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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

El campo antes del punto de vista: Korsgaard y el orden de la recepción 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: a obrigação estabelecida por meio da interpelação e da reciprocidade, nas *Tanner Lectures*; as razões públicas fundadas na interação, em Self-Constitution; o valor intersubjetivo, em *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*; o bem ancorado na

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criatura que tem um ponto de vista e a identificação relacional dos destinatários futuros dos deveres, em *Fellow Creatures*. Mostra-se, primeiro, que a análise do constitutivo, que Korsgaard aplica à atividade do próprio agente, pode ser aplicada às formas de participação de outros, e que a qualificação de uma razão como externa depende da descrição escolhida. Mostra-se, em seguida, que a própria Korsgaard 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 de quem altera um arquivo numa sala vazia é desenvolvido com premissa normativa explícita e serve para formular a pergunta sobre se a interpelação constitui essa autoridade ou a torna perceptível. Três objeções de inspiração korsgaardiana, quanto ao método, ao realismo e à dependência de perspectiva, são examinadas. 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; a normatividade da participação propõe especificar essa relação pela participação em condições comuns, e sua vantagem possível, indicada e ainda não demonstrada, estaria em reunir sob um só critério os habitantes atuais de uma condição e os ocupantes futuros das posições que ela distribui.

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

Resumen:
Christine Korsgaard sostiene que la normatividad no se encuentra en el mundo, sino que la razón práctica la lleva a él. En *O amanhã é possível?* se defiende el orden inverso: la posición de quienes participan en una condición común pesa sobre la acción antes de que cualquier agente la reconozca, y la razón práctica recibe lo que el campo ya contenía. Se examina si las condiciones de participación pueden fundamentar razones para responder ante otros con independencia del reconocimiento, de la reclamación o de la interacción efectiva. Se reconstruye un eje argumentativo de la obra de Korsgaard entre 1992 y 2018: la obligación establecida mediante la interpelación y la reciprocidad, en las *Tanner Lectures*; las razones públicas fundadas en la interacción, en *Self-Constitution*; el valor intersubjetivo, en *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*; el bien anclado en la criatura que tiene un punto de vista y la identificación relacional de los destinatarios futuros de los deberes, en *Fellow Creatures*. Se muestra, primero, que el análisis de lo constitutivo, que Korsgaard aplica a la actividad del propio agente, puede aplicarse a las formas de participación de otros, y que la calificación de una razón como externa depende de la descripción elegida. Se muestra, a continuación, que la propia Korsgaard admite razones anteriores al reconocimiento reflexivo y construye el valor a partir de algo recibido, de modo que la divergencia se circunscribe al ámbito de la autoridad de una exigencia sobre otro agente. El caso de quien altera un archivo en una sala vacía se desarrolla con una premisa normativa explícita y sirve para formular la pregunta de si la interpelación constituye esa autoridad o la hace perceptible. Se examinan tres objeciones de inspiración korsgaardiana relativas al método, al realismo y a la dependencia de la perspectiva. Se concluye que la diferencia entre las dos propuestas es de fundamentación, y no necesariamente de obligaciones. Korsgaard ya identifica relacionalmente a los destinatarios de los deberes hacia las generaciones futuras; la normatividad de la participación propone especificar esa relación mediante la participación en condiciones comunes, y su posible ventaja, señalada pero todavía no demostrada, consistiría en reunir bajo un solo criterio a los habitantes actuales de una condición y a los ocupantes futuros de las posiciones que esta distribuye.

Palabras clave: Korsgaard; normatividad; constructivismo; razones públicas; condición común; participación.

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1 Introduction

Someone silently alters a line of a file that won't be accessed until many years later. No one reads that the moment the hand writes, no one is deceived, no one is harmed, no one complains. The room is empty. The case belongs to The Tomorrow Is Possible? (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 11), and was built to remove from the scene everything that usually explains why an action concerns others: the encounter, the complaint, the damage that has already occurred. If the action is still directed at someone, that direction will not depend on that person being present, nor on being able to address the agent.

Contemporary moral philosophy has a powerful explanation for cases in this family, and it comes from Christine Korsgaard. For Korsgaard, regulatory requirements are not made to us by objects; they are requirements we make to ourselves and to each other (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 96). Practical reason, in the terms with which it presents its reading of Kant, is not shaped by the world: it shapes it, and reason is something we bring into the world, not something we find in it (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. xiv-xv). Tomorrow is possible? supports the reverse order. The position of the participant in a common condition weighs on the action before any agent recognizes, incorporates or organizes it rationally; the field precedes the point of view, and practical reason receives second hand what the field already contained first (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 15). The book discussed Korsgaard's formulation of *The Sources of Normativity* and granted constructivism everything it asks for, practical objectivity, rational discipline, and refusal of caprice, denying it only the order: what practical reason incorporated already weighed before it was incorporated (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 15, note 84).

