

Should We Care Inequality?

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Econ 350, January 13, 2021

Egalitarianism vs. Sufficiency

Harry Frankfurt's Doctrine of Sufficiency:
"If everyone had enough it would be of no moral consequence whether some had more than others."

Hidden Costs of Egalitarianism: Alienation

“the doctrine of equality contributes to the moral disorientation and shallowness of our time.”

Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal” (1987)

Egalitarianism vs. “Democratic Equality”

“democratic equality”: “integrates principles of distribution with the expressive demands of equal respect”

Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality” (1999)

Hidden Costs of Egalitarianism: Disrespect

“equality of fortune makes the basis for citizens’ claims on one another the fact that some are inferior to others in the worth of their lives, talents, and personal qualities”

Rational Choice

- Preferences Exist: $A \succ B$, $B \succ A$ or $A \sim B$
- Preferences are transitive: $A \succ B$, $B \succ C \rightarrow A \succ C$
- Optimizing behavior
- Markets in Equilibrium: supply = demand

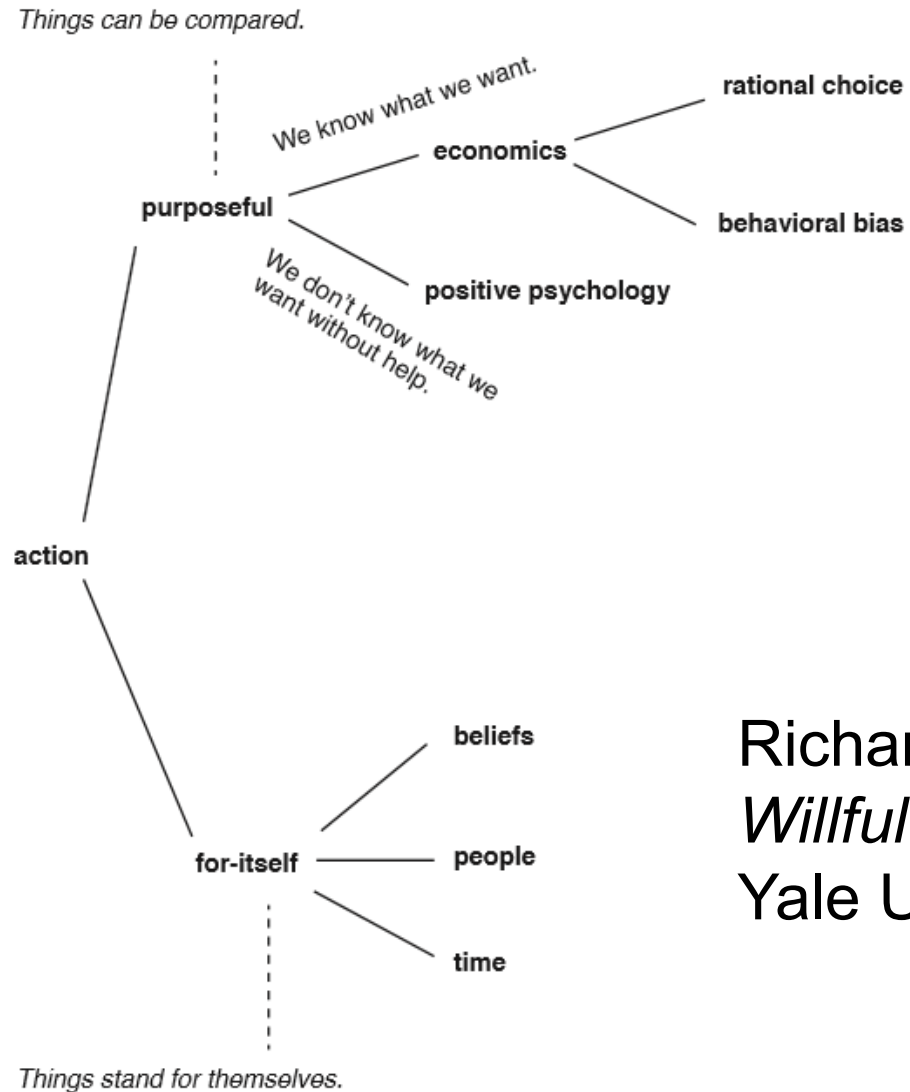
Action not Derived from Preferences

- 1) I see a documentary about the plight of refugees
- 2) I head to the post office to mail a \$100 check
- 3) A gust of wind blows away a \$100 bill in my pocket
- 4) A friend texts: she saw the same show and sent \$100

I wanted a world where the refugees had \$100 more and I had \$100 less.

Do I still send the check?

