REASONING

A Social Picture

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PART I
An Alternative Picture

The terminology of philosophical art is coercive: arguments are *powerful* and best when they are *knockdown*, arguments *force* you to a conclusion, if you believe the premises you *have to* or *must* believe the conclusion, some arguments do not carry much *punch*, and so forth. A philosophical argument is an attempt to get someone to believe something, whether he wants to believe it or not. A successful philosophical argument, a strong argument, *forces* someone to a belief...

Why are philosophers intent on forcing others to believe things? Is that a nice way to behave towards someone?

Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*

A *picture* held us captive. And we couldn't get outside of it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Prologue

It is, I imagine, the rare reader of *Pride and Prejudice* who identifies with Mr. Collins, the Bennets' obsequious, rather stupid, vicar cousin and heir to their estate. And yet.

And yet, his proposal of marriage to Elizabeth Bennet should sound painfully familiar to anyone used to the rituals and rhetoric of the lecture hall.

Listen for a minute:

"Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying—and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did . . . "

"My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness . . . "

"Thus much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father . . . I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place . . . This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune, I am perfectly indifferent, and will make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with."[1]

[1] This and subsequent passages in this section are from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Oxford World Classics, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), vol. I, XIX, 80–4.

Mr. Collins makes a proposal, and like anyone trained in the rhetorical arts of professing and preaching, his proposal amounts to a proposition, an assertion, which is then backed up by reasons. Moreover, despite the fun that Austen here pokes at Mr. Collins, it is worth noting that his reasons, as absurd as they are in the context, have the form that someone schooled in philosophical work on reasoning or even the more mundane art of middle school essay writing might recognize: they start with the general reasons for undertaking the kind of action he is doing, and then work to more particular aspects of it. Moreover, they rest on the sorts of considerations that philosophers have generally counted as reasons: his duties, his own happiness, the authoritative commands of his superior in rank, wisdom, and character, and his own position to reduce the suffering of others. All good reasons when we don't encounter them in the mouth of Mr. Collins. But Austen is not finished with Mr. Collins or with us, for Elizabeth, the object of all this proposing and reasoning has been sitting quietly by, and, as with all good talks, there is now time for discussion:

"You are too hasty, Sir," she cried. "You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without farther loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me, I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them."

"I am not now to learn," replied Mr. Collins, with a formal wave of the hand, "that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long."

The proposal is rejected. The talk meets with objections. But Mr. Collins expects no less. This kind of coquettish give-and-take is all part of the game. No one wants his talk to be met with mute acceptance. The sign of a good talk is the energy of the ensuing discussion. Of course, the discussion period is not over:

"Upon my word, Sir," cried Elizabeth, "your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal.—You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who

would make you so,—Nay, were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation."
"Were it certain that Lady Catherine would think so," said Mr. Collins very gravely—"but I cannot imagine that her ladyship would at all disapprove of you. And you may be certain that when I have the honour of seeing her again I shall speak in the highest terms of your modesty, economy, and other amiable qualifications."

Elizabeth now backs her refusal to accept Mr. Collins's proposal by trying to rebut his reasons. And while one of these objections starts to hit home, and our speaker begins by taking it seriously, he soon finds his feet again and offers a defense. But Elizabeth also begins a different line of criticism here. By raising the matter of her own happiness, which had not figured into his reasons, she begins to insist that all his words have somehow not been directed at her, in particular, but only at her insofar as she is a representative of a type, a type which she also doubts actually exists. When her direct rebuttal of his reasons fails to make a difference, it is this second kind of objection that she pursues:

"Indeed, Mr. Collins, all praise of me will be unnecessary. You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise. In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self-reproach. This matter may be considered, therefore, as finally settled." And rising as she thus spoke, she would have quitted the room, had not Mr. Collins thus addressed her,

"When I do myself the honour of speaking to you next on this subject I shall hope to receive a more favourable answer than you have now given me; though I am far from accusing you of cruelty at present, because I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character."

Although in this exchange, Elizabeth offers a counter to yet another of Mr. Collins's initial reasons, her objection shifts gears in an important way. She now begins to question the rules of the game Mr. Collins is playing directly. If his proposal was an *offer* of marriage, then there must have been space for her to refuse it. And yet it is becoming clear to her that he has not

left such space, that her objections are not having an effect on him precisely because his offer was not an offer at all but rather an assertion and his replies merely defenses of his original position. He is, she and we may be realizing, despite being obtuse, well trained in the art of professing. And the problem with this exchange may lie there. So it is time to bring out the big guns and begin to question his presuppositions:

"Really, Mr. Collins," cried Elizabeth with some warmth, "you puzzle me exceedingly. If what I have hitherto said can appear to you in the form of encouragement, I know not how to express my refusal in such a way as may convince you of its being one."

"You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses is merely words of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these:—It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in its favor; and you should take it into farther consideration that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you. Your portion is unhappily so small that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall chuse to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females."

Elizabeth presses her objection yet again, this time moving to the meta-level. His mode of address has left her no way to be heard as refusing, and so she has raised this as the source of his problem: the talk was fine as far as it went, but we now see that its presuppositions are not so easily defensible. He claims to be offering something, but it would seem that he is really doing something else: imposing himself on her, and, as such, his reasons for action are wanting.

But Mr. Collins is ready once again: if there is a problem here, it is not his, but his audience's. From his vantage point, what she says is "merely words," a fact supported by her lack of good reasons that could counter his. Since they are merely words, their meaning might be anything, and, moreover, they might, as he has heard the words of "elegant females" sometimes do, mean just their opposite. He is, he concludes, still entitled to his original claim. But there is time for one more question:

"I do assure you, Sir, that I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart."

"You are uniformly charming!" cried he, with an air of awkward gallantry; "and I am persuaded that when sanctioned by the express authority of both your excellent parents, my proposals will not fail of being acceptable."

Although Elizabeth brings us back to the question of rationality, and suggests Mr. Collins is failing to respect hers, our speaker has hit his groove, and is undeterred: his audience has been charming, and thus he need not withdraw or alter his proposal. It has survived on this occasion. It is time to thank our speaker, and adjourn for a reception and a friendly dinner.

Works of philosophy are generally understood to be in the business of making proposals to rational creatures, but their authors too often wind up assuming the attitude of Mr. Collins: their proposals are assertions; their reasons serve as foot soldiers whose job is to defeat opposition and defend the author's position; and their final sense of authority often comes from a failure to take wholehearted rejection of their assertions as anything more than "mere words." Whole books could no doubt be written on this attitude and how it entered philosophical thinking and writing. In this book, I will suggest that one of the problems results from our standard way of thinking about reasoning, and that if we want to make genuine proposals to rational creatures, we need to think differently about these matters. In particular, we need to understand the activity of reasoning and thus also of philosophy as like making a genuine and heartfelt proposal rather than a caricature of one; as inviting rather than professing.

1

The Initial Sketch

1.1 Living Together

Consider two people who live together. If they are of the "happily ever after" variety found in fairy tales and romantic novels, then they have probably reached their current state through a proposal and an engagement. As they move into the realm of ever after, where the real living together goes on, they must not only make joint decisions, but also participate together in what John Milton described as "a meet and happy conversation:" an ongoing interaction through which they continually attune themselves to one another.[1] In living together, they share, build, and renovate various spaces beyond their physical dwelling: spaces of meaning and spaces of reasons. This book explores how we might, and perhaps they do, live together. It does so by proposing a particular picture of the activity of reasoning. According to this picture, the central components of the activity of reasoning include proposing, engaging, conversing, and other activities of mutual attunement, rather than calculating, deducing, problem-solving, and judging. The activity of reasoning pictured here brings into view possibilities for living together that are often hard to see clearly from within our standard ways of picturing and talking about reason. The value of adopting the picture of reasoning proposed is that, like a new pair of glasses, it helps us see these possibilities more clearly.

The social picture developed in this book describes reasoning as the responsive engagement with others as we attune ourselves to one another and the world around us. Thus, I am reasoning in this sense when I am

[1] This is Milton's description of marriage from his treatise *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. It is frequently quoted by Stanley Cavell in his discussions of both marriage and conversation. See, for instance, Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 104.

listening to your response to what I have said and taking it seriously as itself calling for an appropriate response, or when I am telling a story in response to something you have said or done that is meant to situate me vis-à-vis you in some normative space. In contrast, our standard picture of reasoning describes reasoning as the activity of reflectively arriving at judgments through the alignment of the progress of our thoughts with certain formal structures in order to better navigate the world, to solve particular problems and, perhaps, seek out the truth or the good. I am reasoning according to this picture when I am working out the implications of a moral commitment, or figuring out whether the evidence in front of me is sufficient to justify my belief in the truth of a proposition, or figuring out how best to accomplish my aims given the obstacles I face. Though these are contrasting pictures in all sorts of ways, they need not be mutually exclusive. Both are important human activities and there is value in understanding both of them more clearly. On many occasions, we engage in both of them. Part of figuring out what an appropriate response to you is may require me to evaluate the evidence you have presented to me, or how what you have said affects my evaluation of evidence I already have. The point of working out the details of a social picture of reasoning as a distinct picture is to insist on these two points: (1) that these two activities are different, and it need not be the case that the only way to do one of them is to do the other. Beginning from the standard picture turns out not to be the best route to understanding the activities captured by the social picture. (2) The activity of responsive engagement and attunement is also properly described as reasoning, both in virtue of the features discussed below and in virtue of ordinary language. In other words, just because the kind of responsive and reciprocal interactions discussed here are forms of reasoning does not mean that they must be or are best described using the conceptual framework developed by our standard picture of reason, and just because many of these activities are not described as reasoning by our standard picture of what reasoning is doesn't mean they are not reasoning.

We often fail to appreciate, or misdescribe, the activities of reasoning discussed in what follows because we regard them as merely a variety of the activity of reasoning as the standard picture describes it. Such a failure to appreciate interpretive alternatives and the concomitant possibilities for action can place obstacles in the way of our living together as we might. It

is common, for example, to think that the only fair alternative to violent conflict in the face of disagreement is a kind of bargaining, where each side tries to get as much as it can and give as little as possible on the way to a compromise. This shapes how we approach such disagreements and the search for solutions. With the aid of the social picture, it turns out that we can imagine a range of other alternatives, where those who disagree come to see each other not as opponents and obstacles, but as partners from whom they might learn and with whom they might search for truly shared modalities of living together. Another consequence of thinking differently about reasoning is that it helps to avoid a certain arrogance on the part of those who think they have reason on their side, whether these be academic experts, politicians, or garden variety know-it-alls. Such figures are all too quick to think of those who disagree with them as somehow lacking in reason, and thus not to be fruitfully engaged in the search for shared ways of living together but to be maneuvered around and manipulated. There may be times when such a judgment is correct. But it is important not to move too quickly to such a conclusion. One reason not to is that a rush to such judgment contributes to a certain distrust of reason as being merely the velvet glove on the fist of power, whether bureaucratic, imperial, Western, male, or white. The result of this reaction is a belief that the path to justice or to forms of reciprocal living together is one that leads away from reason. The impression that our choice is between the arrogance of reason and the rejection of reason is also a consequence of only having the standard picture in mind when we think about reasoning. It is part of the wisdom of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* that it not only so incisively portrays and mocks the arrogant voice of reason in the figure of Mr. Collins, but also imagines a heroine whose reaction to such arrogance is not a rejection of reason in favor of unbridled passion, but rather a search for a different kind of reasoning partner. To fully understand what Elizabeth Bennet looks for (and ultimately finds), we need to unpack the further features of this activity I am calling reasoning.

