

A.J. Julius, *Reconstruction*

1.

My first thought as I read through AJ's manuscript was, "I didn't think they made them like this any more." *Reconstruction* is utterly original: a project and a voice all their own. It is exhilarating to read, and we'd be poorer without it.

I suppose it says something about what a strange discipline philosophy is, though, that having sincerely said this, I can sincerely go on to say that I feel I have learned little from it. I don't come away from AJ's manuscript with the sense that I understand better the things—freedom and how our actions may threaten or promote it—that he seeks to illuminate. Work that I admire less has, odd as it is to say, taught me more.

AJ's project is driven by a few, very abstract ideas. There's Independence, the denial that my attitudes toward doing something, or the fact that I will do something, can contribute to my reasons for doing it. There's the idea, which we might call the Principled Principle, that I have reason to act for the reasons I have as such: that I realize a special kind of value in performing a principled action. There's Publicity, the idea that you have reason to enable me to perform principled actions. And finally there's Julian Freedom: the idea that unfreedom (or at least a central kind of unfreedom) is nothing more or less than being stymied from performing a principled action, because others have thrown new reasons in your path.

AJ introduces these ideas with a few, spare examples and little or no argument. Since I don't find these ideas plausible, except when I confuse them with more concrete, qualified alternatives, I have trouble getting into the spirit of his project. And it's not as if no heart beats in this breast. I think I too care about the things that AJ cares about. I'm no more on board with concentration camps, or slavery, or obstructing country paths, than the next guy. But I don't recognize anything of what revolts, or unnerves, or irks me about those things in AJ's principles. I feel as though I'm watching a squaredance underway on the other side of soundproof glass. It all looks marvelously intricate and concerted. But I can't hear the music.

2.

Philosophical persuasion can follow an abductive course. You dramatize some moral outrage, and then you offer up certain ideas as its best explanation. AJ might seem, at first, to be taking this route. Tearing up your paper airplanes, blocking your way, threatening to visit some evil on your sister, ripping the cigarette from your lips, playing my part in a structure that relegates you to a life of cleaning other people's houses, keeping people like Frederick Douglass in chattel slavery, trying to kill people like Primo Levi, or these are all—to put it mildly—morally objectionable. And AJ describes an abstract structure that all these actions share.

The difficulty with this abductive approach, which has me thinking that AJ puts little store by it, is that too many actions seem to share this abstract structure. Indeed, it looks like any action that affects the physical and social condition of another person in a significant way shares this abstract structure. And that's just about every action there ever was or will be.

Take some such action of mine that affects your physical and social condition in some significant way. Since your reasons depend on your physical and social condition, it looks like this action

will, in turn, affect your reasons. However, AJ denies that my action will *extinguish* your *old* reasons: the reasons that you had before my action. It gives you new reasons,¹ without voiding the old. (He is led to this conclusion by an argument from Independence and Publicity, which we will consider later.) So you have both sets of reasons, old and new. However, there's no way, AJ argues, to integrate them within a single deliberative outlook. So you cannot perform a principled action. According to the Principled Principle, this deprives you of something that matters to you. According to Publicity, it is something that I had reason to refrain from doing. And, finally, according to Julian Freedom, I have made you unfree.

In sum, the trouble is that it looks like AJ's indictment of the "bad" cases can be read out against almost any action.

That is, AJ's primal scene of bondage might as well have been LP's inviting me to this workshop. That gave me new reasons, and so violated Publicity, and made me unfree.

Indeed, no intent to direct the action of another is even required. I'm on the hiking trail, oblivious to the fact that you are a few minutes behind. As things are, you have reason to use your so-so walking stick. But the stick I found is better. If I tire of it, and cast it aside, then I give you new reasons, to trade up when you come upon it. So I violate Publicity, and put you in bondage.

Again: You have spilt your allotted ink, but are still pregnant with verse. You have reason to write another sonnet, which is why you have reason to get more ink. So, if I refuse to give you my fair allotment, I prevent you from doing what you have reason to do. So, by refusing, I violate Publicity.

Again: I make a move on your ink. You have reason to defend your ink against my depredation. I wonder whether I should stop. But if I stop, you will have nothing to defend against. So I will prevent you from doing what you have reason to do. So, by de-depredating, I violate Publicity.

