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Reasons, Relations, and Commands: Reflections on Darwall*

R. Jay Wallace

Stephen Darwall describes the second-person standpoint as “the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another’s conduct and will” (3).¹ Claims are apparently understood by Darwall to be sources of a distinctive kind of reason for action, which Darwall likewise refers to as second personal. “What makes a reason second-personal is that it is grounded in (*de jure*) authority relations that an addresser takes to hold between him and his addressee” (4). These distinctive, authority-based reasons are created by second-personal address, whereby a person with the relevant authority issues a demand to a specific addressee. Second-personal address purports to direct the addressee practically rather than merely epistemically; it generates immediate claims on the addressee’s will, rather than reporting epistemically on normative facts or relations that obtain independently of the issuance of the demand or claim (6–7).

Darwall returns repeatedly in *The Second-Person Standpoint* to two paradigm examples that are meant to illustrate the distinctive features of second-personal address and second-personal reasons. The first is the example of a platoon sergeant ordering her troops to fall in (12). The command in this example, I take it, is meant to be a form of address to the troops, which gives rise to a reason for the troops to comply. This new reason does not derive from the sergeant’s epistemic authority in matters involving the conduct of the troops. It is not that they have reason to comply with the sergeant’s command because the sergeant is in a privileged position to identify their interests or to discern what it

* Many thanks to the participants in my graduate seminar at Berkeley in the spring of 2007 for helpful discussions of *The Second-Person Standpoint*. I owe a special debt to Niko Kolodny, whose comments and suggestions have influenced my thinking about many issues raised by the book.

1. All parenthetical page references in the text are to Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

would be best for them to do. Rather, the sergeant's order creates a reason which did not previously exist, one that is grounded in the sergeant's normative authority vis-à-vis the troops in her platoon.

Darwall's second paradigm example involves a situation familiar from David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in which a person with a gouty toe protests that you should remove your foot from atop his inflamed and painful digit (6–8). One might think of the protest as calling attention to an independent reason for removing the foot, one that is “state-of-the-world regarding” and agent neutral. On this conception, the fact that the foot is causing the victim acute pain counts in favor of its removal, and this is a reason for anyone who is in a position to effect the foot's displacement (rather than a reason specifically for you, as the addressee of the victim's complaint). But Darwall thinks that the victim's protest should be understood differently, as involving distinctively second-personal forms of address. On this conception, the protest functions as a claim directly on your will (as addressee of the protest). It gives you reason to comply in virtue of the victim's authority to make demands of this kind, and the reason is deeply agent relative, insofar as it pertains only to you: the occupant of the relationship created by the issuance of the protest.

Two observations are in order about Darwall's treatment of this Humean example. First, for all he says it is possible that there are two different kinds of reason for action involved in the gouty toe case: a state-of-the-world-regarding reason for anyone to effect displacement of the foot, which is provided simply by the fact that the person whose toe is being stepped on is in pain, and a distinctively second-personal reason for you in particular to remove your foot, which is created by the protest that is addressed to you by the victim. Darwall does not claim that all reasons for action are second personal in his sense but only that second-personal address gives rise to reasons of a special kind, which are important in particular for understanding the normative significance of morality. This claim leaves open the possibility that the pain of the victim generates reasons that are independent of second-personal address, and that apply potentially to anyone, not just the addressee. There is certainly no contradiction involved in seeing the pain of the gout victim as the source of two different kinds of reason in this way. But this outcome would complicate the normative situation by a considerable margin. In particular, if pain generates both second-personal and state-of-the-world-regarding reasons, then it is at least possible that the reasons of the latter kind will turn out to be more weighty or significant at the end of the day, determining what there is most reason for the agent to do. The second-personal interpretation of reasons of pain thus does not suffice on its own to rule out the kinds of consequentialist outcomes that Darwall opposes.

Second, we should note that the gouty toe example seems better suited than the case of the platoon sergeant to illustrate Darwall's thesis about the second-personal nature of morality. The sergeant stands in a hierarchical relation to her troops, and her authority in relation to them is strikingly asymmetrical. Morality, by contrast, is supposed to involve a situation of "equal accountability," whereby each of us is symmetrically positioned to address second-personal claims to each other. You have the same kind of authority that the gout-afflicted agent has to protest when people cause you pain, and your authority generates similarly agent-relative reasons for compliance with your demands, reasons that we may think of as moral in their source and content.