Much of the rest of this chapter lays out five central features of a social picture of reasoning, and contrasts them with a more standard picture of reason. Reasoning is, according to the social picture this book paints, (1) an activity or practice that is (2) social, and (3) ongoing and largely consists of (4) the issuing of invitations (5) to take what we say as speaking for our

interlocutors as well.[2] With this sketch in place, I offer some reflections on the kind of argument offered here. The chapter ends with a look ahead to the rest of the book.

1.2 Reasoning Is an Activity

The first distinctive feature of the picture of reasoning drawn here is that it is a picture of *reasoning* (the activity) rather than of *reason* (the faculty or set of principles). In other words, the social picture characterizes a set of activities as reasoning in virtue of their having a certain shape or point or characteristic norms rather than their being the product of certain mental machinery or being guided by certain abstract principles. Reasons, then, will be characterized as those things that get offered and exchanged in reasoning. Reason, the faculty, if there is such a thing, will involve those mental capacities that make it possible for us to engage in this activity.[3] Contrast this with a standard way of proceeding through these terms: starting with reason as

[2] In drawing a contrast between the social picture painted here and "the standard picture" I do not mean to suggest that no one else has described or conceived of reasoning as I do here, or that all or even most other philosophers who have thought about reason have adopted all the aspects of the standard picture. Although I engage at various points throughout the book with various philosophical conversations about reason, my aim here and in the book is to clearly lay out a possibility for thinking, not survey the state of an academic discipline. Nevertheless, it may be helpful here to drop some names by way of broadly situating this project within contemporary philosophy. Here, then, is a list of heroes and fellow travelers. Heroes are those who strike me as having both articulated the essential aspects of the social picture of reasoning and who have also been influential in my own coming to see its features, and they include: Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Rawls, Stanley Cavell, Onora O'Neill, and James Tully. Fellow travelers are those whose work departs from the standard picture in some but not all relevant respects (for instance, by picturing reasoning as social but not ongoing) or who, though rather closer to the social picture developed here, were not as influential in my own formulation of it. They include Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, as well as Steven Darwall, Jürgen Habermas, T. M. Scanlon, Christine Korsgaard, Axel Honneth, Robert Pippin, and Robert Brandom. The list of fellow travelers is more heterogeneous with some, notably Brandom and Pippin, articulating views that are rather close to the social picture painted here. Neither list is exhaustive and the distinction between them not always hard and fast.

[3] In this sense, I am engaged in a project very much like the one T. M. Scanlon describes himself as taking on in the first chapter of his *What We Owe to Others*, describing the contours of the concept of reasons in part by locating them "as the central element in a familiar form of reflection" ((Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17–18). Beginning one's reflection about reason from the activity of reasoning is the hallmark of what are known as social–pragmatic theories of reason, found, for instance, in the work of Brandom and Habermas. Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Jürgen Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979). To the extent I offer a different description of the contours of reasoning than these authors, it is because I locate reasoning within somewhat different activities. These differences will become clearer as the chapter proceeds.

either a faculty or a set of transcendent principles, one defines reasons in terms of the deliverances of reason, and reasoning as the activity of exchanging or offering reasons.

Those who start their accounts of reasoning from this standard picture of reason make a distinction between practical and theoretical reason, where practical reason is concerned with what to do and theoretical reason is concerned with what to believe. This distinction plays a less central role on a picture that begins with the activity of reasoning. For one, what distinguishes the activity of reasoning that the social picture describes from its closer cousins is not its subject matter but the level and kind of responsiveness it calls for. Sometimes, as I argue in later chapters, the subject of our reflection shapes our interaction, and this leads to some distinctions between theoretical and practical reasoning. But when it comes to the overall picture presented here, it would be a mistake to ask right off the bat whether it is a picture of practical or theoretical reasoning. A more apt description might be that it is a practical picture of reasoning: a picture that takes reasoning to be something we do.[4]

The importance of starting from reasoning rather than reason becomes clearer as the book unfolds, but note here a difference between the respective contrasts that occupy the ground floor of the two pictures. Starting with a characterization of reason, and then defining reasoning as the activity of or according to reason, leads to a picture of reasoning as an activity of rational or logical calculation and determination, a norm-governed engagement with forms or structures or according to principles of reason. So pictured, reasoning stands in contrast to thinking that is emotional or intuitive or arbitrary. Mr. Collins, concerned to not let his passions run away with him as he proposes marriage, may be a caricature, but he is a caricature of this picture of reasoning.

On the other hand, if reasoning is pictured as a particular way of relating to and interacting with others, then reasoning is a (perhaps the) central activity of living together because in reasoning we are relating to one another in ways that are reciprocal and responsive to each other. Since not every way of interacting with others is properly reciprocal and

[4] Brandom and Habermas offer pragmatist pictures of reasoning, focusing on speech acts rather than language per se. Habermas nevertheless stresses a strong distinction between practical and theoretical reason.

responsive, not every form of interaction involves reasoning. Reasoning in this sense requires that we are not commanding or ordering, ignoring or manipulating, blindly obeying or deferring. This kind of reasoning can be characterized in terms of a set of characteristic norms that derive from the type of activity it is rather than from an independent account of the faculty of reason or the rational order. From this starting point, reasons can be defined as what we offer and exchange when reasoning, and so determined via the characteristic norms of the activity, not the characteristic features of a faculty or a set of formal structures. Elizabeth Bennet accuses Mr. Collins of not reasoning with her, not treating her as a rational creature, precisely because by closing off possibilities for response he violates the norms of this activity. Although the propositional content of what he says shows proper responsiveness to a set of relevant considerations in favor of acting as he does, he does not show proper responsiveness to her.

One consequence of this change in the generation of the category of reasons is that it blurs the boundary between reason and various standard contrastive terms like emotion, feeling, sentiment, or affect. What we say to one another counts as the offering of a reason on this picture only when it is an appropriate move in the activity of reasoning. The status of various claims and assertions as reasons is thus highly context dependent. The same words or different words with the same meaning may count as reasons if offered in one tone or with a certain affect, or when offered to a certain person in a certain situation, and not in others. Part of the content of a reason I offer someone can be bound up with my affect in offering it, insofar as that communicates something about my emotional or sentimental relationship to what I am saying or to whom I am saying it. Within the activity of reasoning this book depicts, reason's essential characteristics have little or nothing to do with being cold, hard, or calculating, attributes called to most minds by the term "rational." Characterizing reason from this picture of reasoning as the capacities that allow us to offer and respond to reasons in this broader sense means that reason so understood includes our emotional capacities and various attitudes like care, concern, or love in addition to our ability to calculate, infer, and judge.

Philosophers have long disagreed about whether there is any connection between being moral and being rational. The primary focus of their attention when such disagreements are joined is the figure of the highly

articulate, clever, and thoroughly immoral person, whether the evil tyrant of ancient nightmares or the psychopaths and serial killers of our own. Such figures can calculate and judge, and effectively direct and organize their actions. Their immorality lies in their being unresponsive to others, unwilling to enter into reciprocal relations with them. From the perspective of the picture I draw here, however, the very features that make them immoral are what makes it the case that they do not reason. I do not mean to suggest that adopting the picture of reasoning on offer here settles the debate about the relation of rationality and morality. For one, those who dispute the connection between reason and morality think of the debate as turning on whether there are non-moral foundations for morality. The picture of reasoning on offer here can't answer that question, because it sidesteps it. Reasoning, as it is described here, is already a value-rich activity. So even if this form of reasoning is closely tied to being moral, that does not show that morality has non-moral foundations, only that reasoning so pictured is not a morally neutral activity.[5]

1.3 Reasoning Is Social

The particular activity that I wish to call "reasoning" in what follows has four central features. All of them can be found in a famous characterization of reason by Immanuel Kant. It is a characterization that I return to throughout the book. In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant writes that:

> Reason must in all its undertakings subject itself to criticism; should it limit freedom of criticism by any prohibitions, it must harm itself, drawing upon itself a damaging suspicion. Nothing is so important through its usefulness, nothing so sacred, that it may be exempted from this searching examination, which knows no respect for persons. Reason depends on this freedom for its very existence. For reason has no

[5] That reasoning is not a value-neutral activity has been a common theme of both Kantian and Aristotelian rejoinders to those who oppose the question about the rationality of morality above. See, for instance, John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *Monist* 62, no. 3 (July 1979): 331–50, Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason," in *Constructing the Kingdom of Ends*, 311–34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). As will become clear, my approach to this conclusion takes a different path: it is not because values are one of the things that reason either detects or constructs, or that reasoned investigation presupposes a value orientation to begin with, but because the activity of reasoning is, being a form of reciprocal responsive interaction with others, a form of moral interaction: reasoning with others is one way of treating them morally.

dictatorial authority; its verdict is always simply the agreement of free citizens, of whom each one must be permitted to express, without let or hindrance, his objection or even his veto.[6]

Kant here insists that reason's authority rests in its constant and ongoing openness to criticism. Once we close off avenues of criticism, whether in the name of usefulness or respect for the sacred, including persons and their particular positions, we have thereby ceased to reason and begun to issue or obey commands. One way to avoid closing off criticism is to always leave open the possibility of further challenges to what we say, and thus to never draw final conclusions. This suggests that reasoning, since it cannot reach once-and-for-all conclusions, must be an ongoing process. If, in addition, we reject the thought that anyone is all-knowing, then being always open to criticism inevitably means being open to criticism from others. So Kant's claim here implies, though it does not explicitly require, that reasoning must be something we do with others: a social activity. But if reasoning is social and ongoing, this further suggests that in giving someone a reason, we cannot be drawing a final and unimpeachable conclusion. Rather, the offer of a reason must be a genuine offer, an invitation: open, as Kant does say, to being vetoed by others. And finally, what that invitation amounts to is an invitation to regard what was said as a genuine reason, which is to say a request to regard this corner of the space of reason as the speaker has laid it out. Acceptance of a reason, then, involves an acknowledgement that we share some, perhaps small, space of reasons.[7] Sharing such a space, however, makes it possible for either of us to speak for both of us, and so we can describe the invitation the reason proffers as an invitation to take another's

[6] *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1933), 593 (A738/B766). Kant here is talking of reason (*Vernunft*) and not reasons (*Gründe*) or reasoning, but I take it that for Kant, what makes the considerations we offer one another reasons (*Gründe*) is that they have something like the backing of reason (*Vernunft*) a backing, the passage brings out, that requires an open-ended engagement in something like reasoning. In other words, purported reasons are really reasons when they carry the authority of reason as this is realized by reasoning.

