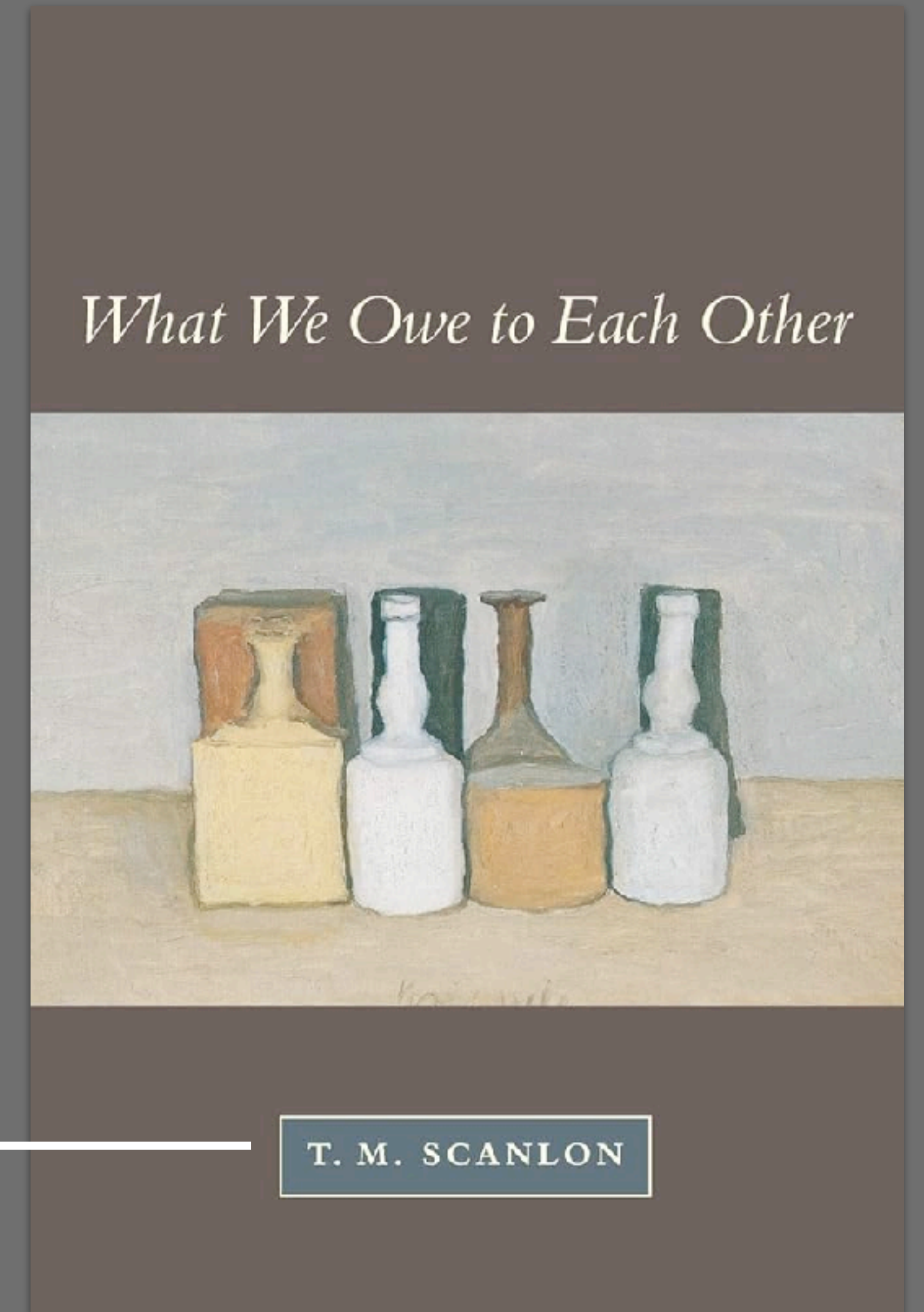
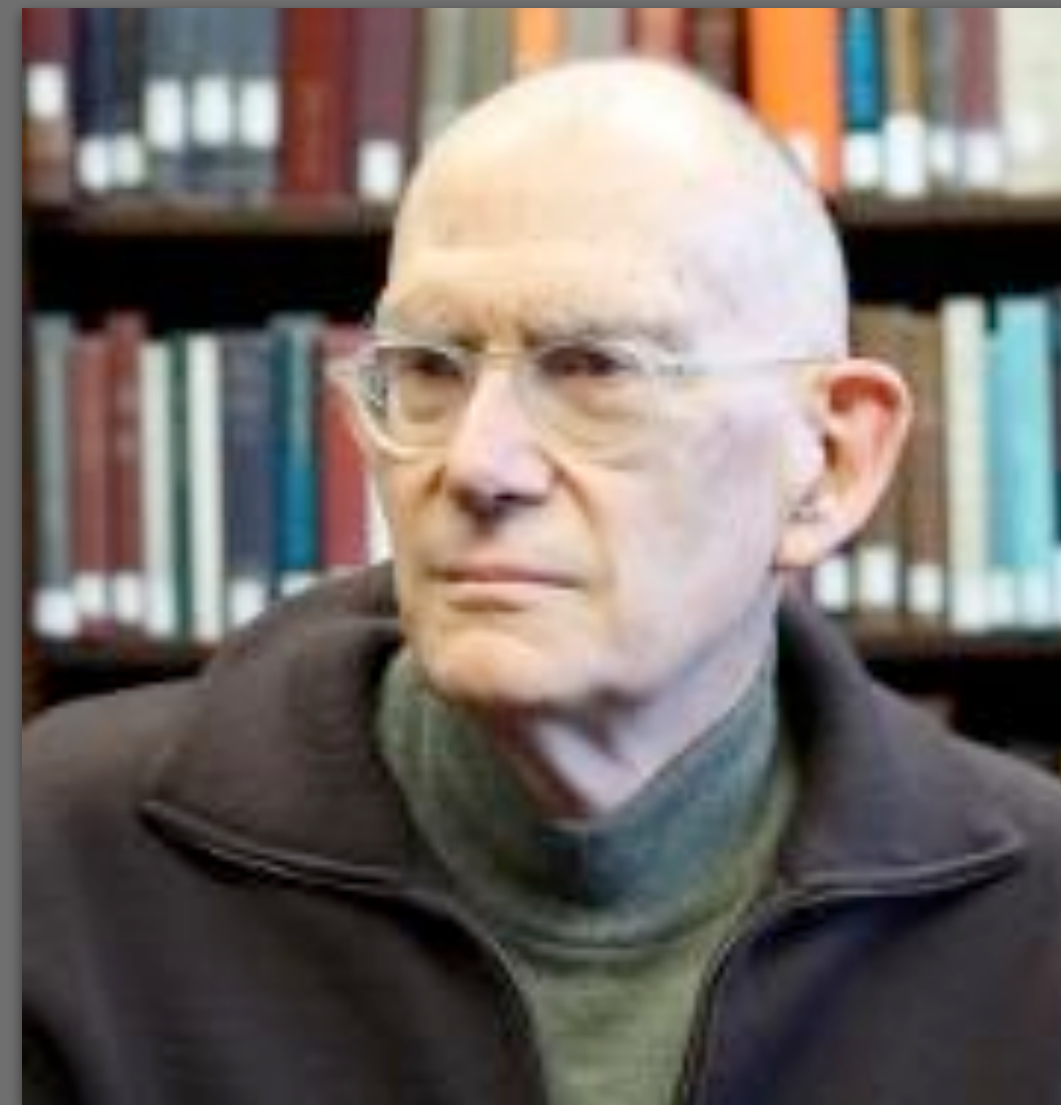


Notes on *What We Owe to Each Other*

a.k.a. that book Chidi likes on *The Good Place*



a.k.a. that book Parfit keeps going on about in *On What Matters*



Context

- This book proposes a view on **normative ethics**
- Normative ethics asks: what principles should be used to judge behavior as right or wrong?
- Other famous views on normative ethics include:



* I'm not totally sure if Rawls's view should be considered a theory of normative ethics; if I remember correctly, in *Justice as Fairness* he says he's only proposing it as a way of organizing political systems, not as an ethical system. Still, Wikipedia lists it as one, it could easily be used as one, and Scanlon makes some references to it throughout the book.

Scanlon's View

“**an act is wrong if** its performance under the circumstances would be **disallowed by any set of principles** for the general regulation of behavior **that no one could reasonably reject** as a basis for informed, unforced general agreement.” (p.153)

- This is **contractualism**, but different from e.g. Rawls's contractualism (p.190-191)
- Scanlon is *not* arguing that this is the basis of *all* of morality, just the segment of morality dealing with “what we owe to each other” (p.177)
- Notice he says *could reasonably*, not *would actually*. A lot hinges on what's '**reasonable**'.
(Although “[a]ctual agreement...is sometimes morally significant as well” in a way discussed on p.155)

Why talk about *what anyone could reject* instead of *what everyone could accept*? Scanlon says, in footnote 8 of chapter 4, that Parfit convinced him this way was better, but the book doesn't address the issue in detail.

Roadmap

1. <u>Reasons</u>	}	groundwork: why reasons are fundamental, and values, desires, and well-being aren't
2. <u>Values</u>		
3. <u>Well-Being</u>		
4. <u>Wrongness and Reasons</u>	}	core theory: moral motivation, justifiability, evaluating principles, issues of priority and aggregation
5. <u>The Structure of Contractualism</u>		
6. <u>Responsibility</u>	—	the significance of choice
7. <u>Promises</u>	—	concrete application of the theory
8. <u>Relativism</u>	—	what's universal, what's contextual; the implications of disagreement
<u>Appendix</u>	—	more on the topic of reasons

1. “Reasons”

What is a **reason**?

