The Second-Person Standpoint

An Interview with Stephen Darwall

HRP: When did you first become interested in philosophy, and what was it that attracted your interest?

Darwall: Maybe I’ll distinguish between implicit and explicit interest. I didn’t know I was interested in philosophy until I got to college, actually. I was an undergraduate at Yale. I grew up in the Sputnik era, where any reasonably talented high school kid was being steered towards math and science, which was terrific in many ways. I went to college thinking I was either going to do mathematics or physics. In the second year of college, I took a course in real analysis with Shizuo Kakutani, who proved the Kakutani Fixed Point Theorem. At that level of mathematics, I think two things were clear to me. One was that I had been doing math mostly because I thought I was pretty good at it. I really didn’t think about it a whole lot outside of class. And then I discovered in this class that, eh, I wasn’t really that good at it. There were other people who were much, much better at it than I was. Luckily, I was taking a philosophy course at the same time. I found that a lot of things that attracted me to mathematics, rigorous reasoning...
and so on, were there in philosophy also. But, the issues were things that I was actually interested in. I also mentioned my implicit interest. I grew up as the son of a clergyman, in the Episcopal Church—pretty fervent religious beliefs, but at about this time in college they were starting to drop away. Even when I’d had the religious beliefs, I’d been interested in questions about the source of morality and the relationship between religion and morality. So I was able to make the implicit explicit in my philosophy courses; I thought that was just terrific.

**HRP:** What was this first course that you took?

*Darwall:* The first course wasn’t all that attractive, as I recall. It was the second course. The first was a course—I won’t name names—given by a member of the Yale faculty who wasn’t the most scintillating teacher. I think it was kind of introductory, probably ancient philosophy. Perhaps the person can be identified from that, but we’ll just leave it that way [laughs]. The second course was a very good course, I thought, in the history of Early Modern philosophy taught by a man named Ronald Jager. This course was just wonderful.

**HRP:** In the acknowledgment to *Impartial Reason*, you mentioned that your interest in ethics developed in graduate school?

*Darwall:* Right.

**HRP:** Did you have a primary philosophical interest in your undergraduate years? Or was it still fairly general?

*Darwall:* Yale in those days was a kind of crazy place. I had some wonderful teachers—some courses with Bas van Fraassen and Richmond Thomason in the philosophy of space and time and philosophy of mathematics respectively. There was a course with Bob Fogelin in sort of contemporary analytical epistemology that I thought was really good. I also had a seminar on Wittgenstein with Charles “Danny” Daniels, and that was just really interesting. I came out of undergraduate school thinking I was interested Wittgensteinian philosophy of language. But it was at Pittsburgh where, in the second year of graduate school, I took a year-long course in ethical theory with Kurt Baier. That sort of lit me up; I mean, that was what I was meant to think about.

**HRP:** When you began thinking about ethical theory, were you from the first interested primarily in questions of practical reason? Or did that come later?

*Darwall:* Pretty much from the beginning. Of course that was what was in the air at that point. Kurt Baier, who became my advisor, though I should also say, just parenthetically, that though Annette Baier wasn’t on the faculty, I still had some access to her because she was teaching at Carnegie Mellon University. I think for the first course I had responsibility for teaching, she hired me to teach at Carnegie Mellon. But Kurt Baier, back to your question, published *The Moral Point of View* in, I think, 1957, initially, but it came out in the Random House edition in 1963.
I went to graduate school in 1968. Baier, W. D. Falk, and Stephen Toulmin had written a lot in the so-called “good reasons” approach to ethics. Falk had written “Action-Guiding Reasons” somewhere in the mid-sixties there. So that’s certainly what Baier was about then. There were other things at the time too. I remember a book by Roy Edgley, called something like *Reason in Theory and Practice*—it was, I think, published in 1969. Nagel’s *Possibility of Altruism* came out in 1970. So yes, reasons for acting and the connection between that and morality—roughly the “Why be moral?” question—that was the question that really was in the air.

**HRP: And Baier had a roughly Hobbesian approach, if I remember correctly?**

*Darwall:* That’s right. I think he was kind of misunderstood at the time. I would call it a sort of rule-Hobbesian approach. I think people read him in such a way that he was committing a fairly simple fallacy, conflating collective interest with individual interest. It was a more complex view than that, but yes, certainly Hobbesian in its main thrust.

**HRP: When were you introduced to Kantian ideas?**

*Darwall:* Well, that’s an interesting thing. Among the people I took courses with at Pittsburgh was Jerry Schneewind. At that time I think Jerry was only on the philosophy faculty full-time for one or two of the years I was there, and I think one of those he was on sabbatical. After that, he became the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Pittsburgh. He was actually out of philosophy after that for a number of years. But what people may not realize is that at that point he’d worked almost entirely on Sidgwick. He hadn’t done any of the work that he’s best known for now, of course, which is his marvelous stuff on the history of Early Modern.

I believe I took the first seminar in which he taught Kant. It was a Hobbes, Hume, and Kant course. I remember being quite engaged by Kant at that point. But to be truthful, I think it was really when I went to North Carolina to teach and met David Falk that I first appreciated the power of Kant’s views. Many of your readers may not know Falk. I think he was a pretty important presence in moral philosophy at that point. Actually he’s the source of the idea of internalism in ethics. His “‘Ought’ And Motivation” developed the category of externalism and internalism—the whole discussion and debate really derives from him on that. But he had a lot of other interesting views on reasons for acting and on the nature of morality. He had two different ways of conceiving of morality—one in terms of a kind of other-regarding content, another in terms of the idea of self-direction. But Falk was, or at least saw himself as, a Kantian, first and foremost. Actually, Falk thought all the main philosophers had held his views [laughs]; he was a Platonist, he was a Humean, he was a Kantian, he was a Moorean! It turned out that all of them thought exactly what David thought [laughs]. Anyway, it was really through David, together with the fact that when I went to North Carolina (well, really, my last year at Pittsburgh and the first year I was at North Carolina) that I was introduced to Kant.

I get my degree in 1972 and *Theory of Justice* came out in 1971 Of course,
that just puts Kant front and center in American moral and political philosophy. I remember writing a longer version of—I had this short thing called A Defense of the Kantian Interpretation, which is about the Kantian interpretation of justice as fairness, but there’s a longer version in an anthology that I think people rarely see. It’s called something like, Is There a Kantian Interpretation of Rawlsian Justice? At the beginning of that, I note that in the seventies you have all of Rawls, Nozick, and Robert Paul Wolff invoking Kant as the source of their respectively liberal democratic, libertarian, and anarchist views. So Kant was very much in the air at that point.

