

WHY SHOULD I RESPECT YOU? A CRITIQUE AND A SUGGESTION FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF MUTUAL RESPECT IN CONTRACTUALISM

Abstract

Contractualism is a normative theory which characterizes principles of right in terms of the idea of mutual respect. In this theory, mutual respect is regarded as having deliberative priority over other values. This essay aims to examine how contractualists can provide a satisfactory justification for prioritizing mutual respect. I will argue that the ‘value of mutual respect argument,’ which is a justification commonly adopted by contractualists, is inadequate because an unconditional priority of mutual respect cannot be grounded on the desirability of a relationship of mutual respect. Then I will suggest that a ‘consistency argument’ can provide a better justification of why the idea of mutual respect should have priority. Mutual respect is of special importance, not because it is highly desirable,, but rather because it is required by an *a priori* guiding principle of consistency. Individuals become inconsistent if they ask others to respect them as reason-assessing individuals, while at the same time refusing to respect others in the same way.

Key words: mutual respect, contractualism, Scanlon, consistency

I. INTRODUCTION

How can we explain that an action is wrong? This is one of the primary questions in ethics. To contractualists, such as T. M. Scanlon, an action is wrong when it violates principles that no one could reasonably reject.¹ Once a person violates these principles, he acts in a way that could not be justifiable to one another. His action represents a kind of disrespect for another individual as a moral agent who is capable of assessing reason and asking for justification. Thus, the idea of mutual respect is fundamental to contractualism. Moreover, contractualists assert that the consideration of right and wrong can have deliberative priority over other normative considerations. Given that contractualists define principles of right in terms of mutual respect, they cannot avoid the responsibility of having to explain the priority of mutual respect in practical reasoning.

The aim of this article is to discuss whether contractualists can justify the *overridingness* of the idea of mutual respect over other values. In the first section, I will explain the contractualist interpretation of mutual respect and the ‘value of mutual respect argument,’ which is the justification given by most contractualists. In the second section, I will explain why the value of mutual respect argument is inadequate. In the third section, I will argue that the ‘consistency argument’ as a requirement for mutual respect is an *a priori* requirement which can take precedence over other normative considerations. At the end, I will briefly discuss two possible objections to my argument.

II. MUTUAL RESPECT IN CONTRACTUALISM: THE VALUE OF MUTUAL RESPECT ARGUMENT

I will first show how contractualists interpret the idea of mutual respect. To contractualism, the idea of mutual respect means a relationship between individuals who mutually recognize one another as reason-assessing beings capable of seeking justification.² However, why should we perceive mutual respect as a moral reason that can override any conflicting reasons?³ I shall discuss it in this section.

The contractualist idea of mutual respect is based on an assumption about human nature. According to Scanlon, the human being is ‘a reasoning creature—one that has the capacity to recognize, assess, and be moved by reasons’.⁴ He is able to provide reasons for his actions and is capable of understanding the reasons provided by others. The human being is the only creature which possesses this distinctive capacity. This distinguishes human beings from other animals. Accordingly, a relationship between a human being and an animal is different from a relationship between two human beings. In a relationship between a human being and an animal, the human being is not required to be worried about whether his action could be justified to that animal.⁵ However, in an interpersonal relationship, the human beings are required to mutually respect each other on the basis that both are reason-assessing beings and therefore capable of providing justification for their actions, as well as understanding the actions of each other. If a human being ignores another human’s capacity of reason-assessing, then this amounts to disrespect, since that human is treated like an animal. Put succinctly, respecting the dignity of a human being is inextricably linked to acting in a way that could be justifiable to him.

¹ T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 1998): 153.

² *Ibid.*: 177-178.

³ It should be noted that some critics of Scanlon doubt the claim that mutual respect is an overriding reason (e.g., Gary Watson, “Contractualism and the Boundaries of Morality”, *Social Theory and Practice* 28(2) (2002): 233-237; Susan Mendus, “The Magic in the Pronoun ‘My’”, in Matt Matravers (ed.), *Scanlon and Contractualism* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 42). Due to limited space, I am unable to discuss their arguments in detail. My concern in this paper is, suppose that mutual respect is an overriding reason, how contractualists should justify this overridingness.

⁴ Scanlon (1998): 23

⁵ But it does not mean that human being can do whatever they want to animals, because they have to care about whether their action could be justifiable to those human beings who care about those animals. See *Ibid.*: 219-220.