That denial must now be tested against the later work. Between 1992 and 2018, Korsgaard reformulated the publicity of reasons in terms of interaction (KORSGAARD, 2009), presented values as intersubjective (KORSGAARD, 1996), and, in addressing animals, shifted the starting point of value to the creature that has a good (KORSGAARD, 2018). If the objection to the order reaches only the 1992 version, it shall be valid against a moment of the work and not against the position of the author. The problem under consideration is therefore the following: can the conditions for participation justify reasons for responding to others regardless of recognition, complaint or effective interaction?

The hypothesis is that Korsgaard's trajectory is gradually approaching this possibility without adopting it. In 1992, obligation to one another is established by a path that goes through interpellation and the argument of reciprocity; in 2009, through interaction and shared

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deliberation; in 2018, value building starts from something that is not constructed, the good of a creature, and the future recipients of duties are identified by the relationships we are in with them. If this reconstruction is correct, the difference between the two proposals is not in recognizing or denying the duty to preserve the file, which both can recognize, but in what underlies that duty: the reflective and reciprocal structure of practical reason applied to the relationships in which the agent is present, or a condition in which others participate. The proposed proposal is that participation under common conditions specifies the relationship which Korsgaard herself believes underlies certain obligations towards future recipients; whether this specification has an advantage over the explanation it already offers is something that needs to be shown, not just stated.

The method is the reconstruction of an argumentative axis in works from 1992 to 2018, with attention to developments and without assuming that all formulations are equivalent, subjected to case testing. *The Sources of Normativity* is quoted by the version of the *Tanner Lectures* delivered at Clare Hall in November 1992 and published in 1994 in volume 15 of the series, whose pageing is adopted; the 1996 expanded edition, whose notes the book in question used, is distinct. Quotations from foreign-language works are our own translations; *Fellow Creatures* is quoted by the numbering of sections, which the author herself employs for internal references.

Some terms in the book need to be fixed. A common condition is one in which many live and which none of them have produced or can present as their own work: the origin of a people's drinking, the trust among strangers that makes trade possible, the record on which accumulated knowledge rests. The last example requires a distinction: someone produced the support and each particular annotation, but what none of the participants produced individually, nor can they constitute by their exclusive will, is the condition of participation that the records underpin: the credit on which rely those who rely on accumulated knowledge, formed by shared use and unavailable to the will of those who wrote each line. Participation is the way in which a person lives under one of these conditions; form of participation is the whole of what constitutes that participation as it is. A distinction is made between the constitutive conditions of a form, without which it ceases to be what it was, and the convenient conditions, which only facilitate its exercise (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 10). Finally, the normative reasoning of the book is assumed, not deduced: in reorganizing what others participate in, the agent can no longer treat that reorganization as his sole subject and must answer to those whose position he has modified as to what has been modified (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 13). The book presents this

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premise as the best explanation of a remnant that the description left unnamed, and not as an inevitable conclusion to the facts; the following examination preserves this caution.

2 Korsgaard's architecture: from address to the creature that has a good

Self-constitution begins with a fact that no one escapes. Human beings are condemned to choice and action; whoever decides to stand still has already chosen, and the need to act is not logical, causal or rational, but the human condition in its simplest form (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 1-2). This is why the normative question arises: since we need to act, on what 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 is based on a general conception, which it attributes to Plato, Aristotle and Kant, according to which normative principles unify multiplicities in objects of a certain type. A house is the arrangement of walls, roof and insulation that allows it to shelter; a cracked house shelters worse and, therefore, is a worse house. Standards that apply to a thing simply because it is the type of thing that it is are called constitutive standards (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 27-28).

According to Korsgaard, constitutive standards have an advantage over skeptical ones: it makes no sense to ask why a house should be housed, and therefore no sense to ask why the fences should be sealed and the roof should be waterproof. Even the most sloppy builder tries to build a good house, because there is no other way to try to build a house (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 29). The same pattern applies to living things. A living being is organized to maintain and reproduce its own form; being a giraffe is not a state but the activity of continuing to become a giraffe, and health is the name of the internal condition that allows the giraffe to perform this function (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 35-36). Teleology thus conceived is internal to the individual, which receives no purpose outside itself, and is ultimately justified by the way humans view the world by cutting objects with a functional unit in it (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 37-38). The rational agent, in turn, constitutes itself by acting on principles that it can universally desire; acting is literally interacting with itself (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 202).