It isn't just that AJ's indictment is indiscriminate: that it applies to these good cases no less than to these bad ones. It's also that there seem familiar, pedestrian, discriminate alternatives. For a variety of reasons, it matters whether you have the opportunity for valuable activities. This opportunity requires all sorts of natural and man-made conditions. You need know-how and raw materials. You need to be healthy and unfettered. And so on. Although having such opportunity isn't all that answers to the name of freedom, it's certainly an important part of that heterogeneous ideal. Accordingly, it matters whether these opportunities are distributed fairly between you, me, and everyone else. So, if my doing something would deprive you of your fair

¹ There's a problem with this. AJ says that you have a reason to X only if you could X if everyone acted on the reasons that they have (138). So I can't give you new reasons to X by an action that makes it possible, where it was not previously, for you to X. For if I acted on the reasons that I have, and so did not give you new reasons to X, then you could not X. But many relevant cases of giving you new reasons are of this structure. For example, if I kidnap your children, I give you new reasons to seek their release. But it would be impossible for you to seek their release if I had not kidnapped them.

share of such opportunities, then I have reason to refrain from doing it. Killing Levi, enslaving Douglass, blocking your way, tearing up your airplanes, relegating you to a life of drudgery, seem straightforwardly wrong on these grounds. They deprive the victim of his or her fair share of opportunity to do worthwhile things. By contrast, inviting me to this workshop, dropping the walking stick, peaceably withdrawing without your ink, insisting on my fair share of ink seem straightforwardly not wrong on these grounds. They don't deprive the victim of his or her fair share of opportunity.

Furthermore, it isn't just that this simpler account gets the intuitive extension right. It's also transparent that it matters, and why it matters, that people to have a fair share of opportunity for valuable activities. By contrast, the Principled Principle, Publicity, and Julian Freedom are far less familiar or gripping ideas. And Independence has no moral content at all; it's redolent of empty formalism.

Now, I don't mean to suggest that all that matters, even all that matters under the heading of interpersonal freedom, is opportunity for valuable activities. It also matters to us that we enjoy control, with respect to others, over our person and perhaps also over external things, quite independently of the uses to which we might put those things. It matters to us that we don't stand in relations of inferiority to, or subordination to, other people. And we need some account of what's wrong about the sort of threats associated with blackmail or abuse of office, even though they seem, at first glance, to improve the victim's "choice-situation." My own view is that these are wrong because they involve exercises of power over others that there is no good reason for one to have. As far as I can see, these further factors—not to mention familiar objections to paternalism and vicarious punishment—explain what is wrong about tearing the cigarette from your lips, or threatening to visit evils on your sister unless you eat your vegetables, or other examples that AJ depicts elsewhere, such as in his article, "The Possibility of Exchange."

This is, of course, unfair. AJ will insist that his analysis does not, in the end, imply that the good cases are bad. LP's invitation, and my stick-abandonment, and your refusal to fund my composition from your well, and my standing down from Operation Ink Freedom, are not, on closer inspection, cases of wrongful bondage. Instead, LP's state of mind in inviting me, what the invitation was an invitation to, and other features of that case, mean that it does not, after all, have the objectionable, abstract structure. Later, I will have things to say about these salvage operations. The question at this point is why we are supposed to be sufficiently attracted to AJ's analysis to mount them in the first place. And the present point is that whatever is supposed to attract us to that analysis it's not any manifest abductive promise.

3.

I take it, then, that AJ does not expect us to be attracted by the individual dramatizations, one by one. Instead, we are supposed to be attracted by the freestanding appeal of Independence, Publicity, the Principled Principle, and Julian Freedom. Yet, again, I don't find any of these ideas plausible, in the way in which AJ understands them. At very least, I don't see any real argument for them.

Consider Independence, to begin with. Distinguish two relevantly different versions of Independence in AJ's discussion. First, that the fact that I will, or am likely to, X cannot contribute any way to my having reason to X. This seems to me correct. I would explain it on the following grounds. When we consider whether we should do something (at least leaving aside facilitating actions, so as not to prejudice the actualism/possibilism debate), we consider how things would be *if* we were to do it. For that hypothetical question, the actuality or probability of our doing it makes no difference.²

The second version of Independence is that the fact that I have an attitude or disposition toward X-ing cannot contribute, in any way, to my having reason to X. This seems to me untenable. Whatever else this form of Independence is supposed to rule out, it is supposed to rule out cases in which:

My X-ing could have some bad property that would make it not worth doing, despite other properties that recommend it. If I decide to X, then that will bring it about that it does not have that bad property. So my so deciding contributes to its being the case that I have reason to X.