Contractualists, furthermore, have to explain why disrespect matters, to the extent that it can override other values in our lives. As Gary Watson points out, ‘a satisfactory [contractualist] view must explain why respect has a deep motivational place in our lives and further how (and in what sense) it is something that we can demand for one another’.⁶ Contractualists usually justify the priority of the idea of mutual respect by drawing on an ‘value of mutual respect argument.’ To contractualists like Scanlon, mutual respect represents a valuable ‘relationship of mutual recognition’ that everyone would desire.⁷ When humans recognize each other as a reason-assessing creature and act in a way that could be justifiable to each other, they are engaged in a ‘relationship of mutual recognition,’ which is highly valuable.⁸ The fact that people generally value this relationship is proved in two ways, a positive and a negative way. For positive evidence, Scanlon cites an argument of Mill. Mill believes that every human being has a ‘desire to be in social unity with fellow creatures’.⁹ This desire explains why human beings are willing to cooperate with one another. Although Scanlon does not agree with Mill that this motivation is a ‘desire’, he believes that, in general, human beings are strongly motivated towards social cooperation.¹⁰ This motivation comes from the great value of the relationship of mutual recognition. Since the relationship of

⁶Gary Watson, “Some Considerations in Favor of Contractualism”, in *Contractarianism/Contractualism*, ed. by S. Darwall (London: Blackwell, 2003) 261.

⁷ Scanlon (1998): 162.

⁸ A defence of this argument appears in Douglas Paletta, “How to overcome Strawson's point: Defending a value-oriented foundation of Contractualism”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16 (2003): 9-20. One can also find similar ideas in the writings of Rawls, though he does not use the term ‘relationship of mutual recognition.’ Rawls believes that in a well-ordered society, individuals should treat one another as free and equal citizens and follow principles of justice which could be justified to all citizens equally. See John Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory”, in John Rawls, *Collected Papers*, ed. by Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2001) 305.

⁹ Scanlon (1998): 154. A similar point is also suggested by Rawls. Although he uses different terminology, he claims that citizens could enjoy satisfaction when they participate on fair terms of social cooperation with other fellow citizens. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 1999) 460-462.

¹⁰ The disagreement between Mill and Scanlon relates to a change in viewpoint by Scanlon in his later writing. In Scanlon’s earlier writings, like ‘Utilitarianism and Contractualism,’ Scanlon believes that human beings were motivated by desire, and they had a desire to be reasonable to one another. However, this position is dropped in the later writings of Scanlon. In *What We Owe to Each Other*, Scanlon argues that desire does not have any crucial role in motivating a person. What motivates a person is reason. Therefore, if the reason behind an action is strong, then one will be motivated to do that action. However, Scanlon’s position at this point is not so relevant to the current discussion. Here, we only need to bear in mind that, according to Scanlon, reason alone is sufficient to motivate a person. See Scanlon(1998) Chapter 1.

mutual recognition is highly valuable, it constitutes a good reason for people to respect one another. This reason is ‘a powerful source of motivation’ which can motivate people to respect one another effectively, and to eventually form a fair system of social cooperation.¹¹ Based on this strong reason, human beings are motivated to uphold a relationship of mutual recognition. Scanlon argues further that standing in this relation to others is appealing in itself, i.e., worth seeking for its own sake. ‘A moral person will refrain from lying to others, cheating, harming, or exploiting others, because these things are wrong. But for such a person these requirements are not just formal imperatives; they are aspects of the positive value of a way of living with others’.¹²

For negative evidence, Scanlon proves the value of the relationship of mutual recognition by showing the disadvantages and negative consequences when this relationship is ignored. Human beings are likely to feel a sense of guilt if they fail to recognize others as reason-assessing creatures. This sense of guilt is so strong that ‘most people are willing to go to considerable lengths, involving quite heavy sacrifices, in order to avoid admitting the unjustifiability of their actions’.¹³ The pain of guilt involves a feeling of estrangement, of having disregarded the requirements of a valuable relationship with others. So understood, this familiar negative aspect of morality corresponds to a positive ‘pull’: the positive value of living with others on terms that they could not reasonably reject.¹⁴ Since the relationship of mutual recognition is so highly desirable to human beings, they would suffer from a strong sense of guilt if they ignored it. In brief, the motivation to be in social unity highlights the value of the relationship of mutual recognition in a positive way, while the sense of guilt experienced at its loss highlights the value of the relationship of mutual recognition in a negative way.

¹¹ Ibid.: 163.

¹² Ibid.: 162.

¹³ T. M. Scanlon, “Utilitarianism and Contractualism”, *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, ed. by Bernard Williams and Amartya Sen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 117.

¹⁴ Scanlon (1998): 162.

Based on the great value of the relationship of mutual recognition, contractualists argue that mutual respect should be taken as having overriding importance in practical reasoning. Since the value of the relationship of mutual recognition is so great and appealing, it ought to have an absolute priority over other values.¹⁵ Although there are always some people who act wrongly and fail to respect one another, it only implies that these people fail to understand the value of the relationship of mutual recognition correctly. Once these human beings acquire a correct understanding, they will certainly appreciate the idea of mutual respect and recognize the authority of this idea amongst other normative considerations.¹⁶

To conclude, the priority of mutual respect is justified by a valuable relationship of mutual recognition. Other values ought to be put aside when they come into conflict with mutual respect. For the relationship of mutual recognition is a moral ideal which is greatly appealing to everyone. A person will suffer from a strong sense of guilt when the relationship is harmed. This ‘value of mutual respect argument’ is commonly used by contractualists when they argue for the importance and priority of mutual respect.¹⁷ However, in the next section, I will argue that merely showing the desirability of the relationship of mutual recognition is inadequate to justify the priority of mutual respect.

