

PARENTS AND PEERS A KANTIAN MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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The man who believes himself endowed with an autonomous will thus places himself in another order of things and relates himself to determining grounds of an entirely different sort from when he perceives himself as a phenomenon. . . . The fact that he has to represent and think everything in this twofold way is not at all contradictory, for it rests in the first place on his consciousness of himself as an object affected by the senses, in the second on the consciousness of himself as intelligence, that is, as an active subject who, in using reason, is freed from any passive attachment to sensory impressions. Thus, in line with the basic orientation of the transcendental method, here too determination of the object is the result of the mediation of the *analysis of judgment*.

—Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*

HOW DO WE become moral persons—performing acts that are our own, endowed with duties, and standing in relations of reciprocal accountability? This is a developmental question. Any satisfying answer will have to capture some change in kind, in a mess of actual changes of apparent degree. Eventually, a number of grains of sand becomes a heap—but it will not be our task to identify that number, nor need we suppose that it is identifiable. Instead, in offering here a narrative of this development, I will discuss the types of experiences that contribute to and render possible the change in kind—that is, those that lead us to our state of dutiful moral responsibility. Specifically, this essay considers two forms of social relations as relevant contributors to development: relations between the child and their authorities (represented by the figure of the parent) and relations between the child and their equals (represented by the figure of the peer). The project is a partisan one: I intend to propose a theory of moral development for a Kantian practical philosophy, but the extent to which this theory is compatible with other approaches to practical philosophy is left to the judgment of the non-Kantian reader.

Twenty-five years ago, David Velleman attempted a project of this kind. In it, he demonstrated the remarkable potential of the Freudian theory of superego

formation to explain how we develop into moral persons, in the Kantian sense.¹ Some reasons for this potential present themselves rather readily: a faculty psychology, an identity between that which is ideal and that which legislates and prescribes, the interplay of internal and external authority. But something significant also stood in the way: an ostensibly critical incompatibility of Kantian “rationalistic” commitments, and Freud’s “anti-rationalism.” Velleman’s reading, however, “purged” Freud of his anti-rationalism and led to the identification of a *rational superego*, a kind of personified ideal of practical reason.² His innovation consisted in proposing that the superego, an “introjected” figure of parental authority that presents itself as the voice of conscience, could be seen as containing legislative humanity in us.³ Other work in the Kantian tradition tries, along similar lines, to assure compatibility of Freud and Kant in the realm of moral psychology.⁴

While I think there is deep insight in this Freudian connection, and I think that the idea of a rational superego plays an indispensable role in offering a story of moral development for Kantian practical philosophy, I think it cannot be the *whole story*. The trouble is, the Freudian theory of the superego and its formation is a theory that concerns itself only with an authority relation—the parent-child relation. Kantian practical philosophy ultimately concerns itself with persons standing in relations of moral equality and reciprocal recognition. Principles of equality and reciprocity are not those characterizing relations of authority; the parent is not, in the critical development period, an equal. *Paternalism*, and its discontents, will resultingly be seen as the reason we cannot account for certain necessary features of a moral psychology capable of *autonomous* action, in relations of authority alone. Though we learn from the parents how to subject impulsiveness to rule (a necessary condition of moral action), we do not yet know how to subject impulsiveness to rule recognized as *our own* (a sufficient condition of moral action).

There is, however, another great tradition of thinking through the psychology of moral development that has been neglected in these investigations—one

1 Velleman, “A Rational Superego.” Before Velleman, this was noted especially by Samuel Scheffler and John Deigh. More specifically, they thought, rationalist moralities have trouble explaining moral motivation: e.g., “that an authoritative aspect of the self may play a role in moral motivation is not obviously incompatible in itself with the rationalist position.... On this view, the superegos of rational human agents confer motivational authority on moral principles in recognition of their status as principles of pure practical reason” (Scheffler, *Human Morality*, 96–97n). See also Deigh, *The Sources of Moral Agency*, ch. 6.

2 Velleman, “A Rational Superego,” 558.

3 Introjection is the process by which a child internalizes representational images of others.

4 See especially Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine*.

that offers us the resources to overcome this paternalism problem—that of the Piagetian stage theory tradition.⁵ Equality and reciprocity characterize peer interaction, which models the active construction and justification of norms (rather than passive internalization, as in relations with authorities). In relations with equals, I claim, we have the resources to make sense of a moral psychology properly fit for persons, recognized legislators of the laws of their own acts. But this too cannot be the whole story. Piaget's account conversely denies contributions from the parental relation that we understand as essential to development. The *logic* of the Piagetian story, I claim, is such that even the most rational of all moral notions can emerge in peer interaction in complete autonomy from relations of authority. *Pace* Piaget, this essay will hold that the basis of peer interaction will necessarily include our having gained certain positive psychological resources from authority relations.

We begin in the first section by identifying what features a Kantian theory of development will need to explain and what the developed state of personhood must minimally consist in. We find that it will explain (1) the original partitioning of two aspects or parts of our person (the *legislative* and the *obedient*) and (2)

- 5 These two traditions, Freudian psychoanalysis and Piagetian stage theory, have been historically the most generative in the empirical psychology of moral development. Conceived sufficiently abstractly, their frameworks encompass a great amount of work. See especially Walker et al., "Parent and Peer Contexts for Children's Moral Reasoning Development." Their object was to compare parent and peer contributions to developing moral maturity, advancing that both are essential to development and "challenging the polarized view that characterizes the field" (1033). They further "hypothesized that the specific processes underlying development would operate differently in these contexts" (1033). For the parents, "inductive discipline, authoritative parenting, responsiveness, and involvement are associated with children's moral maturity" (1033–34). Cf. Hoffman and Saltzstein, "Parent Discipline and the Child's Moral Development"; Hart, "A Longitudinal Study of Adolescents' Socialization and Identification as Predictors of Adult Moral Judgment Development"; Dunton, "Parental Practices Associated with Their Children's Moral Reasoning Development"; and Boyes and Allen, "Styles of Parent-Child Interaction and Moral Reasoning in Adolescence." For the peers, "Kruger and Tomasello ["Transactive Discussions with Peers and Adults"] ... found peer discussions more transactive [for moral reasoning] than mother/child ones [and Kruger ("The Effect of Peer and Adult-Child Transductive Discussions on Moral Reasoning") found the same]"; the findings "support the cognitive developmental view regarding the significance of peers and provide the rationale for the hypothesis that the challenging, operational type of interactions between peers will foster moral maturity" (1034). Walker et al.'s hypothesis that "both socialization contexts are important for development ... [and that] given the profoundly different nature of these relationships on a variety of dimensions, the processes that impact on moral development operate differently in stimulating growth" was in the end supported (1044). Our theory prescribes different forms of contributions from each type of relationship, and I offer albeit very limited substantiation in footnotes that some empirical findings evidence the prescribed forms.

how we come to regard ourselves and others as a *unity* of these two parts—that is, how we come to regard ourselves and others as autonomous (*self-legislative*), how we are awakened to our own personhood and the personhood of others.⁶ We turn in the second section to discuss the parental relation through critical engagement with a Freudian account, represented by Velleman for Kantian practical philosophy. Suitably revising the account for our purposes, we find that the parental relation explains 1. However, due to the paternalism problem, we find that it cannot explain 2. In the parental relation alone, we cannot come to regard ourselves as persons because we stand always under the laws of the parents—whereas persons are subject only to laws they give themselves (alone, or at least along with others).⁷ So we attempt in the third section to solve the paternalism problem through engagement with the Piagetian account. We find that in acts of *co-legislation*, with peers, each party is recognized by the other as self-legislative, and in seeing this in the eyes of the other, each can recognize it of themselves; the peer relation will thus explain 2. But in denying positive contributions from parental authorities to moral development, Piaget leaves the basis of this co-legislative activity unexplained. We remedy this in reconciling the contributions of parents and peers—adumbrating the essay's original, positive picture of development.

