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Reason and Respect

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Kantian constructivists believe that the norms of morality possess universal, unconditional, and categorical normative force. And this is true, they believe, not because those norms are grounded in an objective normative reality that is independent of agents' wills, but because morality can be "constructed," so to speak, from the point of view of practical reason as such—because any creature correctly employing practical reason will inevitably come to endorse morality. By "morality," Kantian constructivists usually mean a cluster of closely related claims from Kant's own moral theory, for example, that every person possesses a dignity by which they are entitled to exact respect from others.

There are two principal genres of argument for this family of views. The first consists of variations on and elaborations of Kant's "regress on the conditions of value" argument in the *Groundwork*. There Kant asks about the conditions of the value of humdrum goods. This question puts a regress on the conditions of value into motion. The best candidate for halting this regress, for the unconditioned condition of value, is the value of "humanity." And not just the value of whoever is doing the valuing either, but of the rational capacity common to every person. All the lofty Kantian doctrines about dignity and respect follow from this claim, and so are implicit in the conditions of valuing as such.¹

The second kind of argument suggests that there are constraints on practical reason imposed by its connection to agency. According to those pressing this kind of argument, agency has certain constitutive requirements, which include principles that entail features of Kant's moral theory. Insofar as agents must presuppose their own agency while engaged in practical reasoning, these philosophers argue, we can be sure that those

¹ Korsgaard (1996) and Markovits (2013).

constitutive requirements will inevitably be constructed from every practical point of view.²

Both of these arguments have come in for heavy weather. On the regress argument: we might wonder why we are required to ground relational value in non-relational value, why this value must be “conferred” by those who value, and why it is shared by all persons.³ On the agency argument: the connection between normativity and the requirements of agency can be questioned, as can the idea that Kantian morality is a real condition of agency.⁴

I don’t plan to defend these arguments. I instead want to note that it is slightly odd that even though Kantian constructivism is naturally understood as a claim about what we are committed to just insofar as we are *reasoners*, neither of these arguments focus on the nature of reason, at least not in the first instance. Instead, they base their conclusions on an analysis of kindred notions like valuing and agency. This isn’t an objection, but it does raise the possibility of a more direct ascent to Kantian constructivism.

My purpose here is to lay out such an argument. Stripped to its essentials, the argument goes like this. The first premise is that reasoning is an essentially collective activity, and thus something that one cannot undertake in perfect solitude.⁵ Indeed, I will argue that *every* rational agent is a party to *every other* agent’s reasoning. The second premise concerns the general conditions of participation in a collective activity. These activities constitutively require mutual respect between their participants within the bounds of that activity. That is, they require attitudes of respect specific to the activity undertaken. In most cases, this respect is conditional and highly circumscribed. If we are painting a house together, I must respect you as my co-housepainter, but not necessarily beyond that narrow station. And I can avoid even this requirement by opting out of our collective project. The third premise is that reason is different from other activities. Its authority over us is unconditional and the demands it makes are uncircumscribed. Putting these premises together yields the conclusion that we have an unconditional and uncircumscribed duty of respect for all persons.

1. Reasoning is a collective activity we undertake with all other persons.
2. Participation in a collective activity imposes an activity-specific duty of respect for one’s partners.
3. The authority of reason is unconditional and uncircumscribed.

² Korsgaard (2009), Velleman (2009), Schafer (2015).

³ Regan (2002), Ridge (2005), Langton (2007), and Theunissen (2018).

⁴ Enoch (2006) and Setiya (2007).

⁵ The argument will make no distinction between the theoretical and practical employment of reason.

Therefore, we have an unconditional and uncircumscribed duty of respect for persons.

The rest of the chapter is organized around a defense of these three premises, with the preponderance of discussion addressing the first.

1.1. THE SOCIALITY OF REASON

The phrase “the sociality of reason” might aptly denote a number of doctrines. In the interest of economy, I will dispense with a systematic comparison of them and leap into my conception.⁶ The version of the thesis I am interested in is inspired by a famous passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the final sections of the book Kant turns to the issue of reason’s own authority:

Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings, and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion. Now there is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect [*Ansehen*] for persons. The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom, which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens, each of whom must be able to express his reservations, indeed even his veto, without holding back.

(A739/B767)⁷

There are several important claims in this short but provocative passage. Teasing them out and defending them can furnish us with an argument for the sociality of reason in the sense that supports my argument. That is what I attempt.

(1) *Reason is a critical faculty that enables reflection and scrutiny on our attitudes, and reasoning is an activity of applying such scrutiny.* This idea is more implied than stated here, but it finds a fuller expression elsewhere, especially in Kant’s *Conjectural Beginnings of Human History*.⁸ There Kant says that rational animals are distinguished by a special freedom from instinct. Whereas non-rational creatures are automatically moved by instinct, rational creatures are not. They can “step back” from their instincts and reflect on them—not as something that *will* move them, but as

⁶ E.g. just in the last half-century: Cavell (1969), Habermas (1984), Pinkard (1996), Brandom (2009), Laden (2014), and Manne (2016). I have more specific debts to Christine Korsgaard and Onora O’Neill that will become clear later.

⁷ References to Kant are to the Berlin Akademie edition of 1900— except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which uses the usual A/B pagination.