HRP: When you began your study of ethics and as it developed, were you initially interested in making the argument that reason for action could be non-self-centered, as you do in Impartial Reason? Or did that develop over time?

Darwall: Yes, that was an idea I had right at the beginning. I mean, it seemed to me that moral obligations certainly present themselves as providing reasons, indeed overriding reasons, for acting. I’ve always thought that’s got to be right. I’ve always been interested in trying to see if I could show that it’s right; I’ve got a better way of doing it now [laughs].

HRP: You do a lot of work on practical reason, and you write in The Second-Person Standpoint that much of your earlier work is directed at the attempt of articulating a comprehensive theory of practical reason. Do you have a basic concept of practical reason that is non-controversial and of which your own views are a specification or an interpretation? Furthermore, how would you define that very broad idea of practical reason in relation and in distinction to theoretical reason?

Darwall: Well I think the more basic idea is just the idea of a reason. A practical reason is a reason to do something, and a theoretical reason is a reason to believe something. Then there can be reasons to feel this or that, or to have this or that attitude. Then what is a reason? Scanlon says—I don’t know a better way of doing it—that it is something that counts in favor of. Now I’ve always thought that simply leaving it at that can be somewhat mysterious because there’s this other feature of reasons, namely, that they feature in reasoning —of agents, if we’re talking about practical reasoners; of believers, if we’re talking about theoretical reasoners; of beings who can have this or that attitude, if we’re talking about reasons for this or that attitude. Therefore it seems to be an important conceptual point about something that counts in favor, in the right way, of an attitude, or a belief, or an action that it’s something that could be the person’s reason—someone’s reason—for having that attitude, something on the basis of which the person could have the attitude and could, as it were, reason to the attitude. That hooks up the counting-in-favor-of relation or the being-a-reason-in-support-of relation with its role in reasoning and in guiding.

Now I think there’s an non-controversial way of putting that point, which is: a reason is a fact or feature, whatever it might be, that an agent would be moved by were she rational. That’s a perfectly colorless way of putting it
because it leaves it entirely open whether someone counts as rational by virtue of being moved by the considerations that are independently reasons, or whether they become reasons thanks to the fact that, were she rational, specified in some formal (non-substantive) ways, she’d be moved by that consideration. I think that’s the broadest way of putting it that connects up reasons in this sort of flavorless counting-in-favor-of sense with this guidance sense. I must say some graduate students here are sort of pushing me on whether there really is this distinction between concept and conception and that really you’re either making a conceptual claim or you’re doing something else which would be substantive or normative judgment. But, I’ll just say, for the moment my conception is that what it is to be a reason is to be a consideration that someone who were rational in some formal sense would be moved by.

HRP: Adopting that definition, is there then any way of specifying what makes a practical reason unique, and perhaps furthermore, specifying species of practical reasons? I’m assuming that in the period between Impartial Reason and The Second-Person Standpoint your answer to this has changed.

Darwall: First, as to practical versus theoretical, whether the practical is primary and the theoretical secondary or vice versa. I don’t have a view on that. Practical reason just has to do with reasons in the service of action and theoretical reason just has to do with reasons in the service of belief. The notion that’s common to both of them is the idea of a reason—a normative reason.

With respect to species of practical reason, yes, I now think it’s a pretty important fact that there are different kinds of practical reasons. What was on the table back in the early seventies, was the question of whether—I’ll use Nagel’s initial terms—whether there could be some reasons that were irreducibly “subjective” or whether all reasons must be “objective.” Well those terms got dropped pretty quickly in favor of “agent-centered” versus “agent-neutral”; then “agent-centered” got dropped in favor of “agent-relative.” Really, what was at issue there was a discussion whether reasons could be irreducibly egocentric, I think. Or whether they had to be appreciated from some non-egocentric point of view, “the point of view of the universe” in Sidgwick’s terms, or a more “impersonal point of view”, to use Nagel’s terms. And at that point, I was partly with Nagel because I wanted to argue that there were some reasons in addition to subjective reasons. But I didn’t want to argue that all reasons were objective. Actually, I didn’t want to argue that any reasons were objective in precisely Nagel’s sense, because it turned out that that involved a notion of agent-neutral value—a notion of states of affairs that there is reason for any rational agent to value—that I wasn’t sure was fully defensible. What I was interested in vindicating was a certain kind of agent-relative reason that wasn’t just about egocentric self-interest but rather one that was about moral obligations involving our relations to one another.

Anyway, what I didn’t see then, and didn’t really see until seven or eight years ago, was that there is this other category of irreducibly second-personal reasons. If there are irreducibly egocentric reasons, then those are first-personal reasons, and if there are irreducibly objective or impersonal reasons, then those are third-personal reasons. What I came to see was that there is a whole class
of reasons that are second-personal, in the sense that to understand them and appreciate them, one has to be in a relationship of reciprocal address. Or they refer, if you like, to a relationship of address, person to person. I’ve come to think that the old point that Prichard made in “Does Moral Philosophy Rest On A Mistake?” is just an instance of the point. Prichard said that it’s a mistake to try to derive reasons for moral obligations or reasons that could establish moral obligation from self-interested considerations. To use contemporary lingo, the latter are reasons of the wrong kind to establish the existence of moral obligation. I think that’s right, but I think that the reason that’s right is because moral obligations are themselves irreducibly second-personal. They always conceptually involve an authority to make claims and demands, so they’re second-personal reasons. You can’t get second-personal reasons out of first-personal reasons that aren’t already second-personal or out of third-personal considerations.

HRP: A couple of questions: First, could you expand a bit on the notion of a second-personal reason and what you call “the circle of concepts”—authority, accountability, responsibility to, and so on—and how these are all in a sense irreducibly second-personal? Secondly, how did you come to the idea of a second-personal reason, in light of your earlier work?

