

ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Practical Reasoning In Political Discourse: Moral And Prudential Arguments In The Debate Over Bankers' Bonuses In The British Press



This paper makes a proposal about the structure and representation of practical reasoning in political discourse. We provide an overview of the arguments that were used in a particular public debate on the fairness of bankers claiming and receiving bonuses in the present context of economic crisis and discuss the structure of those arguments. We adopt an instrumentalist approach to practical reasoning, which regards all reasons for action as means-end reasons. We argue that an instrumentalist approach is supported by the particular logic of political discourse: various types of action that are defended in political discourse are supposed to be means towards the realization of political goals, seen as states of affairs or modes of social organization informed by a normative commitment to various moral-political values (justice, equality, freedom).

We start from a distinction made in philosophy between two types of practical reasoning, "*prudential*" and "*moral*" (Gauthier 1963). Prudential arguments take the agent's desires (wants, needs, interests) as premises: if the agent desires a certain outcome, then a certain course of action is recommended; if he doesn't desire the outcome, then he has no reason to do the action. Moral arguments do not seem to have this conditional (hypothetical) structure, they present an action as necessary in itself, regardless of the agent's desires or interests, regardless of any further goal that is desired, regardless of circumstances. Prudential reasoning corresponds to Kant's hypothetical imperative, while moral reasoning corresponds to his categorical imperative. This might suggest that the structure of moral arguments is significantly different from that of prudential arguments. The view we will defend here is that the two types of arguments have the same means-goal underlying structure, involving the same type of premises, but with

significant differences in the agent's relationship towards the goal (which he may or may not desire) and in the nature of the reasons that support or inform the goal (internal or external reasons). We suggest that, together with an adequate understanding of the Speaker-oriented (as opposed to Subject or Agent-oriented) nature of deontic modality, the distinction between internal (motivating) and external (normative) reasons for action is crucial to understanding the structure of practical reasoning, including practical reasoning in the political field. Our more general concern is to arrive at a conception of practical reasoning that can be used in the analysis and evaluation of political discourse and its characteristic genres (deliberation, debate) – see Fairclough and Fairclough (forthcoming) – within a version of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003, 2010).

1. Practical reasoning: a cognitive-motivational account

According to Audi's (2006) cognitive-motivational account, practical reasoning is a process by which agents infer judgments favouring action from premises expressing motivation and (instrumental) cognition (Audi 2006, p. 104). Audi's account is Kantian in that practical reasoning can take duties (principles, norms), not only desires, as major premises. Thus, judgments of duty (i.e. reason) can also motivate action, not just desires. By contrast, on a Humean view of practical reasoning, defended by Blackburn (1998), all action is motivated by a combination of belief and desire, but desires are ultimately basic. It is our beliefs and our concerns (our emotional, evaluative attitudes towards those things we care about) that together issue in action, and everything we do can be traced back to some concern we have. For the Humean, it is concerns (or desires) that are the ultimate motivators of action, while reason is merely instrumental to desire and cannot motivate by itself.

Walton's (2007) account distinguishes between instrumental and normative (value-based) practical reasoning; the latter involves arguing in favour of a certain action from a desirable goal (major premise), supported by a value premise, and from a means-goal (minor) premise. Values support goals by showing why goals are desirable. Walton's discussion brings in the concept of goal into focus: the major, motivational premise ("I want ϕ ", in Audi's account) is represented as "My goal is to bring about A" by Walton (2007, p. 32). In saying that "friendship requires that I see my friend before he leaves London", I am indicating which value ("friendship") informs my goal of seeing him before he leaves London and makes this goal desirable (Walton 2007, p. 34). Walton's

treatment of value-based practical reasoning as means-goal reasoning seems to encompass both prudential and moral reasoning, and this is a line we want to adopt and develop here. However, it seems (as in the example above) that goals are always viewed as desirable from the viewpoint of the agent, which is a position we will try to argue against.

