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SYMPOSIUM ARTICLE

The Moral Law Within *You*

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Abstract
Stephen Darwall argues that the conditions of the possibility of addressing demands second-personally entail a commitment to Kantian moral principles. He also argues that previous attempts to vindicate Kantian morality, as a necessary presupposition of agency, have failed. I defend both of Darwall's arguments against recent objections. But my replies help to bring out a dilemma: either Darwall's account collapses into previous versions of Kantianism, or it renders morality problematically contingent. I reject the first horn, and then argue that the contingency worry is either not as serious as it seems or affects other versions of Kantianism more severely.

Keywords: relational ethics; Kant; transcendental argument; moral obligation; autonomy; agency; second-person standpoint

1. Introduction

Relational aspects of morality have received increasing attention in the last two decades. Especially the link between deontic moral phenomena like obligations and rights, and relational phenomena like interpersonal accountability practices is now widely acknowledged.[1]

Stephen Darwall argues that this link has implications, not only for the structure of morality and its place in human psychology and social practices, but also for the very content and authority of moral demands.[2] He contends that the conditions of the possibility of "second-personal address," the activity of addressing demands person-to-person, or *I*-to-*You*, entail the authority of the Categorical Imperative (henceforth "CI") and the equal dignity of persons (Darwall, 2006, Part IV). Thus, insofar as we engage in this activity, we are committed to the authority of a morality with a specific, Kantian content. According to Darwall, this *Second-Personal Account* marks an improvement over previous defenses of Kantian morality. These *First-Personal Accounts* attempt to vindicate the Categorical Imperative as a condition of the possibility of the first-personal reasoning required for agency as such (esp. Korsgaard, 1996; Wood, 1999: 124–132).

This article revisits both parts of Darwall's argument—his rejection of First-Personal Accounts and his defense of the Second-Personal Account—in light of recent objections. After reconstructing Darwall's core arguments (Section 2), I defend them against critics who challenge the necessity (Section 3), or sufficiency (Section 4), of second-personal concepts for vindicating the CI and the equal dignity of persons. But my responses will leave us with an apparent dilemma: *either* agents necessarily engage in second-personal address, but then the Second-Personal Account collapses

[1]For an overview, see Schaab (2023).

[2]By appealing specifically to this obligation-accountability link, Darwall's approach differs from transcendental arguments based on social or communicative aspects of practical reason.

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into First-Personal Accounts, or agents can avoid second-personal address, but then the Second-Personal Account makes the commitment to morality problematically contingent (Section 5). I reject arguments in favor of the first horn because they fail to acknowledge the distinctiveness of second-personal concepts (Section 6). Turning to the second horn, I argue that there are two versions of the contingency worry (Section 7). While the first version affects First- and Second-Personal Accounts equally, it is not as serious as it appears. The second version is more serious, but actually affects First-Personal Accounts more strongly. I conclude that, on balance, the Second-Personal Account provides the more promising route for those wishing to vindicate Kantian morality by a transcendental argument (Section 8).

2. Darwall's Arguments

In this section, I briefly reconstruct Darwall's arguments against First-Personal Accounts and for his Second-Personal Account.

2.1. Against first-personal accounts

Darwall notes that establishing the authority of the CI is tantamount to establishing autonomy of the will (Darwall, 2006, 213). After all, for Kant, autonomy of the will is both necessary and sufficient for the authority of the CI (see *G* 4:447–448).[3] Let me briefly outline the way in which this biconditional, known as the "reciprocity thesis" (Allison 1990, Ch. 11), is commonly reconstructed, starting with the necessity component.

The CI demands: "Act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (*G* 4:421, italics deleted). A maxim, roughly, captures the end, *E*, for which an agent performs some act-type, φ (see *G* 4:420–421, fn.). Now, a will that follows the CI is a will whose maxim selection is not exclusively guided by the maxims' specific *E* and φ. In addition, it ensures that its maxims have a certain "*form*, which consists in universality," the hallmark of *lawfulness* (*G* 4:436). But the capacity to be guided by "mere conformity with law as such" (*G* 4:402) is just what Kant means by autonomy, defined as "the characteristic of the will by which it is a law to itself (independently of any characteristic of the objects of willing)" (*G* 4:440).[4] Since "ought" implies "can," this means that only an autonomous will could be bound by the CI.

Let us turn to the sufficiency component of the reciprocity thesis. The autonomous will is "a law to itself," and this law is independent "of any characteristic of the objects of willing." By "the objects of willing" we may understand the contents of maxims, that is, substantive *E*s and φs (see *CPrR* 5:27). Thus, in Darwall's words, autonomy entails the capacity to act on a principle which "is not itself 'empirical' (based on a prior desire) or derived from the value (e.g., the desirability) of an independent outcome or state" (Darwall, 2006, 220). Now, what can a principle be based on, if not a prior desire, or the value of an independent outcome? According to Kant, "all that remains of a law if one separates from it […] every object of the will […] is the mere *form* of giving universal law" (*CPrR* 5:27).[5] Therefore, the law that the will is to itself demands that our selection of maxims be guided by the form of law. In short, it is the CI.

The reciprocity thesis implies that the authority of the CI is a condition of the possibility of some activity, if and only if that activity necessarily presupposes that those engaged in it possess autonomy of the will. However, Darwall argues that agency as such does *not* necessarily presuppose

[3] I use the following abbreviations (and translations of) for Kant's works: *G* for *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant, 2011); *CPrR* for *Critique of Practical Reason* (Kant & Wood, 1996); and *Rel* for *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Kant, 2009). Page references use the pagination of the Academy Edition.

[4] I will bracket the question of why Kant calls this capacity *autonomy* (meaning "self-legislation"). For discussion, see Schaab (2022, 2027)

[5] In Section 3, I will challenge this part of Kant's argument. Darwall's vindication of autonomy and the CI does not rely on it.

the autonomy of those engaged in it, and thus First-Personal Accounts cannot establish the authority of the CI.

Darwall's main line of argument against First-Personal Accounts invokes what he calls the "*naïve (first-personal) practical reasoner*" (Darwall, 2006, 216–217):

> For such an agent, desires (and related mental states like pleasure and enjoyment) seem responsive to the value or desirability of outcomes or possible states of affairs. The agent reasons from premises drawn from the content of her beliefs and desires, not from anything about their form.

