A common defense:
>	"It makes no difference, or only an insignificant difference, if I do it."
What, if anything, is wrong with this defense?

Related to a paradox:
- If *all* of us X, then we *together* do something such that if any one of us did it individually, his or her act would be wrong for a certain reason (e.g. because it would have bad effects).
- However, when *each* of us X's, what he or she does *individually* is not wrong for that reason (e.g., does not have bad effects).

Two kinds of defense:
1.	My doing it makes only an *insignificant* difference
2.	My doing it makes *no* difference.
	(a) "If I don't do it, somebody else will." E.g., developing biological weapons.
	(b) "One person makes no difference." E.g., voting in an election, where you know that your vote won't break any tie.

Two kinds of threshold:
1.	*Absolute*: each action below and above the threshold makes no difference. Only the action at the threshold makes a difference, e.g. voting.
2.	*Discrimination*: each action below the threshold makes a difference, but one too small to be noticed, e.g., keeping heater on leads the blackout to last a millisecond longer.

Replies to the insignificant difference defense:
1. In many cases, it is simply a mistake to say that your doing it makes an insignificant difference. It may look insignificant *in comparison* to the scale of the problem ("A drop in the bucket"). But this does not mean that it is insignificant. (Recall Unger and futility thinking.)

2. Where there is a discrimination threshold, we can appeal to:
>	*Principle of Divisibility*: "Where harm is a matter of degree, sub-threshold actions are wrong to the extent that they cause harm, and where a hundred acts like mine are necessary to cause a detectable difference I have caused 1/100 of that detectable harm."

Worry: What if so few others do it that the discriminability threshold is never met? *Reply*: Then no one has caused harm. Whether your act is wrong depends on what others do.

Question: Should discriminability thresholds be treated any differently from absolute thresholds? There's a sense in which, just like keeping the heater on, each vote makes *a* difference: namely, it adds to the tally. It's just that, like keeping the heater on, it doesn't make a difference *that is morally important*: that is, who gets elected or whether the blackout lasts a noticeable amount of time longer.

The reply to the no difference defense that Glover accepts:

1. *Side effects*: Even if somebody else will do it, your doing it may have worse effects.
   a. The others willing to take the job are less likely to do socially beneficial work;
   b. my refusal can have positive effects on others' attitudes;
   c. taking it can have bad effects on me.

Replies to the no difference defense that Glover rejects:
2. *Generalization test*: "What if everyone did that?"
   Glover's *objection*: Not a good test, since it is often important to take into account that others will *not* do it. E.g., disarming when no one else will.

3. *Unfairness*: Even when it will make no difference, it is unfair to rely on the contributions of others without contributing oneself. This is most applicable to the (b) cases.
   Glover's *objection*:
   • Unfair only if free riding *increases* the contributions that others must make, e.g. six men pushing a car up a hill.
   • Not unfair if free riding does not increase the contributions that others must make, e.g., voting. Why object "to one person benefiting because others are left unchanged"? *Question*: Does this seem to you an adequate response?

4. *The Solzhenitsyn Principle*: "And the simple step of a simple courageous man is not to take part in the lie, not to support deceit. Let the lie come into the world, even dominate the world, but not through me." Most applicable to the (a) cases.
   Glover's *objection*: Isn't it just a selfish concern to keep one's own hands clean?

Notice what these rejected replies have in common: They say that your action can be wrong for some reason *other* than that it produces a bad outcome. That is, they deny consequentialism.

Jackson on group action:
Jackson observes that we speak not only of *individual* actions, but also of *group* actions. Indeed, we can count any "mereological sum" of individual actions counts as a group action.

He argues that we should recognize not only the wrongness of individual actions, but also the wrongness of group actions.

(Note that Jackson is concerned with *objective* wrongness, which depends on what did or will *in fact* happen. This is to be distinguished from *subjective* wrongness, which depends on what *probably* happened or will happen. It is worth asking how his conclusions might change if he considered subjective wrongness.)