[7] Here I follow Onora O'Neill's discussion of Kant, and in particular the passage cited above in Onora O'Neill, "Reason and Politics in the Kantian Enterprise," in *Constructions of Reason*, 3–27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Thinking of reasoning in terms of a social space of reasons will perhaps be most familiar from the work of Wilfrid Sellars and, following him, Robert Brandom, who takes himself to be engaged in a basically Hegelian project. Wilfrid Sellars, *In the Space of Reasons*, ed. Kevin Sharp and Robert Brandom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), Brandom, *Making It Explicit*. One can find variants of this picture in the work of Stanley Cavell, who takes himself to be articulating thoughts he finds in Wittgenstein and sometimes Emerson and sometimes Kant. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

words as speaking for us as well.[8] Thus, from this claim of Kant's, we can extract the four central features of a social picture of the activity of reasoning.[9] I unfold each in turn in what follows.

To describe reasoning as social is, in some sense, hardly controversial. No one that I know of explicitly denies that we can reason with one another, or even that we reason better when we do so. But in describing the picture of reasoning developed here as a social picture, I mean to make a stronger claim: reasoning is fundamentally something we do together. This claim does not deny that I can reflect on and think through problems on my own, but to insist that insofar as what I do in so reflecting is to count as considering reasons, it has to make reference to and thus be answerable to whether I can intelligibly offer these reasons to others, and, in many cases, to whether my invitations are likely to be accepted. This means that all reasons are what might be called "we"-reasons or social reasons.[10] Many people who have discussed social reasons in recent years have taken them to be a special subset of reasons, a subset that might need to be treated differently than individual reasons, but nevertheless not the whole class of reasons.[11] If,

[8] That reasons might be analyzed in terms of speaking for others is one way to understand Kant's connection between reasoning and universalization. For an explicit analysis of Kant in these terms, see David Velleman, *Self to Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), though on Velleman's reading, the process of universalization gives us a way to bring reasoning to an end, by reaching conclusions that are good once and for all.

[9] Although I have cited a passage from Kant to illustrate this position, unpacking Kant's remark in this way requires following suggestions rather than merely reading what it explicitly says, and this explains both why some who accept the claims in this passage and cite it as a touchstone of their own work, do not approach reasoning as I attempt to do here, and why many people will see the position outlined here as more in line with Hegel than Kant. For examples of Kantian positions that differ from the one offered here, see Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification*, trans. Jeffrey Flynn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). For examples of Hegelian philosophers tracing views resembling the one offered here back to Hegel, see Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Robert Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[10] I discuss the importance of "we"-reasons and their place in reasoning together in my "Outline of a Theory of Reasonable Deliberation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 30 (December 2000): 551–80; "Evaluating Social Reasons: Hobbes vs. Hegel," *Journal of Philosophy* 102, no. 7 (July 2005): 327–56; and "Negotiation, Deliberation and the Claims of Politics," in *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, ed. Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen, 198–217 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[11] See, for instance, Samuel Freeman, "Reason and Agreement in Social Contract Views," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19, no. 2 (spring 1990): 122–57, who calls such reasons "public," and uses them to distinguish Hobbesian from Rousseauvian social contract theories; Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and "The Reasons We Can Share," in *Constructing the Kingdom of Ends*, 275–310 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), where she refers to reasons as intersubjective and finds their original articulation in Kant; Charles Taylor, "Exlana-

however, we conceive of reasons as invitations to speak for others, then "we"-reasons are not some special case, but the whole field.

To see why, it helps to unpack the metaphor of a space of reasons. First, reasons form a space in the mathematical sense: they are not merely a set of discrete points but are connected to one another by sets of inferential relations.[12] On the social picture of reasoning, these relations are the product of the norms governing the activity of reasoning. Second, reasons form a space in the geographic sense: they constitute a realm that we can occupy. That is, a full mapping of a space of reasons would not only have to describe sets of inferential relations between reasons but would have to situate each of us within that space, saying in effect, which reasons are reasons for each of us. Third, a space of reasons is essentially public, social, and shareable, and thus neither the product of individual mental structures nor merely the result of the structure of the natural world. As with other public spaces (both physical ones such as parks, and social ones created by forms of political action), sharing a space of reasons does not require that we stand at exactly the same point. Whether we share a space of reasons is not only a matter of where each of us stands, but how we relate to one another through the mediation of the space in question, and how we understand our joint responsibility for its upkeep and renovation.[13] We can thus unpack what is distinctive about the spaces of reasons we (re)construct by reasoning

tion and Practical Reason," "Irreducibly Social Goods," and "To Follow a Rule," in *Philosophical Arguments*, 34–60, 127–45, 165–80 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), where he talks of "common understandings" and traces their importance in practical reasoning to Hegel and Wittgenstein; and Onora O'Neill, "Four Models of Practical Reasoning," in *Bounds of Justice*, 11–28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), where she contrasts "action-based" accounts of practical reason with "teleological" ones, tracing the former back to Hegel, Wittgenstein, and Kant, and the latter to Plato and Hume.

[12] Brandom, *Making It Explicit*. The characterization of reasons as structured by inferential relations is central to Brandom's picture of reasoning, which has many affinities with the picture I present here. Acknowledging that the space of reasons is structured by such relations may seem to dissolve the difference between a social and a standard picture of reasoning insofar as it seems to admit that what is essential to a space being a space of reasons is its formal structure and not its shared construction. The difference lies, however, not in the existence of a connection between formal structure and publicity, but in terms of how that connection is understood, and which way the order of explanation goes. According to the standard picture, it is because the space of reasons has a fixed, objective structure that we can all enter it and it is thus public. According to the social picture, it is the public nature of the activity of reasoning that gives rise to a stable and formally structured space that we can inhabit together. It is a feature of Brandom's pragmatism that he takes the latter position, as do I.

[13] I am grateful to Patchen Markell for pushing me to be clearer about the imagery of a shared space, and in particular its mediating function that allows us to stand together without standing at the same place.

together by thinking about how certain kinds of interaction construct certain spaces. Doing so will also develop a vocabulary for describing the social picture of reasoning in more detail.

Let's say, then, that I share a space of meaning with you when what we say to one another is mutually intelligible, not merely in the sense that I know what all the words you say mean, but I can understand what you mean when you say them, which requires also that I can see your point in saying them, here and now, to me.[14] Sharing such a space already includes sharing normative standards, in particular about the intelligibility and thus the appropriateness of saying things in certain contexts, what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls a "form of life."[15] We might put the point this way, also borrowing from Wittgenstein: sharing a space of meaning in this sense means not only not having a private language, but not using language privately. In other words, if I am interested in making myself intelligible to you, I not only have to use a language you know, but use it in a way that you recognize.

Finding what you say intelligible, however, does not require that I am moved to say the same thing under the circumstances or to give the same importance or weight to what you say that you do. It thus does not require either that I take what you say as an invitation to share a space with you or that I accept your invitation. There are thus ways of communicating intelligibly with one another that do not count as reasoning on the social picture. Of course, that you have said it and that I understand what you have said and why can serve me as reasons to believe certain things, especially about you. But your point in so speaking to me may not have anything to do with instilling or grounding such a belief. You may have merely been bearing witness or trying to work out your own thoughts (which, interestingly enough, is often done better in the presence of others). Alternatively, you may be providing me with information about yourself or some feature of the world. As presented, the information is not part of the activity of reasoning, though it may play a role in constituting reasons. So I can understand what you say in this full-blooded sense without thereby taking you to be reasoning with me, and thus without

[14] This is a point I take from Stanley Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein and to which I return in Chapter 3.

[15] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), §§23, 241.

taking your words to be offering me reasons or even potential reasons.[16] And, yet, understanding what you say even at this level does require that we share some normative space, a space of meaning, and so we can say that we need to share such a space if we are going to speak to one another and not merely at or past one another. If, beyond saying things that are intelligible to one another, we interact through what we say in ways that make our activity a shared one, then we engage in a conversation, and thus speak with and not merely to each other. Idle conversation can include reasoning, but it need not. It does, however, require that we do not merely lecture each other.

Two people share a space of reasons (or at least part of one) if each not only understands what the other says but can affirm it. In such a case, they inhabit at least this corner of this normative space together or at least take themselves to be similarly oriented within the same space. When we wish to share a normative space in this fuller sense, we must not only speak with one another but attempt to speak for one another. Attempting to speak for you rather than merely to or with you invites your responsiveness to what I say in a different manner. When I merely speak to you, it may be a matter of indifference to me whether you respond at all, and your response can even be the last thing I want. Think here of wanting to get something off your chest by ranting about it and being met with a set of solutions to your problem.[17] Merely registering that you understand what I am saying can be enough. When we speak with one another, however, we each expect a heightened level of responsiveness and reaction to what each of us says, even if we are not trying to find common ground or even staking out positions. What counts as an appropriate response, and what an appropriate response to that response, can thus still be loosely defined.

When, however, I try to speak for you in the sense that I do when reasoning, I call for your response, not only to what I have said, but to my

[16] Note here a crucial difference between the activity pictured on Brandom's account of the game of giving and asking for reasons as he develops it in *Making It Explicit*, and the activity pictured as reasoning here. For Brandom, any assertion with propositional content enters one into the game of giving and asking for reasons, as it commits the speaker to certain other claims and licenses others to certain inferences about the speaker. On my account, the making of assertions is part (but only part) of the wider activity of conversation, which has its own norms. I reserve the term reasoning for forms of conversation that exhibit a heightened level of responsiveness among the participants.

[17] Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990).

invitation to take it as something you would say as well.[18] Replying to an invitation does not require accepting it: you can (re)affirm that my words speak for you, too, but you can also mark your distance or your different understanding of what you would say and thus what we could say together. It is ultimately our sharing a world to the point where we can each speak for one another as well as ourselves, say what the other would say, that marks our sharing reasons, and thus in an important sense, having reasons that are reasons for us. Being able to speak for one another involves sharing a space of reasons, not merging into a single self, or occupying a single point of view, just as sharing an apartment involves living together in a physical space, not occupying the same point within it.[19] Since sharing such a space of reasons is both the basis and the result of reasoning together, it turns out that reasoning is an activity that requires and reconstructs a shared world, and this is the sense in which it is a deeply social activity.

That reasoning is a matter of figuring out where and how we can speak for others, and thus the shape and content of the "we"s we form together means that it is at least one way that we determine, in the sense both of discovering and of constructing, the contours of our relationships with others, and thus, inter alia, the contours of our own identities. On this social picture of reasoning, the value of reasoning is that it allows us to build truly reciprocal and thus shared relationships to one another, to live together and not merely side-by-side.

