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## *Points of View and Practical Reasoning\**

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Problems of practical reasoning often arise as the result of a clash between two different points of view. What do we mean when we say that while from the point of view of prudence there is no reason to rescue one's drowning enemy, from the point of view of morality there is reason to do so? In this essay we examine how the idiom of points of view arises in practical discourse, and offer a clarification of it. We will be particularly concerned with a common argument for assigning a privileged status to the moral point of view, an argument which can be seen to be fallacious once certain features of judgments made from a point of view are clearly discerned.

A familiar dissection of practical deliberation distinguishes between *prima facie* or presumptive reasons for action, and reasons on balance or all things considered. The leading idea of the two-stage explanatory strategy to which these two notions of reason correspond is the following. During the first stage of analysis each of the considerations making

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up a total practical situation is assigned to an abstract object (a 'weight'). The assignment is envisaged as made without regard for other circumstances of which account may eventually have to be taken, representing the contribution that consideration makes to practical inferences involving it. A function is then to be defined which operates on this set of weights to determine what rational force each retains when considered in concert with its fellows, yielding an all-things-considered recommendation for action. In the first stage, *prima facie* reasons for action are assembled, and in the second stage they give rise to a reason on balance.

Each of these notions of a reason has a claim to explanatory priority over the other. The essential link between reasoning and action-orientation consists of reasons on balance. When as theorists we seek to codify practical reasoning in a principled way, it is the relation between reasons on balance and the performances they provide rational motivation for that we want to make explicit. It is reasons on balance which are reasons *for action*. On the other hand, it is only by means of the notion of *prima facie* or presumptive reasons that finitely storable principles can be brought to bear on practical deliberation at all, since any such principle admits of an indefinite range of possibly relevant counter-considerations in any actual situation (principles are contextually defeasible).<sup>1</sup> As the vehicles of principles, *prima facie* reasons are reasons *for action*. The concept of such reasons plays a crucial dual role, both acknowledging the relativity to context or total evidence of practical inference, and securing an analytic niche within which relatively context-independent principles can be developed and applied in the ultimate codification of such inference. The full-blooded concept of a reason for action requires both the connection with action-orientation of reasons on balance and the connection with principles making such motivation *rational* motivation which resides in presumptive or provisional reasons.

The notions of *prima facie* or presumptive reasons central to this approach originated as technical legal tools, but the same effect is achieved in ordinary deliberative discourse by the use of judgments described as made from some *point of view*. Consider a surgeon asked by her patient to perform a lucrative but unnecessary operation. We can say that money provides a *prima facie* reason for performing the operation, professional self-respect a countervailing reason for refraining. Or we can say with the plain man that from the point of view of making money,

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1 See Davidson's interesting discussion in 'How is Weakness of the Will Possible?', in J. Feinberg, ed., *Moral Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970).

one has reason to operate, while from the point of view of the profession there is reason not to. In ordinary parlance one can admit that a consideration, e.g., the rudeness of refusing a reasonable request which it is in one's power to grant, has some force as a reason without admitting it as conclusive for action-guidance, by using reason-on-balance talk modified by the explicit invocation of a perspective – 'from the point of view of etiquette, she ought to accede.' The specification of the perspective qualifies the usual motivating force of the 'ought' judgement, offering the conclusion only as a sort of sub-total.<sup>2</sup>

One can have prima facie reason to perform an action without its being the case that one *ought* to perform the action.<sup>3</sup> So to retain the connection between prima facie reasons and action guidance (necessary for them to be called 'reasons' at all), such reasons when carefully formulated must include ceteris paribus clauses. A prima facie reason to do A entails that one ought to do A other things being equal, or if no sufficiently weighty countervailing considerations apply. Reliance on ceteris paribus clauses is a notorious embarrassment. One may ask how the recommended connection of this species of reason with action differs from saying that a presumptive<sup>4</sup> or prima facie reason to do A is one which implies that one ought to do A unless for some reason it doesn't imply that. It is only insofar as we can give substantial content to the description of circumstances intended to be excluded by the ceteris paribus clause that such an account will be non-trivial.<sup>5</sup>

The non-technical idiom of 'points of view' an attractive response to this issue. *From the point of view of X* is an operator which allows the definition of prima facie reasons in terms of the more primitive action-

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2 For finer-grained deliberation, such points of view may be subdivided, as when trying to decide what she has reason to do from the point of view of making money, the surgeon reflects that while from the point of view of cash flow there is reason to operate, in view of possible malpractice suits, from the point of view of long-term capital structure there is reason to refuse to operate. It is in this way that one can reconstruct a distinction between reasons-on-balance and prima facie reasons even *within* some point of view.'

