

A Preliminary Generative Relational Ethics of Volunteer Intervention

Wanhong HUANG
huangwanhong@serendip.ngo

Abstract

This preliminary paper develops a Generative Relational ethics of volunteer intervention centered on situated agents, their candidate actions and omissions, affected subjects, historically acquired commitments, and the grounds required to justify practical conduct. It distinguishes the three GR reality levels and inherits relational descriptions and provenance tools from earlier papers without deriving moral duties from descriptive structures. A typed ethical-situation record supports evidence-relative assessments of need, testimony, competence, consent, urgent assistance, delegation, historically conditioned responsibility, restraint, and recipient participation. Candidate moral reasons and conditional deontic classifications remain distinct from verified organizational or legal authority and from Paper VI's institutional justice claims. The paper examines supererogation, volunteer well-being, dependence, distributed burdens, and the obligations that may arise when an accepted undertaking is revised or discontinued. Four wholly hypothetical diagnostic cases and a verification architecture test the completeness of subject and option coverage, evidential provenance, causal explanation, normative uncertainty, and practical robustness. The philosophical comparison maintains the independent grounds of deontological, consequentialist, care-ethical, virtue-ethical, and contractualist approaches. Cross-programme interfaces identify further questions in political economy, historical dynamics, heterogeneous-subject ethics, humanitarian practice, and jurisprudence. The concluding synthesis records characteristic inference failures and remaining research obligations. The proposed formalisms are preliminary research instruments; they have not received empirical, legal, institutional, or independent peer validation.

Keywords: volunteer intervention; ethics of aid; moral obligation; relational agency; normative uncertainty

Discussion and Publication Notices

Status. This is an independent theoretical working manuscript with a complete 25-section first draft and three integrated source-level revision passes. Further mathematical, normative, source-provenance, and publication review remain necessary. Its examples are constructed cases and report no identifiable human participants or institution-specific practice. No organizational endorsement or implementation is claimed.

Scope. The text is a philosophical and formal research proposal, not clinical advice, legal advice, a volunteer operations policy, or an empirical finding about any organization.

Licence. Except where separately indicated, copyright 2026 Wanhong Huang. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). Third-party works remain subject to their own rights and applicable copyright limitations.

AI-use statement. OpenAI’s ChatGPT assisted with research dialogue, manuscript drafting, source checking, and source-file consistency review. Scholarly sources cited in this draft were checked against accessible online bibliographic and/or scholarly records before incorporation and entered into the accompanying verification ledger. The human author retains responsibility for the research design, content, philosophical judgments, and any errors. This statement records assistance; it makes no claim that the material has passed peer review or independent empirical testing.

1 Ethical Problems of Volunteer Intervention and the Scope of Inquiry

This opening section establishes the normative object of a preliminary ethics of volunteer intervention in historically constituted aid relations. Its purpose is to specify the kinds of practical judgment the paper will examine, distinguish them from the justice diagnoses developed in Paper VI, and identify the descriptive resources inherited from the preceding GR papers. The argument proceeds through conceptual differentiation, constructed aid configurations, and comparison with established philosophical debates on duties of rescue, supererogation, care, and paternalism. The resulting research position is deliberately provisional: specifying an ethical problem and an analytical language prepares a normative inquiry, while the justification of particular duties, permissions, and priorities requires further argument.

A volunteer encounters a subject who appears to need assistance. The volunteer may be able to act immediately, request additional information, consult a supervisor, facilitate access to another provider, withdraw from the encounter, or decline a particular request. The available options depend on resources, competence, prior commitments, institutional rules, the recipient’s expressed wishes, and the anticipated effects on others. Even a carefully recorded need therefore leaves substantial questions unresolved. Which act is called for, by which reasons, under what conditions, and with what limits? Which omissions are blameworthy, which actions are permitted, and which acts might be admirable without being required? How ought the volunteer respond when another person’s interpretation of the situation differs from the volunteer’s own? These are questions of practical ethics rather than descriptive questions about whether an aid event occurred.

1.1 The Normative Object: Agent-Specific Practical Judgment

The primary object of Paper VII is a situated moral judgment concerning the action or omission of a particular agent within an evolving support relation. A working ethical situation includes at least an acting subject, one or more affected subjects, an available action repertoire, a record of evidence and uncertainty, relevant commitments, institutional conditions, and a history through which those conditions emerged. The paper will later give this object a typed formal representation. At the introductory stage, its components remain conceptual roles; enumerating them supplies neither a final ontology of action nor a criterion by which every possible act can be morally ranked.

The agent-specific perspective matters because apparently similar assistance outcomes can arise from ethically different processes. Consider two volunteers who each arrange transport for a recipient. One arranges the service after establishing that the recipient wishes to travel and that the provider is appropriate. Another, persuaded of the recipient’s need, books transport without consultation despite an accessible opportunity to ask. A descriptive record may assign both actions the same material outcome. Their moral assessments require additional premises about authorization, foreseeable risk, agency, and the significance of the recipient’s preferences. Even with equivalent outcomes, the volunteers may have discharged different responsibilities.

The ethical object also includes omission. A decision to wait can preserve autonomy and prevent an incompetent intervention; delay can also increase foreseeable harm. A decision to exit can protect a volunteer against an unsustainable demand; abrupt withdrawal can expose someone who reasonably relied on an explicit undertaking. The evaluative question concerns the available options under specified circumstances, including the costs of obtaining further evidence. Omissions should be assessed through

the same discipline of causal reconstruction and normative justification applied to observable acts. They should not be treated as empty events simply because the intended intervention did not occur.

Paper VI's typed justice claims remain relevant, especially where intervention redistributes exposure, burdens, or opportunities for contestation. Yet the moral appraisal of a specific agent requires further premises about intention, available alternatives, foreseeability, competence, acquired commitments, and reasonable costs to the agent. The paper consequently distinguishes *justice of an arrangement* from *ethical assessment of participation in that arrangement*. They may converge in particular cases. Their connection must be established rather than stipulated.

1.2 Three-Level Reality and the Formation of Ethical Evidence

The programme's three-level reality discipline governs the description of moral situations. At the level of *ontological reality*, claims about the ultimate constitution of subjects, intentions, value, and consciousness remain suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, historically retained patterns of action, dependence, commitment, material consequence, and institutional authority may be reconstructed as causally and practically efficacious. At the level of *manifestation reality*, subjects encounter and interpret expressions of need, testimony, written rules, gestures, refusals, responses to assistance, and other accessible evidence. A volunteer's belief about another subject is an epistemic reconstruction from such records; it is neither an unmediated perception of that subject's inner state nor an additional level of reality.

This separation bears directly on moral judgment. A recipient's visible distress may provide a strong reason to inquire or offer help while leaving the precise source of distress uncertain. A stated refusal may be morally salient even where the volunteer suspects that inaccessible background conditions have shaped the statement. Conversely, publicly visible gratitude may coexist with constrained alternatives, embarrassment, or fear of losing assistance. Interpreting manifestations requires attention to how institutional procedures shape what can be said, heard, translated, and preserved. The resulting account concerns evidential access and causal hypotheses; its implications for justified intervention still depend on the normative treatment of agency and vulnerability.

The first five papers provide an expanding descriptive vocabulary. Paper I represents assistance as a sequence with authorization, refusal, feedback, and revision. Paper II introduces a third position capable of mediation, gatekeeping, witnessing, and allocating interpretive access; pairwise records can miss triadic dependencies. Paper III examines historical co-formation of subjects and roles. Paper IV considers expectation-laden relational positions while restricting unwarranted psychoanalytic inference. Paper V addresses the manifestations of support, including tact, exposure, timing, silence, and aesthetic sensibility. These resources can make an ethically significant situation more intelligible. Their formal or interpretive success does not authorize the conclusion that a given act is obligatory, permissible, or prohibited.

Paper VI introduces a five-dimensional, non-scalar framework of distributive, procedural, recognitional, epistemic, and relational justice. Its claim-sensitive comparison procedure is conditional on a defensible included-claim family and coherent comparison assumptions. Paper VII will inherit the value of that caution. A conscientious volunteer may face a situation in which an action satisfies one justice concern while introducing another ethically significant burden. The practical verdict still requires reasons that relate the agent's options to the affected subjects and a justified account of the action's moral status.

1.3 Duty, Permission, Supererogation, and the Limits of Demand

Volunteer practice is a particularly demanding setting for the distinction between morally important action and morally required action. The literature on famine relief includes arguments for substantial duties to prevent grave suffering when the preventer's morally relevant sacrifice remains comparatively limited. Singer's influential formulation is one such demanding position, whose reach and qualifications require critical examination [50]. By contrast, debate over supererogation investigates whether an act can be morally valuable while exceeding what an agent is required to perform. The contemporary literature

contains competing accounts of duties, options, demandingness, merit, and the boundary between moral aspiration and enforceable expectation [23]. These debates offer distinct theories; the present paper treats them as questions requiring argument within the aid setting.

An act may be described as voluntary in several senses: performed without direct coercion, uncompensated, outside a contracted occupational duty, or initiated because the agent wishes to assist. These senses do not settle its moral status. An initial contribution may have been optional, while a subsequently accepted role, explicit promise, foreseeable reliance, or justified organizational undertaking may alter what the agent owes. Equally, assuming a coordinating role need not impose an unlimited obligation to continue at any cost. Capacity, other commitments, access to alternatives, the risks of sudden withdrawal, and fair distribution of institutional burdens become part of the analysis.

The working taxonomy therefore keeps distinct the moral status of an option, the strength of the reasons favoring it, its admirability, and the consequences of its nonperformance. A volunteer may have a decisive reason to avoid a harmful intervention, a defeasible duty to provide a promised service, a moral permission to decline an additional shift, and a generous opportunity to offer support beyond established commitments. The correct classification in a particular case depends on substantive principles; no such classification follows from the general term *volunteer*. Moreover, moral expectation, organizational obligation, contractual duty, and enforceable legal requirement have different conditions of validity, even when they apply to the same person.

There is also a distinct problem of displaced responsibility. Institutions may praise volunteering in ways that obscure reliance on uncompensated work, normalize increasing demands, or treat volunteers' availability as a substitute for providing adequate professional staffing. If an institution's predictable operation depends on such labor, the volunteer's personal generosity can coexist with an institutional failure to distribute responsibility fairly. An ethics of action must therefore consider whose resources, opportunities, and protections are presupposed by the demand. It should resist converting the indefinite possibility of doing more good into a default expectation of indefinite self-sacrifice.

1.4 Care, Competence, and the Standing of the Recipient

Care is ethically intelligible as an attentive and practically responsive relation whose quality depends on the conditions of its performance. Tronto's political account of an ethic of care situates care within the organization of social relations and power, offering reasons to examine how responsibility and recognition are distributed through caring practices [56]. The present paper takes this as an important point of philosophical contact, while retaining responsibility for its own GR construction and the adequacy of any cross-theoretical translation. A relational interpretation cannot assume that a good intention will reliably disclose the recipient's actual interests or ensure an appropriate intervention.

Competence has a special role in this setting. A volunteer may be able to recognize a problem yet lack the expertise, authorization, or practical resources to perform the indicated response. Ethical attention can then favor accurate communication, supervisory escalation, accompaniment to a qualified service, or explicit acknowledgement of uncertainty. Capability must be assessed in relation to the proposed act and actual context, rather than inferred from general kindness, confidence, or past success. The ethics of referral may be especially important where an intervention is irreversible, health-related, legally sensitive, or likely to alter a dependent subject's opportunities. Clinical and statutory questions in such examples require applicable domain-specific guidance; this conceptual paper supplies neither treatment directions nor legal authorization.

Recipient standing also resists reduction to the provision of beneficial outcomes. A person may prefer to decline assistance, request another form of support, reject publicity, or contest a helper's interpretation of need. Respect for that expression can be difficult where understanding is incomplete, communication is mediated, or urgent risks are credible. Ethical inquiry must distinguish genuine limitations of informed decision making, situational barriers to communicating a choice, and an intervener's mere disagreement with the choice expressed. Paternalism literature examines interference with a subject's choices justified by the claim that it protects or benefits the subject; its distinctions reveal why benevolent purposes alone

Table 1: Distinct analytical burdens in ethical assessment of volunteer intervention

Analytical burden	Object requiring reconstruction	Further justification required
Action provenance	Who acted, omitted, delegated, or revised an action	Agent-relative attribution and fair expectations
Epistemic position	Available testimony, uncertainty, and interpretive access	Standards for justified reliance, inquiry, and error costs
Recipient standing	Requests, refusals, communicative access, and dependence	Reasons for respecting, contesting, or exceptionally overriding choice
Role and competence	Ability, authorized scope, acquired commitments, and alternatives	Applicable duties, permissions, restraint, and referral
Institutional structure	Gatekeeping, available procedures, distribution of burdens	Independent justice, organizational, and legal assessments
Historical effects	Reliance, retained consequences, and revision opportunities	Responsibility for repair, continuity, and withdrawal

leave moral controversy unresolved [15].