⁸ Especially 8: 111–13.

something that they may *endorse* and *act on*, or else *reject* and *resist*. This reflection is an opportunity to scrutinize an inclination, belief, or appearance: to ask what significance that inclination, belief, or appearance has, apart from its natural tendency to move us. Whereas a non-rational creature is simply *moved* by its hunger, the rational creature's hunger poses a problem: what does this mean for me, what reasons do I have in virtue of this hunger, what should I do about it? According to the *History*, these activities—detachment from and scrutiny of one's instincts—are the fledgling steps of reason. Fully developed, reason encompasses the many ways, simple and sophisticated, that we can apply this reflective scrutiny to our judgments.⁹

This is just a thumbnail sketch, but we can already see how this conception of reason differs from some points of conventional wisdom. For the sake of comparison, consider two familiar alternatives. There is a Clarkeian conception on which reason is a perceptual or quasi-perceptual faculty for detecting some special class of contents, e.g. for grasping intellectual appearances. And there is a Lockean conception according to which reason is a capacity for transforming mental states according to particular rules, e.g. for performing logical inferences.¹⁰ My argument going forward will be premised on Kant's critical conception, so the first step in that argument must be to explain why we ought to adopt it rather than these others.

One way to argue for a conception of reasoning is by showing that it better captures our considered judgments about a range of paradigms. But this isn't my approach. My claim is not that Clarkeans and Lockeans identify bogus examples of reasoning or fail to capture genuine exemplars. Indeed, I will come around later to try to show how the critical conception can capture much of what they think is characteristic of reasoning. Instead, I contend that the critical conception is preferable because it better explains a vital property of reason—its pre-eminent authority. As Thomas Nagel explains:

Whoever appeals to reason purports to discover a source of authority within himself that is not merely personal, or societal, but universal—and that should also persuade others who are willing to listen to it.¹¹

⁹ Compare Korsgaard (1996: 12–16) and O'Neill (2000).

¹⁰ See Clarke, The Boyle Lectures, esp. §227 in Raphael (1991) and Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV.18.2. I have no special reason for choosing these philosophers as representatives other than their proximity to Kant. There are of course modern descendants of these views. Bonjour (1998) is a clear descendant of Clarkeanism. Those that view reason as a receptivity to self-subsistent substantive reasons could also be included in this group, notably Parfit (2011) and Scanlon (2013). Those who emphasize reasoning as a procedure are plausibly classed as Lockeans, viz. Setiya (2014) and McHugh and Way (2018).

¹¹ Nagel (1997: 3).

I take this special authority to be something like a fixed point in our understanding of reason. It is, Nagel goes on to say, established in a very special way.

In order to have the authority it claims, reason must be a form or category of thought from which there is no appeal beyond itself—whose validity is unconditional because it is necessarily employed in every purported challenge to itself.¹²

The suggestion here is that reason is not just authoritative. It is the “last word” on (nearly) every subject and the “final court of appeal” for (nearly) every question. For reason to be authoritative in this ultimate, foundational sense, its authority cannot be conferred by something else because then it wouldn’t be the last word.

This means that reason must be, in some sense, self-validating. But obviously not any self-validation will do. If a Magic 8-Ball tells us “always trust the Magic 8-Ball!,” we are not thereby justified in trusting the Magic 8-Ball.¹³ Nagel hints at a more promising kind of self-validation. We could justify the use of reason by showing that any attempt to examine its bona fides from some extra-rational point of view will end up presupposing that authority. This idea can be cast as an argument from pragmatic paradox. If we can show that any criticism of reason will presuppose the use of reason, then a demonstration that reason has no authority will be self-defeating. That is, it will be self-defeating in the way that “A says, ‘I cannot speak’,” “A fears that she has no fears” or “X thinks that she doesn’t exist,” are self-defeating. The content of our demonstration—what it is shown—would be incompatible with that demonstration.¹⁴ (Such an argument would not establish reason’s possession of a special property, but only that we must *take it* to have this property. This is of course a common concern with transcendental arguments. But here the difference doesn’t really matter: saying that I must recognize something’s authority is, from my point of view, tantamount to establishing that authority.) If we can make an argument like this succeed, then reason would have authority not because that authority is bestowed by something else or established according to some further standard. It would have authority because reason is presupposed by any process that would arbitrate such authority.¹⁵

¹² Nagel (1997: 7).

¹³ Compare Nagel’s example of tea leaves on p. 24 and Markovits (2013: 160).

¹⁴ This way of understanding the force of pragmatic paradox arguments comes from Haslanger (1992).

¹⁵ What I am claiming for reason here is sometimes claimed for the principles constitutive of agency. See Ferrero (2009) and Silverstein (2015) for attempts to flesh out the logic of this argument.

Capturing this feature of our understanding of reason seems much more important than fitting our intuitions about what counts and doesn't count as an episode of reasoning. The critical conception is well-suited to this task. Normative questions about what has authority, what reasons we have, and what we ought to do are critical questions. They are questions we ask ourselves when we find that we have an intention, instinct, or an urge and want to know what to do about it, whether it is something we ought to endorse or renounce. If the critical conception of reason is correct, then we are engaged in reasoning simply in virtue of asking these questions and undertaking the scrutiny they express. It follows that any conclusion that reason has no authority here—over e.g. the question of whether to endorse this urge and set out to satisfy it—would constitute a pragmatic paradox. It would assert that reason has no authority while presupposing that very authority. This means that such a conclusion is something we could never reach without contradicting ourselves. On this picture, then, reason secures the authority Nagel identifies by being already enlisted in the very activity of questioning a thing's authority.¹⁶

It is rather harder to see how the Lockean and Clarkeian conceptions could have this kind of unconditional authority. If we understand reason as a productive faculty for producing new judgments—either by intuiting them or transforming extant judgments—then it seems we need a substantive demonstration of its bona fides before we rely on it. This demonstration could issue from something other than reason, like track record data for our intuitions or a proof that a certain rule is truth-preserving given a certain semantics. But this supposes that reason isn't the "last word," so it won't work. On the other hand, this demonstration could come from reason itself. But how would this go? It would have to be something like reason putting forward the judgment (e.g. as an intellectual intuition) that reason has authority to review and revise some wide range of judgments. But then this proposal starts to look like the highly suspect kind of circular justification offered by the Magic 8-Ball: reasoning is self-validating, but not in a way that will appease any genuine skeptic. And that's no good either.