Darwall: Well, maybe I’ll take the second first. I had agreed, maybe as far ago as ten years ago, to write a book on the history of ethics in the modern period, from roughly the 17th century to something like the current moment, though that’s shifted in the last ten years [laughs]. I guess I’m making more work for myself the longer I wait. There’s a series the Cambridge University Press is doing, edited by Gary Hatfield and Paul Guyer, called The Evolution of Modern Philosophy. The idea is to have a series of books that talk about how subdivisions in philosophy—epistemology, aesthetics, and so on—developed into roughly their current shape beginning in the Early Modern period. I agreed to do the one on ethics. Well at that point, I thought I know a fair amount about 17th and 18th century British moral philosophy, a good bit about 20th century analytical moral philosophy, and something about 19th century English-speaking moral philosophy, but not a whole lot about 19th century, post-Kantian, Continental moral philosophy. So I set about reading Fichte, Hegel, and a lot of the post-Kantians. In that process, I read a chapter of Allen Wood’s book, Hegel’s Ethical Thought, on recognition in Fichte and Hegel. Now for other reasons, I had been thinking about the idea of moral accountability, and the light went on. It turns out that what’s actually most relevant for my thought happens in the early parts of Fichte’s Foundations of Natural Right. Though, of course, there are similar themes in Hegel, it’s sort of less spot-on from my point of view. So that’s how I got into it.

I began to see that a fairly small section in Fichte’s Foundations of Natural Right on reciprocal recognition, Anerkennung, was absolutely central for understanding what it is to be in a relation of mutual accountability. What are the ideas? Well, the idea is that there’s a kind of a reason that’s being presupposed whenever anyone addresses a putatively legitimate claim or demand to another. I mean by that not simply trying to get somebody to do something, as in “Give me your wallet!” What I have in mind is the attempt to direct someone, but
through *their* free will. That’s the key idea, that of a Fichtean *Aufforderung*, where I summon you, but I summon you to do something of your own free choice. Now for you to do it of your own free choice as a result of my summons, it’s not like I simultaneously say, “There’s reason for you to tie your shoes. Tie your shoes.” The idea is that the summons, or the authority to issue it, or something in that general direction, generates the reason. The reason doesn’t come from features of the world that exist prior to and independently of any authority that you and I have to address claims and demands to one another.

I use this example of someone stepping on somebody else’s foot. If I’m stepping on your foot, then you and some other third party might take it that I had no authority to do that. I violated your authority when I did that, and you have an authority to demand I not do it, and actually we should understand you as having implicitly demanded even *before* I stepped on your foot that I not step on your foot. You and I, as representatives of the moral community, in holding ourselves to a moral obligation not to step on one another’s feet, are presupposing that we have an authority to demand that people not step on one another’s feet. The idea is that if you politely ask me to get off or even somewhat more forcefully say, “You have to get off my foot: I have a right that you not be on my foot,” then there is a kind of reason that you are pointing to: the reason connected to your legitimate claim. That reason is different from just the fact that you’re in pain or the fact that the world is a worse place for your being in pain—it’s that you have an authority to demand something and you demand it. I claim that that reason is also conceptually connected to the idea of responsibility or answerability to the person who has the authority to claim and demand.

The idea is that there are actually *four* ideas that are conceptually related: there’s the idea of a legitimate claim, the idea of authority that makes the claim legitimate, the idea of responsibility to the claim holder, and then the idea of the reason that is generated by the legitimate claim—which I call the second-personal reason. I call it “second-personal” because claiming, or addressing a claim or demand, is second-personal. We do it person-to-person. The thought is that once you’ve got any one of these ideas, you’ve also got the other three. The four come as a package deal. Authority necessarily entails responsibility to the person; authority of A over B entails B’s responsibility to A as answerable or accountable to A. That authority then legitimates the claim itself, which in turn creates the reason.

**HRP:** Would you look at this as the only way to render the phenomenon of obligation fully intelligible?

**Darwall:** Right. We can put it in terms of Hobbes’ distinction between command and counsel. If there are certain reasons for you to do something, let’s say, I can of course point to those reasons. But, to that extent, I’m simply giving counsel. I’m simply pointing to the existence of reasons that exist independently of any authority that I might have. We can talk about an “ought”, obviously, in terms of just the existence of reasons, and maybe we can talk about a *moral* ought in terms of the existence of moral reasons, but we haven’t yet gotten obligation. We haven’t yet gotten the idea of someone being *subject to* or *bound by* a moral obligation. To
get that idea we’ve got to get the idea of responsibility or accountability in. When you look back at the history [of ethics], you can see a lot of people having this idea. Suarez has it in the late 16th early 17th century. Mill has it when he says that we don’t mean to call anything “wrong” unless we mean to imply that someone ought to be punished for doing it without excuse; I prefer the term “ought to be held responsible for doing it.” It’s there in a number of other places. I think it’s implicitly there when Nietzsche is giving his radical critique of morality—it’s on the assumption that morality involves answerability or accountability. That’s why he brings in the contestable assumption of freedom of the will. So yes, I think it’s a conceptual truth that what we’re morally obligated to do is what we are responsible to the moral community for doing. Exactly who is the moral community is itself contestable. Theological voluntarists might believe that it’s really just God. You and I might believe that it’s just persons—people who are capable of holding one another morally responsible. But that’s the idea.

HRP: As you were doing your study of the British moralists and the internal ought, did you see the idea of obligation coming out? You need a power to whom you’re obligated to be able to hold you accountable. Of course there are interesting accounts, such as Locke’s, in which that appears to be totally separated from a motivational capacity. But nonetheless, there is a very concrete idea of accountability there. As you were studying the British moralists, did that get the wheels turning?

Darwall: The answer is “No,” actually. There’s a kind of an interesting and curious fact there. I contributed an essay to The Cambridge History of 18th Century Philosophy, edited by Knud Haakonssen. I wrote that maybe twelve years ago. At the beginning of that essay, I note that the word “obligation” has its most ancient root in the idea of a tie between people, which can be brought about by one person benefiting another person. In ancient potlatch cultures, there’s an idea that if you give something to somebody, then they’re obligated to you. The crucial point, though, was the idea of a tie or bond. What I say there is that in the 17th and 18th century, philosophers were trying to re-conceptualize obligation in terms of reasons for acting. That’s true, but I now think to the extent that they were doing that, they were losing this central part of the concept. Or, with Locke, it was still there, but really all the action in Locke has to do with the motivational side or the normative-reasons-for-acting side. Then you get a very interesting thing happening, which is that the terms “obligation” and “oblige” come in the 17th and 18th century (not universally, but to a large extent in the English writers) to mean something like “conclusive reason for acting,” or just “reason for acting.” That’s the way it certainly works in Hutcheson and in Shaftesbury. Butler’s an interesting case since conscience plays a distinctive role. But sometimes conscience can just seem to be sort of calm rational judgment, a “principle of reflection” as Butler called it, rather than anything distinctively moral and having to do with feelings of conscience like guilt. So yes, I didn’t find that idea that much in the 17th and 18th century British writers, except in a sort of retrograde form. There it is in Locke. Locke’s a theological voluntarist about morality and moral obligation, but, as you were noting, he just disconnects that from questions of motivation
HRP: Let’s turn for a moment to the figure of Pufendorf. You bring up “Pufendorf’s Point” in *The Second-Person Standpoint*, and that’s a central point of your argument. How does he fit into the whole perspective?

