce rules that are implicitly understood by all participants. The rules will be conveyed by the expectations they hold about one another in such a way that they are liable to exit or defect if the expectations are unfulfilled;

[12] For a similar distinction about what rationality rules out, although not framed in these terms, see Broome (2013).

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these are expectations, as we may say, to which they hold one another. As conversive exchange precludes various forms of restriction and relegation, so its implicit rules prohibit others.[13]

C2.P86 Conversive rules certainly prohibit lying to you or relying on essentially hidden manipulative effects in order to misdirect you. Every act of converse purports to be truthful and to rely for its acceptance only on your trust. If you discover that we were deceptive or manipulative, therefore, you will naturally complain or withdraw. And that shows that deception and manipulation is prohibited by the rules of converse: the rules implicit in the practice. In a similar fashion, the rules of converse also prohibit the sort of relegation implied in our speaking about you as if you were not there, or indeed in our slandering you openly or behind your back; in each case you will reasonably feel that we have breached an expectation associated with our purporting to converse with you.

C2.S15 9. Is Converse Necessary for Respect?

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C2.P87 These observations suggest that treating you in a robustly conversive fashion ensures, in the manner of a sufficient condition, that we treat you with respect. It ensures that our behavior counts as respectful by the assumptions that shape our ordinary concept of respect: the basic assumption that respect is a normative ideal as well as the constituency, the modality, and the behavioral assumptions. But while this robustly conversive treatment is sufficient for respect, it clearly fails to be necessary.

[13] Paul Grice gives an account of four sorts of maxims satisfied, as he thinks, in cooperative or non-misleading exchange. His rules are prohibitive in our sense but focus mainly on rules that speakers must follow if they are not to mislead their hearers (Grice 1975).

C2.P88 A first reason why it fails to be necessary is that there are many non-conversive ways of behaving towards you that are consistent with our still respecting you. Examples might be cajoling or teasing you, hanging out with you, or just going for a walk together. To think that we were not displaying respect just because we were involved in such non-conversive activities would be absurd. Whereas respect is ubiquitous in human interaction, converse is confined to very particular contexts and exchanges.

C2.P89 The treatment illustrated by the examples contrasts in a marked way with the anti-conversive forms of treatment considered above. Unlike the varieties of restriction and relegation that we looked at, they are neither precluded nor prohibited by conversive practice. We may describe them, as indeed we may describe conversive initiatives themselves, as pro-conversive in character. That directs us to a possible adjustments for getting beyond the problem that they raise. This would be to say that while robustly conversive treatment is sufficient but not necessary for respect, robustly pro-conversive treatment satisfies both the sufficiency and the necessity conditions.

C2.P90 Still, this is not quite right either. For by our earlier observations, we may respect you, even in the case where we haven't met you, are very unlikely to meet you, and barely know of your existence. It would be extremely misleading to say that despite this absence of contract, we can treat you pro-conversively, let alone treat you robustly in that way.

C2.P91 This problem too is also resolvable by means of an adjustment that starts from the notion of converse. Even in the case considered, there is a weaker condition satisfied there that is also satisfied when we relate to you in a robustly conversive or just robustly pro-conversive way. This is that we robustly avoid anti-conversive treatment of the kind exemplified by restriction and relegation. We avoid treating you anti-conversively, in other words, not just because we happen

actually not to have contact with you; we avoid that sort of treatment robustly over variations on actual circumstances where there is opportunity and even incentive to restrict or relegate you. We respect you in this limit case in the sense that we would not opt for anti-conversive treatment if the chance came our way.

C2.S16

10. The Conversive Theory and Its Appeal

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C2.P92

If we make the two adjustments required to avoid the necessity problems, then we can offer a theory of respect that still makes converse central. The theory links robustly conversive interaction canonically with respect insofar as it implies that were such interaction impossible for creatures like us, there would be little or no room for the concept of respect: It would have no role to play. But despite that canonical linkage, the theory allows that in the absence of converse, or even of the opportunity for conversing, there remain requirements that respect imposes. It requires us in the absence of converse, to treat others in a robustly pro-conversive way. And it requires us in the absence of any opportunity for converse, to avoid anti-conversive treatment robustly: to take it off the table of possibilities.

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We can sum up these observations in the claim that respect requires us to treat others as conversable, indeed to treat them as equally conversable. The idea of treating others as conversable fit with what we need. It requires us to act according to appropriate rules in conversive exchange; to act pro-conversively, in other interactions; and to avoid acting anti-conversively when there is no opportunity for interaction. In short, it requires that in dealing with others, we are guided or constrained by the fact that they are conversable. And in each case, it requires us to act in the designated way with due robustness. If we are guided and constrained in how we regard and treat people by their conversability, then we are bound to treat others as

conversable when that property is present, and there is no compelling excuse or justification for not treating them in that manner.