The relationship with others comes in two ways, which must be distinguished because they belong to different moments of the work. In the *Tanner Lectures*, the exposition of obligation to another passes through intrusion and the argument of reciprocity. Korsgaard approaches Wittgenstein's argument against private language to an argument against private reasons: just as there must be two for there to be meaning, there must be two for there to be

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reason, a legislator and someone who obeys (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 95). The space of linguistic awareness is public, like a square; whoever calls someone by name forces them to stop, and whoever goes ahead must resist the call (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 97). The example is accompanied by a reservation that matters to what follows. In a note, Korsgaard clarifies that the needs and demands of others are strictly incentive, which are automatically considered as candidates for reasons (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 97, note 24); and shortly thereafter admits that nothing he had said up to now shows that we should 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 to be treated, can no longer proceed as before, because I have made myself law for him (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 98).

In *Self-Constitution*, the same relationship is reconstructed from the interaction. Interacting is deliberating together until a shared decision, and this implies public reasons, whose normative force crosses the boundaries between people (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 191). In a note, Korsgaard notes that these reasons are rather intersubjective than objective: they do not exist independently of the agents, in the form of a substantive realism, but emerge in the interaction between people (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 191, note 9). The same thesis organizes the essay on the reasons we can share: values are neither subjective nor objective, but inter-subjective, and fall within the structure of personal relationships (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. 276). Korsgaard distinguishes there two ways of understanding a neutral value with respect to the agent. In objective realism, value gives reason to everyone as the sun gives light to everyone, because it is there, and it would exist in a world without creatures capable of responding to reason; our relationship with it is of discovery. In the intersubjectivism which it adopts, values exist for all rational agents, but would not exist in a world without them, and our relationship with them is constructive (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. 278-279).

The general orientation of this constructivism is clearly shown in the essay on realism and constructivism. Normative concepts do not name objects or facts found in the world; they name solutions to practical problems, and a sufficiently precise description of the problem already indicates the solution. The normative force is established as follows: whoever recognises the problem as real, as his own and as something that needs to be solved, and who recognises the solution as the only or best, is bound to it (KORSGAARD, 2008, p. 321-322).

Fellow Creatures moves the starting point. Nothing is important without being important to someone, and therefore all importance is anchored in the creature for whom something matters; this does not exclude that something is absolutely important, as long as it is

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important to all those for whom something may matter (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 1.3.2). Functional good, the one according to which rain is good for the plant, is a notion dependent on perspective: values exist in the perspective of a creature that values, just as colors exist in the perspective of creatures that see colors (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 2.2.5). Whether plants have a final good is an issue that the author declares cannot be resolved there (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 2.2.3). The argument in favor of obligations to animals reconstructed Kant with a change of emphasis. When I decide to pursue something that is good for me as if it were absolutely good, I do so not out of respect for my autonomy, which has not yet legislated, but simply because I am a creature that has an ultimate good; charity requires respect for someone's animal nature, not just rational (KORSGAARD, 2018, sections 8.5.3-8.5.4). Without metaphysical access to an intrinsic value domain, all we have is that certain things are certainly good or bad for us, and that is the starting point from which we build our value system (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 8.5.5).

These moments do not reduce to each other, and reconstruction does not intend for Korsgaard to sustain in 2018 exactly what it sustained in 1992. The axis of interest is the place of authority of a requirement on another agent: call and reciprocity, shared deliberation, the point of view of the creature who has an asset, the agent's relationship with the recipients. In all of them, the demand addressed to me comes through someone, their voice, their participation in a deliberation, their perspective or a relationship with them, and it is the practical reason that recognizes or gives them authority. This is the point where tomorrow is possible? aims to be an alternative, and it is in this that the alternative needs to show what it adds.

3 The point of contact: the constitutive

The closest approximation between the two works lies in a distinction that both use and that neither invented. Korsgaard illustrates the constitutive patterns with a house and separates two judgments. A mansion that covers the lake view for the whole neighborhood may be a bad thing for the neighborhood, but it is not, therefore, a bad house (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 28). Why don't you build the house that covers the view? Perhaps because it will displease the neighbors; but this is a consideration that can simply be set aside if you are selfish or insensitive enough to face their displeasure, whereas you cannot set aside the standard that makes the home a shelter (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 29). The constitutive pattern is thus immune to skepticism; the reason of the neighbours is external and can be discarded.

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Tomorrow is possible? uses the same logic in a different place. Chapter 10 asks what makes what others experience something more than a widely used resource and finds the answer in an identity test: remove the condition and see if the form of participation remains the same or becomes another. A road that many use, but another can replace, is convenient; its loss makes it difficult to continue, without destroying what continues. The accuracy of a word, the trust between strangers and the credit of a register are constitutive: without them, the word ceases to realize the distinction by which it belongs to the language, the treatment of strangers ceases to be able to take its form, and no one can rely on the accumulated knowledge without re-creating it (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 10). The structure is that of Korsgaard, to the point where the two formulations coincide: the house that fails too much ceases to be a house and disintegrates into a pile of boards (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 28); the form of private participation of its constituent status ceases to exist as it is.