Subsequent psychological literature has seen itself loosely divided along these lines—those who look to the parents and those who look to the peers.⁸ The following offers a synthesis of the basic elements of the Freudian and Piagetian theories for a Kantian moral development. Arriving at developed moral personhood is necessarily a result of having had authorities who legislated to us and equals with whom we acted as co-legislators.

1. DEVELOPED MORAL PERSONHOOD

An account of moral development attempts to outline the transition from infancy (an undeveloped state) to moral personhood (a developed one). To offer a complete account of development, we will have to be clear about our conception of moral personhood. Since this essay attempts to provide an account for Kantian practical philosophy, it helps itself to a certain Kantian

6 “Awakening to personhood” is Velleman’s language, concerning our shared conception of the end state of development.

7 Cf. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:223 (hereafter parenthetically). All citations to Kant are to the Akademie numbers listed in the margins of most editions; all English translations are the Cambridge editions unless otherwise stated.

8 See note 5 above.

conception.⁹ As exposited in the introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for Kant,

a *person* is a subject whose actions can be *imputed* to him. Moral personality is therefore nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the capacity for being conscious of one's identity in different states of one's existence). From this it follows that a person is subject to no other laws than those he gives to himself (either alone, or at least along with others). (6:223, emphasis original)¹⁰

Imputability is much like responsibility or accountability. To ask whether an act can be imputed to an agent is to ask about a sense in which she can be regarded as the source of the action; imputation is “the *judgment* by which someone is regarded as the author (*causa libera*) of an action” (6:227). With authorship in mind, we are led to conceptions of autonomy and personhood defined with respect to *self-legislation*: acting in accordance with laws (principles of action) we give ourselves. Self-legislation requires that we be able to conceive of two aspects or parts of ourselves, for Kant an empirical law-receiver and an

- 9 While Kant has a well-developed account of the person, one interpretation of which is exposited here, I do not take him to have a substantial account of the person's basic development. (Our narrative is not Kant's, though it is undertaken in a broadly practical-Kantian spirit.) Kant has much to say about how we may become *good* persons—more sensitive of and firmer in our commitment to duty (see, e.g., 6:477–84; his account of the cultivation of character in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7:292–95; and perhaps most topically, *Lectures on Pedagogy*)—but little to say about how we become persons *simpliciter*—that is, how we become morally culpable in the first place. Kant does think that before a person can be held responsible, they must understand certain “subjective conditions of freedom.” I concur with Kate Moran that if what it takes to become a person is really education, “it must be understood more broadly than the kind of education that Kant outlines, for example, in *Lectures on Pedagogy*. The normal experiences that a person has in his or her formative years will serve as a sufficient education” (*Community and Progress in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, 162–63). I think we are better-off not calling it a form of education at all—one is not taught how to be assessable in terms of moral requirements. In a normal development, given the experiences this essay identifies, one develops a moral psychology satisfying the “subjective conditions of freedom” and ascends to personhood without being formally taught any special subject matter.
- 10 Note that “moral personality” is not exhaustive of the person (there is also psychological personality)—a person is a subject whose *actions* can be imputed to him, and one cannot be a cause to actions in the sensible world without also being considered as a sensible being (*homo phaenomenon*). The term ‘moral personhood’ in this essay refers not just to Kant's idiosyncratic use of moral personality as free subjectivity but to the more general condition of being a person, the two aspects as one. Longuenesse offers an interpretation of psychological and moral personality along just these lines (“Kant's Multiple Concepts of Person,” 170).

intelligible law-giver. In natural persons, this is the distinction between *homo phaenomenon* and *homo noumenon*. We view ourselves under two attributes:

First as a *sensible being*, that is, as a human being (a member of one of the animal species), and secondly as an *intelligible being*. . . . The senses cannot attain this latter aspect of a human being; it can be cognized only in morally practical relations, where the incomprehensible property of freedom is revealed by the influence of reason on the inner lawgiving will. Now the human being as a *natural being* that has reason (*homo phaenomenon*) can be determined by his reason, as a *cause*, to actions in the sensible world. . . . But the same human being thought in terms of his [moral] personality, that is, as a being endowed with inner freedom (*homo noumenon*) is regarded as a being that can be put under obligation. (6:228)

While differing in content, in form one may be reminded of Aristotle's dualistic conception of the soul—distinguishing between the rational and the nonrational: while the human being has reason, "they evidently also have some other [part] that is by nature something apart from reason."¹¹ The person, despite their consisting in two parts, is still unified, and the nonrational part "shares in reason in a way," that it "will have reason by listening to reason as to a father."¹² Similarly, *homo phaenomenon* is defined as a "natural being that has reason" in the sense of being "determined by reason." A Kantian cast of the two-part distinction is that of an ideal, intelligible *legislator* and that of a real, empirical *obedient*—their unity consisting in that which may be *self-legislative*.¹³

We see many of the famous tensions of Kantian practical philosophy rooted in this basic conception of what it means to be a person: mere animality and impulse on the one hand, rationality and lawfulness on the other.¹⁴ Of course, infants and children, as we well know, are already impulsive—they are born a member of the animal species human being. One question for a theory of development thereby becomes: How is it that the infant eventually becomes a

11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 20 (1102b).

12 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 20 (1103a).

13 Kant elsewhere defines the person less technically: "the body . . . constitutes, in conjunction with the self, a person" (*Lectures on Ethics*, 27:387). Here again, the person is a unity of itself as a sensible being (body) and intelligible being (self). We are concerned with the corresponding distinction in one's psychological life—the receptive, bodily part of the psyche and the legislative, intelligible part of the psyche.

14 The distinction is not in fact so simple. Our developed inclinations are "value-cognitive" due to the peculiar nature of our animality (the only animality that bears this form of relation to reason). Cf. Wood, "Feeling and Desire in the Human Animal." Nevertheless, I do not think this entails that our animality is *essentially* rational: it does not entail the total inability to distinguish our animality from rationality, as some, including Wood, have thought.

member of the rational, intelligible community of ends? If we assume that it is possible for such membership to never be attained, what types of experiences occasion this development?¹⁵ What explains the relevant partitioning of moral psychological life into these two conceptually distinguishable parts, acquiring a “legislative” figure, a moral authority subjecting impulsiveness to lawfulness? How do we end up such that “morally practical reason in us is humanity (*homo noumenon*) that gives laws to us”?¹⁶ It is this aspect of the person that just is constituted by the moral law: the true ideal of pure practical reason personified.

In coming to these questions as partially guiding questions of moral development, it is shown that Kantian theory already contains an understanding of the ideal of morally practical reason as a figure resembling that of the Freudian ego-ideal—the ideal of human personality as such. Though we will take the parental relation to answer the above questions, explaining the partitioning of our moral psychology into these two parts, it will not explain how we become a recognized *unity* of them, ultimately self-legislative, and thus in relations of reciprocal accountability.