III. THE INADEQUACY OF THE VALUE OF MUTUAL RESPECT ARGUMENT

The relationship of mutual recognition is, undeniably, appealing, but it is difficult to see why it can override other values. In this section, I shall argue that, if contractualists justify the importance of mutual respect solely by relying on its appeal, then this justification fails to explain why mutual respect ought to have an overriding importance over other considerations.

¹⁵ Ibid.: 148; cf. Rawls (1999): 27-28.

¹⁶ Scanlon (1998): 166-167.

¹⁷ For a different expression of the value of mutual respect argument, see Scanlon (1998): 160-164; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 201-206; John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press) 189-190; Paletta (2003): 14-17.

Human beings usually favor a plurality of values. Some may conflict with each other to give contrary norms in particular types of cases. Contractualists are correct in stating that human beings are highly motivated to be in social unity with their fellow beings and therefore experience a strong sense of guilt when this relationship is destroyed or ignored. However, it is also true that human beings do not *only* desire to cooperate with other fellow beings. The destruction of the relationship of mutual recognition is, therefore, not the *only* source of guilt. Some religious people may believe that, although the relationship of mutual recognition is a valuable relationship, their most important aspiration is to achieve salvation through their religion. Some people may think the relationship of mutual recognition is only one of the relationships they have, and it is less valuable when it is compared with other relationships, such as friendship or family relationship. There are plenty of cases where individuals agree that the relationship of mutual recognition is appealing, yet it is not of overriding importance. They may have stronger desires to realize other ideals, and they would, therefore, feel a stronger sense of loss when these desires are dissatisfied. Accordingly, why should these individuals give up their ideals which are most important in their life, for the sake of the relationship of mutual recognition, which they believe is less valuable? As Wallace argues, a fundamental problem of Scanlon's contractualism is that it fails to explain 'how [morality] can attain the kind of importance exhibited by friendships, professional ambitions, and other personal project.'¹⁸

Contractualists have two arguments to defend the value of mutual respect. First, they argue that people who do not appreciate the objective value of the relationship of mutual recognition are only exceptional cases. The overridingness of mutual respect will not be affected even if some people do not recognize the objectively great value of the relationship of mutual recognition. 'If you fail to see that you have such reasons, ...this indicates a kind of

¹⁸ Jay Wallace, "Scanlon's Contractualism", *Ethics* 112 (2002): 454. Another example is Brian Barry, who argues that, to those who believe 'outside church is no salvation,' describing the great value of a fair social

deficiency on your part—moral narrow-mindedness, we might call it'.¹⁹ However, this defense is unpersuasive because it is not uncommon for people to cast doubt on the great value of the relationship of mutual recognition. Some individuals may value family or friendship over other considerations, while others may value culture or religion. These kinds of examples are more apparent in those non-western countries where liberalism is not widely shared in the public culture. Given this significant number of exceptional cases, contractualists cannot simply argue that those who do not appreciate the objective value of the relationship of mutual recognition are morally narrow-minded. Otherwise, too many people would fall into this morally narrow-minded category. This weakens the plausibility of the argument.

Furthermore, even if I agree that the relationship of mutual recognition is objectively valuable, it does not mean that I have to give absolute priority to the relationship of mutual recognition. Contractualists may be right that the relationship of mutual recognition has objective value and its value constitutes a strong reason to motivate persons to act in a particular way. Nevertheless, since the relationship of mutual recognition is only one of the great values in the world, it does not necessarily override other conflicting values. Even if a person is rational and well-informed, he may still refuse to treat the relationship of mutual recognition as overriding. After deliberation, some people may still reach a different answer to their most desirable ideal. One may favor a particular ideal, while someone else may think that this ideal is not worthwhile. The relationship of mutual recognition is only one of the many possible moral ideals which individuals may desire most. Admitting the supremacy of the relationship of mutual recognition is not the only rational answer.

cooperation is not helpful to persuade them to behave justly. See Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 908-909.

¹⁹ See Scanlon (1998): 370. Although the aim is to argue for moral responsibility, James Lenman also defends the great value of having “a community of people, rational and reasonable, sharing a rich array of reflective secure, confidently held moral commitments, and fiercely wedded to an exigent ideal of mutual and self-respect”. See Jame Lenman, “Compatibilism and Contractualism: The Possibility of Moral Responsibility”, *Ethics* 117 (2006): 30.

The second argument of contractualists is that, if those values which conflict with the requirement for mutual respect are understood and examined properly at a deeper level, then it would be discovered that those values should give way to the requirement for mutual respect.²⁰ For example, when someone argues that he chooses to sacrifice mutual respect for the sake of friendship, contractualists argue that this choice is based on a misunderstanding of friendship. Indeed, one should give priority to mutual respect because friendship presupposes the relationship of mutual recognition. ‘Friendship...involves recognizing the friend as a separate person with moral standing—as someone to whom justification is owed in his or her right, not merely in virtue of being a friend’.²¹ An individual cannot violate the requirement for mutual respect for the sake of achieving a genuine friendship, because friendship is, in fact, not a value that is essentially in conflict with the requirement for mutual respect. Similarly, other conflicts between mutual respect and other values can also be resolved in this way. If these conflicting values are examined and understood properly, we will find that the relationship of mutual recognition is still more desirable and has a higher priority over other values.