Schema for Human Action



Richard Robb
Willful: How We Choose What We Do
Yale University Press (2019)

For-Itself as Acts of Will

- Acts of will can't arise out of passive calculations to satisfy preferences or they would no longer be acts of will
- Authenticity is central to for-itself
- Often accompanied by anxiety

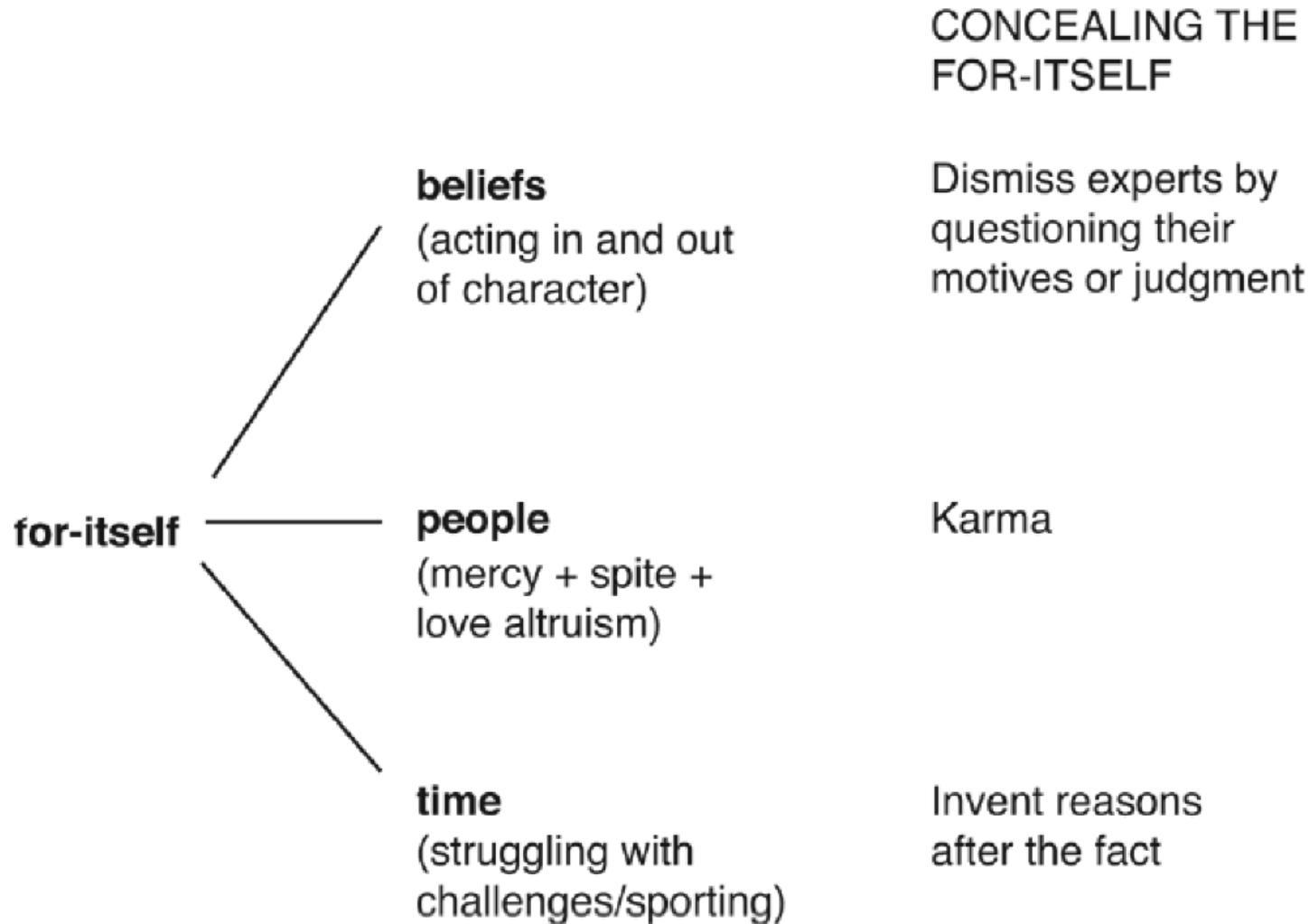
“[T]hat's the whole bane of it, that this tricky profit doesn't fall into any classification, doesn't fit into any list.”

Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

Homo Ludens

From the for-itself perspective, a world in which technology provided all our material needs would be not a paradise but a dystopia. A good economy delivers jobs that involve challenges as well as opportunities for self-discovery and problem-solving.

For-Itself Realm is Obscure to Us



Life is a Mixed Drink

“Honey, says Heraclitus, is at the same time bitter and sweet; the world itself is a mixed drink which must constantly be stirred.”

F. Nietzsche