The naïve practical reasoner takes the way her desires present the world to her to track the value or desirability of their objects. If, for example, a naïve practical reasoner desires to watch a film, she will regard the outcome where she watches a film to be valuable or desirable. Importantly, however, she does not *infer* this evaluation from the premise *that* she has this desire (let alone that this desire meets some independent evaluative criterion). Instead, she reasons "from the perspective of [her] desires," using their *contents* as premises (Darwall, 2006, 217). The desires themselves are "backgrounded" in her deliberation (Darwall, 2006, 216; also see Pettit and Smith, 1990).

Clearly, naïve practical reasoning does not presuppose autonomy of the will. Acting on the perceived value or desirability of outcomes, the naïve practical reasoner is determined by what Kant calls "the objects of willing" (*G* 4:440), not by "mere conformity with law as such" (*G* 4:402).

Darwall's point is not that the naïve practical reasoner accurately represents many, or most, agents. His point is that, as unreflective as the naïve practical reasoner may strike us, she is nevertheless recognizable as an *agent*. Consequently, the conditions of the possibility of agency cannot vindicate the CI.

2.2. For the second-personal account

Having outlined Darwall's main argument against First-Personal Accounts, let us turn to his argument for his own, Second-Personal Account.

Darwall starts by distinguishing two kinds of reason. Suppose Inga is standing on Ole's foot, causing him pain.[6] On the one hand, Inga might acknowledge the fact that, by removing her foot, she could realize a more valuable or desirable outcome, as a reason to remove her foot. On the other hand, Inga might acknowledge the fact that Ole can legitimately hold her accountable for removing her foot, as a reason to do so. According to Darwall, the latter kind of reason is conceptually linked to moral obligation: to be morally obligated to φ is to be accountable for failing to φ without excuse (Darwall, 2006, 26–27).

Darwall claims that, while the first, outcome-based reason could be appreciated by a naïve practical reasoner, the second, obligating reason exemplifies a fundamentally distinct, second-personal kind of practical reasoning. His argument for this claim is that nothing other than Ole's authority to hold Inga accountable could possibly *justify* his doing so. Any other consideration, for example, the value or desirability of the outcome of holding Inga accountable, would necessarily be a reason *of the wrong kind* for doing so (Darwall, 2006, 15). Therefore, Inga's second reason is a "second-personal reason" in that its "validity depends on presupposed authority and accountability relations between persons and, therefore, on the possibility of the reason's being addressed person-to-person" (Darwall, 2006, 8; italics deleted). No amount of outcome-based, naïve practical reasoning will ever suffice to appreciate this reason.

According to Darwall, acknowledging a second-personal reason necessarily presupposes that both its addresser and its addressee possess autonomy of the will (Darwall, 2006, Chapter 10). He argues that, in holding Inga accountable for removing her foot, Ole presupposes that Inga can freely

[6]This example is adapted from Darwall (2006, 5).

and rationally comply. In other words, Inga can appreciate the *legitimacy* of Ole's demand and *act on* it. If it were not for this presupposition, Ole would not be holding Inga accountable, but coercing, goading, or threatening her (see Darwall, 2006, 49–52). Now, since Ole's demand is based on his authority to make it, this demand (and the underlying authority) is legitimate only if Inga can freely and rationally *accept* this authority.

Importantly, however, it is irrelevant whether Inga *actually* accepts it. What is relevant, instead, is "whether, as a rational person, [she] *should* accept this normative relation in general" (Darwall, 2006, 270; italics added). This will be the case only if free and rational persons in general can legitimately make demands of each other by invoking this kind of authority. From this, Darwall infers that any instance of second-personal address is valid only if the addressee could *internalize* the addresser's demand, thus holding *herself* accountable for acting on it, from a perspective that is *shared* between addresser and addressee, and indeed, all free and rational persons. This shared perspective is what he calls the "second-person standpoint" (Darwall, 2006, 35).

Hence, second-personal address presupposes a distinction between two sets of demands: those that can be justified from within the second-person standpoint, and those that cannot. And this, in turn, means that one demand that is always presupposed to be in force is the *addressee's* "demand, as free and rational, against being subject to demands that cannot be so justified" (Darwall, 2006, 274). In addressing Inga second-personally, Ole therefore presupposes that he is *in turn* accountable to Inga. Thus, Ole's authority over Inga presupposes Inga's *equal* authority over Ole.

Darwall suggests that the requirement that legitimate demands be mutually justifiable from the second-person standpoint is "just a second-personal version of the [CI]" (Darwall, 2006, 35). In particular, he contends that "holding oneself accountable for complying with demand-authorizing-principles that free and rational persons [as such] would accept, or could not reasonably reject," is a plausible interpretation of what it means to treat the humanity in persons "always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means," and thus to follow the second variation of Kant's CI (Darwall, 2006, 306; *G* 4:429). Accordingly, Darwall thinks that the capacity to engage in second-personal address, the "second-personal competence" that Inga and Ole must equally possess, entails autonomy of the will (Darwall, 2006, 35).

Indeed, determining oneself by the legitimacy of a demand, and thus by its mere *demandability of any person by any person*, rather than its *content*, seems to require the will to be guided by something like "mere conformity with law as such" (*G* 4:402), "independently of any characteristic of the objects of willing" (*G* 4:440). More specifically, it is tantamount to regarding demands as reasons for action, if and only if they can be justified by "'laws' for a 'kingdom of ends', which structure and define the equal dignity of persons as beings who may not be treated in some ways and must be in others and who have equal standing to demand this second-personally of one another" (Darwall, 2006, 101).

3. Is the Second-Person Standpoint Necessary?

Jeanine Grenberg objects that "an entirely first-personal approach *is* successful in grounding an autonomously legislated notion of obligation" and thus denies "the necessity of Darwall's appeal to the second-personal perspective" (Grenberg, 2013, 208). Unlike other prominent defenders of First-Personal Accounts, Grenberg does not purport to derive the CI directly from the nature of *agency*, thus sidestepping Darwall's invocation of the naïve practical reasoner. Instead, reconstructing Kant's Fact-of-Reason Argument, Grenberg purports to show that the phenomenology of being bound by moral requirements presupposes autonomy, and thus indirectly vindicates the CI.

Kant invokes the example of a man whose prince threatens to have him hanged unless he "give [s] false testimony against an honorable man" (*CPrR* 5:30). Kant argues that, although the man—the so-called Gallows Man—might be unsure whether he will resist the prince's threat, he must admit that he *can* do so. The reason is that the Gallows Man is aware that he morally *ought* to resist

the threat, and "ought" implies "can." But, Kant argues, the Gallows Man can resist the prince's threat only if he possesses autonomy of the will, which is the case only if he is bound by the CI.