- “a consideration that ‘counts in favor of’ something” (p.18)
- We can have reasons for e.g. our “beliefs, intentions, hopes, fears, and attitudes such as admiration, respect, contempt, and indignation.” (p.17)
- Scanlon means it “in a fully normative sense”, i.e., “a **good** reason”, not just anything that caused someone to think/behave some way (p.19)

“Genuine skepticism about reasons...would be a very difficult position to hold.” (p.17)



Why does the book start with this? Compared with some other ethical views, Scanlon’s is pretty open-ended about what sorts of considerations could be morally relevant. For example, according to utilitarianism, to establish that some policy is morally right, you have to argue that it will maximize overall happiness; according to Rawlsianism, you have to argue that people would agree to it from behind a “veil of ignorance”. But Scanlonianism only places some general restrictions on the kinds of arguments that are allowed. You can always propose a new reason for/against the policy, and there is no predefined list (see p.157) of acceptable reasons we can consult to automatically determine whether that reason is valid.

If you think the concept of a “reason” is mystical nonsense (see chapter 1 section 11), or that reasons are subjective and arbitrary, then the open-endedness of Scanlon’s view may seem problematic. Won’t we just end up with unresolvable disagreements because we all have our own arbitrary assumptions about what’s reasonable? I think Scanlon wants to convince us that the notion of reasons is fundamental to all our thinking and behavior anyway, so that we’ll be comfortable relying on them even if we don’t have a fully satisfying metaphysical account of them.

Levels of rational criticism

Irrational	Not Irrational	Unreasonable	Reasonable	Ideally Rational
<p>“...when a person recognizes something as a reason but fails to be affected by it in one of the relevant ways.” (p.25)</p>	<p>A low bar: a person can fall for logical fallacies (p.26) or overlook obvious considerations (p.29) and still be “not irrational” as long as they’re responsive to what they themselves think are “relevant reasons” (p.25)</p>	<p>This is context-dependent: it means failing to take into account some reasons that are relevant to a given “general aim or concern” such as “reaching agreement” (p.33)</p>	<p>Being responsive to at least all the reasons that are relevant to the “general aim or concern” in question</p>	<p>“(1) possession of full information ... (2) awareness of the full range of reasons that apply ... (3) flawless reasoning...” (p.32)</p>

Why does this matter? Some philosophers use a broader definition of “irrational” which includes anything “open to rational criticism” (p.25), but Scanlon thinks his narrower definition is more in line with “ordinary usage” (p.25) and that we risk confusing ourselves when we use the broader one (p. 27). Consider an argument like this:

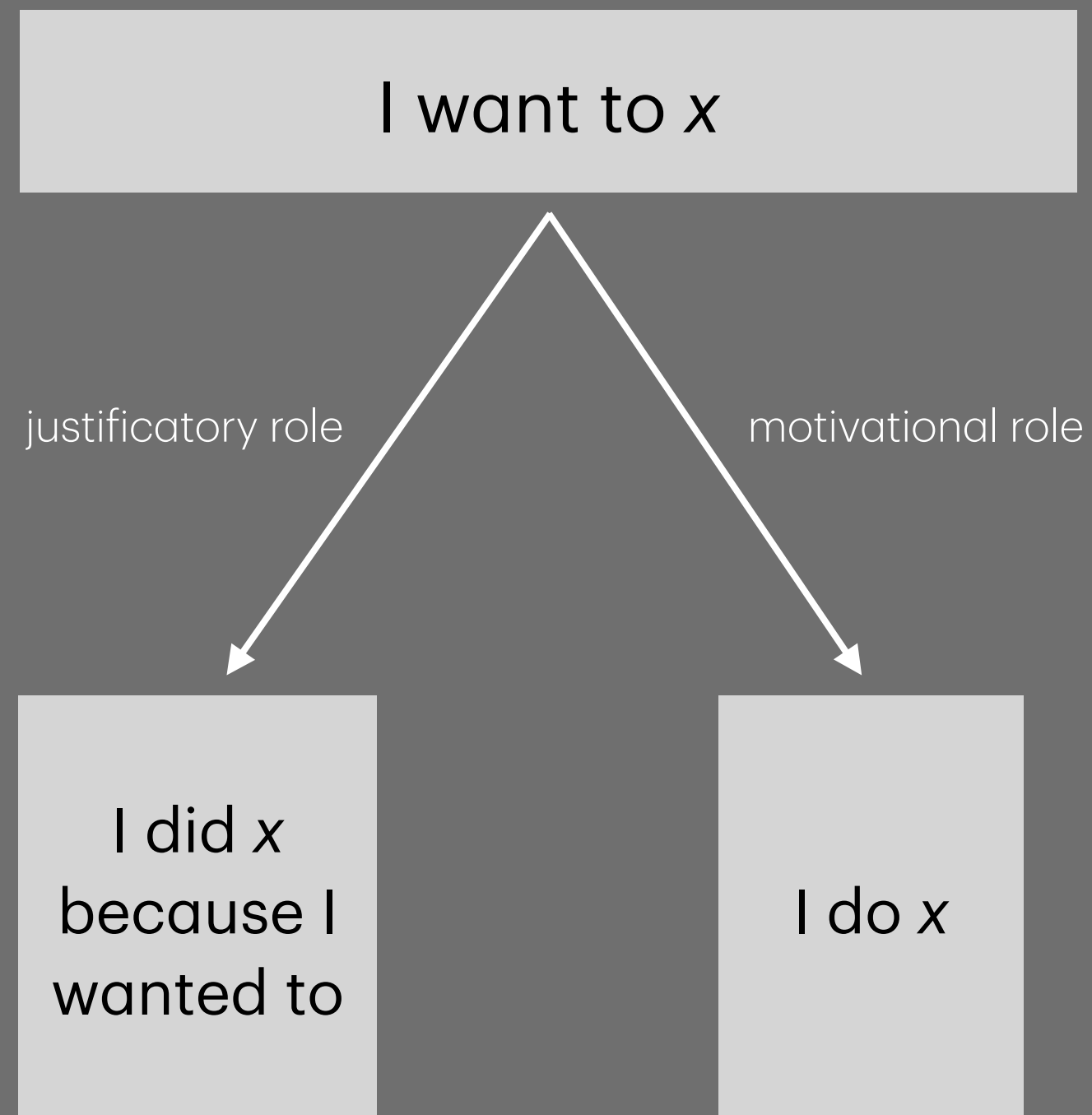
- (A) Bob loves to kick puppies, so he researched animal welfare laws, found a town without any, and acquired a large number of puppies which he kicks daily.
- (B) Since Bob is acting in line with his own motivations and pursuing his goals in an effective way, he is not irrational.
- (C) Therefore we have no objective grounds for criticizing Bob.

(my example, not from the book)

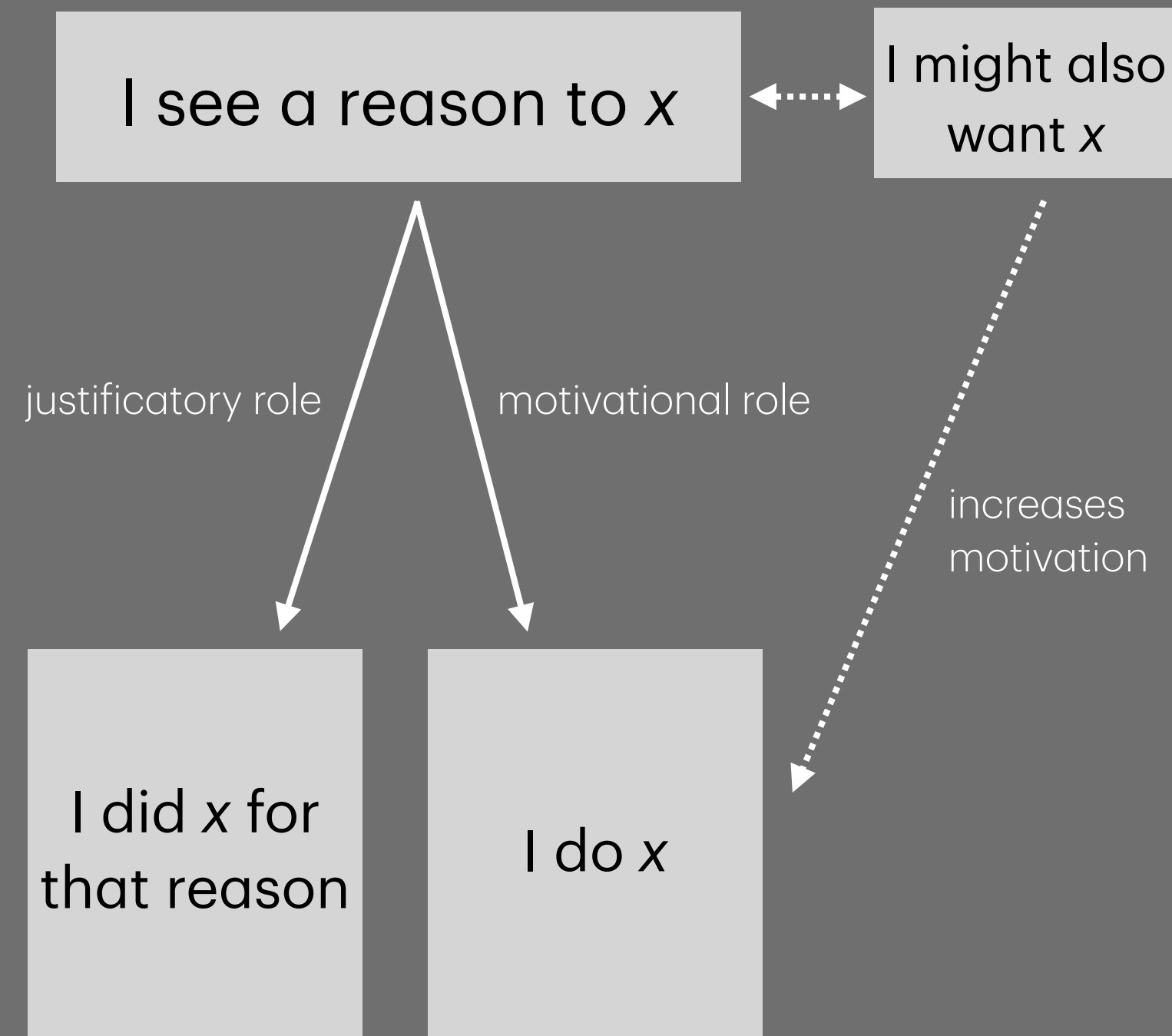
Premise (B) is most plausible when using the narrower definition of “irrational”, but the inference from (B) to (C) only makes sense when using the broader definition. Scanlon is worried that even when we say we’re using the broader definition, we still use the narrower definition subconsciously in evaluating premises like (B), tricking us into thinking that the overall argument is sound.

