Chapter 4

Moral value monism

4.1 Introduction

So far, I dealt with two of the three main traditional background assumptions of the ideal of equality: moral universalism and volitional individualism. Two alternatives were introduced: moral realism and realistic individualism. Both are based on the Wittgenstein-Davidson approach to language and interpretation. In this chapter, the third assumption, moral value monism, is discussed. Value monism was held to be one of the traditional background assumptions of the ideal of equality because of the idea of a contract. In contracts the goods for people are compared to each other and in contracts it is agreed that the loss of one good is compensated by some other good. If you give up your right to that which will be advantageous for me, then I will give up my right to something else in return. Such a trade-off suggests the idea that there is one value with respect to which all goods have to be compared. This moral value monism can also be discerned as the assumption behind the discussion on the proper equalisandum; it seems that it is assumed that there is just one equalisandum. In this chapter moral value pluralism is introduced as an alternative to moral value monism. It leads to the idea that there are several equalisanda instead of just one. This will have in its turn as a consequence that the articulation of the ideal of equality has to be independent of a particular equalisandum.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, the reasons for accepting moral value monism are examined and moral value pluralism is introduced. I follow mainly Stocker’s line of argument against monism [Stocker, 1990]. Two main reasons for value monism are discussed. One is
based on the idea that the main concern of morality is that it should be action-guiding and the other on the idea of compensation. Of both it is shown that they are not valid. Subsequently I present an argument against monism that is based on a discussion on the phenomenon of akrasia or weakness of will. It is shown that although in spite of what is commonly held, monism can account for akrasia. It is argued that monism cannot account for all common sorts of conflicts and genuine choice. At first sight it seems that an explanation for moral conflicts and genuine choices calls for moral universalism, but as is shown, moral particularism within a moral realistic framework can account for these conflicts and genuine choices too.

In the second part, it is argued that there are several equalisanda instead of just one. I arrive at equalisanda by discussing an issue touched upon in the previous chapter, namely the role of responsibility in the ideal of equality and the proper equalisandum. As was argued in the previous chapter, incorporating responsibility in the equalisandum threatens the project of this study because evaluations of distributions without taking their history into account become impossible.\footnote{Chapter 3 p. 89.} Several recent proposals for an equalisandum, notably those of Rawls’ primary goods, Dworkin’s resources and Cohen’s advantages, are discussed. Scanlon’s idea on the equalisandum exposed in his Preferences and urgency [Scanlon, 1975] and his idea on responsibility explained in The significance of choice [Scanlon, 1988] are presented. They are of help in arguing that there are several equalisanda and that responsibility is not to be incorporated in the ideal of equality. Thus the threat to the aim of this study, the development of an evaluation of distributions that is pattern like, is neutralised. In this discussion on the proper equalisandum and responsibility, I arrive at a plurality of equalisanda. They can be subsumed under the name of ‘liberties’, referring to real possibilities for individuals to act or enjoy situations that are valuable, without suffering from disadvantages that others do not suffer from.

4.2 Monism versus pluralism

4.2.1 Reasons for value monism

One of the main reasons for accepting monism is that it is held to be necessary for a definite answer to the question: ‘What to do?’, to which the answer is of course: ‘Choose the best option!’ A complete ordering of available options is a guarantee that there is a best option that should be chosen. It is held that such a complete ordering assumes just one value, which is the value according to which the options are evaluated. If more values
have to be taken into account then a best option is not any longer guaranteed and some arbitrariness is held to be inevitable and morality looses its definite action-guiding character. Once taking morality as essentially action-guiding, one value has to be assumed otherwise it could happen that morality ended up with arbitrary choices, thus the argument. This value is taken to be the central value of morality. In history it can be seen that several suggestions have been made for this value, happiness, eudaimonia, welfare, to mention only a few. Action-guidingness as the central idea of morality is given as one reason for monism.

The second reason for value monism is more or less particular for the discussion related to equality. It is based essentially on the same assumption about comparing options and goods as the one of the first reason. In using the ideal of equality the idea of compensation is a central one. It is held that it has to be possible that lack of some sort of good can be compensated by some other good in order to arrive at equality. Comparing several goods in order to compensate, assumes one value with respect to which the goods and lacks are compared. If there existed more values then there would be no guarantee that the lack can be compensated properly by some good. Wiggins for example formulates this idea as the principle of compensation in kind:

\[ \text{..., if course } x \text{ is better in respect of eudaimonia than course } y, \text{ then there is no important disadvantage that } x \text{ has in comparison with } y, \text{ or no desirable feature that } y \text{ offers that } x \text{ does not offer too, by way of an equal or greater degree of that very feature } \text{[Wiggins, 1982b, p. 259]} \]

Such a principle can be seen as a reason too for value monism. Both reasons are discussed subsequently.

**Definiteness of morality**

As mentioned above, one reason for monism is the idea that morality should give a definite answer to the question: ‘What to do?’ A complete ordering of options will secure a definite answer, because a complete ordering always has a best element. This element, the best option, is of course the answer. But it is not clear at all that the only concern of morality is to give definite answers to the question: ‘What to do?’ And even if it is, it is not clear that the best has always to be chosen and even if the best has to be chosen it is not clear why a complete ordering on one scale means value monism. It could be possible that there is a complete ordering without there being one supervalue which is responsible for this ordering.
Let me first turn to the idea that ethics is concerned with definite answers to the question: ‘What to do?’. It can be admitted that ethics is concerned with this question, but it is not its only focus. Morality is concerned also with judging persons, virtues, or aspects of actions instead of the action itself, or that it is concerned with what is worthwhile to strive at. It is not merely the particular action which is of concern to morality but also the question: ‘What if the circumstances were different?’

For example suppose as a derivative of Rawls’ theory that the one and only value to be taken into account is the well-being of the worst-off person. Now it can be argued, and in fact some do, by pointing to incentives, that we should divide goods not equally, because then the worst-off would be even worse off. It is better even for the worst-off that goods are not divided equally, because equality would lead to a decrease of the incentive to work and so to a diminished total amount of goods to divide, resulting in the worst-off receiving less. Thus is argued that there would be less to divide because the incentive for production would be far less with an equal distribution. Against this reasoning, one can hold that persons should not be moved by their own income but they should be moved by the well-being of the worst-off. If that value were the incentive one could and should distribute goods equally. The incentive argument would not be any longer a reason for differences. On the other hand, one knows that people should, but in fact are not motivated to work for the well-being of the worst-off and so in fact the worst-off will actually end up worse off in case goods are distributed equally and the distribution should not be equal.

In this example one could say that you should divide the goods equally and you could say that you should not divide the goods equally. The former gives the answer to the question: ‘What has to be done idealiter?’, the latter: ‘What has to be done given that people inhabiting this world are not perfect?’ But even if one admits that given the feasible options, goods should not be divided equally, it still makes sense to remark that idealiter goods should be distributed equally. An equal distribution is not simply worse than an unequal distribution. It is worse because we are not perfect. That is an important supplement to the judgement that an unequal distribution is better. The judgement that it is better not to divide goods equally, is not complete. One aspect is missing by neglecting namely the judgement that idealiter equality would be better.

Not all moral judgements are action-guiding, they also concern judgements. Admitting this, one reason for the requirement of monism in ethics is undermined, although it is not yet shown to be false.

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2This example is derived from Cohen’s interpretation of Rawls’ difference principle in which the role of incentives cannot be used as a phenomenon to which the difference principle can be applied if it is cited by those whose incentives it concerns [Cohen, 1993].
Let me for the sake of the argument, admit that morality is concerned exclusively with the question: ‘What to do?’. After all in this study I am concerned with evaluating options i.e. distributions, with respect to the ideal of equality. The next question then will be: ‘Is monism the appropriate way of arriving at definite answers?’

It is clear that if one has a complete ordering of available options there is at least one maximal element that is best. A common definite answer to the question: ‘What to do?’ is: ‘The best available option.’

Although maximisation of some good and striving for the best is seemingly obviously the right method, in fact it is not the only right one. It is argued against the maximisation view, according to which the option with most of the value should be chosen, that it can lead to worse results. For example, perfectionism leading to spending an infinite amount of time on some task in order to fulfil it perfectly well, will lead in the end to nothing. Maximisation is, to borrow the concept from Parfit, indirectly self-defeating. It learns that in order to arrive at the best we should not strive for it [Parfit, 1984, p. 5]. It would disturb in a sense the relationship with ourselves. We could not describe directly to ourselves what we care about i.e. the best. The relationship with other persons would be disturbed too. For example, giving up friendship just because one can develop a better one undermines the whole idea of friendship. This is at least as serious as indirect self-defeatingness. Best can be the enemy of good. Beyond these problems for the maximisation view, supererogation is mentioned against this view. With supererogatory acts are meant acts that are not obligatory but nevertheless very good. Such acts are performed by moral saints. The argument states that the distinction between what is very good and what should be chosen cannot be made in the maximisation view.

The phenomena cited above could be accounted for if not only the best should be striven at but ‘good enough’ would be enough and should be aimed at, i.e. some sort of satisficing theory. In this view perfectionism is not required, it does not require to give up some friendship for a slightly better one and supererogatory actions can be seen as those actions being better than just good enough.

The maximisation view can offer two arguments to rebut these attacks. It can argue that maximisation is still not to be rejected because of the examples cited to show maximisation is wrong, because the examples can be accounted for in the maximisation view. The other argument takes the satisficing theory to focus on the wrong value that is assumed to be central. These arguments are discussed subsequently.