The difference lies in the object to which the analysis applies. Korsgaard applies the test to what the agent does or produces, the home, the activity, the agency itself. The book applies it to the forms of participation of others, which the agent's action achieves. This transposition has consequences for the inquiryple of the mansion. The qualification of the neighbour's reason as external depends on the description chosen. Describe the house, the view of the lake is outside the standard shelter. It describes the lifestyle of that neighborhood, the same view can be convenient or constitutive, and the identity test says that: if the neighborhood is any neighborhood that enjoys a landscape, the view is convenient; if it is a community of fishermen whose visual access to the lake integrates the way they orient themselves and work, the view can belong to what makes them the community they are. In neither case does the sight become part of the house. What changes is that the reason of the neighbors, which seemed external, reveals itself internally in the other form, through which the building passes. The selfish builder may ignore this reason; what he cannot do, without a new description, is call it outward to everything.

That observation alone does not establish any duty. It merely shows that the analysis of the constitutive has a wider use than Korsgaard gives it, and that the contrast between constitutive reasons, immune to skepticism, and external, disposable reasons, does not follow the boundary between the agent and others. To arrive at a requirement, two steps are missing, and they should be separated.

The first is to show that the constitutive condition in a way has value that is not merely instrumental. Also here Korsgaard offers the necessary conceptual space. In distinguishing the

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two distinctions concerning goodness, between intrinsic and extrinsic and between ends and means, she recalls that things can relate to good ends in ways other than as causes or tools for producing them, and that separating the two distinctions opens up the possibility of something being extrinsically good and nevertheless 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 an outcome, but part of what the form is. The substitutable road is the instrumental case: it applies to what it allows to be made, and another that allows the same to replace it. The identity test in Chapter 10 is precisely the criterion that separates the two cases.

The second step is to show why this value underlies a requirement directed at those who reorganize the condition. That step doesn't come from the first. A condition may have non-instrumental value for a form of participation without consequently requiring someone to answer for changing it. The book is not intended to deduce the value requirement: it introduces an assumed rationale to explain a rest that the description left unnamed (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 13). The construction of Korsgaard also rests on a point whose sufficiency is disputed. The authority of the agency's constitutive standards depends on the agent not being able to stop acting, and David Enoch's objection, as reconstructed by Matthew Silverstein, called into question whether constitutionality is sufficient to generate regulatory authority, when asking why someone should be an agent, and not a quasi-agent indifferent to the agency's standards (ENOCH, 2006 apud SILVERSTEIN, 2015). The objection received answers of different types: Ferrero maintains that a rational assessment of the agency itself is already exercising it (FERRERO, 2009); Silverstein, that there is no perspective outside the agency from which the normative question can be intelligibly formulated (SILVERSTEIN, 2015). The existence of the objection does not show that Korsgaard left the point unfounded; it merely shows that, also there, the grounds are disputed. Appropriate confrontation is therefore not opposed to a proposal which assumes the other which demonstrates it. It compares the sufficiency of the justifications each offers to the point at which regulation begins.

4 Reasons before recognition

The objection to the order can be recast more accurately than the book gave it. She does not claim that Korsgaard ignores what others suffer, nor that her theory lacks the resources to recognize obligations to them. It states that, in the Korsgaardian explanation, what weighs on

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the action only gains normative force when incorporated by practical reason, whereas, for the book, it already weighed before. To evaluate this objection, we need to distinguish three things that often come together: the good for a creature, the reason for that creature, and the obligation of another agent to it.

As for the first two, Korsgaard herself admits that reason precedes reflective recognition. In the *Tanner Lectures*, when faced with the objection of pain, she refuses that pain is a reason: pain is the perception of a reason (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 104). And explain what that means with the inquiryple of the hungry animal. The animal has a reason to eat, which is to die if it does not eat; it does not know that it has that reason, but it realizes it, and hunger is the way it realizes it (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 105). Reason was not legislated by the animal, which does not legislate, nor by anyone; it is in the relationship between the form on which it maintains itself and what that form depends upon. Korsgaard draws from this a consequence that goes beyond the inquiryple: a living being is a law to itself, and to say that life is a value is almost a tautology (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 106).