If the Humean example serves to illustrate Darwall's main thesis about the second-personal character of morality, however, it also raises some important questions about that thesis. As Darwall initially develops the example, the victim's protest is lodged after the point at which pressure is applied by your foot to the gouty toe. This has puzzling consequences, if we take seriously the idea that it is the addressing of a claim or demand that is the source of distinctively second-personal reasons. The claim or demand that is at issue in this case is the victim's protest, which we should understand as creating a reason for you to desist, in virtue of the victim's authority to make demands of precisely this nature. This suggests that you did not have a second-personal reason to refrain from stepping on the victim's toe until the protest was issued. This cannot be right, however. Surely we want to say that you have an agent-relative reason not to step on someone's gouty toe that is (to some degree) prior to and independent of any complaint that might be issued after the toe has actually been stepped on. This is an important respect in which standard moral cases, of the kind this example is meant to illustrate, seem different from the example of the platoon sergeant. The sergeant's authority in relation to her troops is precisely the authority to give them new reasons for action by issuing commands, reasons that would not have obtained if the commands had not been issued. The members of the platoon do not ordinarily have reason to fall in unless and until they are ordered to do so by their sergeant. It is different, however, in the moral case; your reason to refrain from stepping on someone's gouty toes is not in the same way brought into existence by the complaint that the victim issues once you have caused him to suffer. The victim's protest, it seems, calls attention to a reason that was already in place before the protest was addressed to you.

Darwall himself acknowledges at two points in his argument that moral requirements do not strictly speaking have to be "addressed" to constitute or create second-personal reasons (9, 290). "Moral obligations," he writes, "involve implicit demands that are 'in force' . . . even when actual individuals have not explicitly made them" (290 n. 22). He

explains this idea by suggesting that the proneness to hold people accountable through reactive sentiments itself involves an element of second-personal demand or claim. Even if the demand is not explicitly addressed by the person whose toe you step on, it is present in the disposition of that person—together, perhaps, with other members of the “moral community”—to respond to certain things you might do with resentment, indignation, and other such emotional reactions. This maneuver, if I understand it, involves an expanded conception of what it is to address a demand to a person. On the expanded account, demands are addressed not merely when they are explicitly articulated (in the form, say, of a command or a protest) but also when there is present a disposition to respond to violations of implicit norms or standards with the reactions characteristically associated with accountability and blame.

This approach, however, still seems inadequate. It continues to make moral obligation hostage to the actual responses of the individuals implicated in interactions with each other, in ways that are problematic. Your reason not to step on the gouty toe of your neighbor seems to obtain independently of whether the victim of the condition orders you not to tread on him, but it seems equally independent of whether the victim, or anyone else, is in fact disposed to respond to your treading on his toes with resentment, indignation, and similar accountability reactions. Your victim might be so demoralized and defeated by life as no longer to be capable of feeling resentment about indignities of this kind, and he might also have the misfortune of living in a community in which nobody else can get exercised about those indignities either. Contingencies of these kinds, it seems to me, should not alter the fact that you stand under a moral obligation not to visit gratuitous suffering on the person afflicted with gout. The obligation is independent of the explicit demands that your victim might make on you to desist, but it is also independent of the claims that might be implicit in the tendency of people in your “community”—including both the victim of your action as well as others not directly affected by it—to hold you to account when the obligation is violated.

There is, I think, at least one path open to Darwall for responding to this difficulty, which finds some qualified support in things that he says. This would be to interpret in a different way the central idea of a second-personal reason. To this point I have followed Darwall’s official account in understanding second-personal reasons to be claims on the will of an agent that are grounded in another agent’s authority to issue claims of the relevant kind. This is what we might call a voluntarist model, and it has the apparent disadvantage that where there are no actual (explicit or implicit) commands that you do X, you cannot have second-personal reasons or obligations to do X. An alternative would

be to treat second-personal reasons in essentially relational terms. On this approach, what makes a reason second personal is not that it derives from the command of another person but that it is implicated in a structure of relational or “bipolar” normativity.² Thus, in the gouty toe example we might say that your reason not to tread on the other person’s foot is second personal, insofar as it is connected with a series of characteristic assumptions about the normative relations you stand in to the other person. That person has a right not to be harmed or made to suffer, which goes together with a claim *against* you not to treat him in these ways. Your obligation in this matter has a similarly relational aspect; it is an obligation to the gout victim not to disregard his well-being, and its violation would not merely be something that is impersonally wrong or incorrect, but an act that *wrongs* the person who is thus made to suffer.