Grenberg proposes that, to appreciate the full force of the Fact-of-Reason argument, we unpack the phenomenology of the Gallows Man. Her first step is to argue that, since the Gallows Man's feeling or experience of being bound by the moral law is one of *necessity* (it presents itself as independent of contingent features of the situation), its cause must be in *reason* rather than sensibility (Grenberg, 2013, 214–223). Let us grant this step for the sake of the argument.

In her second step, Grenberg argues that, since the Gallows Man finds that he *identifies* with the rational cause of his feeling of being bound, complying with the moral law is a matter of *autonomy* (Grenberg, 2013, 223–236). Grenberg emphasizes two aspects of this identification, which I discuss in turn. The first aspect concerns the way in which the Gallows Man experiences the moral demand itself (Grenberg, 2013, 223–226). Grenberg writes that "he does not experience this categorical demand as arising from outside of himself: he does not encounter objects in the world that impose themselves upon him as having categorical qualities" (Grenberg, 2013, 224). On the contrary, while the prince's threat to give false testimony, and the inclination to give in to it, are experienced as "coming from outside of himself," "[n]o one else is telling him he must not lie; no contingent feature of his situation is the source of this demand" (Grenberg, 2013, 224).

There are two problems with this part of Grenberg's reconstruction. First, even if we experience the moral demand as coming from the "inside," this does not commit us to autonomy of the will. Rossian deontologists, for instance, need not depict the demands of *prima facie* duties as coming from the "outside" in any relevant sense. They certainly need not depict such demands as based on "objects in the world" or other "contingent features of [the Gallows Man's] situation," let alone on what someone else is "telling him" to do (see Stratton-Lake, 2013, 254–255). Instead, they will agree with Kant that certain moral judgments are synthetic *a priori* truths, which we can discover simply by reflecting on them in the right way, independently of any contingent objects of experience (Audi, 2004, 24). Nevertheless, there is no reason to think that complying with such judgments requires autonomy of the will (Darwall, 2006, 240; Ross, 2002, 157–160; Stratton-Lake, 2013; 254–255). They do not purport to bind the will by virtue of the *form* of law. They simply hold as a matter of "the fundamental nature of the universe" (Ross, 2002, 29).

The second problem with this talk of the moral demand and inclinations coming from "inside" and "outside" the agent, respectively, is that it seems like a metaphor without clear philosophical significance. In fact, the metaphor can easily be flipped: common moral phenomenology gives us just as much warrant for describing moral demands as coming from "outside," and inclinations as coming from "inside." Indeed, this ambiguity seems to underlie Kant's own distinction between our noumenal and phenomenal selves (see *G* 4:453–455). If our inclinations could not be depicted as coming from the "inside," there would be no such thing as our phenomenal *self*, and no need to determine which of our two selves is the "actual" one (*G* 4:457).

Of course, Kant ends up claiming that our rational, noumenal side is indeed our actual self (G 4:457). This is where the second aspect of the Gallows Man's identification with the moral law becomes relevant. Following Kant, Grenberg argues that the Gallows Man *respects* himself if he complies with the moral law, and *despises* or feels *contempt* for himself if he does not (Grenberg, 2013, 226–234). That the Gallows Man respects himself for complying with the moral law "under circumstances so harsh as to destroy any possibility of happiness" indicates not only that "he also *identifies* with these harsh commands," but also that he "identifies that *part* of himself from whom this moral legislation emerged [as] his best self" (Grenberg, 2013, 229).

The problem with this part of Grenberg's reconstruction is that the language of "respecting" and "despising" oneself is ambiguous between a second-personal and a non-second-personal interpretation, and only the second-personal interpretation entails the Gallows Man's autonomy.

On the second-personal interpretation, the Gallows Man adopts a reactive attitude like *blame* or *indignation* whenever he violates the moral law without excuse, thus holding himself *accountable*, invoking "demand-authorizing-principles that free and rational persons [as such] would accept, or

could not reasonably reject" (Darwall, 2006, 306). In this case, the Gallows Man's phenomenology indeed presupposes his autonomy. But then we are adopting a "Second-Personal Interpretation" of the Fact-of-Reason Argument which is perfectly compatible with Darwall's claims (Darwall, 2006, 239). Indeed, the argument for the Second-Personal Account discussed in Section 2.2, appealing to Inga's awareness of her accountability to Ole, *is* a second-personal version of the Fact-of-Reason Argument.

Contrary to Grenberg's characterization, then, Darwall does not say that "we cannot access an autonomously legislated law first-personally" (Grenberg, 2013, 235). Instead, for Darwall, "the second-person standpoint is always also a first-person standpoint" (Darwall, 2007, 55). The important point for him is that second-personal reasoning "is never *merely* first-personal" (Darwall, 2006, 10; italics added) because it "involves […] thought that is addressed to, and that makes a claim on, a free and rational agent" (Darwall, 2006, 9). Thus, if it is read as appealing to second-personal reasoning, the Fact-of-Reason Argument succeeds. But its success confirms, rather than refutes, the need for the second-personal concepts.

On the non-second-personal interpretation, the attitude that the Gallows Man adopts when he acts immorally is what Darwall refers to as "disdain" (Darwall, 2006, 145):

> Disrespect (contempt) that dishonors is disdain—an attitude that is addressed not so much to its object as to those with the standing to bestow honor or dishonor upon that person. Disdain does not demand, nor even really invite, response from its object; it is exclusive rather than inclusive. And what a person loses when he is dishonored is not a standing within a mutually accountable community, but "face," a social place (where one can show one's face without having to justify oneself to others).

If the language of "contempt" and "despising oneself" is read in this non-second-personal way, it is indicative of an emotion that effectively *subordinates* its object, assigning to it a low *rank* along some dimension. Instead of addressing its object second-personally, calling upon it to freely and rationally determine itself to act in a certain way, it excludes or dismisses it. Accordingly, if the Gallows Man has this emotion toward himself whenever he fails to comply with the moral law, he does not thereby presuppose that he possesses autonomy of the will. This can also be seen from the fact that he could intelligibly disdain himself for various traits, such as his height or family background, over which he has no control.

