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C4

An Explanation of the Essential Publicity of Practical Reasons

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C4S1

Introduction

C4P1   Suppose I am stepping on your broken toe, causing you pain. As Nagel observes in *The Possibility of Altruism* (1979), you would not merely dislike this; you would resent it. Implicit in your resentment is the supposition that I should stop, and hence, that I have a reason to stop. So if your resentment is legitimate, your pain has a dual significance. It gives you a reason to pull your foot away, and it also gives me a reason to remove my foot (or at least not interfere with your removing yours).

C4P2   Nagel famously argued that every agent-relative reason implies an agent-neutral one—that every reason for X to Φ is a reason of equal force for everyone to see to it that X Φs. So, for instance, if you have a reason to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro because it is your lifelong goal, this fact is a reason of equal force for me to promote your climbing Kilimanjaro.

C4P3   This view is extreme, and Nagel has since retracted it.[1] While your reason to climb Kilimanjaro may have some normative significance for me, it is not plausible that I have just the same reason to promote your climbing it as you do. The fact that it is *your* project to climb Kilimanjaro, not mine, must make some difference. In response to these examples, some philosophers with Nagelian sympathies now defend a more moderate but still significant claim about reasons (Korsgaard 1996; Wallace 2009; Bertea 2017). They contend that reasons are "public": their normative force is always shared. But they deny that a reason for X to Φ is always a reason to promote X's Φ-ing. In Wallace's version:

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[1] Nagel has rejected it on the strength of objections raised by Sturgeon (1974: 374–402). See Nagel (1986: 159).

C4P4   **Publicity Thesis:**   Necessarily, if R is a reason for X to Φ, then R is a reason for anyone to not interfere with X's Φ-ing.

C4P5   If you have reason to climb Kilimanjaro, this may not give me reason of equal force to promote your climbing it. (In fact, it may give me no reason at all to promote it.) But plausibly, it gives me some reason to not interfere with your climbing it.

C4P6   The Publicity Thesis is credible in this form. It does not imply that all reasons are agent-neutral, or that we all have reasons to promote the same ends. Rather, it seems to capture the core of morality; the minimal core of morality is that I am under rational pressure not to interfere with your pursuit of your rational ends. Even in competitive contexts, others' reasons plausibly generate reasons to not interfere. If you and I are shipwrecked, fighting for the last plank, it is plausible that your reasons still give me reasons. The fact that you need the plank to save your life gives me at least *some* reason to cede it to you.

C4P7   Still, the Publicity Thesis in this form is not obvious. It amounts to the claim that practical reasons—even those that are grounded in the projects and interests of particular individuals—are never purely private. The alternative view is that while everyone has reasons of his own, they do not necessarily make claims on other people. An egoist thinks that other people have reason to benefit themselves but that these reasons do not provide *him* with reasons to do anything. It is a striking feature of normative reality that it is not this way. If the Publicity Thesis is true, other people and their reasons always matter for everyone, everywhere—not because people happen to be altruistic, but rather because reasons by their very nature make claims on everyone if they make claims on anyone.

C4P8   As noted, the Publicity Thesis has a certain initial plausibility. When I am in a position to interfere with you in the pursuit of your rational ends, I am always under some pressure not to do so. But, of course, questions will arise. Suppose you have some reason to do something that it would be morally wrong for you to do—rob a bank, for instance. Does it follow that I have some reason not to interfere?

C4P9   It is clear that I don't have a serious reason—the sort of reason it makes sense to dwell on. But as Schroeder (2007) has emphasized, it can be hard to tell the difference between a very weak reason, or an overridden reason, and no reason at all; so it can be hard to test claims like the Publicity Thesis by considering hypothetical cases, since apparent counterexamples can always be explained away.

C4P10   Given this, it would be good to have an argument for the Publicity Thesis—a derivation of the thesis from deeper and independently plausible principles. And, of course, even if we find the principle plausible and do not insist on an argument, we should still be in the market for an explanation for it. So we ask: What could possibly explain the truth of the Publicity Thesis?

C4P11   Of course, it may just be a brute fact about normative reality that others' reasons always generate pressure not to interfere: an axiom in the theory of practical rationality. This would not entail that the Publicity Thesis could not be supported, for example, by appeal to coherence with our other views. But it would entail that there is no explanation for its truth.

C4P12   Wallace is happy to endorse the Publicity Thesis simply on the basis of its reflective support and coherence with our other views. The Publicity Thesis, he contends, follows from "our best substantive understanding of what we (individually and severally) have reason to do" (Wallace 2009: 471). While this reflective support is evidence for the truth of the Publicity Thesis, it would be disappointing if we could find no further reinforcement or explanation for it. The Publicity Thesis seems to be the sort of thesis that cries out for further explanation. We may all agree, as a substantive matter, that the reasons of other people bear on what we ought to do. But why should this be the case?

C4P13   Some philosophers argue that the Publicity Thesis does have a deep explanation (Korsgaard 1996; Bertea 2017). Unlike Wallace, they do not think that the Publicity Thesis is a substantive, "synthetic" truth, but rather that it follows from the very nature or concept of a reason—or an account what we are doing when we ascribe reasons to others. According to Korsgaard, practical reasons are "public in their very essence" (Korsgaard 1996: 135). We cannot coherently conceive of a reason that binds one person but not others (though this conceptual truth may be nonobvious). This sort of view is designed to answer the "why?" question in a decisive way, by providing a justification for the Publicity Thesis that should lead any reflective, truly rational skeptic to revise his view, irrespective of his substantive sensibility. Korsgaard offers a Wittgensteinian private-language argument for this conclusion which aims to show that we cannot coherently conceive of a reason that binds one person but not others. This argument, however, is widely rejected.[2]

[2] Korsgaard's thesis has received extensive critical commentary, see, for example, Lebar (2001), Gert (2002, 2015), Wallace (2009), and Bukoski (2018).

C4P14   Indeed, skepticism about the claim that reasons are "essentially" public is well grounded. The egoist who is happy to speak of reasons but thinks that your reasons have no claim whatsoever on them, does not *seem* confused about what reasons are or in violation of formal constraints on the ascription of reasons.

