

REASONS, BLAME, AND COLLECTIVE HARMS

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Do you have a climate-change-related reason to refrain from going for a leisure drive in a gas-guzzling car? And do you have a reason not to take a shortcut across a beautiful lawn in case the lawn will be ruined if enough people cross it? Questions like these are not easy to answer. On the one hand, it seems that you have such reasons since acting in the relevant way contributes to a bad outcome. On the other, it seems that you lack such reasons since your particular act makes no difference to the outcome. Climate change will occur just the same whether you go for a leisure drive or not, and the lawn will look just the same whether you cross it or not.

Building on contemporary accounts of causation, this book suggests an account of outcome-related reasons that can explain both kinds of intuitions. The different kinds of intuitions stem from different perspectives. It is argued that the first perspective according to which you have an outcome-related reason to act in the relevant way often is the more correct one. In addition to giving intuitively correct verdicts about what reasons you have in collective harm cases like these, the suggested account can explain our intuitions about reasons in pre-emption cases, overdetermination cases, switching cases, omission cases, Frankfurt-style cases, the difficult case of the thirsty traveller, and more.

Besides giving an account of outcome-related reasons, this book also gives a corresponding account of when you are blameworthy for an action, omission or outcome. In doing so, it connects three different debates, the one on collective harms, the one on causation, and the one on moral responsibility, and does so in new and illuminating ways.