Tomorrow is possible? part of a similar place. Chapter 5 opens with a stone and a plant in the sun; at the end of the summer, both have changed, but only the plant we say is dead, and the question is whether that difference is in the two things or only in us (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 5). The book answers that it is in the things: depending on what hasn't happened belongs to the way of life, and it is from that dependency that the first norm is born, the difference between a form that stays and a form that fails. The passage from the *Tanner Lectures* offers this thesis a support that the book did not use: the reason for the hungry animal is prior to any recognition and is based on the relationship between the living form and its condition.

Convergence, however, does not reach the third thing, and this is where rebuilding needs to be carefully done. Shortly after asserting that life is almost tautologically a value, Korsgaard explains how we come to obligations to animals, and the way is not through the animal's reason taken for granted. First, reflection shows everyone that their animal nature is a fundamental form of identity on which their human identity depends, and that if they did not value it, they could value nothing. This, however, is not enough, because the value could still be private. For us to have obligations, animals need a way to impose their value on us, just as we do with each other when we ask how the other would like them to do that to them: they need to be able to get into our consciousness and make us think. And they can, because an animal's cry is not noise, just as a person's words are not (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 106). There is no contradiction between this page and the previous one. There is a distinction between the good of the creature,

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which exists without recognition, and its authority over another agent, which in 1992 is established by a path that includes intrusion: the value recognized in the animal nature itself would still have to cease to be private, and it is the cry that, in this text, fulfils that function.

In 2018, the plot changes shape. The reason why I take as absolutely good what is good for me is not my autonomy, but the fact that I am a creature that has an ultimate good; and, as we are not the only beings for whom things can be good or bad, we are committed to considering all animals end in themselves (KORSGAARD, 2018, sections 8.5.3-8.5.5). Screaming is no longer a condition. Construction starts from something that doesn't build: certain things are certainly good or bad for us, and that's the starting point (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 8.5.5). In a precise way, this gives justification to note 84 of the book. What practical reason elevates to the condition of good was absolutely already good for someone before elevation; the construction receives its material from something given.

It would be rash, however, to conclude that Korsgaard adhered to the order advocated in the book. The good for the creature remains anchored in its view (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 1.3.2), and it is the rational agent who, in choosing, takes that good as absolute. The divergence narrows, but it doesn't disappear. Both proposals reject the value released, which was no value to anyone. Korsgaard anchors it to the point of view of the creature he values; the book anchors it to the forms of participation, whose conditions do not receive their importance from the appreciation we give them, but are required by the ways they make possible (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 15). The two anchors coincide in most cases, because the forms of participation that matter are generally the ways of life of viewed creatures. They have separated where form exceeds the point of view of any creature present: the record upon which future readers will depend, the trust that underpins the treatment of strangers who do not yet know each other.

There is one last element that brings the two works together and shows where the dispute really lies. In *Self-Constitution*, Korsgaard argues that one cannot decide to treat someone as an end in itself. Responding to another's reasons as normative is the standard position, such as listening to another's words as meaningful; ignoring them takes work (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 202). The interactive attitude may be aroused by something in the person or in our relationship with them, 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 tank from which he drinks a handful of houses; except for the damage, the complaint, the position, the rule, the promise, the benefit of speaking and the agent's own feeling, there remains

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something that prevents him from treating the repair as his exclusive affair, and the rest does not depend on the state of mind of the person who acted (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 13). In both descriptions, something weighs before the choice and independently of it. The difference lies in the origin: for Korsgaard, the weight is aroused by a person or by a relationship with him; for the book, by a common condition on which the action affected. It is this difference, not a discrepancy about the previous weight, that the file case allows you to test.

5 Answerable to those who do not call

The file case doesn't disprove Korsgaard, and you should develop it thoroughly before confronting it. The normative premise is the reasoning of the book, which is worded here without reference: one who reorganizes a condition in which others participate cannot treat this reorganization as a matter exclusively his own and must answer to those whose position has been modified as to what has been modified. The premise is not deduced from the facts. It presents itself as the best explanation for something that the case description leaves unnamed, and it is in that quality that it should be evaluated.

The file belongs to a form of knowledge sharing: one that relies on what has been recorded without having to retrace the path that led to the record. Recognition of records is a constitutive condition in this way. Once credit is withdrawn, no one can rely on accumulated knowledge without verifying it completely, and the form is no longer what it used to be, according to the identity test applied to the constitutional conditions. Whoever changes the line rearranges that condition at the precise point where others will depend on it. Future readers aren't in the action by accident. As long as there is this form of participation, there will be those who will rely on what has been recorded there, and the place they will occupy is not born of the change, but of the way the file was already part of it. That is why, under the premise, change must respond to them, even if none of them exist when the hand writes and even if none are damaged, because, fortunately, it has never relied on the forged line.