C4P15   Nonetheless, I think there is reason to think this strong thesis is true. In this chapter I offer a new explanation for the Publicity Thesis—one that, if true, entails that reasons are indeed essentially public, though in a sense that differs somewhat from Korsgaard's (or Nagel's). The Publicity Thesis, I show, follows from an independently plausible form of non-cognitivism about normative judgment. If this form of non-cognitivism is true, then anyone who judges that R is a reason for X to Φ is rationally committed to weighing R against deciding to interfere with X's Φ-ing. Hence, everyone is committed to every instance of the Publicity Thesis by the nature of normative judgment.

C4P16   The non-cognitivist view "entails" the Publicity Thesis indirectly—by entailing that everyone who is in the business of ascribing reasons is committed to every instance of it. Reasons are "essentially" public in the sense that their publicity follows from an account of what we are doing when we ascribe reasons to others, rather than any substantive normative commitments.

C4P17   I do not intend this chapter as a complete, all-out defense of the Publicity Thesis or the non-cognitivist view of normative judgment. Rather, I claim that the non-cognitivist view has independent plausibility and, if it is true, then so is the Publicity Thesis. The fact that the Publicity Thesis follows from the account of normative judgment serves both as support for the account of normative judgment—since the Publicity Thesis is plausible—and as an explanation for the Publicity Thesis, a deep fact that we might otherwise be forced to regard as brute. But, of course, many questions will arise, both about the Publicity Thesis itself and the view of normative judgment. This chapter cannot respond to all good objections; it is meant to outline the explanation of the Publicity Thesis and emphasize the strengths of the non-cognitivist view for the sake of framing further discussion.

C4P18   To preview: the non-cognitivist view I advocate holds that the normative judgment of form X should Φ is a kind of decision that X Φ. When this judgment is first-personal—for instance, my judgment that I should Φ—the view aligns with Gibbard's plan expressivism, albeit with slight differences in the understanding of "decision". The major divergence between Gibbard's

view and mine appears in the understanding of third-personal judgments. Gibbard regards such judgments as "contingency plans" to do things in others' positions. For Gibbard, my judgment that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro consists in a plan for *me* to climb if I am Aisha in Aisha's circumstances. My view—the Simple View—instead interprets this judgment as a decision that *Aisha* climb Kilimanjaro: a decision I make *for her*.

C4P19   I have defended the Simple View of normative judgment at length elsewhere (Ayars 2022). This chapter builds on that one, focusing on the implications of the view of normative judgment for the Publicity Thesis. In Sections 4.2 and 4.3, I present the Simple View. In Section 4.4, I show how the Publicity Thesis follows from it when it is generalized to provide an account of judgments about reasons. In Section 4.5, I address an objection to the strong form of publicity implied by the view.

C4S2   4.1 The Account of First-Personal Normative Judgment

C4P20   The explanation of the Publicity Thesis begins with an account of first-personal should-judgments: the sort of all-things-considered judgments that close practical deliberation.

C4P21   Suppose, after some deliberation, I determine that I should climb Kilimanjaro. What mental state does the judgment that I should climb consist in? One tradition sees normative judgment as a kind of non-cognitive endorsement. Judgments about what we should do (and about our reasons) do not aim to represent the world, but rather to settle practical questions: questions concerning what to do and how to weigh certain facts in deliberation.[3]

C4P22   Perhaps the most comprehensive and well-known variety of non-cognitivism concerning should-judgments is Gibbard's plan expressivism. For Gibbard, judging that I should climb Kilimanjaro equates to planning to climb; to endorse an action is to decide on it. As Gibbard puts it: "Questions of what we ought to do are fundamentally questions of what to do. Conclude your deliberation, determine what to do, and you've settled what you ought to do" (Gibbard 2009: 19).

C4P23   However, the language of "decision" is misleading; a normative judgment cannot be a "decision" in the ordinary sense: the formation of an intention.

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[3] When compared to non-reductive realism, non-cognitivism has the advantage of compatibility with a strictly naturalistic metaphysics and vindicating the internal connection between normative judgment and motivation. Beyond noting this, I will say nothing to defend non-cognitivism over realism.

People commonly judge that they ought to Φ without forming a real intention to Φ—that is one form of akrasia; but if the "ought" judgment were an ordinary intention, that would be impossible.

C4P24   What, then, does a "decision" consist in if it is not an ordinary intention? The plan expressivist, in my view, should advocate a functionalist interpretation: a decision is a state distinguished by its specific functional role within our psychological system. In the absence of the capacity to decide (that is, to make normative judgments), we would invariably act on our strongest desire or impulse. However, we possess the ability to "step back" from our ordinary desires, endorsing one course of action over others, based on our assessment of reasons. The successful functioning of this reflective deliberative endorsement is not to depict an independent normative reality, but to guide action in line with our evaluation of reasons. Deliberative endorsement is distinct from intention; the akratic agent endorses Φ-ing without yet intending to Φ. But when it performs well, it leads to a corresponding intention. (Intentions, we might say, "implement" the decisions/judgments made by the deliberative part of the mind.) Normative judgments are "supposed" to influence our intentions in this way; if they fail to do so, something has "gone awry."

C4P25   This action-guiding role is what justifies calling normative judgments "decisions." So, as I use these terms, "choice" and "decision" do not refer to instances in which one forms an intention (or an actionable desire) that then leads to action when all is well, but rather to something preceding intention: the moment at which one endorses a course of action from the practical point of view, even if one may later—due to weakness—fail to form an actionable intention to undertake it.

C4P26   With this rough functionalist understanding of decision in hand, we can formulate the plan expressivist view as follows: normative judgments of the form "I should Φ" consist in decisions to Φ, which, if all goes well, are executed by forming an intention to Φ.

C4P27   So far, this provides an account only for first-personal judgments. But we also make judgments about what others ought to do. For instance, when reflecting on how Aisha should spend her year off, I might form the judgment: "Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro." This judgment, like my first-personal judgment, takes the form "X should Φ"; and since plan expressivism seeks to provide a fully general account of normative thought, it must offer a view about the third-personal case as well.

C4P28   The tradition that sees normative judgment as a kind of practical endorsement has had surprisingly little to say about what it is to think that someone else should Φ. Are these kinds of judgments also practical in nature—a kind of decision? The explanation of the Publicity Thesis hinges on an account of

third-personal judgments. The account I provide deviates from the conven-
tional expressivist view in ways that are relevant to the argument, but which
I take to be independently motivated.

