Collecting such formulas into a set is apparently changing the subject. \( P \land Q \) follows from \( P \) and \( Q \), or to use the above list formalism—commas with ampersand—from \( P \& Q \), we should say, rather than that \( P \land Q \) follows from \( \{P, Q\} \), as orthodoxy dictates. Oliver and Smiley allow the identity predicate to stand between plural terms, making a statement which is true if anything which is one of the things denoted by the left-hand term is one of the things denoted by the right-hand term and vice versa. (‘Is one of’ emerges with plural logic as a new logical constant.) This gives us essentially set-like conditions of identity without the objects (the sets, that is) whose identity would thereby be conditioned—but of course one often wants to work in other logical frameworks, as for substructural logic, in which case the premises need to be treated as though they composed a multiset, or again a sequence, of formulas. Such shifts are easily effected in that terminology, but how the transitions would be clearly indicated in the plural mode is not evident. This is the kind of reason for which, while Scott [e.g. 2012: 284] makes informal use of talk of entailment (meaning multiple conclusion consequence) as a ‘multi-ary relation’, the official story is in terms of a binary relation between sets. Similarly, if I tell you that the arithmetical mean of some numbers is their sum divided by however many of them there are, I have not told you enough to tell you that this multigrade function, as applied to 2, 3 & 7 yields a value of 4 but as applied to 2, 2, 3 & 7 yields a value of 3.5, while supposedly 2, 3 & 7 = 2, 2, 3 & 7. Clarity is served by declaring the argument to be a multiset rather than a set, not by relying on an unruly plural sprawl of its elements.

## References

Hardy, G.H. 1944 [1908]. *A Course of Pure Mathematics* (9th edn). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Humberstone, Lloyd 1995. Names and Pseudonyms, *Philosophy* 70/274: 487–512.  
Penrose. R. 2004. *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe*. London: Jonathan Cape.  
Potts, T.C. 1976. Montague’s Semiotic: A Syllabus of Errors, *Theoretical Linguistics* 3/1–3: 191–208.  
Potts, T.C. 1979. ‘The Grossest Confusion Possible?’—Frege and the Lambda-Calculus, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 33/130: 761–85.  
Priest, Graham 1984. Hyper-Contradictions, *Logique et Analyse* 27/107: 237–43.  
Priest, Graham 2014. Plurivalent Logics, *Australasian Journal of Logic* 11/1: 2–13.  
Scott, Dana 2012 [1974]. Completeness and Axiomatizability in Many-Valued Logic, in *Universal Logic: An Anthology*, ed. J.-Y. Béziau, Basel: Birkhäuser: 281–305.  
Smiley, Timothy and Graham Priest 1993. Can Contradictions Be True? (Symposium), *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 67: 17–54.

Lloyd Humberstone  
*Monash University*  
© 2014 Lloyd Humberstone  
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2014.909860

Scanlon, T.M., *Being Realistic About Reasons*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. x + 132, US$35 (hardcover).

*Being Realistic About Reasons* brings into print T.M. Scanlon’s John Locke Lectures of the same title, delivered at Oxford in the spring of 2009. The book advances an unapologetic defence of the reasons fundamentalism for which Scanlon has been famous since the opening passages of *What We Owe to Each Other* [1998], against charges that it runs into trouble with metaphysics, motivation, epistemology, or facts about the weight of reasons, which are taken up, respectively, in chapters two, three, four, and five. Together, these chapters constitute an admirably clear and nuanced
articulation of an avowedly nonreductive realist picture of metaethics, presented in a
digestible and well-conceived package by one of the most important figures in the
field. They will command attention—as they already have done, in lecture form—from anyone who wants to come to grips with the most serious options in contemporary
metaethics. In this brief review I will focus on observations about Scanlon’s
treatments of the fundamental reason relation, supervenience, and of the weight of
reasons.

The fundamental normative relation, Scanlon claims, is a relation \( R(p,x,c,a) \) that
relates a proposition \( p \), an agent \( x \), a circumstance \( c \), and an action \( a \). The way to
understand what this means, very roughly, is that if \( p \) were true, and \( x \) were in cir-
cumstance \( c \), then one reason for \( x \) to do \( a \) would be that \( p \). I say that this is ‘very
roughly’ how to understand what it means; Scanlon himself says something stronger
that I think we should read as a mistake. He says that ‘the essentially normative con-
tent of \( R(p,x,c,a) \) lies in the claim that, whether \( p \) obtains or not, should \( p \) hold
then it is a reason for someone in \( c \) to do \( a \’) [36–7].