The person, in their unity, is a member of a *real*, rational community, in its unity.¹⁷ In such a community, one is called to justify one’s actions before others, and one is called to hold the acts of others liable to assessment in light of principles. To qualify for membership, one must recognize oneself and be recognized by others as both legislator and obedient in the self-same entity, as self-legislative. Moral communities require conceiving of members as entities capable of both *giving* laws—a capacity necessary for participating in the cooperative process (for engaging in joint law making), and as entities capable of *receiving* and *realizing* laws—a capacity necessary for acting in accordance

15 Studies of so-called “feral” children support the assumption that such membership may never be attained—many children not exposed to social relations during the critical development period fail to ever acquire a language or to display moral reasoning/mature ego functioning. See especially Vyshedskiy et al., “Linguistically Deprived Children”; and Curtiss, *Genie*. See also note 22 below.

16 Kant, *Nachlass*, 23:338 (translation by Konstantin Pollok, via personal correspondence).

17 By the “rational, intelligible community of ends” previously, I mean something akin to Kant’s ideal of a “kingdom of ends” acting under the idea of membership in a “systematic union of different rational beings under common laws” (*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:443). The kingdom of ends is controversial, though; I mean only to analogize. The idea of the “rational, intelligible community,” like the kingdom of ends, is “merely possible”—it is an idea. The *real* moral community addressed here (a unity of the two other descriptions, that of the animal species and that of the intelligible community), by contrast, is not merely possible but really possible and indeed actual—it is constituted in part by an *ideal* of such a community, of rational beings relating in union, and it is in light of this ideal that we hold the nature of our relations to assessment. The end of development is membership in this *real* community.

with the principles jointly constructed by such a community. Finally, it requires identifying these members as *simultaneously* the two, as those who not only receive the laws but who receive the laws *as their own*; this is what separates a free community of equals, a community of ends, from a despotism. This final requirement substantially expresses the necessity of recognizing the person as a unity. Here, I will argue, we need relations of equality; here we need the peers.

According to Kant, a person “acts under the *idea* of freedom.”¹⁸ On our more specific conception, to act under a recognition of oneself as a self-legislator (as a unity of law giver and receiver) is to “act under the *idea* of freedom.”¹⁹ Importantly, Kant claims, we are “really free in a practical sense” acting under the mere idea of freedom (we must act *as if* we were free), as we must hold the same practical laws to us as would hold for the actually free, and “thus we can escape here from the burden that weighs upon theory.”²⁰ The conception of the person offered above is not centrally ontological but *practical*. In practical life, you do not treat yourself or others as merely bodily but also as abstractions, social identities, worlds of thought, and authors of action, among myriad other dizzying, unexplained sorts. It is also here that I avoid the burden that weighs upon theory: a genealogy of moral development does not have to demonstrate how we mystically become willers independent of causal chains but instead must demonstrate how we become beings who must *regard* themselves as autonomous willers—this recognition is enough for truly practical freedom.²¹ It is

18 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:448.

19 Rather, it is implicitly (and more inclusively) to act on conditions that suppose this recognition.

20 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:448n.

21 This strategy hopefully suffices to avoid certain inscrutable metaphysical questions related to offering an account of Kantian moral development. For example, the grounds of freedom are inscrutable to theoretical cognition and are atemporal (Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6:138), yet, I want to say, offering an account of the development of a given individual to the age of autonomy is not helplessly obscure to us. This is because: (1) the end state of development is the state of “being really free in a practical sense,” which epistemically requires only certain kinds of recognition; and (2) the theory of development is of a practical-psychological, speculative sort (relying on reflection, self-reports, and surveys, what is *communicable* about our practical experience) rather than a truly empirical-psychological sort, where we could expect to do something akin to mapping the development of freedom through fMRI scans. As Kant tells us, “Freedom—a property which is made manifest to the human being through the determination of his power of choice by the unconditional moral law—is no mystery, since cognition of it can be *communicated* to everyone; the ground of this property, which is inscrutable to us, is however a mystery, since it is not given to us in cognition” (Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6:138). Even if one thinks the grounds of freedom and morality are outside of time and explanation, the first- and second-personal practical recognition of oneself and of others as free, legislative beings, is not. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing this point.

clear that an infant cannot be identified with this condition. However, somehow along the way, at least some human beings develop into the kind of creatures who (at least implicitly) regard themselves as choosing courses of action on the basis of their own reasons and can be held to justificatory standards for those reasons. Somehow, we may develop into the kind of creatures that can have our actions imputed to us and that stand under (public) moral principles. Though we surely have some natural tendency toward this development, a theory of development will clarify some material conditions from which personhood arises *on the occasion*—i.e., it will clarify what must happen in experience before we are awakened to our personhood and the personhood of others.²²

In our theory, we consider two sorts of relationships that developing children have—relations with authorities and relations with equals, whose contributions are understood as distinct. Further, in our narrative, authorities and equals take on special and evocative characters—the parents and the peers. The figure of the parent and the figure of the peer in this essay are reductive, they are not the same as a *given* parent or a *given* peer.²³ In the progress of normal development, an actual parent eventually becomes a peer. Nevertheless, especially earlier in development, an essential characteristic of a parent-child relation is that it takes the form of a relation of authority—“the parent” has a right to rule.

2. THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

The child, it is thought, is *raised* by the parents, and this has a transparently developmental connotation. In an important sense, parents have final say concerning what ends are set for the child and by what rules they can pursue

22 In the case of language acquisition, Chomsky contrasts “on the occasion of experience” with “derived from experience” (*Cartesian Linguistics*, 66–69, citing Cudworth, *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*). The language faculty is innate on Chomsky’s view but not naively innate, where somehow the faculty does not require exposure to certain empirical content for development. Rather, it “grows,” “like a limb”; it is “something that happens to a child *placed in a certain environment*” (Chomsky, *Language and Thought*, 29). Many “feral children” never develop into language users—they lack the necessary experiences (exposure to language activity in the critical development period). It is similarly possible that a child misses necessary experiences and never becomes a fully developed moral person. Cf. Vyshedskiy et al., “Linguistically Deprived Children”; and Curtiss, *Genie*.

23 Not all children have actual parents. E.g., a child may be raised in foster care with no stable parental figure. Conversely, a child could be raised in a village with no other children. Still, someone or set of ones must play the functional roles of parent and peer, idealized authority and equal, for development to be possible. (Note minimal resources to diagnose *deficient* developments, where such figures are unstably present.)

them—two elemental features of practical life. It is unsurprising, then, that the Freudian tradition would think to center this relation.

2.1. *A Rational Superego*

On an orthodox Freudian view, psychoanalysis is concerned with means and not ends—it may explain where our motivations come from and equip us to do something about those perceived destructive motives we wish to reform or uproot, but it tells us nothing about whether those motives are moral or immoral, rational or irrational, in the Kantian sense. All motives of the organism's action originate in external stimuli and biological instinct (stimulus that arises from within the organism itself), where the two fundamental forms of instinct are self-preservative and sexual (in terms of which more “highly specialized” motives can be unproblematically dissected).²⁴ Here, considerations of autonomy and heteronomy or rationality and irrationality in the Kantian sense seem inoperative.