A constructive problem emerges where assistance changes what the recipient can choose. Offering a translation, transportation, financial support, or intermediary can expand an action repertoire. It can also introduce a reliance relation, a new audience for personal information, or conditions attached to future help. The ethical evaluation should follow the evolution of those possibilities, including whether the recipient can change course and whether the volunteer can responsibly revise an earlier commitment. These effects motivate attention to temporal scope, feedback, and third-party institutions throughout the paper.

1.5 Illustrative Conflicts within a Single Intervention

A constructed case makes the multiple burdens visible. Assume that an inexperienced volunteer helps a recently arrived applicant complete an aid programme's intake form. The applicant uses a language the volunteer understands imperfectly. The programme requires a particular classification to allocate time-sensitive assistance, and the volunteer is invited to select the category believed most favorable to the applicant. The applicant indicates uncertainty about the form's implications. A supervisor is temporarily unavailable, and the application window is closing. All these elements are stipulated for conceptual analysis; they are neither observations about a real institution nor evidence of actual recipients' experiences.

One available action is immediate completion with a guessed category. This action may preserve access to the deadline while introducing an erroneous record or unauthorized disclosure. A second is to pause, seek translation support, and risk delay. A third is to submit only verified information while recording uncertainty and requesting later correction, provided the hypothetical programme permits such a procedure. A fourth is to withdraw from filling the form and refer the applicant elsewhere, with the foreseeable effect of reducing immediate support. The decision concerns more than the aggregate probability of receiving assistance: it depends on what the volunteer reasonably knows, which decisions the applicant authorizes, what risks each option shifts to others, and what the institution permits.

The applicant may also have a justified complaint against the intake system's limited language provision. Paper VI could frame that problem through epistemic and procedural justice claims. Paper VII examines the volunteer's next act under that flawed environment. A duty to refrain from fabricating information, a responsibility to disclose uncertainty, a possible duty to help within competence, and a permission to decline unauthorized action may all be relevant, but their precise relations require a substantive moral argument. The case shows why describing an institution as unjust cannot by itself provide the volunteer with a fully specified intervention rule.

Table 1 states the conceptual distinctions needed to analyze such cases. The table is a map of research obligations rather than a complete decision algorithm.

A second hypothetical case concerns a volunteer who has offered weekly companionship to an iso-

lated recipient. Several visits establish a routine, and the recipient begins relying on that routine. The volunteer later experiences serious exhaustion and can no longer sustain the schedule. An analysis focused solely on either unrestricted personal freedom or unconditional reliance would omit morally relevant considerations. The ethical problem involves the content of any explicit promise, what expectations were communicated, whether alternatives can be arranged, how much advance notice is feasible, and what obligations an organization should bear when it coordinates the relation. It also distinguishes reasonable transition responsibilities from a lifetime duty to continue. The case introduces a historical dimension: the ethical position at departure may differ from the position before the first offer was accepted.

1.6 A Historical and Revisable Structure of Practical Reasons

The relational approach treats ethically relevant circumstances as historically situated. Promises may be made, reliance formed, competences developed, risks discovered, roles delegated, and institutional responses revised. Ethical evaluation should therefore include the conditions under which a reason becomes salient, persists, weakens, is discharged, or is defeated by another reason. Such change calls for a record of its normative basis and relevant evidence. The mere persistence of a practice cannot demonstrate the moral legitimacy of that practice, and the discovery of new information need not retrospectively make an earlier reasonable decision culpable.

Different temporal evaluations are appropriate to different questions. An *ex ante* assessment concerns what an agent could reasonably judge using the information and options available when acting. An *ex post* assessment may examine actual harm, unintended benefits, concealed errors, and whether later repair is required. A historical assessment may ask how repeated actions have changed the recipient's dependence, institutional access, volunteer capacity, or opportunities for refusal. The three perspectives interact, but each warrants its own inference. In particular, an unfortunate result does not alone prove an earlier breach of duty, while good luck does not establish that an imprudent intervention was justified.

Revisability is therefore both an epistemic discipline and a possible ethical demand. It can require creating opportunities for feedback, making uncertainty visible, preserving information necessary for correction, or acknowledging when a role has exceeded competence. Its limits deserve equal attention: excessive surveillance can harm privacy; perpetual review can delay urgent support; demands for explanation can burden subjects already exposed to institutional scrutiny. The value of revision depends on whose interests are affected, the intervention's reversibility, and the distribution of costs and authority. The detailed account will be developed later, with no presumption that every setting calls for maximal information collection or permanent observation.

1.7 Research Contributions, Boundaries, and Programme Continuity

The paper has five provisional research objectives. First, it will construct a typed ethical-situation record that links historical agent positions, affected subjects, feasible options, evidence, commitments, and institutional context without prejudging moral conclusions. Second, it will examine how moral reasons become duties, permissions, prohibitions, defeasible requirements, or opportunities for action through identifiable normative premises. Third, it will study the ethical significance of uncertainty, recipient agency, limited competence, and a volunteer's capacity for refusal and responsible exit. Fourth, it will investigate the historical emergence of responsibilities through role acceptance, reliance, promise, delegation, and revisions of the relationship. Fifth, it will develop finite diagnostic cases and explicit verification obligations for formal, empirical, and normative claims.

These objectives define a specifically ethical research programme. They do not entail that one established doctrine of beneficence, consequentialism, deontology, care, or virtue uniquely determines every volunteer decision. Such traditions may reveal different relevant burdens and disagreements. The manuscript will identify their claims through verified primary or authoritative sources and distinguish the programme's own relational reconstruction from received positions. Formal methods will be used where they clarify action alternatives, temporal dependencies, or consistency conditions. They will be withheld where symbols would merely reproduce contested evaluative premises without resolving them.

The scope remains primarily human volunteer, aid, and support situations. Human-animal, human-artificial, artificial-artificial, and other heterogeneous configurations can raise additional uncertainties concerning subjectivity, moral patienthood, responsibility, suffering, and legitimate authority. Those extensions are assigned to Papers X–XVI, where relevant premises can be examined in their own right. The present paper may identify interfaces but will avoid presuming that the normative status of an unfamiliar subject follows automatically from similarities in a formal relational record.

The paper also remains independent of any named volunteer organization or public institution. Its cases are conceptual constructions and carry no implied claim about implemented practice, participant experiences, applicable law, or efficacy. Clinical, legal, and safeguarding standards require situation-specific professional evaluation. Future empirical research would need an ethics-sensitive design, traceable provenance, attention to interpretive exclusion, and an opportunity for affected participants to contest how their experiences are represented.

The central proposal is that an ethics of volunteer intervention should be *agent-sensitive, relation-sensitive, historically indexed, and explicitly justificatory*. Aid can create value and sustain relational opportunities; it can also generate coercive dependency, mistaken interpretation, moral over-demand, and institutional displacement of responsibility. A disciplined ethical analysis studies these possibilities through the options actually available to a responsible agent, the historically constituted claims of those affected, and the reasons that might justify acting, declining, referring, waiting, or revising. The next section specifies the moral domain and the agent-relative scope of that inquiry before any stronger formal classification is introduced.

2 Normative Scope: Voluntary Action, Aid, and Agent-Relative Assessment

This section delimits the normative domain of volunteer intervention before constructing a fuller ethical-situation formalism. Its object is the morally significant choice of a historically situated agent among actions, omissions, referrals, and revisions of previously undertaken assistance. The analysis proceeds by distinguishing voluntariness from ethical permissibility, differentiating spheres of normative authority, identifying kinds of omission, and specifying what makes a practical comparison agent-relative. It combines conceptual reconstruction, conditional normative argument, and finite hypothetical comparisons. The resulting distinctions determine what a later formal model must record; they supply neither a universal decision procedure nor a claim that the normative status of an act can be read directly from an observed outcome.

The expression *volunteer intervention* joins two terms whose evaluative scopes differ. Volunteering concerns the circumstances of undertaking an activity, including whether a person could reasonably decline the role and whether participation was conditioned by pressure, expectation, or inducement. Intervention concerns what a person does, permits, withholds, or changes in relation to someone else's situation. The voluntary character of entry can coexist with substantial obligations arising within a chosen role. Likewise, an intervention may be ethically defensible despite the absence of a volunteer's free choice to enter a broader institutional relation. These possibilities motivate separate assessments of initial entry, particular acts, sustained participation, and exit.

2.1 The Voluntariness of Entry and the Ethical Status of Intervention

For the present inquiry, *voluntary entry* refers provisionally to a person's acceptance of a role under conditions affording a meaningful opportunity to decline. Its degree and significance depend on information, social and economic pressures, accessible alternatives, foreseeable commitments, and the practical costs of refusal. Formal consent to a volunteer agreement provides evidence of a decision, while the historical conditions of that decision determine how confidently its voluntariness may be assessed. A student whose qualification depends on unpaid service, an unemployed applicant facing reputational pressure,

and a person who freely offers occasional assistance may all be registered as volunteers. Their positions nevertheless differ in ways relevant to the moral interpretation of expectations and burdens.

An ethical appraisal of the resulting intervention asks additional questions: whether the proposed act is justified by adequate reasons, whether the recipient has standing to consent or refuse, whether the actor possesses sufficient competence, what risks are foreseeable, and who must bear the consequences of error. A person can freely undertake an intervention that violates another's justified claim; a constrained entrant can nevertheless discharge a valid duty carefully. Accordingly, the descriptive attribution of voluntariness cannot function as an independent certificate of moral permission, competence, or organizational legitimacy.

The converse inference also warrants caution. A reason to intervene need not establish a duty to enroll in a continuing volunteer role. The rescue argument of Singer [50] is one influential account of demanding assistance obligations under specified sacrifice conditions. The philosophical dispute concerning supererogation examined by Heyd [23] shows why admirable service and required service should remain distinct evaluative categories. The present programme uses those arguments as competing resources for assessing the boundary of demand. It does not presume that the voluntary character of an institution settles the demandingness of every act within it.

Three temporal questions therefore belong in the record. At entry, which options and pressures affected the agent's acceptance? At the decision point, which feasible measures and justified constraints govern a particular intervention? At continuation or withdrawal, which responsibilities arise from earlier communication, reliance, or institutional delegation? An initial freedom to decline cannot alone answer the third question. Equally, duties arising later require an identifiable source and a defensible limit.

2.2 Moral Reasons, Organizational Commitments, and Legal Requirements

Volunteer assistance occurs within overlapping domains of guidance and accountability. *Moral reasons* concern what is owed, permitted, commendable, or wrongful in light of defensible ethical considerations. *Organizational requirements* concern tasks, permissions, reporting relations, safeguarding processes, schedules, and authority constituted by an institution's practices or agreements. *Legal requirements* concern duties, permissions, restrictions, and liabilities whose binding force depends on an applicable legal system, jurisdiction, and legally relevant facts. Professional or technical standards may further shape competent action, particularly when activities approach clinical, counseling, or other specialized practice. These are different kinds of normative source even when they recommend the same course of conduct.

A coordinator's instruction to deliver supplies, for example, can supply a role-specific reason to undertake delivery and evidence of delegated authority. It does not by itself establish permission to disclose a recipient's confidential information, undertake a specialized procedure, or disregard a refusal. Conversely, an institutional ban on a particular act may leave an independent ethical reason to secure urgent assistance through a competent and authorized channel. The ethical assessment of the volunteer's response should register the available alternatives, the actual scope of the ban, potential harm, and prospects for prompt escalation. Questions about the legal significance of an institutional rule require jurisdiction-specific verification beyond the scope of this philosophical proposal.

A prohibition may be binding under one source and contested under another. The model must therefore preserve the source, bearer, object, and conditions of a purported requirement. Describing an action as *required* without specifying its normative ground invites equivocation. A moral reason to care, an assigned shift, a statutory reporting duty, and a professional standard may converge contingently. A disagreement among them creates a problem of justification and practical coordination; it does not license a researcher to treat one sphere as automatically absorbing all others.

The political account of care developed by Tronto [56] supplies a reason to examine the institutional distribution of caring work and authority, including who acquires a capacity to demand others' attention. It does not supply a ready-made adjudication of particular legal conflicts. Within GR, the proposed contribution is a source-sensitive account of how responsibilities are expressed, transferred, accepted,

contested, and manifested across historically changing relations. The correct normative priority in a conflict remains an independent matter for argument.

2.3 Aid, Support, Referral, and the Structure of an Act

Aid provisionally denotes conduct directed toward a perceived difficulty, vulnerability, deprivation, or impediment affecting another. *Support* also includes sustaining or enlarging an affected subject's capacity to act, interpret, decide, and participate in relations. These terms designate broad practical orientations rather than proof that the intervention succeeds or is welcomed. Their usage permits the researcher to examine cases in which expressed assistance becomes intrusive, damaging, paternalistic, or dependent on mistaken beliefs. The ethical predicates remain open to assessment.