2. Internal and external reasons

Walton's structure of practical reasoning can account very well for prudential reasoning: given what I want (based on my values) and given that doing A will help me achieve what I want, I should do A. But it does not seem to account equally well for moral reasoning, as moral reasoning makes no reference to what the agent wants, or to ends in which his wants are fulfilled. To put it differently, while in prudential arguments the major premise makes reference to the agent's desires, wants, interests, to what, following Searle (2010), we will call "desire-dependent reasons", in moral arguments the major premise makes reference to moral values, duties, obligations, norms, to "desire-independent reasons". An obligation I am under or a promise I made can be in conflict with my current desires and inclinations. In moral reasoning we say in fact this: whether you want to or not, you ought to do A. Walton's example above, involving what friendship requires, is in fact a moral argument, in which the goal is not as much desired as recognized as something the agent has to do, whatever his present inclinations.

For a Humean, all reasons are "desire-dependent" and, to a large extent, we do follow Blackburn's (1998) Humean account, which sees the variety of reasons that motivate action as concerns, as things we care about. In other words, unless something matters to us, we will not be moved to action by our beliefs alone. Along the same lines, we suggest, a sense of duty or a promise could not motivate us to act unless doing our duty or fulfilling a promise were something that we were concerned about. If they are to effectively motivate an agent's action, all "external" reasons should ultimately give rise to a desire or concern to act on that reason.

From this point onwards, however, we part company with the Humeans and follow Searle's (2010, p. 128) account of how human institutional reality (e.g., promises, laws, norms, etc.) "locks into human rationality" by providing external reasons for action. Although these external reasons must be internalized in order to motivate action, it is recognition of such external reasons as facts that may subsequently become the ground of a concern or desire to act accordingly. Thus,

the desire derives from the recognition of the external reason and is therefore not basic. We often recognize the binding force of a duty or a promise and either internalize it as motivation to act or fail to do so. We may fail to be motivated by our duties or promises, even while continuing to recognize that we have a reason to act in the prescribed way.

3. Our proposal for the structure and representation of practical reasoning

Practical arguments take premises expressing goals, values, means-goal relations and, we suggest, circumstances, i.e. the context of action. Our proposal is to view goals as (possible) future states of affairs (a variation on the semantic concept of possible worlds), which the agent may or may not desire. In the latter case, the goal is generated by reasons independent of the agent's desires, "external" or normative reasons such as duties, obligations, moral values, norms. The agent may not actually desire the goal but, in the arguer's view, he ought to desire it. Similarly, the agent may not actually care about a particular value or duty but, in the arguer's view, he ought to care. Because what the agent desires may be different from what the arguer thinks he ought to desire, we suggest looking at practical argument as a speech act involving three participants: a Speaker (Arguer), an Audience and an Agent.

On the one hand, we are trying to capture the fundamental Humean insight that all action is underlain by what we care about ('concerns'). This is why we see both goals and circumstances as being informed by our concerns: the goals we set ourselves are underlain by what we value or care about, but the circumstances (facts) that we reason from are also selected as relevant to the claim and presented under a certain value-laden description in relation to our concerns. This is most obvious in the case where we are arguing from a description of the relevant facts which we see as a 'problem', and arguing for a course of action as 'solution' to that problem. Something may be a problem for one agent but not for another, whose concerns are different.

On the other hand, we want to incorporate Searle's externalism regarding reasons such as promises, which we also extend to duties, norms and moral values. We are of course acknowledging that only internal reasons such as desires, or external reasons that we internalize, and want to act in accordance with, can effectively motivate intentional action. But human social, institutional reality provides people with "desire-independent" reasons for action and people therefore have a reason to act accordingly even when they do not want to act on

them or choose to ignore them. This is the gist of Searle's critique of the internalist (Millgram 2001, Williams 2001) position that sees all human motivation as underlain by desire (Searle 2010, pp. 127-132). Recognizing the specificity of the social world as a world of man-made institutions (commitments, contracts, laws, norms) that one is bound by even when one chooses to act otherwise underlies in fact the very possibility of normative critique.