On an orthodox Freudian view, the critical account of “moral” development consists in our introjection of the authority of the parent. Introjection is a process by which one unconsciously internalizes representational images of others, and in the case of moral development, the child internalizes a picture of the parent (for Freud, especially the father) as a disciplining authority, an object of fear. The ego is impelled to introject the parent by the arational, sexual impulses of the id, who takes the parent as its first object.²⁵ Though the parent becomes desexualized when introjected, “their strength, their severity, their inclination to supervise and punish” remain.²⁶ The picture so internalized now lives in the child's head, as an independent agency and fixture of its psyche, the *superego*. When the child considers acting against the laws of this authority, so the toy story goes, they hear the voice of the father as the voice of conscience, commanding them against it; the ego and id's impetus to so act comes into conflict with this voice, and this produces feelings of anxiety and guilt. On an orthodox Freudian view, the formation of the superego has a destructive effect on the ego (and id)—the ego is burdened with conscience anxiety and consciousness of guilt, and it is now tasked to negotiate the “claims of the three agencies which it serves,” itself, the id, and the superego—it has thereby introduced a new set of conflicts for itself to adjudicate.²⁷

24 Freud, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” 118, 124; and Deigh, *The Sources of Moral Agency*, 129–30.

25 “[The] categorical imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus complex” (Freud, “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” 167).

26 Freud, “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” 167.

27 Freud, “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” 167.

Anxiety and guilt arise from the fact that the voice is not just of a disciplinarian to be feared; it belongs to someone the child wishes desperately to emulate. The child seeks to do as the father does. That is, the parent is not only internalized into the superego as disciplinarian, as an object of fear, the image of the parent is also internalized as the *ego-ideal*, an object of admiration.²⁸ But the child cannot be like the parent, the model they have is of an authoritative adult, and they are no authority and no adult; there is a necessary distance between the ego and its demanding ideal, the superego. The child lives in fear of an unsatisfiable ideal, an ideal they do not realize is of their own creation, one that stands to discipline them for failing to satisfy it; moral authority gets its first grip on us by way of the ego's apparently arational fear of its own (unconscious) creation.

The tone of this orthodox Freudian account intimates a moral life that is dark and forbidding and not exactly moral, in the Kantian sense. Among other revisionary work, one attempt to make use of the Freudian account for Kantian purposes is of special importance to this essay: Velleman's synthesis in a "A Rational Superego."²⁹ The success of such a synthesis, according to Velleman, depends on two conditions: "on Freud's side, that the ideals incorporated into the superego include an ideal of practical reason, and on Kant's side, that the categorical imperative—which is an ideal of practical reason—take the form of an ego ideal" (558). The latter condition having been met in the first section, Velleman's innovation consists in meeting the former—that is, in ensuring that the orthodox Freudian account may be "purged of its antirationalism" (558). Specifically, on the orthodox account, the "ideals" internalized into the superego are representations of actually existing social norms and conventions, "of social respectability or conventional propriety" (532). Velleman hopes to demonstrate that what is internalized can "contain an ideal of practical reason, an ideal of personhood as rational nature" (532).

On Velleman's view, when a child internalizes the authority of the parent, this contains an ideal of humanity—when the parent loves and sacrifices for the child, when they have concern for the child's needs aside from their personal interest, they thereby treat the child as an end in itself. It is this capacity that the child responds to in idealizing the parent; an essential part of what the child takes in is "nothing other than their practical reason . . . by which their immediate self-gratification is subordinated to rational requirements embodied in another person" (556). The ideals internalized thereby contain the categorical imperative, "which just is a description of the capacity to take persons as ends" (557).

28 Cf. Velleman, "A Rational Superego," 539–43; and Freud, "The Ego and the Id," 60.

29 Velleman's article will hereafter be cited parenthetically. Note that the exegetical dispute is beside our point—this essay is indifferent to whether the Kantian-compatible account is an alteration of Freud's views or internal to them. Cf. Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine*.

We may internalize a figure of our parents as an ideal because as children we idealize our parents. In the earliest stages, though they are in fact imperfect authorities, we take their word as Word:

Although the child may overvalue his parents as the noblest and loveliest specimens of humanity, he does not err in loving them, to begin with, as specimens of humanity, in the Kantian sense of the word. And when he later internalizes their tin nobility and paper loveliness, he must also internalize their humanity, which is pure gold—a standard not to be superseded by other ideals. (557)³⁰

Velleman thinks the Freudian theory offers a valuable psychological model for three central features of Kantian practical philosophy. The first is the moral law's "dual status as a prescription and an ideal" (531). The moral law tells us what to do. It legislates, but it also describes what an ideal will do; its prescriptive force is justified by its status as an ideal. In presenting the rational superego as a special unity of the superego and ego-ideal, the rational superego tells us what to do, and it gives us a model to emulate (and the superego has authority by way of its status as an ideal). The second feature involves the interplay between the moral law's necessity and the fact that we give ourselves the law. How are we both bound by the authority of the law and ourselves the authority? How is one both legislator of and obedient to the selfsame law? The rational superego makes this "concretely imaginable." The authority of morality is represented as an internalized external authority, and "our ability to exercise moral authority over ourselves is explained by the familiar psychological process of internalizing other people" (531). The third feature is the "only plausible answer" to the question of moral development:

Kantian ethics is an ethics of respecting persons, others as well as ourselves. *But what awakens us to the personhood of others, to the fact that the creatures around us are persons like ourselves?* Freud gives the only plausible answer to this question. The main theme of Freud's moral theory is that we are inducted into morality by our childhood experience of loving and being loved—the experience without which we would neither idealize nor internalize a parental figure. Love is our introduction to the fact that we are not alone in the world; and morality as formulated by Kant is our practical response to that fact. (532, emphasis added)

30 "In the beginning was the Word [*logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). A consequence of idealizing the parent is taking their pronouncements as having special, approaching scriptural authority. "Well, my father said . . ." is the beginning of what seems to the child a genuine justification.

Velleman's theory of the rational superego provides a brilliant model of the first two features (the second with some qualification).³¹ However, I think it falls short of explaining the third. The parental relation cannot alone explain how we are awakened to our own personhood and the personhood of others. Velleman's explanation is that the child is awakened to their own personhood in witnessing the parent treat them as an object of care, and the child is awakened to the personhood of others in seeing the parents as entitled to make authoritative claims on them. But recall that personhood does not rest in each of these separately—it rests in their recognized unity in the selfsame being (the relation of a personified moral authority and a morally considerable being that is not legislative but listens to the legislator “as to a father”).³² Here arises the paternalism problem.

2.2. *The Paternalism Problem*

If we are inducted into morality through the love of our parents, and our own moral authority is nothing other than an internalization of our parents' love and idealized authority, we can offer a theory of development that is compatible only with a moral paternalism, a “morality of heteronomy.”³³ The parent does not relate to the child in the way that persons relate to each other; in relations of persons, each has a duty to respect the autonomy of the other, to respect the fact that the other is subject only to laws they give themselves (alone, or at least along with others), and so a duty to allow the other to legislate for themselves. Moral respect is ultimately a respect for the other as a moral equal, and the parent and the child do not stand in terms of equality. The parent's love for the child is love for a party more adequately described as a patient, one to whom the parent is called to give laws, and not for a person, one whose developed self-legislative capacity they would be called to categorically respect.³⁴ And conversely, the child loves and idealizes the parent as an authority, as a law

31 We may be seen as diverging from Velleman on the details of the “interplay of external and internal authority,” as the essay will hold that the identification of moral authority with the image of the parent must fade, to be recognized as our own power.

32 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 20 (1102b).