Such is the structure of the cases that AJ advances, where, say, X-ing is tearing up your airplanes, and the "bad property" is violating Publicity.

The first problem is that when AJ fears that his own positive account may violate Independence, he then seems to deny that it applies to cases with this structure.

² We can explain in a similar way why it's absurd to conclude from the fact that I won't take the necessary means, that I don't have reason to perform the end. In considering whether I have reason to perform the end, I consider what things will be like, if I perform it. But if I perform it, then I take the necessary means. Since the taking of the necessary means is built into the hypothetical that I consider when I consider the reasons to perform the end, the actuality or probability of my taking the necessary means is neither here nor there.

If so, we don't yet have grounds to "project... from these observations" that "an action x can depend, for its being a thing that I have good reason to do, on the actual or upcoming occurrence of a second action y, only if my having reason for y, where I have it, is not in virtue of my having a reason for x" (26). The explanation above does not apply when y is not a necessary means to x.

AJ might say that this explanation does not explain why my reason for the end is not affected by the fact that, although I will take the necessary means to the end, I will do something that spoils the value of the end (27). My reply is the one that he seems aware of, that the end, properly speaking, is the unspoiled thing, so that spoiling "it" really is failing to take the necessary means to it. This finer specification of the end isn't special pleading, but simply follows from what is good about it.

AJ's response to this line is very difficult to make out. For one thing, AJ describes the example so that poisoning the drink not only spoils it, but also prevents me from drinking it, because "I'm not completely crazy." For this example to tell us anything, we need precisely to ensure that spoiling the drink *doesn't* prevent me from drinking.

AJ also seems to say that, where I won't take the necessary means (either to the loosely described end, or to the properly described end-with-value, by spoiling its value) the end isn't available to me (27). But why should the availability of X depend on whether I will, in fact, X?

Does this give up on independence? My intention might seem to make the overt action valuable by making it the case that the action doesn't objectionably preempt my forming of the intention.... This assumes that a thing can be made good by virtues that consist wholly in the absence of possible defects.... I'm saying that it doesn't follow that, where I have the intention, my having the intention makes the action good by making it the case that it does not have this vice (53).

But if that reply's available to AJ, why isn't it also available to intended paper-airplane vandals?

The second problem is that some cases with this structure seem fine. Suppose that being undecided raises my pulse. If my pulse is raised, then I risk a heart attack by running. If I decide to run, then my pulse will be low, and there will be no risk of heart attack. Otherwise I have every reason to run. It seems to me that, provided I decide to run, I have reason to run.

The third problem is that, double standards and counterexamples aside, there is no good argument for this version of Independence. Is the argument supposed to be: "Because deliberation is directed outward to the world, rather inward into my own mental states"?³ But this is just a rough way of making the point that deliberation is focused on value. And, sometimes, what is of value depends on features of my psychology. Pleasure, friendship, success, etc. are all values, but whether they obtain, or will be realized, depend on various features of my state of mind: a hankering for this food, a genuine affection for this person, a commitment to this project of the kind that is likely to keep me on task. In our cardiac example, what is of value is a well-functioning heart, and it happens, in this case, to depend on a feature of my psychology, a settled mind.

Is the argument that: "Because if deciding to do something made it OK, then anything could be made OK"?⁴ But what we are proposing is not that deciding to do anything makes it OK, but rather that in certain circumstances, deciding to do something, by affecting other things of value, can contribute to its being not not OK.

In any event, the most important point to make is that neither version of Independence actually supports the most important use to which AJ puts Independence. This is to use Independence to show, in conjunction with Publicity, that when my action gives you new reasons, it does not extinguish your old reasons. The argument runs as follows:

1. If my action extinguished your old reasons, then it would satisfy Publicity, but in virtue of something it itself brought about.
2. I have reason for my action, if I do, in part because that action, if performed, would satisfy Publicity.
3. So, I have reason for my action, if I do, in part because of something that my action, if performed, would bring about (not just causally, but in the broadest sense of "bring about").