This is a reason to prefer the critical conception to its rivals. It doesn't mean that there won't be a place for Clarkeian and Lockean activities in reasoning. It means that our most basic conception of reason won't be Clarkeian or Lockean. We can't say that reason *just is* this quasi-perceptual capacity or the ability to apply certain rules. Insofar as these capacities are used in reasoning, it will be because they can be subsumed under the critical

¹⁶ Compare Korsgaard (1996: 46–7).

conception—because these rules or perceptual judgments pass the scrutiny of reason. I will say more about how this can happen later in the chapter.¹⁷

(2) *The scrutiny of reason comes from the consultation of other perspectives.* The most provocative part of Kant's claim is that the "claim of reason" rests on the "agreement of free citizens." To many readers this is a scandalous thing to say, not least because it suggests that reasoning, like "agreement," is a social undertaking. Most of us are probably inclined to think that reasoning is sometimes, if not primarily, a solitary activity—a set of procedures that I cycle through in my own mind. I can invite others to join me in this enterprise, but I needn't do so. Why suppose that other people will *necessarily* be involved in the business of reasoning at all?

To defend this idea, I want to begin by suggesting a connection between the scrutiny of reasoning and other perspectives.¹⁸ According to the critical conception, reasoning consists in the scrutiny of judgments and other attitudes. But how does this scrutiny get applied? Suppose it appears to me that there is a cup of tea before me or that I find myself inclined to take a swig. I clearly don't reason about these things simply by beholding them and asking, "so what?" There needs to be some friction or resistance applied, some gauntlet to be run, if this scrutiny is to be anything but perfunctory. What does this friction consist in?

The answer of course is that there are many things that we do to scrutinize attitudes such as these. We see if they are consistent, broadly speaking, with other attitudes. We consider their consequences, logical and causal. We devise empirical tests and ponder hypothetical counterexamples. My question is whether there is anything synoptic we can say about these procedures.

¹⁷ There is a sense in which this dispute about reason is verbal. As will become clear I am interested in the nature of reason because of the very authority Nagel identifies—the sort of authority that makes demonstrating that something is a condition of reasoning much more exciting than showing it is a condition of chess. Whether we call this faculty reason or the *Kritische Kraft* doesn't really matter. That said, the association between this kind of authority and reason is strong and venerable enough that I think it's worth proceeding as I have so far and making reason the focus of our examination instead of some nameless Ramsey sentence. Notably, this is an issue that arises within Kant's own work. Early in the first *Critique* he flirts with a position close to Lockeanism before offering the more critical remarks I quoted above. (Reason is a "faculty of principles" (A299/B356).) And in the *Critique of Judgment* he reassigns many of the tasks of reason to the power of judgment.

¹⁸ Kant doesn't draw this connection here, but intimates it elsewhere, especially in the second of his maxims of common understanding—that one ought to think into the place of the other. See *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7: 200 and *Critique of Judgment*, 5: 293–5. Analogies with spatial perspective are also important for Hume's discussion of the common point of view. See the *Treatise on Human Nature*, Book III, Part III, Section III.

We might be inclined to think that we ought to scrutinize our judgments by comparing them to whatever they are about. If it appears to me that there is tea in the cup before me, I ought to critique this appearance by comparing it to the cup itself. But this hardly makes sense. You needn't be an idealist to doubt that the cup itself—the cup as it is independent of my thoughts about it—is the sort of thing I can use as an instrument in my reasoning. If I could, I wouldn't need to reason at all.

What we can do, however, is take a closer look at the cup: we can examine its underside, weigh its contents, or give it a sniff. This suggests a rather different way of thinking about scrutiny. In doing these things, we are not employing the cup *in itself* but taking up different perspectives on the cup—from up close, from underneath—and considering the significance of our attitude in light of those perspectives. The same conception of scrutiny is suggested by the metaphor of reason allowing us to “step back” from our judgments. When we step back from something, we view it from a different vantage point, one from which its force or significance may appear differently. We scrutinize something by taking up a new perspective.

Consider some simple examples. Suppose that it appears to me that there is a trapezoidal surface before me. The natural way to scrutinize this appearance is to ask what this surface would look like if I were standing a few feet to the left, and then a few more, or if I occupied all the different points on the circle circumscribing the surface. Depending on how the surface appears from these vantage points, I may come to believe that the surface is rectangular, trapezoidal, or rhomboid. Now suppose I have an inclination to eat bacon. There are some natural ways to scrutinize this inclination. I can consider what I would feel like—leaden or sated—after eating the bacon, and in doing this speculate about how that self would regard the bacon-eating. I can also consider the inclination in light of various commitments—to vegetarianism, God, or my own health. I may then endorse the inclination or resist it. It is natural to say in both of these cases that our scrutiny of a judgment (or some other attitude) will involve viewing it from different perspectives, be they spatial perspectives on a surface or evaluative perspectives on an intention.