3 The point here is not that there can be reasons for action which do not function as reasons for all agents. The distinction between prima facie reasons and reasons-on-balance is orthogonal to that between reasons as expressing abstract communal norms and reasons as expressing concrete individual motivations.

4 *The Moral Point of View* (New York: Random House 1965), 38-9

5 See for instance D. Kurtzman's 'Ceteris Paribus Clauses: Their Illumination and Elimination,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 10 (1973) 35-42.

orienting notion of reasons-on-balance (Ross: reasons sans phrase).<sup>6</sup> It does so first by recognizing that *prima facie* reasons are reasons insofar as they are expressible as reasons-on-balance modified or limited by *ceteris paribus* clauses, and second by stipulating explicitly the obtaining of the antecedent of the *ceteris paribus* clause (i.e. *which* other things are taken as equal) in a non-empty way. A judgment's denomination as 'from the point of view of making money' tells us something about what range of possibly countervailing considerations has been taken account of, namely those relevant to making money. The result can then be presented as a reason-on-balance from an explicitly restricted perspective, without denying the defeasibility of the action appraisal by circumstances appearing from other perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Advancing a putatively countervailing consideration not significant from the specified point of view will accordingly not count as disagreeing with the perspectively qualified judgment, but simply as continuing the evaluation in progress. The notion of a point of view thus potentially provides a bridge from the basic action-orienting concept of reasons-on-balance to the theoretically indispensable but muddy concept of *prima facie* or presumptive reasons, without requiring further qualification by mysterious *ceteris paribus* clauses.

There is a far-reaching argument for the overridingness of moral considerations which takes its point of departure from the consideration of perspectival reasons. Although the argument in question is fairly widely subscribed to, for the sake of definiteness we may consider a recent and particularly clear expression by Becker:

...a close look at moral disputes in general supports this view: that what is inevitably at issue – apart from flaws of logic – is some restriction on the scope of reasons allowed to count toward deciding what one ought (morally) to do.

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6 'Because I have reason on balance to do it,' is of course never a reason for acting, neither in the prospective context of deliberation nor in the retrospective context of appraisal. Citing reasons is always citing *prima facie* reasons. But this does not reduce the notion of a reason-on-balance to empty formality. Such citation justifies an action only when it is further claimed, at least implicitly, that the considerations cited *outweigh* possibly countervailing ones not mentioned. It is this second claim which secures the connection to action-guidance and gives separate content to the notion of reasons-on-balance.

7 This issue has been addressed in a somewhat different way in the context of conditionalization in deontic logics. See B. Chellas, 'Conditional Obligation,' in S. Stenlund, ed. *Logical Theory and Semantic Analysis* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel 1974). For a comprehensive review of related literature, see the bibliography in G. di Bernardo, ed., *Logica Deontica e Semantica* (Bologna: Societa Editrice il Mulino 1977) 349-447.

The egoist restricts his attention to his own good. The altruist ignores some important facts about human psychology. Utilitarians are said to oversimplify. And so on. The sum of such objections can only mean that what we expect from a valid moral judgment is that it have taken *everything* into account – that it has not overlooked or brushed aside pre-emptorily any relevant sort of value, source of obligation, or virtue.<sup>8</sup>

So it is claimed that a necessary, though no doubt not sufficient, condition of *moral* judgement is that it be judgement *all things considered*. This is contrasted with those normative judgments made from some particular point of view (e.g. the point of view of the welfare of the agent, or of the greatest good for the greatest number in his community). Prudential judgements, or those made from the point of view of making money are seen as taking account only of a certain limited range of reasons for action, namely those having to do with prudence or the making of money. By contrast:

What the demand for moral justification of an act does is to “detach” the act from its connection with special or restricted assumptions about what sorts of considerations are relevant and asks for a justification of it no holds barred.<sup>9</sup>

A formal contrast is thus envisaged between all-encompassing moral deliberation, and judgements including some restriction on admissible considerations.