4.2 The Account of Third-Personal Normative Judgment

C4S3

C4P29   Expressivists have generally settled on the position that third-personal
judgments are conditional attitudes: first-personal judgments in disguise.
According to Gibbard, for instance, third-personal judgments are contin-
gency plans to do things in others' situations (Gibbard 2009). Imagine
that Holmes is contemplating what Mrs. Hudson should do. Per Gibbard,
Holmes can't make the decision for Mrs. Hudson, since she can't act
on his thinking, in the way Holmes later on can act on the plans he
forms now (Gibbard 2009: 50). But he can form a contingency plan
for how he would act in her exact situation. In doing so, he's engaged
in a kind of hypothetical planning; he's "thinking as if he could plan
what to do if in Mrs. Hudson's plight..." (Gibbard 2009: 50). So,
according to Gibbard, Holmes's judgment that Mrs. Hudson should Φ
is a plan for what he (Holmes) is to do in Mrs. Hudson's situation. More
specifically, it is a plan to Φ if he is *Mrs. Hudson* in her specific qualitative
circumstances.

C4P30   The idea that third-personal judgments are contingency plans for
being other people in remote counterfactual situations may seem strange,
but Gibbard's view is not outrageous. When offering advice to others,
we frequently say, "If I were in your shoes," or, "If I were you, I would..."
Gibbard's view also captures the purportedly agent-relative nature of
these judgments (Gibbard 2009 53); planning to climb if I am Aisha implies
no commitment to promote *Aisha*'s climbing. Unlike a first-personal
should-judgment, my judgment that Aisha ought to climb does not imply
a commitment to promote her climbing. Gibbard's view explains the asym-
metry; my first-personal ought-judgments are decisions which lead to
motivationally effective intentions on my part when all goes well. My
third-personal judgments are conditional decisions for a situation that will
never arise; and so it is no surprise that they are motivationally inert.

C4P31   While Gibbard's perspective on third-personal judgments carries some
intuitive appeal, I propose an alternative view. Rather than understanding
these judgments as hypothetical plans for ourselves in metaphysically
impossible situations, I contend that third-personal should-judgments are

decisions whose content is other people's actions. When I judge that X should Φ, I am deciding *that X is to Φ*. This judgment is inherently aimed at resolving a practical question for X. It serves as a response to the question, "What is X to do?" rather than a response to the question, "What am I to do in X's circumstances?"

C4P32   This view is simpler than Gibbard's, since it gives the same analyses to all judgments of the form "X should Φ": all consist in decisions that X Φ. We can therefore call this:

C4P33   **The Simple View of Third-Personal Judgments:**   Just as my first-personal judgment that I should Φ is a decision that I Φ, my third-personal judgment that X should Φ is a decision *that X Φ*.

C4P34   In order for this idea to be plausible, however, we must see what is wrong with Gibbard's conditional attitude view. I have articulated my objections to Gibbard elsewhere (Ayars 2022) but will review them here.

C4P35   Perhaps the most powerful objection is its inability to effectively explain interpersonal normative disagreement (Ayars 2022: 6–47). Imagine we're at odds over whether Aisha should climb Mount Kilimanjaro. I maintain that she should undertake the climb, while you assert that it is not the case that she should do so. Our judgments disagree. Expressivists can't claim this is due to differing beliefs; they must argue it's due to a "disagreement in attitude" (Stevenson 1944). The problem is that on Gibbard's account of these judgments, there is no incompatibility in our respective plans, and hence no disagreement in attitude.

C4P36   According to Gibbard, my judgment that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro equates to a personal plan to make the climb if I am Aisha in her situation. Your belief that she shouldn't equates to a plan to not climb if you are Aisha in her situation. If one person made both plans, there would be an inconsistency; one plan would forbid what the other allowed. But such inconsistency does not arise when different individuals form the plans. My plan requires *me* to climb Kilimanjaro in that circumstance, while your plan makes no claim about what I should do, hence neither forbidding, permitting, nor requiring my climb. Since your plan concerns you and mine concerns me, they do not disagree.[4]

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[4] Perhaps there is a sense in which our plans can be viewed as being in "disagreement"—we each make *de se* plans that, if devised by a single person, would be incompatible. However, this is akin to the sort of "disagreement" that occurs when I assert that I am happy and you assert that you are not.

C4P37   The fact that Gibbard's view of third-personal judgments cannot explain interpersonal disagreement is a significant problem. Accounting for disagreement is a longstanding challenge for expressivists. Plan expressivism offers the promising notion of incompatibility in plan to explain normative disagreement, and this works in the intrapersonal case. Yet, it fails to explain interpersonal normative disagreement, so the usefulness of this strategy is undermined.

C4P38   Gibbard's view not only struggles with disagreement, but also conflates distinct normative judgments (Ayars 2022: 48–9). His view equates my judgment that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro with my judgment that I should climb Kilimanjaro if I were Aisha in her situation. They are both construed as decisions to climb Kilimanjaro in Aisha's exact circumstances. But these are distinct judgments.[5] I could accept that I should climb Kilimanjaro in Aisha's situation without accepting that Aisha should climb it. Suppose, for instance, that I am an egomaniac with the following (essentially *de se*) normative view: Everyone should do what's best for me, whoever I am. Given this belief, if I judge that climbing Kilimanjaro is what's best for Aisha in her situation, I judge that if I were Aisha in her situation, I should climb Kilimanjaro. This is because if I were in Aisha's shoes, climbing Kilimanjaro would be best *for me*. However, I don't judge that Aisha herself should climb Kilimanjaro, since I don't judge that her doing so would be best for me (Ayars and Rosen 2022; Ayars 2022: 48).

C4P39   Admittedly, accepting the first judgment while refusing the second can seem irrational; any justification for my climbing Kilimanjaro if I am in Aisha's shoes would presumably justify Aisha's climbing it. But that is just to say that egomania is a silly view. It remains the case that the judgments are distinct.

C4P40   The problems arise from Gibbard's interpretation of third-person judgments as conditional first-personal plans, rather than plans concerning others' actions. The Simple View easily sidesteps these objections. Consider disagreement. On the Simple View, my judgment that Aisha should climb is a plan that forbids Aisha not to climb; your judgment that it's not the case that she should climb is a plan that permits her not to climb. Both our plans pertain to Aisha, so disagree in the same way that conflicting first-personal plans do: my plan forbids something of Aisha that yours permits. The Simple View also differentiates between my judgment that Aisha should climb and

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[5] See Gregory (2017) for further defense of this point.

my judgment that I should climb if I am Aisha in Aisha's shoes. The former is a plan for Aisha, the latter a plan for me in Aisha's circumstances. The egomaniac's view is thus perfectly coherent: "If I find myself as Aisha in her situation, I should climb; but as I'm not Aisha, she should do what's best for me."