Accepting that group actions can be wrong, Jackson thinks, the only way to save the *difference principle*: "the morality of an action depends on the difference it makes; it depends, that is, on the relationship between what would be the case were the act performed and what would be the case were the act not performed." (This is, roughly, consequentialism.)

Two counterexamples to the difference principle:
1. Over-determination case

- X and Y actually harm Z. E.g., each fires a bullet at Z, killing him.
- If either had not acted, then the other, by acting alone, would have caused exactly same amount of harm to Z.   E.g., either bullet would have killed him by itself.

According to the difference principle, however, neither did anything wrong. So, according to the difference principle, nothing wrong was done.

2. The beans example
- A thousand villagers, each with a thousand beans.
- Horizontal stealing: a thousand bandits each steal one bean from each villager.
- Vertical stealing: each of a thousand bandits steals a thousand beans from a different villager.
- Assume that it is no better, and perhaps worse, to end up with one bean.

According to the difference principle, a bandit who steals horizontally does nothing wrong. If he did not steal horizontally, then the other 999 would have, so each villager would be left with one bean rather than none. By contrast, a bandit who steals vertically does something wrong.

Parfit's response:
Parfit's response: An action can also be wrong because, though it itself does not make a difference, it belongs to a collection of actions that does make a difference.

Problem with Parfit's response: Modified over-determination case: If X does not act, then the harm to Z is *worse*. Intuitively, and according to the difference principle, X does not act wrongly. But according to Parfit, X does act wrongly, because his act belongs to a collection of acts that together makes things worse.

Reply on Parfit's behalf: An act that collectively makes things worse is wrong unless it individually makes things better, and an act that collectively makes things better is good unless it individually makes things worse. Individual score overrides collective status except where individual score is zero.

Jackson: "That looks like making zero unbelievably special."

Further evidence that the individual does no wrong
- Suppose that the bandit has the choice of (i) horizontally stealing from the villagers or (ii) vertically stealing from an unrelated hermit. The bandit should clearly choose (i).
- Suppose that the bandit has the choice of (i) vertically stealing from a villager or (ii) vertically stealing from the hermit. Doesn't matter what the bandit does.

This suggests that horizontally stealing is *not* as wrong as vertically stealing.

Jackson's solution: group actions can also be wrong
Our mistake:
- We judge that wrong *is done* in overdetermination case and the horizontal stealing case.
- The difference principle implies that, in these cases, no *individual* does wrong.
- We assume that only individuals can do wrong.
- So we reject the difference principle.

What we should think instead:
- We should reject the assumption that only individuals can do wrong. Groups can also do wrong.
- The difference principle implies that, in the overdetermination and horizontal stealing cases, the group does wrong.
- So the difference principle implies that wrong *is done* in these cases.
- So we have no reason to reject the difference principle.

The difference principle also explains the intuition that horizontal and vertical stealing are morally equivalent. As *group* actions, they are morally equivalent.

The basic explanation: Different options are available to groups than are available to individuals. This is why individual actions can be right, whereas the group action they compose is wrong.

Objections
Objection: This licenses X and Y to collude, in the knowledge that they will be individually doing nothing wrong.
Reply: They will be doing something individually wrong in colluding: namely, causing a wrong group action to take place.

Objection: The group action can be wrong only if its constituent individual actions are wrong.
Reply: Everyone is driving 80, but everyone ought to be driving 60. Still, it would be wrong for any individual to drive 60, since the others will still be driving 80. No constituent individual action is wrong, even though the group action is wrong.

Objection: What is the point of counting group actions as wrong? We can't advise or blame groups (at least not the sort of groups that Jackson has in mind). Is saying that a group action is wrong any different from saying that a *natural disaster* is bad? Does this really address our worry about the individual/collective paradox?