The examples cited above can be accounted for in the maximisation view by considering the actions which have to be chosen according to the satisficing theory, namely to be the best of the available options. Not being
a perfectionist is the best option available to us. Not changing friends just because one person would be a slightly better friend than another, is the best available option. Similarly, the alternative which is not supererogatory is the best available option given the fact we are not saints, although of course it would be better if we were saints; of course we can be ashamed of not meeting these high standards. Supererogatory acts can be accounted for in the maximisation view as actions of which it is a pity we cannot perform them because we are not perfect, just as in the case of admitting that the option of distributing goods equally should not be chosen, because it is not the best option given the fact we are not motivated as we ideally should be. The conclusion is that the examples cited to show the maximisation view is not covering moral phenomena, are not conclusive, the phenomena can be accounted for in the maximisation view. But is this answer sufficient to save the maximisation view?

It can be argued that the maximisation view is still not saved, because this view, in which the option which should or could be chosen is considered to be the best option, is still defective in a certain sense. The satisficing theory can make more and finer discriminations than the maximisation view. If for example, an option which has enough of some value in order to be chosen, then according to the maximisation view this option would be maximal, and it would not make any sense to say that another option has more value. In the satisficing view one can say that this option has enough, but some other option also having enough value in order to be chosen, has even more value. In the maximisation view, these two options would have an equal amount of value, one could not discriminate between them. In the satisficing theory one can. It allows for more and finer discriminations and makes this view preferable, because it fits better in our ways of reasoning, in which we make these finer descriptions.

It could be argued that these finer discriminations could be made also by the maximisation view. It could be held that beyond what is best for doing, an option can have more of some other value than the value ‘to be performedness’ than the other option. But by this response value monism is left and value pluralism is turned to and the motivation for the maximisation view is undermined.

Maximisation is confronted with some problems even if the examples of self-defeatingness of perfectionism, friendship and supererogatory acts can be accounted for. Let me turn to the other argument that is mentioned in defence of the maximisation view.

Against the non-maximisation view cited to question the maximisation view, it is argued that if some option with less of the good than the maximum is better than the option with the maximum, then there is some other value with regard to which options are judged and not just the good which
was meant to fulfil that role. To be more formal, if an option with a certain amount say $n$ of the value $F$ is better than the option with the most amount of this value say $m$, then this betterness of that option assumes some other value $V$ so that $V(nF) \geq V(mF)$ even if $m > n$. So the wrong value was taken to be the only one, it should be $V$ instead of $F$. By taking the right value $V$ instead of $F$ the maximisation theory appears to be the right one.

Although the reasoning of the maximisers seems to be quite convincing, there is still a problem. This reasoning shows too that maximisation is not conceptually true either as is claimed by the maximisers, because saying that some option is better than some other option because it has some more value $V$, also assumes some other value $W$ in which this ‘betterness’ of the option is captured. The maximisation view leads to an infinite regress. However contrary to Stocker’s opinion, this is not the main problem, for the regress argument can be rebutted by interpreting the value of the maximisers. The value meant by the maximisers can be taken such that it is necessarily maximised. Its maximisation is appropriate by definition, and thus the infinite regress is stopped.\(^3\) The main problem is that maximising this value will not help us in decisions, it represents the end of deliberation about what to do.

The possibility of a satisficing theory, just be happy with enough and not strive always to the maximum, can be interpreted in such a way that the maximisers can stick to their idea that there is just one value which is to be maximised. But this will sacrifice the meaning of this value for choices, it will represent the outcome of deliberation and monism is no longer leading to a definite choice, it is the result of deliberations and does not have any role in that deliberation. It would not make any sense that without monism we cannot determine what we should do, because what we should do is not determined by this monistic value but by some other process of evaluation. Of course there is a sense in which one can say without monism no definite solution, but this is only a strict logical sense similar to the way in which the dictator in Arrow’s theorem is a dictator in a special sense. He might even not know that he is a dictator, or that he is influencing the social ordering in a direct way; the orderings of society and the dictator happen to be congruent.\(^4\) In a similar way the option that is maximal on the ordering is decided to, but not because it is maximal; it could have been a different one that would then be maximal on the ordering.

So it is argued that the maximisation view could be saved but only at the expense of making the monistic value dependent on the deliberation itself. It does not help in the deliberation and thus the main reason for the

\[^3\]See also [Broome, 1991, p. 17] against Philippa Foot

\[^4\]See chapter 3 p. 66
maximisation view is undermined. The reasoning shows that one can stick to monism and the view that all options can be ordered along a complete ordering, but the value which should exhibit this ordering is not helping in decisions; it does not offer reasons for choice; it represents choices. One could wonder whether it is a value at all for which we care. We can choose upon other values as in the pluralistic variant by deliberation. This deliberation can result in a complete ordering without there being any supervalue at all, but just an ordering about what to do. It is not shown that this ordering is based on merely one supervalue, it is just reflecting the result of deliberation and decision. Actually, it are the other values we care about and with the help of these, we try to evaluate the options in particular circumstances.

Summarising, the reason for monism that is based on the idea that morality is concerned exclusively with action-guiding judgements, and because of this, definite answers have to be given, namely being a maximum of a complete ordering of options, whereby the ordering exhibits one value, is not quite a valid reason. Morality is not concerned merely with action-guiding judgements, as is shown by the possibility of moral conflicts in an imperfect world. But even if it were, the maximisation view is not the only view possible, the satisficing theory could be offered as an alternative. The maximisation view could be maintained but at the cost of losing its relevance for deliberation and choice and the reason for monism that it is of help in answering the question: ‘What to do?’ would be undermined. A complete ordering of options does not imply monism. There can be a complete ordering without there being one value being responsible for this ordering. Of course one could give the ordering a name for example ‘to be performedness’ but such a ‘value’ would barely have the status of value because we do not care about it. We care about the other values which have to be weighted in particular circumstances; the supposed supervalue ‘to be performedness’ does not help as it supposed to be. Let me turn to the other reason offered for monism that is rather specific for distributive contexts.

Comparing and one supervalue

The second reason for monism is rather particular for contexts concerning equality. In these contexts the concept of compensation is important. It is held that lack of some good can be compensated by some other good. These comparisons of lacks and compensations call for one value that is responsible for these comparisons. Without this value, such comparisons are argued to be impossible. As a consequence of this thought, it is seen
that the discussion about the equalisandum, what has to be distributed equally, is essentially about the nature of this value.

Mainly two ways of comparing are influential, one is in terms of monetary value, the other is more directly in terms of welfare. In the previous chapter, we met these already in discussing the non-envy analysis as resources and income which are held to be easily comparable and welfare which is held to be non-comparable.\(^5\)

According to the first, money is the good to which all others are compared. The value of all goods is measured in terms of money, it is the price of the goods and that price is determined by the free and competitive market. It represents how much the people care about a good. The value is determined by the alternative uses of this good i.e. the monetary value. The value is measured by what one could do by trading that good for some other good. It shows the purchase possibilities, which on their turn show the possibilities of choice. It will be clear that this view is associated with a resourcist theory of distribution according to which the equalisandum are the resources. We met this kind of theories in the previous chapter. So, one proposal for the central value in distribution problems is money. According to this proposal the prices settled by the market determine the just compensation.\(^6\)

The other way of comparing lack and compensation is not through money but by some rather abstract value. Compensation and lack are compared on some scale such that the lack is considered to be compensated if and only if the option with lack together with the compensation for this lack, is equivalent on that scale to the option without this lack and without its compensation. This comparison is more directly linked to what some good or lack means to someone, it is not directly inspired by the idea of alternative uses as in the previous method. One could call this value welfare.

The question to which we have to turn here is: is this reason for comparisons sufficient for monism to be accepted? Let me turn first to the method which is mediated by the free and competitive market and subsequently to the more direct method of comparison.

The first method of comparing lack and its compensation by the marketprices is criticised on the ground that this way of measuring is too much influenced by irrelevant influences i.e. by for example how other persons evaluate some good.\(^7\) If almost nobody cares about something, for instance

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\(^5\)See chapter 3 p. 67.

\(^6\)This idea of compensation is for example also seen in Nozick's idea of compensation [Nozick, 1974, p. 63]. Kolm argued that this idea ends in egalitarianism [Kolm, 1985, p. 162 ff].

\(^7\)See [Kolm, 1984, p. 60 ff] for some problems of the idea commonly advocated in
philosophical ideas, the demand for it is negligible and consequently almost worthless. Furthermore, prices are determined not only by the demand in particular circumstances but also by the supply. Water in the desert is much more valuable than in Holland nowadays. This means, that because supply and demand are not intrinsic features of goods, the prices are not intrinsic features of these goods. Goods cannot have prices in general but only in particular circumstances. The prices are dependent on the particular situations, which are external to the good. Hence this way of measuring the value of something is not reflecting the value of the good itself.

A response to this objection of prices being too much arbitrary could be that goods have to be particularised to a particular time and situation, meaning that water in the desert is some other good than water in Holland on one of its rainy days. This will account for some of the external influences, but the influence of how others care about something is not neutralised. For example, loosing a photograph having merely value to you but to nobody else would mean that you lost nothing valuable. Such a loss has not to be compensated.

But apart from the problem that the value of something that has only some value to you would be determined by what others want to give for it, monism is not yet argued to be reasonable. Suppose one could in a reasonable way compare goods mediated by money, whether or not via market prices, would this mean that money was the only value? The answer can be clear, monism would not be implied. Money is just a way of measuring a certain amount and it does not mean it is the only value. Instead of money chickens could have been chosen, which does not mean that only chickens matter in this world. Even if all values can be represented by money, then it is not implied that money is the only value. So, the method of comparing goods through prices on the market is not a reason for adhering to monism. Let me turn now to the second method of comparing lacks and compensations.