C4P41   The Simple View's ability to resolve the issues with Gibbard's view provides a prima facie case for preferring it to Gibbard's account. But it is one thing for the view to prove superior in these technical respects; it is another for it to be compelling on its own terms. The idea of planning for another may seem deeply strange. We do not control others' actions; so how can we make plans for other people, as the account requires?

C4P42   In Ayars (2022), I argue that the phenomenon of "deciding for others" is not as alien as it may first seem. It's perhaps most visible when we explicitly delegate decisions to others (52–3). Suppose we're dining out and, given your better understanding of the menu, I ask you to choose my meal—not to order for me, but to decide what I will order. You contemplate factors like my preferences and budget, then decide that I should get the burrito. When you express this by saying "Order the burrito" (or "You should get the burrito"), you're expressing a state that is aptly described as a decision for me. The judgment's constitutive aim is to modify my intentions; if all "goes well," your judgment that I should get the burrito will lead me to intend to order it, just as my own decisions/judgments function well when they issue in intentions on my part. If I don't form the intention, there's an interpersonal incoherence analogous to the intrapersonal incoherence that obtains when I believe I should do something but don't intend to.

C4P43   Moreover, your decision can either be voiced as a normative statement— "You should order the burrito"—or as an imperative directed at me. Gibbard emphasizes the inter-translatability of ought-statements and imperatives to provide a prima facie case for the equivalence between ought-judgments and decisions:

C4P44   The answer to an ought question is a statement; I can state this: I ought to speak loudly enough in public that people can hear. If I settle what to do, though, I voice my conclusion not with a statement, but with something like an imperative: "Speak audibly," I might tell myself. If the question of how loudly to speak is open, then my words express a decision-whereas if I say "I ought to speak audibly," my words seem to express a belief, a belief as to what I ought to do. Can a decision, then, also be a belief? . . .

C4P45   (Gibbard 2002: 151)

C4P46   In support of the Simple View, we can apply Gibbard's reasoning to third-personal should-statements. If there's a question about what I should order, you can express your decision for me with an imperative like, "Order the burrito"—a directive clearly aimed at me, not yourself.

C4P47   Another argument that your judgment consists in a decision for me comes from the coherence constraints applicable in this scenario. Let's say the restaurant has just one burrito left. You, aware of this, decide I should have it. It would be incoherent for you then to decide to have it yourself. Upon asserting that I should get the last burrito, if you then declare that you should have the last burrito, I'll be confused. I might respond, "But didn't you say that *I* should get it?" In this context, the following judgments are incoherent:

C4P48   (J1) your judgment that you should get the last burrito

(J2) your judgment that I should get the last burrito.

C4P49   We can explain this by recognizing your judgments as decisions subject to a *corealizability norm*. If your third-personal judgment is a decision, it should be compatible with your other decisions, including your decisions for yourself, analogously to how ordinary first-personal decisions about what to do at different times must be corealizable. The corealizability norm applied to the first-personal case specifies that if you decide to Φ, and also to Ψ, it must be possible for you to do both. Extending this to the third-personal case: if you decide that X is to Φ and Y is to Ψ, it must be possible that [X Φ and Y Ψ]. The judgments, "I should get the last burrito" and "you should get the last burrito" are incoherent because they express the following non-corealizable decisions on your part:

C4P50   (D1) a decision that you get the last burrito

(D2) a decision that I get the last burrito.

C4P51   The corealizability principle arises from the action-orienting nature of decisions. A decision's goal is to answer a practical question. These responses need to be congruent, as incompatible answers can't simultaneously guide action.

C4P52   The example of "delegated decision-making" illustrates that we can indeed make genuine decisions concerning others' actions. Even though you don't directly control my actions, you can decide for me. It also

demonstrates that these decisions can be conveyed using normative language, as the Simple View predicts. But the Simple View argues that all third-personal judgments are equivalent to deciding for others. In the restaurant scenario, I've explicitly handed you the reins of decision-making, but this usually isn't the case when we make normative judgments about others' actions. We make judgments about people we know won't act based on our decisions, as when I privately judge that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro, fully aware that my judgment won't affect her intentions. But is it reasonable to interpret all normative judgments as decisions for others, even when we know the decisions won't be implemented?

C4P53   This is a challenge for the expressivist; but it is worth noting that the plan expressivist is already committed to the claim that we can deliberate and choose in contexts where we know that our choices won't be efficacious, since we make first-personal should-judgments despite knowing they won't be fulfilled. I judge that I shouldn't have gotten drunk last night. According to the plan expressivist, in judging that I shouldn't have gotten drunk, I enter a standpoint in which I deliberate and choose for my past self—as *if* I could affect her past actions—despite knowing I can't. All plan expressivists must accept this to account for judgments about the past, and also for judgments about the future in which it is already settled what we will do.[6] Presumably, the expressivist will lean here on the idea that "decision" in her sense differs in some respects from ordinary planning, allowing for hypothetical decisions which we know won't be efficacious (Gibbard 2006: 731). If the plan expressivist must say this in certain first-personal cases, there can be no objection in principle to regarding third-personal judgments as decisions for others even when we cannot control their conduct.

C4P54   A test for whether all third-personal judgments consist in decisions for others is whether the coherence norms apply to them. Such norms apply regardless of whether complying with them helps fulfill the attitude's role in a given situation, so should extend even to non-efficacious third-personal judgments. Indeed, if I privately conclude that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro, it seems incoherent also to judge that I should prevent her from climbing. The statement "Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro, and I should stop her" carries a ring of incoherence, even when expressed only to myself. In other words, the following judgments are incoherent, even when I hold them privately:

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[6] Gibbard accepts this, noting, "The binge alcoholic can plan, I say, to abstain on Saturday night, where part of what he knows is that in fact he will drink" (Gibbard 2006: 331).

C4P55   (J1*) the judgment that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro

(J2*) the judgment that I should prevent Aisha's climbing Kilimanjaro.

