

Darwall, Stephen. *Essays in Second-Personal Ethics*. Vol. 2, *Honor, History, and Relationship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 304. \$99.00 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).

In *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Stephen Darwall advances the provocative and original thesis that many of our central moral concepts are justified as the inescapable presuppositions of taking up the “second-person standpoint,” “the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another’s conduct and will” (3). Darwall’s second-personal account thus contrasts with more familiar approaches to ethics. It rejects consequentialism, which is fundamentally third personal. The justification of the objects of central moral concepts (including moral rights, obligations, dignity, justice, and agency) does not turn on the overall third-personal benefits they bring about. And it provides an intriguing alternative to familiar deontological accounts that justify these moral concepts, say, as necessary presuppositions of taking up a merely first-personal deliberative standpoint. In this way, a central virtue of Darwall’s emphasis on the primacy of second-personal concepts is that it gives us a fresh, powerful, and rich perspective from which to approach familiar philosophical questions.

Darwall’s new companion volumes on second-personal ethics develop further the basic thesis of *Second-Person Standpoint* in two directions. The first volume, *Morality, Authority, and Law* (*MAL*), focuses on foundational issues in ethics—especially the distinctness of moral obligation and the concept of autonomy—and the philosophy of law. The second volume, *Honor, History, and Relationship* (*HHR*), extends Darwall’s second-personal approach to account for what Darwall argues is the distinctively modern ethics of equal dignity. Once again, Darwall insightfully integrates historical with contemporary reflections to produce a richly textured exploration of a second-personal approach to ethics.

In order to bring into view the overall structure of *HHR*, the subject matter of this review, it will be helpful to begin by explaining what is arguably the pivotal concept of Darwall’s account, namely, that of a *second-personal normative reason*. This concept is technical and complex, for it implicates three pairs of distinctions.

First, central to Darwall’s account is P. F. Strawson’s distinction between “reactive” and “objective” attitudes. Darwall says that reactive attitudes are mental states that “essentially involve an *interpersonal* way of regarding the individuals who are their objects” (*HHR*, 60; *MAL*, 183–84). By contrast, objective attitudes regard the individuals who are their targets as objects rather than subjects, that is, as things that cannot regulate their conduct through norms. While guilt, resentment, and blame are examples of the former, disdain, disgust, and annoyance are examples of the latter. Darwall claims that while objective attitudes always implicate third-personal reasons, reactive attitudes always implicate second-personal ones.

Second, Darwall frequently distinguishes two basic kinds of normative reasons: an *agent-neutral* reason, a reason that makes no reference to the deliberating agent, and an *agent-relative* reason, a reason that makes essential reference to the deliberating agent (*Second-Person Standpoint*, 6; *MAL*, 96; *HHR*, 225). To develop Darwall’s standard example: if we are taking the bus together and you step on my foot, you could have two different kinds of reasons to remove your foot from on

top of mine. An agent-neutral reason would appeal, say, to the disvalue of producing pain in the world. This would be an agent-neutral reason in the sense that you and every other agent now have some reason to reduce pain in the world by moving your foot off mine. By contrast, an agent-relative reason would appeal, say, to my legitimate claim that you respect my autonomy and bodily integrity. This would be an agent-relative reason in the sense that your stepping on my foot creates a reason specifically for you, “as the person *causing* gratuitous pain to another person” (*HHR*, 225–26). Darwall claims that a second-personal reason is necessarily agent relative rather than agent neutral.

While the concepts of reactive attitudes and agent-relative reasons play an explicit and crucial role in the argument of *Second-Person Standpoint*, in his two new volumes Darwall introduces a helpful distinction between bipolar and non-relational obligations (*MAL*, 20–39; *HHR*, 62–63, 132–33). Deploying terminology introduced by Ernest Weinrib and Michael Thompson, Darwall says that a *bipolar* obligation is one owed to a specific other, whereas a nonrelational obligation (or moral obligation *period*, as Darwall sometimes calls it) is not owed to anyone in particular. While a breach of a bipolar obligation is a *wrong* to another, a breach of a nonrelational obligation is simply a *wrong action*. For instance, assuming there are moral duties concerning the environment, if you dump oil in the high seas (which, legally, are not territorial waters), you would breach a nonrelational obligation without necessarily breaching a bipolar obligation, for, arguably, no specific other has been wronged by your act. A central claim of his new work, then, is that both types of moral obligations, bipolar and nonrelational, necessarily implicate second-personal reasons.