My suggestion is that the gauntlet we expect an attitude to run when scrutinizing it—what it is we subject it to—is *further perspectives*. To reason about a judgment is to scrutinize it from different perspectives. Familiar examples of reasoning can be made to fit this formula. When I reason about whether copper rusts, I am searching for perspectives where copper's rusting, or the lack thereof, is in evidence. When I reason about whether courage is a virtue, I am imagining myself into perspectives where courage may have favorable or unfavorable effects. When I reason about whether Jim can be

trusted, I am imagining perspectives that might expose his treachery or unreliability.

This is, as I said before, a highly synoptic claim about scrutiny. It isn't to say anything about the specific methods we follow in reaching a verdict about copper, courage, or Jim. Obviously those will be variable. I will say more about how familiar methods can be made to fit this picture later. The claim is one about our conception of reasoning at its most general: reflective scrutiny on a judgment can be cashed out in terms of the subjection of that judgment to additional perspectives.¹⁹

(3) *The consultation of other perspectives in reasoning is second-personal.* By itself the claim that reason's scrutiny involves the consultation of other perspectives is quite vague. What, we should wonder, does this "consultation" consist in? And what is it that we are consulting?

I want to distinguish two basic forms the consultation could take. First, it could be *third-personal* in the following sense.²⁰ There is a certain content to be found in your perspective—how things seem from where you stand on whatever subject matter we're discussing. Consulting your perspective means integrating this *how-things-seem* content into some process by which we come to ratify, reject, or revise a judgment.

This conception of consultation fits quite well with the geometrical model of perspective. Suppose that I have an appearance as of a trapezoidal surface, with the longer of the two parallel sides nearer me. You are oriented on the opposite side of the surface and so occupy a different perspective. How do I consult your perspective to scrutinize my judgment about the surface? A natural thought is that I take my appearance and yours and plug them into some procedure that yields a suggestion about what shape would produce these appearances from these perspectives. The procedure will reflect basic facts about particular geometrical transformations. If we both see trapezoidal forms and are oriented in a particular way, for instance, geometry would tell us to believe that the surface is in fact rectangular.

What's important about this conception of consultation—and why I call it "third-personal"—is that the occupant of the other perspective is dispensable to the activity. What matters is a *fact* about how things seem from a certain perspective, not what a person occupying that perspective *would say*,

¹⁹ This proposal is not necessarily incompatible with all other conceptions of reason. It is not implausible, for example, to describe a constellation of attitudes that has survived scrutiny from all perspectives as one that exhibits *systematic unity* or *understanding*. In this case, my proposal would coincide with a view of reason on which it aims at one of these ideals. Compare, e.g. Schafer (forthcoming) and Kant's view in the "Appendix" to the *Transcendental Dialectic*.

²⁰ Compare the central distinction in Darwall (2006).

think, or do. I am not so much asking for the judgment, reaction, or criticism of a full-fledged person as for an appearance as glimpsed from a particular vantage point, one that a particular person happens to occupy, but which could, in principle, be captured by something impersonal, like a camera. In this sense, my consultation of your perspective does not essentially involve you. Your testimony is a way to acquire the perspectival content I need, but you are no more than an instrument for obtaining the information.

An alternative way of thinking about this scrutiny is second-personal. On this conception, the consultation of another perspective is, fundamentally, the consultation of another person, and the significance of what we discover from this consultation for the process of reasoning depends on its being proffered by a person. So in consulting another perspective, we are not discovering content, but engaging with another person. On this view, the normative structure of consultation is less like looking at a photograph and more like having a conversation. Suppose that I think this surface is a trapezoid or that it would be prudent to kill my wife for the insurance money. Consulting your perspective means asking you, “What do you think?” about these ideas and having the conversation that ensues from that question. This conversation is not a *means* to something of significance for my scrutiny; it *is* the scrutiny.²¹

I have two arguments against the third-personal model of consultation, both of which point us toward its second-personal rival.

First argument. Suppose I believe that there is a cup of tea before me. I scrutinize this belief by consulting a perspective from across the table. Maybe there’s someone sitting there, or maybe I get up to look for myself. In any event, I find that from there it appears as though the cup is empty. This appearance, we are supposing, has a certain significance for the activity of scrutinizing my belief. Presumably, it favors withholding or revising that belief. The third-personal model of consultation understands this process in a particular way, as the retrieval of an impersonal perspectival content—an *appearance-from-yonder*. On this model how does this content come to have the significance it has? How does it come to militate in favor of belief revision (assuming that it does)? This question is an instance of the more general one: how, to use Sellars’s well-wrought image, can impersonal perspectival content be brought into the “space of reasons”?

In some cases, we seem to have a good idea of how this works. You and I are looking at a common surface from different points of view, and you have some perspectival content *p*. It’s innocent enough to think of this as something like sense data: colors arranged shape-wise amidst my visual field.

²¹ That reasoning is conversational is a principal theme of Laden (2014).

This content plus your position, the direction of your gaze, and basic facts about geometry can produce a verdict about the consistency of my belief about the surface and p . For example, trapezoidal configurations in p are consistent with my belief that the surface is a rectangle, but octagonal configurations are not. (From no perspective does a rectangular table appear octagonal.) Obviously, if p is inconsistent with my belief, then it favors revising that belief. Thus in this simple case, p comes to have significance for the scrutiny of my belief through the interaction of two things: (i) a set of claims about the consistency of different perspectival contents and propositions about the shapes of those items they are perspectives on, and (ii) the axiom that inconsistency is grounds for revision.