This reply is, nevertheless, problematic, at least in the case of friendship. It is true that friendship involves some elements which the relationship of mutual recognition requires. However, friendship involves partiality for particular individuals. An individual may be concerned more about the interests of his friends, while being less concerned about the interests of other persons. To a certain extent, friendship involves showing the same concern about a friend that a reason-assessing creature shows in a relationship of mutual recognition. Nevertheless, this similarity at most shows that friendship *resembles* the relationship of mutual recognition. This similarity is inadequate to support a claim that friendship *presupposes* the relationship of mutual recognition. Friendship should be understood as

²⁰ Indeed, it is one of Scanlon’s argument to justify the priority of morality to other values when conflicts arise. See Scanlon (1998): 160-166.

²¹ Ibid.: 164.

something independent of, if not conflicting with, the impartial requirement for mutual respect.

A more serious problem of this strategy is that contractualists cannot monopolize the authority of interpreting other values. While contractualists can interpret those values in a way which can justify that those values should give way to mutual respect, it is always open to opponents to suggest alternative interpretations of those values to show that those values *indeed* conflict with mutual respect. The preceding paragraph is an example which suggests a different interpretation of friendship from that of contractualists'. Why ought the interpretations of contractualists be accepted instead of other alternatives? Contractualists may insist that these interpretations are not interpretations at all after having a 'proper understanding'. Once there is a proper understanding, it will be obvious that the interpretations of contractualists are more appropriate. Yet contractualists do not explain clearly what interpretations can be described as 'proper.' If an interpretation is 'proper' only when it is compatible with the priority of mutual respect, then the argument of contractualists is circular. Contractualists cannot escape from the responsibility of explaining and providing evidence in support of their claim that their interpretations are more proper.

Therefore, the value of mutual respect argument is unsatisfactory in terms of explaining why the idea of mutual respect has special priority over other values. Its flaw is not that the relationship of mutual recognition, which is the moral ideal realized by mutual respect, is not desirable. Rather, it is unsatisfactory because the relationship of mutual recognition is not the *only* desirable ideal in a human being's life. Human beings may have various desires to other ideals. If these desires are jeopardized, they may suffer from a sense of guilt. This sentiment is not specific to a loss of the relationship of mutual recognition. Therefore, it is not necessarily true that all individuals believe that the relationship of mutual recognition is the most desirable ideal. The supremacy of the idea of mutual respect should be justified by another argument.

IV. THE CONSISTENCY ARGUMENT AND ITS ADVANTAGES

The value of mutual respect argument is questionable because it only justifies the importance of mutual respect by appealing to a desirable relationship, which, as a kind of value, has the same nature with other conflicting values. As the relationship of mutual recognition is only one of the values in a person's practical reasoning, it does not necessarily have a superior status in relation to other competing moral ideals. Contractualists should adopt an approach, which proposes that the norm of mutual respect has different characteristics that distinguish it from other conflicting values. This would then justify why the idea of mutual respect should trump other values and norms.

I suggest the consistency argument, which states that, apart from the great value of the relationship of mutual recognition, consistency is also one of the reasons why we should respect one another. My argument begins with an assumption that a human being believes that he is a reason-assessing creature which can make a legitimate claim of asking one another for justification. There are two reasons to explain why this is a weak assumption that should be widely accepted. First, it relates to the self-respect of a person. Human beings usually want to distinguish themselves from animals. They believe that they are not merely animals, for they have something which animals do not have. The capacity for assessing reasons and asking for justifications is the distinctive capacity of human beings, and this capacity distinguishes them from animals. Therefore, nearly no human being would deny that they possess this distinctive capacity. If they deny this, they would degrade themselves to the level of animals. Their self-respect would be undermined.²² Secondly, the right to ask for justification from one another

²² Some philosophers may doubt that the idea of self-respect is not an universal idea because it is a late arrival in human history. Although the specific term "self-respect" might not be used, similar terms such as "magnanimity", "proper pride", "a sense of dignity" were in integral part of discussions by Aristotle, Aurelius, Augustine, Aquinas, Montaigne, Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hume (Constance E. Roland and Richard M. Foxx, "Self-respect: A neglected concept", *Philosophical Psychology* 16(2) (2003): 248). This shows

is a fundamental right. This right can be used in relation to nearly all interests and desires of human beings. No matter what interests and desires one has, one rarely disagrees that he can make a legitimate claim of asking others for justification. Therefore, the assumption that human beings usually understand themselves as reason-assessing creatures is generally acceptable to everyone.

On the other hand, this belief is not only a self-understanding. One cannot simply think that one is a reason-assessing creature without being recognized by others. The argument follows that an individual requires recognition for the fact that he is a reason-assessing creature. Individuals would claim that other people should recognize their distinctive capacity of reason-assessing. If this capacity is not recognized, then individuals do not feel respected.

