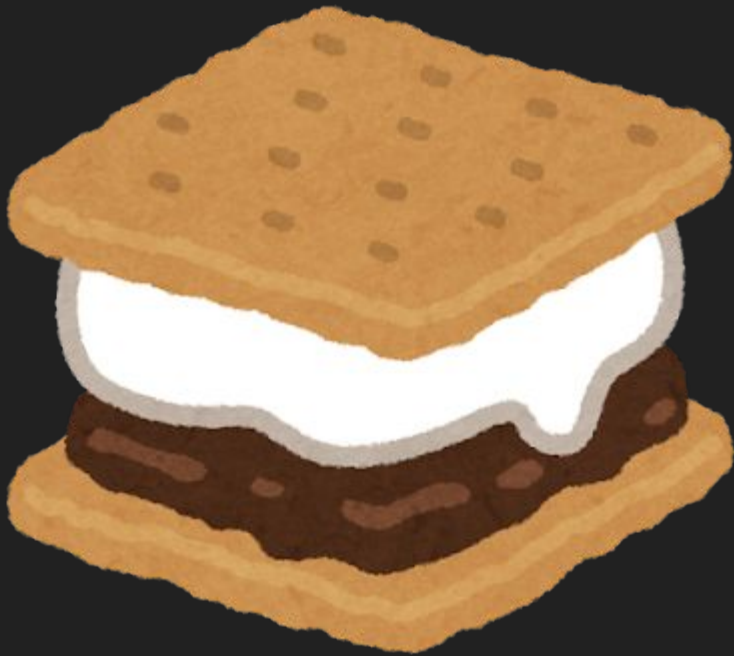


Hard Choice

On what makes choices hard...

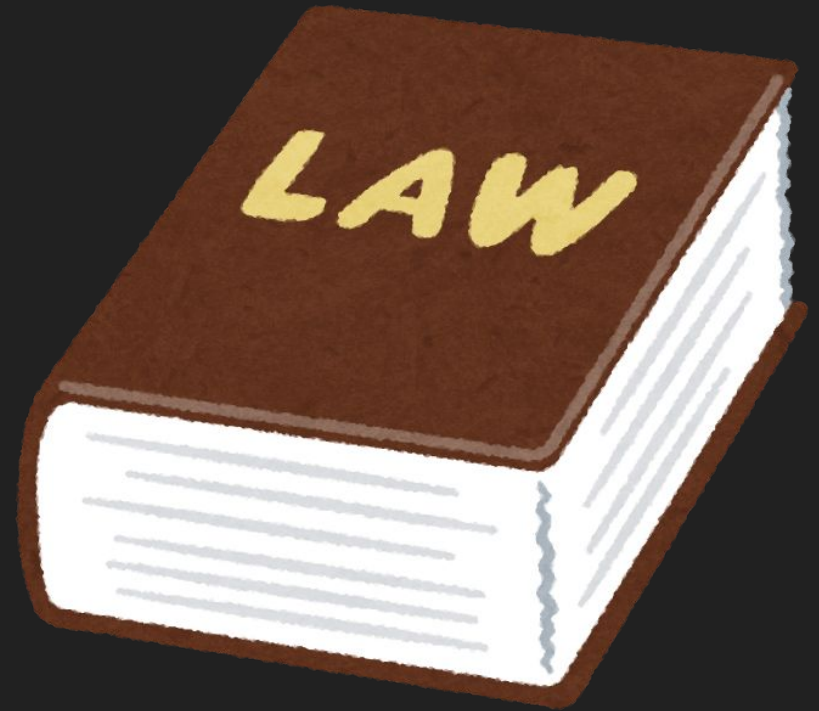
So... What are some examples of hard choices?



So... What are some examples of hard choices?



↑ I mean philosophy



So... What are some examples of hard choices?



Are they hard choices to make?

Ruth Chang, 2017, Hard Choices

She also had a Ted Talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GQZuzIdeQQ>

How to make hard choices | Ruth Chang



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1,862,663 views Jun 18, 2014

Here's a talk that could literally change your life. Which career should I pursue? Should I break up – or get married?! Where should I live? Big decisions like these can be agonizingly difficult. But that's because we think about them the wrong way, says philosopher Ruth Chang. She offers a powerful new framework for shaping who we truly are.

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Are they hard choices to make?

What makes choices hard to make?

- Ignorance?
- Incommensurability?
- Incomparability?