In the third and final step of her argument against Darwall, Grenberg argues that the Gallows Man's first-personal experience entails that the moral law is a merely formal law, and thus requires autonomy of the will (Grenberg, 2013, 236–242). Like in her first step, Grenberg again emphasizes that the Gallows Man experiences the moral demand as *necessary*, and thus as independent of sensibility. She also joins Kant in claiming that the only kind of law that could underwrite a demand of this sort is a merely *formal* one. She writes (Grenberg, 2013, 237–238):

> Any empirically conditioned, merely contingent principle upon which I might act brings with it a "matter": that object toward which my desire is pointed and the attainment of which would constitute the satisfaction of the desire in question. But because the principle of the moral law holds necessarily, it cannot find its ground in this merely contingent material condition; it must, rather, be determined by the mere *form* of law[.]

However, this argument is not valid. The first premise is a conditional: if a principle is empirically conditioned, it is material. The second premise states that the moral law is not empirically conditioned. But this merely *denies the antecedent* of the conditional. The conclusion—that the moral law is formal, not material—does not follow.

What is needed, in place of the premise that all empirically conditioned principles are material, is the premise that *all material principles are empirically conditioned.* Kant evidently takes this

premise to be true, based on his conviction that the bindingness of a material principle would be conditional upon contingent inclination (see, e.g., *G* 4:402). However, there are at least two ways to reject this conviction: first, by rejecting the link between a principle's bindingness and the motivation to comply with it; second, by rejecting Kant's strict dichotomy between two kinds of motives: contingent inclination, on the one hand, and respect for the mere form of law, on the other hand. Indeed, several philosophers, including intuitionist deontologists in a broadly Rossian tradition, reject it in one or both of these ways (e.g., Ross, 2002, 157–160; Stratton-Lake, 2013, 254–255).

Therefore, characterizing the moral demand as *necessary* is insufficient to tie it to (respect for) the mere form of law, and thus to autonomy. A more specific characterization is needed. Darwall provides such a characterization by tying the moral demand to second-personal accountability. Grenberg provides no successful merely first-personal rival to his characterization.

4. Is the Second-Person Standpoint Sufficient?

Two critics deny that the normative felicity conditions of second-personal address are sufficient to ground Kantian morality. Sem De Maagt denies that these conditions entail the equal moral status of *all* persons. Andrea Sangiovanni denies that they entail an *equal* moral status at all. I will discuss their arguments in turn.

4.1. What about third parties?

De Maagt supposes that, from the claim that we are committed to the equal dignity of persons with whom we engage in second-personal address, Darwall infers that we are committed to the equal dignity of all beings who are *capable* of engaging in second-personal address, and thus *all* persons. But this inference is not valid without further premises. So, De Maagt concludes, Darwall's argument has a gap: second-personal address only commits us to the equal status of those with whom we engage in it, not that of *all* persons (De Maagt, 2019, 2778–2779).

However, this objection rests on a misunderstanding. Consider Darwall's discussion of slavery. He writes (Darwall, 2006, 267):

> I am not saying that if a slaveholder claims to the world at large that he has authority over his slaves, this commits him to recognising his slaves' dignity […]. [H]e addresses his claim not to his slaves but to others, and whereas my argument would then require us to conclude that he must presuppose their dignity, it would not entail that he must presuppose that of his slaves.

Thus, while Darwall argues that second-personal address commits addresser and addressee to *each other's* (and their own) equal dignity, he does not argue that it commits them to the dignity of third parties.

Does this mean that all that Darwall establishes, or even purports to establish, is that engaging in second-personal address with a specific person commits us to *that person's* equal dignity? Not quite. While Darwall does not argue that Ole's demand of Inga *per se* commits Ole to recognizing the equal dignity of all persons, he argues that there is a *step* in the line of reasoning that leads from Ole's demand to the recognition of Inga's equal dignity which generalizes beyond this specific instance of second-personal address.

This is the recognition that, *qua* addressee of a second-personal reason, Inga already has a legitimate demand on Ole: the "demand, as free and rational, against being subject to demands that cannot be [second-personally] justified" (Darwall, 2006, 274). This demand must be recognized as *always already* being in place, so to speak, for any concrete demand to be addressable to anyone. But if Inga must be recognized as having this demand just by virtue of being addressed

second-personally, then any *would-be addressee* of second-personal demands must be recognized as having it. Darwall writes (Darwall, 2010a, 224):

> When we presume the authority to address a demand to someone and hold her responsible for compliance, […] we are committed […] to assuming a distinction between directive ways in which we may legitimately address her […], on the one hand, and simply imposing our will on her, on the other.

Thus, while making claims on the world at large does not *per se* commit the slaveholder to recognizing the equal dignity of his slaves, viewing his slaves as potential addressees of second-personal demands *does* commit him to their equal dignity.

But, one might worry, could not an agent in principle *avoid* viewing others as would-be addressees of second-personal reasons? I return to this worry in Sections 5–7.

4.2. *Why* equal *moral status?*

We have seen that Darwall uses the notion of second-personal competence, the capacity to comply, freely and rationally, with demands addressed person-to-person, to infer the *equal* second-personal authority of all (would-be) participants in second-personal address. Andrea Sangiovanni challenges this inference (Sangiovanni, 2017, 50–57).

He contends that, "[i]f Darwall's argument is to work, he must be able to show the practical incoherence of any relation of second-personal authority that is not, ultimately, compatible with the equal moral standing of its participants" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 53–54). As a counterexample to Darwall's argument, Sangiovanni invokes "the unlimited and eternal authority [which] the Christian God [claims] over his subjects" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 54). Sangiovanni argues that a believer in such a God can agree with Darwall that, by virtue of our capacity to appreciate the *legitimacy* of God's commands, "we share a normative point of view with God," but simultaneously insist that, from this point of view, "we can see that [God] has unlimited and eternal authority over us" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 54). Accordingly, from the notion that God's commands must be such that we can appreciate their legitimacy from within the second-person standpoint, it does not follow "that he is (in fact) limited in his powers, or that he must be accountable to us for what he does" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 54).

However, as Sangiovanni himself notes (Sangiovanni, 2017, 54), part of the point of Darwall's argument is to *reject* the kind of theological voluntarism according to which God has genuine authority to obligate us without, in turn, being accountable to us (Darwall, 2006, Chapter 5). In particular, Darwall rejects the idea that God's supposedly unlimited and eternal authority over us could itself constitute a rationale for the legitimacy of his commands. I would reconstruct his reasoning as follows.

