In the Euthyphro, we are asked if we value things because they are valuable, or if they are valuable because we value them. This question is, strictly speaking, applied to the God(s), but the issue can be generalized to us as well. The objectivist claims that a thing's independent value makes it correct that we value it. The subjectivist claims that a thing acquires its value from the fact that we value it first.

First, Sobel distinguishes between valuing something because of a belief versus valuing it because of a desire. This is the *cognitive - conative* distinction. Though it does make some sense to value something because you believe it to be valuable, Sobel thinks this account ultimately fails. Coffee is better for me than tea (all things being equal) because I like coffee better; my belief that coffee is better for me cannot, on its own, establish that it is in fact better for me.

The kind of subjectivist that Sobel is imagining may be quite different than the stereotype you have in mind. Many subjectivists (like Smith) appeal to a kind of idealization as a way to understand what we actually have reason to do. As with Smith, there is usually a cleansing of false beliefs, an inclusion of all relevant true beliefs, a certain amount of cohesion between those beliefs, and a requirement that one has an accurate accounting of all relevant possible ways the world could be. Notice that this idealization is merely structural (i.e. there is nothing about what the appropriate things to value are). Subjectivists must allow that our actual epistemic limitations may hinder our ability to carry out such an idealization. This reality has led to some accounts of idealization to be more restricted in scope. The important piece, though, is 'that the relevant favoring conative attitudes are accurately informed about their object.' (pg 309)

Having clarified the view, Sobel proposes three 'phases' of argumentation and explanation that the subjectivist must engage in.

1. Establish contexts where subjectivism seems more plausible than its competitors.
2. Defend against contexts where subjectivism seems implausible.
3. Establish that subjectivism can account for why morality is authoritative over agents despite it appearing to be independent of the agent's desires.

After arguing that subjectivism is consistent both with naturalism and non-naturalism[1], Sobel takes each phase in turn.

Phase 1

Matters of taste are the clearest case of subjectivism being the most plausible account of why we have reason to act as we do. After paring down the quote from Railton, Sobel arrives at the principle he calls the *minimal resonance constraint* which he considers 'crazy intuitive'.

[1] Non-naturalism should not be understood as meaning *super*naturalism. A kind of Divine Command Theory is not a naturalistic theory, but there are plenty of non-natural positions in metaethics (and outside of it) that never appeal to a supernatural agent.

> **Minimal Resonance Constraint**: In such contexts, if it is to benefit me, options must resonate with me. I must in some sense favor or like it, at least if rational and aware. (pg 312)

Though there are those who deny MRC, they do so in contexts apart from those of mere taste. Sobel concludes that at least in matters of taste, the subjectivist has home turf. Phase 1 is, thus, complete.

Phase 2

Do we have good reason(s) to avoid future agony? If the subjectivist is going to claim that we do, then they will need to build into their idealization procedure some 'transfer principles' to guarantee that an agent's future reasons transfer to their present. Parfit denied that such principles were consistent with the subjectivist position. Sobel, however, does not.

The claim that one should care about one's future reasons in the present is itself contentless. It does not tip the scales in favor of one action or another. Hence, this claim can be incorporated into the idealization procedure. This initial response is not, according to Parfit, not all that there is to phase two. Cases such as Rawl's grass-counting require a more detailed account (though Sobel seems optimistic that such an account can be offered).

Phase 3

In the realm of the moral, however, the subjectivist faces their toughest challenge. We all have a significant reason to not abuse the vulnerable, and this reason seems to persist even if my desires are to the contrary. But, the subjectivist does not allow for there to be a reason if there is not a corresponding desire. Hence, subjectivism may allow for such abuse.

Sobel finds such a defense not only at the ready, but quite plausible.[2] First, we must accept that historically, and presently, we live in a society which is infused with religious values and concerns. To the degree that our social context has inherited a concern for the afterlife, even if we deny that there is an afterlife, we cannot prove that our intuitions about categorical reasons are not the product of such influence.

Second, Sobel reminds us of Plato's example of the Rings of Gyges. In this story, a shepherd name Gyges is given a ring which allows him to become basically undetectable. Gyges proceeds to engage in quite horrid behavior that he otherwise would never have engaged in. The idea here is that we may act in a way that is seemingly against our own desires solely because we would be detected. If we could act as we wished without being detected, then we would. Hence, we may act 'morally' for reasons that are fully subjective.

Third, avoiding immoral behavior accords quite often with not inflicting harm on others. To the degree that a desire to not harm others is quite common, then we have a subjective reason to obey morality (though this reason will not always be decisive when the action will not harm others).

[2] Though he claims to only be giving us a 'taste'. (pg 314)

Fourth, the subjectivist can allow that all [necessarily] ought to be moral, when the ‘ought’ is given a moral reading. What the subjectivist denies is that necessarily all ought to be moral when the ‘ought’ is given a rational or reasons reading. This ambiguity can help explain why it seems intuitive to say that all necessarily ought to be moral. (pg 315)

Fifth, our society has built up a kind of myth that wrongdoers will (eventually) have to face justice. We are taught these lessons quite early in life, and these lessons are routinely reinforced in various ways well into adulthood (e.g. Thanos has to be defeated). Such influences, as with the religious influence outlined in the first consideration, must impact our intuitions about reasons.