

# THE FIELD BEFORE THE POINT OF VIEW: KORSGAARD AND THE ORDER OF NORMATIVE RECEPTION

*O campo antes do ponto de vista: Korsgaard e a ordem da recepção normativa*

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## ABSTRACT

Christine Korsgaard holds that normativity is not found in the world but brought to it by practical reason. *O amanhã é possível?* defends the reverse order: the position of those who participate in a common condition bears on action before any agent recognizes it, and practical reason receives what the field already contained. The question examined is whether conditions of participation can ground reasons to be answerable to others independently of recognition, complaint, or actual interaction. An argumentative axis of Korsgaard's work between 1992 and 2018 is reconstructed: obligation established through address and reciprocity, in the Tanner Lectures; public reasons grounded in interaction, in *Self-Constitution*; intersubjective value, in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*; the good tethered to a creature with a point of view and the relational identification of the future addressees of duties, in *Fellow Creatures*. It is shown, first, that the analysis of the constitutive, which Korsgaard applies to the agent's own activity, can be applied to other people's forms of participation, and that classifying a reason as external depends on the description chosen. It is then shown that Korsgaard herself admits reasons prior to reflective recognition and builds value from something received, so that the disagreement narrows to the authority of a demand over another agent. The case of someone who alters an archive in an empty room is developed with an explicit normative premise and serves to formulate the question whether address constitutes that authority or makes it perceptible. Three objections of Korsgaardian inspiration, concerning method, realism, and perspective-dependence, are examined. The difference between the two proposals is found to lie in grounding, not necessarily in obligations. Korsgaard already identifies relationally the addressees of duties to future generations; the normativity of participation proposes to specify that relation as participation in common conditions, and its possible advantage, indicated but not yet demonstrated, would lie in bringing under a single criterion the present inhabitants of a condition and the future occupants of the positions it distributes.

**Keywords:** Korsgaard; normativity; constructivism; public reasons; common condition; participation.

## RESUMO

Christine Korsgaard sustenta que a normatividade não é encontrada no mundo, mas levada a ele pela razão prática. Em *O amanhã é possível?* defende-se a ordem inversa: a posição dos que participam de uma condição comum pesa sobre a ação antes que qualquer agente a reconheça, e a razão prática recebe o que o campo já continha. Examina-se se as condições de participação podem fundamentar razões para responder perante outros independentemente de reconhecimento, de reclamação ou de interação efetiva. Reconstrói-se um eixo argumentativo da obra de Korsgaard entre 1992 e 2018 e mostra-se que a própria autora admite razões anteriores ao reconhecimento reflexivo e constrói o valor a partir de algo recebido, de modo que a divergência se estreita ao terreno da autoridade de uma exigência sobre outro agente. O caso

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de quem altera um arquivo numa sala vazia serve para formular a pergunta sobre se a interpelação constitui essa autoridade ou a torna perceptível. Conclui-se que a diferença entre as duas propostas é de fundamentação, e não necessariamente de obrigações: Korsgaard já identifica relacionalmente os destinatários de deveres perante as gerações futuras, e a normatividade da participação propõe especificar essa relação pela participação em condições comuns, com uma vantagem possível ainda a demonstrar.

**Palavras-chave:** Korsgaard; normatividade; construtivismo; razões públicas; condição comum; participação.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Someone silently alters a line in an archive that will be consulted only many years later. No one reads it at the moment the hand writes, no one is deceived, no one suffers any loss, no one complains. The room is empty. The case belongs to *O amanhã é possível?* [Is tomorrow possible?] (Dietrich, in press, ch. 11), and it was built to remove from the scene everything that usually explains why an action concerns others: the encounter, the complaint, the harm already done. If the action is nonetheless directed at someone, that direction will not depend on that someone being present, nor on their being able to address the agent.

Contemporary moral philosophy has a powerful explanation for cases of this family, and it comes from Christine Korsgaard. For Korsgaard, normative demands are not made on us by objects; they are demands we make on ourselves and on one another (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 96). Practical reason, in the terms in which she presents her reading of Kant, is not shaped by the world but shapes it, and reason is something we bring to the world rather than something we find in it (Korsgaard, 1996, pp. xiv–xv). *O amanhã é possível?* holds the reverse order. The position of whoever participates in a common condition bears on action before any agent recognizes it, incorporates it, or organizes it rationally; the field precedes the point of view, and practical reason receives at second hand what the field already contained at first hand (Dietrich, in press, ch. 15). The book discussed Korsgaard through the formulation of *The Sources of Normativity* and granted constructivism everything it asks for, practical objectivity, rational discipline, and the refusal of caprice, denying it only the order: what practical reason incorporates already weighed before being incorporated (Dietrich, in press, ch. 15, n. 84).