By the second method the lack of some good and the compensation for it is more or less directly compared. If the option with lack together with compensation for this lack and the option without lack and without its compensation are equivalent, then the compensation is sufficient for the lack. A complete ordering will, in combination with some sort of continuity property for compensation, ensure that there exists for each lack a sufficient compensation. This complete ordering is, just as in the previous section, reflecting a value. As in the previous section, we can argue that this value is not the reason for the compensation to be sufficient for the lack. The liberal environments that the value of a good is determined by the market prices.

It is tempting to take this constructed 'value' such as 'to be performedness' as
compensation is not mediated by asking for equivalence regarding this value but by considering the lack and compensation directly. It is not asked how much of this value is lacking and thus such and such compensation is right. The deliberation is performed on the ground of evaluating the lack of some good and the possible compensations in a particular circumstance.

Here again the idea that a complete ordering implies there to be just one value, is used to conclude to monism. But as stated already, in order there to be a complete ordering in a particular situation of options, the assumption of there being just one supervalue is not a necessary one. It is not implied that all options from all situations can be arranged in a complete ordering on the basis of one value as would be held by monists. It is not valid to conclude from the idea that for all situations there is a complete ordering or scale of comparing based characterised by a particular value or good to the idea there is one ordering or scale for all situations characterised by one value. It is quite intelligible that in different situations, goods are differently evaluated vis-à-vis each other. Actually, in the previous chapter this was illustrated. It was shown that the evaluation of dioptrics against amplification of acoustic signals is dependent on the particular situation, i.e. whether the visit to the theatre concerns a pantomime, a concert or a play.\(^9\)

The reason for monism that is based on comparing and determining compensation for lack of goods is not a convincing reason. It is even more serious for monism. It is not only that monism does not follow from the possibility of comparing different goods, it makes even talking about lacks and compensations impossible.

In monism in which only one value is acknowledged there is hardly lack and compensation, there is just less, or more, or an equal amount of one value. The above-cited principle of compensation in kind recognised by Wiggins, assumes that there is one value relevant, which implies that there is no important distinction to be made between the option with lack together with compensation and the option without lack and without compensation, they just have an equal amount of the one and only value and that is all.\(^10\) The whole idea of compensation for some particular lack is not intelligible, there are just amounts of value, whether these are instantiated by a particular combination of goods or some other combination, is

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\(^9\) See chapter 3 p. 104.

\(^10\) See the principle of compensation in kind cited at p. 117.
not relevant at all. All goods are only to be seen as instantiations of this singular value. And in case of compensation there is actually no reason to speak of compensation of some lack. By these compensations in kind there will remain no trace of the lack as we normally recognise there to be. For instance, being compensated with money for having no longer personal photographs, does not exclude regretting having no photographs. This regret is not intelligible if one is a monist. A monist can only regret having less of the one and only value than one could have, but not that it consists of this composition rather than that; only the amount of the value is relevant; its way of instantiating is not relevant at all. This means that, although until now I undermined the reasons for monism, I touch here upon an argument against monism namely that monism cannot allow for our way of talking in a sensible way about lack and compensation. This argument is turned to in the next section.

4.2.2 Reasons for moral pluralism

In the previous sections, I have shown that the reasons for monism were not convincing. Pluralism is still an option. It was not yet shown that monism is less satisfactory than pluralism. In the last section, one argument against monism was touched upon, namely the fact that monism cannot account for lack and compensation. In this section I discuss this kind of argument against monism more extensively. The introduction to this field of arguments against monism is the phenomenon of akrasia, weakness of will, which consists of doing something of which it is clear, also to the actor, that it is not rational to do. For example staying in bed while it is clear that getting up is much better. This phenomenon is cited in order to show that monism is wrong, for example by Wiggins [Wiggins, 1982b, p. 262 ff.]. Davidson stated a view on akrasia, which also accounts for moral conflicts in general [Davidson, 1970]. But as is shown shortly this view of Davidson elaborated by Jackson lures us to moral universalism [Jackson, 1985]. So, with akrasia we meet two theoretical problems: monism versus pluralism and moral universalism versus particularism.

The main problem now is to articulate a view that can account for moral particularism, moral pluralism and moral realism, of which it was argued that it would be convenient for the development of the ideal of equality. Let me turn to the phenomenon of akrasia for the discussion monism versus pluralism.
Akrasia and moral pluralism

In akratic actions showing weakness of will, for example remaining in bed while it is known to be better to get up, the actor is acting irrationally. On the other hand, there is something in the akratic action which makes it attractive; it is not just irrational. Remaining in bed gives some pleasing bodily sensation of warmth and rest that is disturbed by getting up. But if there was merely one value then it is not explicable why the actor remained in bed; there would be nothing attractive to that action. The akratic action has less value than getting up, so there would not even be a single reason for the actor to choose for the akratic action; it would be highly unintelligible. But akratic actions are known to be possible and also tempting and not merely irrational. It seems that only intervention of some other value can account for akratic actions. Getting up is better, but the bodily sensations interfere. Briefly, this is the reasoning against monism based on akrasia.

This argument based on akrasia is not valid in this form. Some comments have to be made in order to get the problem of akrasia clear. It can be admitted that something has to intervene between seeing what the best option is and choosing the akratic action. But it is not necessarily so that some other value has to intervene. Akratic actions although understandable, are nevertheless irrational actions, one could for example, point to some rather common psychic defect. It is not without reason that it is weakness of will, which is in a particular way irrational and not to be admired. Hence it is not clear at all what akrasia has to do with monism.

The real problem will become clear if it is recognised that within monism there is never genuine choice at all. With genuine choice is meant a choice between alternatives which are both attractive in their own way. Was there merely one value, a maximiser could not describe choices as choices at all. Only the best would be attractive, there would not be any genuine choice. The alternatives bearing less than the maximum of value are not really alternative options, and if the alternative options are equivalent the differences don’t matter and there is no genuine choice either. So the problem pointed to by akrasia is not akrasia and its irrationality, but concerns differences in the attractiveness of actions. It is even more clearly seen in far more common situations of choice and deliberation which do not concern irrational actions. The reason why akratic actions call for pluralism also show why the more common cases of genuine choice, even if there is no conflict of reason, call for pluralism.

So far, it is still not yet shown that akratic actions require pluralism. That is not by chance, because it cannot be shown. If some other way than maximisation of the monistic value is agreed to be possible, for example a satisficing theory, then akratic actions can be accounted for within
monism. The akratic action could be considered to be just satisfying while an alternative would be judged to be better or even best. Deviating from the maximisation view will not require pluralism for explaining akrasia. And as made clear by Stocker, sticking to the maximisation view is not of any help in making clear how within pluralism akrasia is explained [Stocker, 1990, p. 242 ff.].

Suppose one is a pluralist and a maximiser, then if the values in the akratic action and the alternative action that is better are not comparable, then the statement that one option is better than the akratic cannot be made seriously. On the other hand were the values comparable than the akratic action would lose its attractiveness vis-à-vis its alternative in the maximisation view. So, akrasia is not explained by pluralism either. The call for pluralism is not dependent on the phenomenon of akrasia.

**Moral conflict, genuine choice and moral pluralism**

Instead of arguing in favour of pluralism because of akrasia one can better argue for pluralism because we recognise that there are moral conflicts and genuine choice. Although as stated already, it is not true that all forms of moral conflict are impossible within monism, a limited sort of conflicts is possible. The conflicts which can be accounted for in monism, as was stated above, are those for example in which it is regretted that there were no other alternatives available than there actually were because of the imperfection of the people inhabiting this world. But we recognise there to be other forms of conflict that can be detected, even in normal reasoning in which there is genuine choice. Precisely this was seen to be impossible in monism.

Monists could argue that some more conflicts than those because of imperfect people, are possible. If there is just one value then it is not excluded that there can be a conflict about who is getting that value, or to whom it belongs, or applies. As for example in the argument to answer Williams’ argument against the perception view of ethics in which doing philosophy was the only value, there was still a conflict possible, because doing philosophy is not something merely abstractly in the air, but is linked with persons doing philosophy and it can be the case that one person doing philosophy excludes another doing the same. Conflicts can arise because the values can be linked with different people, thus a monist.

Although it seems to be a nice defence for monists, it is not a good one. It is even showing monism to be wrong. The indexicality of some value with respect to persons points immediately to the issue of a fair distribution. The question of the distribution has to be solved by invoking

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11 See p. 118 in this chapter.
12 See chapter 2 p. 49.
some other value than the indexed one. The indexed value cannot function itself as a canon for its own distribution, just because it is indexed. Some other value has to be invoked, for example equality or some other distribution relevant notion. It can even be stated that the whole idea of equality presupposes value pluralism, namely beyond the value ‘equality’, some value that has to distributed equally. In this light it is even strange that the whole discussion about the equalisandum seems to assume there to be just one equalisandum, while monism has already to be abandoned for acknowledging the ideal of equality. Returning to the possibility of conflicts for monists, it is concluded here that monists can not account for conflicts which came into existence through indexing the value. Similarly, indexing some value with respect to time and place will give the same problems as indexing with respect to persons. Summarising monism can allow for some conflicts but not for genuine choice and moral conflicts resulting from conflicts of reasons. But what do these conflicts and genuine choices show? How should they be described?

Reflecting on what monism is missing, namely the capacity of making moral conflicts and genuine choice intelligible, leads to realising there is lack of so-called desiderative structure, a term used by Pettit. Pettit uses this term in order to indicate some defects in decision theory as a full theory of explanation of actions. Like decision theory in which that action is to be chosen which maximises expected utility, monism explains that an action has to be chosen by citing: ‘It is the best’. But this explanation is hardly an explanation because an option is necessarily taken to be best if it is chosen, just as in decision theory it is necessarily the option with the maximum of expected utility. The reason why remains obscure.