How do **desires** relate to reasons?

a common view: desires are fundamental



Scanlon's view: reasons are fundamental



What's the point? Scanlon implies that desires can only relate to each other in simple ways: desires can conflict, and one can be stronger than another (p.51,55). "But **reasons can be related to one another in more complex ways**" (p.51)—e.g. there can be a reason to disregard certain other reasons in specific contexts. Scanlon worries that viewing desires as fundamental leads to a view where "the general form of rational decision-making" consists of "balancing competing desires" (p.50), and argues this does not accurately represent how we actually think (p.55).

This may also be relevant to the question of whether moral agreement ultimately depends on people having compatible desires. Suppose you meet someone whose one and only desire in life is to kick puppies (he loves to hear their sad little squeals). Is there any point discussing morality with him? If reasons are more fundamental than desires, then you may be able to help him see that there are reasons he *shouldn't* want to kick puppies, and this may lead to him either losing the desire entirely or feeling less motivated to act on it.

"we often do things that we 'have no desire to do'" (p.40); "when a person *does* have a desire ... and acts accordingly, what supplies the motive ... is the agent's perception of some consideration as a reason, not some additional element of "desire." (p.40-41)

2. “Values”

Scanlon argues against “**purely teleological**” conceptions of value

<p>Teleological Conception</p>	<p>All value derives from the “intrinsic value” of certain events/states (p.79), e.g. pleasure (p.80)</p>	<p>Valuable = “to be promoted” Disvaluable = “to be prevented” (p.80,82)</p>	<p>“...understanding intrinsic value is a matter of understanding ... which things have it and which have more, which less.” (p.79)</p>
<p>(Partially?) Nonteleological Conception</p>	<p>Valuing is something we do for various reasons (p.95)</p>	<p>Valuing takes many forms: promoting, preserving, being “guided by”, etc (p.95; I’m oversimplifying what Scanlon says)</p>	<p>“Understanding the value of something is not just a matter of knowing <i>how valuable</i> it is, but ... how to value it” (p.99)</p>

To illustrate the inadequacy of the teleological conception to account for how we think about value, Scanlon discusses the value of **friendship** (p.88-90) and **science** (p.90-94); I find the friendship example much more compelling.

“We would not say that it showed how much a person valued friendship if he betrayed one friend in order to make several new ones” (p.89)

“Having recordings of Beethoven’s late quartets played in the elevators, hallways, and restrooms of an office building... would show a failure to understand... in what way [such music] is worth attending to.” (p.100)

Scanlon's "buck-passing account" of value

Chapter 1 argued that *reasons* are more fundamental than *desires*.

Chapter 2 argues that reasons are also more fundamental than *value*.

"...being good, or valuable, is not a property that itself provides a reason to respond to a thing in certain ways.

Rather, **to be good or valuable is to have other properties** that constitute such reasons." (p.96)

Argument 1

"[N]atural properties" are enough to justify why we value things; it is not necessary or helpful to appeal to an additional property of *being valuable*.

"...that a resort is pleasant is a reason to visit it" (p.97)
(pleasantness is a natural property)

Argument 2

"...many different things can be said to be good or to be valuable, and the **grounds for these judgments vary** widely. There does not seem to be a single, reason-providing property that is common to all these cases."
(p.98)

3. “Well-Being”

“What makes someone’s life go better?” (p.113)

narrower questions

“material and social conditions” (p.111)

(how safe, healthy, wealthy, ...)

“experiential quality” (p.112)

(how happy, “what it would be like to live [their life]”, ...)

“worthiness” (p.112)

(how “admirable and worthy of respect”)

current question

→ **“well-being”** (p.112)

???

broader question

“choiceworthiness” (p.112)

(how preferable “all things considered” (p.113))

Three theories of well-being

Experiential

Well-being is *only* about “the quality of one’s experience” (p.113)

Counterexample: “...a person who is happy only because he does not know that the people whom he regards as devoted friends are in fact artful deceivers...” (p.112)

Desire

Well-being is about “the degree to which the world is the way [one] desires it to be” (p.113)

Counterexample: “Someone might have a desire about... whether blue was Napoleon’s favorite color...” (p.114)

Also: the facts that make something desirable are what make it contribute to our well-being, not the fact that we desire it (p.115)

Also: just forming and satisfying a bunch of trivial desires doesn’t increase well-being (p.121)

There’s a somewhat long digression exploring how desire-based theories could be improved by referring to *rational aims* instead of desires. Scanlon concludes that “success in one’s rational aims” must be part of “any plausible account” of well-being, but still doesn’t cover everything. (p.123)

Objective List / Substantive Good

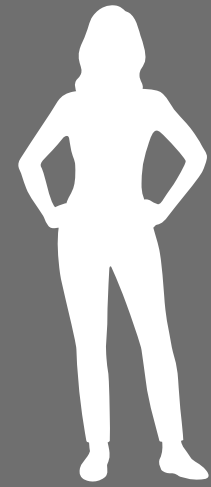
All not-purely-desire-based theories

(“experiential theories count as one kind of substantive-good theory”, p.113)

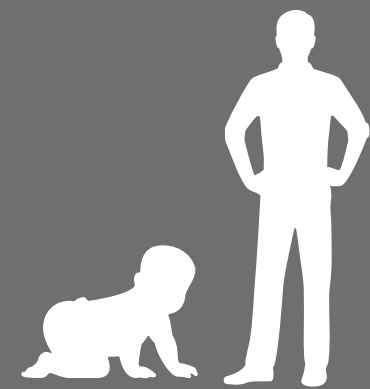
Scanlon thinks various things contribute to well-being but he does not attempt to provide a complete list or overall theory.

“It does not seem likely, for example, that we will find a general theory telling us how much weight to assign to the different elements of well-being I have listed: how much to enjoyment, how much to success in one’s aims, and so on.” (p.125)

Well-being: is it even a useful concept?



First-person perspective: We don't do things *for the sake of* increasing our well-being; we do things for underlying reasons like "I believe it is worthwhile" or "I enjoy it". (p.127) Often "the boundaries of well-being are blurred" (p.129)—does my family's safety become part of my well-being because it's something I care about (see p.128-129)? Generally, we **don't need to know** whether or not something is included in the definition of "well-being" to decide how to act. (p.128,131,132)



"Concerned benefactor" perspective: When trying to decide what actions to take *for the benefit of someone else*, like a friend or child (p.134), the concept of well-being might be more useful, since it may help us distinguish between things that benefit *that person* and things that don't (p.134-135). E.g., maybe I have reason to help you achieve your goal of getting health insurance, but not your goal of raising money for your favorite nonprofit (my example, not from the book). Still, this is just one consideration that may be relevant in some cases; it does **not** make well-being "**uniquely important**" (p.135).



Moral perspective: Is well-being "the basis on which an individual's interests are taken into account in moral argument"? (p.136) Scanlon admits that "some moral principles", like those related to justice which involve "mak[ing] comparative judgments of how well-off different people are" do require us to have "something like a theory of well-being" (p.138), but this is usually **different** from "the **intuitive notion** of individual well-being" (p.138). E.g., to decide whether a "social institution" is just, we probably won't consider *all* aspects of citizens' well-being since not all "are the responsibility of social institutions" (loose interpretation of example on p.139). (Scanlon considers further ways a concept of well-being might be needed in moral argument on p.139-141 but finds it not to be fundamental in any of them.)

I think the point of this chapter is: **we can't start with facts about well-being** and build our systems of morality and value on top of them. If we interpret well-being to include "success in our rational aims" (p.123), perhaps everything valuable is part of it, but then we must determine what can be rationally aimed at **before** we can fully specify what constitutes well-being. (p.143)

4. “Wrongness and Reasons”

The problem of moral motivation

- Goal: “**explain how** the fact that an action is **wrong** provides a **reason** not to do it” (p.149)
- Accounts vary along two dimensions (p.149-153); Scanlon’s is *substantive* (p.151) and he thinks it avoids/resolves Prichard’s dilemma (p.161-162)

Moral vs Nonmoral Accounts aka Prichard’s Dilemma

“the reason not to do the action is just that it is wrong” (p.149)

explains nothing (p.149)

“appeal to some clearly nonmoral reason, such as ... self-interest” (p.150)

“not the kind of reason that we suppose a moral person first and foremost to be moved by”; not “intimately connected with what it is to be wrong” (p.150)

Formal vs Substantive Accounts

morality follows logically from basic assumptions, e.g. about rationality, such as in Kant or Habermas’s views (p.150)

misdescribes what’s wrong with an amoral person; “the fault involved in failing to be moved by moral requirements does not seem to be a form of incoherence” (p.151)

morality is justified by particular values, e.g. happiness in utilitarianism (p.151)

“Once we identify one particular substantive value as the source of moral reasons it may be difficult to explain why that value should take precedence over all others, and why it is a value that, more than any other, everyone must recognize.” (p.151)

What if someone “does not care about” morality (p.148)? Scanlon *doesn’t* think we can always prove that they should be moral, using only reasons they themselves would recognize (p.148). Nevertheless, he thinks “the moral reasons that apply to us apply to [them] as well.” (p.158)

Scanlon's account of moral motivation

“being able to **justify your actions to others** on grounds that they could not reasonably reject” (p.154)

Argument 1: Phenomenology

“When I reflect on the reason that the wrongness of an action seems to supply not to do it, the best description ... I can come up with has to do with the **relation to others that such acts would put me in**: the sense that others could reasonably object to what I do...”

(p.155)

An example: Scanlon thinks the social changes in the US in the 60s-70s resulted from a loss of confidence in the justness of American institutions, which brought “a deep sense of shock and loss”; he says “what is particularly moving about charges of injustice and immorality is their implication for our relations with others, our sense of justifiability to or estrangement from them.” (p.163)

Argument 2: Prichard's Dilemma

Being able to justify our actions to others is necessary for us to have a certain sort of relationship with them that is inherently desirable (not just for its practical/material benefits). But **to fully have that relationship, we have to internalize a commitment to it.**

To get all the benefits, we have to view *I can't justify X to others* as a direct reason not to do X, without the further thought of *I would lose the benefits of this relationship if I did X.*

Scanlon thinks this defuses Prichard's dilemma because it unifies moral and nonmoral reasons “as aspects of a single value” (p.162).