The gist of our proposal is the following. We are detaching the Goal premise from any necessary connection with actual desire or concern: goals are states of affairs that we can actually desire but they can also be normative states of affairs that we ought to bring about even if we don't particularly desire them. Judgments that an agent ought to do something are based either on what the Speaker believes the Agent to desire or value, on motivating reasons, or on what the Speaker believes the Agent ought to desire or value, on normative reasons (or on both). The structure is the same for both prudential and moral reasoning, involving goal and value premises which, in the Speaker's view, actually do or ought to motivate the Agent, as well as means-goal relations and circumstantial premises informed by relevant desire-dependent or desire-independent reasons. In our view, moral reasoning is also of an instrumental (means-goal) type, but the goal is not just some desired state of affairs, but a normative goal that the Agent ought to desire, even if he does not, such as a state of affairs in which promises are kept or obligations are fulfilled. Such a goal would be generated by a Value premise that the Agent ought to be concerned about, in the Speaker's view. If the Agent comes to internalize this concern as motivation to act, then he will act to bring about the goal, but even if he doesn't, it would be still possible to say that he had a reason (an external reason) to act in that way, although he chose not to. The difference between the two types of argument is captured in the following two diagrams (Figure 1 and Figure 2), where arrows indicate a relation of support or justification:

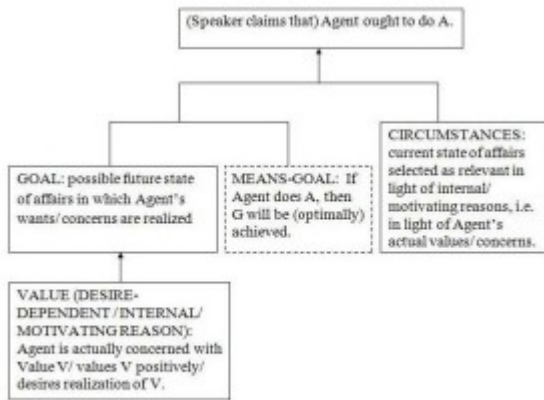


Figure 1. Arguing from desire-dependent reasons

In our view, the specificity of moral reasoning (including moral-political argumentation) derives from the recognition of external reasons for action as basic. External reasons in the political field vary from promises made by politicians in electoral campaigns, which they are then expected to act upon, to moral-political values (justice, equality, freedom) recognized as legitimate and binding and enshrined in laws. But they may also be constraints on agents' action in the sense of power or coercion – obviously, not all external reasons are moral. Recognition of the power of the state or the law, or simply of the authority or power of some individual agent, as external reasons, together with instrumental beliefs (if I fail to obey the law, unpleasant consequences might follow for me), are reasons that shape agents' action. As we argue in Fairclough and Fairclough (forthcoming), these reasons lie at the interface between agents and structures and show how agency and structure interact and shape each other.

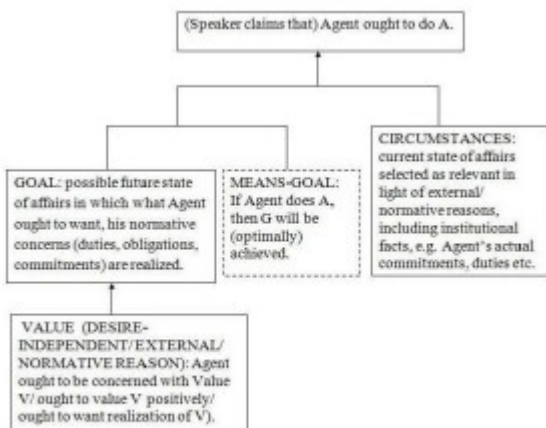


Figure 2. Arguing from desire-independent reasons

We also suggest placing such external reasons (institutional facts such as promises or norms) in the Circumstantial premise in the second diagram: they are facts that speakers argue from in saying that agents ought to be concerned with

their realization. In the case of promises or norms and laws, the fact that the agent made a promise or is bound by a law or moral norm typically override any other possible consideration of what the context is or might require. When we say, for instance that, regardless of circumstances, the Agent ought to do A because he promised, we regard the fact that the Agent made a promise as the only relevant fact.