33 Piaget's term of art in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*.

34 Indeed, considering Velleman's conception of love in “Love as a Moral Emotion” (love of an ideal of the other's person as rational nature), in conjunction with the functional role of love in his account of moral development, suggests a vicious circle: children acquire an ideal of the person as rational nature (in the parent's image) as a *response* to the parent's love, but the parent's love can be nothing other than love of an ideal of the person that the child must have *already had*. The parent's love cannot be both cause and effect of the child's being constituted by such an ideal.

giver, not as a whole person.³⁵ A person is not only one whose autonomy I am required to respect but also one who is required to respect my autonomy: a moral equal. The figure of the parent, insofar as it always must be someone capable of overruling me, awakens me not to the personhood of others and myself but to moral authorities (the parent) and moral patients (myself). The paternalism problem may be seen both in an analysis of this abstract external relation and in an analysis of the internalized psychical materials. We begin with the former.

If moral relations are relations of moral equality, it would be surprising that the child awakens to their moral personhood in a relation of inequality. A moral person, as we have said, acts under the idea of freedom, under the idea of themselves as both legislator of and obedient to that which governs them; the child, in the parental relation, is precisely not legislator of that which governs them—legislative power belongs to the parent. The rules of the parent do not require the say or participation or contribution of the child; the child may kick and scream, and the rules may remain justifiable. The child is often made explicitly aware of the fact that mutual justification is not needed (“because I said so ...”). In such a relation, the child regards the authority over them as outside them and know themselves as an obedient.

Moral relations, as relations of equality, are founded more concretely on reciprocal respect and concern. The relation between the parent and the child does not seem to be one in which the child is capable of reciprocating what is offered by the parent, it is (as acknowledged by Velleman) just this *sacrificial* concern that captures the child’s eye. When a parent cares for the infant at considerable self-sacrifice, the infant makes no offer; they do not reciprocally appeal to the interest of the parent. What the parent gains in the dedication of selfless service to the child is surely something immeasurable, but it is cheapened by the term ‘interest’, and in such service, what the parent stands to gain is precisely the thing beside the point.³⁶ The parent should offer their loving

35 In Freudian theory, what is internalized is not the parent in whole but the parent in their capacity as authority; the child internalizes *the parent’s superego* (Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 136). This is not exactly an ideal of personhood (as Velleman claims) but an ideal of *moral authority personified*. What the parent has, marking them as authorities rather than whole persons, is a recognized *right to overrule*. If, in certain moments, the tempestuous toddler refuses to recognize this right, it is usually born of impulse (the idealization of the parent also rationalizes their authority), and *that* there is a recognition of the right is certainly clear to the child, who sees the whole social order enforcing this right.

36 The intention of the given parent may not be so selfless—what matters is what the child is capable of seeing and idealizing. Even if the nobility is tin and the loveliness paper, to the child it is pure gold.

care expecting exactly nothing from the infant (as infant) in return. Of course, as development proceeds, children increasingly owe their parents—gratitude, the completion of chores, displays of love, and so on. This is, however, twinned with the gradual effacing of what is essential to the parent-child relation as an authority relation.³⁷

Velleman argues that the parent's sacrificial concern for the child treats the child as an end in itself, and the child thereby internalizes the categorical imperative, fully formed, in their internalization of the parental figure. But concern aside personal interest is not enough to show full treatment of *persons* as ends in themselves. I cannot impose my will over that of another adult because I think it in their interest, even if I am sacrificing my own interests. To treat persons as ends in themselves, I must respect their autonomy, their capacity to set ends for themselves. Kant calls the capacity of humanity to "set . . . itself an end" an end in itself.³⁸ By contrast, the parent often has a duty to treat the child paternalistically—not to respect their capacity to set ends for themselves (because this capacity is not yet developed) but to guide development such that the child may eventually govern themselves by moral principles. Because the parent loves the child as a patient, a developing being, and not as a developed person, the parent's love cannot be the vehicle of respect needed for the child to awaken to their own personhood.

One may think: Is this future-respecting concern not itself respect for the child's capacity to set ends for themselves? While I think this confuses the modality of *capacity*, even if we take the premise of the question for granted, I think we must still answer negatively.³⁹ It may appear to be respect for the child's capacity for self-legislation from the parent's perspective, but what is needed is a description from the child's perspective, as they are the party whose experiences are necessary for the internalization of the categorical imperative. And here I think it is safe to say: paternalism appears to the child as just that—paternalism. They see themselves as overridden; they may kick and scream, but the rules remain nonetheless. In the course of development, the parent must give the child space to strike out on their own and make their own mistakes; increasingly also, they will be owed reasons for rules. But especially in the earliest stages, what matters is that in this relation, the parent always has *overridingness*; the child must put on the seat belt, must hold hands while crossing the street—about all of this, there is little to nothing to negotiate.

37 As we find in the next section, relations of authority, in normal development, give way to relations of equality, and eventually, the given parents themselves will become peers.

38 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:437.

39 Here, capacities (which one may be able to exercise now, *ceteris paribus*) and developmental potentials should be held apart.

Now, we should not mistake the baby for the bathwater. The rational super-ego remains an important psychological model for the structure of internal law giving: the structure of the authority of *homo noumenon* over *homo phaenomenon* may even be described as a paternalistic structure (and is so described in the Aristotelian analogy) and so rendered explicable in its rudiments by the internalization of parental authority over the child. *Homo noumenon* begins as the figure of the parent, an ideal and a disciplinarian who gives laws, and *homo phaenomenon* the child, a receiver of laws, subject to rules and obliged to follow them. The child internalizes a picture of parental authority over them, in which an idealized disciplinarian gives laws, which a natural being stands under. The relation becomes, in the course of development, the procedure of internal law giving, in which we conceive of two aspects of ourselves that make self-legislation possible. The relation is not one of mere power—the child, in loving the parent, idealizes them, and power becomes *authority*. This is the embryo of practical normativity.

Even when, however, we look more specifically to these internalized psychological materials, we still have not quite arrived at a psychology characteristic of personhood. For the child, the internalized authority figure is not seen as an aspect of themselves; the internalized authority is an image of the parent, an introjection bearing their mark, speaking in their voice. The child is equipped to subdue their own animality and so has acquired some of the relevant psychological materials for self-legislation—they are capable of being disciplined subjects to laws, but they regard this subduing as issuing not from their *own* authority but from without, from the parent. The child's laws are still in content and form the parent's laws, and in the structure of internal law giving at this stage, the legislator is still claimed by the external parental figure.⁴⁰ Sole obedience to the external is nothing other than heteronomy. Somehow, the child will have to come to recognize the authority as their own and thus not remain in obedience to the laws of others but genuinely impose laws on themselves. The materials provided by the parent will have to be correspondingly transformed. In one minimal sense, the child will have to kill the father—in their practical suppositions the child must conceive of themselves as the legislator of their own principles of action; this is what it will mean to regard ourselves as autonomous willers, to awaken to our personhood.⁴¹ For that, we will need a different sort of relation.

The parent's core contribution to this account of moral development is thus not in explaining our status as imputable but is rather in equipping us

40 Even the process of internalization and idealization appears passive and unconscious, a feature of the authority relation. Only when we begin to reach the age of moral maturity, capable of de-idealizing the parents, are we even positioned to see that the construction of the superego was in part the ego's doing.

41 See again Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:223.

to subject the childish aspect of ourselves to authoritative rule (abstracting from the question of *to whom* rule is identified) and so how to be disciplined law receivers.⁴² We have now unconsciously internalized the parental figure as the authoritative aspect of our moral psychology. What we have not done is recognize ourselves or others as a real unity of authority and obedient (claiming the former as our own), elevating us, as whole persons, to membership of a real, rational community, one in which we are really held liable to assessment by our fellows. When the child's laws are still, in the end, the parent's laws, from the second- and third-personal perspective, it is the parent, not the child, that is regarded as in-the-end culpable; and from the first-personal perspective of the child, they themselves remain (legitimately) subject to the parent's laws. Paternalism, necessarily a treatment regarding the child as less than fully self-legislative, prevents the child from recognizing its own rational nature, its rational nature as its own, and so the mirror must be held to the child in another way.