The contrast with throwing a stone in a street helps to define the scope of the argument, and it needs to be read carefully. The accidentally hit passenger enters the action as a result of the gesture; he could have passed an instant before or after without changing anything in the nature of the launch. Distinguishing between the two cases does not imply denying duties to the passerby. Whoever throws stones on a busy street is liable for the risk it creates to passersby. What changes is the basis and configuration of liability: liability for risk can also exist

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without actual damage, and so the difference is not in the absence of damage. It is in the forward position of the recipients. The transient is reached by the risk that the gesture creates for those who are on the way, without previously occupying any position on the thing on which the gesture affects; the future reader is reached because he already occupies, in the form of participation that the file supports, the position that the change reorganizes.

The first objection that Korsgaard's texts suggest is that obligation to another passes through interrogation. The *Tanner Lectures* prevent the objection from being read in its strongest form. In a note, Korsgaard points out that the needs and demands of others strictly contain incentives, which are taken into consideration as candidates for reasons (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 97, note 24); and admits shortly thereafter that nothing he had said before shows that we should treat the demands of others as reasons (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 98). That reservation makes it possible to state that the summons itself is not sufficient to establish a compulsory reason. It does not conclude that its function is merely to make known a reason already established. In Korsgaard's reading, what converts the incentive into reason is reflective endorsement, based on Nagel's reciprocity argument, and the call may be part of the path by which this conversion occurs. The question whether the appeal constitutes the authority of the claim or makes it perceptible remains, therefore, to be interpreted. The file serves to formulate it clearly: if, without any possible call, there is still something to be answered, the call is not a necessary condition of the direction of action, although it may be a condition of the way in which 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 take their foot off my own, I can make them feel sympathy for my pain, and they will see their desire that I don't suffer as a way of accessing a reason that exists anyway; or I can claim, as who has authority for so much, and the validity of the reason I address will depend on the normative relationships of authority and accountability that he and I find ourselves in, not on whether he actually accepts it (DARWALL, 2006, p. 5-8). The first line describes what the book says about interrogation: it gives access to reason. The book moved away from the second, because the author who describes it dismisses the encounter and goes through a condition (DIETRICH, 2026, ch. 12, note 62). This rejection is a position, not a refutation: the absence of an effective meeting is not enough in itself to reject a theory of second-party authority, which has its own resources to deal with those who cannot complain.

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Nagel's argument, which Korsgaard incorporated in 1992 and in the essay on shared reasons, offers a second test. The victim asks the agent how they would like to have that done to them, and the agent, realizing that they would not merely dislike it but would resent it, discovers that they are under an obligation (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 98). In *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, this primary scene is where the reasons for the agent's neutrality are created in personal interaction; theontological reasons come from the relationships between people who interact and are therefore intersubjective (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. 298-299). The tank case purposely removes that scene, and the file case makes it impossible. If, however, the action remains directed at those whose position has changed, the complaint is not a necessary condition of direction; it is one of the ways in which direction manifests itself.

The strongest objection, however, comes from the 2018 work, and it shows that Korsgaard reaches out to the absent without relying on a call or a complaint. In *Fellow Creatures*, life subjects have a timeless moral position, so someone can be hurt by actions prior to the beginning of their life, and we sometimes owe duties to people as occupants of a role, such as future generation members, whoever they are (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 5.3.5). The author goes further and explains where these papers come from. Individuals to whom we owe a duty are sometimes identified by the relationships we are in with them, and not by their individual identity, particularly when those relationships are the basis of duty; so one has a duty to future generations, to children, neighbors or employees, whoever they may be. And Korsgaard adds the condition that the argument depends: there must be future creatures with whom we are in a relationship that gives us duty (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 10.4.3). The duty to future readers of the file falls within that scheme, and Korsgaard already offers a relational explanation for it. It is not true, therefore, that it merely assigns a role whose origin would remain to be explained.

What the normative nature of participation can offer is a specification of this relationship. Korsgaard lists heterogeneous relationships, that of the creator, that of parents, that of the neighbourhood, that of employment, and the passage does not offer a unified criterion that brings them together. The book proposes that in cases where the action reorganizes something that others live on, the relationship that underlies the duty is participation in the reorganized condition. It is a question of proposing that criterion and assessing its scope, and not of asserting that Korsgaard has left those duties unfounded. The specification can be tested by a case that Korsgaard herself discusses. When a poor neighborhood is gentrified, it becomes better for its residents, but not for the original residents, who can no longer afford rent and