C4P56   The Simple View explains this by noting that my judgments consist in the
following non-co-realizable decisions:

C4P57   (D1*) a decision for Aisha that Aisha climb Kilimanjaro

(D2*) a decision for me that I prevent Aisha from climbing Kilimanjaro.

C4P58   It is an advantage of the Simple View that it can explain why judgments like
J1* and J2* ring incoherent by holding that they express non-corealizable
decisions. Gibbard's view predicts no incoherence: a conditional plan for
Aisha to climb Kilimanjaro if in her shoes is entirely compatible with an
unconditional plan to prevent Aisha from climbing. And, of course, the
cognitivist has no analogous explanation for the felt incoherence. So this is
another reason to take the Simple View seriously.[7]

C4S4   ## 4.3 Rational Constraints on Should-Judgments

C4P59   Many expressivists take their theoretical commitments about the nature of
normative judgment to be independent of first-order theory. But if we accept

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[7] Shea (2024) offers a counterexample to the corealizability constraint:

LONELY AUNT: Ann's brother Bob has promised to visit their lonely great-aunt at
the nursing home this weekend. But he is selfish and unreliable, and Ann knows he's
booked a luxury getaway. Due to COVID restrictions, the great-aunt can only have
one visitor per weekend. Bob should visit, but he won't – so Ann should.

Shea argues that though it is foreseeable that Bob won't visit, this is consistent with judging that
he should. That is, the following judgments are coherent:

(J1**) Bob should visit.
(J2**) Given that he won't, Anna should.

If Shea is right, we have an instance in which the judgments that X should Φ and B should Ψ are
jointly coherent, even though it is not possible for both A and B to Φ.

Shea's point deserves a more thorough reply than I can provide here, but I will gesture at a
response. A shift in context explains the apparent coherence of (J1**) and (J2**). (J1**) and (J2**)
are answers to different deliberative questions; the particular alternatives, provided by the
deliberative question, can affect whether or not someone ought to perform the action. J2**
assumes that Bob's action is fixed; so we are considering the question of whether Ann should
visit *conditional on Bob's not visiting.* Bob's not visiting becomes part of the background
information. Thus, the relevant alternatives are [Ann visits] and [Ann does not visit]. In contrast,
when we consider whether Bob should visit, we shift to a context in which our alternatives are
[Ann visits, Bob does not], [Bob visits, Ann does not]. Merely opening the question of whether
Bob should visit shifts the context to one in which we are also deciding for Bob.

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the view of normative judgment defended here, the independence of our meta-ethical commitments from first-order theory must be rejected. The Simple View rules out certain combinations of normative judgments as incoherent, and has non-trivial consequences for the first-order views we can coherently accept (Ayars 2022: 57–8). These constraints include the following principles, grounded in the intrapersonal and interpersonal cor-ealizability norms, respectively:

C4P60   **Intrapersonal joint satisfiability principle:**   if X should Φ and X should Ψ, then it is possible that [X Φ and X Ψ].

Interpersonal joint satisfiability principle: if X should Φ and Y should Ψ, then it is possible that [X Φ and Y Ψ].

C4P61   The expressivist view, moreover, does not merely rule out certain combin-ations of judgments as incoherent, but also entails certain truths about the propositions we rationally must accept. The interpersonal constraint is substantive; for example, it rules out rational egoism, understood as the view that everyone should do what's best for herself (Ayars 2022). Since there are contexts in which your doing what's best for you is incompatible with my doing what's best for me, the should-judgments of egoism are not jointly satisfiable. So the Simple View shows rules out egoism, and is therefore far from neutral on first-order matters.

C4P62   When we say that the Simple View "rules out" egoism, we do not quite mean that the view entails the falsity of egoism. Rather it entails that egoism coherently be affirmed, since the plans it expresses violate coherence norms on plans. This is in general how views of this sort bear on first-order matters. We can say that plan expressivism entails that if I should climb Kilimanjaro, I should not prevent myself from climbing. But what that means is that given plan expressivism, it would be incoherent to judge that I should climb, and also that I should prevent myself from climbing. To accept that I should climb is to plan to climb. To accept that I should prevent my climb is to plan to prevent myself from climbing. The latter plan is incompatible with a plan to climb. A plan that *permits* me to not climb is also incompatible with a plan that requires me to climb. Therefore, I cannot coherently reject the judgment that I should not prevent myself from climbing, since rejecting it would amount to accepting either that I should prevent myself, or that I may prevent myself, both of which are incoherent with the plan to climb. This is the sense in which I am rationally committed to accepting that

I should not prevent myself from climbing, conditional on my accepting that I should climb.

C4P63   In the same sense, the Simple View entails that accepting that Aisha should climb Kilimanjaro rationally commits me to accepting that I should not prevent her from climbing. By the Simple View, judging that Aisha should climb is planning that she climb. Plans allowing or requiring me to prevent her are incompatible with a plan requiring her to climb. Therefore, I cannot coherently reject the judgment that I should not prevent her from climbing, since to reject this judgment would be to accept that I should or that I may prevent her from climbing, and both of these judgments conflict with my plan that requires her to climb. So I'm rationally committed to the conditional: "If Aisha should climb, I should not prevent her." More broadly, we're all committed to every instance of: "If X should Φ, I should not prevent X from Φ-ing." And, of course, the argument goes through regardless of whose interference is under consideration. So for any X and any Y, we are committed to: "if X should Φ, Y should not prevent X from Φ-ing."

C4P64   This is already a substantial result. It implies what others should do bears on what we should do, and that we are bound by the nature of normative judgment to accept this. A certain "publicity thesis" follows (in the sense that everyone is committed to every instance of it):

C4P65   **Should-Publicity:**   If X should Φ, and Y's Ψ-ing would prevent X's Φ-ing, then Y should not Ψ.

C4P66   The original Publicity Thesis, however, is a thesis about reasons, not about what people should do. It says that any reason for X to Φ is a reason against Y's preventing X from Φ-ing. To explain this, we need to show that judging that someone has a reason to do something entails a commitment to judging that others have reasons against interference; and, for that, we require a non-cognitivist interpretation of judgments of the form "R is a reason for X to Φ".

C4S5   4.4 Judgments about Reasons and the Publicity Thesis

C4P67   Of course, non-cognitivists need an account of judgments about reasons anyway. These judgments play an essential role in deliberation and choice. Should-judgments, as we have seen, are the conclusions of practical

deliberation. But before reaching such conclusions, there is deliberation itself, which involves assessing what the reasons support. So any general account of normative thought needs an account of judgments about reasons.