4. A moral justification of inequality: trickle-down economics and the common good

In what follows we will look at a public debate organized by St Paul's Institute and hosted by St Paul's Cathedral (2009) in London on October 20, 2009 (transcript available at <http://www.stpauls.co.uk/Learning-Education/St-Pauls-Institute/2009-Programme-Money-Integrity-and-Wellbeing>). The discussion focused on the responsibility of banks in the current crisis. Among the panellists were Vince Cable, then Liberal-Democrat Deputy Leader; Brian Griffith, Vice-Chairman of Goldman Sachs International, and Adair Turner, Chair of the Financial Services Authority. One of the questions was: should bankers be made to pay for the bailout, rather than keeping their profits and bonuses? This is how the Vice-Chairman of Goldman Sachs answered this question:

"When it comes to the question of bankers paying for the bailout, I think at a personal level some have paid very expensively.... I think it is very easy to construct a short-term perception of what the common good is. Let's assume, for example, we all said we're not going to have big bonuses... I believe you would then find that leading City firms could easily hive off operations to Switzerland, to the Far East.... I believe that we should be thinking about the medium term common good, not the short-term common good, and in thinking about the medium-term common good... at least one cluster of industries we have is the financial sector. We should be proud of that in London, and we should not therefore be ashamed of offering compensation in an internationally competitive market which ensures the business is here and employs British people."

In his closing remarks, on markets and morality, Lord Griffiths also said the following:

"... I grew up in Wales, in a mining community... I can say I really understand inequality personally. If I felt that the present situation of rising unemployment, ... of almost despair ... was a permanent feature of our society, frankly I would

find it very difficult to defend the City. But what I've tried to say is ... I think that we have to tolerate the inequality as a way to achieving greater prosperity and opportunity for all".

Lord Griffith's interventions were widely reported in the press. The following day, most major newspapers such as The Guardian carried headlines like the following: "Public must learn to 'tolerate the inequality' of bonuses, says Goldman Sachs vice-chairman..." (Hopkins 2009). Not surprisingly, there was public outrage. Over the next 48 hours, there were 313 comments on the Guardian website alone (see the Comments thread at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/oct/21/executive-pay-bonuses-goldmansachs> with a record number (48) being deleted by moderators for offensive language. What did Guardian readers think about the views of the Vice-Chairman of Goldman Sachs? Many recognized Griffith's argument as a defence of "trickle-down" economics and "growth", although neither were explicitly mentioned, and argued that "trickle-down" has never worked:

MorrisZap 21 Oct 2009, 2:18PM. Griffiths said the British public should "tolerate the inequality as a way to achieve greater prosperity for all". Trickle-down never worked. It was always a scam for a bunch of (...) greedy, incompetent, lying bastards, to justify their outrageous salaries which they try to avoid paying tax on in any case...

BuddyBaker 21 Oct 2009, 2:26PM. Don't these people ever ask themselves why we need our economies to keep growing? I suppose they think in phrases like "a rising tide lifts all boats" and trickle-down economics. But after all these years of GDP growth, is the average person in Britain really much better off than 30 years ago? I say thee nay. Instead we've just seen rising inequality, and a few people have become stupidly rich.... You can't have infinite growth. I don't even understand why you'd want infinite growth.

MichaelZ 21 Oct 2009, 3:45PM. So hold on a minute, we have a recession that completely discredits trickle-down economics, and is only averted from getting even worse by granting tax payers' money to the very institutions that caused the crash - and Griffith argues for more trickle-down economics. Just how out-of-touch with reality are these people?... We've "tolerated" inequality for a good few decades now, and is Britain any more prosperous?... The working people saw "wealth" built on debt (effectively Monopoly money) and an utterly insane period of house price inflation...

Several readers were outraged at what they perceived as blackmail and urged each other to call the bankers' bluff, encourage them to move abroad:

Ebert 21 Oct 2009, 2:24PM. Griffiths said that many banks would relocate abroad if the government cracked down on bonus culture... The morality of the blackmailer – so let's call his bluff.

Alebob 21 Oct 2009, 2:17PM. ... Let him relocate abroad. In fact let's charter a ship and get rid of them all.

Goto100 21 Oct 2009, 2:39PM. ... You organize the ship. I'll organize the submarine and the torpedo.