C2.P94 Why should we endorse this conversive theory of respect? A main consideration is that it gives us a candidate referent for the concept of generic respect that meets all of the assumptions commonly endorsed. It makes sense of why respect is a normatively appealing ideal and of why it satisfies the constituency assumptions that tie it to human beings, the modality assumptions that require voluntariness and robustness, and the behavioral assumptions that it rules out a variety of restrictive and relegating activities.

C2.P95 But apart from being conceptually attractive on that count, the conversive theory of respect answers well to problems of unity and ground mentioned at the beginning of the essay. While the theory allows respect to impose weaker or richer requirements, depending on context—surely, a recommendation, not an objection—it still gives unity to the treatment involved in giving another respect. It allows us to see a pattern in the sorts of behavior ruled out by respect and directs us to an intelligibly unified form of treatment that it rules in. It rules in treating people as equally conversable and it rules out any failure to do so: any failure to be guided or constrained by their conversability.

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C2.P96 Even more important, however, the theory also directs us to a plausible ground for giving others respect: a feature, first, that is equally present in all and perhaps only adult, able-minded human beings and a feature, second, that makes respect, as characterized in the theory, fitting among such beings. That ground is the conversability of those agents: their capacity to be engaged conversably and commissively with one another. People may have that capacity in equal measure, while differing from one another in all sorts of other ways, even in cognitive, affective,

and interactive reliability. Their equality as conversable subjects provides a commonality that makes them suitable for receiving and indeed giving respect as equals to one another.

C2.P97 If conversability is to provide a ground for respecting one another as equals, however, it has to be more than just a feature common to all and only adult, able-minded humans. It must also make sense of why respect, as the theory characterizes it, is a natural response to its presence. And in that regard, clearly, the theory does particularly well. There is every reason why conversable subjects should robustly avoid anti-conversive behavior towards one another and why, if opportunity arises, they should be willing to behave in a robustly pro-conversive or conversive manner. There is an internal connection, as it were, between the grounding property and the response that it grounds. It is like the connection between someone's being a friend and the response of treating them as a friend; let the ground be there and the onus lies with explaining why the response might not be appropriate, not with explaining why it is.[14]

C2.S17

11. Conclusion

C2.P98 The idea of respect bulks large in ethical and political theory. It hails an ethical ideal that by almost all accounts we as individuals should strive to realize in our treatment of one another. And equally it identifies a plausible, political ideal for how we as a community or state should

[14] The theory is distinctively social in making conversability the ground of respect, for the grounding property is defined in terms of a possible social relationship. In that regard, it contrasts with theories of respect that look for a ground in some intrinsic, non-social property, such as being autonomous or having a soul. For a critique of the claim that their autonomy provides a ground for respecting others see Buss (2005).

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treat our members—as well indeed as the members of other societies—and for how we should constrain and predispose members to treat one another.

C2.P99 As emphasized at various points, the focus here has been exclusively on the ethical ideal of how we as individuals should behave. But the conversive theory also holds out an image of how we as a political community ought to act.[15] It suggests that if the state is to respect us as equals in our individual identities, then, first, it ought to allow us to share equally in control of its laws, as political or democratic justice requires; second, it ought to make laws of a kind that enhance and reinforce respect between its members, enforcing a plausible version of social justice; and, third, it ought to conduct international relations in a robustly pro-conversive fashion, to a robustly pro-conversive effect, thereby promising a degree of global justice.

C2.P100 We can say no more here on the political theory of respect. But perhaps even these remarks are enough to indicate that as the conversive theory identifies a plausible ideal for ethics—a significant normative kind—so it can do so for politics as well. The theory gives us an analysis of the concept of respect, and an account of what respect itself consists in, that shows why it makes good sense to give it a central place across the full spread of normative thought.[16]

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[15] Thus, it offers a line on a problem that, in the course of a distinct and interesting approach, Ian Carter describes as "strangely neglected by political philosophers" (Carter 2011: 538).

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[16] I benefitted enormously from comments received when I presented versions of the paper at the Freie Univsersität, Berlin, in June 2016, and to the Nuffield Political Theory Seminar in Oxford, June 2019. I was also aided by written comments received from David Brinks, Devon Cass, and Daniel Putnam. The discussion draws on a discussion in *On Statehood and Statecraft*, forthcoming with Princeton University Press.

C2.S18

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