*Darwall:* [laughs] Pufendorf wasn’t in the earlier book because he wasn’t a British moralist. Pufendorf definitely gets it about the second-personal aspect of obligation. But *Suarez* does also, before Pufendorf. One way to look at this is to look at Suarez’s critique of St. Thomas’s theory of natural law. Suarez largely agrees with Aquinas about the human *telos*, about what Aquinas calls eternal law. Eternal law is just our having a *telos*, a certain standard that is simultaneously a standard for our flourishing and also for reasons for us to act. Now for Aquinas, that we can know our *telos* is enough for there to be natural law. Eternal law is made into natural law, and beings become subject to natural law, not just to eternal law, if they can *know* the eternal law with respect to themselves. Then Suarez says, “Okay, call that what you like, but that lacks an essential element of our ordinary notion of law; that is the idea of being obligated, bound, or responsible.” Pufendorf takes that up. You mention Pufendorf’s point. Pufendorf sees a very important thing, which is that I can be under obligation only if I can hold myself accountable. Now to be accountable to someone else I have to be not just in a second-personal relation to them, I also have to be in a second-personal relation to myself. He doesn’t then draw out further points from that, but I think once you’ve seen that then there’s actually pressure on the idea that we can *simply* be subject to God’s command. The point is that if God is in a position to hold us accountable, then we must also be to blame; we must be blameworthy if we fail to do as He commands. For us to be blameworthy, we must be able to be blamed, not just as from His perspective, but from a perspective that’s common between us. I think that for that to be true, it’s got to be the case that the authority that He claims is something that we, from that perspective, can accept.

HRP: Then blaming ourselves is not merely a purely emotive experience of guilt, it’s a recognition of the legitimacy of that blame?

*Darwall:* Exactly.

HRP: In your book, you write that there’s a pressure in what Pufendorf has already articulated, to move away from a theological voluntarist perspective towards something much more egalitarian in which the moral community is comprised of *equal* agents, rather than structured on this asymmetrical relationship between God and a lower creature. Could you say a bit about that, and could you draw the boundaries of the moral community in the second-person standpoint?
Darwall: First, even Pufendorf feels the need to provide some justification for the claim that God has authority. I think what he’s got to be thinking is, “Not only must this justification exist, but it’s got to be something that is acceptable by the person over whom the authority is being claimed.” What’s Pufendorf justification? It’s a very intuitive principle. It’s actually that old, ancient principle of gratitude: that is, if somebody gives you a gift, then you owe them gratitude. Well God has given us the greatest gift possible—our lives in the world. So we owe Him the greatest gratitude possible, and Pufendorf thinks that means to be in a relationship of subservience to Him. But, already, that’s right at the point that I want to make, which is that there has to be a common standpoint that both God and we can occupy from which an argument can be made for any authority that either can legitimately claim over one another, or from which the authority is plausibly thought self-evident. I just don’t accept Pufendorf’s argument that the gift of life is such that it could put us in a position such that, for example, if God were to command us to kill our firstborn, like Isaac, we would be under an obligation to do so. The thought is that Pufendorf’s point—that someone can be responsible to another only if they’re capable of recognizing the legitimacy of the other to hold them responsible, and in so doing hold themselves responsible—that’s what I think pushes in the direction of the idea of an assumed, common authoritative standpoint. Between whom? Between any beings who are capable of holding each other responsible.

I have this notion of second-personal competence. To have second-personal competence is to have those psychic capacities (empathy, most obviously), to be able to put ourselves into others’ perspectives. And not just into their perspectives, but into some perspective that’s impartial between us, and to ask ourselves questions like, “What would someone who was impartial between both of us think it was reasonable to request or demand from these different points of view?” The idea of second-personal competence involves instrumental rationality, a certain degree of self-consciousness, the ability to step back from one’s own perspective, and also the ability to project into others’ perspectives and to relate to one another second-personally. In the book, I argue that any second-personally competent agent has an authority as a member of the moral community.

The question obviously arises, “Well what about beings who don’t have second-personal competence?” Young children, let’s say, or you and I at the end of life, or other animals. Here things, I think, get very interesting and very complicated. Nothing I say is in any way in tension with the idea that we have obligations to treat non-second-personally competent beings in various kinds of ways. What might seem problematic is the idea that we could be obligated to them to treat them in these ways. I think even that is compatible with what I want to say. There are a couple of things I want to say here. One is that there’s no incompatibility between my framework and the idea that we have obligations to them and that they have rights against us. I don’t have an argument to that conclusion, though I think that I have an argument to the conclusion that we have obligations to second-personally competent beings. Nothing I say rules it out however. Second, I’m inclined to think that we do have such obligations. I also note that, to the extent that we think that we do, we’re inclined to think of these beings second-personally. That is, we’re inclined to see them as in a position
to hold us responsible. We’re inclined to see some of their ways of regarding us not just as information about what we are doing to them, but as them looking at us in a way that’s like, “Why are you doing that to me? Tell me.” Right? So even in the case where we don’t literally believe that they are competent to hold us responsible, we tend to see them as though they were. I think that reveals a deep truth about the nature of obligation. To tie that together, I think I have an argument that all second-personally competent beings are members of the moral community. It could well be the case that the moral community is not restricted to them, and to the extent that we see non-second-personally competent beings that way, then I think we’re seeing them in a sort of second-personal terms.

HRP: To push on that a bit, it seems that in your discussion of Pufendorf, there is a tension to move from a second-personal perspective immediately to a plane of both equality and reciprocity. Although we might see an animal as having claims upon us, it seems we rarely, if ever, see them as being accountable to us. How can you reconcile that to the intuition we might have that they would be in some way owed obligation?

