SECOND-PERSONAL REASON-GIVING

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Summary
David Enoch has recently objected to Stephen Darwall’s account of second-personal reason-giving that the phenomena that Darwall focuses on can be fully explained without resorting to second-personal reasons. In this paper, I shall argue, against Enoch, that second-personal reason-giving matters. My account of second-personal reason-giving differs from Darwall’s, however, as it accepts that some of the phenomena Darwall focuses on can be reduced to the more standard form of reason-giving.

Introduction
The key insight that Stephen Darwall develops in The Second-Person Standpoint is that our interactions with others can be of fundamental normative significance. It is nothing new, of course, that our interactions with others may causally affect us. If you are in a bad mood, I might not enjoy being around you as much as I normally do. If you tell me about a recent trip you made, I might form a desire to visit those places too. And if you tell me that you have just read that it will rain again this afternoon, this might cause me to form a corresponding belief. But we can establish those causal effects without establishing anything about the normative significance of these interactions. The normative significance of our interactions with others depends on how they relate to our (normative) reasons for action or for attitudes such as beliefs, desires, etc. To keep things simple, I shall focus here on reasons for actions—the case of practical normativity.

It is also fairly uncontroversial to say that our interactions with others may be normatively significant in the sense that they trigger certain reasons. For example, if I act dismissively towards you, this may give you a reason to express blame or to avoid me. The reason to blame or to avoid disrespectful people is not, I take it, created by my action. It has been there all along.
But my action may trigger this reason, such that your normative situation is now no longer the same as it was before I interacted with you in this way.

Darwall has drawn our attention to the possibility that our interactions with others can be normatively significant in a more fundamental way: they may not just trigger reasons that have been there all along; they may also create reasons that would not exist without this interaction. Second-personal reasons are of this kind.

One of Darwall’s favourite examples is the following. Suppose I accidentally stepped on your toe and you claim that I should remove my foot from on top of yours. Darwall argues that this gives me a reason to remove my foot that was not there before you claimed that I should, a reason that is different from other reasons I might have to remove my foot, say reasons grounded in sympathy. It is a second-personal reason that depends for its existence on properties of our relationship. It depends on whether you have the authority to make such claims and, vice versa, on whether I am accountable to you in this respect. Such second-personal reason-giving, Darwall claims, plays a role in requests, commands, promises, and similar practical scenarios and its role is essential for explaining moral obligations.

David Enoch (Enoch 2011, 2014) has recently challenged Darwall’s account of second-personal reason-giving. Enoch argues that Darwall’s account is not only metaphysically fishy—it appears that reasons are created out of thin air—it is also unnecessary: we can account for the kind of normative phenomenon that Darwall focuses on—Enoch calls it “robust” reason-giving—in terms of triggering reason-giving.

My aim in this paper is to defend the normative significance of second-personal reason-giving against Enoch’s objections. My defense will, however, offer an interpretation of second-personal reason-giving that differs somewhat from Darwall’s own interpretation and that assigns it a different place in our normative geography, as it accepts that some of the phenomena Darwall focuses on can be reduced to the more standard form of reason-giving.

**Darwall on second-personal reasons**

As Darwall influentially put it, second-personal reasons are reasons whose 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)