

**Self-Constitution: Action, Identity, and Integrity**  
**Lecture Six: Integrity and Interaction**  
**Christine M. Korsgaard**

**I. What is reason's own principle, the principle that unifies the soul?**

Plato's unhelpful answer: the principle of doing what will unify your soul:

"One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale - high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act. And when he does anything, whether acquiring wealth, taking care of his body, engaging in politics, or in private contracts - in all of these, he believes that the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions. And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so, and regards the belief that oversees it as ignorance." (443c-444)

**II. Two parallel cruxes:**

Kant: action requires autonomy and autonomy requires willing your maxim as a universal law. But why should the maxim be in accord with the moral law: why should it be a universal law governing all rational beings, yielding reasons that we can share?

Plato, *Republic IV*: action requires unity and unity requires procedural or constitutional justice. But why are Socrates and Glaucon so sure that the truly unified person, the procedurally just person, will do nothing wrong?

**III. Inward and Outward Justice**

Inward justice: justice of the state towards the citizens and so of the citizens towards each other

Outward justice: justice of the state in its dealings with foreigners and other states

Plato on the outward conduct of the Republic: in war, the Republic will exploit the factions produced by the enemy's inferior constitution.

A Kantian Example: constitutional democracies don't go to war with each other.

**IV. Parfit's 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Nobleman**

The story: a socialist in his youth, the Russian Nobleman plans to give his estates to the peasants when he inherits them later. But he expects that by the time he inherits them, he will have different values, and will not want to give them to the peasants. So he signs a contract now to give them away then that can only be revoked with the consent of his wife, and asks her to promise not to consent to the revocation, even if he says then that she is released from her promise.

2 problems for the Russian Nobleman:

1. Kant's theory of marriage as the unification of will
2. Nietzsche's theory of promises as the protractedness of the will

**V. Kant's theory of interaction: cases involving the unification of two wills**

Marriage: I have complete rights over you but you have complete rights over me, so my rights over you include rights over myself; the same is true of you, so our wills are unified.

Friendship: I pursue your happiness but your happiness includes mine, you pursue my happiness but mine includes yours, so we pursue *our* happiness together as the object of a unified will.

Promise and Property Transfer: we agree together that what is now mine shall be yours

Unification of will: shared deliberation leading to joint action governed by a law that we choose together

Condition of shared deliberation and so of interaction:

Reasons are shared or public (objective, agent-neutral) rather than private (subjective, agent-relative)  
= parties treat each other as ends in themselves, respect each other

Three attitudes towards reasons and their implications for interaction:

- your reasons have normative implications for me (reasons are public)  
interaction = shared deliberation leading to shared action
  - your reasons don't exist at all for me  
interaction is impossible
  - your reasons are tools and obstacles for me (reasons are private)  
interaction is negotiation and bargaining and ultimately war
- Note: The Russian Nobleman has this attitude towards *his own* reasons

## VI. Private Reasons

Two senses in which reasons can be mine:

My reasons are the ones I legislate.

We can legislate together, so your reasons can be mine.

My reasons are derived from my incentives.

When we legislate together, my reasons and yours serve as incentives for us.

So assuming that either of these excludes your reasons from being mine begs the question against the possibility of Kantian interaction.

Can the private reasoner simply decide to treat some people's reasons as as normative considerations for him, for some private reason?

- Because they have the same purpose?

This doesn't move him beyond an instrumental relation to the other's reasons

- Because they have agreed to share their reasons?

Hobbesian problems: if the agreement was made for some private reason, why not free-ride on the agreement?

- Because love or respect moves him to treat their reasons as reasons?

This isn't a decision made for a reason

## VII. Self-Constitution and Interaction with the Self

Interaction = acting with others

Action (self-constitution) = interaction with the self

Conditions for action = conditions for interaction = treating one's own reasons as public, sharing them with oneself, and so treating oneself as an end-in-oneself, respecting oneself

Options for the Russian Nobleman:

Accord normative standing to his future reasons

Accord normative standing to his present reasons = judge that his future self is irrational

- If he does neither, he lacks self-respect (does not regard himself as legislative for himself)

Plato and Kant: the good person interacts with others as he interacts with himself

***To Note: Professor Christine Korsgaard will give a seminar on Thursday 13 June, at 2.15 p.m. in the Ryle Room, 10 Merton Street. The purpose of the seminar is to discuss questions raised by her Locke Lectures on 'Action, identity and integrity'. Everyone is welcome, and welcome to ask questions.***