Darwall: That’s just the tension I was feeling before and have always felt about this. One thing to say is just that while second-personal competence is sufficient for second-personal authority, it may not be necessary for second-personal authority. If it’s not necessary then of course we don’t always have reciprocity when we’ve got two beings with second-personal authority. Another way to think about it is, “Well, there’s some kind of second-personal authority there, but it’s not the same as the second-personal authority of second-personally competent beings.” And I think that’s something. If I were tempted . . . I am tempted to hold that non-second-personally competent beings can have some second-personal authority. I guess I don’t feel anything that would lead me to want to hold that they have the same kind of second-personal authority that second-personally competent beings do. The difference would just be this: When it comes to actually treating non-second-personally competent beings, this is a very interesting area. I think it really does matter whether, for example, it’s a young child whom one is in the position of inducting into the community of second-personally competent beings. I guess I tend to think that works on a couple of tracks. On the one hand, we may relate to the child as though she were fully responsible, being prepared in a moment to drop that and say, “No, no, it’s all right. You couldn’t have known,” or something like that. That’s a tension, but I think the tension is genuinely there, and it’s actually a strong point of the framework that it reflects that tension, because I think that’s just true to our moral experience there.

HRP: In cases where a mature, developed human being seems to lack second-personal competence, are they a member of the first order of the moral community, the second-personally competent community? Or do we owe them a different sort of obligation, perhaps, like those that we might owe undeveloped human beings or animals?

Darwall: Well, maybe there’s a kind of point here about subjective versus objective.
It may be that there’s a kind of regulative principle in the background that we treat someone as though they were second-personally competent if they look to be in the neighborhood of someone who is second-personally competent. So two different cases: In one, we might establish they’re not, nor will they ever be, second-personally competent—maybe they’re severely brain damaged or something like that. In the other case, they’ve got the basic capacities but because of their own personal history, they’ve been treated in certain kinds of ways, they don’t regard themselves that way and don’t think of themselves that way. They don’t really relate to others in those terms either. In the latter case, I think the right approach is to treat them as though they were second-personally competent, though granting them a certain kind of excuse that they’re able to make at certain points and not at others. So you want respectively to disabuse them of the idea that they’re not an equal person. You certainly don’t want them to be able to give themselves the excuse, “Gee! I don’t have to be held responsible because I’m essentially a child.” You don’t just give them a pass. You say, “Well no, actually, you aren’t a child, though we understand why you would think so.” You treat their conditions as exculpatory in some way, but not as exculpatory in the terms that they themselves think they might be.

**HRP:** I want to move towards the bindingness of *second-personal* reasons. But, first, considering your foot example, if somebody refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the claim that you have on her, how can you respond in a way which respects the second-person standpoint? Is it legitimate to respect the person by *disrespecting* her by forcing her to recognize your claim? Or is respectful, rational discourse the only way to truly be respectful in these cases?

**Darwall:** Well, not the latter. This all has to do with what philosophers call “the right,” where “the right” is in, say, the Fichtean or Kantian sense of “the right”—*das Recht*, justice. Philosophers in this tradition think that you are in the terrain of justified coercion. But the crucial point is that justified coercion is not merely coercion. Neither is it coercion that there are just some or other good reasons for. It’s coercion that there is reason for the person who is being coerced to recognize as legitimate. That is, it’s coercion that’s compatible with the equal freedom of the person who is being coerced. That force is used doesn’t show that it’s disrespectful. I think that short of big fancy cases that involve a long and unobvious story, disrespect is never called for. But that doesn’t mean that force might not be called for. If the person just stays on your foot, smiles at you, and says, “Ain’t nuthin’ you can do about it,” you can, while respecting him or her as an equal member of the moral community, call for the policeman to lift them off your foot. That’s not *disrespecting* them. The whole problematic of the theory of right is how that kind of use of state power can be consistent with the equal freedom of the persons being coerced.

What I’m saying is that coercion that’s justified in the right way will be justified second-personally. A lot of the time, we relieve ourselves of the burden or the necessity to make second-personal claims person to person, by virtue of there being certain kinds of *impersonal* institutions, say the state. Suppose you’re on my foot. Rather than making a claim for you to get off my foot, I might gesture to the
policeman and just point to your being on my foot. What I’m saying is that that would be implicitly second-personal, and obviously not directed to the person against whom one has the claim. What is a policeman? A policeman is collective state power. Rousseau says in the Social Contract that the problem of political philosophy is to explain how we can be bound but nonetheless as free as we would be outside the state. Then the idea is: What form of collective power is consistent with our freedom? Well, why is that what matters? If that’s what matters, then we’ve got to be presuming that each of us has a certain kind of authority to live our lives as independent, free beings, and that people can use power (with respect to one another) only if they have a certain kind of justification, a justification that could be given to, and be acceptable to, another as an equal free being. Even in a case where I don’t directly say to you—because I’m shy for instance, or it looks like it’s going to do no good—I have a justified claim that you not be on my foot. That would be in the background when I gesture to the policeman and say, “Would you please get him off my foot?” It’s not something I could ask the policeman to do unless I had a justified claim against you that you not do it.

**HRP:** You claim there a strong connection between the moral and the political in this way? Can the moral can justify the political?

**Darwall:** Absolutely! In fact, I’ve just been doing some work on Hugo Grotius, who wrote *The Law* (or, depending on the translation *The Rights*) of War and Peace, published in 1625. Many people, myself included, think that Grotius marks a kind of shift and new beginning in political philosophy, in legal philosophy and also in moral philosophy. The trick is to say exactly why. What is it that’s new in Grotius? I think that what’s new in Grotius is the idea of tying the moral to, well, to rights. It’s the idea is that there are certain fundamental rights, which involve, as he puts it, a “faculty” to claim or demand (I call it an “authority” to claim or demand). He’s a natural lawyer in that he thinks that everyone is subject to, just by virtue of being persons, a law. But that law has to itself enshrine these rights. You could put it this way. Kelsen has the idea that there’s a moral obligation of A to B if and only if B has a right against A. Now not all moral obligations are necessarily moral obligations to. But, at least moral obligations to will involve the idea of rights. Once you’ve got that, then you’ve got the political, because claim rights can be appropriately recognized only collectively through the state. So yes, I think there is that deep connection.

**HRP:** From the perspective of the second-person standpoint and the moral agency law, how do you arrive at content for the sorts of claims that you are indeed entitled to make?

**Darwall:** Though I don’t say anything very definite about this in the book, my view is that the framework provides a kind of foundation for the style of moral theory that’s called contractualism. Whether à la Rawls—Rawls wrote explicitly about “justice as fairness,” but in *A Theory of Justice*, there is a very short sort of discussion about “rightness as fairness”—or Scanlon’s version, or some other, it seems to me that what’s at the foundation of the view is the idea, to use Rawls’
terms, of individuals as “sources of valid claims.” Or as I put it, the idea of second-personally competent beings as sources of valid claims.