Within monism actions are seen as bearing one value and all other properties are not relevant for deliberation and choice. Only being a bearer of a particular amount of that value is interesting. So, any explanation in virtue of what an action is seen as good is missing. But this reasoning is defective because in our daily life we do deliberate on actions and evaluate them because of their particular properties. They are right or wrong in virtue of

\[13\] This recognised by Parfit in [Parfit, 1989].

\[14\] Stocker argues that differences in time are mostly differences in the composition of some good and so contradicting value monism according to which composition does not matter at all. It matters much if someone has a desert, say ice, after dinner or between the aperitif and the soup. The whole meal changes, it is not merely a matter of time. In this way time does matter and a change in the ordering of time changes the whole good and the whole value of some complex good. Here too indexicality will involve pluralism, because of the change of the whole meal by permutating the parts of a meal in a different order, the value is changed. There is not one good indexed to times but there is some value consisting of the whole complex, just as was seen to be the case in the issue on distribution resulting from indexing the value to persons [Stocker, 1990, p. 250-260].
something. And this something is the reason for considering the action as desirable or not. In virtue of these properties actions are further deliberated about or not. Those properties matter and are not merely the bearer of the single value reflecting for example the value ‘to be performedness’.

Apart from repairing the lack of reasons for choice by this deliberative structure Pettit argues also in favour of this structure because it can explain why in attitudinal propositional contexts different descriptions of the same action cannot simply be substituted without altering its truthvalue. For example if telling a certain lie in a particular situation happens to be the same action as saving someone’s life, then the description of saving a life cannot be substituted simply by the description telling a lie. ‘I am happy to have saved a life’ is not similar to ‘I am happy to have told a lie’. These cases of non-substitutability show properties of actions to be relevant.

Another argument of Pettit for this desiderative structure is that choices which seem to be irrational are by considering them more precisely and acknowledging moral relevant properties, appear to be perfectly rational. For example one of the axioms for rationality is the sure thing principle meaning that if some alternative is preferred just because of the discerning properties of the alternative it is also in another situation in which it is also the discerning property. For example if you prefer a bet 1 to 2:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
20\% \text{ chance:} & 80\% \text{ chance:} \\
1: \text{ an ice cream of strawberry} & \text{liquorice} \\
2: \text{ an ice cream of vanilla} & \text{liquorice}
\end{array}
\]

then it would be strange if you did not prefer bet 3 to 4:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
20\% \text{ chance:} & 80\% \text{ chance:} \\
3: \text{ an ice cream of strawberry} & \text{a bar of chocolate} \\
4: \text{ an ice cream of vanilla} & \text{a bar of chocolate}
\end{array}
\]

Of course independent of what is won in the 80% chance case, you prefer strawberry ice to vanilla. So the sure thing principle is formulated as a rule of rationality.

Consider now the following example from Diamond, in which you prefer distributing some good by lottery to giving it directly to one of to persons Mary or John. This would be irrational. Because if you prefer bet 1 to 2:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{head:} & \text{tail:} \\
1: \text{ Mary wins} & \text{John wins} \\
2: \text{ John wins} & \text{John wins (John gets it whatsoever)}
\end{array}
\]

then you should, following the sure thing principle, prefer 3 to 4:
But because of fairness, you introduced the lottery and you just prefer 1 to 2 and 4 to 3. The properties of the options are relevant, not only the bare options characterised by their abstract formal structure. Desiderative structure in which properties of options play an important role, is proposed by Pettit to complement decision theory.

In the desiderative structure, actions are judged in virtue of their properties, which means generally being good qua action being of a particular type say $\alpha$ instead of good simpliciter. This makes much more conflicts possible than allowed for by monism. It also makes genuine choice possible. In this view, an action can be called prima facie desirable because it has some features. Conflicts can arise if an action is simultaneously prima facie desirable and prima facie undesirable, i.e. if there is a reason why it would be good to perform the action and a reason why it would be good to forego the action. But this should be carefully stated.

What does prima facie good mean? An action of type $\alpha$ being prima facie right could mean that if about some action it is only known to be of type $\alpha$, it should be chosen. Similarly, prima facie wrong because of being of type $\beta$ means that if the action is only known to be of type $\beta$, it should not be chosen. This is a hint to the right meaning of prima facie but it is not capturing the idea of prima facie correctly. Stated in this way it is an epistemological concept.

Against this epistemological interpretation Jackson states that if one knows that a certain action is wrong in general, and chooses that action and in the particular circumstances foreseen by the agent with some degree of reliability, it turned out to be right then there is no moral conflict. There are no traces which we are familiar with in conflicts, although this action was considered as prima facie wrong, because the knowledge of the badness in general and ignorance of the particular circumstances should have lead to abstaining from that action. The situation is more like being told that some action is wrong and someone else telling you it is right. But this epistemological problem is different from the genuine moral problem, which is not merely epistemological, because in these some traces remain if an action has to be done which is bad in some way. It is not like the reasoning about Tweety that in learning that Tweety is a bird and a penguin something of the capacity of flying remains, the whole idea of the capacity of flying is cancelled by learning Tweety is a penguin. It is different with moral conflicts, there traces do remain. If you save a life by lying, it still remains true although the actions was right, that it had something regrettable,
namely that it was a lie. Thus compensation of the lack of some good in some option is compensation and not just compensation in kind as in the principle of compensation in kind. But if this epistemological meaning of prima facie is not right, how should prima facie be explained?

One could argue that some action is called prima facie right (or wrong), if it is right (wrong) if all other things considered the same, the action would be better, (worse). The action would be considered prima facie better in virtue of some property $\alpha$ if in comparing the state of the world in which all other valuable aspects remain independently the same, the option with $\alpha$ would make it better. In itself this cannot be of help to explain moral conflicts, because there is nothing said about the relation between the judgements based on a property in situations in which the other aspects are kept the same and judgements of situations in which these others aspects are varied too. Moral universalism as was seen in the introduction, would be a natural answer. $\alpha$ being better than $\neg \alpha$ means that under all conditions $C$ in which all other aspects were kept constant $(C, \alpha)$ is better than $(C, \neg \alpha)$. Thus in every context an action which lacks $\alpha$ lacks something which an action with $\alpha$ does not lack. This reasoning using separability of values as in moral universalism, can help to account for moral conflict and genuine choice. But now we have a problem because this account contradicts moral particularism. Moral conflicts are now accounted for, but in a way not consistent with moral particularism.

So far, it has been argued that moral conflict and genuine choice demand moral pluralism. Without pluralism there would be a lack of what Pettit called desiderative structure. In this structure actions are judged by their properties that refer to the idea of being prima facie right or wrong. But the idea of being prima facie right or wrong seems to be based on moral universalism. So, the question is now: how to account for moral conflicts and genuine choice accepting moral pluralism in a way that is consistent with moral particularism?

Moral conflict, genuine choice and moral particularism

At a first glance it seemed that particularism would be consistent with pluralism which can account for moral conflict. By indexing the values to the particular situations pluralism seemed to be the result; choosing not in the

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15 This difference between epistemological conflict and moral conflict is described by Hurley in [Hurley, 1989, p. 130 ff.]. Pro tanto reasons do not cancel each other completely because they grew from different reasoning systems each with its own central value. Also Dancy argues that there is a difference between moral conflicts and epistemological conflicts in his argument against induction as a way of arriving at moral knowledge [Dancy, 1983].

16 See p. 117.
light of more of some abstract value called 'friendship', but between this or that friendship. Because of this indexing to particular situations the desiderative structure dissolves and only the value seen in the relation 'better to be performedness' remains, which cannot allow for conflicts. Actions were merely bearers of this value 'to be performedness'. It appeared subsequently that other reasons for actions invoke moral universalism by taking the judgements in situations in which all other aspects were kept constant but the property $\alpha$, to be relevant for situations in which these other aspects $C$ are different. But moral particularism denied this reasoning to be valid. It is denied that judgements in situations in which other aspects were held constant can be applied directly to situations in which they are different. There seems to be a dilemma: either being a pluralist and being capable of accounting for moral conflicts but accepting moral universalism, or being a particularist but not being capable to account for conflicts. How to solve this?

Moral particularism denies that if something is a reason, or is valuable in one situation it is necessarily a reason or valuable in any other situation. But moral particularism cannot of course, on the cost of becoming senseless, deny that what is important in one situation can be important in an other. Judgements in different situations are of course related to each other. If this was denied, then a disastrous fragmentation of value and meaning was implied. Nothing intelligible was possible any longer. Even a simple description of situations would become impossible. By describing situations, situations are compared to each other. If the terms used in descriptions would have different meanings in different situations, we would loose sense of meaning, whether it concerns moral or non-moral terms.

Terms, whether they are moral or non-moral, have to be interpreted as is stated by Davidson's radical interpretation view on language. They get their meaning through interpretation for which the principle of charity was indispensable. We assume we live in the same world. Similarly, we can see this principle to be important for interpreting what is said in different situations by ourselves or by others. We can consider each speaker to be particularised to situations. Once this is realised, the principle of charity will care for the relation between moral judgements in different situations. The principle of charity means that in interpreting we should take the other or the indexed other as similar as ourselves in our situations, assuming we see the same things, we care about similar things etc. Otherwise, we could not understand what was said. This was not a choice up to us, but we do, otherwise we would be solipsists not capable of understanding others, not even ourselves. Does this mean that radical interpretation and the principle of charity do imply moral universalism? No, it does not.
Moral universalism holds that a reason in one situation is necessarily a reason in any other too. Moral particularism does not deny that a reason can be a reason in some other situation, but it is denied to be necessarily so. It could have been different, it all depends on the situation. In one it is a reason, in another it is not. The principle of charity does not imply that in all interpretations there should be the same similarities as basis for interpretation. They can be different. In for example contexts of politics, social inequality is seen to be an important value in another for example in dangerous situations, safety will be a most important value. Some situations are seen as mainly determined by the context of politics and some by the context of danger, rescue and survival. Here the idea of moral vision can be of help. Moral particularism will not deny there is some relation between judgements in different situations, but it denies the necessary character of it. It is not said that one can do without common reasons. It can be held that in every comparison or description there are some common values or reasons, but it can be denied that there is some set of reasons or values necessarily the same in all. So, it is admitted that for all limited sets of situations there is a set of common reasons and values, but not that there is one set of common rules for all sets of situations.