That denial must now be tested against the later work. Between 1992 and 2018, Korsgaard reformulated the publicity of reasons on the basis of interaction (Korsgaard, 2009), presented values as intersubjective (Korsgaard, 1996), and, in dealing with animals, moved the starting point of value to the creature that has a good (Korsgaard, 2018). If the objection from order reaches only the 1992 version, it will have held against one moment of the work, not against the position its author holds. The problem examined is therefore the following: can conditions of participation ground reasons to be answerable to others independently of recognition, complaint, or actual interaction?

The hypothesis is that Korsgaard's trajectory moves progressively closer to that possibility without adopting it. In 1992, obligation to another is established along a path that

runs through address and the argument from reciprocity; in 2009, through interaction and shared deliberation; in 2018, the construction of value starts from something that is not constructed, the good of a creature, and the future addressees of duties are identified by the relationships in which we stand to them. If this reconstruction is correct, the disagreement between the two proposals does not lie in recognizing or denying the duty to preserve the archive, which both can recognize, but in what grounds that duty: the reflective and reciprocal structure of practical reason, applied to the relationships in which the agent stands, or a condition in which others participate. The proposal defended is that participation in common conditions specifies the relation that, according to Korsgaard herself, grounds certain duties to future addressees; whether that specification has an advantage over the explanation she already offers is something that must be shown, not merely asserted.

The method is the reconstruction of an argumentative axis in works from 1992 to 2018, attentive to developments and without assuming that all formulations are equivalent, submitted to the test of cases. *The Sources of Normativity* is cited from the version of the Tanner Lectures delivered at Clare Hall in November 1992 and published in 1994 in volume 15 of the series, whose pagination is adopted; the expanded 1996 edition, whose notes the book under discussion used, is distinct. *Fellow Creatures* is cited by section number, which the author herself uses for internal cross-references. Passages from *O amanhã é possível?* are paraphrased in the author's own translation.

Some terms of the book need to be fixed. A common condition is one on which many depend and which none of them produced or can present as their own work: the spring from which a village drinks, the trust among strangers that makes commerce possible, the record on which accumulated knowledge relies. The last example calls for a distinction: someone produced the medium and each particular entry, but what none of the participants produced individually, or can constitute by their exclusive will, is the condition of participation the records sustain: the credibility on which whoever relies on accumulated knowledge depends, formed by shared use and not at the disposal of whoever wrote each line. Participation is the way someone lives in dependence on such a condition; a form of participation is the whole of what constitutes that participation as the one it is. Among the conditions of a form, constitutive conditions, without which it ceases to be what it was, are distinguished from convenient ones, which merely facilitate its exercise (Dietrich, in press, ch. 10). Finally, the book's normative premise is explicitly adopted, not deduced: in reorganizing what others participate in, the agent can no longer treat that reorganization as exclusively their own affair and is answerable to those whose position it has modified, with respect to what was modified (Dietrich, in press, ch. 13). The book presents this premise as the best explanation of a remainder that description left unnamed, not as an inevitable conclusion from the facts; the examination that follows preserves that caution.

## **2 KORSGAARD'S ARCHITECTURE: FROM ADDRESS TO THE CREATURE THAT HAS A GOOD**

Self-Constitution begins with a fact no one escapes. Human beings are condemned to choice and action; whoever decides to stand still has already chosen, and the necessity of acting is neither logical, nor causal, nor rational, but the human condition in its simplest form (Korsgaard, 2009, pp. 1–2). From that necessity follows the normative question: since we must act, by which principles? Korsgaard's answer is that the principles of practical reason are normative because they unify and constitute the agent as an agent (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 27). The thesis rests on a general conception, which she attributes to Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, according to which normative principles unify multiplicities into objects of a particular kind. A house is the arrangement of walls, roof, and insulation that enables it to shelter; a cracked house shelters worse and is therefore a worse house. The standards that apply to a thing simply in virtue of its being the kind of thing it is are called constitutive standards (Korsgaard, 2009, pp. 27–28).

Constitutive standards have, according to Korsgaard, an advantage against the skeptic: it makes no sense to ask why a house should shelter, and so it makes no sense to ask why its corners should be sealed and its roof tight. Even the shoddiest builder tries to build a good house, because there is no other way of trying to build a house (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 29). The same model extends to living things. A living thing is organized to maintain and reproduce its own form; being a giraffe is not a state but the activity of continuing to make oneself a giraffe, and health is the name of the inner condition that enables the giraffe to perform that function (Korsgaard, 2009, pp. 35–36). Teleology so conceived is internal to the individual, which is assigned no purpose outside itself, and it is justified, ultimately, by the way human beings conceptualize the world in carving out objects with functional unity (Korsgaard, 2009, pp. 37–38). The rational agent, in turn, constitutes itself by acting on principles it can will universally; acting is, quite literally, interacting with oneself (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 202).