An intervention can involve direct performance, an offer that leaves acceptance to the recipient, the provision of information, the facilitation of access, coordination with a qualified actor, referral, watchful presence, or an agreed decision to wait. Each may mobilize a different distribution of competence and authority. Referral is particularly important because moral concern does not confer practical competence. The existence of a specialist or formal service may alter the opportunity structure, although the ethical adequacy of referral depends on accessibility, timeliness, consent, continuity, and the prospect that the referral will actually be acted upon.

The action's purpose, intended means, foreseeable consequences, and manifested reception merit separate recording. A volunteer might intend to assist, act within assigned duties, and nevertheless impose a cost or misinterpret an expressed need. Another might decline a requested measure yet take responsible steps to secure a safer alternative. Beneficial intention, effectiveness, just institutional procedure, and ethical permissibility are related through further arguments rather than interchangeable descriptions. Dworkin [15] analyzes the contested justification of interference with another's choice for that person's alleged benefit. That debate supplies an instructive distinction for this manuscript: the aim of benefit can coexist with a reason to investigate the legitimacy and manner of interference.

2.4 Omission, Allowing, Withdrawal, and Prevention

The moral assessment of volunteer action also requires a vocabulary for nonperformance. The philosophical literature distinguishes doing harm, allowing harm, and the behavioral contrast between action and inaction; the moral significance and boundaries of those distinctions are disputed [61]. The present analysis therefore separates four provisional forms: *non-entry* into a role, *declining* a proposed task, *omitting* an action during an accepted responsibility, and *withdrawal* from an ongoing commitment. A fifth category, *failure to prevent a foreseeable consequence of one's own earlier intervention*, can cut across these forms. The categories mark relevant differences in history and expectations; their assignment does not determine blame or permissibility.

Non-entry may leave a potential beneficiary without the help the agent could have provided. Whether that omission constitutes a moral failure depends partly on the proposed duty of assistance, opportunity cost, feasibility, and rival claims. Declining an unaccepted specialized task may protect a recipient from incompetent action. An omission within a role, by contrast, may violate an explicit and reasonable undertaking even when no general duty to undertake that role existed. Withdrawal can be responsible where notice, handover, and transition measures preserve justified reliance within reasonable limits; other circumstances may warrant immediate withdrawal for safety. The effects of a prior intervention can also generate reasons to repair or warn when subsequent nonperformance would expose an affected subject to a risk the agent helped create.

An omission's causal relevance requires a specified contrast. The statement that a subject was harmed *after* a volunteer declined assistance does not establish that the refusal caused the harm; the statement that aid was possible does not establish that its provision was safe, timely, or morally obligatory. Counterfactual comparisons should identify which action was feasible, which outcomes were reasonably foreseeable, how other agents and institutions might have responded, and what uncertainty remains. A moral

judgment then requires a further premise about which preventable harms an agent was responsible for preventing.

This separation also guards against an excessive allocation of institutional failure to individual volunteers. When a service has been designed around precarious unpaid labor, repeated individual omissions may reveal a structurally unreliable arrangement. The volunteer's concrete duties and the organization's reasons to build continuity can be evaluated jointly while retaining their distinct bearers. Paper VI's structural-justice account supplies relevant diagnostics, while the ethical attribution of conduct-specific responsibility requires the additional analysis developed here.

2.5 Agent-Relative Practical Alternatives and Their Feasibility

The phrase *agent-relative assessment* has a restricted meaning in this paper. It designates the evaluation of what a particular agent, in a particular historical situation, had reason and ability to do. It does not assert that moral standards depend solely on that person's preferences or that different agents may define wrongdoing at will. Agent position matters because the available actions, knowledge, authority, risks, time, and burdens differ. Moral claims of the recipient and of other affected subjects retain independent significance in this assessment.

A feasible option requires more than physical possibility. The analysis considers practical accessibility within relevant time constraints, requisite competence, available communication and authorization, foreseeable harms, and the actor's legitimate competing commitments. An apparent capacity to perform an act can coexist with an absence of authority to undertake it. Equally, a measure that could theoretically be delivered after several days may be unavailable within the period in which intervention would prevent a serious loss. These constraints should be evidenced and challenged where possible, since an institution can present socially manufactured resource scarcity as a neutral fact about feasibility.

The opportunity set is historically endogenous. Earlier promises, training, supervision, resource allocation, exclusions from information, and service design can enlarge or contract the options available at a later decision. A volunteer may justifiably decline a measure at one time because competent referral was available, but acquire different responsibilities after promising to return when the promised help becomes a condition of another's plans. Likewise, an organization that knowingly eliminates backup coverage may render later withdrawal costly to recipients. Explaining how the options contracted assists responsibility analysis without predetermining which actor bears the burden of repair.

An *ex ante* moral assessment reconstructs what a reasonable agent in that position could have known and achieved using proportionate inquiry at the time. An *ex post* assessment can identify actual damage, benefits, misleading assumptions, and repair obligations in light of later evidence. The two assessments may diverge without contradiction. The concept of moral responsibility as accountability for conduct is itself distinct from the existence of an obligation and from causal involvement, as emphasized by Talbert [54]. A complete ethical record should therefore distinguish the question of what ought to be done from the questions of what occurred, what the agent caused, and what responses to the agent are justified.

2.6 Moral Demand, Permission, and Praiseworthy Assistance

To prepare a later account of moral reasons, this section adopts provisional deontic vocabulary. An *obligation* identifies an action required by a specified and adequately defended normative ground in a defined situation. A *prohibition* concerns an action excluded by such a ground. A *permission* indicates that a ground allows an action, while *supererogatory assistance*, under theories that accept the category, is morally commendable conduct beyond what duty requires. The categories are introduced as objects for inquiry. Their applicability depends on the theory, conditions, and potential exceptions being examined; a single favorable consequence supplies insufficient reason to assign a deontic status.

There is a genuine dispute about how demanding duties of aid can become. The rescue-oriented argument of Singer [50] gives considerable force to reasons for preventing grave suffering under particular sacrifice conditions. The literature on supererogation surveyed by Heyd [23] examines the limits of what may be demanded even when further help would be morally good. A relational model can sharpen the

facts at issue in such disagreement: the recipient's vulnerability, the volunteer's actual capacities, the prospective costs of assistance, the availability of alternatives, and earlier commitments. It cannot settle a contested moral threshold merely by recording those facts.

An agent's refusal of one action is compatible with a duty to undertake another, less intrusive or safer action, where the relevant normative premises support such a duty. For example, a volunteer without clinical training might be forbidden to perform a requested medical procedure while having strong reasons to notify a qualified professional, explain the delay, and preserve the subject's opportunity to choose. Conversely, calling a measure *permitted* does not establish its wisdom or excellence; and describing a costly act as admirable does not show that a coordinator may coerce its performance. Moral categories should be separated from motivational praise, institutional scheduling, and predictions of social approval.

An especially important question concerns burdens placed on volunteers who lack money, free time, secure residence, or social power. Demandingness judgments depend on a morally appropriate comparison baseline and attention to cumulative obligations. An institution may celebrate extraordinary service while designing ordinary provision around it. Whether the individual act deserves praise, whether continued service can be required, and whether the arrangement is just are distinguishable evaluative questions. This distinction will support a later inquiry into burnout, institutional delegation, and duties of care toward volunteers.

2.7 Historically Acquired Duties and the Limits of Role Acceptance

A volunteer may undertake an obligation by making a sufficiently intelligible and reasonable promise, accepting a delegated responsibility, or inducing foreseeable reliance through a stable practice. The normative force of such events depends on more than their temporal occurrence: the content and clarity of an undertaking, the recipient's understanding, the voluntariness and authority of the acceptance, foreseeable dependence, the consequences of breach, and possible opportunities for revision remain relevant. Section 13 examines those conditions through an explicit account of promises, uptake, and reliance. At the present stage, the key point concerns their scope.

A voluntary commitment can change the ethical meaning of subsequent inaction. Suppose a volunteer offers to accompany a recipient to an appointment and clearly confirms the date. The recipient consequently cancels another transport arrangement. The volunteer's later failure to attend may create a responsibility to give timely notice, seek a safe substitute, or help repair resulting costs, where doing so is feasible. This responsibility differs from a supposed universal obligation to accompany recipients indefinitely. Its source includes a historically identifiable undertaking and reliance under defensible normative premises.

Role acquisition can also be constrained by asymmetric power. Recipients may feel pressure to express gratitude or avoid requesting continuity; volunteers may feel that declining a coordinator's demands threatens their future access, reputation, or community membership. Evaluating acquired duties requires attention to both parties' practical ability to refuse or renegotiate, the organization's role in forming expectations, and whether assistance can continue through other means. Historical evidence may establish that reliance occurred while remaining insufficient to establish that the reliant party was justified in expecting unlimited service.

A defensible account of exit will consequently distinguish abrupt abandonment, communicated discontinuation, mutually agreed transition, and urgent withdrawal. Their normative standing varies with the reason for exit, foreseeable risks, availability of replacement support, commitments already made, and burdens of maintaining contact. Where continuing service becomes unsafe or exploitative, a morally responsible exit may include measures of notification or escalation proportionate to capacity and risk. These are conditional ethical possibilities, not a single universally applicable exit protocol.

2.8 The Three-Level Status of Voluntariness and Obligation

The GR three-level reality distinction applies to the principal concepts of the normative scope. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate nature of freedom, moral value, and subjectivity remains an open

Table 2: Controlled comparisons for the normative scope of volunteer intervention. The contrasts identify evidential and justificatory burdens without fixing the moral verdict.

Comparison	Stipulated difference	Further evidence needed	Normative question
Scheduled accompaniment	An accepted, communicated appointment versus a previously declined offer	Clarity of the undertaking, reliance, notice capacity, alternative transport	Which duties arise through a specific commitment?
Specialized request	A competent, authorized worker versus an untrained volunteer facing the same stated need	Actual qualification, urgency, recipient preference, available referral	Which available response satisfies the agent's reasons?

philosophical question. The present analysis makes no inference from symbolic action descriptions to the final metaphysical constitution of a subject's will. At the level of *relational reality*, historically generated capacities, constraints, patterns of reliance, roles, and institutional authority may constitute durable conditions affecting the agent's practical situation. At the level of *manifestation reality*, signatures, schedules, spoken requests, reports of distress, expressions of consent, and recorded refusals make aspects of those conditions accessible to interpretation.

A signed volunteer agreement is thus a manifestation potentially evidencing an accepted role; whether the role was genuinely voluntary depends on relational circumstances, and whether it generated a morally valid obligation depends on further normative premises. The moral status of the resulting intervention cannot be inferred by assigning the signature to any single reality level. Similarly, an organizational register recording that a volunteer failed to appear is a manifestation with possible evidential value. It may conceal contradictory scheduling instructions, inaccessible transportation, invalid delegation, or an emergency that defeated the original obligation.

The same distinctions constrain claims about recipient choice. Consent is manifested in historically particular practices; its interpretation depends on linguistic comprehension, available alternatives, power over resources, and continuity of authorization. The relational reality of constrained choice may be empirically approachable without asserting direct access to private intentions. Theory-of-mind reconstruction is an epistemic activity within the model, with possible error and power-mediated bias. Treating it as a separate ontological reality would obscure the provenance of ethical judgment.

2.9 Two Controlled Comparisons in Volunteer Support

Two finite conceptual comparisons test whether the distinctions developed here yield new questions rather than redescrptions of the same moral intuition. Each case stipulates a limited set of facts and identifies additional evidence that could alter the judgment. Table 2 summarizes their analytically relevant changes. All scenarios are hypothetical and make no assertion about any actual service provider.

Accompaniment and reliance. In case A, a volunteer has accepted an appointment, communicated confirmation, and knows that the recipient canceled a substitute arrangement. In case B, the same person declined the request before any undertaking and before the recipient changed arrangements. Both cases stipulate a comparable unmet transportation need at the later date. A reason to assist may remain in both cases. Case A adds a prospective responsibility grounded in the agent's own contribution to reliance, provided that the communicated undertaking was valid and feasible. Determining whether cancellation was reasonable, whether notice or substitute assistance was available, and what sacrifices continued help would impose is essential to any further judgment. Equal need does not entail identical agent-specific duties.

Specialized assistance and responsible referral. In case C, the requested intervention falls within a volunteer’s demonstrated competence and valid delegation. In case D, the intervention exceeds the volunteer’s training, though a qualified responder is reasonably accessible. The recipient’s expressed need and apparent benefit are held constant. The practical alternatives differ. Direct intervention may be defensible in C and irresponsible in D, subject to the consent and risk conditions of each situation. A timely explanation, safeguarding response, and referral may constitute morally serious assistance in D. If the qualified service becomes inaccessible, the ethical appraisal may change again; scarcity alone does not create missing competence or authorization.