(At least, that's how I interpreted pages 161-162.)

Argument 3: Complex Motivations

Morality involves “not just being moved to avoid certain actions ‘because they would be wrong,’ but also being moved by more concrete considerations such as ‘she's counting on me’...” (p.155-156)

On Scanlon's view, we have “reason to **shape our process of practical thinking** ... to make it one that others could reasonably be asked to license us to use.” (p.156) He thinks this pressure to adjust how we think explains why we are—or aren't—motivated by various concrete considerations in particular cases, while “the motive of ‘not acting wrongly’ plays a more prominent role in cases in which we act badly or are tempted to do so.” (p.156-158)

Scope of Scanlon's contractualism

Which moral values/responsibilities is it meant to explain?

We “commonly use the terms **‘moral’ and ‘morality’ to refer to a diverse set of values**”; “while contractualism characterizes a central **part** of the territory called morality, it does not include everything...” (p.173)

This “domain includ[es] primarily such duties to others as ... not to kill, harm, or deceive, and ... to keep one’s promises” (p.171)

Who/what is covered by this domain of morality?



All humans, even those we have no need to cooperate with (p.180) and “those severely disabled humans who never develop ... capacities required for judgment-sensitive attitudes” (p.185; Scanlon says we should imagine trustees representing them)



Possibly pets (p.182); maybe all animals, but Scanlon leans against it (p.185-186)

If animals are excluded, we can still have responsibilities to them rooted in other domains of morality (p.181).

If animals are included, Scanlon argues that the range of objections which could reasonably be raised on their behalf to moral principles is more limited than those for humans, such that there’s little “practical difference” between including and excluding animals (p.184).



“all those who **do, have, or will actually exist**” (p.187) but not “all possible beings” (p.186)

5. “The Structure of Contractualism”

The role of justifiability

“The idea that an act is right if and only if it can be justified to others is one that even a noncontractualist might accept.” (p.189)

...but on Scanlon’s view, **justifiability** is “basic in two ways” (p.189):

1. it’s “the **normative basis** of the morality of right and wrong” (p.189)

I think this means: desire to be able to justify ourselves to others is what motivates us to be moral (see [slide on “Scanlon’s account of moral motivation”](#))

2. it’s “the most **general characterization** of [that morality’s] content” (p.189)

I think this means: actions are right because they’re justifiable,
not justifiable because they’re right (according to some more fundamental standard such as maximizing net happiness—see first paragraph of chapter)

I found this unclear; my interpretation is based on this statement: “...there is on [Scanlon’s] view a strong **continuity between the reasons that lead us to act in the way that the conclusions of moral thought require** and the **reasons that shape the process through which we arrive at those conclusions.**” (p.191)

Comparison to similar theories

Two differences in Scanlon's theory (p.191):

1. “**motivational** claim”: Justifiability is not only a *criterion* for determining what's right, but part of our *motivation* to do what's right (see [previous slide](#))
2. “**reasonableness** rather than rationality”: Justifications involve “a substantive judgment” (p.194) rather than applying purely formal rules of rationality (see [next slide](#))

A somewhat related comment on Rawls's theory: “...while the tighter character of the Original Position argument may make it possible to arrive at conclusions with less appeal to intuitive judgment, this is made possible by building into the design of the Original Position features that themselves reflect substantive judgments...” (p.246)



On Kant's theory, justification involves determining what “one could **rationally** will to hold ‘as a universal law’”. (p.190)

Perhaps Scanlon would say our **motivation** to follow those laws must be separate because we know that following them won't actually make them universal laws.



“In Gauthier's case, rationality is identified, initially, with doing or choosing what conduces to the fulfillment of one's aims... In [his] theory, we must take account of what others have reason to do because we are trying to gain the benefits of cooperative arrangements and it would not be **rational** for others to accept a plan of action if doing so would not advance their interests.” (p.190)

I'm not familiar with this theory, but perhaps Scanlon is implying that we would need a separate source of **motivation** to adhere to it since in the real world we could sometimes cheat and get the benefits of existing cooperative arrangements without doing our part.



On Rawls's theory, justification involves determining what “it would be **rational** for parties to accept” assuming that they're trying to maximize their self-interest and they don't know anything about who they will be. (p.190)

I think Scanlon is implying that our **motivation** to follow the principles the hypothetical parties would accept must be separate from the motivations the parties use to arrive at those principles, since we do know who we are. (see p.191)



“Hare identifies the **rational** action with the action that would maximize the satisfaction of one's present preferences as they would be [under certain ideal conditions].” To choose “moral principles” we consider what would be rational in all “possible worlds in which one occupies the position of any of the other people performing or affected by actions of the kind...” (p.190)

I'm not familiar with this theory either; I think Scanlon thinks caring about “other possible world[s]” would require a separate source of **motivation**. (p.191)

Why **reasonableness** instead of rationality?

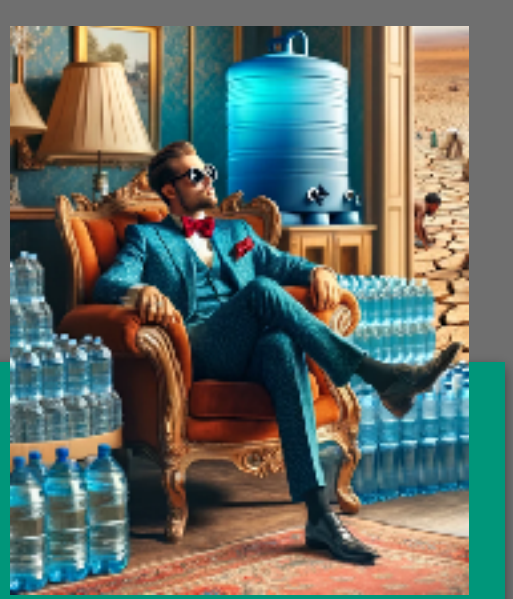
Here, rational = "what most conduces to the fulfillment of the agent's aims" (p.191-192)

Sometimes it would be *rational* to accept unreasonable principles.

For example: given a **power imbalance**, it may be rational for the weaker party to accept the least-bad principle that the stronger party is willing to accept, even if that principle is unfair.

Such a principle would not fulfill the goal of justifying the stronger party's actions. The standard of *reasonableness* is how Scanlon's theory makes room for rejecting such principles.

Thought Experiment: **Irritable Landholder**



"Suppose, for example, that we are negotiating about water rights in our county, and that there is one landowner who already controls most of the water in the vicinity. This person has no need for our cooperation. He can do as he pleases, and what he chooses to do will largely determine the outcome of the negotiations. Suppose also that while he is not ungenerous (he would probably provide water from his own wells for anyone who desperately needed it) he is extremely irritable and does not like to have the legitimacy of his position questioned. In such a situation, it would not be unreasonable for one of us to maintain that each person is entitled to at least a minimum supply of water, and to reject any principle of allocation which does not guarantee this. But it might not be rational to make this claim or to reject such principles, since this is very likely to enrage the large landholder and lead to an outcome that is worse for almost everyone. Moreover, it is natural to say that it would be unreasonable of the large landholder to reject our request for principles guaranteeing minimum water rights. What it would be rational for him to do (in the most common understanding of that term) is a different question, and depends on what his aims are." (p.192-193)

What does Scanlon mean by a “principle”?

Why principles? “Why not consider individual acts instead?”

Scanlon thinks that “[t]o justify an action...is to offer reasons... and to claim that they are sufficient to defeat any objections...” which implicitly involves “defend[ing] a principle... that such reasons are sufficient... under the prevailing conditions.” (p.197)

✗ Not: “a rule that can be ‘applied’ ... with little or no room left for the exercise of judgment” (p.189-199)

✓ “general conclusions about the status of various kinds of reasons for action” (p.199)

- There are “[a]n indefinite number” of “valid moral principles” (p.201)
- Any “succinct verbal formulations [of moral principles] turn out on closer examination to be mere **labels for much more complex ideas**” (p.199)
 - E.g., we realize “Thou shalt not kill” doesn’t necessarily prohibit self-defense (p.199)
- Understanding a principle involves grasping the reasons behind it, why it would/wouldn’t apply in various cases, what kinds of considerations could justify making exceptions to it, etc (p.201)

I don’t understand this section well, especially p.201. The way I’ve summarized Scanlon’s concept of a principle, a principle seems like a kind of second-order reason (or a set of such reasons)—a reason to adjust whether/how we view various other reasons as applicable in various situations. (For example, the principle *don’t murder people* might refer to the reason we have for viewing *it would make me feel good* as an irrelevant reason when deciding whether to kill someone.) But on this interpretation, it seems like we don’t need to ask whether anyone could reasonably reject a principle, because we could simply ask whether the principle is a real (good) reason. On the other hand, if principles are not identical to the reasons underlying them, but we also can’t formulate a rule that fully encompasses the principle, then it’s not clear to me exactly what it is that we’re asking whether anyone could reasonably reject. My best guess is: principles are ideas that humans *often take to be* second-order reasons, and we can communicate which of those ideas we’re talking about because of our shared psychology even though we can’t fully put them into words; and whether any given principle is a *real* reason or not depends on whether anyone has a reasonable objection to us treating it as such.

Evaluating principles

Objections to a principle can be related to...

- ...how it has us **act** in a particular case (p.203)
- ...what would happen if people in general followed it (p.203)
- ...how **knowing the principle was generally accepted would affect** “planning and ... organization of our lives” (p.203) and “our **relations** with others and our **view of ourselves**” (p.204)



There may be a **variety of valid reasons** for objecting to a principle (see slide on "What is a reason?").