Let me explain. To undertake an activity such as reasoning *together* is to share in that activity, to see it as governed by a shared set of norms or rules that mediates and constructs our actions as interactions in part by making them intelligible to each of us as moves within this shared framework. It is not enough to engage in an activity together that each of us is performing that activity with an eye to what the other is doing and how each of our actions intertwines with the other. Although we might be able to isolate each of our individual movements or speech acts from one another and analyze our interaction in this way, if it is truly an activity we do together, then something is missing from such an analysis. When we are acting

[18] The idea of a reason as involving a call is introduced by Fichte and further developed in contemporary idioms by Steven Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[19] For further elaboration of this point, see the discussions of attunement in Chapter 4.2–3.

side-by-side, in contrast, each of us is acting as an independent agent, even if each of us is in various ways attentive to what the other does, perhaps merely to avoid colliding, or perhaps because what I say or do figures as an input into your reflections and decisions about what to say or do. If we begin to think about reasoning as something that individuals do on their own, and then try to picture the activity of reasoning together, we are likely to wind up describing people reasoning side-by-side, perhaps in complexly interrelated fashion, but side-by-side nonetheless.[20] To picture reasoning as an essentially social activity, however, is to picture an interaction that is not reducible to individual actions, and whose agents do not think of themselves as merely reacting to and predicting what others do. Clear cases of acting together include playing a game as a team, or engaging in a lively conversation where no one has an agenda other than the liveliness of the conversation itself. At this stage, these remarks can only be suggestive, as someone committed to something like the standard picture of reason will insist that all of these activities can be analyzed in terms of individual actions that intertwine and mesh together, and so will not accept or see that there might be a fundamental difference between acting or reasoning together and side-by-side.

Like the two pictures of reasoning, the activities of reasoning together and reasoning side-by-side need not be mutually exclusive, and some relationships might require skill at both. Consider, for instance, a married couple. Among their tasks is the performance of various basic activities of household and life management. Someone needs to cook meals, go shopping, help the kids with their homework or take them to school. They need to work out rules of bathroom etiquette, and adjust their standards of cleanliness to one another. All of this can be done by reasoning side-by-side, and a marriage can fail despite both parties truly loving the other, if they are unable to arrange the coordination of their common lives. If and when we fail to live side-by-side, we bump into one another, and do harm and find it more difficult to each pursue our individual goals. At some point, life becomes nasty, brutish, and short.

[20] For an example of this kind of approach that nevertheless takes seriously the distinctiveness of the phenomenon of collective action as different from individual action, see Michael Bratman, "Shared Cooperative Activity," *Philosophical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1992): 327–41, and "Shared Intentions," *Ethics* 104 (October 1993): 97–113. I discuss these matters further in Chapters 5 and 6.

But a couple that was perfectly skilled at such reasoning, but nevertheless had forged no truly shared life together would also be missing something. Part of forging such a shared life is inhabiting shared spaces of meaning and reason together. Such sharing allows them to truly understand each other, complete each other's sentences, and answer each other's questions before they have been fully asked. It allows them not only to reason side-by-side and coordinate their lives, but to reason and thus live together. When we fail to live together, we find ourselves alone, unable to reach out to others around us, to make ourselves intelligible to them, to interact with them as fellow subjects. The isolation that failure to reason together creates is not a matter of a failure of coordination. It is the sense that no one understands what you say or do, or who you are. Such isolation can be the result or the cause of madness, even a kind of death.[21] There is I think, no better guide to the value and perils of living together, and the pain of failing to do so than Jean-Jacques Rousseau. And while unraveling all his insights into this matter is a project for a whole other book, it is helpful to make some brief remarks here. First of all, Rousseau thinks that the capacity to live together is, in a sense, what makes us fully human. The creatures he describes as inhabiting the state of nature in the *Discourse on Inequality* are remarkable, chiefly, for the fact that they live merely side-by-side and that they have not yet taken the first steps on the road to humanity.[22] Because they live side-by-side, however, they are basically satisfied and free. They are not subject to the pains of misrecognition and insult, and so the deepest forms of human suffering are not open to them.[23] Conversely, they are not capable of the deepest forms of human joy, whether love or the ecstasy that comes from uniting into a political society.[24] As Rousseau snidely says in a note to the *Discourse*, the solution for our own unhappiness and dependence cannot be to go

[21] These connections help explain Stanley Cavell's insistence on the link between skepticism and tragedy in *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and throughout his writing.

[22] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in *"The Discourses" and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For a discussion of Rousseau's *Discourse* that takes this line, see my *Reasonably Radical: Deliberative Liberalism and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), ch. 2.

[23] Rousseau, "Discourse on Inequality," 166.

[24] On love, see ibid. 164. On ecstasy of political union, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, ed. and trans. Allan Bloom (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 125–7. On the suffering of being alone, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (New York: Penguin, 1979), 27 (First Walk, par. 1).

back to the forests to live with the bears. Once we have begun to relate to others, we must either command and be commanded or learn to reason together.[25] Merely aiming to coordinate our actions to allow us to live side-by-side is no longer enough.

Reasoning together allows us to bridge these gaps of isolation because it involves not only saying things that are intelligible to others, but others hearing what we say as intelligible. Certain forms of violent trauma leave their victims isolated and alone in part because of the unintelligible (the unspeakable) nature of what has happened to them. Survivors of trauma thus talk about the importance, for their recovery and re-entry into human relationships, of having someone hear and accept their stories, and the difficulty and isolation they feel when no one listens to them this way.

> It is not sufficient for mastering the trauma to construct a narrative of it: one must (physically, publicly) say or write (or paint or film) the narrative and others must see or hear it in order for one's survival as an autonomous self to be complete. This reveals the extent to which the self is created and sustained by others and, thus, is able to be destroyed by them. The boundaries of the will are limited, or enlarged, not only by the stories others tell, but also by the extent of their ability and willingness to listen to ours.[26]

Note here that what is lost through such trauma and is regained in mastering it is not the ability to live alongside others, but the ability to live together with them.

As these examples suggest, living together is not something that comes automatically for us. We do not come by a shared order either by instinct (like ants) or by virtue of some metaphysical fact or supernatural command (like soldiers in God's army). Rather, if we are to share a world, we must build it together. To describe reasoning as a social activity is thus to describe it as the activity of making, maintaining, and inhabiting such a world in the form of a shared space of reasons.

[25] See Rousseau, "Discourse on Inequality," 182–83, and *Émile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 48.

[26] Susan Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 62.

1.4 Reasoning Is Ongoing

Philosophical work on reasoning is full of descriptions of people encountering reasons, whether by invoking or confronting or considering them. And in most of that work, the descriptions of those encounters paint them as episodic, as occurring in finite, basically self-contained chunks with a more or less clear beginning and a more or less clear end. The thought that we encounter reasons episodically is built into much thinking about reasons and the place they hold in our lives, although it is not so frequently stated or used as a means of characterizing sets of positions about reasons.[27] Even many people who hold that reasoning is a deeply social activity in the way described above think of reasoning as episodic, and thus depart from the picture presented here. To picture reasoning as an ongoing activity is to deny that we can adequately understand it as episodic.

To understand why, it helps to have some examples of episodes of reasoning in place:

1. I need to meet a colleague for lunch and also run an errand, and need to figure out how to do both of these given the available time, means of transportation, and a variety of other constraints. I devote some time to thinking about it, see a path that satisfies my aims while obeying the constraints, and either take the path now or decide that it is the path I will take at the appointed moment.[28]
2. I take up a difficult theoretical problem in philosophy or mathematics, and, over a period of years, in both concentrated moments at my desk and idle moments in the course of my life, turn my attention to the problem, try out various approaches to a solution, and, ultimately, if

[27] Candace Vogler comes as close as anyone to explicitly making use of the episodic nature of reasoning in arguing for a particular conception of practical reason, one that holds that practical reasoning is, as she puts it, calculative in form (that is, has something like a means–end structure to it). See Candace Vogler, *Reasonably Vicious* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), esp. 168–70.

[28] I mean here to be purposely vague and ambiguous about an issue that many regard as of central importance to any account of at least practical reason: namely, whether such reasoning merely leads up to or also involves either decision or action. I think that what is at stake in answering it one way or another depends in part on what picture we have of reasoning, and so I don't want to prejudge the matter here. (Of course, one could turn this approach on its head and insist that we are compelled to answer this question of the relation of at least practical reason to action in a certain manner, and then use this as grounds for opting for one picture of reasoning over the other (Vogler's argument in *Reasonably Vicious* can be read this way).)

I am fortunate enough, work out a solution or at least make progress in that direction.

3 We must come to an agreement about how to spend the afternoon. We deliberate together, find common ground, and from that ground, work out a plan for the afternoon that we can all support.

4 I have some time on my hands as I sit on the train, so I turn my mind to trying to understand Swiss politics or the nature of practical reason.

What makes the reasoning in all of these cases episodic is that it takes place in a clearly bounded region of space and time and is internally directed at its own termination.[29] That is, whether or not the reasoning is started up as a result of outside forces setting a problem, or the play of idle thoughts and time focusing one's attention, and whether or not the reasoning is all done in a single sitting, or proceeds in bits and pieces over a long span, and whether or not it is successful and does in fact come to an end, in each of these cases, the reasoning is directed towards reaching a conclusion, a solution or a decision that, *inter alia*, brings the episode of reasoning to an end. This is even true of the final case, where I idly turn my attention to a topic. I am not merely attending to a topic, but trying to figure it out or understand it, and this attempt has its own internal standards of success. If, after reflecting for a while, I come to feel that I have adequately or satisfactorily understood what I was thinking about, then I have succeeded. If the success is clear enough or the topic limited enough, I may take my reaching such a conclusion as grounds for bringing this episode of reflection to a close, and turning my attention elsewhere. To see that the standard of success is, in this case, internal to the activity of reasoning about a given topic, contrast it with the case where I turn my mind to something not to figure it out or better understand it, but as a form of distraction, to better endure a boring train ride or a painful dental procedure. In such a case, success is measured and the episode of reasoning bounded by the external events I am trying to endure. When the dentist finishes drilling, I can stop reasoning regardless of what progress I have made.

[29] Realists about reasons may hold that the reasons themselves and perhaps the inferential structures of their relationships to one another are not so easily located. But, even then, the reasoning that adverts to these structures is temporally located.

To say that reasoning is episodic is to make a claim about the activity of reasoning and not the structure of the space of reasons.[30] It means that we imagine the paradigmatic cases of reasoning as limited in time and subject, and measure their success in terms of progress towards an end. This picture of where and how we reason then brings with it certain other features. Since episodes of reasoning are directed at something which is not itself an episode of reasoning, but a decision or conclusion or greater understanding, the point of reasoning is to bring us to (or closer to) that goal. The aim of reasoning is, we might say, to be able to stop reasoning.[31] If we are deliberating together about what to do in order to make a joint decision, we have failed if we just keep on deliberating. Moreover, if we do reach a conclusion, then it will be odd for someone to keep discussing the matter merely in order to prolong the activity of reasoning. Of course, our bouts of reasoning may follow one another without a gap, overlap, or may lead directly to their successors, as when reaching a decision about ends leads to reasoning about how to bring them about, which in turn leads to reasoning about implementing the plan decided upon. But, even then, each bout of reasoning is a bounded, episodic activity.