These examples show the limited but meaningful analytical work of agent-relativity: identifying changes in reasons through changes in feasible alternatives, accepted commitments, and standing to act. A full verdict requires additional normative commitments, attention to affected persons, and testing of the supposedly controlled conditions. Their role is diagnostic rather than confirmatory.

2.10 Scope Conditions and Research Obligations

The preliminary ethics of volunteer intervention accordingly adopts four working constraints. First, the moral status of entry, particular conduct, continuation, and exit should be assessed with their own relevant historical circumstances. Second, moral, organizational, legal, and competence-related considerations require source-sensitive treatment. Third, alternatives should include ethically meaningful omissions, referral, precaution, and reasonable withdrawal where these are feasible. Fourth, the evaluation of duties must disclose the normative assumptions connecting evidence to practical reasons. The resulting architecture remains open to disagreement among ethical traditions and among affected participants.

The analysis also has limits. The present cases concern primarily human aid relationships in deliberately simplified settings. It has not established a general account of the metaphysics of free will, a complete theory of promises, a scalar aggregation of competing interests, or a jurisdiction-independent rule of legal compliance. Nor does the existence of a recorded option establish that the option was accessible to the recipient or volunteer under the relevant circumstances. When affected subjects, constraints, or alternatives are excluded from the record, the assessment can appear coherent while remaining materially incomplete.

The next section will specify how the earlier GR accounts of relational beings, three-level reality, and action provenance can be inherited in the ethical analysis. Sections on the ethical-situation record, moral reasons, consent, competence, acquired duties, and institutional delegation will then develop the outstanding components in their respective domains. For now, the operative distinction is clear: a volunteer’s ethical position emerges through the relation between available choices, justified normative reasons, historically constituted commitments, and the standing of those affected. Reconstructing that position permits responsible inquiry while leaving contested moral judgments open to argument and revision.

3 Inherited GR Relations, Three-Level Reality, and Action Provenance

The ethical inquiry developed in Paper VII requires a precise inheritance rule for the descriptive and historical objects introduced in the earlier GR volunteer/aid manuscripts. This section identifies which accounts of relational subjects, manifestation, action individuation, epistemic reconstruction, authorization, and historical provenance can be retained from Papers I–III. It then states the supplementary normative premises needed to assess the practical choices of a situated volunteer. The method is a typed conceptual reconstruction, supported by a restrained formal interface and hypothetical comparisons. The principal objective is continuity of the research programme together with an explicit boundary between explanatory reconstruction and moral justification. The typed ethical-situation record is defined in Section 4.

The word *inheritance* has a limited meaning here. When an earlier manuscript defines an action record or an historical tracking relation, Paper VII may use that object subject to the earlier manuscript’s resolution, domain, and evidential restrictions. It may also select a simpler representation adequate for

Table 3: Descriptive inheritances from earlier GR papers and the additional justification required for ethical appraisal. The source objects retain their domain and evidential restrictions.

Inherited object	Licensed descriptive contribution	Additional ethical burden
History-bearing subject and role	Tracks a positioned agent and affected subjects over a declared history	Grounds standing, relevant obligations, and the limits of role-based demands
Relational and manifestation correspondence	Distinguishes retained relational conditions from accessible appearances	Justifies attention, inquiry, response, and permissible reliance on evidence
Action individuation and provenance	Traces how a procedure or action became possible and occurred	Establishes duties, reasons, fault, credit, and morally pertinent control
Authorization and refusal	Identifies communicated permissions, limits, and operative procedures	Determines morally valid consent, intervention authority, and duties to respect refusal
Third-position mediation	Exposes institutional and interpretive contributions beyond dyadic shadows	Assesses delegation, competence, responsibility sharing, and contested authority
Subject continuity and co-formation	Distinguishes persistence, reconfiguration, and evidence-relative provenance	Evaluates acquired commitments and morally significant changes without presuming benefit

a particular ethical question. Neither use transmits an ethical verdict automatically. Whether an action should be performed, whether an omission is culpable, whether an undertaking creates an obligation, and whether an institution is entitled to direct conduct remain matters for normative argument.

3.1 Inheritance Rules and Normative Supplementation

Papers I–III develop a descriptive architecture with several distinct layers of analysis. Paper I introduces history-bearing subject representatives, partial procedures, epistemic access, action provenance, evaluative judgment, and authorization. Paper II permits irreducibly triadic mediation, including situations in which an interpreter or institutional coordinator changes the relation between two focal subjects. Paper III develops criteria for tracking and diagnosing historically consequential changes in subjects and their relational organization. These resources provide admissible inputs to a moral inquiry, particularly when a volunteer’s available choices cannot be understood from an isolated act or from an outcome alone.

Three inheritance conditions will govern their use. The *type condition* requires that a borrowed object retain its analytical kind: an accessible expression of need remains a manifestation, an inferred condition remains a reconstruction, and an action-generating process remains distinct from the act as individuated under a declared rule. The *scope condition* requires attention to the original model’s domain, resolution, and partiality. The *justification condition* requires an independent ethical argument before a descriptive property becomes a reason that allegedly obliges, permits, or forbids some conduct. Violations of these conditions can produce attractive but invalid shortcuts: the presence of a need may be converted into a determinate volunteer duty, a recorded authorization into a moral entitlement to intervene, or a documented contribution to dependency into blame.

A further distinction separates *normative sources* from *normative validity*. Institutional policies, role scripts, shared expectations, professional codes, and locally stabilized judgments can enter the relational model as consequential structures. Their historical efficacy may explain why an agent regarded one option as salient or unavailable. Their moral authority must be evaluated in relation to affected subjects, justified responsibilities, foreseeable burdens, and other reasons appropriate to the case. Paper VII therefore employs the inherited objects as conditions for reason-sensitive evaluation, while leaving open disagreement among ethical theories about the reasons themselves.

Table 3 records the central division of analytical labor. It is a type-and-burden table: its final column identifies an additional task, rather than claiming that the present section resolves that task.

3.2 History-Bearing Subjects, Positions, and Practical Address

In Paper I, the focal supporter and supportee are represented at an explicitly chosen resolution as history-bearing subject subconfigurations within a coupled relational configuration. Labels such as A and B identify positions for inquiry; they do not establish immutable helper and recipient essences. At resolution κ , subject representatives may be denoted $\mathcal{K}_{A,t}^\kappa$ and $\mathcal{K}_{B,t}^\kappa$, with their coupling contained in a broader $\mathcal{K}_{AB,t}^\kappa$. The representation is a candidate formal carrier for relational histories. The labels neither isolate subjects metaphysically nor determine the moral boundaries of responsibility.

For ethical analysis, historical subject tracking matters in at least three ways. First, it enables the agent to be identified across successive decisions, so that an earlier undertaking can be assessed in relation to later performance, cancellation, or repair. Second, it preserves the affected subject's trajectory, including changes in reliance, practical alternatives, communicated preferences, and accessibility of care. Third, it allows roles to change: a person initially described as a recipient may later act as a coordinator, witness, translator, or provider of material support. The normative appraisal should refer to the ethically pertinent conduct and relationship, rather than deriving fixed moral permissions from a role label.

The relevant subject boundary can also be contested. A narrow dyadic model might exclude the recipient's family, another volunteer bearing transferred work, or a person who never reached the intake procedure. Where such omissions affect the range of foreseeable impacts and claims, ethical inquiry has reason to reconsider its subject selection. Expanding the represented population does not automatically determine which interests prevail. It makes possible a more adequate account of who may be affected and whose reasons require consideration. The issue of whose needs or interests should count, and with what weight, remains a substantive normative question.

Historical identification should be distinguished from moral personhood, competence, and legal status. The fact that a relational model can retain a stable subject representative establishes neither a complete account of moral standing nor an enforceable right to represent or judge that subject. The present paper's first applications concern human assistance under explicitly provisional assumptions about the relevant subjects. Extending the model to heterogeneous subjects will require the additional arguments allocated to later papers in the programme.

3.3 The Three Reality Levels and Their Historical Interface

The three-level GR distinction supplies a framework for locating ethical evidence and for preventing a model from claiming access that it has not earned. *Ontological reality* marks an unresolved question about the ultimate constitution of beings, experiences, agency, and value. Paper VII retains ontological suspension. The symbol $O^?$, where useful, is a reminder of this epistemic stance, and designates neither a hidden state carrier nor a causal mechanism. *Relational reality* refers to historically constituted structures whose persistence, causal contribution, or practical efficacy can be examined under stated criteria. *Manifestation reality* concerns situated expressions, documents, gestures, silences, procedural registrations, and other forms through which relational structures become accessible.

The relationship between relational and manifestation realities is historically conditioned. A relatively stable arrangement of dependence may appear in several different ways: a request for assistance, repeated accommodation, apparent gratitude, or silence when withdrawal would have material consequences. Conversely, a single expression of gratitude can arise within different relational configurations. Paper I models their correspondence through context-sensitive and potentially partial relations, including the possibility that manifestations feed back into later role formation and institutional practice. Paper VII retains this many-to-many, history-bearing character.

The ethical consequences of this distinction are concrete. A volunteer may observe a request but lack access to the circumstances that made the request costly to refuse. An organization may record the absence of a complaint while making complaint procedures practically inaccessible. A written record may show that authorization was once obtained while failing to capture its subsequent withdrawal. These are difficulties of historical reconstruction and evidence. An ethical response may include seeking clarification, choosing a lower-risk alternative, creating an accessible channel for correction, or declining an

intervention where the consequences of mistaken interpretation are serious. The decision among such responses requires substantive judgments about risk, autonomy, urgency, and responsibility.

The three levels also have histories. Relational dependence can intensify or weaken; manifestations can become standardized in templates; categories can become more or less legible to participants; and the very act of collecting evidence can transform what participants are willing to disclose. Neither the relation nor its expressions are frozen while an observer studies them. A later assessment may therefore differ because the relation changed, because access improved, because the interpretive standard was revised, or through several of these pathways together. A historically indexed ethical analysis should document which explanation it is invoking.

3.4 Manifestation Access, Interpretation, and Epistemic Asymmetry

Paper I distinguishes the possibility of manifestation, access to a manifestation, actual uptake, and a subject's reconstruction of another's situation. A verbal request may be audible yet not understood; an accessible document may go unread; a gesture may be registered yet interpreted through an inapt cultural or professional category. Theory-of-mind constructions, including an agent's beliefs about another subject's beliefs, belong among relationally situated epistemic activities. They form no additional reality level and confer no transparent access to another subject's experience.

An ethics of intervention must therefore attend to the provenance of the agent's beliefs. What did the volunteer observe directly? What was reported by the recipient? Which terms were supplied by an interpreter, supervisor, standardized form, or automated classification? Which claims are inferences from an institutional category? Which interpretations have been challenged? These questions establish the epistemic burden of a proposed action. They do not imply that every belief has equal plausibility or that action should always be delayed until certainty is achieved. In a time-sensitive situation, the evidential cost of delay belongs in the practical assessment alongside the costs of acting on uncertain information.

Asymmetry is especially important when one person controls how another's condition becomes legible. A coordinator might translate a recipient's ambiguous expression into a definite category of need, thereby narrowing the options that the volunteer recognizes. The apparent dyad may then depend on a third position that controls information flow, category selection, or access to referral. Paper II's triadic formalism is pertinent where this configuration cannot be reconstructed adequately from two isolated interactions. Paper VII inherits the possibility of such third-position dependence, while withholding any judgment that mediation is ethically legitimate merely because it improves informational coordination.

An agent's epistemic obligation may consequently include responsiveness to correction. If later testimony or evidence undermines a previously warranted reconstruction, an ethically attentive volunteer should consider whether current conduct needs revision, whether a recipient requires notification, and whether foreseeable adverse consequences can be repaired. The precise scope of those duties remains contingent on the source and stakes of the error, feasible alternatives, and the applicable moral commitments. The descriptive distinction between an error and a contested interpretation must remain visible.

3.5 Action Individuation, Generative Provenance, and Attribution

Paper I treats an action as an individuated relational process under declared criteria. A support sequence can contain requesting, offering, checking authorization, arranging transport, transferring material, and receiving feedback. Depending on the question, the model may represent several actions or one extended procedure. The same recorded process can support different legitimate individuations. This flexibility matters ethically because consent, information disclosure, referral, and material transfer can involve different subjects, competencies, and duties. A global description such as "the volunteer helped" often conceals the operative action boundaries.

Action provenance addresses the retained historical contributors to an action's emergence or execution. Paper I introduces a provenance relation, conventionally Prov_P^k , between an action record α and the admissible historical records h treated as its contributors. The associated family $\Pi_P^k(\alpha)$ collects those

retained contributors. This is a descriptive representation requiring independent causal support where causal claims are made; it does not designate a list of morally responsible persons. A prior request, an organizational procedure, an enabling resource, and a volunteer's discretionary decision may all contribute to an intervention in different ways.