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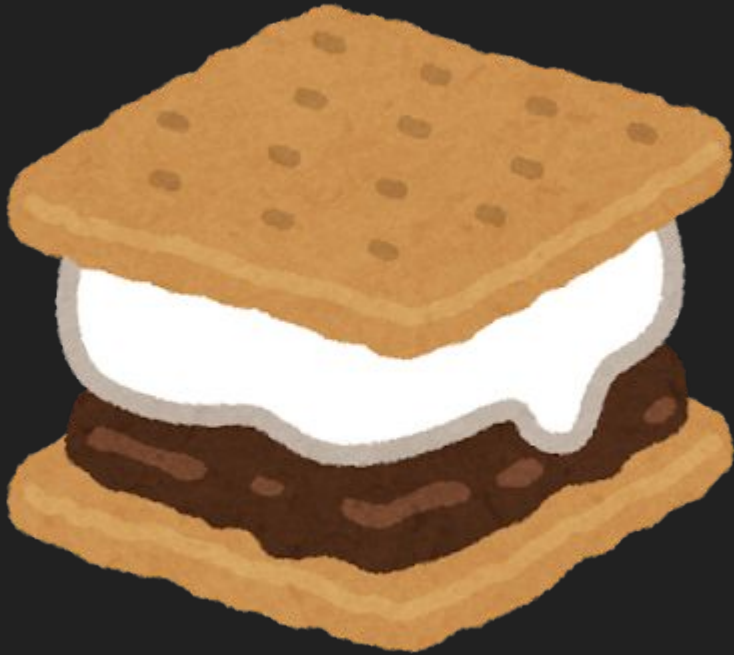
Parity - two options are on a par.

What's the further implication of Parity then?

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Ignorance: reasons run out as we cannot know the full picture.

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Three relationship:

A is better than B

A is worse than B

A is equally as good as B



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Small improvement argument:

P1: A is no better than B

P2: A is not worse than B

P3: A + is better than A

P4: A+ is not better than B

C: A is not equally as B



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

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And it seems like when making decisions, we are only **practically certain** over most situations.

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And it seems like when making decisions, we are only **practically certain** over most situations

Higher the stake, less likely we are certain



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

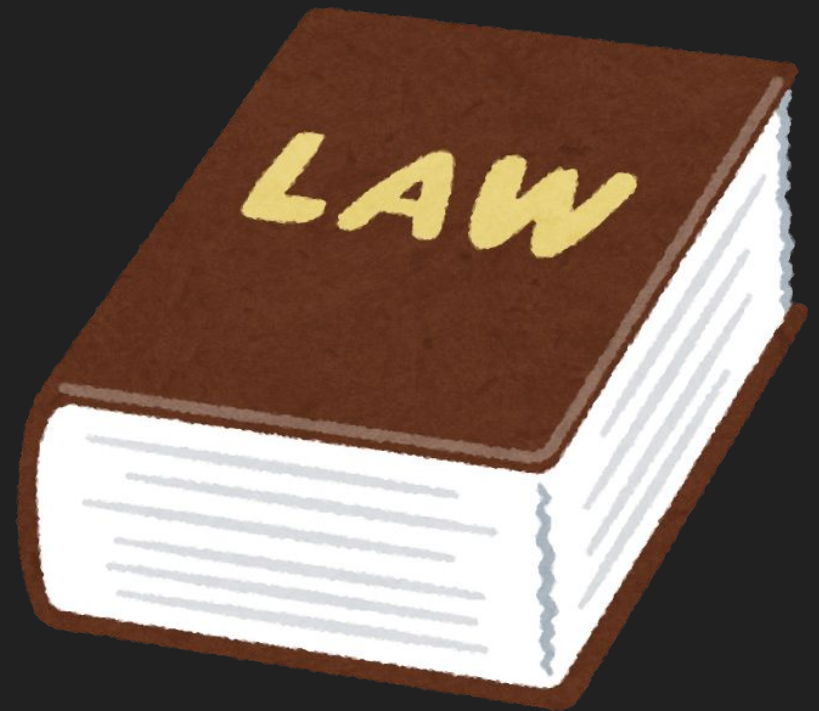
Incommensurability

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incommensurability: Our reason runs out as there is no common measure in value

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incommensurability: Our reason runs out as there is no common measure in value



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

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Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

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"if the alternatives—or reasons for and against choosing them—cannot be normatively ranked, then how could we rationally choose between them?"

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Three-fold arguments

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

1:

We are rational agents (or at least exercising our rational agency)

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

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If A and B have fundamentally incomparable qualities, A and B cannot be normatively ranked.

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Either choosing A or B will be **irrational**.

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We are rational agents (or at least exercising our rational agency)

If A and B have fundamentally incomparable qualities, A and B cannot be normatively ranked.

Either choosing A or B will be **irrational**.

And this is against the common fact that one could have more reason to choose one over the other, even in front of hard choices.

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

2:

We understand that our practical responses have to match the evaluative relation.

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If A is worse than B, then it's rational to choose B over A.

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We understand that our practical responses have to match the evaluative relation.

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If A is equally as good as B, then it's rational to pick (even randomly) A or B.

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If A is equally as good as B, then it's rational to pick (even randomly) A or B.

However,

If A is not comparable to B, then it would be **irrational** to choose (plump) either.

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

3:

When we say, A is not worse than B.

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When we say, A is not worse than B.

It's possible that we conclude that based on A and B are incomparable (rather than based on evaluative relationship)

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

3:

When we say, A is not worse than B.

It's possible that we conclude that based on A and B are incomparable (rather than based on evaluative relationship)

When this happens, we cannot make rational choice between the A and B, even we say A is not worse than B.

Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

Counter - 1:



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

Counter - 1:

Pear and watermelon are incomparable to each other.

But if you want pear rather than watermelon at the moment,



Why these are not the reason why choices are hard

Incomparability: reason runs out when we can't achieve "all-things-considered"

Counter - 1:

Pear and watermelon are incomparable to each other.

But if you want pear rather than watermelon at the moment,

It still can be rational to pick pear over watermelon.

Based on the fact that you want pear.



But how else can we explain...

She wants to explain:

A) How can we keep our rationality when encountered with hard choices

But how else can we explain...

She wants to explain:

- A) How can we keep our rationality when encountered with hard choices
- B) How can we approach hard choices through the relationship between the alternatives.

But how else can we explain...

Parity

But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

Any value relationships can be interpreted with two dimensions:

Bias and magnitude in difference

But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

Examples:

And to compare 2 cakes,

their magnitude in difference will be zero,

So, their value relationship is unbiased with zero magnitude.

(they are equally good)



But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

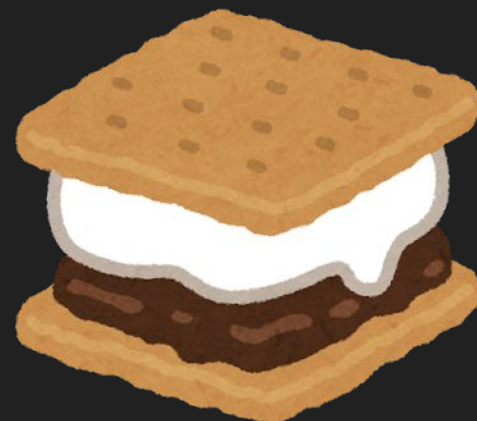
This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

Examples:

To compare s'more and cake

If s'more is better than cake (s'more lover perspective)

then their value relation is biased with non-zero magnitude



But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

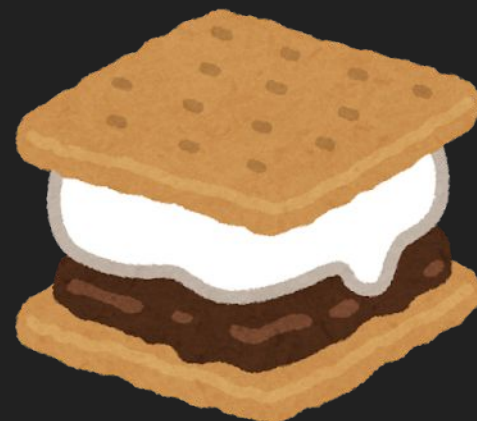
This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

Examples:

Not a S'more lover anymore

Cake and S'more is good in some aspects.

So their value/evaluative relation is unbiased with nonzero magnitude



But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

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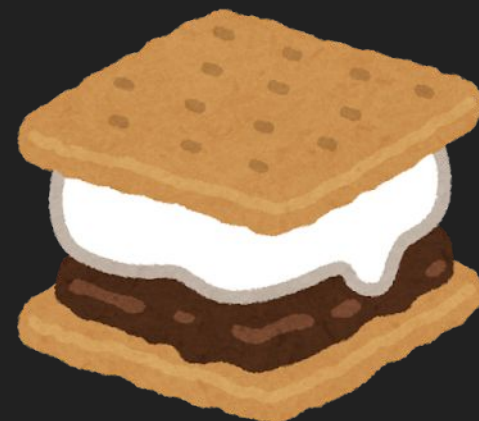
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Not a S'more lover anymore

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S'more is on a par with cake



But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

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Both qualitative and quantitative factors can change the value relationship.

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Examples:



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Examples:



But how else can we explain...

Parity: Two things are on a par.

This will provide a fourth dimension of relationship

Both qualitative and quantitative factors can change the value relationship.

And hard choices will be things on a par with another:

They are in the same neighborhood in V-ness, but are qualitatively very different.

Afterthoughts

Rationality / Agency

She argues that we have two sets of reason, **given** and **internal**

Afterthoughts

Rationality / Agency

She argues that we have two sets of reason, **given** and **internal**

Given in the sense of practicality, external social norms

Internal in terms of commitment.

Afterthoughts

Rationality / Agency

She argues that we have two sets of reason, **given** and **internal**

Given in the sense of practicality, external social norms

Internal in terms of commitment, ideological standard we have to ourselves

We must be having both and using both when making choices:

Without **given** reasons, there seems to be no common understanding

Without **internal** reasons, we don't keep any agency.

Afterthoughts

My thoughts there is always a path to accept that we are not rational

The urge to seek rationality may be meaningless and we have to return to the absurdity of life and live with it. (existentialism)

Discussion Questions

Starter:

What hard choices can you think of and willing to share?

Do you think these experiences fit in what Ruth argued?

Do you think we can be rational when encountering hard choices?

More advanced:

Do you think which one is the best explanation of hard choices?

Ignorance? Incommensurability? Incomparability? Parity?

In terms of Ruth's rejection on incomparability, what do you think of the necessity of rationality?