Relations with others enter in two ways, which should be distinguished because they belong to different moments of the work. In the Tanner Lectures, the exposition of obligation to another runs through intrusion and the argument from reciprocity. Korsgaard brings Wittgenstein's argument against private language close to an argument against private reasons: just as it takes two to make a meaning, it takes two to make a reason, a legislator and one who obeys (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 95). The space of linguistic consciousness is public, like a town square; calling someone by name makes them stop, and whoever walks on has to resist the call (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 97). The example comes with a qualification that matters for what follows. In a note, Korsgaard clarifies that, more strictly speaking, the needs and demands of others present us with incentives, which come up automatically for consideration as candidates for being reasons (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 97, n. 24); and shortly afterwards she grants that nothing she has said so far shows that we must treat the demands of others as reasons (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 98). The decisive step comes from Nagel's argument: the stranger who torments me, when I ask

him how he would like it if someone did that to him, can no longer proceed as before, because I have made myself a law to him (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 98).

In *Self-Constitution*, the same relation is reconstructed on the basis of interaction. To interact is to deliberate together towards a shared decision, and this presupposes public reasons, whose normative force extends across the boundaries between people (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 191). In a note, Korsgaard specifies that such reasons are intersubjective rather than objective: they do not exist independently of agents, in the manner of a substantive realism, but emerge in the interaction between people (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 191, n. 9). The same thesis organizes the essay on the reasons we can share: values are neither subjective nor objective but intersubjective, and they supervene on the structure of personal relations (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 276). Korsgaard there distinguishes two ways of understanding an agent-neutral value. On objective realism, value gives everyone a reason the way the sun gives everyone light, because it is out there, and it would exist in a world without creatures able to respond to reasons; our relation to it is one of discovery. On intersubjectivism, which she adopts, values exist for all rational agents but would not exist in a world without them, and our relation to them is one of construction (Korsgaard, 1996, pp. 278–279).

The general orientation of this constructivism appears clearly in the essay on realism and constructivism. Normative concepts do not name objects or facts encountered in the world; they name solutions to practical problems, and a sufficiently accurate description of the problem already yields the solution. Normative force is established as follows: whoever recognizes the problem as real, as theirs, and as one they must solve, and recognizes the solution as the only or the best one, is bound by it (Korsgaard, 2008, pp. 321–322).

*Fellow Creatures* moves the starting point. Nothing is important without being important to someone, and so all importance is tethered to the creature to whom something matters; this does not exclude something's being important absolutely, provided it is important to everyone to whom anything can matter (Korsgaard, 2018, § 1.3.2). Functional good, the sense in which rain is good for a plant, is a perspective-dependent notion: values exist in the perspective of a creature who values, just as colours exist in the perspective of creatures with colour vision (Korsgaard, 2018, § 2.2.5). Whether plants have a final good is a question the author declares she cannot settle there (Korsgaard, 2018, § 2.2.3). The argument for obligations to animals reconstructs Kant with a shift of emphasis. When I decide to pursue something that is good for me as if it were good absolutely, I do not do so out of respect for my autonomy, which has not yet legislated, but simply because I am a creature with a final good; beneficence requires respect for someone's animal nature, not merely for their rational nature (Korsgaard, 2018, §§ 8.5.3–8.5.4). Without metaphysical access to a realm of intrinsic values, all we have to go on is that some things are certainly good or bad for us, and that is the starting point from which we build our system of values (Korsgaard, 2018, § 8.5.5).

These moments do not reduce to one another, and the reconstruction does not claim that Korsgaard holds in 2018 exactly what she held in 1992. The axis of interest is the location of the authority of a demand over another agent: the call and reciprocity, shared deliberation, the point of view of the creature that has a good, the relationship in which the agent stands to the addressees. In all of them, the demand addressed to me arrives through someone, through their voice, their participation in a deliberation, their perspective, or a relationship with them, and it is practical reason that recognizes or confers its authority. This is the point at which *O amanhã é possível?* aims to be an alternative, and it is there that the alternative must show what it adds.

### **3 THE POINT OF CONTACT: THE CONSTITUTIVE**

The closest approximation between the two works lies in a distinction both use and neither invented. Korsgaard illustrates constitutive standards with a house and separates two judgments. The large mansion that blocks the whole neighbourhood's view of the lake may be a bad thing for the neighbourhood, but it is not therefore a bad house (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 28). Why not build the house that blocks the view? Perhaps because it will displease the neighbours; but that is a consideration one may simply set aside, if one is selfish or tough enough to brave their displeasure, whereas one cannot set aside the standard that makes the house a shelter (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 29). The constitutive standard is thus immune to skepticism; the neighbours' reason is external and may be discarded.

*O amanhã é possível?* uses the same logic in a different place. Chapter 10 asks what makes what others depend on something more than a widely used resource and finds the answer in a test of identity: remove the condition and check whether the form of participation remains the same or turns into another. A road that many use, but that another road could replace, is convenient; its loss hinders continuation without destroying what continues. The precision of a word, trust among strangers, and the credibility of a record are constitutive: without them, the word ceases to draw the distinction by which it belongs to the language, dealings among strangers can no longer take their form, and no one can rely on accumulated knowledge without redoing it (Dietrich, in press, ch. 10). The structure is Korsgaard's, to the point that the two formulations coincide: the house that falls too far short ceases to be a house and disintegrates into a heap of boards (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 28); the form of participation deprived of its constitutive condition ceases to exist as what it is.