This contrast may then immediately be exploited to argue that moral judgments ought to override those made from any other ‘point of view,’ insofar as judgments ‘all things considered’ have rational precedence over judgments which restrict the circumstances considered. Since judgements made from the point of view of prudence or etiquette are seen as ignoring a range of possibly countervailing considerations, we always have reason to act as recommended by moral judgements:

If that is so, then a valid moral judgement is by definition overriding. Its action-guidance is “inescapable” or “binding” in the sense that there is nothing more to consider – nothing further which might be introduced to enlarge the inquiry further and make prescription subject to withdrawal.<sup>10</sup>

Moral judgments are thus seen as Reason’s last word concerning human actions, in virtue of their non-perspectival completeness. The connec-

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8 The Finality of Moral Judgements’ *Philosophical Review*, **82** (1973) 364-70

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

tion noted above between reasons-on-balance-from-a-point-of-view and *prima facie* reasons, together with some observations about meta-ethical disputes, is taken to set 'the moral point of view' off from other points of view as not perspectival in the same sense.

It is easy to see the advantages such a strategy offers for one who is concerned to argue for the overridingness of moral considerations. If one treats the moral point of view as just one perspective among others such as prudence, etiquette, political expediency, etc., then the overridingness thesis is the antecedently implausible assertion that in adjudicating the claims of such competing *prima facie* reasons expressed as perspectival judgements-on-balance, the moral point of view should be assigned an *infinite* weight. And then we must ask why there cannot be weak moral reasons, outweighed in some particular circumstances by stronger considerations of prudence or taste.<sup>11</sup> By arguing for a purely formal distinction between moral reasons and all others, the advocate of overridingness need not address such questions.

The essential requirement of this formalist argument is that perspectival judgments must exclude certain kinds of consideration as irrelevant. The invidious distinction between moral judgements and those made from some point of view, on which the overridingness claim rests, is made out precisely in terms of the latter's *ignoring* considerations of which the former takes account. But some care must be taken in formulating this claim. It simply is not the case that when a judgement is made from the particular point of view, say, of making money there are some kinds of consideration (e.g. the virtuous character of an individual or the socially approved style of holding a soup-spoon in Albania) which are in principle irrelevant. On the contrary, given any consideration it is easy to describe circumstances in which how much money would be made turns precisely on that issue. After all, one can bet on anything.

Sophisticated accounts of the logic of relevance have been worked out,<sup>12</sup> but the present point requires attention only to the most straightforward notion of relevance, definable in ordinary logical systems. We suppose that the background beliefs which form the context of deliberation are expressed in a set of sentences *C*. Then we must surely admit that a consideration *p* is relevant to the truth of a further sentence *q* in that context if while the set *C* of sentences expressing

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11 P. Foot, 'Are Moral Considerations Overriding?', in her *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Blackwell's 1978) 181-8

12 For the best of these, together with a survey of the others, see A. Anderson and N. Belnap, *Entailment*, Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1975) especially Part I.

background beliefs does not by itself entail  $q$ ,  $C$  together with  $p$  does entail  $q$ .<sup>13</sup> In other words, it is clear that  $p$  is inferentially relevant to  $q$  in some set of circumstances if in those circumstances  $p$  represents the last piece of information needed to establish the truth of  $q$ . While it is obvious that the satisfaction of this condition is *sufficient* for  $p$  to be judged relevant to  $q$ , in ordinary usage we would not require the satisfaction of such a rigorous condition for a judgement of relevance. Even with this restrictive criterion of relevance, the possibility that the context  $C$  contains the conditional 'If  $p$  then  $q$ ' ensures that there will always be some contexts in which  $p$  is inferentially relevant to  $q$ . Of course, no sentence is in this sense relevant in *all* contexts to any sentence it does not *logically* entail. What this means in our case is that even in the most demanding sense of 'relevant,' there is no sort of consideration which is in principle irrelevant to judgements as to what should be done from the point of view of making money. Again, any issue could matter from the point of view of prudence, since getting what one wants in the future can depend on any feature the world might be imagined to have. The denial of in-principle irrelevance (irrelevance in all contexts) of course admits that any circumstance may be irrelevant in a particular case, but the most ardent advocate of the overridingness claim would not deny that this applies equally to moral judgements (to some one of which the eye-color of the mouse hiding under the bed *may* be irrelevant).