The relational model is certainly suggested by some of the things Darwall says about second-personal reasons. He asserts, for instance, that “claim rights” and the directional obligations associated with them—obligations specifically to the bearer of the right not to interfere in its exercise—are ethical concepts that belong firmly within the family of second-personal ideas (18–20). But the relational model does not comport so well with other things that Darwall says about second personality. Most important, facts about relational norms of this kind do not seem to depend on implicit or explicit demands that are actually made by one individual or another. This point may be obscured somewhat by the language of “claims,” which figures prominently in Darwall’s argument. The bearer of a moral right may be said to have a claim against you not to impinge uninvited into the sphere that is protected by the right. To speak in this way of a claim, however, is not to imply that the bearer of the claim has done anything to address the demand in question to another agent; one can have a claim against someone, in the relevant sense, without having made or asserted the claim with any degree of articulation or self-awareness. Consider the variant of the Hume example introduced above, in which the person afflicted with gout neither lodges an explicit protest against those who threaten to cause him gratuitous suffering nor holds such agents implicitly to account through a disposition to resent them for such infractions. It seems to me that the person in this situation would have a claim against you not to tread on his toes, even though this claim goes completely unaddressed by its bearer in his interactions with you.

Relational normativity, understood along these lines, thus obtains

2. On “bipolar” normativity, see Michael Thompson, “What Is It to Wrong Someone? A Puzzle about Justice,” in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace, Philip Pettit, Samuel Scheffler, and Michael Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 333–84.

independently from the actual addressing of demands by one agent to another. Darwall might insist that it remains distinctive of these kinds of norms that they are “able to be addressed” within the kind of authority relations that he describes as second personal (cf. 4). Insofar as relational normativity really is independent of the actual addressing of claims or demands, however, it is tempting to conclude that those who articulate such demands stand in a merely epistemic relation to the relational norms that they give voice to. Darwall’s contention that second-personal reasons are tied to our practical authority to make demands on other parties thus seems to go by the board.

This conclusion may be premature, however. If we accept the relational model of second-personal normativity I have been sketching, we probably have to abandon the suggestion that reasons of this kind are grounded in practical authority. But there is a place within that model for the distinct idea that those who are implicated in a nexus of relational normativity possess a kind of practical authority over the relevant normative relation that uninvolved third parties lack. Thus, it is characteristic of relational normativity, as I understand it, that the person who is wronged by you has a privileged basis for complaint against you, an objection to your conduct that is not shared by mere observers to what was done. The notion that someone in particular has been wronged by your action is conceptually connected to the idea that the wronged party has special ground for complaint, which typically takes the form of resentment and the kind of personal protest that gives expression to this reactive sentiment. We might put this point in the language of authority by speaking of the aggrieved party’s privileged authority to complain or object when relational obligations to them have been violated.

A second and connected dimension of relational normativity involves the notion of consent. With many (if not all) moral rights, there is scope for the bearer of the right to alter the directional prohibition that the right involves, by consenting to the kind of behavior that is otherwise prohibited.³ For example, though you would ordinarily wrong me by cutting into my gouty toe with a scalpel, I can render this form of treatment permissible by choosing to authorize it. Choice or consent can have direct practical significance in contexts of relational normativity, altering or negating directional obligations that would otherwise obtain. This point too might be expressed in the language of authority. Thus, the bearers of moral rights are in a unique position to alter the normative relations at issue through their choices; their consent matters

3. Some moral rights may properly be understood to be inalienable, not subject to forfeit through voluntary acts of consent on the part of their bearer; examples might include the rights not to be enslaved or killed.

directly for the question of whether otherwise proscribed behavior may be engaged in, in a way the choices and preferences of uninvolved parties do not. To the extent this is the case, the bearer of the right has the unique authority to determine whether actions within the designated class may be carried out. Claim rights do not themselves derive from volitional acts of their bearers (such as explicit or implicit demands that others desist from the behavior the rights forbid). But once these essentially relational norms are in place, their bearers often have special authority to waive the protections that they provide, by consenting freely to being treated in the way that the right would otherwise prohibit.