While human beings make this claim, they logically assume that others are also reason-assessing creatures. Making such a claim is a reason-giving activity. This activity is meaningful only when the opposite side has the capacity of assessing reason. Human beings do not ask a cat or a dog for respecting them, because this action is meaningless. A cat or a dog cannot understand the force of our claim. Human beings only make such a request to other human beings, because they are reason-assessing creatures as well. Hence once human beings claim that other human beings should respect them by treating them as reason-assessing creatures, they cannot deny the assumption that other human beings are also reason-assessing creatures.

the long-lasting impact of the idea of self-respect on the culture of western civilization. Furthermore, apart from the western civilization, the idea of self-respect is important in both the Islamic culture (Fatemeh Vojdani and Kavous Roohi Barandagh, "Respect for others: From Attitude to Behavior, an Islamic view", *European Journal of Science and Theology* 14(4) (2018): 151-164) and the East Asian Confucian culture (Xunwu Chen, "The Ethics of Self: Another Version of Confucian Ethics", *Asian Philosophy* 24(1) (2014): 67-81). The central themes of many contemporary literature, dramas and plays are about the loss and regain of self-respect (Stephen Massey, "Is Self-respect a Moral or a Psychological Concept?", *Ethics* 93 (1983): 246; Robin Dillon (ed.), *Dignity, Character, and Self-respect* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-2). Hence, it makes sense to claim that the idea of self-respect is widely accepted in the contemporary world. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to clarify this point.

Provided that human beings recognize one another as reason-assessing creature,, they should acknowledge that one another is the same with them, i.e., one another would ask for justification from them, and one another's claim is equally legitimate as their claim. Human beings should recognize that they owe one another a duty to respect each other as a reason-assessing creature, i.e., a duty of acting in such a way that is justifiable to one another. The acknowledgment of this duty stems from the acknowledgment of the equal moral status. While human beings admit the equal moral status of an individual, they have to accept the correlative duty to respect that individual as well. If an individual denies this duty, then he denies the assumption that each person has a reason-assessing capacity, and thus, he has no basis for the claim that others should respect him and act in a justified way. Therefore, to act consistently, as long as an individual claims that others owe him a duty of acting in a justified way, he cannot deny that he others the same duty and should enter into the relationship of mutual recognition. The argument can be presented in this way:

- (1) A believes that he is a reason-assessing creature with a capacity of justifying his action by giving reasons and asking for justifications from others
- (2) The special feature of a reason-assessing creature is that he is able to ask for justification and to assess reason. Therefore, recognizing an individual as a reason-assessing creature represents recognizing his claim of asking for justification and acting in a way that is justifiable to A.
- (3) From (1), A believes that he is a reason-assessing creature. However, this belief cannot merely be a self-understanding. It requires another person's recognition.
- (4) From (2) and (3), A makes a claim to B that B should recognize him as a reason-assessing creature and act in a way that is justifiable to A.
- (5) This claim-making activity is a reason-giving activity. Such an activity can only happen between two reason-assessing creatures.

(6) From (4) and (5), A must admit B to be a reason-assessing creature which is the same as A.

(7) From (2) and (6), A must recognize B's claim of asking for justification and acting in a way that is justifiable to B

Since proposition (2) and (5) are uncontroversial facts, the argument above relies on two things: proposition (1) and the principle of consistency. As previously mentioned, proposition (1) is a very weak assumption that everyone should accept. Individuals have a strong reason to accept it because it is related to self-respect. Also, this proposition is generally compatible with most of the desires and interests of individuals. This means that, if an individual intends to deny the conclusion above, he can only deny the principle of consistency. However, the principle of consistency is not something that one can easily reject. The principle of consistency is an *a priori* logical principle of practical reason. This principle is about the *structure* of reasoning. It requires one to make sure that, when one believes in a set of statements, these statements are not contradictory with one another.²³ By maintaining consistency, one's belief in a set of statements can gain a formal validity that represents a kind of rational compellingness. For example, when one believes in certain supposed matters of fact—such as that *p* and that if *p* then *q*—this means that one should believe that *q*.²⁴ That is, if one believes that *p* and that if *p* then *q*, but denies *q*, then this is self-refuting, because it denies the conclusion that is logically implied by the premises. It is logically impossible for those two things (that *p*, and that if *p* then *q*) to be the case without it also being the case that *q*. Thus, denying *q* represents a failure in internal practical consistency. This failure is a mistake of irrationality that most people intend to avoid. As Gilbert Harman observes, people

²³ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 177; Robert Audi, "Theoretical Rationality: its source, structure and scope", in *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*, ed. by Alfred Mele and Piers Rawling (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 27-29.

²⁴ A detailed discussion of this logical implication is in Jonathan Dancy, *Practical Shape: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 93-95.

are naturally inclined to “increase its coherence as much as possible”.²⁵ Hence, this means that similar to proposition (1), the principle of consistency is also an assumption that one is likely to accept because it is one of the most basic rational commitments of human beings.