³ "When I'm thinking whether to perform an action I don't often take the fact of my own attitudes for the action as counting in the action's favor. My thinking does not seem incorrect for lack of attention to those attitudes. It doesn't seem incomplete or even abbreviated..." (8-9). In the examples following this note, neglect of the relevant psychological states would be incorrect.

⁴ "But nothing is made to be okay by the fact that I'll do it" (74).

4. But 3 violates Independence.
5. So, my action does not extinguish your old reasons.

The difficulty is that 3 doesn't violate either version of Independence that AJ discusses. It would violate a version of Independence that said that the fact that my action, if performed, would bring about something cannot contribute to my having reason to perform it. But this is a lunatic principle. It means that the fact that if I fish my child from the pool, then I will save its life cannot contribute to my having reason to fish my child from the pool. Or to have a case closer in structure to tearing up your airplanes, imagine a game in which no player may leave the field while the ball is in play, but in which play stops as soon as the ball is carried across the far end of the field to score a goal. The lunatic principle would imply that a player cannot have reason to carry the ball over the far end, because so doing would secure the permissibility of thereby leaving the field. Indeed, I'm not sure what reasons for action would survive this Independence principle.

As far as I can tell, AJ just mistakes, at the crucial moment, this third, lunatic Independence principle—that whether I have reason to do something cannot depend on what my doing it would bring about—for the first, sane and correct Independence principle—that whether I have reason to do something cannot depend on the fact that I will, in fact, do it, and so what my doing it will bring about will, in fact, occur.⁵ But it's the lunatic principle that AJ needs. To see this, consider a case in which, in fact, no doubt about it, I am going to do the right thing, and leave your paper airplanes be. Nevertheless, I can still run through the apology that AJ wants to expose as ridiculous. “Interestingly, if I were to tear up your paper airplanes—which, as we know, I am not going to do—then you would no longer have reasons to fly them, but instead would have only the new reasons to sweep up the pieces that my tearing would give you. So if I were to tear up your paper airplanes, you would not be prevented from doing what you have reason to do.” This apology depends in no way on the fact that I *will* tear up your paper airplanes, and indeed it explicitly asserts that there is no such fact. It merely appeals to how things would be if I were to tear them up, as all justifications, apologetic or not, of actions do.

In Toronto, AJ's reply seemed to be: None of the above, but rather:

Schmindependence: If, “as things are,” I am required not to X, then it cannot make it permissible for me to X that, if I X-ed, then, “as things would then be,” I would not be required not to X.”

My first worry about this is that I don't see what this has to do with bootstrapping. Hence, the Yiddification. Schmindependence looks like a tautology. If, as things are, I am required to X, then, as things are, I'm required to X. *Nothing* suffices to make it permissible, *as things are*, that I X. A fortiori, bootstrapping gambits won't make it permissible. Granted, this would explain why fishing my child out is OK. As things are, I'm not required not to fish my child out (quite the contrary). And this would be a principled reason (which I was looking for in Toronto) for

⁵ Making matters worse, AJ also slides back and forth between the first two versions of Independence as well. For instance, “You could take your given *disposition* of obstruction...Your *obstruction*...” (83).

saying that there could not be a game as I have described it. If I'm required not to leave the field, I'm required not to leave the field. The fact that if I leave the field it will then be the case that it's OK to be off the field is neither here nor there.

My other worry, which is related to the first, is that now I don't see how the argument is supposed to work.

Back to the beginning. Again, we want to show that I don't extinguish your "old" reasons. So the argument needs two things: (A) It needs a version of Publicity such that if I did extinguish your old reasons, then I *would thereby* satisfy Publicity. (B) And it needs a version of Independence such that satisfying Publicity in this way would violate Independence.

We seem to face a choice between two publicity principles:

Publicity Narrow (or "Rigidified"): If you have reason, "as things are," to X, then I am required not to act in a way that, if I act in that way, you cannot X.

Publicity Wide: I am required not to act in such a way that, if I act in that way, then you cannot act for the reasons that, "as things will then be," you have.⁶

Dilemma:

If Publicity Wide, then we do get (A). If I tear up your paper airplanes and if this extinguishes your reason to fly, then you can act for the reasons that, "as things will then be," you have. So my tearing up your paper airplanes would satisfy Publicity Wide. But we don't get (B). There is not, as things are, a requirement on me that I don't tear up your paper airplanes. There is only a requirement on me not to violate Publicity Wide, which again I satisfy by tearing. So tearing them up doesn't violate Schmindependence (no matter what bootstrapping potential tearing might have).