The relational model seems to me to preserve many of the distinctive features that Darwall associates with second-personal reasons. I think that it is plausible in its own right, and also that it plausibly applies to many central moral requirements in particular, which are directional or bipolar in precisely the way captured by the model. But there are important strands in Darwall's discussion that make me doubt that he himself consistently understands second-personal reasons in these terms. One of his central theses, as we have seen, is that the stance of holding someone morally accountable, in the way connected with the Strawsonian reactive attitudes, is "ineliminably second-personal" (69). If we interpret second personality along the lines of the relational model, this thesis would entail that such reactive sentiments as indignation and guilt implicate one in a nexus of interconnected entitlements and directional duties. But this simply does not seem to be true.

In saying this, I do not mean to deny that reactive sentiments involve implicit claims; I myself have argued at some length that there is a distinctive stance of holding people to a demand or expectation that is constitutively connected to the Strawsonian reactive attitudes and that is indeed among their defining characteristics.⁴ To the extent this is the case, we might say that reactive emotions "address" demands or normative expectations to the agents who are their targets. It is not the case, however, that the expectations implicated in these attitudes are specifically relational norms, linking the bearers of the attitudes to their targets in a bipolar normative nexus. Reading the latest reports in the morning paper about Robert Mugabe's treatment of Zimbabwean dissidents, I might feel some indignation about his tawdry and pointless and contemptible policies, without of course for a minute thinking that he has flouted any directional duties specifically to me. Among the reactive sentiments, resentment may be a special case, presupposing that one stands in a relational nexus of the kind I have been discussing. We feel resentment when we believe that another person has wronged

4. See my *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

us, violating a directional duty to us not to treat us in certain ways; resentment, indeed, can be understood as the characteristic form of complaint that bearers of relational rights and claims are in a privileged position to lodge when those rights and claims have been flouted. But these features of resentment hardly generalize to all of the reactive sentiments across the board.

The reactive sentiments constitutive of accountability relations thus do not seem to conform to the relational model of second personality. But they equally fail to conform with the voluntarist model of second personality that I earlier distinguished. According to that model, reasons have a second-personal character when they satisfy two conditions: (a) the reasons are created by the addressing of demands (explicitly or implicitly) by one agent to another and (b) the reasons thus created are “grounded” in the *de jure* authority of the addresser vis-à-vis the addressee. The first of these conditions might be said to apply to the reactive sentiments; as I acknowledged above, they are connected to demands or expectations, which we may think of the sentiments as “addressing” to the person who is their target. It is also true, I believe, that the demands in question are correctly addressed only when the addressee has (or had) reason to comply with them.⁵ In Darwall’s terms, this is a “normative felicity condition” of the addressing of demands through a susceptibility to reactive emotions (4). But it is not the case that the reasons at issue are based in the authority of the addresser vis-à-vis the addressee, as the second condition stipulates. When I become indignant about Mugabe’s treatment of Zimbabwean dissidents, I assume that he had good reason to comply with the demand that I hold him to for humane treatment of his political opponents. But this reason does not derive from my “authority” to hold him to the demand. If anyone’s authority is at issue here, it is surely the authority of Mugabe’s political opponents, who are in a privileged position to complain when he arranges for them to be beaten and intimidated. His opponents have a claim against him not to be treated in these ways, one that is prior to and independent of any sentiments that I might be subject to as I read about events in Zimbabwe from the comfort of my kitchen in Berkeley.

The upshot of these reflections is that there is a fundamental unclarity about how Darwall understands the standpoint of second-personal address, which his wide-ranging and erudite elucidations do not succeed in dispelling. Accountability relations, he asserts, are “ineliminably second-personal” in nature (11–15). Yet neither of the two models

5. I discuss this issue in “Reason and Responsibility,” as reprinted in R. Jay Wallace, *Normativity and the Will: Selected Papers on Moral Psychology and Practical Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 123–43.

of second personality that I have extracted from his discussion—the voluntarist and the relational conceptions—seems to apply to this important class of interactions.

In the end, the relational model seems to me the conception that has the greater significance for understanding the reasons at the heart of morality. The model may not shed much light on the stance of holding people morally accountable, but it captures some important and distinctive features of moral requirements, including features that figure prominently in Darwall's account of the second-personal standpoint. In the later parts of his book, however, Darwall himself gravitates decisively toward a version of the voluntarist understanding of moral reasons. According to the "equal accountability" conception of morality that he advances in those sections, the demands that we impose on each other must ultimately be ones that could be endorsed from a "perspective that we can all share as free (second-personally competent) and rational" (276); they are grounded, he suggests, in our "common authority to make claims on each other" (274). The picture is one on which normative principles get traced in the end to a kind of (hypothetical) collective self-legislation, whereby we make principles normative for ourselves by imposing them on ourselves from a common point of view. That a demand be capable of figuring in collective self-legislation of this kind is Darwall's ultimate "normative felicity condition" for the use of the demand in ordinary second-personal address.