This shows that we cannot explain the difference between judgements made from some point of view and those made all things considered by looking for a set of considerations which simply cannot enter into the perspectival judgement. Rather, we should look at the different ways in which circumstances can be taken account of in making a judgement. In a situation in which the girth of a particular tree is relevant to my decision as to what I ought to do tomorrow from the point of view of making money (when lumberjacking, for instance), it is relevant to the final judgement only insofar as in the actual circumstances it entails some statement about how much money will be made. Statements concerning how much money will be made are *directly* or immediately relevant to a decision made from the point of view of making money, while other considerations matter only insofar as they jointly entail such statements. When one qualifies a political recommendation as 'made from the point of view of winning primary votes,' one distinguishes a class of sentences, those describing how many primary votes will be won. The significance in practice of this class of directly relevant con-

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13 Of course there is a dual notion of negative relevance corresponding to that stated above, which holds just in case the background beliefs alone do not entail *not-q*, but those beliefs together with  $p$  do entail *not-q*.



cerns is that anyone who objects to the perspectival recommendation on the basis of a further consideration is obliged to argue that that consideration makes a difference to the truth values of some sentences about how many primary votes will be won. Two grades of relevance are discriminated, and claims which are not directly relevant must show as credentials their directly relevant consequences or be turned away as not even indirectly relevant.

This suggestion that judging from a perspective enforces a distinction between directly and indirectly relevant considerations may be developed as follows. A point of view can be taken to consist of two elements, a specification of a set of sentences expressing directly relevant considerations, and a maxim determining a preference ordering of directly relevant circumstances. The point of view of making money, for instance, has as first element the set of all sentences specifying amounts of money gained. Its second element, the rule 'maximize profits,' tells us how the evaluation of the directly relevant considerations applicable in a particular case is to settle the issue of what should be done from the point of view of making money.

The idea is that practical deliberation from a point of view ought to be seen as involving three stages. First, one must determine from the description of the point of view what set of sentences it distinguishes as directly relevant. The second stage consists of constructing and assigning truth values to conditionals whose antecedents describe the various contemplated actions being compared, and whose consequents express directly relevant considerations. Then the maxim is applied to compare those directly relevant consequences and yield a recommended course of action.<sup>14</sup> The perspectival maxim surveys the possible outcomes as summarized by the directly relevant consequences of the possible courses of action. For the operation of the maxim no facts are significant save those expressed by these statements. The point of view of hedonic utilitarianism, for instance, discriminates as directly relevant those sentences which report the amount of pleasure and pain which will be caused to members of some community. To apply that point of view to an actual situation, it must be determined which of these sentences will be true according to which actions are undertaken. Besides the directly relevant sentences, this point of view contains a maxim urging the performance of whichever will produce the least pain and the most

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14 A more sophisticated account would assign *probabilities* to directly relevant considerations during the first stage and require a maxim stated in terms of the expected return along the dimension defining the perspective. the arguments we are concerned with can all be approached equally well in the simpler interpretation according to truth values, however.

pleasure in the community as a whole. A distinction is enforced between directly relevant considerations and the rest by the fact that the maxim settles what ought to be done given only the truth values of this distinguished set of sentences, conditioned on the alternatives being considered. As argued above, any consideration can be *indirectly* relevant to what ought to be done from any point of view. But this is so because anything can be relevant to the determination of the truth values of directly relevant considerations.

Before restating the dispute about the overridingness of the moral point of view more carefully according to this model, we examine what use such perspectival structures of appraisal might be when no clash of points of view is involved. Consider the scientific task of codifying the practical inferences which are the licensings of a certain class of performances for a community. We imagine here, as is actually the case in moral theory, that we are confronted with a community which exhibits a rich set of such inferential and justificatory practices, but has not codified those practices in a set of principles.<sup>15</sup> The inferences of concern here are not formal or logical inferences, but *material* inferences involving the particular contents of the sentences involved – depending on concepts of rights or welfare or interests and so on. They are practical inferences in that their conclusions are appraisals of the appropriateness of performances. One form which the codification of such practices into principles could take is that of a perspectival semantics for those practical inferences. Such a semantics is a theory-form, a simplifying structure for organizing an initially heterogenous mass of individually admissible inferences. Its strategy is to exhibit the inferences in question in terms of a point of view, that is, a maxim paired with a set of directly relevant considerations. To produce such a representation, one must be able to discriminate a subset of sentences involved in the target inferences, to play the role of directly relevant considerations. For some set *S* to play that role with respect to a maxim is for it to be the case that whenever the community regards as warranted an inference from a description of a situation to the appropriateness of some performance, that description entails the truth of some subset of sentences of *S* which in turn, according to the maxim, settle the appropriateness of that performance.<sup>16</sup> Finding a perspectival rendering provides a recipe

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15 See my 'Freedom and Constraint by Norms,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (1979) 187-96.