As shown above, the propositions in the consistency argument are linked as a kind of logical implication. Proposition (7) is logically implied by the previous six propositions. Accordingly, if one believes that he is a reason-assessing creature and demands others to acknowledge it, one must then respect other reason-assessing creatures’ claims of asking for justification and acting in a way that could be justifiable to others. One’s demand of asking others for respect logically implies a demand of entering into the relationship of mutual recognition and respecting others as reason-assessing creatures. Accepting the former but denying the latter violates the principle of consistency and undermines the incoherence in one’s practical reason. It means that one ignores the logical implications of his beliefs and creates an inconsistency in his reasoning. In short, the principle of consistency, together with the natural demand of being recognized as a reason-assessing creature, requires individuals to mutually respect one another. To deny mutual respect, one either undermines his self-respect, or incurs self-contradiction.²⁶

The consistency argument is better than the value of mutual respect argument because it can explain why the idea of mutual respect has overriding importance. Firstly, as long as contractualists adopt the consistency argument, the supremacy of mutual respect shall be less

²⁵ Gilbert Harman, *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press): 2. See also Kirk Ludwig, “Rationality, Language, and the Principle of Charity”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*, ed. by Alfred Mele and Piers Rawling (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 348-349.

²⁶ Some might feel that my consistency argument is similar to Kant’s argument of categorical imperative. For both of them rely on the principle of consistency. Nevertheless, the two arguments differ in their assumptions. The ultimate assumption of my argument is the idea of self-respect. Human beings are usually concerned with their capacity for assessing reasons and asking for justifications. This capacity distinguishes them from animals and becomes a foundation of their self-respect. To ensure that this capacity is respected by others, a human being must respect others reciprocally. This idea of self-respect, nevertheless, is not the ultimate assumption in Kant’s ethics. As Paul Guyer interprets, the fundamental value of Kant’s ethics is freedom (Paul Guyer, *Kant*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge), p. 204). One should be free to determine the value of things and one’s way of life. Also, one’s use of freedom should be consistent with everyone’s use of their freedom. Categorical imperative, therefore, represents a principle that tells us how to pursue one’s particular end in a way that is consistent with the preservation and promotion of other people’s ends. Hence, although there is a

affected by contingent factors. In the value of mutual respect argument, whether or not one thinks the relationship of mutual recognition is the most desirable ideal depends on one's desires and interests. All these factors can be affected by contingent circumstances. However, in the consistency argument, these contingent factors cannot affect the duty to respect one another. Since the principle of consistency is a logical *a priori* principle, everyone should accept it regardless of the context in which he is brought up. No matter what desires and preferences one has, one still has to behave consistently. 'Consistency is generally held to be a virtue: we praise those whose deeds and words are consistent'.²⁷ As long as one believes that one should be respected by others, then one has to accept the requirement for mutual respect. If a person wishes to escape from this duty, he can either choose to violate the principle of consistency, or state that others do not have a duty to respect him; both of which are painful choices. Hence, by adopting the consistency argument, the requirement for mutual respect becomes more mandatory, and whether one should respect others becomes not merely a preference.

Secondly, the value of mutual respect argument is inadequate because it justifies how the requirement for mutual respect is prioritized by the great value attributed to the relationship of mutual recognition. Yet this relationship is only one of the great values in human life, and it is possible for it to be trumped by other values. In the consistency argument, the requirement for mutual respect is supported by the principle of consistency, which is an *a priori*, logical principle working at a more general level than those values which conflict with the requirement for mutual respect. They are on different levels because values give reasons for our actions, while logical principles arrange these values in a consistent way and determine whether a value is valid or not. Values are invalid unless they are compatible with logical principles. For example, suppose that there is a value which requires people to prefer

similarity between the arguments of Kant and I, the content are different. I thank the editor for suggesting me to clarify this difference.

²⁷ Samuel Guttenplan, *The Language of Logic* (London: Blackwell, 1986): 91.

A to B but, at the same time, requires people to prefer B to A. This inconsistent value cannot be a reason for action because it would lead to self-contradiction. If a person justifies his action of choosing A by this value, then he is also self-refuting because this value requires him to choose B rather than choose A as well. Such a value should be excluded from the considerations at the beginning of reasoning, since it fails to be a ground for justification. Hence, values are subjected to logical principles because the validity of values is determined by logical principles. The logical principles are like a gate to the realm of justification; only those values which can pass through the gate of logical principles can be taken as reasons for actions.

The relationship between logical principles and values explains why the need for mutual respect is conclusive. Since mutual respect is a requirement derived from the principle of consistency, only values which are compatible with mutual respect are logically consistent. Hence these values are valid and can be reasons for actions. However, this is not in cases where values are in conflict with mutual respect. Given that mutual respect is a requirement of being consistent, those values which are in conflict with mutual respect are incompatible with the principle of consistency. Therefore, they are invalid and are not qualified to enter into the realm of justification. People cannot take those values as justifications for their actions. Thus, in the consistency argument, we should respect one another not because mutual respect is a stronger reason for actions than other conflicting reasons, but rather because those reasons which are in conflict with mutual respect are indeed *not qualified* to be reasons for action.