But there's a hitch. The claims in (i) reflect substantive assumptions about the world, namely that you, I, and the table are oriented in a certain kind of geometrical space. (Not all geometrical spaces will support this kind of reasoning.) This poses a problem. For if we want to offer the method just described as the basis for an answer to our question, then it must be a method characteristic of *reasoning*. But that would mean that this substantive assumption about space would have to be a constitutive feature reasoning. And that seems highly dubious, especially on the critical conception of reason. We adopted this conception because it was able to self-validate in a way that vindicated with the unique authority of reason. But the geometrical propositions on which the claims in (i) depend will certainly not be capable of that kind of self-validation. There is no paradox, pragmatic or otherwise, in supposing that the world does not have this kind of structure. The more plausible interpretation is that the procedure described above is not a feature of reason, but something that introduces substantive, extra-rational claims about the nature of space. And if this is true, then that procedure cannot be the answer to our question about how perspectival contents acquire normative significance for reason.

Of course, things only get more difficult when we move beyond the spatial cases and start talking about different perspectives on the justice of capital punishment or the efficacy of psychoanalysis. The general problem is that we need some method or principles to bring impersonal perspectival contents into the "space of reasons," to make them normatively significant, but any particular method for doing this—like the one exemplified by my consultation of your spatial perspective on the surface—is likely to rely on substantive assumptions that we should be very reluctant to call constitutive of reasoning as such.

Maybe this challenge can be met, and a procedure can be discovered that does not make substantive, extra-rational assumptions, but the burden of proof is very much on the advocate of the third-personal model to show it can be. Importantly, however, the second-personal model doesn't face it all.

For it understands the consultation of other perspectives as a conversation, and the “moves” in a conversation—asserting, assuring, challenging, questioning, demurring—come with normative significance built into them. Reasoners will of course face the question of what, exactly, to do with someone’s assurance or demurrals—e.g. how much weight to assign to it—but this is something that can be settled as a conversation evolves. What they don’t face is the more fundamental question of how the contents of other perspectives gain normative significance in the first place.

Second argument. The third-personal model of consultation presupposes what I will call the *separability* of perspective and occupant. It supposes that there are facts about how things seem from a perspective independent of what a person occupying that perspective would say, judge, or think in certain circumstances. Once more, this supposition seems justified in the spatial case. Objective facts about how things appear from various spatial perspectives is one of the things Renaissance polymaths are famous for figuring out.

But the separability of occupant and perspective seems more doubtful when we move to complex cases. Think of the perspective of an actual person, or a well-developed literary character. I think I have a decent grasp of Philip Marlowe’s perspective on various questions and subjects. But I have trouble imagining there being facts about how things seem from Philip Marlowe’s perspective above and beyond what Philip Marlowe would *say* or *think* about those subjects. It’s hard to even describe the perspective in impersonal terms. We could list biographical details in characterizing the perspective, but that seems to miss something. There’s a difference between Marlowe’s perspective and facts about how things would seem under distinctively Marlovian conditions. So we cannot, as is tempting in the spatial case, understand Marlowe’s perspective as fixed by conditionals of the form, “if *a* had Marlovian quality m_1 , then things would seem *thus* to them.” Things only get harder when we scrutinize more complicated judgments. Suppose we have a hunch about a murderer’s motive, an idea for getting revenge on someone who swindled us, or a moral dilemma about whether to turn a client over to the police. Can we extend our model of spatial perspective to these cases? Doing so would require us to think there is some perspectival content that is not essentially Marlowe’s but which he is simply well-placed to inform us about—a content of the form “how things seem with respect to your revenge plot from here.” I have trouble conceiving of what such a thing would even be.

This is not just an epistemic problem of gaining access to this impersonal perspectival content. The best explanation for our difficulties in conceiving of the impersonal perspectival content of a complex person on a delicate question is that the separability of person and perspective is incoherent.

It is incoherent because a perspective is constitutively something that belongs to a person. The separability of perspective and occupant runs into problems of conceivability because it tries to separate a thing from its conditions, and this yields an antinomy on the order of “leaving our olfactory powers aside, what does peppermint smell like?”

If I am right, then the understanding of spatial perspectives we have been working with is misleading. The perspective on this table from the other side of the room is not an impersonal fact about how the table seems from that point. It is representation of what a hypothetical person would judge if they were standing there. This hypothetical person may simply be a version of myself who is standing over there, or it may be a suitably idealized observer. The geometrical theory of perspective that tells us which relations are preserved under which kind of transformations is useful not because it is constitutive of reasoning but because it makes reliable predictions about what a wide range of these hypothetical observers will see.

Both of the objections I have put to the third-personal conception of consultation favor its second-personal rival. Marlowe is an essential party to my consultation of Marlowe’s perspective, I have argued, and not simply an instrument for discovering perspectival content. The natural way to understand my consultation, then, is as a request for Marlowe to do something: to agree with my hunch about the motive, to object to my revenge plan, to suggest a resolution to my dilemma. In most cases, this would only be the beginning of a longer process. I may reply to his reservations or ask for clarification. And he may reply in turn. What I am asking for is a *conversation* about my hunch, my plan, or my dilemma.

For our purposes we don’t need to say much more about the structure or aims of this conversation. Some Kantian fellow travelers have been tempted to insist that reason requires me to justify myself to others in particular ways: to make my principles and judgments intelligible to others, to make them seem reasonable, or even to secure their agreement.²² And they may want to specify the conditions under which this process takes place: with equal information, behind a veil of ignorance, freed of various distortions. These claims may be good advice about how to consult other perspectives in answering particular questions, but I don’t think the ambitions of this chapter require me to weigh in on these questions. What matters for my argument going forward is that this is an activity in which the other person, the occupant of the perspective, is an essential participant.

²² See the discussion in O’Neill (2015) and Markovits (2013: 133–6).