16 The sort of significance captured in such a semantics concerns the appropriateness of inferences and other performances, including assertions about what ought to be done. Perspectival schemes for practical inference are thus

for determining the admissibility of inferences. First one determines what directly relevant considerations are entailed by the premises of the inference. Then, considering only these directly relevant facts, one applies the maxim to determine what performance is appropriate.

If one can find a set of sentences and a maxim which play the role described in the previous paragraph, then one can represent their target inferences (justifications) in a particularly simple way. It is perfectly appropriate to try to codify our everyday moral reasoning by exhibiting for it a perspectival semantics. I take it that it is a prime task of moral theory to find a point of view which would support such a codification. Its maxim might approve the actions which permit the greatest overall exercise and development of the human capacities of the members of a community, those which most secure and enhance their virtues, those which provide them the most emotional satisfaction, or which involve minimal infringements of their fundamental rights, or may take some form we have not thought of yet. In presenting a theory in this form one would not be 'overlooking or brushing aside pre-emptorily any relevant source of value,' as the formalist argument of our first quotation above alleges. One is rather *organizing* a practical inferential field according to the scheme of maxims and the discrimination of directly and indirectly relevant considerations. Such organization need in no way falsify the inferential practices it addresses.

Of course, any simplifying scheme can be *misused* to oversimplify. This would occur if a theorist attempting to codify a set of inferences seized on a maxim and a set of considerations treated as directly relevant which expressed only *some* of those inferences. Employing the perspectival semantic apparatus in this way can be either pernicious or merely preliminary. It is pernicious insofar as it amounts to a false theory of the evaluative inferential practices one starts out to codify. An example would be an attempt to present moral reasoning which admitted as directly relevant only the affective states of individuals, and whose maxim recommended as morally appropriate those performances approved of at the time by the agent issuing them. A theory of this sort is bad just because it is inadequate to its intended explanatory domain.

An artificial perspectival restriction of attention may be a legitimate preliminary evaluation, however, if the restriction it embodies is explicitly admitted. This is what we do with the idiom of points of view in ordinary discourse. When discussing what ought to be done to win the

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more akin to assertibility semantics than truth-conditional semantics (see my 'Truth and Assertibility,' *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 [1976] 137-49). So invoking such schemes does not beg the question against a non-cognitivist rendering of action appraisals.

game one first explicitly invokes a certain form of perspectival evaluation, and then qualifies one's conclusion by admitting that conclusive counter-reasons may exist which cannot be expressed in this perspectival form. One uses the linguistic form appropriate for the expression of reasons-on-balance, 'You ought to castle early,' but gives it the force of a *provisional* conclusion based on *prima facie* reasons by using the idiom of points of view, e.g. adding the qualification '...from the point of view of control of the center.'

It is obvious from the account we have given of perspectival representation that a set of inferential practices which could not be expressed entirely in terms of one point of view might be completely captured if one considered two independent points of view and had some hierarchical principle of 'overridingness' to settle disputes between them. The addition of a principle for adjudicating disputes between perspectives makes possible the use of several perspectives to represent sets of inferential practices too heterogeneous to yield to codification in a single point of view.

The precise account offered here of points of view as constituted by a set of considerations treated as directly relevant by a perspectival maxim has enabled us to discriminate three uses of perspectival representations of inferential practices: as theory-form, as bad theory, and as cold-storage for codifications admitted to be partial and preliminary in the context of an overridingness relation between competing points of view. Our aim is the evaluation of a particular argument for the overridingness of the moral point of view in practical deliberation. We have noted that it would not be appropriate to condemn a moral theory (or any other theory) just for taking the form of a perspectival semantics. For using such a theory-form need not involve ignoring any sort of consideration, but concerns only the way in which relevant considerations are taken account of. Indeed, of competing expressively adequate schemes for codifying a field of justifications or inferences, a perspectival representation will always be preferable to a non-perspectival one on grounds of simplicity and economy. For a perspectival scheme reduces the deliberative task to that of determining the truth values of the directly relevant statements, conditional on the performance of various actions.