The recourse to moral universalism in order to account for moral conflicts was premature. Judgements in one situation can be relevant for other situations, and this is sufficient. Moral universalism was not necessary. It is sufficient that it is acknowledged that there are relations between judgements in different situations. In contrast to the moral universalist, who does not even recognise the problem, the particularist has of course to answer the question how we know in which situations some reasons are relevant and in which not. The answer has to be found in epistemology. In the second chapter a coherenst view was argued for, according to which something is knowledge if it fits in more properly with other things already known than its alternative, whether it concerns moral or non-moral knowledge. Moral perception will play a role. By the question 'How do we know when

\[17^A\] A rather popular idea that the adjustment that the importance of the reasons can vary is inconsistent. If reasons are important in all situations than that is also valid for the reasons for a particular weighing of these reasons. Consequently, different weights are not possible, because that would require different reasons applying to the situations. Non-monotone reasoning could be a way out but it does not save moral universalism as was argued in chapter 2 p.33.

\[18^A\] In order to preclude some misunderstandings namely that all situations are to be considered as similar, we should bear in mind that this is not implied, just as the principle of charity does not imply there are no differences between people. It is acknowledged that there are differences and that people have different wants, but in order to discern these differences, one has to assume a lot of similarity. Similarly, situations differ but in order to discern the differences it has to be assumed that they have a lot in common.
reasons are relevant and not?', it should not expected to find a general rule which can be applied as a kind of algorithm. As was explained in the previous chapters such an algorithm is not likely to be found as explained by coherentism and particularism.19

Summarising, moral particularism can account for conflicts by accepting that judgements in different situations can be related to each other, i.e. one reason in one situation is relevant for another. Although it is admitted that it is necessarily so that some judgements are related to each other in different situations, without these relationships there would even no sensible descriptions possible, it is denied that these judgements are necessarily related in this way. The dilemma, either accounting for conflicts but losing moral particularism or keeping particularism but not being able to account for moral conflict, can be solved by realising it is not a genuine dilemma. We can accept moral pluralism within a particularistic framework.

4.3 Equalisanda instead of one equalisandum

So far, I argued in favour of moral pluralism meaning that there are more values than one. I have shown that the arguments for monism based on the narrow view on morality, that it has to be action-guiding, and the idea that comparability implies one value, are not valid. Furthermore, I argued that monism is defective because it cannot account for moral conflicts and even not for genuine choice. It was shown that monism lacks a desiderative structure. So moral value pluralism is a more promising starting point in developing ideas about the equalisandum or even better, equalisanda. Value pluralism suggests already that there are more equalisanda than just one, contrary to what is assumed in the discussion on the proper equalisandum.

In the discussion on the proper equalisandum, ingenious examples are constructed to show that some particular equalisandum is not the proper one. For example, in arguing that well-being cannot be the proper equalisandum, it is argued that it would lead to a strange distribution if some person was only happy by eating caviar and living in a palace, and someone else was as well-off as the former in his best days, by just sitting in front of his little house, some piece of straw between his lips, looking at the sea extending before him. The former would get too much of the resources than would be fair, and it is argued consequently that well-being cannot be the proper equalisandum but that resources are. Against the latter view that being a resource is the defining characteristic of the equalisandum some other examples can be given. As will become clear, pluralism is of help in solving this discussion about the equalisandum.

19See chapter 2 p. 46 and chapter 3 p. 104.
CHAPTER 4. MORAL VALUE MONISM

This discussion on the proper equalisandum concerns for its most important part the incorporation of responsibility in the equalisandum. As was argued in the previous chapter, incorporating responsibility is a serious complication for the project of this thesis, i.e. an evaluation of distributions without taking into account the way they came about. Because a pattern of distribution could be the result of different choices of individuals and even by gambling, as was illustrated by the Babylonian lottery, responsibility cannot play a role in pattern principles. Responsibility poses a problem for the ideal of equality as treated in this study.

In the subsequent section, I discuss the proposals of Rawls, Dworkin and Cohen. They suggest an equalisandum in which responsibility is incorporated because as they argue, neglecting responsibility will lead to an unequal distribution. The situation in which somebody pays continually for the pleasures of his lazy incontinent neighbour represents such an unequal distribution. Thus it is argued that egalitarian ideas themselves are the basis for taking responsibility into account. These ideas can also be discovered in the debate in Holland on the health insurance, which is aimed at equal care for all. It is suggested for example by the Minister of V.W.S., Borst, that persons who are responsible for their injuries by doing sports should pay for their own treatment by physiotherapists, in order to make as much available for all as possible. I argue against these proposals in which responsibility is densely interwoven in the equalisandum. My argument is based on Scanlon’s ideas on what should be distributed equally and his ideas on responsibility. I arrive at equalisanda. This is possible because of moral value pluralism. The consequence is that the meaning of the ideal of equality has to be articulated independent from a particular equalisandum.

4.3.1 Subjective welfare as equalisandum

A well-known idea of equality is equality of welfare in which a distribution is considered to be right if everyone has reached an equal level of welfare whereby the level of welfare is determined from the point of view of each person’s own tastes and preferences. This principle assumes a subjective criterion for welfare levels. The level of welfare of a person is determined by that person himself. This idea of equality has some attractive features.

In the first place, it takes seriously the idea we met in the previous chapter, that goods are not goods simpliciter but that goods do mean something to people. And because goods do mean something to people, dealing with

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20 Algemeen Dagblad, 7-3-1995
21 See chapter 3 p. 67.
goods on their own is not sufficient for determining a fair or equal distribution.

In the second place, it takes into account a variety of tastes, interests and preferences. This feature is particularly important in a society in which there is a great diversity of values to which people are committed, as is taken to be the case in our society. It is commonly held that by turning to equality of subjective welfare, totalitarian intervention in personal development in order to reach consensual preferences can be avoided. It is held that freedom and autonomy are not necessarily overthrown by the ideal of equality of subjective welfare.

Although equality of subjective welfare is an appealing idea there are several problems. Apart from the problem of interpersonal comparisons, with which I dealt in the previous chapter, I mention two that are particularly important in the coming dispute on equalisandum:

- offensive tastes
- expensive tastes

The first objection against subjective welfare as the equalisandum holds that there is no way to exclude claims of sadists and racists for compensation if they endure for example lack of sadistic or racist pleasure. Such claims that are based on offensive tastes should not count for establishing an equal distribution. However, adherents of equality of subjective welfare have no reason to exclude these claims. The mere possibility of these offensive tastes form an objection to subjective welfare as the equalisandum.

The second objection concerns expensive tastes. It holds that it is not right according to the idea of equality, to transfer commodities from relatively poor but content people to rich people who are discontent because of their refined expensive unsatisfied desires. Again it is argued that in the idea of equality of subjective welfare there is no reason for excluding such expensive tastes and no reason to condemn such transfers. The recent discussion on the proper equalisandum was focussed on these two objections to subjective welfare.

4.3.2 Offensive and expensive tastes excluded by social ideals

One reason why offensive tastes should not be taken into account by establishing an equal distribution is that such tastes are contrary to the ideals by which they give rise to claims of compensation. Offensive tastes are excluded by the social ideals of justice. They should not be given any weight in distribution problems. It is even argued that utilitarianism based on
subjective welfare can exclude offensive tastes because such tastes are contrary to utilitarianism itself. It is better that no one has those tastes in a society considered from an utilitarian point of view [Rawls, 1971, p. 30-31]. Generalising this line of reasoning, one arrives at the idea that an ideal P using subjective welfare, can exclude tastes and preferences which are contrary to P itself. So it can restrict itself to inoffensive tastes. This formulation has a circular appearance. How to determine whether tastes and preferences are contrary to the ideal if it is not clear which tastes to include? This question however, shows merely an apparent objection. It is possible to compare the situation in which the ideal P is satisfied and in which all tastes are included with the one in which offensive tastes are not present. The latter could be better according to the ideal P, because satisfaction of those offensive tastes harm others.

For some ideals this might be the way to exclude offensive tastes, but for the ideal of equality of subjective welfare I am sceptical. Let me use the above stated method to circumvent circularity in the case of the ideal of equality of subjective welfare.

Let me compare two situations. In one situation a sadist is satisfied in his sadistic preferences and his level of subjective welfare equals that of all the others let us say \( n \) units. I assume that such a comparison is possible just for the sake of the argument. In the other situation the sadist's preferences are neglected and not satisfied altogether and his welfare is \( m \) units equally for all. Is the former worse according to equality of welfare? Of course all might be worse off, \( n < m \), because of compensation to the victims, but that is not relevant here. The question here is whether regarding the ideal of equality the former is worse? The answer is: 'No it is not.' Both situations can be considered as equivalent. In the latter the ideal of equality is just restricted to taking only inoffensive tastes into account. It could be worse for the sadist, but only in a way which is not relevant, because his sadistic preferences should be neglected. Circularitiy is not avoided by the comparison method in case of utilitarianism. However this answer is not final.

