HONOR, HISTORY, & RELATIONSHIP

Essays in Second-Personal Ethics II

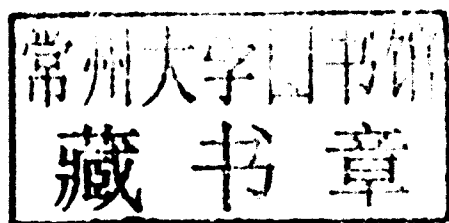STEPHEN DARWALL

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For my colleagues and students at Yale

Acknowledgments

Many colleagues, students, friends, and family members have helped me to formulate the ideas in this volume and its companion, *Morality, Authority, and Law: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics I*. The central elements of the second-person framework were first conceived in the stimulating environment provided by the University of Michigan Philosophy Department and I owe much to many people there. Since coming to Yale in 2008, I have been fortunate to find wonderful colleagues and students who have helped me to develop my ideas further. I am especially indebted to the participants in a seminar Jules Coleman and I gave at the Yale Law School on law and the reactive attitudes in Fall 2008, a seminar Matt Smith and I offered on recognition in Fall 2011, and a seminar on moral obligation in Spring 2009. I have also had the opportunity to present versions of these essays at many different institutions, conferences, and workshops and have benefited enormously from the feedback I have gotten there. I can hardly try to mention all of these, but I would like to give special thanks for the invitations that initiated so many of these essays.

"Respect as Honor and as Accountability" derives from a paper delivered at a conference on respect at the University of Pavia (Italy) in June 2007. It was translated into Italian and published as "Due tipi di rispetto come riconoscimento per le persone," in *Eguale Rispetto*, edited by Ian Carter (Bruno Mondadori 2008). "Smith's Ambivalence about Honor" was initially presented at a conference on Adam Smith held at Balliol College, Oxford, in January 2009. "Justice and Retaliation" was written for a special issue of *Philosophical Papers* (2010) on the retaliatory emotions edited by Lucy Allais. And "*Ressentiment* and Second-Personal Resentment" was first presented at a conference on Nietzsche's ethics held at the University of Southampton (UK) in April 2010.

"Responsibility within Relations" derives from a paper presented at a conference on universality and partiality in ethics held at the University of Reading (UK) in December 2005. "Being With" was originally given as the keynote lecture at the Spindel Conference on empathy and ethics at the University of Memphis in October 2010. And "Demystifying Promises"

was first presented at a conference on promising organized by Hanoch Sheinman at Rice University in October 2008.

"Grotius at the Creation of Modern Moral Philosophy" was first drafted several years ago and presented at various places, including Notre Dame in May 2008, before being revised for publication in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* in 2012. "Fichte and the Second-Person Standpoint" was presented at a conference on German idealism and analytic philosophy at Notre Dame in December 2002. And "Kant on Respect, Dignity, and the Duty of Respect" was written for *Kant's Virtue Ethics*, edited by Monika Betzler.

Contents

The companion volume to *Honor, History, and Relationship* is *Morality, Authority, and Law: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics I*

Introduction

In his recent book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Steven Pinker argues that the dramatic decline of violent death in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resulted, at least in part, from the undermining of cultures of honor in favor of the Enlightenment's "humanitarian revolution": conceptions of equal dignity and human rights and expanding circles of empathy brought on by greatly increased rates of literacy and the reading of novels ("a technology for perspective-taking") (Pinker 2011: 175). Many of the essays in the current volume might be thought of as studies of the philosophical roots of this transition. In *The Second-Person Standpoint* (*SPS*) and this volume's companion, *Morality, Authority, and Law: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics I* (*MAL*), I argue that the modern conceptions of morality and human rights are grounded in the idea of equal second-personal authority—the notion that we share a common basic standing or authority to make claims and demands of each other and hold one another mutually accountable. In calling these modern moral concepts "second personal," I mean that they implicitly refer, in a way other ethical and normative concepts do not, to claims and demands that must be capable of being addressed second personally. For example, I argue that it is part of the very idea of a moral (claim) right that the right holder has the authority to make the claim of the person against whom the right is held and hold him accountable for compliance. As P. F. Strawson argued influentially in "Freedom and Resentment," accountability is second personal (he said, "inter-personal") in its nature (Strawson 1968: 77). When we hold people accountable, whether others or ourselves, we take a second-personal perspective on them and implicitly relate *to* them in a way that is different than when we view them in an "objective" or third-personal way.