Before moving on, I should address two objections. First, there is the problem of “unoccupied” perspectives, like a perspective from the dark side of the moon a hundred years ago. On the third-personal model, there is no special mystery about such perspectives. Their contents exist; they’re just harder to retrieve since there’s no one at hand to get them. On the second-personal model, however, “unoccupied perspective” is something like an oxymoron, since perspectives are constitutively had by persons. So what is it to consider an unoccupied perspective? My answer is straightforward. When I consider an “unoccupied” perspective, like one from the dark side of the moon, I am imagining a hypothetical person (or persons) and thinking about what they would say, do, or judge. My interest is an interest in a conversation with a merely possible person. But—one might reply—isn’t there something incoherent or defective about an interest in a conversation with a non-actual person? I don’t think so. Witness, for example, our attitudes about fictional characters. I can desire to go on an adventure with Philip Marlowe, I can fear for his safety when he’s blackjacked by a goon, and I can be absorbed by his soliloquies. My desire can never be satisfied, my fear involves a state of affairs that never will obtain, and the object of my absorption doesn’t exist. And yet I have these attitudes all the same.²³ By the same token, it is perfectly coherent for me to be interested in having certain kinds of conversation with Marlowe. And this, I am suggesting, is what an interest in his perspective amounts to.

The second objection is that the second-personal construal of scrutiny implies that every perspective-haver is someone we can reason with. This may be challenged: we might think that a fish has a perspective even though it lacks the capacities that are distinctive of persons and could certainly never be our partner in conversation. I disagree on the first point. When we talk about a fish’s perspective, we are anthropomorphizing it. We are introducing a fiction on which the fish is more like a person than it actually is, where it has opinions, preferences, and other attitudes. Insofar as the fish has a perspective, it is the perspective of a hypothetical person who shares certain key properties with the fish. (If you think I’m being unfair to fish, you can turn the argument around: fish do have perspectives and could, with the right aid, be our conversation partners.)

(4) *For any judgment subject to the scrutiny of reason, that scrutiny ought to be unrestricted in the sense that all perspectives are relevant to it.* In the passage above Kant says that reason’s scrutiny must be unbounded and unchecked—that nothing can be “exempted from” reason’s “searching review and inspection.” I am going to assume he is right about this and

²³ Gendler and Kovakovich (2005).

address a related proposition. What I want to argue is that the scrutiny of reason is unrestricted along another axis. For any judgment subject to the scrutiny of reason, every perspective is in principle appropriately consulted as part of this scrutiny.

One might demur from this claim in a few ways. First, they might say that it is ridiculous to demand agents complete the laborious, probably endless task of consulting *all* perspectives—including extremely exotic ones—in order to count as having reasoned about a given judgment. I agree, but my claim isn't that we should attempt such a comprehensive consultation in practice. I agree that that would be impossible. I am instead claiming that every perspective is in principle relevant to reasoning about a judgment. This doesn't yield a minimal requirement for reasoning, but a regulative ideal. How we try to live up to this ideal given our cognitive limitations is an important and difficult question, but not one we need to answer before concluding that it is an ideal.

Second, one might insist that certain perspectives are simply too remote from the subject matter to be relevant, even in principle. Suppose that it appears to me that there is a teacup before me, and I set about reasoning about this. Some perspectives are clearly relevant to this endeavor: the perspective from the other side of the table, the perspective of someone in the room before I arrived who might've seen an elaborate hoax constructed. But others are more questionable. How could the perspective from (say) a person standing on the dark side of the moon a thousand years ago be relevant to this question? Our standard for relevance ought to be whether it is possible that a given perspective may bear on our question. And it is plainly possible that the perspective from the dark side of the moon a thousand years hence *could* have some probative value. This may be the one time and place that principles of optics my visual experience depends on are falsified. It may be the one time and place where a powerful goblin reveals his plan to deceive me. That these are remote possibilities means that such a perspective is of low priority in practice, but not that it is wholly irrelevant.

Third, one might say that perspectives of other people are in principle irrelevant to certain kinds of reasoning. A version of this objection might come from a certain kind of Humean. It makes sense to consider the perspectives of other people in the case of theoretical reasoning, they might say, since we are trying to uncover some subject-independent reality that is common to ourselves and others. By contrast, practical reason does not aim at the representation of some objective reality, but to produce rational action. And all that is required for this is internal coherence. Thus, the thought goes, the kind of scrutiny an agent applies to a practical judgment will come from the point of view of their own practical

commitments and no others. We find a version of this thought in Sharon Street's rejection of certain reflective questions:

According to the Humean constructivist, eventually (at least in theory, if we pursue our reflections far enough) we get to a point where we have arrived at a coherent web of interlocking values. At that point, one can ask: "But why should I endorse this *entire set* of normative judgments? What reason do I have to endorse this set as opposed to some other set, or as opposed to no set at all?" The proper answer at this point, according to the Humean constructivist, is that the question is ill-formulated. One cannot coherently step back from the entire set of one's interlocking normative judgments at once, and ask, from nowhere, whether this set is correct or incorrect, for on a constructivist view there *are* no independent standards to fix an answer to this question.²⁴

Here Street seems to acknowledge that her question—"What reason do I have to endorse this entire set of normative as opposed to some other set?"—*sounds* forceful. It sounds like it merits an answer. But in fact, she says, it is "ill-formulated" because asking it requires us to "step back" from all standards of evaluation that might be called upon to answer it. But I don't think this is right. Even if we are constructivists and agree that there are no mind-independent normative standards, it doesn't follow that this is a question that can only be asked from "nowhere." It is a question that can be asked from the point of view of another person. That is, even if my normative commitments form a coherent, interlocking whole, I can scrutinize those commitments, *in toto*, from the point of view of other people and their normative commitments. I can ask: what would Philip Marlowe make of this comprehensive set of normative judgments? That this question *sounds* forceful and doesn't end up ill-formulated in the way Street suggests is evidence that the question is forceful—that it is a question we are required to answer as part of the process of scrutinizing our normative judgments.