Those reasons may involve moral judgments (e.g., “it is reasonable to object to principles that favor others arbitrarily” (p.216)). This raises the worry that Scanlon’s view is **circular**. He defends against this concern in section 6 (p.213-218); in my interpretation, the key is that these underlying moral reasons do not directly establish right and wrong, so we need a theory for resolving conflicts/interactions between them: “contractualism... can account for the significance of **different moral notions, within a unified moral framework**, without reducing all of them to a single idea.” (p.216) This section also argues that attempting to have “a ‘fundamental level’ of justification at which only well-being... matters” (p.214) is both an unnecessary and inadequate response to the perceived circularity.

But the reasons must be **personal**, not impersonal. (section 7, p.218-223)

Example: valid/invalid objections to “flood[ing] the Grand Canyon” (p.219)

✗ it’s “valuable and ought to be preserved and respected” (p.219)

✓ people would be deprived of “visiting and enjoying it” (p.220)

You may have good reasons to care about the Grand Canyon for its own sake, they just aren’t within “the part of morality” covered by Scanlon’s theory (p.219).

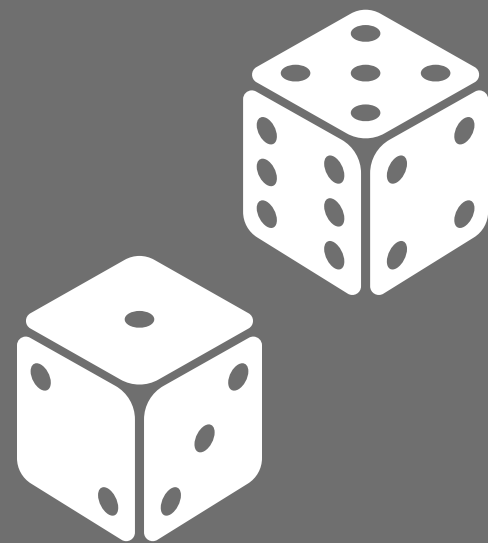
However, you *can* object that a principle would *prevent* people from adequately responding to impersonal reasons. (p.220-221)

✗ I object to you flooding the Grand Canyon, because it’s inherently valuable

✓ I object to saying it’s wrong for me to forcibly stop you from flooding the Grand Canyon, because it’s inherently valuable

How should we think about principles that **probabilistically** cause harm?

✘ Not via an expected-value approach. *Don't* treat a harm as proportionally less burdensome just because it's less likely to happen. (p.208-209)



✔ Instead, the probability affects “**the care that [an] agent has to take to avoid causing harm.**” (p.209)

Thus, a principle which can be expected to cause a certain amount of harm “**by accident**’... despite the fact that **reasonable precautions** have been taken” may be acceptable even though one which causes just as much harm by “**directly inflict**[ing it] on particular people” is not. (p.209)

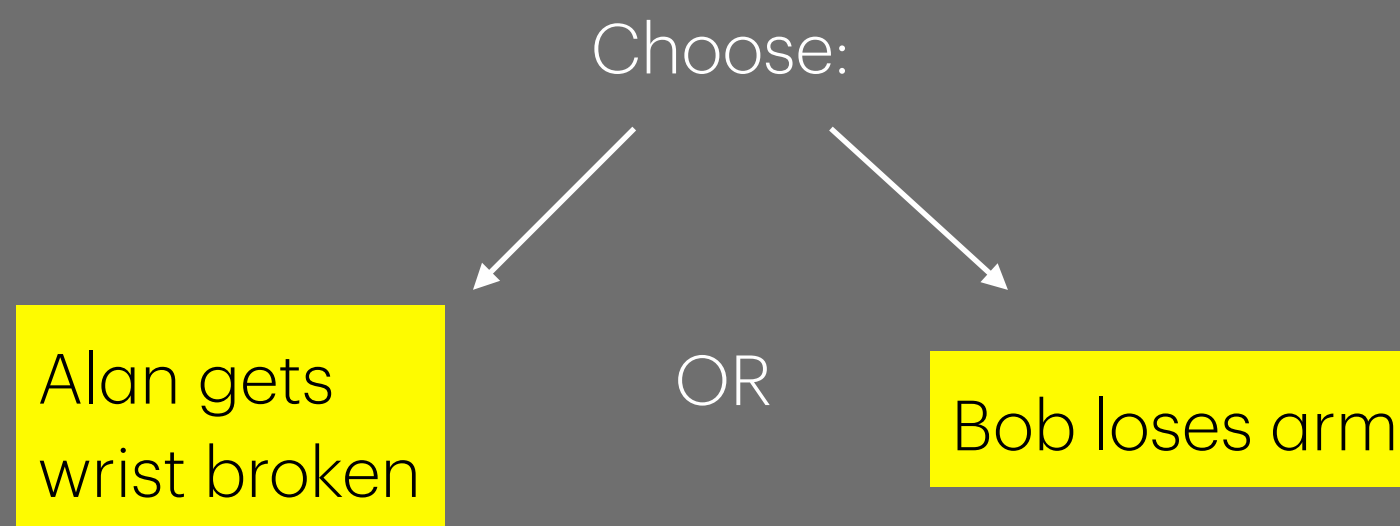
“Priority for the Worst Off?” (p.223-229)

Rawls famously held that even a small benefit to the least-well-off is preferable to any benefit (however large) to people better-off. (See [SEP article on Difference Principle](#)) Scanlon considers whether his own theory should similarly prioritize less well-off people. His answer is generally no, but yes in certain cases.

A broad class of cases where we should not prioritize

“Many moral principles are concerned with the provision of specific forms of assurance and protection... **To recognize an exception ... in every case** in which this would benefit the person whose overall level of well-being was lower **would prevent these principles from offering the kind of assurance** that they are supposed to supply.”
(p.223)

A well-being-focused case where we still shouldn't prioritize

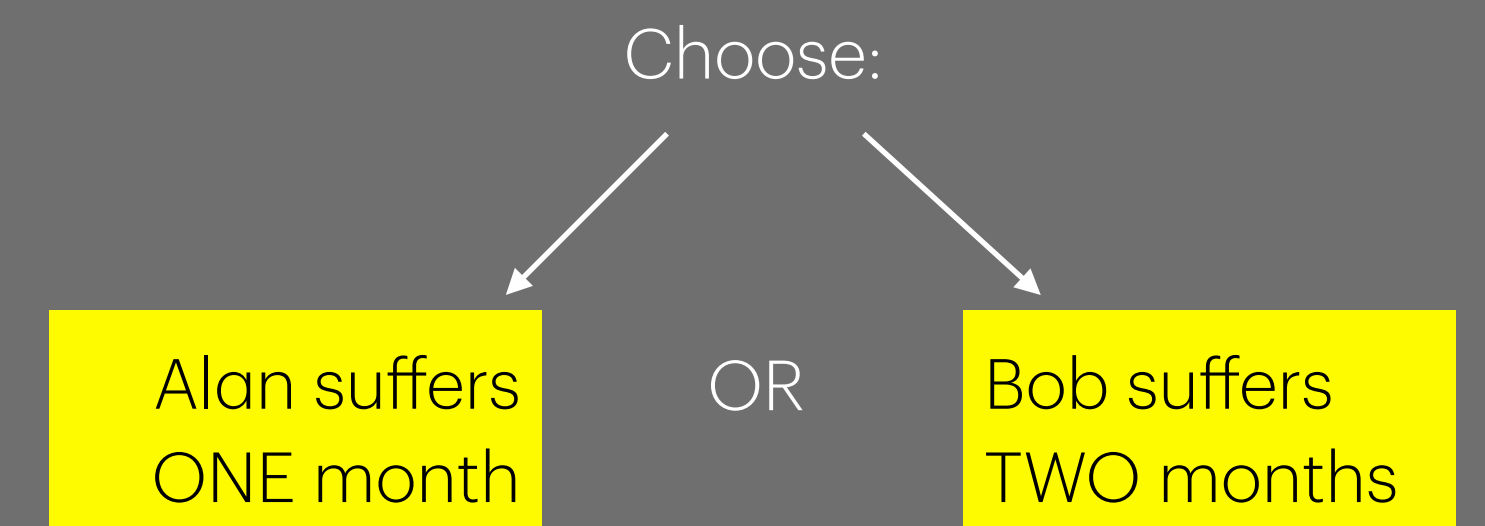


Assume: Alan has had a much worse life

Scanlon thinks: Save Bob.
The bigger benefit available for Bob, not the worse starting point of Alan, should guide our decision.

(p.226-227; he calls the people A and B)

A case where we might prioritize



Assume: Alan will also suffer for 5 more years regardless

Scanlon thinks: Save Alan (maybe).
“The idea of priority for the worse off has greater plausibility in cases in which **the aspect of well-being in which some people are worse off is the same as the way in which they can be helped.**” (p.227; he calls them A and B)