Let us start by noting that, as it stands, the rationale is circular: it attempts to legitimize God's authority to command by appeal to this very authority. And, indeed, this circularity was widely noticed and discussed in the history of modern philosophy, including by theologians. For example, Darwall cites Cudworth as writing (1731/1996, I.ii.3, cited in Darwall, 2006, 109):[7]

> It was never heard of, that any one founded all his Authority of Commanding others, and others Obligation or Duty to Obey his Commands, in a Law of his own making, that men should be Required, Obliged, or Bound to Obey him.

Thus, if God's unlimited and eternal authority is to provide a rationale for obeying his commands, that authority needs to be justified by something other than his commands.

[7] Darwall (2006, Chapter 5), Darwall (2023), and Korsgaard and O'Neill (1996, Chapter 1) also reference, for example, Suarez, Pufendorf, Locke, Leibniz, and Clarke as discussing this problem.

But what else could justify it? First, one might appeal to God's superior might. But this appeal provides the wrong kind of reason insofar as—instead of holding us accountable—it coerces, threatens, or goads us (see Darwall, 2006, 49–52). Second, an appeal to God's superior wisdom provides the wrong kind of reason because it invokes the merely *epistemic* authority of an advisor. As Darwall puts it, "[a]dvisors purport to give reasons to their advisees that hold independently of the advising relation or of their competence to stand in it" (Darwall, 2006, 58) and thereby try to get them "to agree, as it were, that there is a reason for [them] to do something rather than asking him to agree to do it" (Darwall, 2006, 6–7). This is the kind of authority that any intelligent observer can invoke to inform Inga that, by standing on Ole's foot, she is bringing about an inferior outcome. But to invoke this authority is not to hold Inga accountable. Third, the same reasoning applies to appeals to God's superior goodness: instead of invoking God's authority to hold us accountable, they legitimize his commands on the basis of their *independent* correctness. Finally, one might appeal to the fact that God has created us, invoking an obligation of gratitude to God (see Darwall, 2006, 110). But then what is ultimately legitimizing God's commands is not his unlimited and eternal authority. This authority is then itself justified by a general type of obligation that any rational agent could, in principle, owe to any other. And this raises the question of what justifies *that* obligation.

Importantly, Darwall does not deny that relations of unequal authority could ever be legitimate. For example, when he discusses the authority of a sergeant to order a private to do ten pushups, he does not claim that the private must, in turn, have the same authority over the sergeant (Darwall, 2006, 305). He rather claims that, insofar as the sergeant's *unequal* authority over the private is to create any genuine second-personal reasons, it must ultimately be justified from the second-person standpoint, by appeal to principles that free and equal rational agents *as such* can accept as ordering relations of authority and accountability between them (Darwall, 2006, 306). Any authority, if it is to *bind* others, is ultimately also *answerable* to them. If God, or whoever, demands that we φ, they must not only provide a rationale for complying that we can *understand* (*pace* Sangiovanni, 2017, 55). Instead, they must be able to justify why φ-ing is something that free rational agents, when placed in the relevant circumstances, can generally demand *of each other*. This is why a conception of "morality as unequal accountability (say, to God) is inherently unstable" (Darwall, 2007, 65). If his authority over us is to obligate us, even God must be, fundamentally, an equal member of the moral community.

While this might not rule out "the conceptual and practical possibility of God's unlimited and eternal authority" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 55), it shows that this authority cannot ground second-personal reasons unless it is, "ultimately, compatible with the equal moral standing of [the participants of second-personal address]" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 53–54).

This distinction also plays an important role in Darwall's discussion of slavery. When Darwall writes that his argument does not "entail that practices like slavery are impossible, necessarily conceptually confused, or pragmatically self-contradictory" (Darwall, 2006, 268), he is not conceding that his account "cannot explain the sense in which slavery is wrong," as Sangiovanni thinks (Sangiovanni, 2017, 56).

Instead, one of the reasons why slavery needn't be self-contradictory or conceptually confused is that, while slavery obviously constitutes an *unequal* authority relation, the fact that it constitutes a second-personally *invalid* authority relation may not be immediately obvious. Like in the case of God's unaccountable authority, it might take some philosophical reasoning to see this.[8] Thus, slavery can, in principle, be *accepted* (as, sadly, it was for much of human history), even though it is not *acceptable*, freely and rationally (Darwall, 2006, 267–68). But, as I explained in Section 2.2, it is free and rational acceptability, not actual acceptance, that makes relations of authority legitimate.

[8]Presumably, that is why Darwall says that he is "not even here claiming that slavery is immoral" (2006, 268). "Here" refers to the chapter, which does not spell out the substantive normative implications of Darwall's view.

Another reason why, in Darwall's view, slavery needn't be self-contradictory or conceptually confused is that, as noted in Section 4.1, slaveholders could in principle avoid regarding their slaves as potential participants in second-personal address (2006, 266–267). But, as Sangiovanni notes, this seems to create a problem: "Darwall has only offered an argument showing that the slaveowner owes a justification to his slave […] if he addresses him. But the argument doesn't show that he does any wrong in *not* addressing him" (Sangiovanni, 2017, 57). It is this problem, and the apparent dilemma that it creates for Darwall's view, to which I turn in the rest of this paper.

5. Contingency or Collapse: A Dilemma for the Second-Personal Account

My responses to both De Maagt's and Sangiovanni's objections left us with the sobering admission that the Second-Personal Account seems to make an agent's commitment to the equal dignity of persons *contingent* upon that agent's engagement in second-personal address. Darwall himself acknowledges this when he writes: "Even if taking up the second-person stance commits us to equal dignity and autonomy, that is consistent with that standpoint and its associated commitments being no more than rationally optional, or worse, illusory" (Darwall, 2006, 277).

It seems that the only way to avoid this problem is to insist that an agent's engagement in second-personal address is not contingent but necessary. In other words, one would have to insist that engaging in second-personal address is a necessary part of agency *as such.* But the whole point of Darwall's invocation of the naïve practical reasoner (see Section 2.1), and of the distinction between first- and second-personal interpretations of the Fact-of-Reason Argument (see Section 3), was to demonstrate that the second-personal concepts needed to vindicate Kantian morality go beyond the requirements of mere agency. To retract this point would be to give up on the distinctiveness of the Second-Personal Account.