In brief, the value of mutual respect argument fails to explain the overridingness of the requirement for mutual respect. Therefore, I suggest that contractualists also adopt the consistency argument. It argues that we should mutually respect one another because this behavior is required by the principle of consistency, which is a *second-order* principle of practical reason, but not one of the *first-order* values in our practical reason. This argument is better than the value of mutual respect argument because it can explain why the norm of

mutual respect can override other moral values and why people can hardly escape from this obligation. As long as one wants to avoid being inconsistent, one must respect others.

V. POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS TO THE CONSISTENCY ARGUMENT

In this section, the possible objections which may be posed to the consistency argument will be examined. Two possible objections will be discussed. First, other philosophers also argue that the requirement for mutual respect is an *a priori* requirement, such as Stephen Darwall, Christine Korsgaard, and Nicholas Southwood. The difference between the consistency argument and their argument will be explained. Second, others may criticize that the consideration about mutual respect is irrelevant to the logical consideration of self-contradiction, because this is a misconception of the nature of mutual respect. These two objections will be handled hereunder.

As a contractualist, Darwall also disagrees with the justification provided by Scanlon and argues that moral requirements are *a priori* requirements that individuals cannot escape. According to Darwall, if the requirement for mutual respect is justified by the desirability of a particular relationship, then it is ‘hard to see how it can adequately account for the non-optional character of moral obligation’.²⁸ Therefore, the requirement for mutual respect is an *a priori* requirement.²⁹ He justifies the non-optional character of the requirement for mutual respect by relying on the nature of claim-making activity. Mutual respect means that individuals acknowledge the dignity of each other and that they have ‘the authority to demand certain treatment of each other, like not stepping one another’s feet’.³⁰ The requirement for

²⁸ See Stephen Darwall, *The Second-person Standpoint* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 36. Apart from Darwall, Christine Korsgaard and Nicholas Southwood have made a similar point. See Christine Korsgaard, *The Source of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 120-122, 132-136, as well as Nicolas Southwood, *Contractualism and the Foundation of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 128-134. These three philosophers all try to defend the priority of morality by a requirement to be consistent. Since their arguments are similar, I shall take Darwall as the representative.

²⁹ Darwall (2006): 30.

³⁰ Ibid.: 13.

mutual respect is non-optional because every individual becomes inevitably committed to the duty to respect others when they make ‘second-personal address’ to other people. The activities which are counted as ‘second-personal address’ include asking for justification from one another and requesting respect from one another.³¹ Therefore ‘any second-personal address commits us to the equal dignity of persons’.³² Once an individual claims that other individuals should respect him, this is a ‘second-personal address’ and he unavoidably commits himself to the duty to respect other individuals on the basis that they have equal moral status. By doing this, he acknowledges that other individuals are able to make the same claim.

The argument of Darwall is similar to mine because both arguments claim that asking for respect from others naturally follows the duty to respect others. Nevertheless, Darwall does not explain in detail the reason why an individual would ask for respect from others. The reason why an individual wants to make a ‘second-personal address’ is that, only when two individuals both make a ‘second-personal address,’ an agreement can be reached.³³ If this does not happen, then there would be a disagreement between the two individuals. However, in this scenario, it seems that an individual could choose not to make a ‘second-personal address’ if he thought that having a disagreement between him and other individuals is not a big issue. This weakens the strength of Darwall’s argument, as he does not explain why an individual *must* make a ‘second-personal address.’ He does not explain why the duty to respect others is inescapable. An individual can escape from the duty to respect others by making other kinds of claims instead of a ‘second-personal address,’ even if this would lead to a disagreement between himself and other individuals. For instance, an individual could make a ‘first-personal address,’ which is a claim that does not presuppose that others should respect him. In this case, he could escape from the duty to respect others without being

³¹ Ibid.: 20-21.

³² Ibid.: 30-31.

³³ Ibid.: 318-319.

inconsistent. Others would not have a duty to respect him, but he also would not need to respect others. Since Darwall does not explain clearly the cost of not making a ‘second-personal address,’ he cannot deny the possibility that an individual can ignore the duty to respect others if he does not think that requesting respect from others is necessary.³⁴

The necessity of requesting respect from others can be explained in the consistency argument, for this argument mentions the logical relationship between self-respect and the duty to respect one another. The consistency argument begins with a contractualist understanding of human nature. To contractualists, human beings are distinguished from animals because they possess a capacity of reason-assessing. This is the distinctive feature of a human being and constitutes his self-respect. Since human beings usually value this capacity, they want other people to recognize it.³⁵ If an individual is denied the capacity of reason-assessing, it is equivalent to saying that his status as a human being is disrespected. This could damage his self-respect. The relationship between the recognition of the capacity of reason-assessing and self-respect can explain why individuals *must* request that others should respect them. The request for recognition is not only a matter of preference but also related to the self-respect of an individual. Although an individual can escape from the duty to respect others by not asking others to respect him, the cost of doing so is not as low as many people might think. Acknowledging that individuals are not required to respect him is the same as saying that he is indifferent from animals and does not have a say when he is treated by others arbitrarily. Since the consequence is serious, individuals generally want to be recognized as human beings. As asking others for respect logically follows the duty to respect others, the duty to respect others becomes a necessity to individuals.