Furthermore, Darwall argues that both types of obligations necessarily implicate different types of practical authority. While bipolar moral obligations to you entail your distinctive, individual authority to hold others answerable for violations to your rights, a discretionary authority that third parties lack, moral obligation period entails the representative and nondiscretionary authority of any moral agent to hold the wrongdoer answerable (*HHR*, 34, 62–64, and 135; *MAL*, 30–32, 170, and 181). For instance, on Darwall’s account, I have a discretionary, individual authority to claim that you should remove your foot from on top of mine. This authority is discretionary and individual because only I have the authority, say, to consent to your stepping on my foot or to forgive you for having done so.

These three distinctions are important not only for conceptual clarity but also to understand one of Darwall’s principal argumentative strategies. Very roughly, this strategy has two main steps. First, one argues that a certain phenomenon central to our moral lives (e.g., human dignity, moral rights and obligations, promising, love and friendship) necessarily presupposes a second-personal kind of reason. And second, one argues that this type of reason is irreducibly second-personal, that is, not reducible to reasons of other kinds. Darwall often articulates the first step, in Kantian terminology, as a “regress” to the conditions of the intelligibility of the phenomenon in question, or, in Austinian terminology, as the “normative felicity conditions” of second-personal address (*Second-Person Standpoint*, 24–25, 56, and 245). And he articulates the second in terms of an argument about the “wrong kind of reasons”: “normative reasons always concern some specific attitude or other, and reasons that are of the right kind for one sort

of attitude will not generally be so for another" (*HHR*, 59; see also *HHR*, 16, 66, 104, and 138–39). Darwall's main example is that (agent-neutral) considerations of the desirability of holding someone responsible cannot make that person culpable. Normative reasons of one kind cannot (generally) ground normative reasons of another.

With this conceptual and argumentative background, we are now in a position to overview the structure of *HHR*. In part 1, Darwall deploys the concept of a second-personal reason to contrast two different ideals of a social order, an order of honor and an order of mutually accountable equals. Darwall insightfully exploits historical discussion of Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Friedrich Nietzsche to argue that an order of honor does not generate truly second-personal reasons. Darwall explains the contrast between these two social orders in terms of competing ideals of personhood. An order of honor is necessarily hierarchical and socially constitutes persons by assigning them a specific rung in the hierarchy (*HHR*, 15–16, 31, and 54). Darwall then argues that an order of honor is inextricably tied to attitudes of contempt and the related reflexive feeling of shame, both of which should be understood as implicating objective (third-personal) attitudes of contempt and shame "don't necessarily involve accountability at all" (*HHR*, 61). By contrast, for an order of mutual accountability a person is a bearer of dignity. Whereas dignity implicates a normative authority, the status of a member of an honor culture is just a social fact. Very roughly, then, Darwall's general argument is that an order of honor and its related retaliatory structure provide reasons of the wrong kind to ground the genuinely second-personal reasons characteristic of morality.

In part 2, Darwall deploys the concept of a second-personal reason to explore relations to particular others: relations of care, concern, and of promissory obligation to another. The first essay emphasizes the presuppositional step. Darwall argues that a central normative presupposition of intimate relations of love and friendship is the mutual respect and accountability characteristic of his own second-personal account (*HHR*, 102–6). Similarly, in "Being With" he argues that the distinctive form of empathy involved in being with another is "projective empathy," a form of empathy that "involves an imaginative projection into another person's point of view" (*HHR*, 116). "Demystifying Promises" offers a crisp argument emphasizing the second wrong kind of reasons argumentative strategy. Darwall argues powerfully that familiar consequentialist and deontological approaches fail to account for the distinctively bipolar character of promissory obligations.

In part 3, Darwall takes us on a philosophical exploration of the historical origins of second-personal reasons. While the essays on Pufendorf and Fichte cover in more detail material already presented in *Second-Person Standpoint*, the essays on Kant and especially on Grotius are particularly noteworthy. Darwall argues that Grotius marks a watershed by articulating for the first time a version of what we now call the wrong kind of reasons argument: when Grotius introduces the idea of a *strict right*, a right that necessarily involves a correlative bipolar obligation on another, he refuses to ground strict rights in agent-neutral or *eudaemonistic* considerations, as Darwall claims Aquinas and Suarez ultimately do (*HHR*, 158 and 169).