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move elsewhere; the author calls this the problem of gentrification (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 10.4.4). The description of the paper, the residents of the neighborhood, admits two readings, and you need to know which relationship underlies the duty. Korsgaard solves the problem by dealing with animal communities: it would be unfair to injure existing inhabitants to replace another inhabitant class, and groups of creatures are normally significant insofar as they share common interests (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 11.7.1). The participation specification identifies those involved by the same criterion. The original inhabitants participate in the neighborhood as a condition of their life, and gentrification reorganizes that condition; future occupants will participate in it as long as the reorganization continues to affect them. Where Korsgaard employs the role for future recipients and the shared interests for existing groups, participation identifies both by the condition through which the action goes, and it is this meeting that constitutes the possible advantage of the proposal. The result is finite. Identifying the two groups does not resolve the conflict between them: to conclude that the displacement of current residents is unfair, an additional argument would be needed to show why their position limits substitution for the benefit of future residents, and this argument is not developed here. Nor do the two explanations need to differ as to obligations in order for one to have merit over the other. Two explanations may lead to the same duties and differ in the accuracy with which they identify the recipients, the clarity with which they explain the time span of the duty or the economy with which they combine cases without additional hypotheses. It is in these terms that the advantage of the specification needs to be assessed, and here only where the gain would be stated.

Korsgaard knows yet another way to extend someone's reasons beyond his own life, and the contrast with it makes the proposal clearer. Someone who identifies with a scientific or artistic tradition may experience a restriction on free inquiry five hundred years from now 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 this case, the future is determined by the identity the agent assumes. In the case of the file, it enters by the position that the condition already distributes, and enters even if the agent does not identify with any tradition of knowing. The difference is not a result, because both paths can lead the agent to consider future readers. It is justifiable, and it has a consequence: in the first way, the agent who does not identify with tradition ceases to have that specific reason, linked to his practical identity, even though other reasons offered by Korsgaard's theory continue to achieve

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it; in the second, the reason for responding to future readers does not depend on this identification.

An example of *Self-Constitution* shows the same point in the negative. Two besiegers whose properties are threatened by the same fire join forces to fight it. Korsgaard asks whether each has thereby assigned regulatory force to the other's reasons, and replies that no: cooperation by coincidence of purposes is mutual use, and mutual use continues to be use (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 201). The conclusion is correct in the plane in which it is formulated, that of each person's reasons. What the inquiryple leaves out is the condition the two share. If one of them were to open a steel that diverted fire to the other's land, the question of why to answer would not depend on whether they had cooperated, nor on whether one had adopted the other's reasons. It would depend on the reorganization of a condition, the course of the fire and the ground it passes through, which both participated in. The book calls this direction objective because it does not stem from the attitude of either.

6 Three objections inspired by Korsgaard

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

The first concerns the method. Korsgaard argues that Kant's arguments are not about us, but addressed to us, and that moral philosophy is the extension and refinement of common practical deliberation; speaking of morality from outside, in the third person, as a phenomenon that needs explanation, is unduly emulating science (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. xii). It presents its reason as the best explanation of a remnant and claims explanatory superiority over rivals (DIETRICH, 2026, chs. 13 e 15). The objection would be that this strategy answers a different question from the normative question: even if the participant explains why the action is directed at others, it does not tell the agent why he should care about it.

The objection is serious and part of it must be granted. The book does indeed adopt an explanatory language, and that choice is not indifferent. But the description to which reason answers is not made from the outside. The rest of chapter 13 is what the agent finds when he deliberates on what he did with the tank and can't treat the repair as his own affair. The question is addressed to him, not to an observer. Korsgaard herself, in concluding the essay on realism and constructivism, admits that the two concepts are compatible in a certain sense: if

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constructivism is true, normative concepts refer to complex facts about practical problem-solving, and these facts only appear normative from the perspective of those who face the problems (KORSGAARD, 2008, p. 325). The book can take that wording. The practical problem that the agent faces is posed by the condition before he recognizes it as his own, and the answer that the book calls assumed reason can be read, in Korsgaard's terms, as the proposed solution to that problem. What remains is a divergence as to where the problem begins.

The second objection concerns realism. If the participants' position weighs before any recognition, the book seems to affirm exactly what Korsgaard rejects: that the objectivity of values comes from certain things having value, and not from restrictions on rational choice (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. x). An easy answer would be to say that the book does not fit the objective realism described by Korsgaard, because its values would not exist in a world without life, and therefore do not resemble the sun that would shine in a world without eyes (KORSGAARD, 1996, p. 278). The answer is true and insufficient. Failure to fit its description of realism does not eliminate realistic objection; dependence on life and independence from recognition are distinct issues. The book's position can be described as a form of relational realism: the demands depend on real relationships between life forms and the conditions in which they participate, and are independent of the approval of the agents.