If it is acknowledged that the ideal of equality of welfare is just one among other social ideals, it is possible to exclude offensive tastes; not by the ideal of equality itself but by the combination of ideals in the way the comparison method indicates. Ideal P refers in this case to a combination of ideals. Suppose we have a combination of utilitarianism or perfectionism and equality of subjective welfare.\(^{22}\) It is possible that offensive tastes should be neglected by the ideals themselves. It is possible that by compensating the sadist for his lack of sadistic pleasures, the total amount of

\(^{22}\)See [Nagel, 1991] for what is meant here by perfectionism.
4.3. **EQUALISANDA INSTEAD OF ONE EQUALISANDUM**

welfare is lower in which case there is a reason for neglecting those tastes because it is contrary to the ideals particularly utilitarianism. Of course, in theory it remains possible that it is better to take offensive tastes into account in case the pleasures generated by offensive tastes outweigh the costs in terms of welfare of others. So offensive tastes are not definitely excluded but I believe the sting is removed from the objection that subjective welfare theories lack any reason for excluding offensive tastes. It has been shown that there can be a reason for the exclusion of offensive tastes.

Offensive tastes can be excluded by social ideals. Rawls' theory of justice, particularly his theory on primary goods can be referred to as an example. The primary goods he proposes as candidates for being the equalisandum are not affected by the problem of offensive tastes. Although the primary goods can be seen as derived from subjective welfare, offensive tastes are excluded by his social ideals even before they can get any weigh. This is demanded by his method of constructing social principles which is essentially based on reasonable morally inspired people [Rawls, 1971] [Rawls, 1985].

What about expensive tastes? The reasons why they should be excluded could be that such tastes fall within the domain of volition. Although it is not said as in volitional individualism that all preferences have their origin in a well of volitions, it is stated that moral persons have some part in forming and cultivating their final ends and preferences. It is likely the case that those with less expensive tastes have adjusted their lives and their final ends to their income or wealth that they could reasonably expect. Consequently, it is regarded as unfair that they should receive less in order to spare others from the consequences of their lack of foresight or self-discipline [Rawls, 1985, p. 168-169]. It is because of responsibility that expensive tastes should be neglected in determining equal distributions. This idea too is incorporated in Rawls' theory on primary goods. Being a primary good as defining characteristic of the equalisandum proposed by Rawls does not suffer the problems of offensive and expensive tastes.\(^{23}\)

### 4.3.3 Objective welfare as equalisandum

Are the aforementioned reasons for excluding offensive and expensive tastes because of their anti-social content and their voluntary nature respectively

\(^{23}\)To prevent misunderstandings on my description of Rawls, these objections to equality of subjective welfare are not the decisive reasons for Rawls to condemn subjective welfare theories; they are just consequences of his argumentation. His main argument for primary goods is based on the idea that primary goods are necessary conditions for realising the powers of moral persons and are all-purpose means for a sufficiently wide range of final ends of reasonable morally inspired people. These people determine the basic ideas of social justices according to Rawls.
indeed the appropriate reasons for exclusion? The former can be questioned because not all offensive tastes are anti-social; morality demands more of us than just conformity to the social moral rules. For example, the person who does not want to have any moral feelings at all has an offensive preference for being inhuman, although it is not a preference which is necessarily contrary to social moral rules. The latter can be questioned because reasons for excluding offensive tastes can be also applicable to expensive tastes and could put aside the reason based on responsibility for one’s expensive tastes.

As is said above, morality demands more from us than mere conformity to social moral rules. It suggests that offensive tastes have to be excluded directly. They are not worth to be taken into account. So, there is invoked a system of ideas by which tastes and preferences are judged as valuable or worthless. It means that the idea of equality of subjective welfare has to be abandoned and that we should use objective judgements about the importance of what goods do to people. Objective here means the contrary of subjective and refers to the basis of interpretation of preferences as explained in the previous chapters in radical interpretation and realistic individualism. Objective judgements on the level of welfare of a person means that these judgements are independent of this person’s tastes and preferences; they may even conflict with those personal tastes. Subjective judgements are not to be seen as unimportant altogether, but their value is determined by objective judgements on for example the value of freedom of choice and the value of the freedom of making mistakes. Subjective judgements are not any longer directly relevant for determining equal allocations they are relevant only via an objective evaluation.

This view is plausibly illustrated by Scanlon in taking it for granted that we judge a claim for help for building a religious monument by somebody who foregoes a decent diet for it, not a priori as strong as a claim for aid in obtaining enough to eat [Scanlon, 1975]. Someone’s own judgement on the importance of claims is not decisive. To be clear, it is not held by Scanlon that both claims, the one for help for the building and the one for obtaining food, should not count at the same degree of urgency, but it is not a priori necessarily so because of their being subjective evaluations. The degree of urgency depends on the objective value of such a religious building.

According to the view that objective welfare is the proper equalisandum offensive tastes are excluded directly by objective evaluations. Furthermore expensive tastes can be treated similarly. On the basis of those objective judgements, they do not have a high priority in a distribution problem. Contrary to Rawls’ proposal, they should not be excluded because people

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24 See for example P.F. Strawson’s article: Social morality and individual ideal.
can be held responsible for them, but because they are less urgent. That people can develop some preferences and can be held responsible for them, can be taken to mean that people can do without them; they are not necessities and so loose some of their urgency. Responsibility for preferences in itself is not a reason for rejecting claims, it is at most a sign of being not very urgent if one considers objective welfare as the equalisandum.

In short, Scanlon holds contrary to Rawls that responsibility is not densely interwoven in the tissue of egalitarian ideas, he keeps them disconnected. Scanlon’s objective judgement view is simpler. It uses only one reason for excluding offensive and expensive tastes and explains the intuition on which the former proposal for exclusion was based. Of course, this proposal has to be supplied with a theory that accounts for objective judgments. Scanlon mentions two sources for such objective judgements, ethical naturalism and conventionalism. The latter he thinks the most plausible one because in that one consensus has a morally proper place, which is denied in the former. In the preceding chapters an alternative view was presented, namely moral realism developed within a radical interpretation framework. This view can account for objective judgements, i.e. moral judgements being true just because they are true and not because someone is convinced that they are true. What about this idea of objective welfare being the proper equalisandum?

4.3.4 Resources as equalisandum

The idea presented by Scanlon immediately suggests the question: ‘How can we determine on the basis of these objective judgements whether a distribution is equal?’ This question is not easily answered. How should one compare the welfare of the optimist with the welfare of the pessimist? What about the comparison of the loss of welfare or regret because of not leading the ideal life of an ambitious person who judges his actual life hardly valuable with the regret of a less ambitious person who judges his actual life as quite reasonable. Should the ambitious man be compensated for regretting his actual life more than the less ambitious person? It is reasonable that compensation should be given, proportional to the degree of difference between people’s regret leading the actual life instead of a life which could be reasonably expected. The determination however of this reasonable expectation is impossible without assuming some distribution of resources to be reasonable. Because what kind of life is reasonable to be expected is dependent on the resources one can reasonably expect to have. So, an idea of entitlements to resources is assumed. Without such an idea no meaningful judgement on the equality of welfare is possible. This does not only hold for subjective welfare but also for objective welfare as
it appeared in Scanlon’s proposal. Dworkin states:

Any pertinent test of what someone should regret about the life he is in fact leading, even on the best rather than his own theory about what gives value to life, must rely on assumptions about what resources an individual is entitled to have at his disposal in leading any life at all [Dworkin, 1981a, p. 225].

On account of these arguments, equality of welfare, whether it concerns subjective or objective welfare, is dismissed as an adequate theory of distribution by Dworkin. The only acceptable theory of objective welfare for Dworkin is not a theory about what is valuable but consists of a list of goods including for example physical and mental competence, education and opportunities as well as material resources etc. Such a theory is a resourcist theory in welfare language. The objective judgements which satisfy the requirement that on the basis of them we can determine whether a distribution is equal, are judgements on resources, thus Dworkin.

In a resourcist view, offensive tastes and expensive tastes are not excluded because they are not judged as valuable, but because tastes and preferences should not be taken into account at all, only resources should.

The example of Dworkin concerning expensive tastes is illustrative. Suppose Louis lives in a society in which there is realised a state of equality of welfare. Now Louis is developing and growing older and happens to get the belief that it would be better for him if he adjusted his tastes and he developed some other more refined tastes which happen to be more expensive to be satisfied and he is aware of that. If they were satisfied his welfare should raise considerable but if they were not satisfied his welfare would become lower. For these new insights he can hardly be held responsible. To hold that one is responsible for what one considers to be true or valuable is at least highly questionable. Although Louis cannot be held responsible for his new insights, he is responsible for acting upon these believes i.e. developing these expensive tastes. Louis has a choice between two options:

- stay in the position he is now in and refrain from developing the expensive tastes
- develop the expensive tastes but get less enjoyment than in the status quo; so accept a lower level of welfare.

It is wrong according to Dworkin to give Louis a third option in which he develops his tastes at the costs of other persons, because this would diminish other person’s shares of resources [Dworkin, 1981a, p. 237]. Expensive tastes are excluded with an appeal to responsibility in a resourcist theory
of distribution. It suggests a tight connection between responsibility and the idea of equality of resources, because if Louis had no choice it would be appropriate to judge that the distribution was not egalitarian at all and therefore he should receive some more of the resources.