Let us focus first on the argument in favour of inequality: people should tolerate inequality for the sake of future prosperity and opportunity for all, a goal allegedly underlain by a concern for the "medium-term common good". The common good is offered as a normative premise ("we should be thinking about the medium-term common good, not the short-term common good"), as a concern that agents ought to have. Thus, given what people (as agents) presumably want and ought to want, a future of prosperity and opportunity for all, together with a commitment to the medium-term common good (as external normative reason that ought to motivate action), and given that, in a free market economy, allowing for inequality will help achieve this goal, inequalities in pay ought to be accepted by everyone.

Griffith spoke about "prosperity and opportunity for all". His argument was apparently motivated by a concern for everyone's interests. Given that the action advocated allegedly benefits everyone, and is thus universalizable, in a Kantian sense, the argument is in fact intended as a moral argument. It says that people ought to be concerned with the medium-term common good and a future that benefits everyone, i.e., they ought to have these concerns even if they didn't particularly want to. The action would be the right one regardless of desires, because of the legitimate underlying value. The argument is therefore presented as a moral justification of inequality: inequality is necessary because it serves the common good, understood as what is good for everyone.

Figure 3 represents Griffith's argument. There are two claims in fact, both underlain by the same value and goal (and for the sake of economy we represent them together): the claim that the right action is to allow for highly unequal pay for bankers (where the implicit Agents are presumably banks and politicians) and

the claim that people (as Agents) ought to tolerate this action. The argument is also supported a Cost-Benefit premise: unless the actions in question are performed and accepted, banks will move abroad, will stop producing revenue for Britain, will not employ British people, etc. The Costs will therefore outweigh the Benefits. The circumstances that are selected as relevant for the claim constitute the ‘problem’ that the action is intended to solve: “rising unemployment”, “despair”, the broader context of “crisis”.

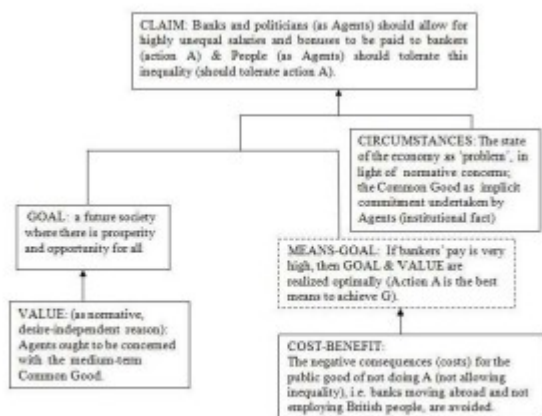


Figure 3

What does “trickle-down” economics say? According to political philosophers, it says that “inequality is justified because it promotes economic growth, thereby benefitting even the poorest members of society”. Given that people are motivated by economic incentives, trying to equalize and excessively redistribute resources will cause the most hard-working people to lose the incentives to produce. A better way of helping the poor is to promote economic growth. “Even if their share of the overall pie remains the same, perhaps even if it gets smaller, the pie will be growing at such a rate that the absolute size of their piece will be growing”. Instead of “minding the gap” between the rich and the poor (relative inequality), we should be concerned with improving the position of the worst off members of society in absolute terms (Swift 2006, p. 110). We should therefore be concerned with growth, not (re)distribution, and growth is made possible by inequality.

However, even if it is granted that “trickle-down” might make sense as a description of how people would behave if incentives were removed and everyone were paid the same, it is an incoherent concept when regarded as a justification of inequality (Swift 2006, p. 125). On the one hand, the assumption underlying it is, quite overtly, that people are motivated by selfish interest: if you don’t pay me

a lot more to do this particular job, I will not do it and the entire system will collapse, thus damaging the interests of the worst off. Yet “trickle-down” is justified by those who advocate it because it allegedly maximizes benefits for the worst off: inequality at the top will allegedly benefit the most disadvantaged members of society. This double motivation (self-interest or other people’s interest?) makes “trickle-down” economics ultimately incoherent: I can be perfectly justified in paying a lot of money to those who are holding my child hostage, but it does not mean that the final distribution of money, after I’ve paid them off, is justified or fair (Swift 2006, p. 125-127). We may say that a good prudential argument (based on everyone’s desires and interests and on a cost-benefit analysis) is not necessarily a good moral argument as well: it is not fair that the blackmailers should get the money.