If Publicity Narrow, then we do get (B). As things are, you have reason to fly paper airplanes. So, as things are, I am required not to tear them up. So, a fortiori, I don't make it the case that I was not under this requirement by tearing them up, as Schmindependence reminds us. I merely violate that requirement. But now we don't get (A). I violate Publicity Narrow *simply by tearing up your paper airplanes*. Suppose, for reductio, that when I tear up your paper airplanes, I do extinguish your old reasons to fly. Still, I don't satisfy Publicity Narrow. So we don't get any contradiction. We just get the result that, whether or not I extinguish your old reasons to fly, I violate a requirement by tearing up your paper airplanes. That's perfectly compatible with its being the case that I extinguish your old reasons. (Which is, as it happens, my own view. I shouldn't tear up your paper airplanes, although if I do, you no longer have reasons to fly, and are no less able to act for the reasons you have on the "de dicto" reading.)

⁶ By the way, in the ms., AJ tends to assume, without argument or even announcement, that embedded conditionals are material—or at least that to falsify the condition of a conditional requirement is to satisfy it. Why?

Perhaps AJ will want to say that Publicity is the combination of Publicity Wide and Publicity Narrow. Fine, but I don't see how it helps.

I should add—putting something back that I cut from an earlier draft of these comments, thinking that it was overkill—that I find it very, very odd to think that your “old” reasons to fly your paper airplanes *could* survive my tearing them up. That seems in tension with a pretty elemental ought-implies-can principle. And if *faits accomplis* don't change our reasons, are we made unfree by the injustices of the past, or at least those injustices committed during our lifetimes, but by those now dead? If so, is liberation, without the unavailable cooperation of the dead, possible? The dead can't “stop stopping” us, can they? I don't even know how to think about it. But I worry here about inescapable enslavement to the dead hand of the past, or a secular doctrine of original sin.

It might be replied, by way of partial concession, and leaning on tensed oughts: If in fact I will tear up your airplanes, then, prior to my tearing them up, you have both the new reasons to do something else and the old reasons to (prepare to?) fly them, and so are Julian-unfree. But once I have torn them, you have only the new reasons, and so are no longer Julian-unfree. (I wondered at times whether this wasn't why AJ was so inclined to put the point in terms of before-the-fact dispositions or plans.) But this would be strange. Before I lock you up and throw away the key, you're unfree, but once I do, you're liberated. Perhaps that's what AJ wants to say. But if so, again I feel we've drifted far from anything I care about under the heading of interpersonal freedom.

There is another argument that AJ can give for the conclusion that my action does not extinguish your old reasons, which dispenses with anything like Independence. This would be to assume that Publicity must sometimes be a binding constraint. But if, as a rule, my action extinguished your old reasons, then Publicity would be a constraint that never bound. Since I don't find it problematic that Publicity never binds, I'm not swayed by this argument. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

4.

On to the Principled Principle: the idea that there is a value or standard of principled action. There are two things that might be meant by “value” or “standard” here. The weaker thesis is just that it manifests something good of its kind. It may well be true that principled action as a rule manifests something good of its kind. But such “values” and “standards” are too easy to find. Throughout Edward St. Aubyn's *Patrick Melrose* novellas, about “monsters of English privilege,” there cascade example after example of the kind “cutting remark,” which are ideals of their kind, meeting all the exacting requirements of the associated standards. But almost all of these speech acts are pointless or worse. (Note, among other things, that if a witty and sincerely meant compliment turns out, by accident, to be humiliating, then it doesn't count. So the fact that we discount accidents in the case of acting for the reasons that one has doesn't show that acting for the reasons one has is correct in any way other than being good of its kind (13).)

AJ's Principled Principle is supposed to be stronger: that there is reason to perform principled actions as such. The only way for me to get a grip on this thought is to work my way up from humbler analogies. Consider, by analogy, friendship, or apologizing, or practicing your faith, or

expressing yourself. At least in the proper context, these are valuable activities: activities that you have reason to pursue. And part of the value of these activities consists in the fact that they flow from the right sort of autonomously formed motives. It's not an apology or friendship if you are just going through the motions; it's not an act of faith, or speaking your mind, if you don't believe. These activities can't be wrung out of you by force or manipulation. The Principled Principle, then, generalizes this. It says that, in addition to friendship, apology, faith, expression, there is the further, more abstract valuable activity of acting for the reasons that you have as such. I just don't see this. Putting on my shoes is worth doing because it gets me shod, not because I fill the world with one more instance of this valuable kind, acting for the reasons I have. That strikes me as implausibly precious—and this from a guy who has built a career on implausible preciousness.