This reply suggests a more general argument for the unrestrictedness of reason's scrutiny. For any set of attitudes and judgments that are internally coherent, we can ask, "but why *these* judgments?" This question has *prima facie* intuitive force: it is something that seems, in principle, to merit an answer. On the conception of reason I have developed here, the only way to provide that answer is with an appeal to a perspective beyond the ones from which these judgments are made. The intuitive force of these questions, then, is evidence of the relevance of a corresponding perspective to our reasoning. This point is usually expressed as an objection to constructivism, but it's only an objection to those versions of constructivism, like Street's Humeanism, that would impose a limit on which perspectives are employed

²⁴ Street (2012: 51–2).

in our construction procedure. The “openness” of these normative questions is perfectly compatible with a similarly open-ended constructivism.²⁵

1.2. REASONING AS A COLLECTIVE ACTIVITY

In the previous section I argued that (1) reasoning is an activity of critique and scrutiny, (2) that this scrutiny involves consulting other perspectives, (3) that this consultation is second-personal in the sense that it depends on the participation of another person, and (4v) that all perspectives are relevant to this scrutiny. These claims entail that reasoning is something I do with others, lots of others. It is something that I do with the occupants of every other perspective. It is of course equally true that you need to rely on other people, including me, in your reasoning. And this reasoning is both ubiquitous and ongoing. Individual episodes of reasoning will naturally overlap with each other: if I change my mind after reasoning with x , that will affect my reasoning with y . This suggests a more economical way individuating episodes of reasoning. Rather than thinking of there being a glut of discrete episodes of reasoning— x with y and z , y with x and z , z with x and y , and so on—we can think of reasoning as involving a single, massive, ongoing collective activity in which x , y , and z are all partners.²⁶

This thesis raises some obvious questions. As we observed before, most of the perspectives I might consider in reasoning are not occupied by actual persons. And I only occasionally find it necessary to converse with the occupants of those perspectives that are occupied. Much of my reasoning goes on in perfect solitude, without any overt conversation at all. Much of it involves no thought of other people at all, but only impersonal things like principles of inference. How should we square these facts with the conception of reasoning on offer?

If my proposal is correct, then much of what we commonly regard as the practice of reasoning is actually a simulation of the real thing. The cogitations we call reasoning frequently involve the imaginative projection of oneself into the point of view of another person in hopes of simulating their half of a conversation. If I want to scrutinize my judgment from Marlowe’s perspective, I do my best to act out his side of an imagined conversation. This enterprise will obviously vary in difficulty and likelihood of success. It’s fairly easy for me to simulate what me-in-two-minutes would

²⁵ I elaborate on this point in Walden (2015).

²⁶ Is Philip Marlowe a partner in this activity? Obviously not, since he doesn’t exist. Nonetheless, the activity is one that has an *interest* in doing the impossible, in making Philip Marlowe a partner.

think about my intention to leave the house in a rainstorm without an umbrella. It's much harder for me to say what a person from a very different system of values would say about my proposed resolution of a moral dilemma. Sometimes this simulation will be a good one, and sometimes it won't be. But we plainly do engage in this kind of simulation, and some of our most intense episodes of reasoning play out as imagined conversations between ourselves and a persistent interlocutor.

As I said before, in principle every perspective is fair game for the scrutiny of a judgment, but in practice we can by no means have a conversation, real or simulated, with the owner of every perspective. So we employ shortcuts. One shortcut involves the formation of perspectives into representative amalgams. My future self encompasses many slightly different points of view. But when I am scrutinizing some judgment according to the demands of prudence, I am likely to suppress these differences and consider the perspective of a single representative of these future selves if I believe the differences between them are immaterial. I may also develop heuristics to stand in for conversations. I know my wife well enough to know how a conversation about my intention to buy our toddler an illustrated edition of *Naked Lunch* will go, so I can rely on a summary of that conversation instead of simulating it.

The activities Clarkeans and Lockeans identify as the essence of reasoning can be modeled through a combination of these strategies. The obvious truths that Clarkeans say reason allows us to perceive can be understood as those things we judge to be manifest from every perspective—to be such that only the “extremest stupidity of mind, corruption of manners, or perverseness of spirit, can possibly make any man entertain the least doubt concerning them.”²⁷ Similarly, the rules that a Lockean associates with reasoning can be understood as those that are “valid” across all perspectives. These rules will codify those functions F such that if it seems that p from someone's perspective, it will also seem that Fp from their perspective. This reconstruction would allow us to capture much of what is attractive about the Lockean and Clarkean conceptions while also doing justice to the unique authority of reason that the critical conception does so well with.

1.3. COLLECTIVE ACTIVITY AND RESPECT

I have sketched a conception of reason, and I expect readers will recognize something pro-social, even nascently moral in the sketch. There are a few

²⁷ As himself Clarke puts it (Raphael 1991: 296).

different ways to make these features more explicit. Here I will do so by relying on a thesis about the structure of collective activities: participation in collective activities is conditioned on certain forms of respect for one's partners in those activities. I cannot mount a complete defense of this thesis here, but I will try to motivate it with examples.