C4P68   According to Gibbard, judgments about reasons consist in our treating considerations as "weighing in favor" of certain choices from within the practical point of view:

C4P69   Ought questions are practical; they are questions of what to require of ourselves. As for reasons, to ask how strong a reason is, we can say, is to ask what weight to give it in one's decisions. We can't find two clear, distinct questions to ask ourselves, first, how strong a reason a consideration is, and

C4P70   second, what weight to give it in decisions.   (2006: 741)

C4P71   "Weighing a consideration in favor" of a decision is a psychological notion—it is something we do. When we are deliberating, we weigh certain considerations for and against various decisions. Arriving at decisions by weighing considerations in this manner is, as Gibbard says, something we could "program a robot to mimic" (2009: 190). Gibbard imagines a robot that first assigns weights to pairs of factors and actions, then decides what to do based on this assignment of weights. On Gibbard's view, my first-personal judgment that R is a reason (of such-and-such weight) to Φ consists in my treating R as weighing in favor of Φ-ing to such and such degree in deliberation.[8]

C4P72   But the Publicity Thesis is a thesis about the connection between my reasons and the reasons of others—or more generally, between the reasons X has to Φ and the reasons Y has not to prevent X from Φ-ing. So if we are to assess it we need an account of the mental state expressed by third-personal reasons judgments.

C4P73   Begin with the question of what it is to judge that *someone else* has a reason to do something. What is Gibbard's view? What Gibbard actually says is ambiguous[9], but what he ought to say—given his account of third-

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[8] The proposed account says that a judgment about reason expresses a weighing state—the state of weighing R in favor of Φ-ing—in the same sense in which a should-judgment expresses a decision. Bratman (2006) argues for an alternative view in which the reasons judgment expresses a plan to weigh R in favor of Φ-ing and is therefore tantamount to a should-judgment: I should weigh R in favor of Φ-ing. For present purposes, either account will do.

[9] Gibbard suggests in places that third-personal judgments about reasons consist in conditional plans for how to weigh factors when in other people's situations:

When I now advise that the pain I would feel is reason for you not to kick me, the state of mind I express is . . . for the hypothetical case of being you, or of being just

personal should-judgments and general account of reasons judgments—is that to judge that R is a reason for X to Φ is to treat R as weighing in favor of one's own *Φ-ing in X's exact situation*. If third-personal judgments are conditional decisions, the deliberative role of my judgment that R is a reason for Aisha to climb is to push me toward deciding to climb if I am Aisha in Aisha's situation. In other words, if a first-personal judgment that R is a reason (of such-and-such weight) to Φ consists in my treating R as weighing in favor of Φ-ing to such-and-such degree in deliberation (as Gibbard thinks), and my judgment that Aisha should climb is really the judgment that I should climb if I am Aisha in Aisha's situation (as Gibbard thinks), my judgment that R is a reason for Aisha to climb must consist in my treating R as weighing in favor of climbing if I'm Aisha in Aisha's situation.

C4P74   But we have seen that there are strong reasons to reject Gibbard's view of third-personal should-judgments, and instead adopt the Simple View. If the Simple View is true, the deliberative role of my judgment that Aisha should climb is to push me toward deciding that Aisha climb (not deciding that I should climb in Aisha's shoes). So, proponents of the Simple View should accept the:

C4P75   **Simple View of Reasons Judgments:**   Just as my first-personal judgment that R is a reason to Φ consists in my treating R as weighing in favor of my Φ-ing, my third-personal judgment that R is a reason for X to Φ consists in treating R as weighing in favor of *X's Φ-ing*.

C4P76   With this in mind, return to the Publicity Thesis (formulated slightly differently):

C4P77   **Publicity Thesis:**   If R is a reason for X to Φ, and Y's Ψ-ing would interfere with X's Φ-ing, then R is a reason for Y to not Ψ.

C4P78   Given our account of judgments about reasons, to establish this, we must show that anyone who weighs R in favor of X's Φ-ing is thereby committed

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like you in every way. I am saying, "If I'm about to be you, let me weigh against kicking Gibbard the fact that it would hurt him".   (2003a: 290)

But we should reject Gibbard's suggestion here. That Aisha has a reason to climb implies nothing about how she (or anyone) should weigh R in her situation. After all, her situation may not include the opportunity to deliberate at all; perhaps she has already considered her options at an earlier stage, rendering further deliberation redundant. Hence, my judgment that R is a reason for her to climb should not bind me to any plan for weighing R if I were in her position. Instead, assuming Gibbard's understanding of third-personal should-judgments, the judgment consists in weighing R *now* in favor of deciding to climb if I were in her position.

to weighing R against Y's interfering with X's Φ-ing. Now that the Simple View of Reasons is on the table, this looks to be straightforward. By the Simple View of Reasons Judgments, if I believe (say) the happiness Aisha would gain from climbing Kilimanjaro is a reason for her to climb, then I weigh her prospective happiness in favor of her climbing. Now consider an action I could take—like slashing her tires before she leaves—that would prevent her from climbing. Since deciding for her to climb commits me to deciding against slashing her tires, then anything that I weigh in favor of deciding that she climb must also be weighed against slashing her tires, and hence judged to be a reason against it. And, of course, the argument goes through for any R, X and Y. So we are all committed to every instance of Reasons Publicity: If R is a reason for X to Φ, and Y's Ψ-ing would interfere with X's Φ-ing, then R is a reason for Y to not Ψ.

C4P79   We might also think in these terms: since judging that Aisha should climb commits me to judging that I should not prevent her, my decisional alternatives in this context are [Aisha climbs, I do not slash her tires] and [I slash her tires, Aisha does not climb]. These are the only coherent plans I can adopt. Thus, anything that weighs in favor of Aisha climbing also weighs against deciding to slash her tires, since any alternative that includes Aisha climbing also includes my not slashing her tires. A reason for Aisha is automatically a reason for me: a reason not to prevent.