In their comments, Guardian readers rejected the “trickle-down” defence of inequality in several distinct ways. First, they rejected it on the basis of empirical evidence: people have always “tolerated inequality” and this has now resulted in worldwide recession. Secondly, people rejected the concept of growth and the assumption that growth will benefit everyone (Aleksandrow: “Greater prosperity for all??!! All who??!!”). In other words, it is wrong to sacrifice some people’s interests to those of others for the sake of an overall increase in prosperity, even if there is such an increase in overall growth. Thirdly, people rejected the concept on various ethical grounds: demanding incentive payments in order to do a job that will benefit the others is a form of “blackmail”. Most significantly, they rejected Griffith’s argument by invoking various conceptions of justice: it is not fair that bankers should get these unequal rewards, they certainly do not deserve them, and even if they are entitled to them according to rules they have themselves written, these rules are themselves wrong.

However, Griffith’s argument was clearly advanced as a moral argument, underlain by a normative concern for the common good, which supposedly will generate a future of prosperity and opportunity for all involved. Yet why, we may ask, is there a need to “tolerate” an arrangement which is right anyway because it serves the common good? A closer look at the structure of Griffith’s argument will show why exactly the “trickle-down” defence of inequality is incoherent and could never serve as a justification of inequality. This is because, we argue, the argument, as stated, is a rationalization: the reasons that are being offered are not the real reasons. The common good is not in fact the underlying value,

although it claims to be, and the goal is not that of prosperity and opportunity for each and every citizen. The real, unstated value that underlies the argument is self-interest and it is related to the unstated goal of economic growth. Given what is in the bankers' interests and given that in the process of serving those interests some positive side-effects will "trickle down" as by-products (benefits) of the logic of perpetual growth, and given the costs to the system of refusing to pay them, they ought to be paid a huge amount. The argument cannot be a moral argument but at most a prudential one analogous to an argument which says: it is in your interest (because of the potential costs) to pay off the blackmailers. Then it will make sense to also say that you have to "tolerate" this arrangement in order to avoid undesirable costs. But it will also be obvious that the interests of the two parties involved do not really have much in common, there is no "common good" that they both share.

To conclude, there could be a justification of inequality (inequality is functionally necessary, a necessary evil), but it cannot be a moral justification. Its best approximation is the argument from blackmail, which is in fact how many Guardian readers interpreted it. As for the "common good", it is in fact represented by an aggregate conception of growth and some "trickle-down" of wealth as an alleged benefit of inequality. We represent this structure as follows (Figure 4):

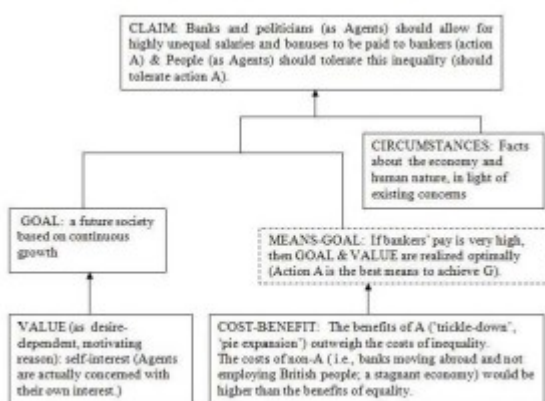


Figure 4

5. Justice as fairness, justice as desert. Political values as desire-independent, external reasons for action

We have argued that Lord Griffith's argument is not a moral argument although it is dressed up as one, as it invokes the common good as an alleged value premise. The comments thread however involved genuine moral argumentation: people did

not argue from their own desirable goals but from moral-political values they thought everyone ought to be concerned with. Many posts focused on the idea that bankers do not deserve the high pay they get: they do not produce anything useful, their so-called talents are worthless and they are being rewarded for failure:

LeavesNoWitnesses 21 Oct 2009, 2:38PM. What an arrogant swine! Can he please explain how do banks serve the economy by sucking money out of it when most of the economy is in ruins? Why should we reward these idiots in charge of financial institutions that do not produce anything of value to the society? I'm really lost here. Furious, just furious.