The respect that collective activities presuppose is a kind of recognition respect.²⁸ It is a recognition of the authority our partner has in virtue of their being our partner. Suppose you and I are baking a cake together. For us to be baking *together* I must recognize your standing to make certain suggestions about how the activity unfolds. In many cake-baking scenarios, this will include your standing to suggest what kind of cake to bake, how to divide our labor, what order to perform certain tasks in, and what substitutions to make to the ingredients. We could even talk about your having rights as part of this activity. You may have a right to veto an almond cake because of your nut allergy. If I wander away halfway through to watch the baseball game, you have a right of rebuke.²⁹

Call the duties of respect I have in virtue of my participation in a collective activity *activity-specific* duties of respect. What these duties amount to will depend on the nature of activity naturally. If I am the owner of a bakery and you are my employee, then our baking a cake together may not accord you the same standing to make suggestions about what kind of cake we bake or how we divide the labor. But even in this case, it seems clear that I do have some activity-specific duties of respect. I should recognize your objections about nuts and allergies, or hear you when you say that the dough is too wet, or simply not push you away from your work area. If we imagine a superficially similar activity that lacks even these minimal forms of recognition, it is hard to say that it is a genuine example of collective activity, rather than two activities in parallel, or even an example of one person using another like a tool.³⁰

Where do these duties of respect come from? This is an important question but beyond what I say here. I am sympathetic to the view that collective activities depend on a “plural” kind of subjectivity or agency—that

²⁸ Darwall (2006: 140ff.).

²⁹ Compare Gilbert (1996 and 2014).

³⁰ One might object that in even more asymmetrical relationships—like that between slave and captor—this respect is completely absent. Slavery is a complicated and heterogeneous relationship, and I think different replies are appropriate for different cases. Some slavery does feature non-negligible respect for the slave (Cicero and Tiro). Other instances do not but also lack genuinely collective activity. Still others may involve collective activity and so presuppose a kind of respect but systematically deny that respect; these are pathological but not a counterexample to my claim.

they are performed by a distinctive *we*—and that the duties of respect that structure those activities reflect the conditions of this plural subject’s integrity.³¹

1.4. REASON AND RESPECT

We now have the first two premises of our central argument: (1) reasoning is a collective activity and (2) all collective activities entail activity-specific duties of respect. Combining these yields the claim that reason involves activity-specific duties of respect. But what are these duties? The activity-specific respect associated with, say, cake-baking is not very impressive. For one thing, it is conditional on my participation in the activity, so if I tire of respecting you as my co-cake-baker, I can simply exit that activity. For another, the duties of respect I owe you are highly circumscribed. They only concern our baking together. It seems that I can respect you as my co-baker while maintaining total insensitivity to your pain, while blackmailing you, and even while planning to murder you as soon as we’re done.

Reasoning is very different from baking, though. Recall our fixed point: the authority of reason over a wide range of our judgments is unconditional. Capturing this idea was the primary motivation behind adopting the critical conception of reason in the first place. But now it is relevant in a different way. For it means that reasoning-specific duties of respect are neither conditional nor circumscribed. I cannot opt out of the reasoning-specific duties of respect because I cannot opt out of the demands of reason. And these duties of respect are relevant to every attitude that is subject to the scrutiny of reason—that is, to nearly every attitude. This is the third premise of the argument. Combining it with the first two, we have the result that I have an unconditional obligation to recognize the authority of every person to weigh in on nearly any question I might entertain. This is the sense in which respect for persons is implicit in reason itself.

Establishing this conclusion is the principal ambition of the chapter. It’s a schematic conclusion, though, so we might wonder, with some skepticism, what exactly it means for us. What am I required to do in light of this universal duty of respect? One possibility is that we can derive particular obligations and prohibitions directly from the conclusion. We could do this by arguing that certain act types or species of maxim constitutively involve a failure to recognize the standing of others. In performing such acts or adopting such maxims, I am *thereby* refusing to acknowledge your authority

³¹ Gilbert (1989) and Korsgaard (2009: ch. 9).

over certain questions. I am dubious about this strategy because I doubt that there are any act or maxim types that *necessarily* involve a problematic refusal to recognize. More generally, I am inclined to doubt that concrete, action-guiding imperatives can be extracted from the principle I have defended. The constraints introduced are simply too vague to produce this kind of result. In this respect my ambitions are more modest than other Kantian constructivists: I do not think I have shown that “enlightenment morality is true.”³²

Of course, this doesn’t mean that the duty of respect is completely empty. Its force is simply more mediated. My model for this control comes from Kant’s theoretical philosophy. There he distinguishes between constitutive and regulative principles. Constitutive principles give us specific guidance on how we must represent nature. They have authority because they codify the conditions of experience. Regulative principles prescribe ideas for us to aspire to—e.g. the idea of systematic unity—but do not issue specific commands. Regulative principles are irremediably indeterminate because their content is fixed by an open-ended process of rational self-scrutiny. The principle of respect I have defended is regulative in this sense. It offers an ideal of our attitudes being subject to a massive conversation to which every person is a party. How agents should operationalize this idea of reason will depend on further features of those agents, just as their operationalization of other ideas will depend on their specific cognitive constitution and circumstances. The “cash value” of my conclusion will therefore be a complicated question that involves reckoning with many other factors that shape a given agent’s normative landscape.³³

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³² Korsgaard (1996: 123).

³³ I am grateful to audiences at the 2018 Madison Metaethics Workshop and Binghamton University for helpful questions and discussion as well as to two anonymous referees for the same. I owe special thanks to Julia Markovits and Timothy Rosenkoetter for extensive comments.

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