C4P80   The argument does assume one basic premise: that weighing a consideration in favor of a decision commits one to weighing it against incompatible decisions, or more specifically, in favor of decisions that one is committed to by the first decision. And admittedly, this premise and its implications may be questioned.[10] But I will note that it—or some version of it—appears to be sound in the first-personal case. If I am deciding between two incompatible actions—e.g., going to the movies and going to the beach—anything I weigh in favor of going to the movies must also be weighed against going to the beach, since deciding to go to the movies commits me to deciding against

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[10]   Selim Berker suggests problem with this principle. Suppose we run the inference in reverse. Deciding to interfere with Aisha's climbing commits me, on my view, to deciding against Aisha's climbing. By this line of reasoning, weighing R in favor of deciding to interfere with Aisha's climbing commits me to weighing R against deciding that Aisha climb. Now suppose that you offer to pay me five dollars if I interfere with Aisha's climbing. Then (assuming that Aisha's climbing is not so important as to silence the relevant reason) it's plausible that [You'll pay me five dollars if I interfere with Aisha's climbing] is a reason in favor of my interfering with Aisha's climbing (albeit an outweighed reason, on most ways of filling in the case). But it's not plausible that [You'll pay me five dollars if I interfere with Aisha's climbing] is a reason for Aisha not to climb. This seems to suggest the principle does not hold in full generality; but I will not explore possible restrictions here.

going to the beach. The non-cognitivist view I am defending simply extends the application of the relevant principle to the third-personal case.

C4P81   To get the intuitive idea, recall the burrito example. If you judge that R is a reason for me to get the last burrito, then intuitively you must also weigh R against deciding to get it yourself, since you are deciding for both of us, and deciding in my favor commits you to deciding against yourself. It would be odd, for instance, for you to claim that the fact that I like burritos is a reason for me to get it, while denying that this counts against your getting it. The natural thing to say is: "Since you like burritos, that's a reason for you to get it *rather* than me." Since you are deciding for both of us and your decisions must be corealizable, reasons take on an intersubjective dimension: a reason for you (to do one thing) is automatically a reason for me (against preventing you from doing it).

C4P82   Let me address a potential worry. One might object that it isn't always true that any consideration that favors someone's acting automatically disfavors incompatible actions. Assume that climbing Kilimanjaro would make Aisha happy, and thus make someone happy. This general fact is also a reason for Aisha to climb. But what if slashing her tires would also make someone happy, namely, me? Since my slashing her tires also results in someone's happiness, the fact that Aisha's climbing would make someone happy isn't a reason *against* my interference.[11] The factor of "making someone happy" doesn't distinguish between Aisha's climbing and my preventing it. Is this a counterexample to the claim that any reason for Aisha (to climb) is also a reason for me (to not prevent her), or to the claim that anything I weigh in favor of her climbing must be weighed against my interfering?

C4P83   I say that it is not. Fully spelled out, the reason for Aisha to climb is that [Aisha's climbing will make someone happy]. Similarly, my reason to slash the tires is that [My slashing will make someone happy]. These are different facts. The first counts in favor of Aisha's climbing and against my interfering, and vice versa for the latter. It's just that they cancel out, so they're hardly worth mentioning.

C4P84   Let me sum up. This argument shows that if the non-cognitivist view is true, then everyone is committed to every instance of the Publicity Thesis by the nature of normative judgment. Since plans must cohere, anything that is weighed in favor of someone's Φ-ing must be weighed against others'

[11] See Tucker (2022), building on work by Snedegar (2018), for further discussion of this sort of case, utilized to argue that reasons are essentially contrastive.

interfering. The general idea is actually quite intuitive when brought into focus. The non-cognitivist view says that when we make judgments about what others should do, we're engaged in a kind of planning for them, and our plans must harmonize. We assume a role akin to a "project manager," deciding what everyone will do. The project manager, in this context, must treat everyone's reasons as having shared normative weight. If she fails to treat reasons for one person to Φ as reasons for others not to interfere, she risks ending up with an incoherent plan that does not respect the corealizability constraint on decisions. Hence, anyone who is in the business of making judgments about what others should do and about their reasons must regard those reasons as public.

C4P85   The result—that all reasons have intersubjective force—may seem to be a significant, revisionary claim about reasons, but we should remember that the Publicity Thesis, as initially argued, carries intuitive weight. As noted earlier, the minimal core of morality is plausibly that we have reason to not interfere with others' pursuit of their rational ends, which is just what the Publicity Thesis specifies.[12] Given this, the fact that the non-cognitivist view explains the Publicity Thesis lends support to the non-cognitivist view. And given the independent merit of the non-cognitivist view (only sketched here), that view lends support to the Publicity Thesis. They mutually reinforce one another.

C4P86   Of course, what is more significant (and controversial) is to have explained the Publicity Thesis by appeal to an account of normative judgment. While many will accept the Publicity Thesis as a normative truth, few will be sympathetic to my claim about its source. But if one is not sympathetic, the explanation I've presented can be interpreted as a challenge. I've illustrated that the Publicity Thesis follows from a series of reasonable theoretical choices: (1) Endorsing plan expressivism about first-personal should-judgments, over cognitivism; (2) Extending the view to third-personal judgments in a natural way, culminating in a view that improves on Gibbard's; (3) Recognizing certain rational norms governing should judgments that follow from the non-cognitivist theory; and (4) Adopting

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[12] Of course, by itself, the Publicity Thesis is purely a formal thesis. It provides no substantive insights into what our reasons are. One way to see this is to note that an egomaniac, who is convinced that everyone has a reason only to benefit him, could still accept the Publicity Thesis, provided he also accepts that these reasons weigh against his preventing others from benefiting him. So, the non-cognitivist view should not be misconstrued as entailing a strong form of altruism. Still, this formal thesis is of considerable importance. It entails that the only possible reasons are those we share; *every* reason for someone to do something is a reason for everyone else in the universe.

a complementary non-cognitivist view of judgments about reasons and a corresponding coherence norm governing such judgments, from which (a commitment to) the Publicity Thesis follows. Anyone skeptical of the Publicity Thesis must reject one of these steps; the challenge is to specify which.

C4P87   Yet it is worth noting that the form of publicity entailed is relatively strong. When I am in a position to interfere with your pursuit of (what I judge to be) your rational ends, it is intuitive that I am always under some pressure not to do so. If you have a reason to feed your dog or build a spaceship, and I can stop you, the mere fact that you have your reasons means that I need some fairly strong reason to interfere. Interfering on a whim would be unreasonable; that much is intuitive. But if the non-cognitivist view I am defending is true, I am arguably under *considerable* pressure. The strength of my reason not to interfere is not just proportionate to (what I take to be) the strength of your reason to perform the act; the strengths are equal. If I judge that R is a reason for X to Φ, then I must weigh it in favor of the alternative [X Φs, I do not prevent X from Φ-ing]; so R is automatically a reason of *equal* strength for me to not interfere.