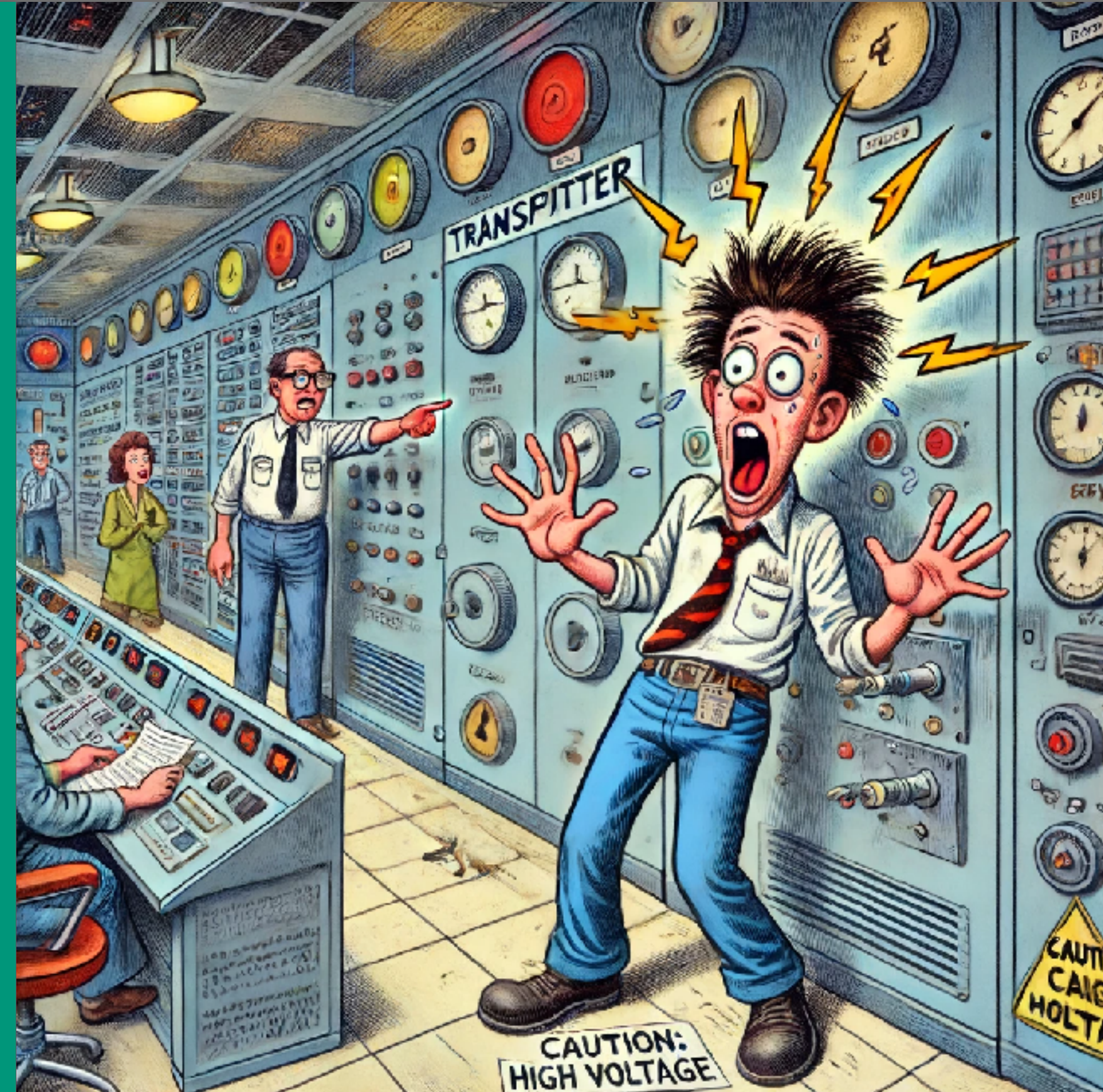
Aggregation, the bad kind

Thought Experiment: **Jones's Electrocution**

- "...Jones has suffered an accident in the transmitter room of a television station."
- "A World Cup match is in progress, watched by many people, and it will not be over for an hour."
- Jones "is receiving extremely painful electrical shocks."
- "...we cannot rescue him without turning off the transmitter for fifteen minutes."

"Should we rescue him now or wait until the match is over?"

(p.235)



Utilitarianism: if enough viewers are enjoying the game, their aggregate pleasure outweighs Jones's suffering

Scanlonianism: no individual can reasonably object to saving Jones (yay!)

Aggregation, the good kind

Thought Experiment: **Saving One or Two**

If you can *either* save Aaron's life, or both Brooke's and Connor's lives, are you obligated to save Brooke and Connor?

(Yes, obviously.)

(p.232; I've made it more concrete and added names)



Problem: Scanlon says “a central feature of contractualism” is “its insistence that the **justifiability of a moral principle depends only on various *individuals’* reasons for objecting...**” (p.229) What objection could either Brooke or Connor have, *individually*, have against a principle that lets you save Aaron?

Solution: “either member of the larger group might complain that this principle did **not take account of the value of saving his life**, since it permits the agent to **decide what to do in the very same way** that it would have permitted **had he not been present at all**, and there was only one person in each group.” (p.232)

Thanks to someone in my book club for pointing out a big issue with this: if, for example, we had to choose between saving 2 vs 3 people, and we save the 3, the fact that we'd have made the same decision in a 1 vs 3 case does not mean we are devaluing either of the 2 people's lives. I think Scanlon's argument, that e.g. saving Aaron in the 1 vs 2 case devalues Brooke, depends on all the following (see p.232): 1) we'd have exactly equal reason to save Aaron or Connor if Brooke were absent; 2) we'd have to save Aaron if both Brooke and Connor were absent; 3) we'd have to save Connor if both Aaron and Brooke were absent. So it seems like our reasons to save Aaron and Connor each have independent force, and create a tie when pitted against each other, which suggests our equal reason to save Brooke should break the tie (see p.397).

This is only a “**tie-breaking' argument**” for when you would otherwise have equal reason to support either principle; it does not apply in Jones's Electrocution (p.235).

I think this approach is fascinating but misguided. It implies that if I saved Aaron, I would be personally wronging Brooke, in a way that I would not be personally wronging Aaron if I saved Brooke instead. That's dubious and, at best, a secondary concern. Isn't the *main* reason to save Brooke and Connor simply that two deaths would be more tragic than a single death? I think Scanlon might do better to take one of the following approaches:

1. Say that our reason not to choose Aaron comes from a different part of morality than “what we owe to each other”. Scanlon does consider this option and seems lukewarm about it (p.231)
2. Say that everyone can object to a principle that allows saving Aaron because, if it were widely accepted, all our lives would be riskier (our odds of being rescued any time we fell into a situation like this would be lower than if a principle that required saving the larger number of lives were widely accepted instead). I'm not sure whether Scanlon's resistance to choosing principles based on who we are likely to be (p.206) precludes this option or not.

Aggregation, the murky kind

Should we save 1 person from drowning or 1000 people from being blinded?

(p.239: I've added numbers to make it concrete)

- Scanlon isn't sure (p.239)
- If 1, contractualism explains this easily
- If 1000, contractualism *might* be able to explain it as follows: (p.239-241)
 - There may be “a relation of ‘relevance’ between harms” (p.239)
e.g. perhaps “missing half an hour of exciting television is not relevant when we are deciding whether to save a person ... who is in extreme pain, but ... total paralysis or blindness is relevant to the even more serious harm of loss of life” (p.240)
 - Use an argument similar to the one discussed on the previous slide
“Consider cases in which the choice is between preventing one more serious harm and a greater number of less serious ones. It might be claimed that if the less serious harms are nonetheless morally relevant to the more serious ones this means that a principle requiring (or perhaps even permitting) one always to prevent the more serious harms in such a case could reasonably be rejected from the point of view of someone in the other group on the ground that it did not give proper consideration to his admittedly less serious, but still morally relevant, loss.” (p.240)

6. “Responsibility”

Two senses of “responsible”

you’re responsible for something if...

how your choices affect your responsibility is determined by...

“responsibility as **attributability**” (p.248)

“it is appropriate to take it as a basis of **moral appraisal** of” you (p.248)

“whether a given action... reflect[ed]” your “**judgment-sensitive attitudes**” (p.290; see [slide on moral appraisal](#))

“**substantive responsibility**” (p.248)

you “**cannot complain** of the burdens or obligations that result” (p.248-249)

“the **Value of Choice**” (p.290; [next slide](#))

I had a hard time understanding the difference between the two senses. The concluding section of the chapter (especially p.290,293) makes it clearest.

Here’s an example of the **practical implications**: “It is said, for example, that there are two approaches to issues such as drug use, crime, and teenage pregnancy. One approach holds that these are the result of immoral actions for which individuals are responsible and properly criticized. The remedy is for them to stop behaving in these ways. The alternative approach, it is said, views these as problems that have social causes, and the remedy it recommends is to change the social conditions that produce people who will behave in these ways. ... But this debate rests on the **mistaken assumption** that taking individuals to be responsible for their conduct in the sense of **being open to moral criticism** for it requires one also to say that they are responsible for its results in the substantive sense, that is to say, that they are **not entitled to any assistance** in dealing with these problems.” (p.293)

The Value of Choice

Having *choices* that affect *outcomes* can have at least 3 kinds of value:

Instrumental

Example: I want to choose my own dinner because you probably don't know what I'll enjoy as well as I know. (p.251-252)

Representative

Example: I want to choose my spouse's anniversary gift because "both the fact that I chose it and the choice that I make reflect my thoughts about her and about the occasion." (p.252)

Example: I *don't* want to choose whether a job goes to "my friend or some well-qualified stranger", because "I want it to be clear that the outcome does not reflect my judgment of their respective merits or my balancing of the competing claims of merit and loyalty." (p.252)

Symbolic

Example: "in societies in which arranged marriages are not the norm, people have reason to want to choose their own mates... also because having their parents make the choice would be 'demeaning'—that is to say, would suggest that they are not competent, independent adults..." (p.253)

- All of these are **potential reasons** for objecting to principles (p.253-254)
- This level of detail is useful when evaluating charges of **paternalism** (p.254-255)
- **Main point:** the fact that choice is valuable—in at least these 3 ways—is **why** giving people choices can make a moral principle more justifiable (p.251)
 - This "Value of Choice" explanation is in contrast to the "Forfeiture View" explanation (next slide)

More precisely: "Two things need to be explained. The first is why principles that no one could reasonably reject often must be ones that make normative outcomes sensitive to individuals' choices, or at least to their having had the opportunity to choose. The second is how considerations of responsibility can diminish a person's reasonable grounds for rejecting a principle." This slide relates to the first question; he "derive[s] an answer to the second question from an answer to the first." (p.251) It's hard for me to grasp why these are two separate questions. My best interpretation is: the first question is about why someone would want moral principles that respect their choices as opposed to ones that don't. The second question is about why, when someone is hurt by a moral principle and would be better off if that principle were rejected, the fact that the principle gives them choices can help overrule their objection (see next slide).

Forfeiture View *versus* Value of Choice, for substantive responsibility



Thought Experiment: **Waste Removal**

(p.256-267; I added the names)

A city must transport some hazardous waste. All reasonable precautions are taken and citizens warned not to be outside during the process, but some still go outside and are injured:

1. Dave: “despite the newspaper stories, mailings, posted signs, sound trucks, and radio and television announcements, he **failed to hear** about the danger” (p.257)
2. Erin: “heard ... but did not take the danger seriously” (p.257)
3. Faye: made a calculated decision to go outside because she probably doesn’t have long to live anyway and “the day ... offered unusually good conditions for working outdoors on a scientific project to which she attached great value” (p.258)
4. Gary: “was informed ... but then simply **forgot**” (p.259)

It’s assumed that **none** of these four can reasonably object to “a principle permitting what [the city has] done” (p.257).