This picture, with its evocation of Kant's formula of the realm of ends, has a recognizably contractualist flavor. These associations are of course intended by Darwall, who claims in his concluding chapter that an appreciation of the second-personal character of moral address provides a necessary foundation for contractualist views. If I understand Darwall's position, the second-personal standpoint is supposed to figure at two places in the argument for the form of contractualism he favors: First, what motivates the contractualist picture of moral demands is the use we make of those demands in second-personal address, insofar as we hold one another accountable for complying with the demands. Second, the contractualist picture is itself cashed out in second-personal terms; in particular, Darwall understands the collective imposition of demands on ourselves to proceed from a distinctively second-personal standpoint, one that he adverts to by referring to the "second-personal competence" of those to whom ordinary moral demands are addressed (see, e.g., 35). I want in conclusion to make a few brief comments about this part of Darwall's position.

The perspective of collective self-legislation is second personal, I presume, insofar as it involves our "common authority" to create reasons through our will. This is, as I suggested above, the voluntarist model of the second-personal standpoint. Just as the sergeant gives her troops

reason to fall in by commanding that they do so, we too can give ourselves reasons to comply with moral principles by endorsing them from a common standpoint of reflection. This presupposes a kind of reflexive authority vis-à-vis ourselves, which is the central element in the condition Darwall describes as second-personal competence. Now it is natural to suppose that if we have this kind of authority collectively, we must also possess it individually. How can we be in a position to make laws for ourselves collectively if we are not authorized to legislate for ourselves individually? The individual model of self-legislation, however, amounts to a form of constructivism about practical reason: the view that principles become normative for us through our act of endorsing them, as principles that are to govern our choices and activities.⁶ Darwall argues that constructivist approaches provide some support to the conclusion we are independently committed to through second-personal address, namely, that we each possess an equal dignity and standing to make laws for each other (293–97). But he writes as if that conclusion could equally find support within a recognitional account of practical reason (which holds that normative principles are prior to and independent of the wills that they govern). One question I have is whether he can really be as neutral on the debate between constructivism and recognitional views as he apparently wishes to be. Doesn't his own conception of equal accountability as collective self-legislation commit him to the constructivist account, at least for a large class of normative considerations?

Darwall's version of contractualism offers one interpretation of the basic idea that we have "common authority to make claims on each other." On this interpretation, the thought that we have common authority is expressed in the conclusion that normative principles must be capable of being endorsed collectively, from a point of view that we occupy together. This is not, however, the only way the idea of common authority might be interpreted. An alternative conception would hold that our "common authority" consists not in our joint authority to legislate from a shared point of view but in our equal and reciprocal standing to make relational claims on each other. On this relational conception, I would have rights against you to be treated with consideration and respect, just as you have claims against me to be treated in these ways; the normative nexus in which we are linked is not merely bipolar but also symmetrical. I myself find this a more attractive way of under-

6. I have in mind here the kind of constructivism about normativity developed most systematically by Christine Korsgaard; see her *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and "Realism and Constructivism in Twentieth-Century Moral Philosophy," in "Philosophy in America at the Turn of the Century," suppl. vol., *Journal of Philosophical Research* 28 (2003): 99–122.

standing the ideal of equal accountability, and would note that it finds clearest expression in a form of contractualism different from the one that Darwall himself favors.

As I have emphasized, Darwall understands the ideal of equal accountability in terms of the collective choice of principles from a single, shared standpoint of choice. In Scanlon's version of contractualism, by contrast, there is no shared standpoint for the acceptance or rejection of candidate principles.⁷ Rather, principles are accepted or rejected from the representative standpoints of the different individuals variously affected by the actions those principles would permit or require, whose reasons for acceptance and rejection will be tied to their distinctive points of view. On this form of contractualism, there is no common standpoint for the choice of principles, only a common concern to arrive at a set of principles that everyone can reasonably accept (from their several points of view). To see the implications of this model for a relational conception of normativity, consider the example of promissory obligations. A principle of fidelity to promissory undertakings is one that everyone could reasonably accept because the alternatives to it are ones that promisees in particular would have very strong reasons to reject. The fact that promisees have a compelling objection to principles that permit you to flout expectations you have deliberately led them to form about your own behavior is connected to the relational idea that promissory obligations are owed specifically to the promisee; it is the recipient of the promise who would be wronged when it is broken and who is in a privileged position to complain when let down in this way. Thoughts of these kinds become elusive within Darwall's alternative contractualist model, on which (for instance) sergeant and private are represented as accepting the norms that govern their interactions with each other "from the (second-person) standpoint they both share as free and rational" (260).