We thus arrive at the following dilemma:

(1) If agents as such necessarily engage in second-personal address, the account collapses into First-Personal Accounts.
(2) If agents can avoid second-personal address, the Second-Personal Account makes their commitment to morality contingent on their choice to do so.

In Section 6, I respond to arguments for taking the first horn. In Section 7, I will argue that the second horn is not as problematic as it might seem. In any case, it does not pose a unique problem for the Second-Personal Account.

6. No Agency without Second-Personal Address?

Christine Korsgaard, Tamar Schapiro, and Christoph Hanisch argue that second-personal reasoning might be a necessary part of agency after all. In this way, they attempt to save the Second-Personal Account from the contingency worry and simultaneously redeem First-Personal Accounts. For if second-personal reasoning is necessary for agency, and its necessary presuppositions vindicate the CI, then first-personal reasoning entails a commitment to Kantian morality after all. Since Korsgaard's and Schapiro's arguments are similar, and Darwall has already replied to them, I will address them only briefly, before discussing Hanisch more thoroughly.

Korsgaard denies the intelligibility of naïve practical reasoning by arguing that, if our movements are to qualify as *actions*, we cannot consciously be determined by our desires uncritically (Korsgaard, 2007, 10). Instead, we must inevitably reflect on whether we *ought* to act on them. Crucially, "[t]o answer in the affirmative is to adopt a certain maxim of action as a law governing my conduct; to answer in the negative is to command myself to adopt a law of doing the opposite" (Korsgaard, 2007, 11). Thus, agency inevitably involves accountability to "the voice of the second person within" (Korsgaard, 2007, 23).

Schapiro also rejects naïve practical reasoning, albeit by appealing to the nature of *desire*. Desires are not backgrounded but purport to be satisfied, prompting rational reflection. Through this reflection, "we become aware of [desires] as making purportedly authoritative claims to direct our wills," and thus enter the second-person standpoint (Schapiro, 2010, 235).

Darwall's replies to these arguments emphasize the distinctiveness of second-personal reasoning. Even if some critical reflection on "the disparate practical perspectives provided by my various desires" is inevitable for determining what one has *reason* to do, it does not follow that all action involves *second-personal* reasons (Darwall, 2007, 56; also see Darwall, 2010b, 257). Indeed, in both Korsgaard's and Schapiro's arguments, it is not clear why rational reflection on the *normativity* of one's desires should amount to reflection on *authoritative claims* or putative *self-commands*.

Unlike Korsgaard and Schapiro, Hanisch does not attempt to show that the second-person standpoint collapses into the first-person standpoint. In fact, he emphasizes its distinctness "as a free-standing autarkic source of normative requirements" (Hanisch, 2014, 110). However, Hanisch attempts to establish that agency as such requires us to *take up* the second-person standpoint. In this way, Hanisch attempts to square a strong commitment to the analytical *separateness* of the second-person perspective with a defense of its *inescapability*. His argument draws upon Korsgaard's work on agency as self-constitution (Korsgaard, 2009).

According to Korsgaard, for our movements to count as actions, we must critically reflect on our desires and choose which desires to act on. Korsgaard contends that this choice must be expressive of a unified personal identity. After all, for behavior to be interpretable as an action, it needs to be attributable to a single agent (Korsgaard, 2009, 18–19). But it is not the case that we already have a determinate conception of our identity prior to our actions, which is then expressed by our choices (Korsgaard, 2009, 19). Instead, it is only through choosing to act on certain desires, and thus adopting certain principles of action, or maxims, that we constitute ourselves as agents.

According to Hanisch, Korsgaard's account implies that successful self-constitution, and thus the very possibility of action, requires that we can be efficacious in bringing about the ends that we set as part of the maxims that we adopt (Hanisch, 2014, 114). The idea is not that, to serve the aim of self-constitution, our actions must *actually* succeed. However, in order to intelligibly engage in self-constitution, that is, to choose maxims meaningfully, we at least need to be able to assume that our actions on these maxims *can* succeed.

Hanisch states that this requires that the world we act upon follows certain regularities. However, "surrounding agents pose a potential source of interference that endangers every agents' [sic] self-constituting activities, especially her attempt to conceive of certain ends as something that can be brought about by acting in a specific way" (Hanisch, 2014, 114) It is therefore necessary for an agent's self-constitution that she can predict, with some degree of reliability, that others will not interfere with her activities.

For this reason, Hanisch argues, "practical deliberation presupposes that certain interpersonally shared principles of non-interference are held constant" (Hanisch, 2014, 115). Hanisch suggests that this necessary presupposition of shared practical principles commits self-constituting agents to taking up the second-person standpoint and, thus, to assuming their own and others' second-personal authority and competence (Hanisch, 2014, 116–118, 122–126).

There are three fatal problems for Hanisch's argument. The first problem is that it inherits from Korsgaard an equivocation between two senses of "action." Hanisch suggests that, in order for *action* to be possible at all, we must assume interpersonal normative principles that bar against chaotic interference with our plans. And these principles are supposed to be binding on every human being since every human being *must act* (Korsgaard, 2009, 1). However, it is clearly not the case that, if there are no interpersonal normative principles of non-interference, we cease to "act" in a sense in which it is *inevitable* for humans to act. While acting, in some minimal sense of that word, might be inevitable, fully constituting oneself as the author of one's movements is not. We might read Darwall's argument from the naïve practical reasoner as highlighting that these two senses of

"action" are not the same. Hence, we cannot infer the inevitability of action in the second sense from the inevitability of action in the first sense.

The second problem is that, even if action requires self-constitution, and self-constitution requires *interpersonal interaction*, it does not follow that action requires *second-personal address*. Not all social interactions are second-personal. Purely strategic interactions, for example, are not.

Hanisch contends that we cannot view others as held in check by principles of non-interference in the way our inanimate environment follows the laws of nature (Hanisch, 2014, 122–126). To establish this conclusion, he relies on Wittgenstein's considerations against the possibility of a private language (see Wittgenstein, 2009, esp. Section 256–258). He takes these considerations to show that "[t]he experience of confronting other independent agents" is necessary "to generate and maintain the normative environment for each individual ('correctness standards')" (Hanisch, 2014, 124). Thus, insofar as we follow any normative principles whatsoever, including principles of self-constitution, we must presuppose a community of agents who are equally capable of following them. Therefore, we "cannot but acknowledge these others as normative creatures and, hence, at least as minimally second-personally competent" (Hanisch, 2014, 125).