AlanMoore 21 Oct 2009, 2:16PM. Idiot. It might be considered an investment to the general good if these bastards actually generated any wealth - or did anything useful. But they don't, all they do is distort markets for short-term benefit...

Samboy 21 Oct 2009, 2:21PM. What these greedy snout-in-the-trough bankers utterly fail to grasp is that the obscene bonus culture which was in place before the collapse of the financial sector rewarded long term failure not success. Where's my f*cking bonus for being part of the investment group which provided 1 trillion pounds worth of capital to ensure that Goldman Sachs could continue to trade?

Another conception of justice that was implicit in many of the posts was "justice as fairness", with particular emphasis on equality as political value:

deano30 21 Oct 2009, 2:36PM. Foolish tosser - a society is never the richer if its good fortune is based on rampant inequality. It is a flawed and fractured place which is just about to fall apart at the seams.

Harrymanback 21 Oct 2009, 2:15PM. ... [O]ne rather large hole in his argument... is the mountain of evidence that shows that happy societies are those that have low inequality, not those that are rich.

Equality and fairness were also defended in the sense of equal treatment of similar situations. If the bankers want to keep the profits, they must swallow up the losses and repay their debts first. In other words you cannot demand one rule for yourself and another one for everyone else.

farandolae 21 Oct 2009, 2:38PM ... so we face unemployment, massively reduced pensions, big cuts in public services and some of the people who put us in this

mess get an average of GBP 450,000+ on top of their salary. Seems fair.

The Paladin 21 Oct 2009, 9:39PM. That's fine... You want to keep paying, I'll let you collapse when you don't bloody listen. Fair dos.

jacko121 21 Oct 2009, 11:40PM. ... if you are not ashamed at paying your staff then you should not be ashamed at repaying your debt to the tax payers first.

Several comments addressed justice in the sense of equal treatment by means of analogies:

patelvijay 21 Oct 2009, 2:14PM. Banks must learn to "tolerate the fairness" of collapse when they mess up.

2LSE 22 Oct 2009, 9:22AM. Err ... didn't the French aristocracy also think that the peasants should tolerate inequality???

Here, we shall draw on political philosophy in order to clarify an important distinction. It is a distinction between a concept of justice and various conceptions of justice (Swift 2006, pp. 11-12). The concept of justice means giving people what is due to them (thus, justice is tied to duty and to rights, not to what is "desirable"). There are however various particular conceptions of justice, different ways of filling out the basic logic of the concept: Rawls's conception of justice as fairness, Nozick's conception of justice as entitlement and the popular conception of justice as desert.

In this thread, people argued from a conception of justice which rules out privileging certain people at the expense of others, or putting some alleged aggregate conception of growth above the rights and interests of individual people. The allegedly desirable goal of "growth" was challenged from the perspective of the goal of a just or fair society. Basically, people argued against Griffith's allegedly moral argument by constructing their own moral arguments with similar structure but different underlying values and goals. Instead of the goal of growth, people argued from the normative goal of a just or fair society (in Swift's terms, from a concept of justice, as a state of affairs in which everyone gets what is due to them, whether according to desert or a more egalitarian conception, such as Rawls's "justice as fairness" - Rawls 1971, 1993, 2001). The popular conception of justice as desert, for example, says that talented, hard-working or successful individuals deserve more rewards than untalented, idle or unsuccessful ones. We can represent the arguments from justice-as-fairness and

justice-as-desert as follows, in Figure 5:

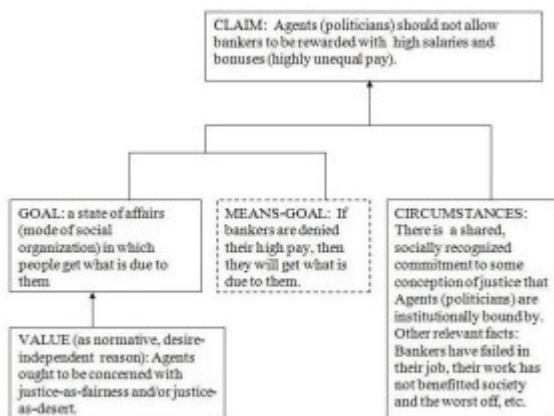


Figure 5. Arguing from justice-as-fairness/ justice-as-desert

If we argue from the goal of justice and the specific value of desert, coupled with the factual premises that bankers have in fact failed, that their work involves no special talent or difficulty, as well as the institutional fact of a conception of justice-as-desert as a socially recognized, normatively binding commitment, we are led to the claim that they should not receive bonuses. The reasoning is analogous for justice as fairness (which we discuss in detail in our forthcoming book). The moral claim that is made is based on goal, means-goal, value and circumstantial premises, like any prudential claim, only differently understood. The goal is not one that some people happen to desire because it satisfies their own concerns, but one in which nobody's particular desires or concerns are privileged over anyone else's, i.e. a society that gives everyone what is due to them. Likewise, the value premise says that agents ought to be concerned with justice-as-desert or justice-as-fairness, while some conception of justice is viewed as a publicly recognized and normatively binding commitment, part of an explicit or tacit contract with the citizens, as an institutional fact that politicians and the state are expected to act upon even when there seems to be little political will to do so.

6. Conclusion

We have represented arguments focusing on justice issues in a similar way to prudential arguments, as involving the same type of premises, including goal and means-goal premises, i.e. an instrumental structure. An argument in favour of a particular type of political action is intended to contribute to the realization of a particular vision about what society should be like (political goal), grounded in a normative concern for certain moral-political values (rights, obligations, shared

norms), regarded as institutional facts.

We agree with the Humean view that what underlies action are beliefs and concerns (Blackburn 1998), e.g., a desire for my wellbeing as well as for the wellbeing of others, and these are internal reasons. Recognition of external reasons has to be accompanied by a desire to act accordingly in order to lead to action, so desire-dependent reasons underlie all action. However, while all action springs from beliefs and desire-dependent reasons, an argument for action can take desire-independent reasons as premises, and these may subsequently be internalized by agents as concerns and motivate action. In acknowledging this, we have moved beyond the Humean conception and adopted Searle's view of the irreducible nature of certain external reasons, such as those we create by entering into contracts with other people, making promises, being part of human society and abiding by its rules, norms and laws. It is recognition of such reasons that can lead to the formation of a desire to observe their binding force, but the concern or desire derives from the reason we recognize, and not vice-versa (Searle 2010, p. 131). In the arguments we looked at, people argued from pre-existing norms and obligations (from an implicit "social contract") whose binding nature ought to be recognized and internalized as motivation by politicians and by the state in deciding on a course of action. Even when politicians apparently fail to care about this social contract, and thus fail to act from a commitment to social justice, they ought to do so: they have a reason to do so, and one that they themselves have created by accepting a mandate of political representation.

Our conclusion is that we can preserve the same schema for both prudential and moral practical reasoning if (a) we understand Goals properly, as states of affairs, thus detaching them from any intrinsic connection with desire; and (b) if we understand the specific nature of the social world, as a world of man-made institutions, which generate external, desire-independent reasons for action. In the moral arguments we have discussed, the goal was a mode of social organization that is just, that gives everyone what is due to them, irrespective of anyone's particular desires. With regard to external reasons, we have seen that they are irreducible to internal reasons but can ground people's internal motivations, such as a desire to act so that a promise made is actually fulfilled, or a socially shared norm or contract is observed and abided by rather than ignored. An institutional obligation to be fair and impartial can only motivate people through the mediation of a concern for or desire to be fair and impartial, but it is

recognition of such an independent obligation as an institutional fact that grounds (whenever it does) the concern that can subsequently lead to action. External reasons that ought to motivate but fail to do so (e.g., social contracts that are broken, publicly recognized values and norms that are disregarded) are a good starting point for social critique.

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