What then is the content of the claims? What claims do we have standing to make of one another just as equal, second-personally competent beings? Well, I think that’s to be worked out within contractualist moral theory. I think there are some things that one can say as a matter of the concept. Here’s one thing you can say, and it just goes back to our discussion of that freedom: Since the very idea of a second-personal reason is of something which is directive but which simultaneously recognizes and respects the other’s standing to make claims and demands as an equal, the very idea of second-personal reason presupposes the legitimate use of force and the illegitimacy of mere coercion. If only second-personal reasons can justify or legitimate coercion, then coercion must be otherwise illegitimate. Then what counts as coercion, and when is the use of force legitimate? Well now we’re back into a much more complicated question which I think is usefully discussed from within the constructs of contractualism.

Take another case. The very idea of second-personal address involves the idea of a good faith representation to the other. We’ve already then got—just by the concept and need for distinction between genuinely and sincerely representing yourself to the other and misleading, lying, or simply using the other—we’ve got that we all have some authority to claim and demand that we not be trifled with, or that people not represent themselves as being serious to us when they’re not, and so forth. What exactly does that mean on the ground? Well now we’re back in the terrain of contractualist moral theory. That’s the way I tend to think about it. I think of the ideas I’ve been working on as providing a kind of foundation, a way of thinking our way into contractualist moral theory without giving you a whole lot of guidance about exactly what the precise contours of the obligations are.

HRP: Do you favor a particular procedure for contractualist moral philosophizing? Would you argue that there are rational ways to justify one procedure over another?

Darwall: Well, I haven’t been persuaded by the kinds of arguments people have given against the Rawlsian perspective. I still kind of like that way of thinking about it. How do we think of primary goods? I think we think about them in terms of things that can be presumed good for independent, second-personally competent beings. That is, beings who have an interest in leading their lives as independent, mutually accountable persons. I think of Rawls’s “highest order interests,” as he calls them in the Dewey lectures, in developing a sense of justice and of not just pursuing one’s conception of the good, but having a conception of the good that one can, upon reflection, affirm, I think of those as interests of persons as second-personally competent. I think that in many cases when we’re trying to think about at least the broad contours of an obligation, say to tell the truth or to help those who are in need, we can make the relevant arguments from that point of view.

HRP: To turn to the question that I raised a while ago, but that we didn’t actually pursue, the bindingness of second-personal reasons . . .
HRP: In *The Second-Person Standpoint*, you make the case that Kant’s own attempt—and various contemporary Kantians’ attempts—to argue for the supremacy of the moral law (the fact that it actually binds us and gives us compelling reasons to act which override other reasons doesn’t work. Could summarize why in your view that is? And how is it concerned with the failure to appreciate the second-person standpoint?

Darwall: Right, I tend to argue two things here against Kant. One is that Kant’s own argument in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, section III, and various neo-Kantian versions of that (say, those of Allen Wood or Chris Korsgaard, where it’s really *Ground Work II* that’s being referred to) don’t work in their own terms; and, that even if they did work in their own terms, they’d still miss an important element of obligation, namely the second-personal element, the idea of answerability. Then I say two things, that once you’ve appreciated the second-person element, once you’ve appreciated that to be under a moral obligation is to be responsible to one another for acting in a certain way, then you can appreciate why moral obligations present themselves as providing supremely authoritative reasons. Here the idea, roughly, is that if you are under a moral obligation to do something, then you’d be blameworthy if you didn’t do it without adequate excuse. Suppose now that you don’t do it, you don’t have adequate excuse, and therefore I blame you. In blaming you I am issuing a demand. I couldn’t simultaneously issue that demand, hold you answerable for complying with it, and also at the same time think that you had perfectly good reason not to do it. There would be a kind of pragmatic contradiction, and my state of mind would be in tension. After all, if you did have perfectly good reason not to do it, then you could successfully answer! You could justify yourself to me for not doing it. I think that just shows why thinking of obligations as essentially involving responsibility to—this second-personal element—shows why moral obligations present themselves as supremely authoritative reasons. But then, I also argue that they are reasons and supremely authoritative reasons.

First, what is lacking in Kant’s approach Just to set the stage a bit, at the end of *Groundwork II*, Kant notes that it’s consistent with everything that’s just happened up to that point in the book that, though it’s true that if there’s such a thing as morality then its fundamental principle is the categorical imperative, nonetheless there might not be such a thing as morality. Morality might be a chimera, an illusion. If so, than there would be no such thing as the distinctive moral goodness of the good will. The categorical imperative wouldn’t bind us and validly apply to us. If you’re thinking from within the moral framework, if you’re thinking of the idea of its moral duty, then you’re committed to its a priori character, to its universal character, you’re committed to the idea of a kind of value, the distinctive, unqualified, goodness of the good will. You’re committed to the equality of moral persons: you’re committed to the categorical imperative and all of its different formulations. But that’s all within the moral framework, and nothing has been said to show that the moral framework isn’t just an illusion.

In *Groundwork III*, Kant says, “We need a synthetic use of reason and a
critique of pure practical reason.” He set out in *Groundwork III* to provide that. It goes through the concept of freedom and, in particular, through the concept of autonomy. The thought is something like this: to deliberate at all, I’ve got to see myself as free. I’ve got to *assume*, anyway, that my reasoning is free from alien influence. One way I think about that is just that there is nothing outside your reasoning that’s screwing up your reasoning. Sometimes I use the thought of an alien who’s sort of dictating your reasoning from outside. You’ve got to be assuming that it’s not the way, it’s actually *you* thinking about what there’s reason to do. You’ve also got to think that your reasoning has reason in it. That it’s in accordance with rational norms, whatever they are. It seems to me though that you’ve got to be assuming what Kant calls autonomy. What he means by autonomy is that the fundamental norms of practical reason are themselves completely formal. They’re not given by “features of the objects of volition,” as he calls them. But I can’t see what drives you to that conclusion. I choose to think of it in terms of G.E. Moore, in *Principia Ethica*. Moore himself would applaud the first point. In fact, you might just think of the idea of the naturalistic fallacy as insisting upon the idea that there’s a gap between any claim about how I am in fact thinking, or what my desires are, to what I *should* be thinking and what I *should* do, the idea of a normative reason. Reasoning has to involve that assumption. There is a kind of freedom there, if you like. But, there’s nothing yet, I think, to move Moore away from the next thought that he’d have, which is, “The way an agent reasons about what to do is by reasoning about how the world should contain it. How should the world be?” Moore himself thought that we could have intuitions about that. In certain views, desires are those intuitions. A desire presents the world as it would be good to be or it would be good to do.