³⁴ This is also a recent critique made by Vallier toward Darwall. Vallier argues that Darwall is committed to a hypothetical account of second-person normativity. If moral principles are those endorsed by members who make ‘second-personal address’ to each other in a merely hypothetical community, then it is unclear why actual people must also make ‘second-personal address’. See Kevin Vallier, ‘Second Person Rules: An Alternative Approach to Second Personal Normativity’, *Res Publica* 23 (2017): 23-42, esp. 29-30.

³⁵ Scanlon (1998): 106.

Hence, although the consistency argument and the argument of Darwall both claim that the requirement for mutual respect should be an *a priori* requirement, the consistency argument can answer some of the questions that Darwall's cannot. The problem with Darwall's argument is that it fails to explain why an individual *must* ask others for respect. An individual can escape from the duty to respect others by refusing to ask one another for respect. However, in the consistency argument, the request for respect is logically related to the self-respect of an individual. The self-respect of an individual could be harmed if other individuals do not recognize him as a reason-assessing creature. Also, an individual would be inconsistent if he, on the one hand, believes that he is a reason-assessing creature but refuses to perform the duty to respect others. Therefore, compared to Darwall's argument, the consistency argument provides a better explanation of the unavoidability of the requirement for mutual respect, because it can explain why an individual must ask others for respect and recognize that they both have equal moral status.

The second objection to the consistency argument is that it misunderstands the nature of mutual respect. In the consistency argument, the requirement for mutual respect is reduced to a *logical* consideration of self-contradiction. We respect one another because we do not want to be inconsistent. However, this understanding of mutual respect goes against some of our intuitions. For instance, imagine when one person disrespects another, is this perceived as a logical mistake? Probably not. It is more likely that the mistake will be perceived differently from a mistake one makes while calculating a mathematical equation. Critiques of the consistency argument would say that reducing mutual respect to a matter of logic seems to overlook the *genuine* meaning of mutual respect. As Scanlon says, "[t]he special force of moral requirements seems quite different from that of, say, principles of logic, even if both are, in some sense, "inescapable." And the fault involved in failing to be moved by moral

requirements does not seem to be a form of incoherence'.³⁶ According to contractualists, disrespecting one another is wrong because it upsets a moral ideal. It ruins the relationship of mutual recognition, which is perceived to be a valuable relationship. This view seems to capture the nature of mutual respect more precisely. Mutual respect should not be viewed as a matter of logic, but as a matter of relationship.

The consistency argument remains concrete despite this objection. This objection is based on a misunderstanding of the role of the consistency argument. The consistency argument is not used to replace the value of mutual respect argument. Rather, it is used to *complement* it. Indeed, I do not intend to deny the importance of the value of mutual respect argument. The relationship of mutual recognition is undoubtedly valuable, and it is appropriate to believe that disrespecting one another is wrong because it ruins the harmony in this sort of relationship. However, only the value of mutual respect argument is inadequate to explain the conclusiveness and compulsoriness of the requirement for mutual respect. The effect of emphasizing the importance of the relationship of mutual recognition is insignificant if an individual does not believe that this relationship has overriding importance. In this case, the consistency argument can justify the requirement for mutual respect by referring to a *priori* logical principle. This paper recommends that, accordingly, contractualists should use both the value of mutual respect argument and the consistency argument to justify the necessity for mutual respect. While the value of mutual respect argument can account for the value of mutual respect, the consistency argument can guarantee that those who do not fully appreciate the value of mutual respect will still have reason to adhere to the requirement for mutual respect.

VI. CONCLUSION

³⁶ Ibid.: 151.

Contractualism defines morality as a matter about the relationship, and rightness is defined as maintaining a relationship based on mutual respect between individuals. However, despite the fact that the idea of mutual respect plays a crucial role in contractualism, the foundation of mutual respect is rarely ever discussed. This paper is an inquiry into the foundation of mutual respect. It discusses why this notion is so important insofar as it can override other conflicting considerations. In the mainstream contractualist approach, the priority of the requirement for mutual respect is justified by the great desirability of the relationship of mutual recognition. However, in this essay, I show that the desirability of the relationship of mutual recognition cannot guarantee that the consideration of this relationship trumps other conflicting considerations. Therefore, I offer the consistency argument as a supplement. The consistency argument shows that the idea of mutual respect is conclusive and compulsory because it is required by the principle of consistency, which is an *a priori* guiding principle of practical reason. Since the duty to respect one another is a logical, *a priori* requirement, it can override other considerations which are related to other values and be in conflict with the requirement for mutual respect. Hence, the consistency argument is a more satisfactory justification for the requirement for mutual respect to be an overriding value over other values.