HHR is a rich, provocative, and highly stimulating book, where Darwall once again exemplifies the virtues of making ethics and its history illuminate one another. As befits such a rich work, *HHR* raises a number of elemental philosophical questions which it helps us to formulate. Here are a few examples, drawing from each of the three parts. First, why should we suppose that the attitudes characteristic of an order of honor, such as contempt and shame, should be understood third personally? Contempt may well be a different form of hierarchical second-personal engagement with another. Second, why should we suppose that projective empathy is the right way of thinking about *being with* another? As Heidegger—from whom Darwall borrows this phrase—argued, projection is the wrong model for thinking about being with another, since projection prioritizes my first-personal access to myself and then extrapolates this to thought of another, where being with another, instead, appears to prioritize a direct access to the other. And third, why suppose that Hugo Grotius really offers a distinctive and genuinely second-personal grounding of strict rights? Grotius's work may at the very least be far more ambiguous, for he often grounds strict rights (e.g., rights to property) in our "rational and sociable nature" and in the value of self-preservation, arguably third-personal kinds of reasons.

Instead of focusing on these particular questions, in what remains I would like to focus on the concept underlying Darwall's entire second-personal approach, namely, the concept of a second-personal reason. More specifically, I would like to bring together the three pairs of distinctions with which we began in order to construct a problem for Darwall's account of second-personal reasons.

Occasionally, Darwall recognizes that "a norm or reason can be agent-relative without being second-personal" (*MAL*, 137; see also *HHR*, 262). We should distinguish, then, what we might call merely first-personal agent-relative reasons from truly second-personal agent-relative ones. On the one hand, what we might call a *merely first-personal reason* is an agent-relative reason that captures a (mandatory) norm, perhaps entailing supremely authoritative reasons, without granting any other person the authority to claim or demand compliance (*MAL*, 138). On the other hand, a *second-personal reason* is an agent-relative reason that makes reference not only to the deliberating agent but also to the authority of others to bind and have claims against the agent. For instance, if a norm requiring foot avoidance were merely first-personal, foot-oppressed victims would have no claims, rights, or demands against the aggressor. Conversely, the very idea of a right to freedom from foot oppression entails a second-personal reason, my authority to have a claim against you and your correlative obligation to me.

Bearing in mind this distinction between types of agent-relative reasons raises the following question: Has Darwall offered us the resources for distinguishing merely first-personal and second-personal agent-relative reasons? My concern is that he has not. In particular, my concern is that, as described by Darwall, the normative structure of moral obligation period is aptly understood as that of merely first-personal reasons.

Consider the following propositions:

- (1) *A* is responsible to/addresses him- or herself.
- (2) *A* is responsible to/addresses the moral community.
- (3) *A* is responsible to/addresses a specific other.

Darwall's official position is that only (3) implicates bipolar obligations. Nevertheless, he also holds that propositions of type (1)–(3) can uniformly implicate second-personal reasons because they all involve address (*HHR*, 84) and because they all involve authority relations.

But there is reason to be skeptical of this line of response. Darwall's response that (1) and (2) involve second-personal reasons because they involve address and authority relations does not give us enough resources to establish that propositions of type (1) and (2) are genuinely second personal.

To see why, distinguish two kinds of address. A *paradigmatic* address is one I make to another; a paradigmatic exercise of practical authority involves a claim I have against another. A *claim-right*, as Hohfeld taught us, is a right that necessarily correlates with the (bipolar) obligation another owes me. Paradigmatic forms of address take the form of (3). By contrast, a derivative case of address is one I make to myself (1) or to the world at large (2) and does not necessarily involve a specific other. Darwall himself, at least implicitly, agrees with this distinction since his exposition of second-personal reasons typically begins with what I have called the paradigmatic type of case (e.g., your stepping on my toe, a sergeant ordering a soldier). Similarly, Darwall maintains that "practical authority is not just a relation in the logical sense; it is a standing in a relationship" (*MAL*, 141 and 157). Presumably, a relation in the logical sense is one in which you do not relate to any actual others, while a standing in a relationship is your standing in a relationship with an actual other. Weaving these thoughts together, we can put my concern as follows: Darwall has not offered us enough conceptual resources to distinguish the derivative cases of address from merely first-personal reasons. Darwall still owes us an account of why propositions of type (1) and (2), those essential to moral obligation period, really involve a standing in a relationship (a genuinely second-personal reason) rather than a relationship in a logical sense (a merely first-personal reason).