5.

Finally, Publicity. Because I don't think I have reason to act for the reasons that I have, I don't think that you have reason to act for the sake of my acting for the reasons that I have. I agree that part of what makes California's mass incarceration so horrific is that it keeps people from spending time with their families. But what makes that bad is, well, that it keeps them from spending time with their families, not that it keeps them from some more abstractly conceived activity of acting for the reasons that they have. Assuming that those inmates, and their families, could get their minds around AJ's suggestion, in its intended philosophical register, it would seem to them bizarrely off-topic.

In any event, if Publicity is a constraint, I think it never binds. If I tear up your airplanes, then I simply change your reasons. So I needn't worry that I prevent you from acting for the reasons that you have. Of course, I certainly should worry that I have deprived you of the opportunity to do something that you would enjoy, exerted a kind of domineering power over you, disposed of your property without authorization, and so on. But again that's the point: that's what matters, not whether you can act for the reasons you have, which you can all too easily do.

AJ anticipates this response: "Maybe reasons are not public in the way that I've claimed. There's no such reason as the reason I have to act for the sake of your doing what you have reason to do. In that case the objection to my tearing up your airplane will have to lie elsewhere: I will be destroying your property or causally interfering in your going project or subtracting from the quality of your life by closing off one valuable option." But AJ suggests that the price of saying this is practical solipsism: denying that the reasons of others can be practically consequential for me.

I know I'm supposed to find this bleakly isolating, but if this is what being lost in the supermarket comes to, I can still shop happily. And it's not *just* that I'm not a people person. Suppose I let you say your piece, when I could silence you, out of respect for the value of self-expression. Or I reunite you with your dying father, so you can say your goodbyes, when I could keep you apart. It can't be said that I'm failing to respect you as a person, as a being who is responsive to reasons. In giving you a hearing, in reuniting you with your family, I'm seeing to it that you can pursue an activity that is *partly constituted by* responsiveness to reasons, that you couldn't pursue if you weren't a person, attuned to reasons.

But actually, I'm conceding too much. I don't even get what the difference is supposed to be between preventing someone from acting for the reasons that they have and "closing off a valuable option." After all, acting for the reasons one has, performing principled actions, just is a very abstractly characterized kind of valuable activity, partly constituted by one's responsiveness to reasons. If acting so as to enable you to engage in *this* abstractly characterized valuable activity, partly constituted by your responsiveness to reasons is *not* practical solipsism, then why *is* it practical solipsism to act so as to enable you to engage in *less* abstractly characterized valuable activities, partly constituted by your responsiveness to reasons, like speaking your mind, practicing your faith, spending time with your loved ones, and so on?

6.

I noted earlier that the counterexamples—the good cases that AJ's analysis seemed to classify as bad—aren't, by AJ's lights, counterexamples. AJ's basic maneuver, roughly, is to say that you and I already have independent reason for the joint action [LP hosts, NK comments] or [I drop, you pick up] or [you compose, I lay off your ink] and so on. So LP's invitation just points out that this action is there for the taking. It doesn't give me new reasons; it just informs me of old reasons to do my part in this joint action. So we escape the problematic structure.

But I don't see how we escape the problematic structure. Let's grant that independently of anything either of us is doing, you and I have reason for [left, left] but not for [right, left]. And so, independently of anything either of us is doing, you have reason [to go left as part of the good pattern]. But do you have reason to go left? It depends on whether going left will be part of the good pattern, or the bad pattern. And whether it will be part of the good pattern or the bad pattern depends on whether I will go left or right. So my going left gives you new reasons to go *left*, even if it does not give you new reasons *to do your part in the good pattern*. But then we're again entangled in the problematic structure.

Granted, that part of my going left that is *communicative*, that amounts to saying, "Both going left would be a good pattern," doesn't give you new reasons, but merely cites old reasons. But that part of my going left that is *locomotive*, that is a component of the good pattern but not the bad, does give you new reasons.

