

Transparency and Recognition
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The value of transparency

“[T]he aspiration that society should be *transparent*, in the sense that the working of its ethical institutions should not depend on members of the community misunderstanding how they work... fits naturally with liberal contractualism, but... marks the distinction not so much between liberals and nonliberals as between any who retain more radical hopes born of the Enlightenment and those who do not. Many Marxist theories embody a version of this, in the aim for a society that can do without false consciousness.”

Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1986 / 2011), 112

Negative version of transparency: no dependence on misunderstanding

- Shared activity in a friendship that depends on clashing conceptions of its meaning

Positive version of transparency: value that depends on understanding

- Legitimate state power through reflective endorsement, for political contractualists
- Being understood vs. having a creepy fan; joint activity vs. reluctant coordination

It is not merely useful in these cases to know the reasons for institutional design or for an action. Their very status as good reasons depends on the possibility of uptake by a certain subject.

My question: In the domains of life where transparency has positive value, how should we make sense of the way that our practical thought is directed towards another person's point of view?

Background question: What is involved in valuing another person?

- A foil: human beings are to be valued as objects of a special kind: rational, having dignity.
- My work argues: to value a subject, your reasoning about them must aim at their uptake. How you take someone to matter must provide them *recognition* of how they matter.

Transparency in my work

Immanent critique: question-based vs. instrumental versions of the aim of critical theory

Love for other people: second-personal vs. instrumental versions of expressing care

Contractualism: justification *to* a person vs. justification, *simpliciter*, as that person can see

Future work

Human beings care what other human beings think of them. What reflective attitude should we take to our desire for other people's regard? It is often a source of vice. Does it have healthy forms?

1. A project clarifying how recognition can confirm or complete one's sense of self.
2. A project thinking through which forms of dependence on the judgment of other people are compatible with autonomy.