

Original citation:

Brownlee, Kimberley and Stemplowska, Zofia. (2010) Introduction. Ethics, Volume 120 (Number 2). pp. 209-211. ISSN 0014-1704

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Publisher's statement:

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Link to the journal article: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/651424>

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SYMPOSIUM: JOSEPH RAZ ON VALUE, REASONS, AND RESPECT

Introduction

Joseph Raz's seminal work in legal and political philosophy and practical reason theory has been complemented in recent years by his writings on the nature of value.¹ His account of value combines a commitment to the universality of values with an appreciation that evaluative properties depend on historically contingent social practices. This fact of dependence makes values contingent, diverse, and legitimately differentially attractive—three features that Raz shows to be compatible with universality. Importantly for the arguments contained in this symposium, Raz's account of the nature of value has implications, which he himself develops, for what it means to show respect for persons. The essays in the symposium each engage in different ways with this topic and with the more general issue of how values provide reasons. They focus on such questions as whether the duty to respect persons is a distinct type of duty or, as Raz has argued, an instance of the more general duty to respect value; how respect for persons, respect for value, and value pluralism bear on state neutrality; and how respect for persons as addressees of claims and demands bears on the limits of practical authority.

In May 2008, the University of Manchester Centre for Political Theory hosted a conference on themes from Joseph Raz's recent work. The three articles published in this symposium were presented in draft form at that conference. The conference concluded with a response from Joseph Raz, which developed into the reply for this symposium. We are grateful to David Miller for helping shepherd these articles through the review process. We are also grateful to the Society for Applied Philosophy and the University of Manchester School of Social Sciences for their sponsorship of the conference.

In the first of the articles, Leslie Green examines two worries about the Razian account of respect for persons. Green's first worry is conceptual: Can we explain meaningfully what it is to show respect for persons—all persons—given that such respect must in some sense “terminate on the person” (214)? Does respect for persons require anything beyond treating people as we ought to treat them? Green argues that

1. Compare Joseph Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), *The Practice of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and *Engaging Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

a highly abstract conceptualization of respect such as Raz's is insufficiently specified to explain what is actually required of us when the question of respect arises. He rejects the suggestion that the duty to respect persons begins and ends with a duty to think about those we do think about in a way that is consistent with their value. Green contends that we have a duty not just to think appropriately about the persons we do think about but also to think about certain persons to begin with, namely, those persons who are "in our general sphere" (222). Thoughtlessness toward persons within our general sphere provides us no net against disrespect, a point which, Green notes, seems to distinguish respect for persons from respect for valuable objects. Indeed, an explanation of such duties to think about persons may necessarily depart from Raz's account of respect. Green's conceptual critique continues by challenging, among other things, Raz's central distinction between respect for and engagement with value. Green's second worry is respect inflation, a problem akin to that of rights inflation. Persons want to be respected and to have it known that they are respected. But, reasons for respect are not entirely independent from persons' projects, goals, and commitments, and in complex pluralist societies affirmation of some values often means disavowal of others, with the all too common result that persons invested in the latter feel disrespected. Green's proposal for containing respect is, first, to recognize the importance of institutional mechanisms that protect basic liberties and promote tolerance while reaffirming the distance between the state and those views that are merely tolerated and, second, to appreciate that part of respect for persons is respect for their capacity to moderate their reactions to treatment they see as lacking respect. Attending to this feature of respect would allow society to concern itself less with signaling full and proper respect and more with discouraging and avoiding displays of significant disrespect.

The issue of how to accommodate respect for persons and their conflicting values within a complex pluralist society also animates Steven Wall in his article "Neutralism for Perfectionists." Wall appreciates that the case of an individual responding to value differs from that of a group of people whose members have conflicting wills. Whereas an individual may choose from among incommensurate values the value most attractive to her, a group's representatives cannot favor one value over another without facing the charge of arbitrary discrimination. Wall applies this observation to Raz's perfectionist claim that it is permissible for the state to promote value; that is, the state need not remain neutral among people's differing evaluative commitments. He argues that Raz's perfectionism and his pluralism about value can be reconciled with a restricted form of state neutrality. This novel restricted neutrality principle (RNP) requires the state to be neutral only among those value

ideals that are of equal or incommensurable value and have adherents within the society. Wall highlights some advantages of this RNP over the more familiar liberal principle of state neutrality. For example, the latter, unlike the former, requires state officials to refrain from discouraging certain ideals of the good, even when they judge correctly that these ideals are unworthy of pursuit. Wall goes on to offer a qualified defense of the RNP, arguing that, although it is not plausible as a general principle, it helps safeguard against some state actions that undermine people's fitting sense of self-worth.

A distinct dimension of respect for persons informs Stephen Darwall's article "Authority and Reasons," which continues his debate with Raz over the nature of practical authority. Darwall mounts an argument against Raz's Normal Justification Thesis (NJT) for practical authority.² Darwall's objection to the NJT is that the thesis would allow someone to come to have authority over someone else, even in the absence of any relationship of accountability between them. According to Darwall, however, for a person to have the authority to make demands on another person, the second must be answerable to the first (or, put differently, the first must have the standing to hold the second accountable). This feature, he argues, is absent in Raz's account of practical authority. Darwall expands his criticism of the NJT to argue that it also fails as an account of authority understood as the capacity to create preemptive reasons. For the authority relationship to obtain, it is not enough that one person has a reason to treat another person's directive as giving her preemptive reasons. To use Darwall's example, one can have reason to treat one's alarm clock as giving one preemptive reason to get up in the morning, but it does not follow that the alarm clock gives one preemptive reason to get up. What is needed for preemptive reasons to arise is the second-personal relationship of accountability for which the NJT makes no special space.

The symposium concludes with Joseph Raz's detailed reply. In answering the criticisms and friendly suggestions contained in the symposium essays, Raz also comments on broader problems facing moral and political philosophers, such as the limits of philosophy for solving practical problems, what we should expect from normative principles as opposed to reasons, and the nature of rights and duties.

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2. According to the NJT, one is a practical authority when following one's demands would better enable the follower to conform to reasons that apply to her than if she followed her own best judgment on the matter; cf. Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 53.