The difference lies in the object to which the analysis is applied. Korsgaard applies the test to what the agent does or produces: the house, the activity, agency itself. The book applies it to the forms of participation of others, which the agent's action reaches. This transposition has a consequence for the example of the mansion. Classifying the neighbours' reason as external depends on the description chosen. When the house is described, the view of the lake is external to the standard of shelter. When the form of life of that neighbourhood is described, the same view may be convenient or constitutive, and the test of identity says which: if the

neighbourhood is an ordinary one that enjoys a landscape, the view is convenient; if it is a community of fishermen whose visual access to the lake is part of how they find their way and work, the view may belong to what makes them the community they are. In neither case does the view become part of the house. What changes is that the neighbours' reason, which seemed external, turns out to be internal to another form, which the building cuts across. The selfish builder can ignore that reason; what he cannot do, without a new description, is call it external to everything.

This observation does not, on its own, establish any duty. It shows only that the analysis of the constitutive has a wider use than the one Korsgaard gives it, and that the contrast between constitutive reasons, immune to skepticism, and external reasons, which can be discarded, does not follow the boundary between the agent and others. To reach a demand, two further steps are needed, and they should be kept apart.

The first is to show that the constitutive condition of a form has a value that is not merely instrumental. Here too Korsgaard offers the necessary conceptual space. In separating the two distinctions in goodness, between intrinsic and extrinsic and between ends and means, she recalls that things can bear relations to good ends other than being their causes or tools for their production, and that separating the two distinctions opens the possibility of something extrinsically good yet valued as an end (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 252). The constitutive condition occupies that place. Its value is extrinsic, because it derives from the form of participation it makes possible; it is not instrumental, because it is not a means for the form to achieve a result but part of what the form is. The replaceable road is the instrumental case: it is valued for what it allows one to do, and another that allows the same replaces it. The test of identity in chapter 10 is precisely the criterion that separates the two cases.

The second step is to show why that value grounds a demand addressed to whoever reorganizes the condition. This step does not follow from the first. A condition may have non-instrumental value for a form of participation without its following that anyone must answer for altering it. The book does not claim to deduce the demand from the value: it introduces an explicitly adopted normative premise to explain a remainder that description left unnamed (Dietrich, in press, ch. 13). Korsgaard's construction, too, rests on a point whose sufficiency is disputed. The authority of the constitutive standards of agency depends on the agent's being unable to opt out of acting, and David Enoch's objection, as reconstructed by Matthew Silverstein, called into question whether constitutiveness suffices to generate normative authority, by asking why one should be an agent rather than a shmagent indifferent to the standards of agency (Enoch, 2006, as cited in Silverstein, 2015). The objection has received responses of different kinds: Ferrero argues that rationally evaluating one's own agency is already an exercise of it (Ferrero, 2009); Silverstein, that there is no standpoint outside agency from which the normative question could be intelligibly raised (Silverstein, 2015). The existence of the objection does not show that Korsgaard left the point ungrounded; it shows only

that, there too, the grounding is disputed. The appropriate comparison, therefore, does not set a proposal that adopts its starting point against one that demonstrates it. It compares the sufficiency of the justifications each offers for the point at which normativity begins.

#### **4 REASONS BEFORE RECOGNITION**

The objection from order can be reformulated more precisely than the book did. It does not claim that Korsgaard ignores what others suffer, nor that her theory lacks the resources to recognize obligations to them. It claims that, on the Korsgaardian account, what bears on action acquires normative force only by being incorporated by practical reason, whereas, for the book, it already weighed beforehand. To assess this objection, three things that usually come together must be distinguished: the good of a creature, that creature's reason, and another agent's obligation to it.

As to the first two, Korsgaard herself admits that the reason precedes reflective recognition. In the Tanner Lectures, facing the objection from pain, she denies that pain is a reason: pain is the perception of a reason (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 104). She explains what this means with the example of the hungry animal. The animal has a reason to eat, which is that it will die if it does not; it does not know that it has that reason, but it perceives it, and hunger is the way it perceives it (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 105). The reason was not legislated by the animal, which does not legislate, nor by anyone; it lies in the relation between a self-maintaining form and what that form depends on. Korsgaard draws from this a consequence that goes beyond the example: a living thing is a law to itself, and to say that life is a value is almost a tautology (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 106).

*O amanhã é possível?* starts from a similar place. Chapter 5 opens with a stone and a plant in the sun; by the end of the summer both have changed, but only of the plant do we say that it died, and the question is whether that difference lies in the two things or only in us (Dietrich, in press, ch. 5). The book answers that it lies in the things: depending on what one did not produce belongs to the form of life, and it is from that dependence that the first norm arises, the difference between a form that maintains itself and one that fails. The passage from the Tanner Lectures offers this thesis a support the book did not use: the hungry animal's reason precedes any recognition and is grounded in the relation between the living form and its condition.