Korsgaard points out, correctly, that if the agent just is the sum of her desires, if she can’t get above her desires and critically assess them, than she’s not really an agent. Let’s assume that’s true, let’s assume then that the agent *can* get up above its desires and ask, “Well which one is there reason to act on?” But so far, it seems to me, nothing has been said to rule out the possibility that we might just have intuitions about what and how it would be good for the world to be, and that practical reasoning is, as Moore would have thought, reasoning about how the world ought to be and what I can do to make it the best that it can be. In so doing, I’m not presupposing some formal principle of universal law. In fact, nothing even commits me to a categorical imperative. Even take the most formal version of it: act only on that maxim which you could will everybody to act on. Well, many people have pointed out about, for example, the principle of act consequentialism, that willing everyone to act on it might violate the principle of act consequentialism. Here I am, a Moorean reasoner, trying to figure out the best way the world could be and taking myself to have good reason to do whatever would make the world the best that it could be. I say, “Well it would be good for there to be pleasure.” I’ll use Moore’s example: It would be good for there to be beauty and it would be good for there to be pleasure and friendly relations. From this I conclude what it would be best for me to do in light of what I can do to make the world the best it would be. That’s what it points out to me and—well, wait a minute! How would you like it if everybody would act simply on that principle? I think about it and I go, “If we did that then we might undermine those
kinds of institutions like promising, and our trust in one another that we could tell the truth, even if we could make the world better by not telling the truth.” I can imagine Moore saying, “Oh, I don’t think I would will that everybody act on the principle of act consequentialism.” Once you force him to the view that it’s somehow inconsistent with the freedom he has to presuppose to be a practical reasoner at all, that he must move away from his act consequentialism on the assumption that it would violate the categorical imperative. I can’t see anything in the argument that would force Moore to accept that. Of course, I’m assuming in this process a certain part of the Moorean picture I don’t for a moment believe. I’m just saying that I don’t yet see why Moore, given Groundwork III, should rule out that possibility. You know, as we know, Kant himself ended up giving up the argument of Groundwork III, and in the end thought that the kind of freedom that we have is something we come to appreciate only through our experience of the moral law. I want to say, “Hooray! I agree with that!” And that involves second-personal interaction, right? The idea is that, in seeing myself as being under a moral obligation, I see myself as having a certain kind of responsibility. I think there’s actually a distinctive version of “ought implies can” that Kant’s talking about in “the fact of reason” which is actually deeply second-personal.

HRP: You call the Moorean the “naïve practical reasoner” in your book. Do you think that is the way we intuitively or most naturally practically reason?

Darwall: Well, Moore himself was a kind of professional naïf. Both on the theoretical side and on the practical side. With his claim about knowing he had a hand on the epistemology side, he was philosopher of common sense. I think he did think in the way. He was pushing in the direction of something that is just the way it normally seems to us when we’re not in the grips of some theory. And I think that he’s onto something here. If I want the world to be such that there is vanilla ice cream in it whenever I’m hungry for vanilla ice cream, then it seems to me that that’s the way the world should be. And it’s not that I distinctively have some reason to bring it about, it’s just that that’s what there’s reason for people to do and that’s the way that it’s good for the world to be. I think that’s the way children actually experience it. They don’t make the distinction that that only gives me a reason, it doesn’t give you a reason. They say, “Where’s the ice cream?” not “Oh! I should have gotten some ice cream.” It’s more like, “Oh! I just don’t understand why the world has no ice cream yet!” Yes, I do think that the use of the word “naïve” was purposeful. It was both to signal the idea that there’s something primitive and original about it, but also that there’s something that the sophistication . . . well, what is sophistication? It comes, Kant himself says, by a sort of polishing one another through second-personal interaction, and we then see that, “Wait, that picture can’t be right.”

HRP: To return to your characterization of Groundwork III for a minute, it brings to mind Chris Korsgaard’s explication of Groundwork III in her article, “Morality as Freedom.” There she makes an argument that seems absent from your own argument, which she calls the “argument of spontaneity”: the idea that by interrogating whatever my reasons for action might be and demanding of
those further reasons, I can come to a point where either I’ll recognize something like a principle of self-love—which roughly states that my own desires are themselves reasons, or I’ll recognize the moral law. And I’ll choose between those. I’ll have no reason, she points out, for choosing the former, because why should I take a given desire to be authoritative, or in the Moorean example, why should I take a given intuition to actually be normatively binding? As a result of my incapacity to come up with reasons for those, I’m led to the moral law, which is purely formal, and which simply says, “Choose a reason. Choose something rational in this context.” As you know, it’s a separate question whether or not Kant’s formulations of the moral law, say the formulation of universal law, might give too much content to that apparently purely formal principle. But it does seem, at least prime facie, as if there is an argument there to which the Kantian, favoring something like the argument of *Groundwork III*, could respond to your Moorean. Namely, “What’s your reason for assuming that intuition could actually be a reason or a legitimate claim of value?”