However, even granting the rest of the argument, this last inference is invalid. The conclusion that we must assume others to be *second-personally* competent follows only if, in following any normative principle whatsoever, we already assume *ourselves* to be second-personally competent. But that is not the case. Second-personal competence must be presupposed only by those acting from a *second-personal* reason. But then Hanisch's argument does not build a *bridge* from the first-personal requirements of agency to the second-person standpoint. Instead, it presupposes that we are *already* engaged in second-personal reasoning from the start.

The third problem with Hanisch's argument is that the only way it *could* provide a bridge between first- and second-personal reasoning is by providing a non-second-personal reason for entering the second-person standpoint. However, Darwall would object (Darwall, 2007, 59)—and Hanisch actually seems to agree (Hanisch, 2014, 119)—that this would be a reason *of the wrong kind*. Indeed, I would make the even stronger claim that the second-person standpoint is not the kind of standpoint that we can *choose* to take up at all. I say more on this in Section 7.

We can conclude that, in addition to being dialectically unattractive for Darwall, the first horn of our dilemma is not a viable option. It runs afoul of the distinctiveness of second-personal concepts. So, let us turn to the second horn.

7. Revisiting the Contingency Worry

The Second-Personal Account renders an agent's commitment to Kantian morality contingent on whether the agent takes up the second-person standpoint. Before we can assess how problematic this contingency really is, we should distinguish two different kinds of contingency. First, agents could avoid reasoning second-personally, and thus evade moral obligations, *altogether*. Second, agents could avoid regarding specific persons as potential co-participants in second-personal address, and thus evade moral obligations *to these individuals*. In this section, I address these two worries separately.

7.1. Avoiding second-personal address globally

Darwall himself offers two replies to the worry that agents could avoid second-personal address altogether. First, he argues that "the second-person standpoint gives us a perspective on our own agency" and that, "[w]ere someone somehow to avoid taking it up, consequently, she would fail to appreciate what we, who have taken it up, can validate as reasons from a more comprehensive view that includes it" (Darwall, 2006, 277). In other words, the second-person standpoint offers insights into the nature of our agency that agents who do not take it up will miss out on.

The problem with this reply is that, as important as these insights may be, they cannot constitute *an agent's reason* to take up the second-person standpoint. Since an agent outside the second-person standpoint cannot envision what gaining these insights might be like, and these insights will utterly transform their practical deliberation by adding a distinctive class of reasons, taking up the second-person standpoint amounts to a *transformative experience*. It is questionable to what extent we can rationally deliberate about whether to have such experiences at all (Paul, 2014).

But even if this is possible in general, a specific difficulty arises for the decision of whether to take up the second-person standpoint: the reason for taking it up would have to be *non-second-personal*. After all, if it were second-personal, the agent in question would need to be reasoning second-personally already to entertain it. However, as Darwall explicitly notes, one *cannot* "genuinely take […] up" the second-person standpoint from a non-second-personal reason because it is a reason *of the wrong kind* (Darwall, 2007, 59). This, again, is because non-second-personal considerations cannot provide adequate warrant for holding anyone *accountable*. Thus, second-personal concepts "comprise an interdefinable circle" and "propositions formulated only with normative and evaluative concepts that are not already implicitly second-personal cannot adequately ground propositions formulated with concepts within the circle" (Darwall, 2006, 12).

Darwall's second reply to the contingency worry is to insist that "whether someone actually takes up the second-person perspective or not is irrelevant to whether or not second-personal reasons for him actually exist" (Darwall, 2007, 60). Such reasons exist for him, provided he has "the psychic capacities necessary to take a second-person standpoint" (Darwall, 2010b, 256).

To me, this response seems incompatible with the Second-Personal Account. According to Darwall, the very existence of a second-personal reason for an agent *depends* on the possibility to address it to him, by holding him accountable for unexcused non-compliance. But this possibility, in turn, presupposes that "there was a process of reasoning [the agent] could have engaged in by which they could have held themselves responsible and determined themselves to act as they should have" (Darwall, 2006, 241). And, as we just saw, one cannot *reason* oneself into holding oneself accountable from non-second-personal premises.

It is also not clear to what extent the *existence* of second-personal reasons for an agent who is not reasoning second-personally would even help to address the contingency worry. Again, such reasons cannot be *the agent's reasons* for reasoning second-personally because, to recognize them, he would need to be reasoning second-personally already. They also cannot offer a basis for holding the agent accountable because that, too, presupposes the agent's engagement in second-personal reasoning.[9]

Darwall's replies might, thus, fail to put the contingency worry to rest entirely. But fortunately, they bring out some points that help us move forward. Since there cannot be *any* reasons—second-personal or other—for or against taking up the second-person standpoint, it turns out that taking it up is not really something one can rationally *decide* to do at all. Hence, it is misleading to speak of second-personal reasoning as "optional" or "avoidable." As soon as one is addressed second-personally, or recognizes the possibility for addressing demands oneself, there's no "option" to "avoid" the second-person standpoint (Darwall, 2006, 277–78; Darwall, 2007, 60). One has, then, simply taken it up.

It is thus not as if some agents avoid second-personal reasoning, and thus moral obligations, by simply refusing to join the "club," to echo Philippa Foot's analogy (Foot, 1972, 310; also see Darwall, 2016). *Pace* Foot, then, morality is not "a system of hypothetical imperatives" (Foot, 1972). All that the "contingency" of morality, on the Second-Personal Account, amounts to is that it is *not*

[9]Similar limitations apply to Darwall's, otherwise convincing, argument that the normativity of moral obligation is not "perspective relative" (2016: 258). He shows that, *if* an agent is morally obligated to φ, they have reason to φ, regardless of their substantive commitments. But it does not seem to follow that agents who do not reason second-personally can be morally obligated in the first place. Also see my point on unconditionality in Kant below.

necessary, conceptually or metaphysically, for human beings to reason second-personally, and thus recognize moral obligations.

Does this constitute a disadvantage of the Second-Personal Account, vis-à-vis First-Personal Accounts? Korsgaard thinks so: "[o]n Darwall's account, the second-person standpoint does not seem to be unavoidable, the way the standpoint of first-personal deliberation is" (Korsgaard, 2007, 22).