The ethical inquiry therefore distinguishes *generative contribution*, *control*, *foreseeability*, *answerability*, and *remedial responsibility*. A person who enabled an intervention need not have controlled its execution. A person who exercised discretion may have possessed only partial evidence. A supervisor's assignment may explain why a volunteer was present while leaving contested whether the assignment was valid or the volunteer had a moral duty to comply. These distinctions matter both in assigning blame for harm and in assessing duties to prevent or repair it. Moral responsibility can involve several agents and institutions, but distributed provenance alone supplies neither their shares of responsibility nor a complete theory of collective agency [54].

The difference between action and omission also depends on individuation. A record describing "no assistance" may encompass considered refusal, inability to access the site, failure to notice the need, delayed referral, or a deliberate decision to avoid intrusion. Earlier undertaking and reliance can make a later omission ethically significant, as argued in Section 2. Yet a procedural log of nonperformance cannot independently decide whether the agent had the capacity, information, or valid obligation to intervene. The ethical-situation account in Section 4 therefore keeps omissions and alternatives within the action-provenance inquiry, while Section 5 specifies their possible deontic status separately.

3.6 Authorization, Refusal, and the Limits of Inherited Authority

Paper I separates need judgment, communicative authorization, refusal, capacity, and operative authority. An earlier agreement may apply only to a particular procedure, target, interval, or means of intervention. A request for accompaniment need not authorize sharing personal information, recording images, or making medical decisions. Continued assistance may require renewed confirmation if the recipient's circumstances or the nature of the action changes. Conversely, institutional policy can impose procedural limits even when a recipient asks a volunteer for help outside the volunteer's competence.

For Paper VII, the conceptual inheritance is an account of authorization as historically and contextually bounded. The moral treatment of authorization requires additional premises. These include the significance of informed and voluntary consent, the weight of refusal, the relevance of competence, and any justified exceptions under urgent circumstances. A recorded permission may be evidence that a communicative event occurred. Whether the permission is normatively valid also depends on comprehension, available alternatives, pressure, and the action's actual scope. Similarly, an institutional authorization can carry operational force while remaining open to moral criticism. It does not by itself show that a volunteer ought to perform the task.

Refusal has multiple possible objects. A person may refuse an offer, a proposed means, a particular helper, public disclosure, or continuing participation. Treating refusal as one undifferentiated negative response obscures the range of respectful alternatives, including changed modalities, clarification, or discontinuation. Ethical evaluation may require attention to the recipient's communicative capacity and to forms of pressure that shape the manifestation of choice. The analysis should avoid treating an observer's doubts about refusal as a sufficient license to override it. A paternalistic intervention needs a distinct, proportionate justification under a publicly defensible normative standard [15].

Authority can also be distributed through an institution. A volunteer's access to a recipient may depend on a supervisor, interpreter, safety officer, or service provider. The resulting arrangement should be reconstructed with the triadic and procedural resources of Paper II where necessary. The ethics of delegation then concerns who may decide, who possesses relevant competence, who can decline, who hears a complaint, and how the recipient can challenge the decision. The legitimate authority to allocate a role, the moral permissibility of an intervention, and the recipient's authorization remain analytically separate matters.

3.7 Subject Continuity, Co-Formation, and Acquired Commitments

Paper III examines the historical co-formation of subjects, with diagnostics that separate subject persistence from stronger constitutive reconfiguration. Its provenance analysis identifies whether a retained support relation contributed to particular changes in practical horizons, role organization, capacities, or evaluative orientations. The criterion is evidence-relative and depends on selected dimensions and tracking rules. A volunteer and a recipient can undergo profound changes during repeated assistance, but relational co-presence, personal testimony of change, and a formal co-formation verdict carry different evidential burdens.

Paper VII borrows this distinction to examine the history of responsibility. An accepted commitment may create reasonable reliance; repeated accompaniment may reorganize practical alternatives; institutional recognition may stabilize a role that was initially informal. Each event can change what the parties may reasonably expect next. These changes may matter ethically without meeting the stronger threshold of subject-constitutive co-formation. Acquired duties therefore do not require proof that a person's identity was transformed. They require arguments about valid undertaking, reasonable reliance, foreseeability, available alternatives, and the distribution of burdens.

Conversely, establishing subject-constitutive change would not settle whether the change was beneficial or justified. An aid relationship may cultivate agency and competence, reinforce dependency, narrow access to alternatives, or create a role in which one subject becomes indispensable. These outcomes can be mixed and historically unstable. A diagnosis of co-formation records what changed and, with adequate provenance evidence, how the support relation contributed. Whether the resulting dependence gives rise to duties of continuity, transition, or non-domination is an additional ethical question. The justice analysis of Paper VI may identify structural concerns, while Paper VII must assess what a particular volunteer could reasonably do within the circumstances.

Responsibility across time also presupposes a sufficiently defensible identity or succession relation for the agent and the action undertaken. Paper III's subject-tracking architecture makes explicit that continuity claims depend on the representation and historical evidence. In everyday human cases, practical attribution will often be adequately grounded without metaphysical controversy. Where roles or agents are distributed, temporary, or reorganized, the relevant object may be an undertaking maintained by an institution or group rather than an obligation traceable to one enduring volunteer. Sections 14 and 13 examine the assignment and discharge of such duties. The present section supplies the historical vocabulary and its limitations.

3.8 A Minimal Interface between Descriptive Evidence and Ethical Reasons

The foregoing inheritance can be summarized by a partial *warrant relation*. Let $\mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa$ be the family of admissible evidence records available for agent A at stage t and resolution κ . These records may retain action and procedure histories, accessible manifestations, consent or refusal records, evidential qualifications, and provenance hypotheses. Let $\mathcal{B}_t$ be a declared family of candidate normative premise bundles, such as principles concerning reasonable aid, respect for refusal, competence, or the moral relevance of promises. Let $\mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^\kappa$ denote a carrier of typed, action-directed practical-reason claims. Equation 1 defines the preliminary warrant relation.

$$\text{Warr}_{A,t}^\kappa \subseteq \mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa \times \mathcal{B}_t \times \mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^\kappa. \quad (1)$$

A triple (e, b, q) in Equation 1 means that evidence record e , interpreted under a disclosed bundle of normative premises b , is provisionally offered as warrant for a practical-reason claim q concerning A . The relation is intentionally nonfunctional: several incompatible conclusions may remain admissible, some premise bundles may yield no settled result, and an input can fall outside the relation's defined domain. The definition neither proves the moral validity of b nor makes the premises jointly coherent. Those matters require explicit argument and criticism; the word *warrant* here names an auditable claim of justification, subject to challenge.

The types in Equation 1 also discipline common inference errors. A manifestation alone is not already a value judgment; an observer’s value judgment is not already a moral duty; and a moral duty is not already lawful or institutionally delegated authority. If a volunteer infers that a recipient’s distress demands immediate personal intervention, a defensible record should distinguish the evidence supporting distress, the premises assigning urgency, the availability of safer competent responders, the recipient’s expressed will, and reasons for assigning the obligation to this volunteer. The formal interface provides places for those arguments; it supplies none of their answers by fiat.

A modest non-entailment follows from the interface’s type discipline. Fix one admissible descriptive record e and consider two competing premise bundles b_1 and b_2 that differ about the conditions under which aid becomes required or about the priority of consent. Both can interpret the same history without agreeing on the moral status of an intervention. The descriptive record alone therefore underdetermines the practical conclusion within this model. This is a logical limitation of the proposed interface, not an argument that moral truth is impossible or that competing ethical premises are equally defensible. An inquiry may give reasons to reject one premise bundle or to refine the factual record.

The formalism is deliberately minimal. It does not yet define a comprehensive feasible-action domain, deliberative procedure, priority rule, or full account of answerability; those are tasks for subsequent sections. Nor does it treat the evidence record as objectively complete. A stable register can omit unrecognized subjects or exclude claims through intake design. Apparent robustness across premise bundles is therefore weaker when the same evidential omission persists in each comparison, a problem already exposed by Paper VI’s claim-selection analysis.

3.9 Two Historical Diagnostics for Action Provenance

Two hypothetical configurations illustrate the work performed by the inherited architecture. They are diagnostic constructions, not empirical case studies or advice for a particular institution. Their comparison holds some visible features constant while varying the relations needed for ethical appraisal.

A referral produced through contested interpretation. A recipient communicates an ambiguous need to a volunteer through a coordinator. The coordinator assigns a standardized category and directs the volunteer to make a referral. The recipient later explains that the categorization omitted an urgent practical constraint. A dyadic record containing only a request and a referral could make the volunteer’s behavior appear straightforwardly responsive. A three-position reconstruction includes the coordinator’s translation, institutional classification, the volunteer’s access to information, and the recipient’s opportunities for correction. The referral’s action provenance may be shared across those positions, with different modes of contribution. The ethical question then concerns what the volunteer could reasonably investigate, whether correction was feasible, and who had legitimate authority to select a response. The recipient’s later report warrants re-examination of the descriptive record; it does not automatically establish culpability by each participant.

An accompaniment relation with delayed reliance. At an earlier stage, a volunteer accepts a recurring accompaniment arrangement. The recipient gradually ceases to seek alternative arrangements. At a later stage, the volunteer experiences serious exhaustion and informs the coordinator of an intention to withdraw. The visible act of withdrawal can be identical in two hypothetical histories, while the provenance of the recipient’s reliance differs. In one history, the service provided clear advance notice that volunteers might rotate and maintained an accessible substitute process. In the other, the organization actively discouraged alternative arrangements and presented the volunteer as a guaranteed permanent contact. The source of expectations, the reliability of assurances, available transition arrangements, and the burdens of continued service become crucial to practical judgment. A duty of reasonable transition may be defensible in some versions of the case; indefinite compulsory service does not follow from the mere fact that reliance developed.

The examples also illustrate temporal epistemic revision. Initial observers can misidentify the operative third position or treat reliance as a direct product of one volunteer's conduct. Subsequent records may show a different distribution of causal contributions, and historical arrangements may themselves have changed. A revised provenance reconstruction should prompt review of the moral appraisal while preserving the difference between a new factual finding and a new normative premise. Neither configuration yields a single ethical verdict solely from its structural description.

3.10 Scope of Inheritance and the Subsequent Ethical Formalism

The inherited GR architecture supplies a disciplined way to reconstruct the subject, relation, act, manifestation, procedure, and history relevant to practical judgment. Its strongest contribution to an ethics of volunteering is methodological: it reveals where an explanation of what occurred ends and where a justification of what should be done begins. Action provenance identifies contributors, role tracking identifies historical continuities, and epistemic reconstruction clarifies what an agent could have known under specified conditions. These results are necessary inputs for some ethical arguments, yet their sufficiency for any particular conclusion remains open to reasoned criticism.

Several limits constrain the present proposal. The labelled-complex and algebraic apparatus of Papers I–III is a possible representation, with no claim to ultimate ontology. The present section uses only the portions needed to preserve type and historical provenance; it does not construct a new operator algebra or dynamical field. Its normative premise bundles are placeholders for substantive ethical arguments rather than hidden scoring functions. The record may omit affected persons, distribute agency inadequately, misclassify refusals, or lack the counterfactual evidence needed to assign causal contribution. Ethical verdicts issued from such a record should disclose uncertainty and allow revision.

The account also retains distinctions that will remain important when later papers extend beyond ordinary human aid. Stable relational tracking, evidenced distress, credible claims of suffering, moral standing, institutional personhood, and legal jurisdiction are analytically separate objects. Paper VII will not assume that a procedure developed for human volunteers automatically assigns comparable duties toward artificial or alien agents. The heterogeneous-subject papers will examine the additional ontological, normative, and legal arguments that those questions require.

Section 4 develops a typed ethical-situation record containing acting and affected positions, option-feasibility assessments, evidence, commitments, institutional constraints, and temporal context. The subsequent ethical analyses justify and test candidate duties, permissions, intervention boundaries, and historically acquired responsibilities. The inheritance established here is consequently both enabling and restrictive: the GR descriptive framework makes relationally situated moral reasons examinable, while moral appraisal remains dependent on explicit premises, reasonable evidence, and ongoing contestation by those affected.

4 Ethical Situations: Agents, Affected Subjects, Options, and Temporal Contexts

An ethics of volunteer intervention requires a unit of analysis that preserves the historical and epistemic conditions of an agent's practical choice. This section constructs a preliminary *ethical-situation record* for that purpose. Its objective is to specify the acting positions, potentially affected subjects, candidate options, evidence, commitments, capacities, and temporal circumstances that may bear on an ethical assessment, while keeping descriptive feasibility distinct from moral permissibility. The argument first defines a typed record, then examines the incompleteness of subject and option registers, the status of feasibility judgments, and changes over time. Two controlled hypothetical examples and an explicit account of evidential limitations test the construction. The method is conceptual and formal: the record is a proposed analytical interface, neither an empirical representation of a particular institution nor a decision algorithm.