3. THE ROLE OF THE PEERS

When a child interacts with peers (here represented by other children) outside of the purview of authorities, the child engages with others by their own power, on their own terms. Relations between equals, between peers, can embody values of cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual respect. Piaget considers this insight scientifically and systematically in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*.⁴³

42 Recall that the empirical literature finds "inductive discipline, authoritative parenting, responsiveness, and involvement" associated with "moral maturity" and "mature ego functioning." See Walker et al., "Parent and Peer Contexts for Children's Moral Reasoning Development"; and note 5 above. Proper ego functioning is predictive of moral development over time in a particular way: "mature ego functioning on the part of socializers scaffolds children's moral development by engendering an affective context in which ... emotions are *expressed appropriately*, and *self-control* is evident even in difficult circumstances" (1036). Cf. Hart et al., "Overt and Relational Aggression in Russian Nursery-School-Age Children"; and Matsuba and Walker, "Moral Reasoning in the Context of Ego Functioning." The parent's functional impact, in our account, is a kind "scaffolding" that renders possible other forms of social associations—those with peers.

43 Hereafter, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* is cited parenthetically. Note that Elliot Turiel has provided a critical appraisal of Piaget (and Kohlberg) in light of contemporary evidence: "A large body of research has, on the one hand, provided very strong evidence that the type of differentiations proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg do not adequately characterize the development of moral judgements, and, on the other hand, *strongly supported* fundamental propositions put forth by Piaget and Kohlberg regarding the construction of moral judgements of welfare, justice, and rights through reciprocal interactions with multifaceted aspects of the social environment" ("Thought, Emotions, and Social Interactional Processes in Moral Development," 24). In the context of Turiel's paper, it is clear that the evidence against Piaget is evidence against specific empirical claims of stage development

3.1. *The Moral Judgment of the Child*

Piaget was a Kantian, and so we fortunately do not have to do the work of reconciling his premises with Kantian ones. While orthodox Freudian theory considers children as passive internalizers of already existing social norms, Piaget considers children as active participants in the construction of norms. Genuine moral norms are properties that arise from certain forms of social interaction, those of equality and cooperation. Piaget distinguishes relations of “constraint” and “cooperation”:

The great difference between constraint and cooperation or between unilateral respect and mutual respect, is that the first imposes beliefs or rules that are ready made and to be accepted *en bloc*, while the second only suggests a method—a method of verification and reciprocal control in the intellectual field, of justification and discussion in the domain of morals. It matters little whether this method be applied immediately to all the rules imposed by the environment or only to one aspect of behaviour: once it has come into existence it has the right to be applied to everything. (91)⁴⁴

Recasting the paternalism problem in Piagetian terms: the relation of the parent and the child is a relation of constraint and unilateral respect, and thus it never establishes the method of justification in the domain of conduct. For that, we require cooperative relations—relations of peers.

Piaget’s discussion of the peers involves an insightful study of games. Children’s participation in games opens up for them a field of norms over which they have control—norms applicable to themselves and other children with whom they play, applicable on conditions of mutual respect; the rules of the game are not rules of the game if participants do not recognize them. Games thereby model at least three critical aspects of moral life: action in accordance with norms; the construction of norms; and the justification of norms that one considers valid. Children must play in accordance with the rules of the game, where they are held liable to assessment by others in light of these rules. The rules of the game are in part a result of deliberation—often children do not

(e.g., the egocentrism of Piaget’s first stage is at tension with observations of early prosocial attitudes); it is not an indictment of the general spirit of Piaget’s project. As indicated, the claim that judgments of justice and right arise through reciprocal interaction has only been substantiated.

⁴⁴ Piaget continues: “Mutual respect is . . . the state of equilibrium towards which unilateral respect is tending when differences between child and adult . . . are becoming effaced; just as cooperation is the form of equilibrium to which constraint is tending in the same circumstances” (91).

know the rules entirely and so must invent and reform them together, or they know them and take up the project of altering them. When children engage in these deliberative procedures, they justify their rule proposals to others and challenge justifications that seem against their interests or not quite right.⁴⁵ The playground is the child's primitive moral community, a superficially supervised space of reasons. Studying the playground, Piaget draws a distinction between "constitutive" and "constituted" rules:

There are two kinds of rules, those that are constitutive and render possible the exercise of cooperation, and those that are constituted and are the result of this very exercise. . . . The rules of the Square, of the Coche, etc. . . . are "constituted" rules, due to mutual consent, and capable of being altered by general opinion. The precedence given to justice as opposed to chance, on the other hand, of effort over easy gain are "constitutive" rules, for without this "spirit of the game" no cooperation would be possible. (92–93)

The notion of *constitutive rules* here is distinct from its contemporary epistemological usage. In the contemporary sense, a constitutive rule of a game is just the rule that makes the game that game (that is, what Piaget calls "constituted rules")—if we move the rook diagonally in a game of chess, we are not playing chess. Nonetheless, these rules get an important kind of grip on us—there is force to the injunction "We're playing chess, so don't move the rook diagonally." The need for stability of such constituted rules is no match for the awesome imaginations of children at play. Children may be seen "playing chess" wherein the king moves two spaces instead of one. Nonetheless, there remain rules that get a kind of inalterable grip on the children's psyche, the second order sort, those that constitute and govern the deliberative, cooperative activity by which such alterations and formations are made—the rules without which we are no longer even playing *together*.

Developed moral rules in social life seem to take an analogous form to those of children's games: rules concluded through deliberation and that require mutual consent, as well as rules that are necessary conditions of this

45 Recall that the empirical literature suggests that discussions of dilemmas between children are more transactive than with parents (Walker et al., "Parents and Peer Contexts for Children's Moral Reasoning Development," 1034, citing Kruger and Tomasello, "Transactive Discussions with Peers and Adults"; and Kruger, "The Effect of Peer and Adult-Child Transductive Discussions on Moral Reasoning"). Parental discussions are highly transactive when they are "highly representational interactions ['socratic style . . . drawing reasoning out through appropriate probes, i.e. in cooperative, recognitive forms']," when parents play a more peer-like pedagogical role. By contrast, "highly informative interactions [opinionated lecture style] were associated with slow rates of moral growth" (1045).

deliberative activity. If my spouse and I speak at some length to establish the extent of privacy, and each agree never to read the other's journal, we have formed a constituted moral rule, one that would be morally dubious to break. This rule could be otherwise, but it was generated in a deliberative space constituted by rules that could not be—those constituting mutual, reciprocal respect—constitutive moral rules. Less solid in genealogy, cultural mores may be constituted moral norms. What precisely it means to fail to respect the dignity of another may be vastly different in content in Colombia than in Japan. It may be offensive in some circumstance, even morally, for an Italian to brush the underneath of their chin with an outward sweep of the fingertips of one hand, and yet be a completely meaningless gesture elsewhere. Nonetheless, the constitutive moral rule, to respect the dignity of others, remains constant. The “method of verification and reciprocal control in the intellectual field, of justification and discussion in the domain of morals,” constitutive of relations of cooperation, will come to have “the right to be applied to everything” (91). The moral law, for Piaget, is the ur-constitutive rule of cooperative activity—the method of justification in the domain of conduct.