Thinking of reasoning as taking place in bounded episodes that do not merely stop but arrive at an end fits well with a standard view about the point of reasoning: to make conclusive judgments in the form of beliefs or decisions: to make up our minds. We can make up our minds in bounded episodes of reasoning if reasoning is directed at conclusions, and thus at a kind of end, and reasoning can be so directed if reasons play some role in contributing to or bringing us closer to such an end. In fact, it may be hard to imagine within this picture in what sense one would be reasoning if one was not trying to reach a conclusion or deploying claims or information that

[30] Picturing reasoning as episodic is thus independent of questions that are hotly debated in epistemology between foundationalists, contextualists, and coherentists about the status of claims to knowledge.

[31] Those of an Aristotelian bent might wonder where the activity of contemplation that Aristotle regards as making up the best form of life fits in to this characterization. The value of contemplation, after all, is in large part that it has no end beyond itself and thus no internally directed termination point. It may be that contemplation is a form of reasoning that best fits within the social picture. Here I merely note that the difficulty of explaining (and of understanding) what Aristotle has in mind in these sections of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that discuss contemplation may be a sign of the hold that the standard picture has on us insofar as it makes it seem paradoxical for an activity to be both a form of reasoning and non-episodic.

were in some sense thought to advance towards such a conclusion. As Candace Vogler expresses this position:

> If what "comes to mind" or "goes through one's head" between setting out to figure out, for example, what to plant and deciding what to plant has the sort of relevance to the garden project that it must if we are to describe [it] as the content of garden-directed practical reasoning—rather than, say, idle speculation or the inward rehearsal of a song that is stuck in one's head,—then this will be because the process was a means to, or part of, deciding what to do . . . [R]easoning must be a means to or part of decision-making; otherwise, what's taking place isn't *practical deliberation* at all.[32]

And, for many situations, this seems exactly right: we offer reasons in order to end our (perhaps internal) conversations. If we are reasoning together about how to spend the afternoon, it is natural to assume that each of us offers the other reasons in the hope that we can bring the deliberation to an end and get on with the business at hand.[33]

But notice that if we take reasons to aspire to a kind of decisiveness in this sense, it is hard to also hold onto Kant's insistence that it is definitive of reason, and thus presumably reasoning, that it remain open to criticism. That is, if reason must harm itself if it does not continually open itself to criticism, then it looks as if reason harms itself if it comes to an end. One common way to square this circle is to say that reasoned conclusions are always subject to revision and review, so that once a bout of reasoning has come to an end, there is the implicit possibility of reopening it in the face of new information or attitudes. But there is a way to give a more robust reading to Kant's insistence by picturing reasoning not as an episodic and end-driven activity but an ongoing one.

To start to imagine how reasoning could be reasoning and yet ongoing, it helps to think of other species of interaction that are both responsive and ongoing, such as casual conversation, and then ask about the possible place

[32] Vogler, *Reasonably Vicious*, 166.

[33] The assumption that reasoning is end-directed can just as easily shape a social theory of reasoning, such as Habermas's. Though Habermas makes a strong distinction between strategic and communicative reasoning, he analyzes communicative reasoning in terms of its aim of finding rationally motivated agreement. See, among others, Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" and "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990). This marks a major difference between his view and the one developed here.

of reasoning within them. In other words, if reasoning is a species of conversation, then, like casual conversation, it may not need to be directed at an end or aimed at its own termination. It turns out that characterizing the activity of reasoning in terms of the responsiveness it demands also leads to a way of picturing reasoning as an ongoing activity. On the social picture being sketched here, offering someone a reason lies between ordering her to do as the reason directs and merely making noise in her general vicinity. When I order you to act, I remove space for you to determine what you do. When you hear my words as mere noise or a plea rather than a reason, you leave no space for me to determine what you do. Taking my words as potential reasons means you leave some space for them to make a difference in what you do. Likewise, offering you what I take to be a reason, and not a command, means that I leave space for you to rebut or criticize it.

I think we should spend the afternoon cleaning up the house, because, well, it's a mess. I offer its messiness as a reason to you for spending the afternoon so. Even though I do so in the hope that you will agree and we can get to it, by offering you a *reason*, I am implicitly giving you space to reject it, and thus to keep on talking. Were I in a position to command you, there would be nothing to discuss. Note that this would also be true if you take what I say as offering something less than a reason because, for instance, you can only hear it as noise or because you treat it that way. One thing that distinguishes commands and noise from reasons, then, is that reasons can serve to keep conversations going.

Furthermore, it turns out that thus used, reasons cannot bring conversations to a close, once and for all. If you accept my reason, then you do not need to offer me a reason in return, but an expression of your acceptance, an expression of your will. If you try to offer me a further reason for cleaning the house, even one that is based on your willingness to do so, then that suggests that the conversation is not over, for you are leaving me room to reject your reasons. Consider the difference between the following responses to my suggestion of cleaning up the house: "I guess you're right. I'll go get the vacuum cleaner out of the basement" and "It would also give us an excuse to miss your nephew's piano recital." In the first case, you do not offer a reason to clean up the house. Rather, you endorse the proposal and begin to carry it out. There is, in the normal course of events, nothing for me to say about the question of what to do this afternoon any more. We have moved on to divvying up the work. Of course, I can reopen the

question now or later, but it is no longer what is expected of me, and it requires opening something that is closed, rather than continuing something that is ongoing.

In the second case, however, the conversation about the afternoon has been prolonged. I cannot really go get the vacuum cleaner just yet, because I need to respond in some way or other to the reason you have offered, even if only by now expressing what I am confident can be our joint decision: "Great, then why don't you get the vacuum cleaner while I pick up all the dirty clothes lying around?"

Note that the conversation about what to do this afternoon looks, on pretty much any theory of reasoning, like it involves reasoning: we are deliberating about what to do. And, clearly, in such a case, our deliberation needs to bear some relationship to the decision we ultimately reach if that decision is also to be thought of as reason-guided, and the action it yields rational or reasonable.[34] But there is nevertheless a feature of reasoning that we lose sight of if we think of reasoning as aiming to reach a conclusion, and it is this feature I wish to keep front and center as we proceed: offering someone a reason can be a way of opening the possibility of further conversation, but not, on its own, a means of ending a conversation.

Understanding reasoning as a species of conversation pictures reasoning as an activity that is not episodic but rather forms part of the background of our shared lives. Reasoning, so described, is how we occupy a social space of reasons, just as swimming is how fish occupy water. That is to say that the space of reasons is something we inhabit, not merely invoke and deploy, more like our home than our office, and that reasoning is just the ongoing activity of inhabiting that space. Inhabiting a space of reasons goes beyond merely moving around in it, and navigating through its shoals. As with inhabiting a home, inhabiting a space of reasons involves interacting with it, occasionally changing or remodeling it, and in turn being changed by it.[35]

Thinking of reasoning as the background activity of our lives rather than as episodic also suggests a different focus of attention in order to see clearly this activity of reasoning, and where we engage in it. First of all, if reasoning

[34] I return to this example below (towards the end of 1.5) and focus on the question of how to understand the relationship between reasoning and deciding on the social picture.

[35] The image of reason as a home, though most evocative of Hegel's project of reconciliation, finds expression as well in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1933), A707/B735.

is not episodic, then exhibiting neatly packaged episodes of reasoning as cases to study provides a distorted sample. Rather, reasoning also takes place in the more general interactions that shape and constitute our lives, and so an adequate picture of non-episodic reasoning has to include them and describe which of their features make them reasoning. It requires paying attention not to the solving of isolated problems, but all the interactions that Stanley Cavell describes as the "whirl of organism:"

> our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life."[36]

This kind of ongoing reasoning takes place in what can be called scenes of instruction, or attunement or the lack of it.[37] These are moments when someone is brought to see the world as another sees it, or is confirmed in her own view by finding that another sees things similarly or is threatened or struck by the recognition that they do not, after all, inhabit the same space of reasons. They are often moments that pass in idle conversation, even if the conversation is emotionally charged. That is, they are scenes of instruction not in the sense that a pupil goes to the teacher and asks for an explanation or help in solving a problem, or where someone sets out to convert another to her point of view, but where, in the course of a conversation that may be aimless and may be aimed elsewhere, something of significance that merits the name of instruction or attunement takes place. They are moments that may only be recognized as such after the fact, and thus are most easily found in literature and other forms of storytelling.

They can, in fact, come in the form of learning to see that a genuine proposal, since it is no more than an invitation, is open to rejection by a rational creature. For Elizabeth Bennet turns down another presumptuously offered proposal in the course of *Pride and Prejudice*, this one from her

[36] "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969). Cavell is unpacking what he takes to be Wittgenstein's understanding of what supports our confidence that others will go on as we do, will understand what we mean by our words.

[37] A focus on scenes of instruction marks Wittgenstein's later philosophy, esp. *Philosophical Investigations*, and it is a point that Cavell continually stresses in his own engagements with Wittgenstein. See, for instance, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, lec. 2.

eventual husband, Mr. Darcy. And what, apart from money, standing, higher principles, and more intelligence, really distinguishes him from Mr. Collins is how he hears her rejection and what it leads him to. As he tells her upon her much later accepting his second proposal: "You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You shewed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased."[38]

If reasoning is an ongoing activity, then understanding it requires investigating the whole range of casual conversation and idle chatter, interactions that have no particular end or aim, but which serve to situate and resituate us vis-à-vis each other in social spaces, and thus not only to invoke shared spaces of reasons but to construct them. Although such interactions do not look like reasoning in the standard sense of the term, they turn out to have what might be called rational significance insofar as they help to shape the spaces of reasons in which we live. Such conversations are the focus of Chapters 3 and 4.

1.5 Reasons as Invitations

If reasoning is episodic and directed at the forming of conclusions or decisions, then it is natural to think of the act of offering reasons as a kind of directing or legislating. Legislating, even in a democracy, is an activity that presumes a kind of hierarchical relationship between the legislator and the subject of the law. In the normal course of events, it is done in a forthright and uncompromising manner: this is what is meant, after all, by saying that someone is "laying down the law." It is this underlying idea of reasons and the thought that reasons function as legislation that both motivates the following passage from Christine Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity*, and makes it somewhat jarring:

If I call out your name, I make you stop in your tracks. (If you love me, I make you come running.) Now you cannot proceed as you did before. For now if you walk on, you will be ignoring me and slighting me. It will probably be difficult for you,

[38] *Pride and Prejudice*, vol. III, ch. XVI, 282.

and you will have to muster a certain active resistance, a sense of rebellion. But why should you have to rebel against me? It is because I am a law to you. By calling out your name, I have obligated you. I have given you a reason to stop.[39]

Notice here how Korsgaard moves from ignoring and slighting to resisting and rebelling, and then uses the idea of rebellion to introduce the idea of reasons as laws and thus as being able to command.