In fact, I think this gloss betrays two kinds of mistake. The first is that if \( R(p,x,c,a) \)
is really the fundamental relation in terms of which ordinary truths about reasons are
to be understood, then it had better not turn out that the ‘essentially normative con-
tent of \( R \)’ consists in a counterfactual relationship to what reasons there would be, in
the ordinary sense of reason. At best, we should take this as giving us an intuitive
grip on \( R \) in terms of our ordinary grasp of ‘reason’ talk, in the same sort of way in
which Moore helped us to latch onto his notion of intrinsic goodness by using our
ordinary notion of good. That is consistent with the claim that \( R \) is what is properly
fundamental.

The second mistake betrayed by this gloss is that at least one of the arguments of \( R \)
is redundant. Notice that Scanlon says that the content of \( R(p,x,c,a) \) consists in its
being the case that, should \( p \) be true, ‘then it is a reason for someone in \( c \) to do \( a \.’
Clearly, this gloss leaves \( x \) out of the characterization of \( R(p,x,c,a) \)—and by no coin-
cidence. Philosophers who have added a ‘circumstance’ to their conception of the
relation—Michael Smith [1994] prominently among them—have done so precisely to
do away with the need for an agent place in the relation. And views that allow for an
agent argument as there seems to be in ordinary language ascriptions of reasons—
such as that articulated in Schroeder [2007]—have no need for a ‘circumstance’ argu-
ment, because there can be facts about an agent in virtue of which \( p \) is a reason for
her to \( a \), without those facts themselves being an argument of the relation. This is no
different from how there can be facts in virtue of which someone is the tallest person
in the room that she occupies, without the height of anyone else being an argument
in the relation expressed by ‘is the tallest person in the room that she occupies’.

Fortunately, neither of these mistakes is ultimately a fatal flaw in Scanlon’s view,
because with care we can read around them for what is of importance. And one of
the pieces of greatest importance in the book is the treatment of supervenience that is
enabled by his isolation of the fundamental reason relation \( R \), and in particular by
his view that \( R(p,x,c,a) \) is always necessary if true.

Notably, run-of-the-mill ordinary language claims about reasons are typically con-
tingent. For example, the fact that you find this review interesting is a reason for you
to keep reading it, but only contingently so, since it is only contingent that you find
this review interesting. But according to Scanlon, the fundamental reason relation, \( R
(p,x,c,a) \), is never contingent. If it holds of any \( p \), \( x \), \( c \), and \( a \), then it holds of them
necessarily. Ordinary ‘reason’ talk, then, does not directly ascribe the \( R(p,x,c,a) \) rela-
tion, as we have already seen from his gloss of this relation, above. It instead informs
us of the relationship between the \( R \) facts and the natural facts. For example, for it to
be true that one reason for you to keep reading this review is that you find it
interesting, there must be some circumstance c such that you are in c, you find this review interesting, and R holds of the proposition that you find this review interesting, you, c, and the action of continuing to read this review. So ordinary ‘reason’ talk is not normatively ‘pure’. It is, as Scanlon puts it, a mixture of the normative and the natural.

One of the big payoffs—the most interesting, in my view—of this diagnosis of ordinary ‘reason’ talk is that it locates all normative necessities in a domain of pure normative truths—truths of the form R(p,x,c,a), which bear necessary connections to the natural facts only in the trivial sense of being necessary. So on this picture, though it may seem that the normative facts co-vary with the natural facts in a way that may seem to require some explanation (as, for example, suggested by Schroeder [2007]), in fact the only ‘normative’ facts that co-vary in this way are ‘mixed’ truths, and their covariance with the natural facts is wholly explained by the fact that mixed truths are themselves constituted in part by a relationship to the natural facts. So the account dispenses with the appearance of necessary covariation relations between wholly distinct properties or relations.