That independence needs to be defended, and there are three reasons in its favor. The first is that Korsgaard herself admits reasons independent of recognition in the creature plan, that of the hungry animal (KORSGAARD, 1994, p. 105), and a starting point received in value construction (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 8.5.5); the book extends to the plan of forms of participation an independence that she already grants in the plan of individual good. The second is that the independence of approval does not imply independence from any point of view: the forms of participation that matter are mostly life forms of creatures that have perspective, and the book does not need values that are not values for any possible participant. The third is that Korsgaard's relational explanation leads the question to the point in dispute. If the recipients of certain duties are identified by the relationships we have with them, especially when those relationships are the basis of the duty (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 10.4.3), it remains to be seen whether the rational construct confers authority on those relationships or recognises an authority they already have. The current absence of future readers does not resolve this question, because a rational construct can recognize duties to those who do not yet exist without their approval, and Korsgaard does. What the question shows is that the accusation of realism focuses on a point that the relational explanation also needs to address. None of these reasons prove the

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position of the book to be true. They show that the accusation of realism, by itself, does not defeat it.

The third objection concerns the prospect. Korsgaard argues that functional good depends on perspective: to say that rain is good for the plant is to speak from someone's point of view (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 2.2.5). The standard that the book finds alive, the difference between the plant that died and the stone that just wore off, would then be our projection, not something that's in things. The objection reaches a real point, but smaller than it seems. The book does not need to attribute a final good to the plant, a question which Korsgaard herself leaves open (KORSGAARD, 2018, section 2.2.3). It just needs to be that there are shapes that hold and can fail to hold, and that this difference is not created by the observer. Korsgaard concedes this in *Self-Constitution*: if we cut out self-sustaining regions in the world and call them living things, such things must exist, and she expressly denies that living things are mere human constructions (KORSGAARD, 2009, p. 39). Perspective dependence focuses on the vocabulary of good for, not on the fact of self-maintenance. The standard of Chapter 5 is more modest than the final good and does not need the perspective that Korsgaard demands for it.

7 Conclusion

The question was whether the conditions for participation could justify reasons for responding to others regardless of recognition, complaint or effective interaction. The reconstruction of Korsgaard's argumentative axis between 1992 and 2018 showed that her response moves. In 1992, the obligation to the other is established by a process of inquiry and reciprocity, although the call itself presents only applicants for reasons. In 2009, it goes through the interaction and publicity of the reasons, and the answer to the other is described as a standard position, not chosen. In 2018, value building starts with what's good for a creature, and the future recipients of the duties are identified by the relationships we're in with them.

Three results have stood the test of time. The first is that the constitutive analysis, which Korsgaard applies to what the agent does, can be applied to the forms of participation of others, and that the classification of a reason as external depends on the description chosen; the identity test identifies, in other forms, conditions whose value is extrinsic without being instrumental. The second is that Korsgaard herself admits reasons prior to recognition in the creature's plan and a starting point received in the construction of value; the difference is not in the precedence

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of what weighs, but in the anchor of that weight, the creature's point of view or form of participation. The third is that, in Korsgaard's texts, the call is not sufficient to establish a compulsory reason, and that its function, to constitute the authority or to make it perceptible, remains an interpretative question which the case of the file helps to formulate; and that the relational explanation of *Fellow Creatures* admits a specification for participation under common conditions, which identifies by the same criterion the current inhabitants of a condition and the future occupants of the positions it distributes.

These results have limits that need to be declared. The normative reasoning of the book remains assumed, and not demonstrated; removing the damage, the promise and the complaint from the scene makes the problem clearer, but does not prove, by exclusion, that the proposed explanation is the only possible one. The advantage of the specification for participation over Korsgaard's relational explanation was indicated, and not demonstrated. In the case of gentrification, participation identifies current and future residents by the same criteria, but does not resolve the conflict between them alone. The gain that can be claimed does not depend on the two theories diverging as to liabilities; it depends on the participation better identifying the recipients, explaining the time span of the liability or bringing together the cases without additional hypotheses, and this still needs to be shown in other cases. The difference in method remains: the language of the best explanation does not coincide with that of the argument addressed to the agent, even though the problem to which they both answer is the same. And the independence of the requirements in relation to approval was defended against the accusation of realism, not established as truth.

What can be said is that the two proposals do not need to differ on obligations. Korsgaard does not have to deny the duty to preserve the file so that the dialogue is relevant, and the book does not have to attribute that denial to him. The difference is in what makes the duty due. For Korsgaard, the demand comes through someone, his voice, his participation in a deliberation, his point of view or a relationship with him, and practical reason recognizes his authority. For Tomorrow Is Possible?, the demand comes from something that someone participates in, and so it reaches those who can't yet call, without having to wait for them to call.

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