If I think that by reasoning, I can be a law to myself and others, then I am likely to see reasoning as a process that erects a kind of support and bulwark for my position, and gives me the right to direct things. The result is that, armed with reasons, I am likely to go forth in the world in an arrogant manner, unable to imagine that I might be mistaken, that I might not have a claim on others. If, however, reasoning involves, first and foremost, being responsive to and open to criticisms from others, then it is not a means to put my legislation on firm footing, but is rather what I do when I interact reciprocally with others instead of legislating to them. Thus, on the social picture of reasoning under development here, reasoning rests on an assumption that though my position vis-à-vis others gives me a right to make a demand on them, it is only a right to be heard and to call for a response. As a result, the demands I make in reasoning must be made in a more open spirit, and cannot presume to be the final word. If I call out your name with this picture as background, I am, we might say, not commanding you to stop in your tracks, but asking you to turn your head. And, if you choose not to, although you can do so as an act of rebellion, you need not: you can merely ignore me or slight me and thereby deny my authority. Who am I, after all?[40]

Note that my position in asking you to turn your head rather than commanding you to stop in your tracks is nevertheless not the same as that when I make a plea or supplication. The supplicant forswears all authority, and appeals to our tastes or preferences or whims. And while these preferences may have been reflectively or rationally arrived at, that fact plays no role in their capacity in this matter to render a decision. That is, in appealing to us without invoking any form of authority, the supplicant forswears any criteria on the basis of which she might question our decision.

[39] *Sources*, 140.

[40] Though in many cases we can tell which of these kinds of activities someone is engaged in by her body language, affect, and tone, we cannot always. It may depend on how they react to our response to what they say, and even then it may not be determinable at certain moments, by either party. But the possibility of practical muddiness need not undermine the conceptual distinction or obviate its value.

But that is just to say that the supplicant is not reasoning with us but blindly obeying or deferring to us. Supplication, no less than legislation, rests on a hierarchical relationship. If reasoning is being distinguished from commanding, then I also cannot reason with you if I make you issue commands by placing myself under your commanding authority.

This intermediate position from which we reason in the sense being pictured in this book is captured by describing reasoning as a form of inviting or proposing. Thinking of reasoning as inviting has two features it is worth highlighting from the beginning. First, as suggested by the discussion above, it provides a way of understanding the authority involved in reasoning in a manner that is fundamentally different than the kind of authority involved in legislating. Note, in this regard, that inviting is importantly different than licensing or permitting, both of which can be analyzed in terms of hierarchical authority relations.[41] Chapter 2 discusses the mode of authority at work in inviting and how it differs from the mode of authority at work in legislating and licensing.

Second, invitations allow for the creation of relationships that do not already exist, and so capture an essential feature of the activity of reasoning pictured here: that it not only takes place within shared spaces of reasons, but that it can serve to construct and modify those spaces as well. When I invite you to take my words as speaking for you, I open up a space of reasons for us to share, and if you accept my invitation, you thus participate in our joint construction of this space of reasons as one we share. But I can do this without yet knowing whether we do share this space. Moreover, some forms of reasoning with others may not even aim to forge a shared space of reasons, but merely work out what spaces of reasons we each inhabit. In such cases I offer reasons to those with whom I disagree and may not even be trying to convert to my way of thinking. Nevertheless, it is still the case that I cannot offer all invitations to just anyone at any time. In the normal course of events, there is a background that already must be in place for me to offer you a particular invitation, and there is a similar background that is presumed when we reason. I cannot really offer reasons to someone at whom rather than with whom I can speak. Our disagreement cannot be so total that we are mutually unintelligible, or that the person to

[41] That reasons function like licenses is central to Brandom's account of what he calls the game of giving and asking for reasons. See *Making It Explicit*.

whom I offer reasons only hears them as noise or a private, inscrutable use of words.[42]

Finally, note that invitations can be offered in all sorts of guises, and these track a number of different kinds of activity that we consider reasoning. Sometimes, we offer invitations that we would be shocked to have turned down. They are invitations, not commands, because it remains open for the person we invite to say no, but we issue the invitation in full confidence that it will be accepted. Similarly, we often have very good grounds for thinking that we share a certain space of reasons with someone and share an understanding of our respective places in that space. Most examples of reasoning in the philosophical literature take this form, and this may explain why they often miss the invitational nature of reasoning.

In other cases, invitations are issued out of a genuine interest to forge a connection that is not already there. In such cases, the possibility of rejection is real and while rejection may be disappointing, it is not a shock. Similarly, I can offer reasons to someone without yet knowing whether I share a space of reasons with them. My offer here is a genuine invitation for them to either enter my space of reasons or affirm that they are already there. Such inviting is at work in cases where people are reasoning about a matter that is not so clear-cut, and so people make suggestions about how to think about the matter, or why certain facts are the salient ones and so forth.

How I respond to an acceptance or rejection of my invitation may depend on what kind of invitation is being offered and to whom. While I might genuinely regret it if you cannot accept my invitation to my wedding, I am unlikely to change the date or my partner as a result. And while it is technically accurate to describe a marriage proposal as an invitation to my wedding, I am likely to have a very different reaction to your rejection of it or your prior commitment to be elsewhere on the wedding day. Sometimes reasoning with someone with whom we don't agree is like inviting them to a wedding, and at other times it is like proposing to them. The differences between these forms of reasoning are the focus of Chapters 5 and 6.

[42] I don't mean to rule out here innovative or personal uses of language that, while not inscrutable, require imagination on the part of the hearer to fully grasp, such as those in poetry, literature, or, for that matter, certain forms of humor. It is important that the space of mutual intelligibility is malleable, and changes through our use of language. But we can contrast, at least conceptually, such literary use of language with private use of language characteristic of certain forms of mental illness.

Third, some invitations are offered out of politeness and we expect them to be refused. Thus, when I offer you reasons merely to explain or justify my beliefs or actions rather than to enlist your affirmation of them, I still offer to speak for you, but my offer is one which I expect you to refuse. Nevertheless, the offer is a way of saying that my world is a world a reasonable person might inhabit, one into which I can in good faith invite you, and so one in which you should feel free to leave me in peace. Certain types of justification, especially of idiosyncratic or unfamiliar practices, make invitations of this sort.

When these practices do not involve issuing invitations, they look less like reasoning. If we are working out what to do and are on sufficiently familiar ground that I can be sure that we agree about the reasons before us, then if I draw a conclusion backed up by my understanding of the reasons we share but take my word on the matter to be final, then I am commanding you to follow, not reasoning with you about what to do. If we are less sure about the reasons we face or whether we share them, and I also draw a conclusion and explain my reasoning, but do not invite you to see it my way, then I am perhaps not commanding you to follow me but I am not reasoning with you, merely explaining my position. And, in the final case, if I lay out the grounds for my behavior without inviting you to share them, then I am not so much justifying what I do as defending it by building up a kind of protective barrier around it.

Trying to picture reasons as invitations nevertheless runs into some obvious objections. Consider, for instance, the following exchanges:

"Why did you cross the street?"
"Because the restaurant is on the other side."

"I don't want to tell him the truth. It will be awkward and uncomfortable for me."
"But it is the right thing to do. Lying would be wrong."

Thinking of reasons as invitations appears not to capture the appropriate finality of what look for all the world like reasons in these two exchanges. It just seems contrived to say of blindingly obvious instrumental reasons or uncontroversial moral ones that they are best thought of as invitations, even invitations that we would be aghast if someone rejected. And this seems in large part because such instrumental and moral reasons are decisive, and properly so. If you explain your crossing the street by pointing to the

restaurant where we are headed or explain not having done something by citing moral considerations against it, you are not trying to continue a conversation, but end one. Moreover, such an objection might continue, reasoning together can only help us live together if it somehow connects to action, and not merely to never-ending conversations.[43] If there is not some fundamental link between the reasons that serve as invitations and continue our conversations and our actions, then our actions are arbitrary, mere movements, controlled by something or someone else or merely random, no longer willed but merely willful. So we need to show that our reason-constructing and exchanging conversations also link up to action, that the reasons we offer one another bear some relation to our decisions, conclusions and actions. And then we need to show how these reasons allow us to stop talking and get something done.

Distinguish two activities in which the space of reasons we inhabit play a role. The first activity, which is what the social picture calls reasoning, involves taking part in responsive and reciprocal conversations where we exchange reasons. This activity serves to lay out how the world seems to each of us, and possibly, to us together. Reasons work here in the manner of invitations, asking us to accept or decline particular claims, to rebut or amend them. Offering a consideration as a reason within such conversations can prolong but not end them, and, so, on their own, cannot move us to further action. At the same time, the exchange of reasons within conversations can serve to construct our shared world, our space of reasons, and orient us within it, to set out what is normatively the case for us.

Making and expressing judgments (whether about beliefs or actions) is a different kind of activity we undertake with reasons, and here we need to be able to issue commands, though possibly only self-directed or conditional ones. (This is basically the activity of reasoning as the standard picture describes it.) But what could possibly ground our right to issue such commands? It is precisely the background conversations that have oriented us in our shared world. Go back to my earlier example. We are talking about how to spend the afternoon, and I suggest cleaning up the house

[43] Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Action, Identity and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), argues that reasoning is essential because it provides a solution to the problem of action, which she describes as our plight.

because it's a mess. If I offer the messiness of the house as a reason for staying in and cleaning, then I invite you to keep talking. Sure, you say, it is a bit of sty, but it's so beautiful out and there aren't going to be many more days like this for a while. Here is a counter-reason, an invitation for me to reconsider our local space of reasons, to see it differently, and so an invitation to keep talking. At any time, however, either of us can try to bring the conversation to a close (otherwise, we will spend the whole afternoon talking). But, if I am to do this, I need to engage in a different kind of activity: I need to stop conversing and (try to) start commanding: "Yeah, never mind the mess, let's go for a walk in the park." Notice that there is not a reason in this statement, only something with the form of a conditional command. I could have said, were I trying to make a philosophical point as well as reach a decision, "Enough talking. Given the space of reasons and our orientation in it that this conversation has helped to bring about and confirm, I have set my will on going for a walk in the park with you, conditional on what I am confident will be your agreement." Note that this command is self-directed and conditional but not provisional. It is up to you to satisfy the condition by commanding your own will, but it is not an open-ended suggestion. To see this, note that, should you agree to satisfy the condition, the matter is closed, and we have, as it were, our marching (or walking) orders.