We want to fully understand **why** they can’t; “what role the fact that they were warned, and thus given the **choice of avoiding exposure**, plays...” (p.257)

“**Forfeiture View**”: when you make “a conscious decision” to choose one option over others, you forfeit your “right to complain” about the results (p.258)

- Dave can’t object, because the city took all reasonable precautions; but he does not seem responsible for his injury (p.258)
- Erin does seem “**(substantively) responsible** for her own injury”, so she has even *less* grounds for complaint than Dave does, and perhaps(?) less grounds for demanding aid for her injury (see p.293)

Why the difference? Forfeiture View is a tempting explanation. (p.258)

- Note: Faye is “just as fully responsible” as Erin according to the Forfeiture View, even though her choice was reasonable and Erin’s wasn’t. So, “[w]hat lies behind the Forfeiture View is ... **not** a notion of **desert**, according to which people who behave wrongly or foolishly cannot complain about suffering as a result” (p.258-259)
- Gary also seems “fully responsible”, but is not according to the Forfeiture View. (p.259)
- Scanlon thinks we should explain the similarities and differences of these cases by the **Value of Choice** rather than the Forfeiture View (p.259)
 - The city was trying to give something valuable—choice—to all these people, but it failed to in Dave’s case; that’s the difference from Erin (p.259)
 - Scanlon may(?) also be saying that merely *trying very hard* to give Dave this valuable choice reduces Dave’s ability to object (p.259)
 - The Forfeiture View always emphasizes “explicit choice or consent”; the Value of Choice view can require that sometimes, but can also account for scenarios where all that matters is having the right sort of *opportunity* to choose. (p.260-261)

“Moral appraisal” based on “judgment-sensitive attitudes”

- “...**moral criticism** claims that an agent has **governed herself** in a way that would not be allowed by any principles that no one could reasonably reject. ... this charge **calls for her to explain** why this claim is mistaken or to acknowledge that it is valid and that her self-governance has been faulty.” (p.268)
 - **Blame** is a form of this coming from outside (p.268)
 - **Guilt** is a form of this coming from inside (p.269-270)
- Thus moral criticism “applies ... only in regard to ... judgment-sensitive attitudes: that is, those **attitudes** that, in a rational creature, should be ‘**under the control of reason.**” (p.272)
- This helps explain:
 - why we **don’t blame** people for actions that aren’t “**attributable** to” them e.g. if they’ve been hypnotized (p.227); and it enables nuanced thinking about this (p.277-279)
 - why we still **can blame** people even if their actions are causally **determined** (p.281) i.e. if nobody has free will in a radical sense (see [next slide](#))

Free will, the Causal Thesis, and the Desert Thesis

“the **Causal Thesis**”

“**all of our actions have antecedent causes** to which they are linked by causal laws of the kind that govern other events in the universe, whether these laws are **deterministic or merely probabilistic.**” (p.250)

Scanlon points out that not only does *determinism* pose a difficulty for free will and moral responsibility—as is widely recognized—but even the “weaker claim” made by the Causal Thesis poses a difficulty too. (p.249-250)
(I agree—determinism is a red herring in free will debates, since the indeterminism of e.g. quantum mechanics doesn’t help address the fundamental problem of free will at all.)

Without arguing for or against the Causal Thesis, Scanlon wants to show that his view can make sense of moral responsibility even if the Causal Thesis is true. (p.250-251)

- The instrumental, representative, and symbolic values of choice discussed earlier only depend on our choices accurately reflecting “what we are like” or our “tastes”, etc.; the Causal Thesis doesn’t affect that (p.255)
- Scanlon’s account of moral blame (previous slide) only relies on them being self-governing in a “weak sense” that’s compatible with the Causal Thesis (p.281; detailed discussion p.281-290)

“the **Desert Thesis**” (*desert* as in *deserve*): “the idea that when a person has done something that is morally wrong it is morally better that **he or she should suffer** some loss in consequence” (p.274). Scanlon **categorically rejects** it: “To my mind, no degree of freedom or self-determination could make the Desert Thesis morally acceptable.” (p.275) I agree, and I suspect a common source of resistance to determinism is a commitment to the Desert Thesis paired with a (misguided) belief that it would somehow be justified if the world were nondeterministic in the right way.

7. “Promises”

Don't lead people on

In this chapter Scanlon applies his framework to reach conclusions on some concrete issues. I'm not going to cover this in nearly as much detail as earlier chapters.

- Hume, Rawls, and others thought our obligation to keep promises “depends essentially on the existence of a social practice of agreement-making.” (p.295) but Scanlon derives it from principles which would be valid **even without such social customs** (p.296)
- He covers “a ... general family of moral wrongs which are concerned ... with what we owe to other people **when we have led them to form expectations about our future conduct.**” (p.296)

“Principle M [for Manipulation]:

In the absence of special justification, it is not permissible for one person, A, in order to get another person, B, to do some act, X (which A wants B to do and which B is morally free to do or not do but would otherwise not do), to lead B to expect that if he or she does X then A will do Y (which B wants but believes that A will otherwise not do), when in fact A has no intention of doing Y if B does X, and A can reasonably foresee that B will suffer significant loss if he or she does X and A does not reciprocate by doing Y.” (p.298)

“Principle D [for Due Care]:

One must exercise due care not to lead others to form reasonable but false expectations about what one will do when one has good reason to believe that they would suffer significant loss as a result of relying on these expectations.” (p.300)

“Principle L [Loss Prevention]:

If one has intentionally or negligently led someone to expect that one is going to follow a certain course of action, X, and one has good reason to believe that that person will suffer significant loss as a result of this expectation if one does not follow X, then one must take reasonable steps to prevent that loss.” (p.300–301)

The obligation to keep promises

Promises have an extra feature: it's usually **wrong to break them even if you compensate** the person for any loss you cause (p.301)
Scanlon uses "the value of assurance" to explain this (p.303-309):

"Principle F [for Fidelity]:

If (1) A voluntarily and intentionally leads B to expect that A will do X (unless B consents to A's not doing so); (2) A knows that B wants to be assured of this; (3) A acts with the aim of providing this assurance, and has good reason to believe that he or she has done so; (4) B knows that A has the beliefs and intentions just described; (5) A intends for B to know this, and knows that B does know it; and (6) B knows that A has this knowledge and intent; then, in the absence of special justification, A must do X unless B consents to X's not being done. (p.304)

Scanlon notes that this would have "to be supplemented by further principles" (p.312)
if the promiser is genuinely obligated to fulfill their promise in either of the following cases:

"undesired promises"

"a mother's promise to give her daughter a sewing machine, when in fact the daughter would not want to have such a thing in the house" (p.311-312)

disbelieved promises

"the Profligate Pal": "Your friend has been borrowing money from you, and from others, for years, always promising solemnly to pay it back but never doing so.he comes to you on his knees, full of self-reproach and sincere assurances that he has turned over a new leaf. You do not believe this for a minute, but out of pity you are willing simply to give him the money he needs. You realize, however, that it would be cruel to reject his promises as worthless and offer him charity instead. So you treat his offer seriously, and give him the money after receiving his promise to repay the loan on a certain date, although you have no expectation of ever seeing your money again. Does he have an obligation to pay you back?" (p.312)

Lies and oaths

Against **deception**:

“Principle ML [for Misleading]:

One may not, in the absence of special justification, act with the intention of leading someone to form a false belief about some matter, or with the aim of confirming a false belief he or she already holds. (p.318)

This “forbids more than lying” because “from the point of view of those who are misled, the reasons for insisting on at least the protection provided by ML are just as strong as the reasons for wanting the protection provided by a weaker principle forbidding only outright lies. Their interest is in not being misled; **it does not matter whether this is done by saying something false, by artful and selective use of the truth, or by the planting of misleading physical evidence.**

(p.318-319)

Oaths have a different basis than promises. (p.323)

“A person taking an oath says, in support of a claim to be telling the truth or to have a sincere and reliable intention to do a certain thing, ‘I swear to you by . . .,’ naming here something to which he or she is assumed to attach great value, such as God, the Bible, or the memory of a loved one.” (p.323)

“The binding force of an oath derives from the value that is invoked in making it rather than from ‘principles that no one could reasonably reject.’” (p.326)