The need for such an interface follows from a familiar contrast in practice. A volunteer may possess the physical capacity to undertake a requested task while lacking the requisite competence or authorization. A coordinator may have legitimate authority to arrange a referral while lacking a defensible basis to override the recipient’s refusal. A person may be willing to help yet be unable to continue because earlier commitments and present exhaustion have changed the available courses of action. These differences concern the constitution of the situation in which judgment occurs. The conditional warrant relation of Section 3.8 provides a place for reasons directed to an agent; the present section defines the structured inputs over which those reasons are to be assessed.

4.1 The Ethical-Situation Record and Its Analytical Types

Fix an agent-position A , a historical stage t , and an observational and analytical resolution κ . An agent-position identifies a participant whose practical conduct is under assessment; it may correspond to an individual volunteer, coordinator, or a distributed role requiring further individuation. A record at resolution κ includes distinctions that the inquiry can presently sustain rather than a complete inventory of the underlying relational world. Equation 2 introduces the preliminary situation type.

$$\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^{\kappa} = (A, \mathcal{U}_t^{\kappa}, \mathcal{H}_{\leq t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{E}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa, \text{commit}}, \Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \hat{\mathcal{F}}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa}). \quad (2)$$

The components of Equation 2 have distinct types. In particular, the commitment register $\mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa, \text{commit}}$ is a local ethical-audit object and must be distinguished from the history-bearing subject carrier $\mathcal{K}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ inherited from Paper I. $\mathcal{U}_t^{\kappa}$ is a *represented-subject register*: a provisional collection of affected, acting, witnessing, representing, and potentially absent positions that have entered the analysis. $\mathcal{H}_{\leq t}^{\kappa}$ records a finite, revisable account of relevant relational and institutional histories through t . $\mathcal{E}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ denotes accessible evidence attributed to A under specified access conditions, with uncertainty and provenance attached where available. $\mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa, \text{commit}}$ records undertakings, assurances, assignments, and acknowledged reliance, each tagged by its historical and evidential status. $\Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ collects *represented options* for conduct at this resolution. $\hat{\mathcal{F}}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ is a partial evidential appraisal of the feasibility of those options, and $\mathcal{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ records relevant capacities, resources, time constraints, organizational rules, and claims of authority. These components can depend upon one another: a recipient’s manifestation can alter the represented-subject register; a new historical record can change the interpretation of a commitment; and a discovered referral resource can expand the options under consideration.

Equation 2 is a *schema*, not a claim that every component is naturally bounded or objectively enumerable. The record is deliberately indexed by a participant, historical stage, and resolution because what is manifest, knowable, feasible, or recognized may differ for another agent and may change later. The representation’s usefulness depends on an accompanying explanation of its inclusion rules, missing data, and types. Treating the tuple as an exhaustive or ontologically fundamental description would exceed its stated evidential purpose.

4.2 Acting Positions, Distributed Agency, and Practical Address

The address of a practical reason must specify who can respond to it. A volunteer is often the most visible actor, but a recipient, translator, supervisor, administrator, or collaborating service can shape the available conduct without occupying the same position. The type A refers to the locus of appraisal in a particular inquiry. An investigation may construct separate records for several agents in the same history, and should not assume that these records agree in their available evidence, commitments, or options.

One volunteer may directly observe an apparent need, another may know of a clinical or safeguarding restriction, and a coordinator may be able to activate a competent service. Their abilities and organizational positions differ even when a common manifestation is accessible to all three. Attributing a practical reason to one of them requires more than showing that the relevant intervention was possible somewhere in the organization. It requires a defensible account of the agent’s standing, available alternatives, burdens, and access to a legitimate course of response.

Collective and distributed agency introduces an additional problem. An organization may maintain a schedule, training process, or referral pathway across changes in personnel. A failure can emerge through several locally reasonable actions whose combination is harmful. The record should preserve a process-level history while locating each proposed agent-specific responsibility in the relevant role and evidential circumstances. The existence of shared causal contribution, which Papers I–III seek to reconstruct, is a distinct question from moral accountability. Separate records may consequently attribute different practical reasons to the volunteer, coordinator, and organization, with an interface for analyzing the dependencies among them. Section 3.5 supplies the inherited provenance distinction needed for this reconstruction.

The subject occupying A may also change over a prolonged engagement. Competence can develop, exhaustion can accumulate, delegated authority can expire, and a role can be transferred. Maintaining a single historical identifier is useful for tracing responsibility across stages, provided that the inquiry records the changed capacities and institutional conditions associated with that identifier. This is the practical-ethical significance of continuity without presuming an unchanging agent.

4.3 Affected Subjects, Recognition, and Incomplete Registers

A potentially affected subject is a participant whose interests, opportunities, exposure to risk, standing, or practical relations might be altered by the candidate course of conduct, under an explicitly stated theory of relevance. This definition is intentionally provisional. It does not treat registration as the source of moral standing. The set $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ records those represented in the inquiry; it cannot certify that other affected subjects do not exist. An individual may be unrepresented because of an inaccessible language, a restrictive eligibility category, a hidden relationship of dependency, or a prior institutional choice about what constitutes a reportable need.

A recipient occupies a particularly important position because the proposed act may affect the person's agency as well as material welfare. The relevant fields can include expressions of preference, communications of refusal, accessibility of alternatives, privacy interests, testimony, and the circumstances of any surrogate representation. The presence of a recorded preference has evidential significance; its normative force depends on the validity and interpretation of the communication, context of consent, and applicable ethical premises. A category assigned by a coordinator should remain linked to its provenance and the recipient's capacity to correct it.

Other affected subjects can include caregivers, family members, other recipients waiting for scarce resources, fellow volunteers, staff who must repair an intervention, and people excluded by a protocol before they enter an intake register. The category of affected subject does not itself resolve how competing interests ought to be weighed. Its function is to identify whose interests could be neglected when assessing the situation and to make challenges to the analysis possible.

An ethical record can therefore appear determinate while remaining systematically incomplete. Consider an intake procedure that counts only requests submitted through a written online form. The record may accurately describe the forms received and the volunteer hours assigned while omitting applicants who cannot access the form. A comparison of options restricted to recorded applicants can generate a coherent answer to a restricted problem and still fail to examine morally relevant exclusions. This is a problem of *coverage*, separate from errors about registered persons. The missing-claim problem in Paper VI and the epistemic limits described in Section 3.4 offer related, though nonidentical, diagnoses.

4.4 Option Individuation: Intervention, Referral, Restraint, and Omission

The candidate option family $\Omega_{A,t}^\kappa$ consists of courses of conduct that the analysis has identified as potentially relevant to the agent at stage t . An option is indexed by its intended object, temporal window, procedural role, and the available description of the action or omission. Options can include undertaking direct aid, seeking clarification, referral, communicating an inability to assist, protective escalation, delaying for reliable information, declining a requested act, changing an existing undertaking, or coor-

dinating a transition. An omission needs a specified opportunity and relevant temporal boundary before an attribution such as *failure to act* becomes analytically meaningful.

Option individuation requires sensitivity to relational consequences. “Make a referral” can mean furnishing general contact information, actively obtaining a recipient’s permission to share details, sending identifying information without consent, or arranging a supervised handoff. The apparent action label may hide distinct implications for privacy, continuity, and access to assistance. Likewise, “withdraw from accompaniment” covers a communicated transition and an unexplained failure to attend; these choices differ through the historical commitments and opportunities to mitigate foreseeable harm.

The option family is not taken to be a universal menu. Some alternatives may remain unknown, depend on unavailable third parties, or be created through deliberation. The possibility of asking for assistance from a trained supervisor illustrates this generative feature: the volunteer’s initial options may be limited until a new institutional relationship becomes active. Candidate descriptions can also overlap or belong to different temporal resolutions. A defensible comparison therefore specifies what counts as a distinct course of conduct, which consequences are attributed to it, and which dependencies the inquiry treats as material.

An option’s inclusion does not imply its permissibility. An analyst may represent an unauthorized intervention precisely in order to understand its risks and to argue against it. Equally, a refusal or omission is not automatically permissible just because it is recorded as an available course of conduct. Section 5 constructs a deontic assessment from explicitly stated ethical grounds. At the present stage, the record captures alternatives while keeping their moral status open.

4.5 Partial Feasibility and Evidential Accessibility

A situated agent may be able to perform an act physically yet lack the relevant training, time, equipment, permission, communication access, or supportive organization needed to perform it responsibly. Distinctions among *physical possibility*, *practical executability*, *institutional authorization*, and *ethical permissibility* are thus central. Their extension can differ: an intervention may be practically executable but institutionally prohibited, or institutionally delegated while physically inaccessible at the moment of need. Determining which distinction is relevant is part of specifying the ethical question.

The preliminary model treats practical feasibility as a *partially evidenced* predicate rather than an objectively complete relation. Equation 3 defines the representational convention; 1 means that feasibility is supported under disclosed background conditions, 0 means that infeasibility is supported under those conditions, and an undefined value means that the record is inconclusive.

$$\hat{F}_{A,t}^{\kappa} : \Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa} \rightarrow \{0, 1\}. \quad (3)$$

This partial function represents a settled *classification within the current evidential record*, subject to revision. When credible evidence supports both feasibility and infeasibility under incompatible assumptions, the assumptions should be separated into distinct scenario specifications or the function left undefined until the discrepancy is resolved. If a task is feasible only after third-party agreement, that contingency belongs in the option specification or its supporting evidence. Equation 3 therefore cannot prove objective possibility, and the absence of a value cannot be equated with impossibility. Nor does the classification 1 entail legal authority or normative permission.

A further distinction concerns an agent’s awareness. A route to assistance might have been materially available in the setting while remaining inaccessible to the volunteer’s knowledge at t . Retrospective evaluation may properly incorporate subsequently recovered evidence, but attribution of blame for earlier choices requires a separate account of what the agent could reasonably have investigated. The analyst should distinguish the evidence actually accessible then, the evidence that should have been accessible under justified standards of inquiry, and what later investigators have learned.

Feasibility judgments also depend on burdens. A volunteer may be physically capable of accompanying someone overnight while having commitments to dependents, exhaustion, or safety constraints that render the act unreasonable to demand. Whether such burdens make an option infeasible or only morally

burdensome depends on the locally declared definition of feasibility; collapsing these judgments obscures the need for ethical argument. This paper adopts a relatively narrow sense of practical executability and records burdens separately for normative appraisal. The candidate option may remain executable while ethically unjustified, supererogatory, or impermissibly imposed.

4.6 Temporal Windows, Commitments, and Relational Path Dependence

The stage index t marks a historical location in an evolving relationship, not merely a timestamp associated with a static choice. An ethical situation inherits previous assurances, disclosed information, resource commitments, and changes in dependency. Its relevance is both retrospective and prospective. Earlier undertakings can alter what others reasonably expect; later developments can change which consequences are foreseeable, while a future reassessment may uncover evidence inaccessible at the time.

The history component $\mathcal{H}_{\leq t}^\kappa$ represents this temporal conditioning. The commitment register $\mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa, \text{commit}}$ is separated from the broader history for analytical convenience: it records when a promise was made, how it was understood, whether it was modified, the parties' reliance, and the evidence for each attribution. Inclusion does not establish that the promise created an enforceable moral duty. Relevant normative premises include voluntary validity, foreseeable reliance, proportionality of demand, reasonable exit, and competing obligations to third parties. The difference between an undertaking and its morally justified consequences remains necessary at each later stage.

Practical time also has multiple granularities. A protective response may require action within minutes; a transition from a long-running service may require notice over days; changes to volunteer staffing or eligibility classifications can unfold over months. An immediate decision can have long-term effects on a recipient's alternatives or on other volunteers' distribution of burdens. A decision rule that examines only present outcomes risks overlooking historically sedimented dependencies. Conversely, a demand justified solely through previous reliance can disregard emerging safety limits and the feasibility of responsible transition.

Situations may branch through actions that produce new choices. A phone call can establish that a qualified responder is available; a clarification request can reveal that a presumed need was incorrectly interpreted; a communication of intended withdrawal can permit a coordinator to arrange continuity. Such acts are ethically relevant partly because they transform subsequent information and option sets. The schema permits stage-specific updates rather than insisting that a single fixed menu describe the entire evolving relationship.

4.7 Capacities, Institutional Constraints, and Claims of Authority

The constraint component $\mathcal{C}_{A,t}^\kappa$ collects statements concerning training, material resources, risk exposure, available supervision, role descriptions, scheduling, and claims of delegation. Their evidential and institutional status should be explicit. A training certificate is evidence of a qualification under a specified scheme; its relevance to an unfamiliar procedure depends on the task and the scheme's scope. A supervisor's direction is evidence of an organizational instruction; its moral or legal validity requires examination of the institutional context and applicable norms. The record should preserve the origin and limitations of these claims.