Are there "discrimination threshold" cases?
Suppose I have two options.
- If I "focus," I turn the switch N times on a single victim. (Like vertical bean-stealing.)
- If I "disperse," I turn the switch once on each of N+1 different victims. (Like horizontal bean-stealing.)

Suppose that I am the only person facing this choice. It seems plausible that:
       1. It would be wrong for me to focus.
Now suppose that N of us face the same choice. It seems plausible that:
       2. No matter how many others disperse, it would be wrong for me to focus.
       3. If all of us disperse, the outcome is that N+1 victims get the switch turned to N.
       4. If none of us disperses, the outcome is that N victims get the switch turned to N.
       5. Therefore, if all of us disperse, we have an as-good-as-wrong effect.

For the time being, assume *aggregation*: it is wrong to produce a larger *sum* of pain when one could have produced a smaller sum.

First case: Additional pain from each turn is constant.
- Then 1 is false. My dispersing produces a larger sum of pain, and so is wrong.
- 1 *seems* true only because we find it psychologically difficult to aggregate many tiny effects and compare them to a single large effect.

Second case: Additional pain from each turn increases with each turn.
- 1 is true, because the first turn causes little pain.
- But 2 is false because making (say) the Nth turn causes great pain.
- However, now we have an absolute threshold case.

Third case: Additional pain from each turn is *zero*!
- How can the additional pain from *each* turn be zero, but the additional pain from *N* turns be more than zero?
- Because one cannot perceive any difference between the pain from X turns and the pain from X+1 turns. And one pain cannot be worse than another if one cannot perceive any difference.
- Paradoxical: *No matter what we together do*, we together could have produced less pain! This means that, *no matter what we together do*, we together act wrongly, or at least produce effects such that, if any individual produced these effects, he would act wrongly! Suppose 0 disperse, N focus. We would produce less pain if 1 dispersed, N-1 focused. Suppose 1 disperses, N-1 focus. We would produce less pain if 2 dispersed, N-2 focused…. Suppose N disperse, 0 focus. Then we would produce less pain if 0 dispersed, N focused!

Review Questions (which might be discussed in section too):
1. Come up with your *own* examples of the following kinds of cases:
   a. Your action makes no difference, because if you don't do the bad thing, someone else will.
   b. Your action makes no difference, because it is only when N or more people do it that the bad thing happens.
   c. Your action makes no difference, because no matter how many people do it, an additional person's doing it makes no difference to whether something bad happens. This is so even though when 10,000 people do it, something bad happens that would not happen if zero people did it.
   The examples of a and b should be drawn from real life. The example of c can be fiction.
2. Consider this proposed rule: "Do what would have good results if everybody did it. Don't do what would have bad results if everybody did it." How might this rule explain why I should vote, even though my vote won't make a difference to the outcome? Why would Glover nevertheless reject the rule? Explain with an example.
3. When Jackson writes of "group actions," does he assume that for each group action there is a single group agent, which evaluates possible courses of action and decides what the group is to do? How might the answer help his account? How might it hurt it?
4. Consider "1. Over-determination case" above. Is this a threshold case, like voting? Explain.
5. This one is harder than usual!

a. Consider "1. Over-determination case" above. You are X, and your options are to shoot or to do nothing. Suppose you are not sure how the other guy, Y, will act. It's fifty-fifty whether he will shoot. How might that be used to explain why we think it is wrong for you to shoot? (HINT: If it helps, suppose that what you are morally required to perform the action with the greatest expected utility. Greatest expected utility = the weighted average of the possible outcomes the action might produce, where the weight attached to each outcome is the probability that the action produces that outcome.)

b. Now consider "*Third case*: Additional pain from each turn is *zero*!" above. Simplify it in the following way: your options are to disperse or *to do nothing* (i.e., forget about focusing). Suppose that you don't know how many other people will turn the switch. Will the answer that you just gave in a. above help in *this* case to explain why we think it is wrong for you to disperse? Why or why not?