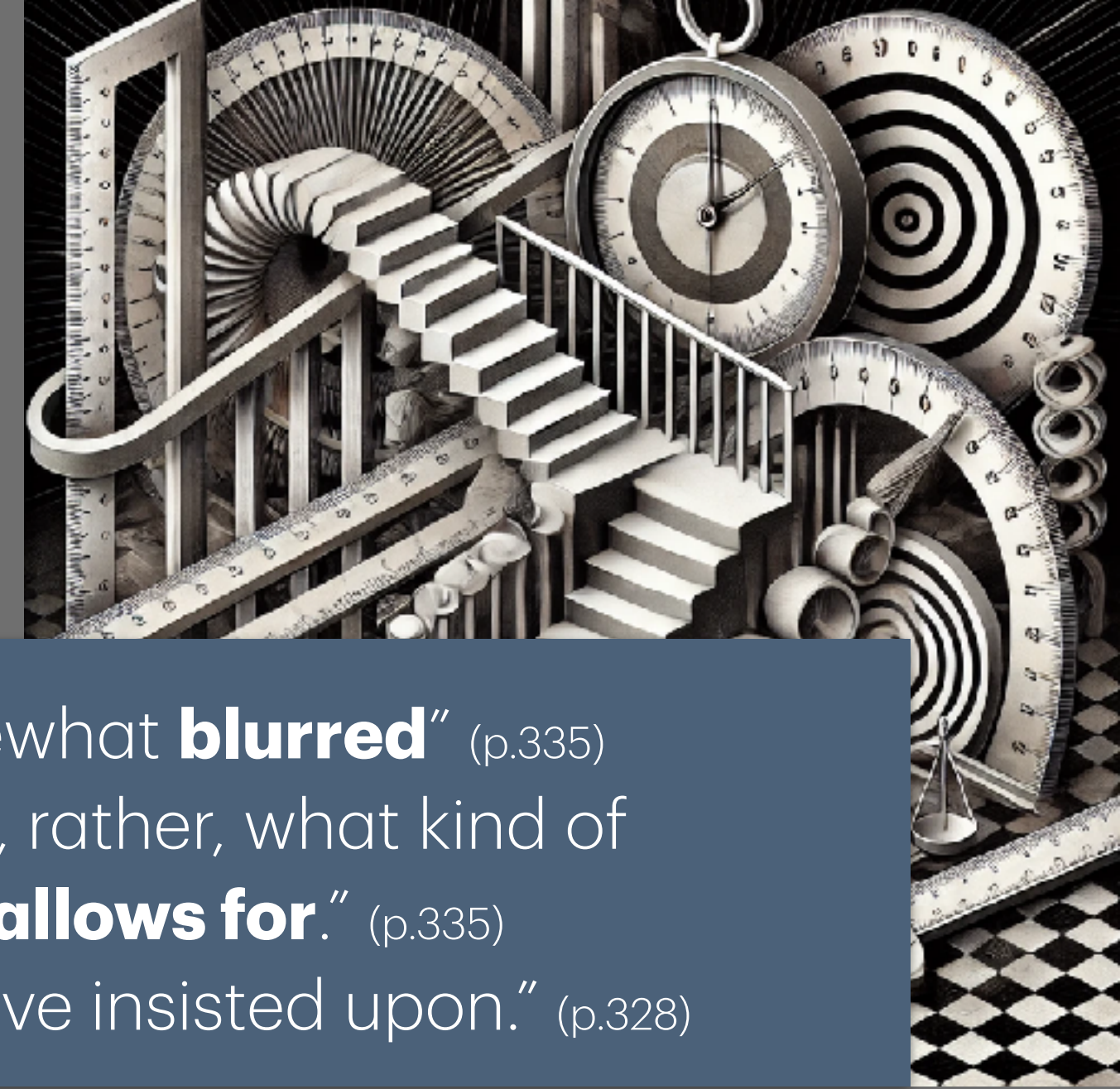
This leads to the surprising (to me) conclusion that oaths may sometimes be valid even when they were made under **duress**, when a mere promise under the same circumstances might not be. (p.326)

8. “Relativism”

A coherent account of moral relativism

Scanlon is **not** a relativist (p.328), but he says “the boundaries of ‘relativism’ are inevitably somewhat **blurred**” (p.335) so “the crucial question should not be whether a view is or is not properly called relativist but, rather, what kind of foundation it takes moral standards to have and **how much variation in such standards it allows for.**” (p.335) He thinks he “explain[s] how moral standards can vary in many of the ways that relativists have insisted upon.” (p.328)

- “Moral relativism **denies that there is a single set of** ultimate substantive **moral standards** by which all actions are to be judged...” (p.329)
 - It does *not* deny that there is a single set of standards for judging the validity of **reasons**, so it’s **not self-defeating**: relativists can still appeal to reasons when making the case that relativism is true, and when arguing that particular moral standards do or do not apply in a given context (p.329-330)
 - “...relativists should construe the claim that an action is wrong as, roughly, the claim that action is ruled out by principles that there is, in the context, sufficient reason to regard as having the kind of authority properly called moral.” (p.330)



Why are people afraid of relativism?

1. Worry that it will lead others to **do awful things** (p.330-331)

- “The worst mass murderers have not been relativists, and many relativists accept, perhaps for varying reasons, the basic contents of ordinary morality. So this first reason for resisting relativism does not seem to me compelling.” (p.330)
- Amusing quote from Philippa Foot: “We are, naturally, concerned about the man who doesn’t care what happens to other people, and we want to convict him of irrationality, thinking he will mind about that.” (p.331)

2. Desire to be justified in **condemning evil** (p.331-332)

- “When Harman says, for example, that ‘ought to do’ judgments do not apply to people who lack relevant reasons, and that we therefore cannot say that it was wrong of Hitler to murder millions of people, this claim threatens to deprive us of something important.” (p.331)
- “...if we give up the idea that an agent can be properly condemned for his action, then it seems that we must also withdraw the claim, on his victims’ behalf, that they were entitled not to be treated in the way that he treated them.” (p.332)

3. The sense that it “undermine[s] the **importance** of our moral judgments” (p.332-333)

- “...relativism is often seen as a debunking doctrine, according to which morality is *merely* a matter of social convention—where the ‘merely’ reflects the assumption that being generally accepted in a society could not, by itself, confer anything like the authority that moral judgments are commonly supposed to have.” (p.333)

“three concentric domains” (p.348-349)

judgments based on principles “that **people in any society** could reasonably reject”
e.g. hate-based murder/torture (p.348)

“judgments... that depend on reasons for rejection that people have **only under certain social conditions**”
e.g. particular privacy expectations (p.348; p.341)

“[j]udgments... based **not** on the idea of **what we owe to others**
but on the appeal of **particular values** that we may share.”
e.g. “[d]ifferent conceptions of patriotism” (p.333) or “honor” or “family ties” (p.344)

This chapter contains a nuanced discussion (p.333-349) of “whether and how a form of **benign relativism** could be correct” (p.333). We can have valid reasons to behave in different ways due to differences in a society’s “way of life” (especially “customs and traditions” (p.335)), or “social conditions” or “systems of social relations” (p.340), or in which of the “many diverse values that are worthy of respect” an individual chooses to adopt (p.343). But there are limits to what can be justified in this way. For example, you may have reason to follow traditions, but not to demand that everyone in your society does (p.337); it may be reasonable (not required) to “regard an ideal of patriotism as a moral standard” for yourself (p.334), but not if it has an “excessively nationalistic character” (p.346). Although Scanlon does not regard his contractualist theory as a form of relativism, his theory does accommodate such benign variations in morality via the middle and outer domains shown above.

“Disagreement and Skepticism” (p.354-360)

- A common skeptical argument:
 - **Premise:** “serious people, who are well informed and do not appear to be making logical errors, have arrived at stable opinions about right and wrong that are incompatible with ours.” (p.354)
 - **Conclusion:** “there is nothing there to be ‘right’ about—that is, no ‘objective truth’ about morality.” (p.354)
- Scanlon has two different responses based on the nature of the disagreement in question. Do the people disagreeing have “different conceptions of the basis of moral standards” (p.357), or about the implications of those conceptions?



Fundamental disagreement

- Sometimes “what are often described as conflicting moral views do not represent conflicting opinions about the same subject matter but, rather, commitments to quite distinct ultimate values.” (p.355)
- Scanlon might have something like this in mind: you and I disagree about whether abortion (see p.357) is morally wrong, but you think *wrong* means *disallowed by God* while I think *wrong* means *fails to maximize net happiness*. The apparent disagreement (whether *wrong* applies to abortion) is misleading because we’re really talking about two different things.
- In this case, the premise of the skeptical argument is false!
 - Our “conflicting moral views are not the result of sustained inquiry into the same subject matter” (p.356)
 - The real disagreement is on “What principles is there most reason ... to accept as ultimate standards of conduct? But **this question is not one that most people have inquired into very thoroughly ...**” (p.356)

I think there’s some validity to this, but it’s not fully satisfying. Philosophers, for example, do put a lot of thought into the foundational questions and still disagree.

Non-fundamental disagreement

- In “cases in which people who seem to have much the same conceptions of right and wrong nonetheless disagree”, we have to consider whether it’s really more plausible that “there is nothing to be mistaken about” than that one or both parties are mistaken. (p.356)
- Since “[t]here is no doubt... that murder, rape, torture, and slavery are wrong”, it would not be plausible to say there’s “nothing to be mistaken about” for “all questions of right and wrong” (p.356-357. This might sound question-begging, but remember, we’re assuming a shared conception of morality—otherwise the box on the left is relevant.)
- For some more narrow class of questions, the nothing-to-be-mistaken-about view “may be more plausible.... But one would then need some explanation of how this particular class of moral questions differed from others in a way that made them lack determinate answers, rather than merely being very difficult to settle.” (p.357; he does consider an explanation that may apply in some cases.)
- Disagreement can result from “partisanship” and “the intellectual difficulty of the underlying issues” without implying there is no true answer (p.357-359)

Interesting comparison: “Disagreements about which of several competing scientific hypotheses is best supported by the available evidence... often persist even among... experts... Further evidence may determine which of these hypotheses was correct, but the disagreement about reasons—about **which hypothesis the more limited body of evidence in fact supported**—may continue...” (p.358)

Appendix. “Williams on Internal and External Reasons”

(Bernard, not me)

- “Williams distinguishes between two ways of interpreting a statement that a person ‘has a reason to ϕ ’ (where ϕ stands in for some verb of action).” (p.363)

Scanlon does a lot of subtle analysis in this chapter that I’m not mentioning here.

1. **Internal** reason: “the agent has some motive—that there is something that matters to him or her—that will be served or furthered by ϕ -ing.” (p.363)
 - More precisely, there’s something in the agent’s “**subjective motivational set**, S”, which “includ[es], [Williams] says, such things as ‘dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects, as they might be called, embodying commitments of the agent.’” (p.364)
2. **External** reason: “on this interpretation it can be true that A has a reason to ϕ even though ϕ -ing would not serve or further any aim or value that matters to the agent.” (p.363)

- Williams only believes in internal reasons. (p.364)

However, Scanlon notes Williams still believes people can be **mistaken about what reasons they have**, when they fail to see that there’s a “sound deliberative route” from their own subjective motivational set S to some conclusion. (p.364-365)

Scanlon highlights the oddity of treating cases where people can’t see the link between their S and some conclusion **differently** from cases where their S is missing the elements that would enable such a link. (p.369)

- Scanlon is more sympathetic to the externalist view, but: “It is, or should be, **conceded on both sides** that:

(1) reasons very often have subjective conditions;

(2) failing to see the force of a reason that applies to one need not involve irrationality; although

(3) it may, as in the case of cruelty and insensitivity, involve some other failing or deficiency.

Once these things are conceded, the remaining disagreement over the range of applicability of the locution ‘has a reason’ does not seem to me to be so important.” (p.372)