Capacity and authority can diverge. A medically trained volunteer may possess technical knowledge but lack authorization to provide particular care within the relevant service. A coordinator may possess scheduling authority while lacking the skill needed for a clinical assessment. A recipient may be able to decide whether personal information is shared even when the recipient cannot personally provide a requested service. Identifying these distinct positions reduces the risk of inferring authority from expertise, or expertise from role allocation. Jurisdiction-specific legal conditions require verified legal analysis and remain outside this preliminary ethical record.

Constraints themselves can be subjects of ethical evaluation. An inaccessible intake design may create apparent scarcity by excluding persons who would otherwise request assistance. A scheduling policy may make a recipient depend on a single volunteer, then shift the burden of continuity entirely to

that person. Recording such policies as background conditions is useful for agent-specific deliberation, but treating them as morally fixed would reproduce an institutional judgment within the model. The relevant problem can require several situation records: one for the volunteer’s immediate decision and another for the coordinator or institution whose choices structure that decision.

4.8 Three-Level Interpretation and Conditional Ethical Appraisal

The three-level GR distinction disciplines interpretation of the proposed situation. At the level of *ontological reality*, ultimate questions concerning freedom, moral agency, conscious experience, and the status of relations remain suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, the analyst provisionally models historically efficacious subjects, role structures, capacities, institutional arrangements, commitments, and changes in the accessibility of options. At the level of *manifestation reality*, messages, requests, refusals, observable actions, schedules, records, and expressions of need render aspects of those relations accessible to participants and investigators. Each component of Equation 2 is an analytical representation whose evidential access is mediated by manifestation. Epistemic inference does not constitute another level of reality.

The layers remain relevant to each principal ethical object. A volunteer’s *capacity* may be relationally constituted through training and available support while being manifested through certificates, successful procedures, or the testimony of supervisors. A *recipient’s refusal* may be communicated through a gesture, constrained by dependencies in the relation, and subject to unsettled philosophical questions about volition. An *option* may have relationally real pathways even when the present record cannot access them. A *commitment* can be historically established and evidenced by correspondence while its moral validity continues to depend on reasons not settled by either its existence or its manifestation.

The proposed tuple is situated on the descriptive and evidential side of ethical appraisal. Conditional normative premises enter through the warrant relation of Equation 1. Given a situation record and a premise bundle, an inquiry may ask whether there are reasons for a specified option, whether the premises are defensible, and whose standing is recognized in that assessment. A robust record can still support several incompatible practical conclusions when normative foundations are contested. The present architecture preserves that possibility; it does not encode permission, prohibition, or obligation directly in the feasibility function or in an organizational designation.

This separation also clarifies a possible misunderstanding of generativity. A course of conduct can sustain an aid relationship or expand a person’s effective choices, yet require independent examination of consent, fairness, distribution of burdens, and respect for refusal. Equally, a temporary rupture may be ethically justified when an existing pattern imposes unacceptable costs or unauthorized authority. Historical relational efficacy can inform ethical reasoning without functioning as a universal standard of the good.

4.9 Finite Diagnostics: A Mediated Referral and a Changing Commitment

Two constructed cases test the situation record’s capacity to distinguish different questions that a simpler act-level description could merge. They represent possible configurations of volunteer support without claims about actual institutions. Table 4 identifies their principal variables and the observations that might alter a tentative practical appraisal.

Mediated referral with incomplete subject recognition. A person communicates a need through a coordinator, who translates the account into an administrative category. A volunteer sees only the category and a direction to refer the person to another service. The analyst’s initial record lists the volunteer as A , the identified recipient and coordinator in $\mathcal{U}_t^k$, a limited evidence register, and candidate options including direct referral, clarification, and requesting supervisory review. The feasibility of direct referral may appear supported, while the feasibility of clarification remains undetermined because the coordinator’s availability is unknown. Later, the person reports that the translation omitted a practical risk and that the

Table 4: Diagnostic changes in ethical-situation records. The variables indicate questions to investigate, not conclusions about duties or wrongdoing.

Hypothetical situation	Record components in tension	Uncertainty to investigate	Normative issue reserved for appraisal
Mediated referral	Acting position, recipient register, interpreted request, option set, authority claims	Translation accuracy, recipient correction, accessible referral, consent to disclosure	Responsibilities to clarify, refer, protect privacy, and respond to urgency
Changing accompaniment	Prior assurances, reliance, volunteer capacity, exit options, institutional arrangements	Who assured continuity, available replacement, burden and risk, notice opportunities	Scope of transition duties and justified withdrawal

proposed service cannot be accessed. The relevant situation record changes in its evidence, apparent feasibility, and potentially the affected-subject register if other dependents are revealed. The earlier referral may remain a causally identifiable act without permitting a moral verdict on the volunteer’s knowledge or obligations until the evidential and normative questions are addressed.

Accompaniment amid changing capacity and reliance. A volunteer has accompanied a recipient for several months. A coordinator has previously described the arrangement as dependable; the recipient accordingly reduces alternative arrangements. The volunteer develops severe fatigue and wishes to discontinue. The record retains the undertaking and the histories producing reliance, while representing options such as immediate withdrawal, scheduled notice, supervised handoff, limited continuation, and a request for organizational replacement. Practical executability differs among these options and may remain uncertain. If no replacement exists, a plan proposed in good faith might become materially unavailable. If the coordinator had guaranteed continuity on behalf of the organization, the institution may be a significant source of the reliance, altering the assignment of prospective responsibilities. The model identifies the changing fields; it does not derive an indefinite duty of service from the existence of reliance.

The two examples demonstrate a useful asymmetry. An apparently minor evidential correction may materially change which act is described as responsive; a substantial historical commitment may coexist with a present limit on what can reasonably be demanded. They also show how a single person can be an acting agent in one record and an affected subject in another. This flexibility supports historical and multi-position evaluation without converting every difficulty into a numerical trade-off. The ethical importance of these changes still requires arguments that the record has been designed to disclose.

4.10 Coverage Tests, Counterfactuals, and Limits of the Situation Schema

The proposed record offers three immediate tests for research integrity. A *coverage test* asks whose interests, testimony, and practical options may have been excluded by the rules constructing $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ and $\Omega_{A,t}^\kappa$. A *provenance test* asks how evidential descriptions, accepted undertakings, capability statements, and organizational instructions were produced and by whom. A *counterfactual sensitivity test* asks whether plausible changes in a missing fact, a feasible alternative, a historical assurance, or a normative premise would alter a provisional appraisal. Passing one test does not establish the adequacy of the other two. Repeating the same analysis with identical exclusions can produce stable yet misleading results.

Several limitations are substantive. The record does not prescribe a universal subject boundary, a complete semantics for omission, or a final ontology of agency. Its feasibility function is intentionally partial and resolution-dependent. The historical register may omit weakly documented relations, while an evidence record can carry distortions produced by institutional power. The formal tuple does not by itself establish legitimate authority, obligations, rights, a theory of risk, or a ranking of options. The

model's precision can exceed the available evidence if its components are mistaken for directly observed features of the world. These limitations should accompany any empirical use of the scheme.

The framework also invites a methodological caution concerning formal abstraction. Two histories with the same tuple at a coarse resolution can differ in ethically important respects at a finer resolution. An apparent match therefore establishes only similarity under the selected fields and granularity. Conversely, increasing representational detail is costly and may threaten the privacy of subjects whose experiences are recorded. Research design must justify the marginal ethical and explanatory value of additional information, including its collection burdens and protections. The representation can be revised when affected people question the categories assigned to them.

Section 5 examines types of practical reasons and deontic judgments with the ethical-situation record as a typed input. Subsequent sections will evaluate the normative premises concerning supererogation, vulnerability, competence, consent, promises, and institutional roles. The present contribution is a structured account of *which situation is being assessed*, whose perspectives have entered it, and where uncertainty and historically produced constraints reside. Keeping those questions available for revision is a condition for an accountable preliminary ethics of volunteer intervention.

5 Types of Moral Reasons, Duties, Permissions, and Prohibitions

A preliminary ethics of volunteer intervention requires a vocabulary for practical reasons that can be related to an agent's circumstances without prejudging the final moral status of an act. This section develops such a vocabulary and a conditional representation of deontic positions. Its purpose is to distinguish a consideration that supports or opposes conduct, a proposed obligation, a justified prohibition, and a permission to choose among responses. The analysis first distinguishes reason types, then constructs a typed reason record and a partial deontic assessment, examines conflicting and conditional demands, and tests the framework with two hypothetical situations. The method is conceptual and formal, drawing selectively on philosophical accounts of practical reasons, plural duties, and deontic logic. It supplies an interface for ethical deliberation rather than a complete normative semantics or an automated judgment procedure.

Section 4 establishes an agent- and stage-indexed record of evidence, represented subjects, historically acquired commitments, candidate options, and partial feasibility. Section 3.8 separately introduces a conditional warrant relation from evidence and explicit normative premises to practical-reason claims. The present construction uses both resources. The existence of an action, its expected benefit, the fact of an organizational assignment, and a subject's request can each be relevant to a moral assessment. Their evidential presence does not by itself determine whether the agent has a duty or a permission. That determination requires premises whose authority, application, and possible defeat can be examined.

5.1 The Roles of Practical Reasons in Ethical Assessment

Three uses of reason language should be kept distinct. A *normative reason* is a consideration offered as counting in favor of or against a course of action. A *motivating reason* helps explain the consideration for which an agent acted. An *explanatory consideration* may account for conduct without having guided the actor or morally favored the conduct. These roles overlap in some circumstances, but their distinction is important in evaluating aid [1]. A volunteer may accompany a recipient because the coordinator asked, because companionship matters to the recipient, or because the volunteer anticipates praise. The first can explain organizational compliance, the second may support an ethical reason given appropriate premises, and the third may be motivational evidence without independently justifying the act.

The difference between a reason's existence and its uptake matters when examining responsibility. An agent can act beneficially from objectionable motives; an agent can also act from a sincere concern that rests on inaccurate information. Judgments concerning the quality of deliberation, permissibility of the performed act, effects on recipients, and subsequent accountability therefore require different evidential routes. The GR provenance analysis tracks what entered an agent's manifest field of attention

and how a choice was made. Normative appraisal adds the question whether those considerations actually carried the claimed ethical significance.

The term *pro tanto reason* denotes a consideration that contributes in a particular direction while potentially coexisting with considerations favoring other options. An agent may have a reason to provide prompt assistance and another reason to protect the recipient’s private information. Both can be substantively relevant even if a justified decision gives one of them precedence in a particular situation. The present account treats the practical role of *pro tanto* reasons as open to philosophical contest and declines to prescribe a general numerical weight for them. Its vocabulary is informed by, while remaining distinct from, W. D. Ross’s historically influential analysis of *prima facie* duties and their relation to actual duty [52]. An explicit analysis must establish which premises make a reason salient and how its possible defeat is argued.

A source-specific limit matters for applying this typology. Alvarez and Way survey competing analyses of practical reasons; their classification helps specify the questions that an ethical register must ask, while their exposition provides no criterion for identifying the grounds of an actual recipient’s need. Consider two coordinators who both describe “urgency” as their reason for a disclosure. The first may cite a specific expiring entitlement, the second an organizational target. Their utterances have a comparable grammatical form, but the normative relevance of their considerations depends on distinct evidence and premises. Recording a reason as motivating, explanatory, or potentially normative is therefore a preliminary analytical classification; it supplies neither an evidential endorsement nor a deontic verdict [1].

5.2 The Typed Register of Candidate Moral Reasons

Fix a situation $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ as defined by Equation 2, together with a declared candidate normative premise bundle $B \in \mathcal{B}_t$. Let $\mathcal{G}_B$ be the collection of articulated grounds available under B , for example respect for informed refusal, an undertaking to communicate changes, a defeasible reason of aid, or concern for an unjustifiable transfer of risk. Let $\Sigma = \{\text{fav}, \text{opp}\}$ mark whether an alleged reason favors or opposes the selected option. The proposed *candidate-reason register* is given in Equation 4.

$$\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} \subseteq \mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa \times \Omega_{A,t}^\kappa \times \Sigma \times \mathcal{G}_B \times \mathcal{J}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}. \quad (4)$$

Here $\mathcal{J}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ is a set of *justification and qualification records*: each record states how its evidence is interpreted, how the declared ground is thought to apply, whose interests have been represented, and which defeaters or information gaps remain salient. Thus a tuple $(e, \omega, \sigma, g, j)$ means only that evidence e has been interpreted as supplying a candidate reason of valence σ concerning option ω , under ground g and justification record j . It does not assert that e is exhaustive, g is ultimately sound, or the reason conclusively establishes a duty. Different premise bundles may produce different records over the same situation. The index κ marks the analytic resolution of the represented option and evidence sets.