However, the first-person standpoint is not strictly unavoidable either. As Korsgaard concedes, one could in principle stop being an agent by ceasing to recognize any normative reasons whatsoever (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, 161–164). Since, in Korsgaard's view, agency is a matter of adopting a conception of one's practical identity, she holds that "[t]he most straightforward expression of complete practical normative skepticism would […] be a form of suicide" (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, 161). She writes (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, 163):

> Is there an argument against that kind of skepticism, a reason not to commit suicide? In one sense, the right reply is that there can't be, since life itself is the source of reasons. In another sense, the right reply is that this is not an issue to be settled by philosophical argument alone.

I agree that this cannot be settled by philosophical argument alone. But then why would we expect there to be such an argument for taking up the second-person standpoint?

Korsgaard might respond that the First-Personal Account still has an advantage because, by appealing to the conditions of the possibility of agency, it depicts a *larger set* of human beings as bound by morality. However, I doubt that there is a significant number of human beings who engage in agency but do not reason second-personally. As Darwall puts it, "[r]ecognizable human life without second-personal thought and experience is simply unimaginable" (Darwall, 2006, 278).

Recent work in empirical psychology seems to confirm that human beings naturally tend to hold themselves and each other accountable (Dill & Darwall, 2014; Isern-Mas & Gomila, 2020; Tomasello, 2020). Indeed, the isolation or mental illness necessary to prevent a human being from reasoning second-personally might well be sufficient to also prevent her from acknowledging any normative reasons whatsoever.[10] And even if there are agents who do not reason second-personally, I suspect that we would not hold them accountable for complying with moral obligations.[11]

Why, then, worry about the charge of contingency at all? One reason might be that especially Kantians are weary of abandoning the *unconditional* bindingness and *necessitation* of morality (*G* 4:413 and 4:416).[12] However, we should distinguish the modality of the *way* in which the moral law binds us from the modality of *whether* it binds us. From the fact that, *as* moral agents, we recognize the moral law as *commanding with* necessity, it does not follow that we necessarily *are* moral agents. Indeed, Kant remarks that unless one possesses the capacities of "moral feeling," "conscience," and "respect for the law," by which we "recognize duties," one cannot be bound by morality (*CPrR* 6:399–402). And he reserves conceptual space for members of the human species who possess some capacity for practical reason but not pure (i.e., moral) practical reason (*Rel* 6:26–28). So even for Kant, neither agents nor biological humans are *necessarily* under moral obligations.

To sum up, the worry that agents might not reason second-personally and thus avoid moral obligations also affects First-Personal Accounts, *mutatis mutandis.* But it is also not a very serious worry because, *if* either of these views is correct, there is no way of rationally entertaining moral claims from outside the relevant standpoint anyway.

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[10]For evidence of the role of second-personal interactions in developing agency, see Musholt (2024).

[11]As a case in point, David Shoemaker characterizes psychopaths as agents who forego second-personal reasoning, but concludes that they are not morally accountable (Shoemaker, 2011).

[12]See Schaab (2021) for a more general discussion of Darwall's Kantian credentials.

7.2. Avoiding second-personal address locally

As we saw in Section 4.1, if we do not regard a person as at least a potential co-participant in second-personal address, we are not committed to recognizing their equal dignity. I think that, for the same reasons for which there cannot be any philosophical argument for engaging in second-personal address, there cannot be any philosophical argument for regarding specific persons as (potential) co-participants in it.

One might argue that, psychologically, it is unrealistic that many human beings will fail to regard each other as potential addressers or addressees of demands. But dehumanizing practices like slavery might be considered real-life cases of such failures. Although it is debatable whether they really are such cases (rather than cases where persons *are* regarded as participants in second-personal address, but the resulting commitment to their equal dignity is violated), it seems fair to say that this version of the contingency worry is more serious than the previous one. However, I argue that this issue arises for Kantian moral theory in general, including First-Personal Accounts.

For Kant, autonomy is required, not only for being morally obligated, but also for possessing dignity (*G* 4:436). According to First-Personal Accounts, we have insight into *our own* autonomy by reflecting on the structure of agency, either directly (see Sections 2.1 and 6) or indirectly, *via* the phenomenology of moral requirements (see Section 3).

But what about other persons? We cannot read *their* autonomy off their external acts (see Saunders, 2016). According to Kant, autonomy requires transcendental freedom of the will, which lies outside observable nature (*G* 4:446–448). And even if we do not buy that part of Kant's theory, it seems that others' behavior will always be interpretable as determined by their strongest contingent desires (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, 100). So, First-Personal Accounts cannot tell us who possesses autonomy and dignity *at all.* So, they have no advantage over the Second-Personal Account in this respect.

Quite the opposite: the Second-Personal Account has two advantages over the First-Personal Account here. As noted in Section 3, Darwall essentially advances a second-personal version of the Fact-of-Reason Argument. One way to run this argument is to start from the agent's recognition of their *own* accountability. We already saw an illustration of this when we considered the argument from Inga's accountability. By holding herself accountable, Inga is implicitly committed to *her own* dignity and autonomy as a participant in second-personal address. Insofar as Inga recognizes herself to be accountable *to Ole*, she is *also* thereby committed to *his* dignity and autonomy. This already constitutes an advantage over First-Personal Accounts, which only offer support for the agent's own autonomy.

But another way to run the argument is to start from the agent's recognition of *another's* accountability. Thus, for example, we can appeal to Ole's recognition of *Inga's* accountability for withdrawing her foot to show that *he* is committed to *her* dignity and autonomy. Thus, not only can the second-personal version of the Fact-of-Reason Argument—unlike its first-personal rival—be used to establish the autonomy of both the addresser and the addressee of moral demands, but it can also be run in either a *self-regarding* or in an *other-regarding* way. Just as there is a second-personal Fact-of-Reason Argument for the agent's *own* dignity and autonomy, there is a second-personal Fact-of-Reason Argument for the dignity and autonomy of those whom the agent is prone to hold accountable.

While this does not *solve* the problem of local failures to recognize others as persons, it ameliorates this problem for the Second-Personal Account.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, I have defended the necessity and sufficiency of second-personal concepts for vindicating Kantian morality, and their distinctiveness from the concepts involved in mere agency, against objections. This left us with the worry that the Second-Personal Account renders morality

contingent. I argued that one version of the worry is less problematic than it might seem, and affects First-Personal Accounts equally. The other version is serious, but even more so for First-Personal Accounts. On balance, then, the Second-Personal Account is still the better option for those who seek to vindicate Kantian morality through a transcendental argument.

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