The convergence, however, does not reach the third thing, and this is where the reconstruction must be careful. Right after asserting that life is almost tautologically a value, Korsgaard explains how we arrive at obligations to animals, and the path does not run through the animal's reason taken on its own. First, reflection shows each of us that our animal nature is a fundamental form of identity on which our human identity depends, and that, if we did not value it, we could value nothing. That, however, is not enough, because the value could still be private. For us to have obligations, animals must have a way of impressing their value on us, as

we do with one another when we ask how the other would like it if someone did that to them: they must be able to intrude into our consciousness and make us think. And they can, because an animal's cries are no more mere noise than a person's words (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 106). There is no contradiction between this page and the preceding one. There is a distinction between the good of the creature, which exists without recognition, and its authority over another agent, which in 1992 is established along a path that includes intrusion: the value recognized in one's own animal nature would still have to cease being private, and in that text it is the cry that performs this function.

In 2018, the argument changes shape. The reason I take what is good for me to be absolutely good is not my autonomy but the fact that I am a creature with a final good; and, since we are not the only beings for whom things can be good or bad, we are committed to regarding all animals as ends in themselves (Korsgaard, 2018, §§ 8.5.3–8.5.5). The cry no longer figures as a condition. The construction starts from something it does not construct: some things are certainly good or bad for us, and that is the starting point (Korsgaard, 2018, § 8.5.5). In one precise respect, this vindicates note 84 of the book. What practical reason raises to the status of absolutely good was already good for someone before being raised; the construction receives its material from something given.

It would be hasty, however, to conclude that Korsgaard has adopted the order defended in the book. The good of the creature remains tethered to its point of view (Korsgaard, 2018, § 1.3.2), and it is the rational agent who, in choosing, takes that good as absolute. The disagreement narrows but does not disappear. Both proposals reject free-floating value, value that would be value for no one. Korsgaard tethers it to the point of view of the valuing creature; the book tethers it to forms of participation, whose conditions do not receive their importance from the esteem we accord them but are required by the forms they make possible (Dietrich, in press, ch. 15). The two tethers coincide in most cases, because the forms of participation that matter are, in general, forms of life of creatures with a point of view. They come apart where the form exceeds the point of view of any creature now present: the record on which future readers will rely, the trust that sustains dealings among strangers who have not yet met.

One last element brings the two works together and shows where the dispute really lies. In *Self-Constitution*, Korsgaard holds that one cannot decide to treat someone as an end in themselves. Responding to another's reasons as normative is the default position, like hearing another's words as meaningful; ignoring them takes work (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 202). The interactive attitude may be called forth by something about a person or about our relationship to a person, but it is not chosen (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 202). Chapter 13 of the book describes something with the same structure. Someone repairs the mechanism of a cistern from which a handful of households draw their drinking water; once the harm, the complaint, the office, the rule, the promise, the advantage of speaking, and the agent's own feelings have been removed, something remains that prevents the repair from being treated as exclusively the agent's affair,

and that remainder does not depend on the state of mind of whoever acted (Dietrich, in press, ch. 13). In both descriptions, something weighs before choice and independently of it. The difference lies in its origin: for Korsgaard, the weight is called forth by a person or by a relationship with a person; for the book, by a common condition on which the action fell. It is this difference, and not a disagreement about whether the weight comes first, that the case of the archive allows us to test.

## **5 ANSWERABLE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT CALL**

The case of the archive does not refute Korsgaard, and it is worth developing it in full before confronting it with her. The normative premise is the one the book explicitly adopts, formulated here without cross-reference: whoever reorganizes a condition in which others participate cannot treat that reorganization as exclusively their own affair and is answerable to those whose position was modified, with respect to what was modified. The premise is not deduced from the facts. It is offered as the best explanation of something the description of the case leaves unnamed, and it is in that capacity that it must be assessed.

The archive belongs to a form of participation in knowledge: that of whoever relies on what was recorded without having to retrace the path that led to the record. The credibility of records is a constitutive condition of that form. Remove that credibility, and no one can rely on accumulated knowledge without verifying it entirely, and the form ceases to be what it was, by the test of identity applied to constitutive conditions. Whoever alters the line reorganizes that condition at the precise point at which others will depend on it. Future readers are not in the action by accident. As long as that form of participation exists, there will be people who come to rely on what was recorded there, and the place they will occupy does not arise from the alteration but from the form of which the archive was already part. That is why, by the premise, the alteration is answerable to them, even though none of them exists when the hand writes, and even if none of them ever suffers harm because, by luck, no one ever relies on the falsified line.