C4P88   This form of publicity is stronger than the Wallace-derived thesis we have been discussing, which says nothing of the reason's strength. But the stronger thesis arguably follows from the considerations we have adduced. In the final section, I will defend this strong form of publicity.

C4S6   ## 4.5 Publicity and Partiality

C4P89   Recall the shipwreck: you and I are fighting for the last plank. If I save myself, I will thereby prevent you from saving yourself. Call cases of this sort—cases in which it is not possible for everyone to do what is in his narrow self-interest (or the interest of his nearest and dearest)—*conflict cases*. The non-cognitivist view entails that in Shipwreck, it's not the case that each of us ought to get the plank for himself. Moreover, it entails that neither of us has more reason to get the plank for himself than to cede it to the other. Your weighty reason to get the plank for yourself translates to an equally weighty reason for me not to prevent your getting the plank for yourself.

C4P90   The result looks especially implausible in cases like the following. Suppose you and I are fighting for a bottle of medicine needed to save the life of our respective children. Surely, we each have more reason to take the medicine

for our own child than to cede it to the other. If you can overpower me and grab the medicine, you should do so—or so it seems. We are not rationally required to be impartial in cases of this sort.

C4P91   I take this to be a significant challenge. I will address it in two parts. I will first suggest that the implication that each agent's reasons are counterbalanced in conflict cases is not as counterintuitive as it may first appear. Then, I will argue there is something else we can say about such cases—consistent with the non-cognitivist view—that captures our original intuitions about rational partiality. We can say that each individual has reasons to *try* to benefit himself and his nearest and dearest which are not counterbalanced by reasons to allow the other to try; reasons to try are not reducible to reasons to succeed.

C4P92   The claim that our reasons are counterbalanced in conflict cases is not as implausible as it may at first seem. In the shipwreck case, is it of course prudentially best for me to save myself, and prudentially best for you to save yourself. This gives us each reason to care about our own death in a distinctive way. But would ceding the plank to you be all-things-considered irrational? To do so would be a considerable sacrifice on my part. But people who make enormous sacrifices for others—donating kidneys, jumping on a grenade to protect comrades—are typically not deemed "irrational." More often, they're regarded as heroes, individuals who display exceptional awareness of the significance of other people's interests. Perhaps if I cede the plank, I am in fact demonstrating an extraordinary sensitivity to the underlying rational situation, in which your interests provide just as weighty reasons as mine do.

C4P93   Granted, this argument is harder to accept in the medicine case, where the interests of our nearest and dearest are at stake. It seems perverse for me to cede the medicine to you, at the cost of my own child's life. Yet even in the medicine case, each agent's reasons to save their child do generate strong reasons of non-interference for the other. The fact that the medicine could save your child's life provides a substantial reason against my interference. If I weren't also in a desperate situation needing the medicine for my child, I clearly should not interfere with your taking it. If I yield the medicine, I will be responding to these very weighty reasons, and if I don't, insofar as I am vividly aware of everything at stake in the situation, I will feel their force.

C4P94   Still, it is hard to shake the intuition that there is something seriously objectionable about my passively ceding the medicine to you, knowing my own child needs it. But we can explain this, I submit, by appeal to the fact that in ceding I'm failing to respond to my reasons to try to save my child.

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C4P95   First, a few words on reasons to try, and how they fit into the non-cognitivist view. While the non-cognitivist view is inconsistent with the claim that each agent should do what is best for himself (or his nearest and dearest) in conflict cases, it is not inconsistent with the claim that each agent should try to do what is best for himself (or his nearest and dearest). It is possible for both agents to try. So the judgments that I should try to get the medicine and that you should try to get the medicine do not violate the corealizability constraint. Though I may be able to prevent you from obtaining the medicine, I cannot prevent you from trying to obtain it. Even if I manage to take it for myself, you will still have made an effort, so I cannot prevent your trying. So, though your reasons to try, per the present theory, generate reasons for me not to interfere with your trying, these reasons have no practical force, since I can't possibly interfere with your trying (in the sense of preventing it). In particular, your reasons to try do not generate reasons against my *trying* to get the medicine. (When I weigh R as a reason in favor of your trying, I am committed to weighing it against any action incompatible with your trying. But my trying is not incompatible with your trying; so I need not weigh your reasons to try against my trying.) The existence of non-counterbalanced reasons to try is thus perfectly consistent with the present framework.

C4P96   It is highly plausible that there can be reasons to try to Φ that are not derived from reasons to Φ. For example, the reasons to try to win at team sports are only partially derived from the reasons to win, since trying to win has many independent benefits—for instance, it makes the game fun, win or lose. Although these benefits require genuinely adopting the aim of winning, the value of trying remains independent of the value of winning.

C4P97   More relevantly, there are reasons to try to promote the interests of others that are not derived from the reasons to succeed. Trying has a kind of communicative value: in trying to save someone's life, for instance, one expresses love and respect by treating him as a person to whom it makes sense to direct such effort. The communicative value of trying is accentuated within special relationships. If I were to passively cede the medicine to you, it would express that I see my child as just another individual—no more important to me than anyone else's child. And I have many reasons not to express that sentiment.

C4P98   Thus, regarding the medicine case, we can say: in this scenario, we each have reasons to try to save our own child, which tips the balance in favor of each of us trying to grab the medicine before the other. The alleged intuition that each agent has most reason to take the medicine is really the intuition that each agent has most reason to try.

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C4P99   In support of the last claim, observe that our intuitions differ in the shipwreck case, in a way that is consistent with the hypothesis. We acknowledged that in the shipwreck scenario, it's far from clear that commonsense deems it rationally necessary to relinquish the plank. This can be explained by the absence of special relationships in the shipwreck case, which means there are no reasons to try deriving from its communicative value. This suggests that our judgment that it would be unreasonable to cede in the medicine case is produced by the thought that there are strong reasons to try in the medicine case deriving from the expressive value of trying, which are not present in the shipwreck case. If so, the non-cognitivist view perfectly predicts the pattern of judgments that seem correct, including the pattern of judgments about reasons.[13]

C4S7   **References**

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