This suggests that the issuing of commands (whether to ourselves or to others) necessary for action is a different activity, though it takes place against a background of reasoning and makes use of that reasoning to be non-arbitrary. In other words, what grounds my confidence that my conditional self-command will meet with acceptance is that our conversation has revealed to both of us that we see the relative parts of our normative world in similar ways and are similarly oriented within it. We have established (provisionally, imperfectly, but nevertheless solidly) that as far as deciding to go for a walk in the park is concerned, each of us has the right to speak for both of us. This was not exactly the result of a contract, although it was the result of an exchange (or more likely, many exchanges, very few of which may have been concerned with how to spend this afternoon). It was also not the result of a deduction: deciding, on this picture, is not something that follows reasoning like the conclusion follows the premises of a syllogism. It is, rather, a different type of action, and so is guided by different norms. Here I am issuing a command or a report (perhaps only a conditional one)

and so what I need is the authority to speak, perhaps only for myself, perhaps for both of us. Such authority, however, comes not from any principles of reason or rationality, for these generate no commanding authority. They will come, instead, from the details of our interactions and our relationships, from the various facts that ground my confidence that you will accept my command, endorse my decision, see things as I do. Since these include our conversations and deliberations, the legitimacy of our decisions, whether shared or individual, can rest in a fundamental way on our reasoning, not because reasons are the name we give to items of reflective success, but because reasoning is what allows us to share a world and thus, to a greater or lesser extent, to know each other and ourselves.[44] Moreover, as we move from talking to acting, it is the background space of reasons and their connection to our joint decision to act that make the parts of that action intelligible or not. If we have decided to clean up to miss your nephew's recital, then my rushing to finish in order to leave in time to catch the recital will seem strange, inexplicable. You will be within your rights to rebuke me by saying, "What are you doing?" And if I reply, "I'm cleaning up the house," then you can retort, "I thought we were trying to miss the piano recital." That is, I have not given a fully adequate description of what I am doing, and so have not rendered my actions reasonable to you. We can sum up these thoughts with the following contrast: on the standard picture, reasoning is an activity that aims at and ends with the drawing of a conclusion, which is thus part of the reasoning process. On the social picture, though reasoning can prepare the ground for conclusions and decisions, the actual drawing of such conclusions is not part of the activity of reasoning, but goes beyond it.

1.6 Speaking for Others

Finally, in inviting someone to share a space of reasons with us, or to affirm that they already do share that space, we are inviting them to take what we say (in describing that space) as speaking for them as well. That our invitation has this basic form and content helps to make sense of the idea that its

[44] The idea that reasons are the names we give to reflective success comes from Korsgaard, *Sources*, 93–4.

authority is subject to our interlocutor's veto.[45] If you reject what I say as speaking for you as well, then I have not managed to say something that speaks for you. Now, talk of speaking for others is likely to be misunderstood. It can smack of precisely the arrogance that the social picture of reasoning developed here is in part meant to avoid. So I need to make clear the sense I am giving this phrase.

There are at least three distinct ways of speaking for others. First, there is commanding. In commanding you, I speak for you in the sense of instead of you, overriding whatever you might have said, and thereby replacing your words, in fact, your will, with mine. For me to command you, we need to stand in a hierarchical relationship and my speaking for you must be unilateral. My commanding you rules out your commanding me, at least here and now.[46] To command you, I need to be able to speak to you, but not so clearly to be able to speak with you, though I may need your recognition of my authority over you.

Second, there is the form of speaking for others that tends to be characteristic of intellectuals on the barricades, who claim to speak for the masses. Here one speaks for others in the sense that one claims to represent them, to articulate their interests or desires or ends. Such a claim is also a claim to authority, perhaps the authority of expertise or wisdom. As such, it often rests on a view of the speaker's connection to reasons: it is because of the intellectual's supposed better grasp of the true situation and the reasons it affords that she claims to have the right to speak for others and represent their interests better than they could on their own. Such speech is also unilateral: intellectuals do not expect or allow the masses to speak for them, nor do they think that what they say can be effectively or legitimately challenged by the masses.

[45] It also makes clear that treating reasoning as a form of inviting thus treats our reasoning partner from the second rather than the third person point of view. On the importance of the second person in understanding reasoning together, see Darwall, *Second-Person Standpoint*. Habermas criticizes Brandom's "score-keeping" approach to the evaluation of reasons for failing to hold on to this feature of reasoning. Jürgen Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language," in *Truth and Justification*, ed. and trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 162–3.

[46] As I discuss in the next chapter, there are some cases where a group of people stands to one another in a series of relationships such that it appears that each can command the other. Think, for instance, of any group that makes decisions by taking majority-rule votes. Each member of the group has, by casting a deciding vote, the possibility of commanding the others, but each is thus also under the command of her fellow members insofar as they, too, can vote. For such cases, the claims above need to be formulated more precisely, but these details do not matter for the contrast drawn here.

The indignity of speaking for others[47] in this sense stems from the fact that it implicitly involves, no less than the issuing of commands does, treating those for whom one speaks as somehow inferior, lacking humanity or at least the capacities necessary to represent themselves. Unlike commands, however, it is a form of speech directed not so clearly to those for whom one speaks but on their behalf to others with whom one may be deliberating or negotiating. To the extent that the intellectual on the barricade's speech calls for a response, the response she seeks is from those in power, not the masses. Note that the indignity here is not built into the activity of representing others by speaking for them in this way, but only to the form this takes when one's representation is not suitably responsive to those one represents.

These forms of speaking for others stand in contrast with the form of speaking for others involved in the social activity of reasoning. This third form of speaking for others can be found in Stanley Cavell's discussion of the authority with which ordinary language philosophers make their claims:

> When Wittgenstein, or at this stage any philosopher appealing to ordinary language, "says what we say," what he produces is not a generalization . . . but a (supposed) *instance* of what we say. We may think of it as a sample. The introduction of the sample by the words "we say . . ." is an invitation for you to see whether you have such a sample, or can accept mine as a sound one. One sample does not refute or disconfirm another; if two are in disagreement they vie with one another for the same confirmation. The only source of confirmation here is ourselves. And each of us is fully authoritative in this struggle.[48]

He goes on to describe what happens when such offering of instances fails to find confirmation, saying that "At such a crossroads we have to conclude that on this point we are simply different; that is, we cannot here speak for one another. But no claim has been made which has been disconfirmed; my authority has been restricted." It turns out, that is, not that I have "said something false about 'us'," but there is "no us (yet, maybe never) to say anything about." This leads him to conclude that "the philosophical appeal

[47] The phrase is Foucault's, from a conversation with Deleuze. Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 209. For some discussion of the problems of speaking for others, see Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others," *Cultural Critique* (winter 1991–2): 5–32.

[48] *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 19.

to what we say . . . are claims to community . . . The wish and search for community are the wish and search for reason."[49]

Here I speak for you by speaking for an us of which we are both members, by saying what I take it we would say. Such speech has three distinctive features. In order for us to be connected so that I can speak for you in this sense, you must have the right to speak for me. This already marks a big difference from the first two forms of speaking for others, which are, in the forms that raise concerns, unilateral. But reciprocity requires more than mere symmetry. It also commits me, second, to being answerable to you, to being open to the possibility that you deny my attempts and perhaps, in so doing, distance yourself from me.[50] I only succeed in speaking for you if you accept that my words do speak for you, and thus acknowledge the "us" on whose behalf I have presumed to speak. If I am attempting to speak for you in this way rather than issuing a command, attempting to manipulate you, or doing any number of other things I can do with words, then I must leave open the possibility of your rejecting my offer. Leaving open this possibility not only means that you can say no, but that your doing so has an effect on what has happened, makes it the case that my offer fails, that I have not, in fact, spoken for you. It thus requires that you, too, have authority. Your rejection may, for instance, make it the case that I have failed to speak for myself, either. We are looking at houses. I say, "We'll take it," and you respond, "No, we won't." This does not leave me having offered to buy the house alone. Alternatively, it may leave me reasserting my claim, but now offering more explicitly or clearly my understanding of the connection that I take to support it, a reassertion you can, in turn, accept or challenge. Finally, speaking for others while holding what I say open to criticism also requires that I be vulnerable in the sense that I allow that my position within what I take to be a space of reasons can change as a result of our interaction. Reciprocal, fully answerable attempts at mutual persuasion or conversation, where each nevertheless insists on holding her ground thus do not count as reasoning according to the social picture.

[49] Ibid. 20.

[50] Ibid. e.g. 19–27. See also my discussion of "we", -reasons in "Outline of a Theory." On answerability, see Forst, *Right to Justification.* Answerability understood as openness to criticism plays a central role in Kant's conception of reason. See O'Neill "Reason and Politics" and "Four Models."

1.7 Thinking Differently

The full development of the social picture of reasoning occupies the rest of the book. Since, however, the painting of conceptual pictures is not what many philosophers think of as the primary activity of philosophy nor an activity that is familiar outside of philosophy, it is important to try to say something about the kind of activity this is, if only to forestall certain kinds of misunderstandings and frustrations. To begin with, what is meant by talk of pictures? It is a term that Wittgenstein uses in his famous remark about a picture holding us captive, and I mean to invoke his meaning in using it myself. But what is that meaning?

If we take the five features of the activity of reasoning I am trying to describe here one at a time, and note that in each case, there is an alternative way of describing the activity of reasoning, we can naturally ask why a particular set of features must go together. Why, for instance, should we not try to develop a theory that describes the activity of reasoning as social but episodic, or as social and ongoing, but primarily a matter of making assertions, not issuing invitations? Each such possible combination would then yield a kind of theory about reasoning, and we might use such a taxonomy to make sense of the variety of positions philosophers and others take in their discussions of reason and reasoning.

The idea of a picture goes beyond the idea of a bundle of features that categorize a kind of theory in two important ways. First, the image of a picture is of something whose disparate elements fit or hang together in a certain way, so that the adoption of one part of the picture pushes us to adopt its other features. The elements of a philosophical picture, just like the elements of an ordinary picture, fit together because of features that may not be purely logical or conceptual. So describing certain bundles as constituting pictures is not to rule out other bundles as inconsistent or incoherent or even false. The point, rather, is that because the picture as a whole hangs together, we can be led to adopt some of its elements without really noticing that we are doing so. One danger of this, one way that a picture can hold us captive, is that even when we consciously and explicitly reject one feature of a picture, we may be pulled back towards that feature by other aspects of the picture we do not even recognize that we have endorsed. So, for instance, you might not be fully convinced that we

ought to conceive of reasoning as episodic, but nevertheless keep finding yourself imagining the activity of reasoning episodically because you are assuming that reasoning cannot merely involve issuing invitations because reasons aspire to be decisive.

Faced with a picture that holds us captive, it can be liberating to entertain a wholly different picture, and thus to expand our imaginative possibilities, even if, at the end of the day, we do not think the new, radically different picture captures the whole truth either. So another advantage of the picture metaphor is that it makes room for a variety of responses, including ones that offer new, possibly hybrid, alternatives to the two I have begun to sketch here or, as my own thinking on the matter currently stands, accepting that each picture captures something different and that in the absence of two distinct pictures, we are bound to misinterpret aspects of our lives and their possibilities.

Because pictures often frame or provide the background to our particular theories, a contrast between two pictures moves of necessity at a high level of generality, often blurring the important distinctions between different theories that rely on a similar picture. And this can lead to misunderstanding. In particular, there are many different ways of developing full-blown theories of reasoning within the two pictures distinguished in this book, and its argument does not, in general, pay attention to these more particular differences. Nevertheless, from time to time, a point is explained by reference to a particular theory that relies on a given picture. In those cases, a proponent of a different theory relying on the same picture is likely to reply that a more sophisticated version of that approach does not run into that particular danger. I ask such a reader for a grain or two of salt at those moments, to see the smaller argument as an illustration of the larger point, not the full argument for it, and to ask whether the more general point being made nevertheless applies to her favored position.