The essays in the current volume extend and develop these ideas in three different areas. Part I, "Honor, Respect, and Accountability," explores

fundamental differences between the form that respect and response to insult and injury take in a culture of honor and the shape they assume among mutually accountable equals. The essays in Part II, "Relating to Others," are concerned with the role of accountability in interpersonal relationships, both informal personal relationships of friendship and love and more formal relationships generated by promises. Part III, "History," is concerned more explicitly with the history of ethics: case studies of second-personal aspects of moral theories of the modern period, beginning with Grotius and including Pufendorf, Kant, and Fichte.

The essays in this volume need not be read consecutively. I assume that most readers will have more interest in one topic or another and will proceed accordingly. There are significant connections between these essays, however, as I hope will become evident. A core set of ideas about second-personal concepts and reasons, and the second-person perspective, runs throughout. Since the essays are not meant to be read in any particular order, I have not seen how to avoid repetition in laying out the core ideas. I apologize for this, but hope that readers will find it more helpful than annoying.

To provide a more specific idea of what to expect, brief summaries follow.

I. Honor, Respect, and Accountability

"Respect as Honor and as Accountability" examines two different kinds of *recognition respect* for persons that mediate two different ideals of social order: an order of honor, on the one hand, and of mutually accountable equals, on the other. In Darwall 1977, I noted a distinction between respect as a kind of esteem, an evaluative attitude (*appraisal respect*) that is merited more or less by a person's character or conduct, and respect as recognition (*recognition respect*) that we owe equally to everyone and that is manifested in our treatment of them. In *SPS*, I argued that the form recognition respect for persons takes in modern conceptions of morality and equal rights is fundamentally second personal, not just in the sense that the dignity of persons includes or grounds an equal basic authority to hold one another mutually accountable, but also in the sense that this authority calls for acknowledgment in second-personal

relations. We respect persons in this sense when we enter into relations of mutual accountability with them.

In "Respect as Honor and as Accountability," I show that there are also very different companion senses of 'recognition respect' and 'person' that are realized in orders of honor. The sense of 'person' here is that of *persona*, a socially presented self that bids for recognition (honor) by others. Contempt or disdain is the denial of such recognition. Together, social relations of honor respect and contempt constitute a hierarchy of status, an order of honor. I discuss basic differences between orders of honor and mutual accountability and the different forms recognition respect takes in mediating these different orders. These differences are tied to different negative emotions. The appropriate response to dishonoring contempt is shame, the feeling that one is appropriately regarded or seen (third personally) as having a different persona than the one that one aspires to present. Thus shame shows itself in hiding and covering one's face (which one has "lost"). The response to a (second-personal) charge of a failure of respect, however, is guilt, the feeling that one has indeed violated a legitimate demand. And guilt's natural expression is also second personal, e.g., acknowledgment of wrongdoing, apology, and making amends. Guilt thus *reciprocates* blame and resentment, whereas shame reflects or mirrors contempt.

The second essay is "Smith's Ambivalence about Honor." No philosopher is more important for understanding the differences between the way honor respect and second-personal respect mediate relations of honor and mutual accountability, respectively, than Adam Smith. With one foot in the values of a waning *ancien régime* and another in an ideal of reciprocal respect that he was himself helping to shape, Smith was genuinely ambivalent about honor. On the one hand, Smith calls the disposition to honor rank and wealth "the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments" and notes that it is almost impossible to treat those of exalted rank "as men" and "reason and dispute with them upon ordinary occasions" (1982: 61, 52). On the other, Smith frequently praises a concern with rank and criticizes those who are prepared to suffer insults to their honor and station as "mean-spirited" (1982: 244). "Magnanimity, or a regard to maintain our own rank and dignity in society," he writes, "must characterize our whole stile and deportment" (1982: 38). I analyze Smith's ambivalence about honor, its relation to accountability, and the way each is realized in our moral psychology.