Darwall, as we have seen, argues that his collective self-legislation model articulates a normative felicity condition of second-personal address. The movement of thought involved in this argument goes something like this: I can address second-personal reasons to you (e.g., by holding you accountable with respect to a demand) only if you are capable of freely and rationally acknowledging and complying with the demand in question. This is Darwall's condition of second-personal competence, and he contends that it is satisfied only when the demand in question and the authority relations underlying it are ones that can be endorsed by you (the addressee), from a standpoint that you and I share (see, e.g., 249, 258–59, 306). The competence to accept and comply

7. See T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

with authority-based claims thus presupposes that the addressees share authority with their addressers to address the claims in question to themselves, collectively.

This argument raises a host of questions. For instance, it assumes that accountability relations are distinctively second personal in nature; something that, as we have seen, does not in fact seem to be the case. Reactive sentiments may be understood to address demands to the agents who are their targets, but the normativity of the demands has nothing in particular to do with the authority of the “addresser” in these cases; this is true on both the relational and the voluntarist conceptions of second-personal reasons. Setting aside this difficulty, however, there is also a large problem with Darwall’s interpretation of the notion of second-personal competence. We should agree with him, I believe, in holding that an authority-based demand is legitimate only when the person on whom the demand is placed can freely acknowledge the authority that grounds the demand and act from this acknowledgment. Darwall claims that this condition is satisfied only when the people on whom the demand is placed have the authority to place the demand on themselves (from a common point of view, etc.). But this suggestion actually undermines the normative relation it was meant to explain. If I have reason to do something in virtue of your authority to demand it of me, then what I need to be able freely to acknowledge is precisely *your* authority in this matter. To the extent I see the demand as one I have reason to comply with because I have the authority to impose it on myself, it seems I have changed the subject; the normativity of the demand is no longer based in your distinctive authority over me but in my own reflexive authority to make laws for myself.

Now there are some philosophical views on which the kind of slide I have just sketched might seem unavoidable. On certain constructivist views, for instance, the ultimate source of normativity is not external to the will, in the facts or relations that are explicitly acknowledged in normative reflection, but in the volitional act of acknowledgment itself. I make principles normative for myself by endorsing them in this way.⁸ On this kind of view, the requirement that I acknowledge your authority vis-à-vis me has the inevitable effect of transferring authority from you (as the object of my normative judgment) to me (as the author of that judgment). But Darwall, as we have seen, does not wish to commit himself to constructivism of this kind. If we leave constructivism to the side, however, then there is no reason to accept Darwall’s interpretation of second-personal competence and good reason to reject it. If you have a right or claim against me that I not step on your gouty toe, it must be possible for me to acknowledge this normative relation and to act

8. See, again, the works by Christine Korsgaard cited in n. 6 above.

from this acknowledgment; I must be capable of grasping, for instance, that you would be in a privileged position to resent me if I were heedlessly to tread on your inflamed appendage, and I must be able to refrain from so acting out of a recognition that this is the case. Nothing in these conditions requires, however, that I see the claim in question as deriving from my own authority to impose demands on myself. Furthermore, if I did see things in these terms, I would thereby appear to deny the autonomous normative significance of your claim against me. I would be acting from what Darwall elsewhere calls the “wrong kind of reason” (15–17); the normative consideration to which I respond would not be that you have an irreducible claim against me but that I have imposed on myself, through an act of self-legislation, a requirement to respect your claim.

A more thoroughly relational view would hold that each of us has reciprocal rights and claims against each other, as well as the competence to acknowledge and act on these reciprocal normative claims. This is, of course, an attractive picture, part of the enlightened bourgeois conception of morality that many of us take for granted in the modern world. It would be nice if it could be shown that a commitment to this conception is built into our relations to each other and our attitudes toward those relations: for instance, that my acknowledgment that I have claims or rights against you commits me to acknowledging that you have reciprocal rights or claims against me. This would be a very different “normative felicity condition” from the one that Darwall officially defends, however, nor does it find support in anything Darwall says about the second-personal nature of moral reasons and moral address.