Piaget then confronts a problem: “how can these constitutive rules be regarded as themselves the outcome of mutual respect since they are necessary for the latter's formation?” (93). His answer is to wave it away: “The difficulty here is purely formal. Between mutual respect and the rules which condition it there exists a circular relation analogous to that which holds between organ and function” (93). It soon becomes clear why Piaget must dissolve rather than solve the problem: “Since cooperation is a method, it is hard to see how it could come into being except by its own exercise. No amount of constraint could determine its emergence. If mutual respect does derive from unilateral respect, it does so by opposition” (93). Piaget does not have much to identify by way of necessary conditions for the emergence of cooperation because here he refuses positive, necessary contributions from relations of unilateral respect (i.e., from the parents).⁴⁶ Instead, he contends, through a kind of spontaneous and self-reflexive process, cooperation both emerges and creates the conditions for its emergence—the “equilibrium-based solution.”⁴⁷

Now, I struggle to see how the “circular relation” in question could be anything but a vicious one: if only cooperation could create the conditions for its own emergence, then such conditions would never be created, for want of cooperation. The appeal to circularity appears to be a way of pulling rabbits

46 His position on the parents in general (rather than specifically their relation to the development of mutual respect) is more developed than I spend time with here. See Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, ch. 2.

47 Piaget, “The Relationship Between Morality and Law,” 161.

from hats, and indeed, I think it leads Piaget to try to reach for a rabbit himself: the ability of cooperation to spontaneously and self-reflexively develop leads us to the conclusion that “two of three individuals who have lived their entire lives on a desert island will necessarily come up with the idea of justice, without implying that they had it in them to start with.”⁴⁸ The idea of justice, what Piaget calls the “most rational of all moral norms,” will spontaneously emerge within social relations, even between those who have not been taught or loved or raised, and thus all that is *really* necessary for moral development is the peers. This seems almost obviously wrong. It is not just the individual who had to develop to the age of morality, it is also the society.⁴⁹ We learn from John Dewey that the path to moral social life was surely long and torturous, and required the communication and transmission of “ideals, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it.”⁵⁰ Rational interaction was not always a constitutive ideal of social interaction. The young do not have the capacity to survive on a desert island even physically without caring authorities—“how much more then, is this the case with respect to all the technological, artistic, scientific, and moral achievements of humanity!”⁵¹

Piaget comes to this rather perplexing position on the relation of constraint to cooperation by first posing a very difficult problem for any developmental account that starts from our premises. Indeed, Piaget considers a conception of the parental contribution that is, in summary, quite similar to our own, that of the first stage of J. M. Baldwin's theory.⁵² Here too, the child acquires conscience in an idealized parental image, becoming accustomed “to the presence of something in him that represents his father, mother, or in general the *law-giving personality*.”⁵³ The trouble is, as Piaget puts it, having thus begun, “one cannot escape the following contradiction—namely, that rational logic is itself derived from social processes from which it is supposed to free itself in matters of moral psychology” (398). This is the central challenge set by Piaget:

48 Piaget, “The Relationship Between Morality and Law,” 161.

49 Piaget's implicit premise is that a nascent society of two would not require such development.

50 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 3.

51 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 3. Consider again “feral children.” For language acquisition, children require early exposure to language activity. Two infants on a desert island, with no exposure to such activity in the critical development period, will not spontaneously generate a fully formed language.

52 See Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development*.

53 Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development*, 49 (quoted in Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, 395–96).

in our story, “morality begin[s] with conformity and end[s] in autonomy. . . . To account for this evolution,” we must have an explanation that “really suffices to make us understand why constraint gives way to cooperation” (398). Everyone else, Piaget thinks, has failed to do so, instead giving “priority to the relation of constraint over against the relations of cooperation” (398). Piaget bites the bullet on this problem: in the end, constraint does not give way to cooperation by providing its original necessary conditions; rather, cooperation is the immanent equilibrium of all social relations. (If there are ever noncooperative relations, their inherent instabilities will eventually lead back to cooperation.)

In my view, Piaget thus errs in just the opposite way, giving undue priority to relations of cooperation. For Piaget, the relation of constraint and its characteristic “morality of heteronomy” is something merely to be overcome; for this essay it is instead, to borrow a Hegelian expression, something to be *sublated*. Cooperation cannot nebulously produce its own necessary conditions but emerges *only* on the basis of necessary contributions to development provided by relations of authority. We *can* give an account of how constraint gives way to cooperation, and we *can* escape the contradiction that rational logic is itself derived from social processes from which it is supposed to free itself in matters of moral psychology. And in bringing together parents and peers, we will show now how this is concretely imaginable.

3.2. *Parents and Peers*

In the joint construction of norms, *co-legislation*, we are awakened to and recognize the personhood of others, a respect owed to them and their autonomy. We know that when we stand in terms of equality, we cannot treat another as an obedient of our laws; we cannot treat them as we have learned to treat our animality. Any childish effort to assert our own principles over them is in vain, as we soon learn that they can do otherwise without impediment. In acts of co-legislation, we are also awakened to and recognize our own personhood. We see, in the reflection of the gaze of our co-legislators—our peers—a respect for our own personhood. This is a respect that we could not have before seen in the eyes of authorities, who did not require our consent or participation for the construction of rules, who always in some part had the reins on governance and an intention for guidance. The relation of co-legislation is thus our first relation of moral equality. Co-legislation brings forth the recognition of self-legislation within and toward both parties.

The analogous problem to Piaget’s conditions of cooperation is this: Do we not already have to be *in some sense* self-legislative to participate acts of co-legislation? We will not wave this problem away, but answer it: the contribution of the parents has provided what is necessary to participate in acts of co-legislation.

The imposition of rule and discipline, and the internalization of an idealized parental authority, has made discursive, rule-governed activity with the peers possible; the child has an efficient power, even if they do not know it as their own. We can participate in such activity prior to a recognition of ourselves as legislative because peers recognize the moral authority in us as our own before we do, and we simultaneously return this favor. Two similarly situated children can participate in acts of co-legislation prior to each recognizing the legislative power in them as their own, because they can each see the legislative power of the other as belonging to the other. Finally, the reciprocal recognition of co-legislative activity allows each child to see, in the eyes of the other, a regard for their own legislative power, and in so seeing, recognize it of themselves.

In order to participate in, approach, or even consider acts of co-legislation, we must come to the table with some capacity or constitution. And this does not materialize from thin air; it is not within the infant fully formed; it is disciplined and trained by the idealized authority of the parents, and this authority is internalized. If children came to the schoolyard with no authority over the impulsive aspect of themselves, they could not participate in any such joint deliberation; their consent to the rules of the game would not matter because they would be incapable of giving it; they may be excluded from the beginning or at the point of older or more developed children's recognition of these facts.⁵⁴ It is the parent who has a duty to legislate to the young child, as Kant claims in the *Pedagogy*, the child would otherwise be trapped in its "inner wildness," its animal nature (*tierische Wildheit*).⁵⁵ It is only by the parent's discipline that the child learns to self-discipline.

But without the peers, the child is not quite yet an autonomous person. For the child to be autonomous, they need authority over their own powers, but in the parental relation, it is still the parent who claims this authority. This is captured already by Piaget: in the first stage of the development of the child's

54 We can now offer a narrative tracking some of the empirical literature's suggestions about the different functional impacts of parental and peer contributions: early inductive discipline and authoritative parenting tends to "mature ego functioning on the part of socializers" thereby "scaffolding children's moral development" allowing for social interactions in which "emotions are expressed appropriately and self-control is evident even in difficult circumstances"; these contributions enable social interactions with peers that are highly transactive for moral development, generating advances in "higher moral reasoning" (Walker et al., "Parents and Peer Contexts for Children's Moral Reasoning Development"). Eventually the most transactive modes of engagement for parents are those simulating equality, and the parental relation itself gradually effaces itself into something peer-like. See notes 5, 42, and 45 above.