Punishment and reparations are sometimes held to express retaliatory emotions whose object is to strike back against a victimizer or avenge an insult. "Justice and Retaliation" begins by examining a version of this idea in Mill's views about natural resentment and the sense of justice in Chapter V of *Utilitarianism*. Mill holds that the "natural" sentiment of resentment or "vengeance" is at the heart of the concept of justice, that it is essentially retaliatory, and, therefore, that it has "nothing moral in it." It must thus be disciplined or moralized by the desire to promote the general welfare. I argue, to the contrary, that if reactive attitudes like resentment and moral blame are conceived in second-personal Strawsonian terms, they have a different content and function. They implicitly demand respect in a way that also expresses respect for the victimizer as a member of a mutually accountable community of moral equals. In this way, second-personal reactive attitudes, which seek accountability, differ fundamentally from retaliatory impulses, which are expressed through retaliatory vengeance in an order of honor.

A central aspect of Nietzsche's critique of morality is that morality is born in *ressentiment*, a destructive hatred that powerless inferiors feel for their "betters," whose contempt they cannot directly and honestly challenge. Repressed, ressentiment bores into the unconscious, a "dark workshop" in which morality's distinctive ideas of guilt, moral responsibility, and moral evil are fashioned. Personal slights are felt as impersonal offenses—offenses by *someone* against *someone*—violations of a standing anyone has and that anyone can be held responsible for violating.

"*Ressentiment* and Second-Personal Resentment" discusses Nietzsche's analysis of morality's relation to *ressentiment*. I argue that Nietzsche is right to see morality as tied distinctively to guilt and distinctively moral responsibility, but that there are significant differences between *ressentiment* and the second-personal resentment and other reactive attitudes that are conceptually implicated in morality. In Nietzsche's view, the "value" of morality is compromised when *ressentiment*'s retaliatory and destructive force is turned against the self: moral guilt involves a form of self-hatred. I argue, however, that second-personal resentment and other genuinely "inter-personal" Strawsonian reactive attitudes are nothing of the kind (Strawson 1968: 77). To the contrary, in mediating mutual accountability, they express a *reciprocal* respect that differs fundamentally from any attitude that seeks to degrade, contemn, retaliate against, or otherwise devalue their objects.

II. Relating to Others

Philosophical discussion of love and friendship has highlighted ways in which particularistic care and concern can create problems for impartial, universal ethical theories. "Responsibility within Relations" explores ways in which regard and respect for one another as equal persons is no less central to these particularistic relationships and how this is best accounted for within a moral theory that is grounded within a second-person standpoint. More specifically, I argue that central to loving and friendly relations is a form of mutual answerability that involves mutual respect. No emotion is more corrosive of relationships than contempt, since it implicitly excludes answerability to the other.

What is it for two or more people to be *with* each other or *together*? And what role do empathic psychological processes play, either as essential or typical constituents? "Being With" begins with the proposal that to be genuinely with one another, persons must be jointly aware of their mutual openness to mutual relating. It follows, I argue, that being-with is a second-personal phenomenon in the sense discussed in *SPS*. People who are with each other are in one another's *presence*, where the latter involves a second-personal standing or authority, as in the divine presence, or the king's. To be with someone is therefore to give the other second-personal standing, implicitly, to claim it for oneself, and therefore to enter into a relation of mutual accountability. Second-personal relating, I then argue, requires a distinctive form of empathy, *projective empathy*, through which we imaginatively occupy others' perspectives and view ourselves from their point of view. Projective empathy is not, however, the only form of empathy that being-with typically involves. I discuss further ways in which emotional contagion, affect attunement, as well as projective empathy typically enter into the complex psychological (and ethical) phenomenon of being with another person.

"Demystifying Promises" concerns some philosophical puzzles about promising. The traditional philosophical problem has been to explain how it is possible to place oneself under obligation simply by expressing one's will to do so. However, there is a second problem that is less discussed, namely, how it is possible to become obligated *to another person* by so expressing one's will to that person. The major attempts to explain promissory

obligations—consequentialist, Rawls's, and Scanlon's—fail to account for this "directed" or "bipolar" obligation, whether or not they can explain promissory obligations period.[1] By appreciating bipolar obligations' second-personal character and promising as a second-personal phenomenon, however, it is possible to account for promising as a species of a genus, *transactions*, in which parties acquire new obligations to and rights against one another through interactions that presupposes their mutual accountability and their sharing a common basic second-personal authority. Other examples are consent, agreement, accepting an invitation, and acceding to a request.