This strategy has, I think, a lot of merit for reducing the explanatory burden for the nonreductive realist in moral metaphysics, because it promises to reduce what appears to be a distinctive feature of the normative cases—namely, the non-trivial necessary covariation that is exhibited by plausible supervenience claims—to the claim that pure normative truths are necessary in their own right. And I think that, among the ways in which one might try to pull off this trick, Scanlon’s is particularly promising, in that it makes clear why we haven’t just re-named the problem of explaining necessary connections between the normative and the natural by calling the conditionals stating the connections the ‘pure’ normative truths. Rather, we’ve articulated a genuine conception of what the pure normative truths are about—this special relation R(p,x,c,a)—and a corresponding plausible picture about why run-of-the-mill contingent normative truths, such as those expressed using words like ‘good’ and ‘reason’, are really only mixtures of the normative and the natural. Note once more that it would not succeed at doing this if R(p,x,c,a) just meant something counterfactual about when p would be a reason for x.

Still, though his strategy dispenses with postulating unexplained necessary covariance relationships between normative and natural properties, it does not dispense with unexplained necessary relationships between wholly distinct entities. On the contrary, because the basic normative relation R is itself a relation, to say that R ever holds of any tuple <p,x,c,a> is just to say that there are some necessary relationships that hold among wholly distinct entities. Those who find this objectionable or puzzling will therefore remain puzzled by Scanlon’s account unless he can replace the relation R with a fundamental one-place relation or property. But such a move would be incompatible with Scanlon’s other commitments.

In the final chapter, Scanlon offers a very sparse account of when one reason outweighs another. Scanlon is motivated, as was Schroeder [2007], by the idea that the weight of reasons is essentially a comparative matter, rather than one of absolute weights, and that the weight of reasons ultimately matters primarily for determining what an agent should do. This leads him to introduce a primitive relation of being a sufficient reason that is modelled on R(p,x,c,a), and written SR(p,x,c,a), and to offer the following account [108]:

One consideration, q, outweighs another, p, if the following hold: R(p,x,c,a), R(q,x,c,b), where b is a course of action incompatible with a, and SR(q,x,c,b) but not SR(p,x,c,a), although SR(p,x,c’,a) where c’ is a set of circumstances as normatively similar to c as possible except that q does not obtain in c’.
In other words, one reason outweighs another just in case they compete and the first is sufficient, the second is not sufficient, and the second would be sufficient if not for the first.

This conception of weight is too sparse, because it does not allow for one reason to outweigh another without being sufficient. But we should allow for such cases. Suppose that you have two beloved aunts, Matilda and Romilda, who will both be at the holiday party. But you have a pressing work obligation that is more important than seeing either aunt separately, but less important than seeing them each. In this case, your work obligation outweighs Matilda’s presence at the party, but is not sufficient, because Romilda will also be at the party, and it does not outweigh them both together.

Not only are these observations intuitive (and run-of-the-mill); we also plausibly need them in order to make sense of what happens if, for example, you stay at work because, although you know that Matilda will be at the party, you are unaware that Romilda will be there. In such a case your action is reasonable given what you knew, because you were acting on the best reason you knew about. Scanlon can say only that you thought you were acting on a better reason; but in fact neither reason was any weightier than the other, because neither was in fact sufficient. We should reject these commitments and hold out for an account of the weight of reasons that, while comparative in nature, is still robust enough to allow for comparisons even among reasons none of which are sufficient.

References

Scanlon, T.M. 1998. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Schroeder, Mark 2007. *Slaves of the Passions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Smith, Michael 1994. *The Moral Problem*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Mark Schroeder
*University of Southern California*
© 2014 Mark Schroeder
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2014.910241

Schilbrack, Kevin, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto*, Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. xx + 226, AUD $41.95 (paperback), AUD $19.95 (hardback), AUD $33.99 (e-book).

With admirable clarity, Kevin Schilbrack proposes three ways in which philosophy of religion should interact with other ways of studying religions. And he defends philosophy of religion thoroughly against the objections that he, and no doubt many readers, take to be the most serious. I shall argue, however, that the neglect of these three kinds of interaction should be of less concern to philosophers of religion than to those who study religions in other ways.

Schilbrack begins by criticizing traditional philosophy of religion for being narrow (too focused on theism), intellectualist (too focused on doctrines), and insular (not interacting with other scholars in the study of religions). Concerning narrowness, he cites the neglect of the non-theistic ‘religious philosophies’ such as the Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism, the neglect of African religions (such as the Yoruba with its influence on Latin America), ‘indigenous wisdom tradition’, including indigenous Australian religions, and ‘New Religious Movements’ [12]. He grants that