The contrast with someone who throws a stone into a street helps delimit the scope of the argument, and it must be read with care. The passer-by struck by chance enters the action through the consequences of the gesture; they could have passed a moment earlier or later without anything changing in the nature of the throw. Distinguishing the two cases does not mean denying duties to the passer-by. Whoever throws stones into a busy street is answerable for the risk created for those who pass. What changes is the ground and the configuration of responsibility: responsibility for risk can also exist without actual harm, so the difference does not lie in the absence of harm. It lies in the prior position of the addressees. The passer-by is reached by the risk the gesture creates for whoever happens to be in the way, without previously occupying any position in the thing on which the gesture falls; the future reader is reached because they already occupy, in the form of participation the archive sustains, the position the alteration reorganizes.

The first objection Korsgaard's texts suggest is that obligation to another runs through address. The Tanner Lectures prevent the objection from being read in its strongest form. In a note, Korsgaard specifies that, more strictly speaking, the needs and demands of others present incentives, which come up for consideration as candidates for being reasons (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 97, n. 24); and she grants, shortly afterwards, that nothing she has said so far shows that we must treat the demands of others as reasons (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 98). This qualification allows us to say that the call is not, on its own, enough to establish an obligating reason. It does not allow us to conclude that the call's function is merely to make known a reason already constituted. On Korsgaard's reading, what converts the incentive into a reason is reflective endorsement, supported by Nagel's argument from reciprocity, and the call may be part of the path along which that conversion takes place. Whether address constitutes the authority of the demand or makes it perceptible therefore remains a matter of interpretation. The archive serves to formulate the question sharply: if, without any possible call, there is still something to be answerable to, the call is not a necessary condition of the direction of the action, although it may be a condition of the way a reflective theory establishes its authority.

Stephen Darwall's distinction between two ways of giving someone a reason helps separate the two readings. To get someone to remove his foot from mine, I can lead him to feel sympathy for my pain, and he will see his desire that I be free of pain as a form of access to a reason that is there anyway; or I can lay a claim, as one with the authority to do so, and the validity of the reason I address will depend on the normative relations of authority and accountability in which he and I stand, not on his actually accepting it (Darwall, 2006, pp. 5–8). The first route describes what the book says about address: it gives access to the reason. The book departed from the second, because the answerability it describes does without encounter and runs through a condition (Dietrich, in press, ch. 12, n. 62). That departure is a position, not a refutation: the absence of actual encounter is not, on its own, enough to dismiss a theory of second-personal authority, which has its own resources for dealing with those who cannot make claims.

Nagel's argument, which Korsgaard incorporates in 1992 and in the essay on the reasons we can share, offers a second test. The victim asks the agent how he would like it if someone did that to him, and the agent, realizing that he would not merely dislike it but resent it, finds himself obligated (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 98). In *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, that primal scene is where agent-neutral reasons are created in personal interaction; deontological reasons supervene on the relationships of people who interact with one another and are therefore intersubjective (Korsgaard, 1996, pp. 298–299). The case of the cistern removes that scene on purpose, and the case of the archive makes it impossible. If the action nonetheless remains directed at those whose position changed, the complaint is not a necessary condition of the direction; it is one of the forms in which the direction shows itself.

The strongest objection, however, comes from the 2018 work, and it shows that Korsgaard reaches the absent without depending on either call or complaint. In *Fellow Creatures*, the subjects of lives have an atemporal moral standing, so that someone can be wronged by actions prior to the beginning of their life, and we sometimes owe duties to people in their capacity as occupants of a role, such as the members of future generations, whoever they might be (Korsgaard, 2018, § 5.3.5). The author returns to the point later and explains where these roles come from. The individuals to whom we owe a duty are sometimes picked out by the relationships in which we stand to them rather than by their individual identity, in particular when those relationships are the ground of the duty; thus one has a duty to the members of future generations, to one's children, neighbours, or employees, whoever they turn out to be. And Korsgaard adds the condition on which the argument depends: there must be future creatures to whom we stand in a relationship that gives us the duty (Korsgaard, 2018, § 10.4.3). The duty to the future readers of the archive fits this scheme, and Korsgaard already offers a relational explanation of it. It is not true, therefore, that she merely ascribes a role whose origin would remain unexplained.

What the normativity of participation can offer is a specification of that relationship. Korsgaard lists heterogeneous relationships, that of a creator, of parents, of neighbourhood, of employment, and the passage offers no unified criterion bringing them together. The book's proposal is that, in cases where action reorganizes something on which others depend, the relationship that grounds the duty is participation in the reorganized condition. The aim is to propose that criterion and assess its reach, not to claim that Korsgaard left those duties ungrounded. The specification can be tested on a case Korsgaard herself discusses. When a poor neighbourhood is gentrified, it becomes better for its residents, but not for the original residents, who can no longer afford the rent and move elsewhere; the author calls this the problem of gentrification (Korsgaard, 2018, § 10.4.4). The role description, the residents of the neighbourhood, admits two readings, and one needs to know which relationship grounds the duty. Korsgaard resolves the problem when dealing with animal communities: it would be wrong to harm the existing inhabitants in order to put a different class of inhabitants in their place, and groups of creatures are normatively significant to the extent that they have shared interests (Korsgaard, 2018, § 11.7.1). The specification by participation identifies those involved by a single criterion. The original residents participate in the neighbourhood as a condition of their life, and gentrification reorganizes that condition; future occupants will participate in it as long as the reorganization continues to bear on them. Where Korsgaard uses the role for future addressees and shared interests for existing groups, participation identifies both by the condition the action cuts across, and it is this bringing together that constitutes the proposal's possible advantage. The result is a limited one. Identifying the two groups does not resolve the conflict between them: to conclude that the displacement of the present residents is wrong, an additional argument would be needed, showing why their position limits substitution