III. History

It is widely believed that in the seventeenth century ethical philosophy began to assume a self-consciously "modern" form that Hugo Grotius was central in shaping. Certainly, this was the view of Grotius's contemporaries and followers. There is disagreement, however, about what was distinctively new or "modern" in Grotius's thought. Worse, Terence Irwin has recently argued that Grotius should be interpreted as an "Aristotelian naturalist" and that his ideas marked no significant departure from earlier orthodoxy (Irwin 2008). "Grotius at the Creation of Modern Moral Philosophy" argues that there was indeed something importantly new in Grotius. Grotius identified a theoretically fundamental notion of universal "perfect rights" that individuals have against one another and included within these the "faculty," that is, the authority or standing, to claim and *demand* these of one another. Grotius placed these at the heart of a complementary conception of morality, and maintained, moreover, that, in principle, anyone has the standing necessary to hold violators accountable. It follows that the conception of morality that Grotius bequeathed to the modern period is a fundamentally second-personal one. So conceived, morality consists of authoritative demands that we all have the authority to make, and to hold one another and ourselves accountable for complying with.

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[1] For the distinction between these and metaethical accounts of both, see Darwall 2012a.

"Pufendorf on Morality, Sociability, and Moral Powers" concerns second-personal aspects in the highly influential early modern moral and political philosopher, Samuel Pufendorf. Only in the last twenty-five years have scholars begun to appreciate Pufendorf's importance for the history of ethics. The signal element of Pufendorf's ethics for recent commentators is his idea that morality arises "by imposition" when God imposes his superior will on a world that, if not completely value free, nonetheless can contain no *moral* value on its own. But how, exactly, is imposition accomplished? It is clear that Pufendorf's view is not that human beings simply defer to God in the way elephant seals might to a dominant male. Rather, imposition is realized through his creatures' recognition of God's authority to direct them and hold them answerable. This brings into play a whole battery of concepts—accountability, imputation, and authority—along with the capacities to operate with these concepts in practical thought. What is brilliantly original in Pufendorf is his appreciation of these conceptual connections and of their implications for moral psychology. Authority is a kind of "moral power," as Pufendorf calls it, which contrasts with natural or physical powers, and which agents can exercise only within a social, moral space that is constituted by their respective obligations to and rights against one another and whose exercise directly affects those rights and obligations. Only "sociable" beings with the capacity for mutual recognition are thus capable of moral obligation.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* has only recently begun to receive anything like the attention it deserves from Anglophone historians of ethical and political thought. "Fichte and the Second-Person Standpoint" explores a central insight Fichte develops in this work, which I have exploited in my own constructive moral philosophy in *SPS*. (What I there call "Fichte's Point.") Fichte argues that it takes a second-personal *Auffordering* (or "summons"), addressed from one free and rational agent to another, for the addressee to gain a practical consciousness of his own free will. Moreover, Fichte holds that right and law are grounded in this essentially second-personal phenomenon. Through the address and acknowledgment of a summons, summoner and summoned are committed to a reciprocal recognition (*Anerkennung*) of their shared authority as free rational beings to demand a sphere of freedom of action, which grounds both right and law.

It is a familiar theme that Kant bequeathed to modern moral thought the doctrine that all rational beings or persons have a dignity that gives them an equal claim to a respect that differs from any we accord to any form of merit, even moral merit. Frequently this characterization is put forward on the basis on Kant's most familiar ethical writings, *Groundwork* and *The Critique of Practical Reason.* When, however, one looks carefully at these and others of Kant's works, a much more complicated and puzzling picture emerges. As often as not, Kant characterizes the dignity of persons as a species of merit rather than a standing that persons have regardless of merit. "Kant on Respect, Dignity, and the Duty of Respect" discusses the fascinating details of Kant's writings on respect and dignity. Although Kant sometimes conceives of dignity as involving a standing every person has to demand or "exact" respect, Kant also treats dignity as a value we can all achieve, but only when we properly exercise our capacity for moral choice.