An example might help to make this point. Darwall argues that the moral concept of human dignity contrasts with the honor concept of status: while status is a social fact and therefore normatively contingent, human dignity is necessarily normative and a presupposition of the second-person standpoint (*HHR*, 16, 35, and 54). However, Darwall would appear to have got things backward. By his own description, status appears to involve a standing in a relationship to others (however defective from the moral point of view), while the concept of dignity appears intelligible even in the absence of any relations to others. But if human dignity involves an intrinsic worth intelligible independently of my actual relations to others, it generates merely first-personal reasons. Human dignity would not be a "standing in a relationship" but a merely logical relation to imagined others. When I respect your dignity, I do not seem to be respecting you as the individual to whom I am relating, but rather I seem to be respecting some feature in you (cf. *HHR*, 94).

Darwall's obvious response would be that dignity is a second-personal concept because, as he understands it, dignity is connected conceptually to the practical authority to demand respect. However, recall that Darwall insists that practical authority always comes in two forms: either individual and discretionary or representative and nondiscretionary. When we apply these distinctions to the topic of dignity, they yield a surprising result: so long as dignity generates nondiscretionary duties (duties which you cannot waive), dignity cannot generate bipolar

obligations. For instance, if your dignity necessarily generates a nondiscretionary obligation on others to not torture or enslave you, by Darwall's lights that obligation could not be bipolar, an obligation another owes you, but could only be a moral obligation period. And if that is so, you could not possibly have a claim-right on another party to not be tortured or enslaved, since claim-rights are the mirror image of bipolar obligations. But if your obligation to not torture or enslave me cannot make reference to my claim-right against you, your obligation would be more aptly understood as a merely first-personal reason. We seem to have completely lost from view Darwall's initially appealing idea that human dignity is a second-personal standing in a relationship. Even if Darwall is correct that your obligation implicates an address or demand of some type—of type (1) or (2)—this sense appears so anemic as to make us wonder whether we are still talking of second-personal reasons at all. In short, my concern is that Darwall has not offered us the conceptual resources to account for the second-personal nature of propositions of type (1) and (2).

A reader might feel that the distinction I have been urging between paradigmatic and derivative second-personal reasons is too subtle to make any difference. So let me close by pointing to the serious argumentative consequences of my concern. If what I have been calling derivative second-personal reasons indeed collapse into merely first-personal ones, Darwall's *wrong kind of reasons* argument would boomerang. If normative propositions taking the form of (1) or (2) can be aptly characterized as representing merely first-personal reasons, then they would be reasons of the wrong kind to explicate normative propositions taking the form of (3). Considerations of obligations I have to myself or to a generic, abstract moral community would not be considerations of the right kind to ground an obligation I have to you.

Another way to put this point is to focus on Darwall's proposed order of justification. Darwall's general strategy is to argue that cases that fit into (3) (e.g., stepping on your toe, promising, having a right against you) presuppose concepts that fit into (2) or (1), involving representative authority (see, e.g., *HHR*, 63; *MAL*, 34–39). But notice that the order of entailment does not run both ways, since my obligation period (whether to myself or to the community) does not entail obligations to a specific other. The upshot is that Darwall's alleged normative basis (the representative authority to make demands on the world) cannot entail bipolar obligations but does entail merely first-personal reasons. Darwall's account threatens to render bipolar obligations entirely mysterious.

It should be clear that even if my concerns are warranted, they do not detract from the power of Darwall's new book. One might say that a great philosophical book is measured not only by the compelling force of its arguments but also by the gripping power of the questions it makes possible. Darwall's new work succeeds on both accounts, especially since it gives us the conceptual resources to ask elemental philosophical questions we could not have formulated before. Darwall's work continues to provide a fresh and stimulating perspective on fundamental and familiar philosophical questions. As such, *HHR* promises to become mandatory reading for anyone wishing to explore the second-personal turn in practical philosophy.

ARIEL ZYLBERMAN
McGill University