55 Kant, *Lectures on Pedagogy*, 9:442, 9:444, 9:449.

sense of justice, the idea of justice is subordinated to adult authority—it is no different from obedience: if the adult says it, it is just.⁵⁶ But in the end,

the sense of justice . . . requires nothing more for its development than the mutual respect and solidarity which holds among children themselves. It is often at the expense of the adult and not because of him that the notions of just and unjust find their way into the youthful mind. . . . In contrast to a given rule . . . such as the rule of not telling lies, the rule of justice is a sort of immanent condition of social relationships or a law governing their equilibrium. And as the solidarity between children grows, we shall find this notion of justice gradually emerging in almost complete autonomy. (198)

Though we diverge from Piaget on there requiring “nothing more for its development” than the peers, this reveals the way in which the child suitably transforms the materials provided by the parent into genuine autonomy—solidarity among the children themselves, often against and at the expense of the adult! Children keep secrets among themselves, they resolve to break rules and not tattle to the adult, they coordinate to play tricks on the authorities, etc. The development of autonomy often appears as a *rebellion* against external authority. But why be solidaristic, and why rebel?

Children originally bring their parents’ principles to the schoolyard, but they are challenged by the principles of others (even those of similarly situated children, whose principles are also merely inherited). This challenging exposure to the differing principles of others reveals the fault in our assumption that our parents are the “noblest and loveliest specimens of humanity,” in at least our assumption that their word is Word, and so we may depart from them not from mere impulse but from genuine reasons—principled differences of our own. As the ideality of the parent was that which, for the child, licensed their authority, the impetus to rebel is thereby more particularly brought on by an understanding of the parent’s imperfection; when the nonideal nature of the parent is thoroughly understood, the child begins to take legislation into their own hands. Because the challenge comes from equals, parental authority is not merely supplanted by the external authority of another—the challenge is not an imposition but a disputation. This recognition of the nonideal nature of the parent thus also motivates solidarity between children: when children bring their parents’ principles

56 The “sense of justice” is for Piaget “the most rational of all moral notions” and must be the result of cooperation. It is here that we “penetrate into the child’s actual consciousness” rather than the merely “juridical”—that associated with “a morality of constraint or of heteronomy” defining relations of unilateral respect and authority (*The Moral Judgment of the Child*, 195).

against each other, the children are reciprocally destabilized, and they thereby find themselves in a common situation—subjected to authorities and to rules they now find imperfect, subjected regardless of their imperfection, and in turn in search of principles they can really call their own. This shared developing-dominance-like status encourages the solidarity in which children support each other in the effort to part ways from the parent, to stand on their own two feet (not in solitude, but in relation to equals). The good parent seeks for their child the same—the effacing of the parent-child relation *is* its realization.

The turn from constraint to cooperation, from authority to equality, and the escape of the apparent contradiction of morality “deriv[ing] from social processes from which it is supposed to free itself in matters of moral psychology” consists in something of this process, a process of idealization and de-idealization. The first relation transformed power into authority, and idealization conferred legitimacy on the authority’s laws; the second relation weakened idealization of the external and turned it inward, where each is recognized as exercising authority of their own, and where legitimacy now depends on the authority of each. The unilateral authority relation was imbued with a truly moral-developmental character after the process of idealization, when power became authority. The turn from constraint to cooperation was therefore not an inexplicable transformation from inert power to genuine moral relations but a relocation of the ideal to its proper place—not a named, voiced conception of an external figure but an ideal conception recognized as in part constituting ourselves and others, equals with whom we act and live together—an ideal in light of which we are now licensed to reciprocally hold each other to account.⁵⁷

We gain autonomous authority over ourselves when we transcend the yoke of parental authority, when we recognize the laws that govern us as our own, when we recognize ourselves as legislative.⁵⁸ But as we require the parents to

57 So we propose, as an alternative to Piaget’s equilibrium emergence of cooperative relations: (1) seeing the child as idealizing and internalizing a legislative power in the parental image (one which, by this idealization, rules with legitimacy); (2) seeing the necessary conditions for the emergence of co-legislative activity as having this efficient power, even if the child themselves has not yet recognized the power as their own (they are able to do so with a similarly situated child because each can see the other as having this legislative power, even if each does not yet know it of themselves); and (3) seeing that the reciprocal recognition of co-legislative activity results in each child being able to see in the eyes of the other a regard for each other’s legislative power as belonging to each, and so finally being able to see it of themselves. The resources Piaget lacked that allow us to account for authority giving way to equality are, first, the idealization proper to the parental relation and, second, the logic of reciprocal recognition proper to the peer relation.

58 Freud partially anticipates this, as “the course of childhood development leads to an ever-increasing detachment from parents.” But for Freud, the de-idealization story is still one of authorities: “To the *imagos* [of the parent] they leave behind there are then linked

acquire the power to subject impulsiveness to lawfulness, we have the capacity to rebel against external authority *only by first internalizing it*. We turn away from an idealized external authority through the embrace of equals, who do not impose their ends on us, but by the conditions of co-legislative activity, respect our capacity to set ends for ourselves, and therein we claim authority over our own powers. True autonomy is the result of both the internalization of parental authority and a rebellion against it.⁵⁹ Only with authorities do we learn to take authority over ourselves, and only with equals do we learn that authority is our own.

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, we find that, in part by way of synthesizing the Freudian and the Piagetian, the roles of the parents and peers are not only compatible but complementary, and both needed for moral development. With parents, we learn to be disciplined law receivers; with peers, we learn to be law givers; and in their combination, we become *persons*, recognizing ourselves as legislative and obedient of the selfsame laws. Thus acting under the idea of freedom and relating ourselves to determining grounds of an entirely different sort—earning our membership in the real, rational community of ends.⁶⁰

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the influences of teachers and authorities, self-chosen models and publicly recognized heroes, whose figures need no longer be introjected by an ego which has become more resistant. The last figure in the series that began with the parents is the dark power of Destiny. . . . There is little to be said against the Dutch writer Multatuli when he replaces the μοῖρα [Destiny] of the Greeks by the divine pair Λόγος και Ἀνάγκη [Reason and Necessity]" ("The Economic Problem of Masochism," 168).

59 This insight foreshadows the teenage years. In the United States, we do not hold children fully responsible until the age of eighteen. This is also usually the culmination of the teenager's rebellion against authority, when they no longer follow their parent's every rule, but resolve instead to create and follow more exclusively their own rules. Rebellion against parental authority is usually also in coordination with the peers. They resolve to cut curfew together, they resolve to experiment with drugs together, they resolve to drink wine and read Goethe in the woods, and so on. Rebellion is a rather dramatic (and characteristically American) expression of the movement. All that is necessary is the fading away of the idealization of the parents—their authority and judgment has to be seen for what it is, less than perfect, never quite what it could be.

60 I am especially grateful to Elizabeth Anderson, as this essay was originally written as an undergraduate thesis under her supervision. Her approach to the student's autonomous development demonstrated that authority and equality might be properly mediated in *pedagogy*. I am also thankful to many other peers, or perhaps my betters pretending to

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