A further way of understanding the idea of drawing pictures is that drawing a picture invites you to adopt an ideal. The offering of ideals does not fit neatly on the standard division of theories into the normative and the descriptive. Ideals, in the sense used here, are akin to what John Rawls calls "realistic utopias."[51] They are descriptions of a world or a social order or, in this case, an activity that we might construct or engage in,

[51] *Justice as Faimess: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

although we do not always do so now. Offering an ideal sketches a possibility to which we might aspire rather than argues that something is necessary or obligatory.[52] In the sense that it sketches something we might do, it adopts a descriptive tone, and insofar as what it describes is meant to be realistic even if not yet realized, the sketching of ideals borrows from descriptions of what we already do. But the point of sketching ideals is not merely to describe our current activity, but to offer attractive possibilities, and so they play something like a normative role as well. The difference, however, is that their normativity comes from their attractiveness, not their being required. It is important that the ideal being sketched here is realistic in the sense that it can be realized, acted upon, right now by anyone. That is, it is not an ideal in the sense of a distant goal that leaves open the question of its feasibility and the means for reaching it. The ideal of reasonable interaction being sketched here serves as a kind of constraint on our present actions. It tells us not which ends to seek, but the means that would make our actions and interactions more reasonable here and now.

To those used to normative arguments that attempt to ground norms on undeniable or unavoidable foundations, the invitation to consider an ideal and find it attractive will seem hopelessly weak and underwhelming, not a form of argument at all. To dispel such frustrations about the arguments to follow, note two things: (1) we can think of both arguments that invite us to adopt ideals and arguments that aim to force us into certain positions as relying on a similar strategy: making plain the costs of not accepting their conclusions.[53] In painting a social picture of reasoning as the central element in an ideal of living together, this book highlights what we lose in terms of the possibilities of living together to the extent that we do not realize this idealized activity, and suggests some of the attractions for us in living and acting this way. If you accept the account of the costs and the attractions, then you should accept the ideal as your own as well. If you don't, then you shouldn't. (2) Following from this, whether or not you accept the social

[52] This marks perhaps the sharpest break between my project here and various Kantian attempts to discuss reasoning as social, all of which search for something like necessary preconditions for reasoning or action so as to show that we are forced to follow the norms that they uncover. See, for instance, Forst, *Right to Justification*, Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" and "Discourse Ethics," and Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*.

[53] I take this way of capturing a broader sense of what might count as philosophical argument from Cora Diamond, "Anything But Argument," *Philosophical Investigations* 5, no. 1 (January 1982): 23–41.

picture as attractive depends not only on where you initially stand in encountering it, but also what can be said in its articulation and development. In other words, I offer a series of arguments on the way to constructing the social picture of reasoning, and, being arguments, they are each open to criticism and challenge. As with any argument, the responses open to you upon reading it go beyond accepting or rejecting it.

What, then, does the fully articulated social picture of reasoning look like? If offering reasons is a matter of offering claims that aspire to be decisive commands, then a theory of reasons should provide prior procedures for determining the reasons we have, whether by laying out a theory of rational choice or something like a categorical imperative procedure.[54] As with procedures for free and fair elections, these need to be worked out ahead of time and then used as the standard to measure what we actually say to see if it rises to the level of a reason.

If, however, reasons are invitations that can only keep conversations going but not end them, then their status as reasons can only be established, as O'Neill points out, retrospectively and recursively.[55] First, they must be treated as reasons by others to vindicate the authority on which they rest. Second, they must survive the test of free and open discussion, and this is not a process that comes to an end. On such a view, a theory of reasons can only be, as it were, negative and defensive. It can tell us what not to do, which utterances cannot ever have the authority of reason, but not positively what reasons we have.

Sometimes conversations are brought to a close, not because the parties stop talking, but because their interaction has collapsed into a series of commands or the babble of mere noise. A theory of reasoning might help us see when this happens and how to avoid it. But it cannot thus provide algorithms for decision-making and acting. Rather, it provides guidelines for what kinds of interaction count as genuine conversation. In short, a theory of reasoning helps us to recognize reasonableness.

[54] This is John Rawls's phrase for a kind of schema of practical reasoning to be drawn from Kant's examples in the *Groundwork*. I do not think Kant ought to be read, at least not in the *Groundwork*, as offering us as kind of algorithm for generating a theory of moral, rational choice, nor do I think Rawls read him as doing so. For Rawls's discussion of what he calls the CI-procedure, see John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Barbara Herman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 167–70.

[55] O'Neill, "Reason and Politics," 21.

It might also serve to reassure us, to provide a defense of our reasonable faith in the meaningfulness of our words and our mutual intelligibility.[56] Such a defense could aim to show that such intelligibility is not conceptually incoherent, or it might provide some positive support for our confidence in particular cases, positive grounds that are not esoteric or metaphysical, but are bound up in our ordinary practices, even when these fail. Both Wittgenstein and Cavell, for instance, offer reminders of the vastness and depth of the forms of life we share, and how they provide the background against which agreement and disagreement is possible. Such support falls short of a proof or a metaphysical guarantee, but it can be more than sufficient to support our faith and confidence.

Finally, this attention to our ordinary practices of finding common ground and mutual attunement suggests that we think differently about the skills that make for good reasoning. Traditionally, the model of good reasoning has been good decision-making and effective advocacy, the ability to skillfully invoke the rules of reason in service of one's aims. So understood, reasoning is an assertive skill, one which some use effectively to direct and project their wills in the world, a kind of normative bulldozer that clears paths for action and belief. But if the activity of reasoning is the activity of sharing the world, of attuning ourselves to others within reciprocal relationships, then the good reasoner is going to look much more like the good listener: someone who is able to hear others' words as invitations, and be affected or moved by them, and someone who is able to hear and appropriately react to the responses her own invitations prompt. The truly reasonable person, then, is willing sometimes to move to find common ground and forge and maintain reciprocal relationships, and also to understand when not doing so is part of being reasonable. And a social picture of reasoning might serve to provide guidelines for such a reasonable person in how to engage in the very activities her reasonableness directs her towards. Rather than giving us a theory with which to judge interactions as rational or not, a social picture of reasoning might be thought to show its value in animating what might be thought of as the foreign policy of a reasonable person.[57]

[56] Kant describes his own philosophy as offering a defense of our reasonable faith. For discussion of this aspect of Kant's thought, see Rawls, *Lectures*.

[57] I mean here to rely on a contrast that is sometimes made in discussions of international relations and global justice, between theories that lay out principles of justice for the global order, and theories that

1.8 The Work Ahead

According to the standard picture of reason, different categories of reason can be seen as occupying sets of concentric circles. At the core are principles of reason that govern the very structure of our actions and beliefs: the requirement that she who wills the ends must also will the necessary means, and the laws of logic. Around this core might be principles telling us that we have reason to promote our interests or overall well-being, or to follow the laws of mathematics, or governing the formation of beliefs on the basis of forms of evidence. At the outer limit would be, for some theories of reason, moral principles and the laws of the special sciences. Thus, the standard picture works outwards from the structure of action and belief to the structure of the self or of reality, and then finally to our relationships with other people and the particular features of our world. Insofar as the social picture starts from the thought that reasoning is always a social activity, it does not work outwards to our relationship with others, but begins there. And instead of working outwards through categories of reasons, it works inwards through different types of reasoning activities.

Part II of this book discusses three such activities: casual conversation, responsive conversation or reasoning, and engaged reasoning. Each category is a subset of the one before it, and the move from the wider activity to the narrower one goes by tightening the requirements on responsiveness that the activity requires. To converse with you, I need to be sufficiently responsive to you to be speaking with and not merely to you. Not all talking in the presence of others counts as conversing. But to reason with you I have to invite you to take my words as speaking for you as well and do so in a way that leaves what I say open to criticism from any quarter. This means that I have to be more responsive to you than when I converse with you, paying greater attention to how you take up my invitations and your grounds for criticizing what I say. If we further tighten the requirements of responsiveness we get a special category of reasoning I call engagements.

work out the principles that ought to guide just democratic states in acting on the international scene; that is, between giving us principles of international justice and principles of foreign policy for a just society. See, for instance, Erin Kelly, "Human Rights as Foreign Policy Imperatives," in *Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy*, ed. D. Chatterjee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). This marks one of the fundamental differences between my project here and that of Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*.

When we engage with one another, we are concerned not only to make open invitations, but to make successful ones, and so we are required to be more responsive to those we are engaged with than when we merely reason with them. The discussion of these three activities in Part II elucidates their central characteristic norms, and shows how these shape the activity in question. These norms, insofar as they define the activity of reasoning, are thus the norms that guide the kind of living together the ideal painted here depicts.

All three activities of reasoning are essentially interactive, and they are defined by the levels of responsiveness they require. But defining these levels of responsiveness does not yet help us figure out how to respond to what our conversation, reasoning, and engaged partners say to us and the invitations they offer us. Part III then focuses on how to respond to proposals and invitations. Chapter 7 argues that one constraint on our responding reasonably to the proposals others make to us is that these responses both treat the proposals as proposals and thus not as commands or mere noise, and that they do not undermine our capacity to continue reasoning. In order to meet this requirement, we must constitute ourselves in such a manner that no part of us has dictatorial authority over the rest. Chapter 8 explores the implications of this requirement for the range of reasonable responses that are open to us. Chapter 9 turns to a broader requirement, one that applies to our conversational responses as well. In order to continue conversing with others, we must remain intelligible to them, and this constrains how we can justify and explain our actions and beliefs as well as the ways we structure them. One consequence of the requirement that we respond intelligibly is that we can respond to proposals by pointing to what we do as means to our ends.

Chapters 4–9 thus fill in the details of the social picture of reasoning. The rest of Part I takes up two topics where the social picture enters particularly unfamiliar territory. The social picture of reasoning casts reasoning as a species of casual conversation. Since casual conversation is not an activity that receives much attention from those who think about reason, Chapter 3 brings the phenomenon of casual conversation into view and demonstrates its rational significance. Chapter 2 takes up a general issue about reasoning: the authority that reasoning generates. One way that the standard picture of reason holds us captive is by anchoring our picture of reason in a particular understanding of one of its features: its authority. The standard picture

draws a close connection between reason and the authority possessed by laws and rules, an authority that can be described as the right to rule or command or pass judgment. This connection supports a central feature of the standard picture: that reasoning is an activity aimed at reaching conclusions, and thus that aspires to be decisive. In order to open up conceptual space in which to develop a picture of reasoning as an ongoing social activity, we need to loosen this connection between reasoning and the authority of command. Chapter 2 does so not by denying that reasoning has a deep connection to authority, but by loosening up our conception of authority to make room for alternative forms of authority that might be connected to a picture of reasoning as a social and ongoing activity.