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Brennan begins his paper by stating his argument formally:

1. One has an obligation not to engage in collectively harmful activities when refraining from such activities does not impose significant personal costs.
2. Voting badly is to engage in a collectively harmful activity, while abstaining imposes low personal costs.
3. Therefore, one should not vote badly.

In support of premise 1, Brennan denies that voting is like a prisoner's dilemma (re-watch the video from Aug 27 for a refresher if you need it). Whether or not you should vote, as well as prisoner's dilemma, are examples of *collective action problems*. Collective action problems are problems where the group would be better off if they worked together, but do not work together because of conflicting desires / interests. If you think that voting is like a prisoner's dilemma, then we are all *required* to vote and to try to work together for the best outcome.

In contrast to this, Brennan points out that if you don't vote you rarely suffer serious personal harm. In a classic prisoner's dilemma, though, if you do not participate you suffer greatly. This is the main way that voting and prisoner's dilemmas are not analogous, and Brennan seems to think that this is sufficient to show that we needn't view mandatory voting as the best way to avoid the worst outcome.

Brennan then goes on to attempt to tie the plausibility of premise 1 to fairness via examples. If you find these examples compelling, then you will likely buy into premise 1. Premise 2 is fairly uncontroversial and so most of the argument's plausibility resides in whether or not you accept premise 1.

One reason to doubt the plausibility of premise 1 involves another moral claim. It seems likely that we are required, when able, to help prevent injustice in the world. From the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

Citizens count as partial authors of the law, even when the citizens do not vote or participate in government. Citizens who refuse to vote are thus complicit in allowing their representatives to commit injustice. Perhaps failure to resist injustice counts as kind of sponsorship. (This theory thus implies that citizens do not merely have a duty to vote rather than abstain, but specifically have a duty to vote for candidates and policies that will reduce injustice.)

Worse for Brennan's position is that, if we are responsible to prevent injustice when able, then focusing on our individual benefit and harm is irrelevant. Sometimes we must suffer harm when preventing injustice (e.g. MLK Jr). This would undercut Brennan's response to the prisoner's dilemma above. After all, Brennan's response was that we suffer little personal harm when we don't vote, but that is irrelevant to whether or not we are required to do what we can to prevent injustice.