for the benefit of future occupants, and that argument is not developed here. Nor is it necessary for the two explanations to diverge in their obligations for one to have merit over the other. Two explanations can reach the same duties and differ in the precision with which they identify addressees, in the clarity with which they explain the temporal reach of the duty, or in the economy with which they bring cases together without additional hypotheses. It is in these terms that the advantage of the specification must be assessed, and here it is only indicated where the gain would lie.

Korsgaard knows yet another way of extending someone's reasons beyond their own life, and the contrast with it clarifies the proposal. Someone who identifies with a scientific or artistic tradition may feel a restriction on free inquiry five hundred years hence as a violation of their own reasons, because what someone counts as their embodiment depends on the identity they construct rather than preceding it (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 199). In that case, the future enters the reasoning through the identity the agent takes on. In the case of the archive, it enters through the position the condition already distributes, and it enters even if the agent does not identify with any tradition of knowledge. The difference is not one of result, since both paths can lead the agent to take future readers into account. It is one of grounding, and it has a consequence: on the first path, an agent who does not identify with the tradition lacks that specific reason, tied to their practical identity, although other reasons offered by Korsgaard's theory continue to reach them; on the second, the reason to be answerable to future readers does not depend on that identification.

An example from *Self-Constitution* shows the same point from the other side. Two farmers whose properties are threatened by the same fire join forces to fight it. Korsgaard asks whether each of them has thereby accorded normative force to the other's reasons and answers that they have not: cooperation from coincidence of purpose is mutual use, and mutual use is use all the same (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 201). The conclusion is correct at the level at which she draws it, that of each person's reasons. What the example leaves aside is the condition the two share. If one of them cut a firebreak that diverted the fire onto the other's land, the question of the reason to answer would not depend on their having cooperated, nor on one having adopted the other's reasons. It would depend on the reorganization of a condition, the course of the fire and the land it crosses, in which both participated. The book calls this direction objective because it does not proceed from the attitude of either of them.

## **6 THREE OBJECTIONS OF KORSGAARDIAN INSPIRATION**

The objections that follow are reconstructed from Korsgaard's texts; not all of them are formulated by her against a position like the book's, and the reconstruction should be read as such.

The first concerns method. Korsgaard holds that Kant's arguments are not about us but addressed to us, and that moral philosophy is the extension and refinement of ordinary practical

deliberation; talking about morality from the outside, third-personally, as a phenomenon in need of explanation, is a misguided emulation of science (Korsgaard, 1996, p. xii). *O amanhã é possível?* presents its reason as the best explanation of a remainder and claims explanatory superiority over its rivals (Dietrich, in press, chs. 13 and 15). The objection would say that this strategy answers a question different from the normative one: even if participation explains why the action is directed at others, it does not tell the agent why they should care.

The objection is serious, and part of it must be granted. The book does adopt an explanatory vocabulary, and that choice is not indifferent. But the description to which the reason responds is not made from the outside. The remainder of chapter 13 is what the agent finds when deliberating about what they did to the cistern and finding that they cannot treat the repair as their own affair. The question is addressed to them, not to an observer. Korsgaard herself, in concluding the essay on realism and constructivism, grants that the two conceptions are compatible in a determinate sense: if constructivism is true, normative concepts refer to complex facts about the solutions to practical problems, and those facts appear normative only from the perspective of those who face the problems (Korsgaard, 2008, p. 325). The book can accept that formulation. The practical problem the agent faces is posed by the condition before the agent recognizes it as theirs, and the response the book offers as an explicitly adopted normative premise can be read, in Korsgaard's terms, as the proposed solution to that problem. What remains is a disagreement about where the problem begins.

The second objection concerns realism. If the position of participants weighs before any recognition, the book seems to assert exactly what Korsgaard rejects: that the objectivity of values comes from certain things having value rather than from constraints on rational choice (Korsgaard, 1996, p. x). An easy reply would be that the book does not fit the objective realism Korsgaard describes, since its values would not exist in a world without life and so do not resemble the sun that would shine in a world without eyes (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 278). The reply is true and insufficient. Not fitting her description of realism does not dispose of the realist objection; dependence on life and independence from recognition are distinct questions. The book's position can be described as a form of relational realism: demands depend on real relations between forms of life and the conditions in which they participate, and they are independent of agents' approval.