This point is not decisive against the formalist claim that moral judgements are overriding in virtue of treating *all* considerations as directly relevant, however. For the issue of overridingness arises when individually *inadequate* perspectival schemes are being combined in an attempt to represent fully some set of performance-licensing practices, not when we are comparing expressively adequate schemes. So we must ask whether, when adjudicating the conflicting claims of two

schemes neither of which captures their common target practices completely, a scheme in which everything is directly relevant for that reason should override a perspectival one. It should not. Think for the moment of the formalist's all-things-directly-relevant scheme as a limiting case of perspectival accounts as ever larger sets of considerations are taken as directly relevant. It is not the case that in general because one point of view considers more things as directly relevant than another the first overrides the second. For the maxims those perspectives embody must be considered as well. An example will make this point clear. In a practical deliberation about which mechanical manipulations to perform on the innards of a household appliance, a preliminary appraisal may be made from the point of view of avoiding electrical short circuits. The directly relevant considerations are statements affirming the occurrence or non-occurrence of shorts of various severities in different locations. It is conditionals relating such statements as consequents to descriptions of the various contemplated actions which must be investigated. In the context of the true conditionals of this form, the maxim 'Minimize the occurrence and severity of shorts' determines what ought to be done from this point of view. But there are other points of view whose maxims correspond to other possible interests but which include the same considerations as directly relevant. The same actions can be deliberated about from the point of view of causing a house fire which will look innocent to suspicious insurance investigators. Directly relevant considerations will include those concerning electrical shorts, as well as, for instance, the fact that apparently spontaneous combustion will occur under various circumstances. In this case, though, the maxim operating on conditionals whose consequents are directly relevant urges performing whichever action *will* result in a short or a chemical fire. The second point of view considers more features of the situation as directly relevant, but does this mean that it should override the first? Clearly not, for the maxim generating the second point of view corresponds to a perverse motive. How many circumstances are directly taken account of by the unworthy interest the maxim expresses is not of itself relevant to the weight it should be accorded when in conflict with other interests. So even if morality treats all circumstances as directly relevant, as the formalist seems to want to claim, that will not be a reason for moral judgements to override those made from some (other) point of view.

Stepping back a bit, we should see that even if it were sufficient for one sort of judgement to override those made from some point of view that the first treat all circumstances as directly relevant or be non-perspectival in some other sense, it would still not be correct to argue in this way for the overridingness of *moral* judgements. For as Kant is concerned to point out, morality is constituted as much by what one is *not* permitted to take (direct) account of in moral deliberation as by what one

does consider.<sup>17</sup> Not everything directly relevant from the prudential point of view (How powerful is this drowning person? What rewards will I gain by rescue?) is directly relevant from the moral point of view. Our ordinary moral reasoning clearly excludes some sorts of consideration (such as skin color, sex, parentage, wealth and so on) from direct relevance to moral deliberation. These factors may be considered *only* insofar as in the concrete situation they entail some morally relevant circumstance such as the existence of an obligation or right, or a difference in the predicted welfare of some person. It is not just, as the formalist might be tempted to claim, that considerations such as the pleasure I might feel at the discomfiture of an enemy are given little weight in moral reasoning compared to others such as effects on communal welfare. From the moral point of view such considerations have *no* weight, except as they bear on those of direct moral relevance – as happens when we take a wealthy individual to have greater obligations to succor the poor, or the community to have special debts to the victims of historical patterns of mistreatment. And this is to say that there *is* a moral point of view, though our approach has offered no substantive suggestions as to what its maxim might be, or how to describe usefully its range of directly relevant features. The exclusion of some considerations as morally insignificant in themselves is a feature of our moral reasoning which is merely reflected in our explicit moral theorizing in the idiom of a moral ‘point of view.’ A careful look at the notion of a point of view together with this brief reminder about basic features of our practices of giving and demanding moral reasons support the conclusion that *if* moral judgements are to be thought of as overriding perspectival judgements, some further reason must be found for according such a privilege than the claim that moral judgements are not made from any point of view. Not only is that claim false, but even were it true it would not justify the overridingness thesis.

April 1981

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17 This is one of the points of the discussion of duty in the first section of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.