I'm sure I'm missing something here, since the point feels so simpleminded. But having pored over the text, I still can't find a direct response. Here are the two passages that come closest:

This pattern-level permission might also explain the innocence of certain seemingly unilateral resolutions of the predicament. When I head to the left while making it clear that that is what I'm doing, and when you follow my lead by heading left yourself, I am not simply bringing it about that you go left and also that you have reason to go left. And I am not simply bringing it about that I have reason to go left by bringing it about that you go left. Instead it could be that I am noticing that each joint pattern is fine and that we need to settle on one. I am taking the initiative and leading us into one of the two patterns, helping us to exe[r]cise an unconditional permission that we act in this pattern (98).

Yes *we* enjoy an unconditional permission *to act in this pattern*. But you don't enjoy an

unconditional permission *to go left*. You enjoy only a conditional permission to go left *when going left is part of a good pattern*, and whether it is part of a good pattern depends on what I am doing.

It can seem that our motivations and dispositions, though they don't make the pattern to be good, make a person's individual action of sitting or standing to be something that a person should do. Our dispositions cause all of the others to play their parts of the picked pattern. So they make it the case that I have reason to play my part. This is what I've denied. When things go well with our action and deliberation, the facts as to what the others are going to do don't settle the question of what I should do. I should do my part because it's part of a good possible pattern. In standing now I join the others in satisfying a standard that, before we began to think about it, has already called for us to perform one or the other of the several good patterns (141).

I should do my part because it's part of a good possible pattern. But the fact that it's part of a good possible pattern depends on the fact that others are doing their parts in that pattern, rather than some other. So our actions are giving one another reasons. Perhaps our dispositions don't *cause* one another to do anything. Imagine, for good measure, that we spontaneously coordinate on the good pattern. All the same, the fact that others are doing what counts as doing their parts in this pattern is what accounts for the normative fact that I have reason to do what counts as doing my part in this pattern.

In Toronto, AJ's reply seemed to be that, although, on a bad day my reason to do go left depends on what others are doing, on a good day, my reason does not so depend. In the "other comments," below, I worry that this distinction can bear the weight that AJ is placing on it. Or rather I worry there isn't a distinction.

I also worry that this pushes the problem back. What is a good day? Not merely a day in which everyone does what he has reason to do (as in the intrapersonal, non-under-determined, case of walking to the square), since that doesn't distinguish between [left, left] and [right, right]. So presumably a day in which everyone does his part in some good pattern *that we've decided on*. But how do we decide on [left, left]? Granted, I can point out that this is a good pattern without giving you new reasons. But to point out isn't to decide (even if both are done by a single nod or gesture). May I [decide we [left, left]]? It seems like I should decide this only if you [decide we [left, left]], and vice-versa. But this looks like the problematic, "strategic," "predictive" structure. How do we escape it? By saying that, on the assumption that everything goes to plan, my reason to do my part doesn't depend on others' doing their parts? But what is it for things to go to plan, when there isn't yet a plan?

7.

Be this as it may, my deeper, although admittedly inconclusive, worry is that we haven't been told why the good patterns are good patterns—why they count as joint activities for which we have reason—and why the bad patterns are bad—why they don't count as joint activities for which we have reason. All we have been told is that these are patterns in which everyone acts for the reasons he has consistently with others acting for the reasons they have.

Is this abstract formula supposed to have enough content to determine an answer? I don't see how it can, without importing autonomous moral ideas. What does "consistently" mean? Is my refusal to let you use my ink consistent or not? Well, one question is whether the distribution of ink is *fair*. But what does fairness consist in? And if you believe, as I do, that a fair distributive structure can still lead to objectionable relations of hierarchy and dependence—after all, if I lose a voluntary coin flip to become your slave, I can't complain on grounds of fairness—then you will also want to know whether the present distribution of ink is compatible with our continuing to stand in *relations of equality* to one another. In sum, supplying "consistently" with content looks like it will require recapitulating more or less the history of political philosophy.

Perhaps this won't worry AJ. Perhaps he would answer: "Granted, we need a theory of the good life, a theory of justice, a theory of egalitarian social relations, and no doubt much else in order to determine which joint activities we have reason for, which patterns of acting for the reasons we have are consistent with others acting for the reasons they have. The point is that something further of value is realized when we engage in these joint activities for the right reasons. We will then be acting in a way that is consistent with the reasons that others have."