Darwall: Well a couple things. Let me just note, initially, that the idea that we’re sort of moved most naturally to think of normative reasons as arising either from self-love or from the moral law. Of course, that’s the way Kant thought about it. That actually seems not so intuitive to me, for just the reason I was giving before, because, when you have a desire, it seems to you not as if the fact of the desire gives you a reason; it’s more that the desire presents you with reasons. It’s sort of like what Scanlon says: Desire in the directed-attention sense involves directed attention to reasons for one to desire and do something. It’s a fair point that as reflective beings we can always step back from anything that seems true to us, either from the theoretical standpoint, or from the practical standpoint, and question that appearance. I imagine things from the practical standpoint, as a naïve practical reasoner who has intuitions about how it would be good for the world to be. As Christine notes, I can say, “Woah, why should I accept this particular intuition or even any of my intuitions?” At some point one might want to say what Sidgwick says, which is, “You have to start somewhere, right? And can you really start from zero?” Now let’s go to the positive, spontaneity interpretation of *Groundwork III*. Suppose I just start with, “Don’t treat something as a reason unless you can see it as a reason.” There’s a perfectly innocuous sense of that which is perfectly innocuous; it doesn’t get anywhere! It certainly doesn’t get you to the formula for universal law, which is to see something as a reason, but only if you can rule that everyone could treat it as a reason. Then the question is: What would lead you to that idea? Yes, of course, I should treat this intuition as bearing on what there is reason for me to bring about, how there’s reason for the world to be, and what there’s reason for me to bring about—but only if I can see it as a genuine reason. Let’s even put in that there’s a norm of practical reason that says, “People should try to bring about this state.” That’s innocuous. But that’s much weaker than the categorical imperative, even in the formula of universal law, because there’s nothing about being able to will that everybody sees it that way, act on the relevant maxim, and so on. Then, the question is, “Now where exactly does that latter idea come in?” Now I know where that idea enters in the second-person standpoint. Because, if we’re talking about reasons whose form of
existence is tied to authoritative claims or demands, they are, *in their nature*, tied to the expression of the will. To see this as a second-personal reason is to see it as something that can ground a will that someone act on it. But, now we bring in the universality point: a reason is a reason only if it’s a reason for anyone under these circumstances. Then the relevant willing will have to be universal. I understand how the various formulations of the categorical imperative get grounded in the second-person standpoint. Just to make another, perhaps obvious, point: The formula of humanity gets grounded because what it is to see someone else as a person, to treat them as a person, is to see them as having equal second-person authority. But, all I’m saying is, I don’t see how, simply in the standpoint of an agent deliberating about what to do, even the most formal formulation of the categorical imperative gets grounded.

**HRP:** Now to return to *The Second-Person Standpoint.* You’ve argued both for the existence of second-personal reasons and for the way in which they seem to be supreme. But if one challenges you, “Prove to me that they’re actually supreme and that they should override other reasons,” how can you mount that argument?

**Darwall:** Yes, good. First, I haven’t said anything about how I would argue that they are genuinely reasons. Henry Allison has what he calls the reciprocity thesis. The reciprocity thesis is that autonomy and freedom on the one hand and morality on the other reciprocally imply one another. What I’ve argued for by the end of chapter 10 is a broader reciprocity thesis. The idea is that any second-personal reasons presuppose and also are entailed by autonomy, morality, and moral obligation. But maybe all of it’s a chimera, an illusion. Maybe if there is such thing as second-personal reason than there is such a thing as moral obligation. Nonetheless, if there isn’t moral obligation than there isn’t second-personal reason.

What I do in chapter 11 is to argue that second-personal reasons really are reasons—not just putative reasons, but genuine normative reasons. What I do there is very quick. I basically run a two-track argument. I say, let’s assume there are two broadly different pictures of the metaphysics of reason: one is a kind of realist picture, the other is either a proceduralist or constructivist picture. I then argue that on either approach, we have at least as good reason to suppose that there are second-personal reasons as we do to suppose that any other reason exists. Second-personal reasons are no worse off than reasons of other kinds. That just gets us that moral obligations create genuine reasons. It doesn’t get us that they create supreme reasons. This is a part that I don’t do that much with, but I think that I’d be inclined to say that if these are reasons that exist at all, they have to be supreme. Well, they certainly present themselves as being supreme. If we’ve got that morality exists, then I think it will just follow from that that these considerations which we’ve already shown to be reasons, must be reasons that override reasons of other kinds. Why? Because if they didn’t, then one of the presuppositions of moral obligation would have been violated. To go back to the example I gave before: If you’re under a moral obligation not to step on my feet, and you step on my feet, I hold you responsible for it and blame you for it. In blaming you for it, I’m demanding that you not do it. I’m implicitly saying, “There
is reason for you not to do it” regardless of what interests or desires you had in stepping on my feet. In holding that you are under the moral obligation and taking it as valid, I am committed to the assumption that those reasons are supreme. What I’m inclined to argue is that if reasons associated with moral obligations exist at all, they have to be supreme. If they exist as they present themselves as being—if they exist as the distinctive kind of second-personal kind of reasoning they purport to be—then they will be supreme.

**HRP:** We’re almost out of time, so just a couple of brief questions, looking ahead to the future. First of all, have you gotten a lot of feedback on *The Second-Person Standpoint* and the ideas in there? What’s been the nature of that? Have any criticisms made you reconsider certain parts of your positions, or expand them?

*Darwall:* I don’t think any of the criticisms I’ve gotten have made me want to change anything fundamental. One criticism I get very frequently is, “What about non-second-personally competent beings, whether it’s disabled human beings, or children, or other animals?” We’ve talked a bit about how I’d be inclined to handle those, although I haven’t really worked on it that much.

Another problem that gets raised—and I note it, although I don’t really deal with it at much length in the book—is that there’s some slippage between the idea of an actual claim or demand and some implicit claim or demand. We want to be able to say, not just that I had some reason to get off your foot once you’ve noted that my foot’s on your foot and you’ve actually demanded that I do so, we want to be able to say that I had a reason not to step on your foot in the first place. I want to be able to distinguish between two kinds of reason, or two related reasons: one having to do with my obligation to you not to step on your foot and your associated right that I not step on your foot on the one hand—which has to do with the authority you have as an individual to claim or demand that I not step on your foot—and, on the other hand, just the obligation not to step on people’s feet. Here again, you have an authority to demand, but it’s not as the individual whose foot is getting stepped on, it’s as a representative of the moral community. And this is a point that Jay Wallace brings out in his critical remarks on the book which have just recently been published in *Ethics.* Parenthetically, *Ethics* has recently brought out a symposium on the book with Christine Korsgaard, Jay Wallace, and Gary Watson. Wallace notes that there’s an important difference between a case where I actually claim or demand that you do something and where the reason depends upon my actually having claimed or demanded it, and other cases where it doesn’t look like there is any actual claim that’s been addressed to the other. Maybe even in imagination there’s been no claim that’s been addressed. Now I want to argue that in these cases there’s still an implied claim or demand in the background, from the moral community. Why? Because in thinking that the action would be blameworthy and taking ourselves to have the authority to blame, we’re already presupposing that claim or demand in the background. That’s something I need to think about and develop more.

**HRP:** Final question: Future projects. I assume you will be working on expanding some of these arguments in the next few . . . ?
Darwall: Well, yes [laughs]. But I also have to turn back to what I turned away from ten years ago. I’m now actually doing some work on Grotius, as part of the beginning of this book on the history of ethics from the 17th century on, that I was supposed to have been writing and am now actually starting to write.

HRP: Great, we’ll look forward to seeing it. Professor Darwall, thank you very much!

Darwall: Thank you so much! ☺