In this resourcist theory responsibility is densely interwoven with the idea of equality of resources. It becomes clearer if we follow Dworkin in his distinction between brute luck and option luck; a distinction we already met in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{25} Brute luck happens to somebody, it is not the result of a choice. An example of brute bad luck is a storm blowing off the roof of somebody’s house or lung cancer developing in the course of a normal life. Option luck, to the contrary, is the result of a voluntary undertaken action. In case of for example the loss of money in a lottery, or lung cancer after a life of heavy smoking, one has chosen an option that turned out to be an unsuccessful gamble. Brute bad luck should be compensated, optional disadvantages should not. Goods desired by one person can also be valuable to another. To keep a distribution right from an egalitarian point of view people should pay the price of the goods they voluntary desire. They should pay the price for the life they have decided to lead. This price is measured in terms of what others give up in order the former can do as they want. This idea is the basic element of equality of resources, which explains why optional disadvantages should not be compensated, but brute bad luck should [Dworkin, 1981b]. Responsibility is considered to be essential in the ideal of equality of resources. By neglecting responsibility unequal distributions will result, thus is argued by Dworkin. In this resourcist theory responsibility is densely interwoven in the idea of equality.

\subsection{Access to advantages as equalisandum}

We could wonder whether this interpretation of how well-off people are in resourcist terms, is appropriate; there are good reasons for doubt. In a recent article Cohen shows that neither welfare nor resources are the proper equalisandum but that the judgements on which the distribution should be based concern access to advantages [Cohen, 1989].

That welfare is not a proper equalisandum is shown by an example of a very well to do person who has many opportunities to welfare but suffers from a pair of paralysed legs. According to equality of welfare theories his high level of welfare is a reason for rejecting his claim for help in the form of a wheelchair. But as Cohen holds, his level of welfare has nothing to do

\textsuperscript{25}In the previous chapter I pointed already to the problems with this view, here Dworkin’s theory is cited because of the relation between responsibility and the equalisandum.
with his paralysis. It is a disadvantage such that it is right to compensate for it. So, equality of welfare is not the proper equalisandum according to Cohen.

In a similar way it is shown by an example that being a resource is not the defining characteristic of the equalisandum either. The example consists of a person who does not lack any capacities and has enough resources who can move his arms very well, but who suffers from a terrible pain after moving his arms. According to equality of resource theories this man has no claim to a medicine which could relief his pain, he does not lack any resources for which he should be compensated. To describe the person as a person lacking the capacity of moving his arms without pain is welfare talk in resourcist language and will not do. But not lacking any resources he really suffers from a disadvantage and so according to Cohen he has a claim to the medicine. Cohen concludes that the equalisandum should not be characterised by resources but by access to advantages.

The proposed characterisation of the equalisandum, access to advantages, does not suffer from the offensive tastes objection. Unsatisfied offensive preferences are not disadvantages in themselves. But contrary to the resourcist theory such tastes could count and should count if they are disadvantages like cravings and if a person would accept for example psychotherapy to get rid of them. For the costs of such a therapy he should be compensated.

How about expensive tastes? About these it is argued that they should be taken into account to the degree they are involuntary. If they are not developed freely these expensive preferences should be taken into account. In Cohen's view there is a reason for helping or for giving compensation such that expensive tastes can be satisfied but only if these tastes are not the result of a choice. If the preferences result from a choice no compensation should be given. If Paul likes photography and John likes fishing and photography happens to be more expensive then fishing, Paul should receive some compensation to the degree he is not responsible for his preferences and not responsible for the fact that satisfying these preferences is expensive. Responsibility cancels any claim on compensation. According to Cohen it is unjust and contrary to the idea of equality that people should be exploited for the pleasure of others. This would be the case if expensive tastes for which a person himself is responsible, were compensated. Exploitation is contrary to the idea of equality, responsibility is important, thus Cohen.

In the resourcist view sketched above as proposed by Dworkin, the distinction between resources and welfare, or context and person, or actual circumstances of life and ideas about what makes life valuable, is the morally important distinction. That what is the result from particular
ideas about what makes life valuable should not be compensated, only lack of resources or particular circumstances of life, or in other words the extra personal elements of the context should be compensated for. Tastes do not count, resources do. But according to Cohen this distinction is besides the point. The more fundamental distinction is between involuntary disadvantages and disadvantages which one begot as a result of one’s own choices. Dworkin’s reason for rejecting claims referring to welfare; after all these claims are based on ideas about what makes life valuable and thus on intrapersonal characteristics; are plausible in case these claims were voluntary developed. If the pessimistic and ambitious nature were voluntary begotten they should not count, but if this nature is forced upon persons they should count, thus Cohen.

In short, Cohen holds that we should take only involuntary disadvantages into account. As a consequence it is not against equality to help a person building a religious building if he is not responsible for having this particular belief. It is not against equality even if we do not endorse the value of the particular religious believe. It is however a different matter if the person because of this particular religious belief has to suffer for building the monument and that suffering is part of his religious commission. In that case the suffering is so intrinsically connected with his religious project that it is hardly defensible that he should be compensated for his suffering. Cohen holds that the equalisandum is access to advantages, which demands compensation for those disadvantages which are not due to the subject’s choice and which the subject would not choose to suffer. The last part of the circumscription is because of the example in which the suffering of the person is an inherent element of his project by which he suffers and which should not be compensated.

In Cohen’s line of reasoning responsibility is decisive for the compensation demanded by equality. It is given a central role in the idea of equality, but is it a right role? Isn’t it strange that egalitarianism should lean so heavily on such a complex notion as responsibility by which metaphysics about free will and determinism is introduced in questions of political philosophy? Cohen does not believe this to be a reason for rejecting his proposal. If equality is complex we should not deny that complexity. Furthermore he assures us that the question of free will or choice is a matter of degree. In a footnote he refers to Scanlon’s Tanner lecture: The significance of choice, in which free will and choice is treated in a non-metaphysical way. He wonders whether Scanlon’s approach can be used to improve a theory of distribution à la Dworkin. As will be made clear below, it cannot be used as such. On the contrary, it offers further support for theories of equality in which responsibility is not densely interwoven.
4.3.6 Equalisanda

The idea that responsibility determines what should be compensated is illustrated in the discussions by examples about big spenders, lazy persons, people with irrational or even immoral desires, in short examples in which the actions are not very praiseworthy. Bad actions, or irrational actions, do raise the question of responsibility in a particular way, but one should not forget that if the notion of responsibility is applicable at all, it is certainly applicable to rational actions, actions which are performed because of good reasons [Strawson, 1986, p. 33]. Actions that are morally right belong to this category and if we are responsible at all, we are at least responsible for morally right actions. By shifting our attention from examples with irrational and immoral actions to actions which are morally praiseworthy, it is illuminated that responsibility is losing its important role in determining the equalisandum. Let us look at an example with a morally right action with disadvantages for its performer in which, in my opinion, the claim on compensation for the disadvantage is not forfeited because of responsibility.

Suppose you are walking alongside a canal in an expensive suit that you lent from a neighbour because of some important event. A child playing near the canal falls into the water and it appears the child is not able to swim. You jump into the water knowing your suit will be spoilt for ever and you should pay for that. The reason you jumped into the canal is part of a particular morality in which saving children from drowning has some place. This morality was not installed in you; you developed it voluntary. Your jump was not a reflex. You jumped into the water to save the child in full awareness the suit would be spoilt; you realised you could not have jumped into it, but then the child would have been drowned, a result which is considered to be awful in the morality you developed for yourself.

As the disadvantage of spoiling the suit is clearly traceable to a choice; the disadvantage itself was of course not chosen, it was not part of the project of saving the child; compensation is not demanded by equality according to Cohen's proposal. The same goes for Dworkin's proposal in which the distinction between option luck and brute luck is relevant here. However I do not believe these judgements are reasonable. Should this saviour's disadvantage not even be partly compensated, merely because of his choice to jump?

One could argue that compensation is reasonable not because of the idea of equality but because morally right actions should be awarded and not be punished. Morally right actions should be stimulated by awards. By refusing any compensation one will probably destroy the willingness to perform morally right actions. And thus the example above does not show that compensation is required by the idea of equality. This view,
which I call the award view, has to compete with another view, which I call the possibility to a normal life view, which can be considered to be finally more in the line of ideas of those who argue in favour of the central role of responsibility in the ideal of equality. The latter view is based on arguments for compensation because of equality that is embedded within moral realism.

The man in the example, who jumps in the water, is like the man who is able to move his arms but suffers from pain afterwards. The man in the latter case can freely move his arms so he could hold them relaxed in which case he does not suffer pain. In this case too the disadvantage is traceable to a subject’s choice, not in the sense that he chose the pain but in the sense that he could avoid it. Similarly, a morally right action with consequential disadvantages is voluntary undertaken although the disadvantages are not chosen at all. Having pain after moving one’s arm is a disadvantage just as the bad consequences after a morally right action is a disadvantage. It suggests that we should care about capabilities that people have. Some of them should be cared for in the sense that they should be possible for all equally. Some activities such as morally right ones we see as valuable and should not be denied to some people because the risk of disadvantages following such actions is too costly for them to bear. Some activities should be possible for all. If it is admitted for morally valuable actions why not for many more?

There are many more actions that can be seen as valuable that bring with them a risk of disadvantages. These disadvantageous consequences are not chosen. The probability distribution on the possible consequences is not under control of agents. They would of course prefer doing the action without any risk of disadvantages. But in all those cases the disadvantages are seen as the result of voluntary undertaken actions and should according to the ideas in which responsibility determines the equalisanda, not be compensated.