Yet I, again inconclusively, have precisely the opposite suspicion. Once we have spelled out these theories, of a decent life, of fair treatment, of nonsubordination, and so on, there won't be anything left for AJ's analysis to do. Everything that troubles us about Boko Haram, or Americans for Prosperity, or the Egyptian military-hospitality complex, will already have been brought into the light of day.

Other comments:

Ch. 2:

The aim, I take it, is to identify some way in which the reason itself helps to explain why someone does what that reason supports (when he does). The answer is that when the action is described as "doing what the reason, in fact, supports," the reason explains the action by partly constituting it (20). Had there been no such reason, there would have been no such action.

But this is unsatisfying. Imagine that someone fails to do what the reason supports, or refuses to do it, or does it but only accidentally. Then it is equally true that when the action is described in those terms, as "failing to do what the reason, in fact, supports" or "refusing to do what the reason, in fact, supports" or "doing, only accidentally, what the reason, in fact, supports," the reason helps to explain these actions by partly constituting them. Had there been no such reason, there would have been no such actions.

It is particularly unsatisfying because the point of identifying such an explanation was to earn an entitlement to say that, when someone does what the reason supports, it is no accident. "I hope that true reasons explain the performance of good actions because I hope that a person's doing what she has reason to do is no accident" (18). But if true reasons explain, in the same way, someone's failing to do what she has reason to do, or her doing it by accident, then how is this hope met?

Ch. 4:

The idea is that where I won't take the second step, there is no such thing as acting for the reasons that I have. Because there is no such thing as acting for the reasons that I have, my taking the first step cannot be necessary for acting for the reasons that I have. By contrast, where I will take the second step, there is such a thing as acting for the reasons that I have, so my taking the first step is necessary for acting for the reasons that I have. So, there is a principled reason to treat good and bad days differently.

A very inventive argument, but there are two things I just don't follow. First, the description of the bad case seems incoherent. Why, in the bad case, is it that I cannot act for the reasons that I have? Isn't it because I have "new" reason (provided by my failure to take the second step) to omit something that is *necessary for acting for the reasons that I have*? In other words, the claim that taking the first step is necessary for acting for the reasons that I have looks like a premise in the argument that I cannot act for the reasons that I have. Can the argument be spelled out so as to clarify that it does not depend on this premise?

Second, why are we entitled to say that, in the good case, my reason for taking the first step does not depend on the fact that I will take the second step? After all, my reason for taking the first step depends on the fact that the first step is contingently necessary for acting for the reasons that I have. And the first step's contingent necessity depends on the fact that I will take the second step. But, like, ... doesn't that imply that my reason for taking the first step *does* depend on the fact that I will take the second step? Is AJ denying the transitivity of the "depends on" relation? But he can't, since he relies on precisely that same transitivity whenever he tries to get mileage out of Independence. Would AJ dispute this description, and say that while my reason for taking the first step may depend on its not being the case that I won't take the second step, it does not depend on its being the case that I will take the second step? That's a subtle distinction.

Ch. 5:

"Permission of the conclusion belief rests on a permission of believing the premises..." (49). As the discussion proceeds, the *permission* to have the premise attitudes seems to drop out. "The transition is good in virtue of this would-be should-making relation between the possible truth of the content of the original judgment and the act that forms the object of the succeeding intention" (51). Nothing here about a permission to have the original judgment. I also didn't follow the "in virtue of." Why does this relation make the transition good?

Ch. 6:

I had a very difficult time seeing what was at stake in the debate whether ownership of a reason could be reduced in the way described. I agree that a reduction seems hopeless. But who would have thought otherwise? And how does any of this bear on the rest of the book? Is the point to make room for ownership of reasons for joint actions without Third Personnel (see 99)?

AJ seems to suggest that when I work around myself, and merely do the thing to be done in light of my practical failures elsewhere, then what I do is correctly characterized by the reductionist view (66). But where the reductionist view is correct, the hierarchy of instrumental reasons is lost (63). Does AJ really want to say that when I do the thing to be done, which might be supported by a complex network of facilitating actions, there is no such hierarchy? This seems

unlikely, at least if the arguments for there being such a hierarchy in the “good” case are any good.