That independence needs to be defended, and there are three reasons in its favour. The first is that Korsgaard herself admits reasons independent of recognition at the level of the creature, that of the hungry animal (Korsgaard, 1994, p. 105), and a received starting point in the construction of value (Korsgaard, 2018, § 8.5.5); the book extends to the level of forms of participation an independence she already grants at the level of the individual good. The second is that independence from approval does not imply independence from every point of view: the forms of participation that matter are, for the most part, forms of life of creatures that have a perspective, and the book does not need values that are values for no possible participant. The

third is that Korsgaard's relational explanation leads the question to the point in dispute. If the addressees of certain duties are picked out by the relationships in which we stand to them, above all when those relationships are the ground of the duty (Korsgaard, 2018, § 10.4.3), it remains to be asked whether rational construction confers authority on those relationships or recognizes an authority they already have. The present non-existence of future readers does not decide that question, since a rational construction can recognize duties to those who do not yet exist without depending on their approval, and Korsgaard does so. What the question shows is that the charge of realism bears on a point that the relational explanation must also address. None of these reasons proves that the book's position is true. They show that the charge of realism does not, by itself, defeat it.

The third objection concerns perspective. Korsgaard holds that functional good is perspective-dependent: to say that rain is good for the plant is to speak from someone's point of view (Korsgaard, 2018, § 2.2.5). The norm the book finds in the living, the difference between the plant that died and the stone that merely wore away, would then be our projection, not something in the things. The objection touches a real point, but a smaller one than it seems. The book does not need to ascribe a final good to the plant, a question Korsgaard herself leaves open (Korsgaard, 2018, § 2.2.3). It needs only that there be forms that maintain themselves and can fail to do so, and that this difference not be created by the observer. Korsgaard grants this in *Self-Constitution*: if we pick out self-maintaining regions of the world and call them living things, there must be such things, and she expressly denies that living things are merely human constructs (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 39). Perspective-dependence bears on the vocabulary of the good-for, not on the fact of self-maintenance. The norm of chapter 5 is more modest than final good and does not need the perspective Korsgaard requires for it.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The question was whether conditions of participation can ground reasons to be answerable to others independently of recognition, complaint, or actual interaction. The reconstruction of Korsgaard's argumentative axis between 1992 and 2018 showed that her answer moves. In 1992, obligation to another is established along a path that runs through address and reciprocity, although the call, on its own, presents only candidates for reasons. In 2009, it runs through interaction and the publicity of reasons, and responding to the other is described as a default position, not a chosen one. In 2018, the construction of value starts from what is good for a creature, and the future addressees of duties are identified by the relationships in which we stand to them.

The analysis supports three conclusions. The first is that the analysis of the constitutive, which Korsgaard applies to what the agent does, can be applied to other people's forms of participation, and that classifying a reason as external depends on the description chosen; the test of identity picks out, in other people's forms, conditions whose value is extrinsic without

being instrumental. The second is that Korsgaard herself admits reasons prior to recognition at the level of the creature and a received starting point in the construction of value; the disagreement does not concern whether what weighs comes first, but what that weight is tethered to, the creature's point of view or the form of participation. The third is that, in Korsgaard's texts, the call is not enough to establish an obligating reason, and that its function, constituting authority or making it perceptible, remains a matter of interpretation that the case of the archive helps to formulate; and that the relational explanation of Fellow Creatures admits a specification by participation in common conditions, which identifies by a single criterion the present inhabitants of a condition and the future occupants of the positions it distributes.

These results have limits that must be stated. The book's normative premise remains explicitly adopted, not demonstrated; removing harm, promise, and complaint from the scene makes the problem sharper but does not prove, by exclusion, that the proposed explanation is the only possible one. The advantage of the specification by participation over Korsgaard's relational explanation was indicated, not demonstrated. In the case of gentrification, participation identifies present and future residents by the same criterion but does not, by itself, resolve the conflict between them. The gain that can be claimed does not depend on the two theories diverging in their obligations; it depends on participation identifying addressees better, explaining the temporal reach of the duty, or bringing cases together without additional hypotheses, and this still has to be shown in other cases. The disagreement about method remains: the vocabulary of best explanation does not coincide with that of an argument addressed to the agent, even if the problem both respond to is the same. And the independence of demands from approval was defended against the charge of realism, not established as true.

What can be asserted is that the two proposals need not diverge in their obligations. Korsgaard does not need to deny the duty to preserve the archive for the dialogue to matter, and the book does not need to ascribe that denial to her. The difference lies in what makes the duty owed. For Korsgaard, the demand arrives through someone, through their voice, their participation in a deliberation, their point of view, or a relationship with them, and practical reason recognizes its authority. For *O amanhã é possível?*, the demand proceeds from something in which someone participates, and that is why it reaches those who cannot yet call, without having to wait for them to call.

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