The example of saving the child shows that it is not right to deny compensation for disadvantages resulting from voluntary undertaken actions because they are voluntary begotten. Responsibility does not have the role it has been given. This is also illuminated by the example of the person suffering pain after moving his arms and the person suffering lung cancer which develops in the course of his normal life. The lung cancer in the course of a normal life is considered by Dworkin as brute bad luck in contrast to a life in which one smoked heavily which is considered to be optional bad luck. In other words, it is the result of an unsuccessful gamble. What count as a

\[\text{26A similar line of reasoning can be discerned in Van Parijs' argument for real liberalism, in which the essence of liberalism has to be concentrated on protecting real possibilities instead of formal opportunities.}[\text{Van Parijs, 1991b, p. 156,184}] [\text{Van Parijs, 1995}].\]
normal life is of course determined by what we consider to make life valuable. The ideas on what is valuable are necessarily presupposed. They are the more fundamental ones. Without these, the distinction between bad luck and option luck is impossible to understand and similarly the point of Cohen's examples is difficult to apprehend.

The examples which are meant to show the importance of responsibility for equality are apparently convincing because the actions undertaken are not praiseworthy or valuable or necessary for the development of a normal life. They are irrational, bad and they do not deserve to be cared for. It would be even better if they were not done at all. It is certainly not according the idea of equality to care for an equal possibility to do these bad actions. For many other actions it is different and they are components of a valuable way of life.

The actions which are a component of a valuable way of life, should be the subject of our concern. These should be available for all because they are worthwhile. That what is valuable for people is also worthwhile to be distributed equally. These considerations lead me to the suggestion that possibilities to perform actions, to effectuate choices, or to enjoy situations are the proper candidates for equalisanda. One could call these liberties. These should be equalised. Liberties are those choices, actions and possibilities that are considered to be valuable; they are the normal elements of a person's life and so in a sense necessities for a normal way of life. That they are valuable is the reason that they should be possible for all. Because of that, they are subsumed under the name of liberties and not the other way round. We should care that they are equalised. Something is an equalisandum in virtue of being valuable and not because of a special characteristic. Because of moral value pluralism we can conclude there are equalisanda instead of one equalisandum.

A consequence of the view that what is valuable is also an equalisandum is that responsibility has some role in equality but merely a secondary role. It is not a decisive role, its role is dependent on the judgement on the value of choice and responsibility and on some idea about in what degree someone should suffer from his wrong actions as a kind of punishment in order to discourage these actions. But why prefer this view to the alternative which I called the award view in which disadvantages that are morally praiseworthy should be compensated because such praiseworthy actions should not be discouraged? There are some arguments in favour of the former.

As was stated above, all the interpretations of the examples that are meant to point to the importance of responsibility given by Cohen and

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27See chapter 6 p. 199 for the idea in accord with moral realism: what is valuable for me is valuable for you too.
Dworkin need some assumption on what is valuable in life and what counts as a normal life. One element of a normal life is of course the possibility of performing right actions. Compensation should be given not because good action should be awarded but because they are an element of a normal life in this world. This was the possibility to a normal life view.

In the award view responsibility forfeits any claim on compensation for disadvantages due to one’s own choices but this does not comply with the idea that one wrong choice should not have such harsh consequences. By applying the award interpretation, the natural jungle would be replaced by the social jungle. One liberty that looks important to me is the liberty to make some mistakes. A world in which everybody is neurotically anxious avoiding mistakes and in which every mistake results in a disadvantage, is awful. There should be some liberty for performing mistakes. How much depends on our view on that matter. The idea that responsibility cancels compensation for disadvantages is not at all an adequate view on equality.

The final argument in favour of the possibility to a normal life view against the award view is derived from Scanlon’s treatment of responsibility in his Tanner lecture: *On the significance of choice*. An example mainly due to Scanlon can be used to make the point clear.

Suppose some area is seriously polluted. The material is planned to be removed and some precautions have to be taken because during this work some material will be dispersed into the open air. If somebody inhales the material he will get pulmonary problems. So, everybody should stay inside his home; the doors and windows should be closed. Those living in the neighbourhood are warned by television, radio and newspapers. Of course it is inevitable that some people are affected by a pulmonary disease because they were outside their home during the cleaning of the area.

- One person did not receive any message about the danger; he didn’t know anything about the removal. On the evening of the dangerous work he left his home as he did every evening.

- Another person is very curious and did not believe the seriousness of the warnings. He left his home in order to see how this piece of work was done.

- A third person went outside after he weighed the reasons of pro and con thereby taking the risk of a pulmonary disease into account and judged his going outside to be rational.

- A fourth was used to go for a walk but had just forgotten the warnings.

- The fifth saw the other persons and ran outside to warn them and probably prevented some more pulmonary damage to the victims.
All those described above did leave their home voluntary by their own choice, no one was forced. The pulmonary problems are traceable to choice. Is this really the reason of forfeiture of compensation if there is one. Should they pay for their own treatment really? Why do we not argue that we should acknowledge that we are small minded, strangely curious and very often distracted as in the case of the first, second and fourth person? Should we really think these features as worthless? Should it not be reasonable to pay for the treatment then? But consider the rational and the heroic types, should not we compensate for their disadvantages? Are rational and virtuous actions not valuable? Of course they are. The conclusion must be that responsibility does not forfeit the right to compensation. If that would be the case, all persons should pay for their own treatment. All should bear the costs of their choice alike. That is, I believe, contrary to the idea of equality in which what is valuable called liberties, should be equalised and the compensation for disadvantages resulting from these liberties form claims to compensations of which the urgency depends on the liberty that was executed and the liberty that as a result of that action is threatened.

To be clear, I will not deny that the history of liberties exhibiting the way a particular situation came about is not important, it is. It shows the other liberties, which if we should not compensate, would be threatened otherwise. But to what extend its history and responsibility should be influencing the claims on compensation depends on the value of all the liberties at hand. Looking once again at the lazy neighbour for whom all the pleasures were paid by the work of others, indeed there is inequality. However it is not simply restored by refusing to pay for the pleasure of that lazy man. There is inequality in the relevant liberties, which are: the liberty to enjoy pleasure and the liberty to enjoy leisure. Which inequality is more important depends on the urgency of these liberties. The pleasure of the neighbour to which is pointed, is a too abstract term for a sensible judgement on the urgency. All these liberties do not make equality simpler but if equality is complex in this way. let it be so. To acknowledge this complexity is better than using simple slogans in which an appeal to responsibility is used to prevent people to be compensated and to prevent care for their liberties to which they have according to egalitarian ideas a reasonable claim.

Summarising, it was argued that responsibility is not densely interwoven with the idea of equality. The reason that it seemed to be came from one-sided examples in which only irrational actions were the causes of disadvantages. But once one turns to rational actions with disadvantageous consequences it becomes clear that responsibility for a disadvantage does not forfeit a claim to compensation for it.
It was suggested that what is valuable should be available for all are
the equalisanda. These are called liberties, they are liberties to certain
actions or activities or enjoying situations. The importance of these liberties
determines how much they count in distribution problems. Because of a
plurality of values there is a plurality of liberties, consistent with moral
value pluralism. There is a plurality of equalisanda. It will give rise to the
idea of several ideals of equality each for its own equalisandum or liberty.
Equality concerning the more urgent liberties weigh of course more than
those of the less urgent.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, the third of the three background assumptions of the ideal
of equality was discussed. It was argued that monism was not tenable. First
it was seen that the reasons for monism were not sound. The assumption
of ethics to be concerned solely with action-guiding judgements was not
right. Furthermore, a complete ordering does not imply that there is one
supervalue. And even if such a value was postulated, this value was seen
to be not of any help in deciding what to do, because it is representing the
results of deliberation. It was mentioned that the whole idea of equality
actually presupposes moral pluralism, because there is a difference between
the value of a distribution and the value distributed in that distribution.
Subsequently, it was shown that monism is unsatisfactory because it can-
not account for moral conflict and genuine choice. Pluralism could account
for these, but in a more complex way than one expect at first sight. Par-
ticularism had to be stated in a way such that it does not mean that no
judgement is related to any other in other situations as would be held in
the most extreme denial of moral universalism. Pluralism could account
for conflicts and genuine choice within a particularistic framework if it is
acknowledged that there are relationships between judgements in different
situations. These judgements are not necessarily so related in all situations.

After arguing in favour of moral pluralism within a moral particularistic
framework, I turned to the problem of the equalisandum. Pluralism was
seen to be of help in establishing equalisanda which could be subsumed un-
der the name of liberties. It was shown that the reasons for incorporating
responsibility into the equalisandum were based on a myopic view, only ex-
amples in which morally wrong actions were looked at in arguing that some
good had not to be given to someone. Once these morally wrong actions
were substituted by morally right actions the examples were loosing their
force, indicating that responsibility was not the main reason for denying
compensation. Real possibilities for valuable actions or experiences with-
out bearing disadvantages that others do not suffer from were introduced as equalisanda. They were called liberties. Consistent with particularism one could say that in a particular situation with a distribution problem particular liberties of several persons are important. For example in political contexts this will be political power, in situations of acute danger this will be chances of being rescued and survive, instead of political power.

A consequence of this view on equalisanda especially its denial of the inherent link with responsibility is that evaluations of distributions remain applicable without taking their history into account. It was argued in the previous chapter, that in case responsibility had to be incorporated, procedural evaluations or historically based principles were inevitable. By taking these liberties as equalisanda one can end the discussion on the proper equalisandum. The end-state evaluations as in pattern principles of distributions remain possible. How to evaluate distributions regarding the ideal of equality is discussed in subsequent chapters.

So far, I have only introduced moral realism, realistic individualism and moral value pluralism as alternatives to the traditional background assumptions. Proceeding with the articulation of the ideal of equality in the second part of this study is possible after I end this part on the new framework in the next chapter by answering the criticisms to moral realism as basis for the ideal of equality.

\footnote{See chapter 3 p. 89.}