The register makes at least four distinctions available. First, an agent can possess evidence for a reason without awareness of its significance; what mattered to the agent’s actual deliberation requires a distinct account. Second, a reason can concern the means, timing, or disclosure attached to an option rather than only its intended end. Third, more than one ground may support the same option, while a single ground may oppose several alternatives. Fourth, qualification records can flag a missing subject or an unsupported feasibility claim before the analyst infers a practical status. These distinctions make the proposal more auditably precise without reducing ethical judgment to data registration.

An analyst should also avoid converting the register’s cardinality into moral magnitude. Several separate records might express one underlying reason repeatedly; a single well-supported reason may carry particular moral force. Summing entries would privilege documentation practices and the granularity of the model. The *presence* of a candidate reason is therefore a provisional logical and interpretive result. Priority, comparative stringency, and all-things-considered status require further argument.

5.3 Deontic Positions and the Meaning of Permission

Duties, permissions, prohibitions, and open assessments are different practical conclusions. An *obligation* asserts that an agent is required, relative to a defensible normative account and specified conditions, to perform a course of conduct or secure an acceptable form of response. A *prohibition* asserts that the conduct ought to be excluded. A *permission* asserts that an agent may undertake the conduct, while the question whether one is obligated to undertake it may require further specification. *Optionality* in a stronger sense requires a justified license both to perform and to omit a defined action. In deontic logic these statuses can be connected through formal operators under stipulated axioms, although the interpretation of conflict, agency, and conditional obligation remains disputed [39].

The present framework adopts a narrower partial *certification scheme* to prevent epistemic gaps from masquerading as moral liberties. Equation 5 defines a partial map for a declared premise bundle. Its four outputs mean respectively: a certified requirement, a certified permission with omission also permitted, a certified prohibition, and an assessment whose overall status remains unresolved.

$$\hat{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} : \Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa} \longrightarrow \{\text{Req, Opt, Forb, Und}\}. \quad (5)$$

The map is defined only for a specified assessment procedure and its coverage conditions; Und is an explicit bookkeeping value for insufficiently warranted classification. The three certified outputs express the result of that procedure *conditional on B*, rather than claims of incontrovertible moral truth. A separate, weaker claim that one has not demonstrated a prohibition is insufficient for Opt. Equally, the failure to establish an obligation does not prove that omission is permissible. In the limited model, Req entails conditional permission to perform the required act, while Opt reserves the stronger finding that performance and omission are both permitted. A proposed permission to perform whose omissibility has not been assessed may be described in prose as a *positive permission claim*; the map leaves its combined status at Und until the relevant conclusions are justified. Here *omission* means a separately specified, relevant alternative at the same temporal and practical resolution. A claim that an act is optional therefore requires an argued account of both performance and the feasible alternatives to performance; logical negation of a broad action label is insufficient.

Two assumptions delimit this construction. First, the displayed outputs are mutually exclusive as results of a *coherent completed classification* for the same indexed option and normative specification. Conflicting supported reason claims can exist in $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ without producing two simultaneous certified outputs. Second, the represented options must be individuated at a resolution that permits the relevant comparisons. If an “intervention” combines authorized translation and unauthorized disclosure, its components may need distinct options. Neither assumption follows automatically from GR ontology; both are methodological choices open to challenge and refinement. In particular, morally irresolvable dilemmas may resist the single-status scheme and require an explicit conflict-tolerant extension. The current draft treats such instances as Und, recording the unresolved rival claims in the reason register. The tag Und is an output of an evidentially bounded certification procedure: it covers at least inconsistency in defended requirements, reasoned incomparability, insufficient support, and gaps in subject or option coverage. These explanations must remain distinct in the accompanying justification record; an unclassified action is not certified as morally neutral.

A counterexample exposes a further limitation of deontic certification. Imagine that a recipient approves a volunteer’s ordinary visit while withholding permission for audio recording. Evidence that the visit is permissible offers no certification for the composite action “visit while recording,” even when the recording might improve a service report. Conversely, if the volunteer’s participation remains morally optional, the absence of an obligation to make the visit cannot establish permission to record it. The option descriptions, affected interests, and normative grounds must be held fixed throughout an inference. Treating the alternatives as different merely by changing the wording of one action would make the status map unstable. Philosophical deontic logics differ on how permissions are defined and on which inferences remain valid in contrary-to-duty circumstances [39]. Accordingly, the paper’s four outputs are certificates relative to an explicit argument and assessment specification; they provide neither a com-

plete normative semantics nor a shortcut from “no known prohibition” to “justified authorization.” A failed attempt at classification should record which premise, factual determination, or alternative-action assessment is missing.

5.4 Positive, Negative, and Relationally Acquired Duties

A moral requirement can direct an agent to undertake a positive act, avoid an injurious act, maintain an accepted assurance, or implement a suitable remedy after a failure. These are analytically distinct *forms of practical direction*, while their moral legitimacy depends on substantive premises. The requirement to refrain from disclosing identifying details may apply to a volunteer who has access to a personal record. An obligation to explain a delay may arise when a specific promise or reasonable reliance has been established. A duty to respond to urgent need may be argued under particular assumptions about seriousness, competence, opportunity cost, and the distribution of responsibility. None of these grounds needs to be translated into a single quantitative objective.

The distinction between a reason of nonmaleficence and a prohibition can be especially important. A risky intervention may provide significant immediate benefit and also create a *pro tanto* reason against exposing a recipient to unconsented risk. Calling the intervention prohibited requires a further account of what kinds of risk, consent deficiency, or role overreach justify exclusion. By the same logic, the ethical importance of need does not directly entail that a particular volunteer must perform the requested service. An agent may have reason to initiate competent referral, seek clarification, or activate a collective safeguard when direct action lies beyond competence or legitimate standing.

The acquisition of obligations through voluntary entry also has a temporal structure. An offer creates an opportunity for cooperation; a valid undertaking and the resulting reliance may alter the moral significance of later withdrawal. The strength and addressee of such obligations depend on who made which undertaking, the foreseeability of reliance, whether alternatives were accessible, and the agent’s present capacities. Sections 2 and 4.2 already distinguish the volunteer’s commitment from the institution’s responsibilities. A single interpersonal tie should therefore not be used to transfer every organizational burden indefinitely to an individual volunteer. Section 6 examines the limits of reasonable demands, while Section 13 assesses the grounds and scope of acquired obligations.

5.5 Conflicting Reasons and All-Things-Considered Judgment

The occurrence of reasons with opposing valences is ordinary within volunteer support. A recipient’s wish for privacy can favor restraint in sharing a case description, while a concern about imminent harm may favor a narrowly tailored disclosure to a competent responder. Both reasons can have genuine normative force under independently defensible premises. The conclusion depends on further questions: the severity and probability of the risk, whether the recipient understands the consequences, the minimum information required, available alternatives, and who holds the authority to decide. The analysis must identify the level at which the conflict occurs. Sometimes two grounds support different *means* toward a compatible protective end; sometimes the same option has opposing ethical features; and sometimes agents disagree about the governing principles themselves.

Ross’s pluralistic account provides a historically important model for retaining several *prima facie* considerations while appraising actual duties in a situation [52]. The proposed GR formalism takes from that discussion the methodological importance of preserving distinct moral grounds. It neither attributes its typed records to Ross nor adopts his full metaethical account. In particular, the existence of several *pro tanto* reasons provides no formal theorem establishing which one prevails. A completion rule would require a defensible normative theory, a specified domain of options, information adequate to the case, and explicit conditions for overriding or accommodating reasons. Different theories can legitimately contest the structure of such a rule.

There can also be conflicts over *who* must respond. A volunteer’s limited ability may support a reason to notify a supervisor, while a coordinator has the capacity to arrange an accessible replacement.

Multiple agent-indexed records are then required, since the organization’s failure cannot be fully understood by evaluating only the volunteer’s options. Incomplete claim visibility complicates the picture further: a formal comparison can be internally coherent while excluding an unregistered dependent or a person unable to make a request. The coverage tests developed in Section 4.10 therefore apply to deontic conclusions as well as to descriptive records.

5.6 Conditional Obligations and Responses after Failure

A conditional duty can concern how a participant should behave given that an earlier undertaking is fulfilled, revised, or breached. Imagine that a volunteer promises to accompany a person to an appointment. Under specified moral premises, the volunteer may have a reason to attend as promised. If a new constraint makes attendance unavailable, other reasons become salient: prompt notice, truthful explanation, consent-respecting coordination with a substitute, and measures to reduce avoidable reliance-related harm. The emergence of these secondary considerations neither automatically cancels the earlier obligation nor establishes that impossible performance remains currently required. A careful assessment describes the change in the situation and identifies the conditions under which an altered duty arises.

The distinction has a formal motivation. Classical deontic representations of conditional obligations can yield counterintuitive conclusions when an agent violates an earlier obligation, a family of problems illustrated by Chisholm-type examples [39]. Our proposal does not adopt a standard unary deontic calculus or use a material implication as the semantics of moral conditions. A situation indexed after nonperformance, $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t+1}^\kappa$, is assessed under its actual historical evidence and declared norms. The primary undertaking remains in $\mathcal{H}_{\leq t+1}^\kappa$ and $\mathcal{K}_{A,t+1}^\kappa$ as appropriate, while secondary reason claims concern the newly available options. An independent argument must establish whether a remedial requirement is owed, by whom, and on what grounds.

This separation also prevents automatic moral exculpation through organizational reassignment. When a volunteer transfers a case to another unit, the original role may end, but an uncommunicated or knowingly ineffective handoff can preserve residual obligations under suitable premises. Conversely, a well-executed transition may be ethically adequate even if the same individual cannot continue providing service. The relevant object is the quality and status of the transition under the actual normative and institutional conditions, not the unlimited persistence of an earlier task description. The theory remains preliminary: it does not claim to resolve the general logical problem of contrary-to-duty conditionals.

5.7 Supererogation, Moral Latitude, and Reasonable Demands

Volunteer action makes the distinction between praiseworthy conduct and obligatory conduct especially salient. An agent might offer exceptional assistance under conditions where either ordinary participation or respectful withdrawal remains permissible. Whether an act is *supererogatory* depends on a defensible account of what is morally required, the act’s value, the agent’s capacities and costs, and the permissible alternatives. The philosophical concept is contested [23]; the present framework records it as a possible conclusion supported by an independent ethical argument. It cannot be inferred from unpaid status, emotional intensity, observed generosity, or a favorable result alone.

A common difficulty concerns moral over-demandingness. An institution may celebrate voluntary devotion while quietly relying on continued unpaid labor to sustain essential services. The same arrangement may be experienced as meaningful by a volunteer, helpful by a recipient, and unfairly burdensome when the institution places all continuity expectations on that person. The ethics of volunteering should examine such interactions without treating the volunteer’s willingness as a permanent waiver of self-regarding considerations. Conversely, the recognition of limits need not deny that unusual sacrifices can have genuine moral worth. The challenge is to justify the boundary between an admirable optional response and an action required under the situation’s particular conditions.

An ethical model must also permit cases where an agent has defensible discretion over means. Two different referral routes may be adequately safe, consent-respecting, and competent. The grounds that

support them may be partly incommensurable while still permitting both. A theory that forces one numerical optimum would obscure legitimate plurality; a theory that declares both permitted merely because it has failed to assess them would obscure the difference between moral latitude and epistemic incompleteness. The classification in Equation 5 retains this distinction, while leaving substantive principles of sufficiency, burden, and reasonable care to later sections.

5.8 Authority, Institutional Rules, and the Scope of Moral Status

A moral reason for a particular response can coexist with organizational restrictions on the agent's role or jurisdictional limits on what the agent is legally permitted to do. These domains require separate interpretation. A volunteer may have a strong moral reason to secure urgent assistance while lacking professional authorization to deliver a specialized treatment personally. The morally relevant alternatives may include summoning competent staff, sustaining a safe environment within role boundaries, and communicating information with appropriate protections. An institutional direction can help define a participant's operative tasks, yet the direction remains independently assessable in light of recipient rights, safety, privacy, and moral grounds.

The partial map in Equation 5 is indexed by a *moral* premise bundle. It does not classify legal rights, professional permissions, or an organization's disciplinary authority by fiat. Such questions may be represented through additional, separately justified normative predicates with their own sources and applicable conditions. A reported policy is evidence of a policy's existence; assessing its fairness or legality requires distinct arguments. For an agent facing apparently incompatible instructions, the inquiry should first reconstruct which obligations are genuinely addressed to that agent, whose authority is operative, what alternatives remain possible, and whether the perceived conflict depends on a mistaken scope attribution.

The proposed distinction extends to recipients. A recipient's consent is ethically significant, but the validity and reach of that consent depend on the proposed act, information, communicative conditions, and surrounding dependencies. A request made under severe pressure may raise questions concerning the voluntary character of authorization. The agent may also encounter competing reasons to respect refusal and prevent serious harm. Treating moral competence, practical ability, and an institutionally assigned role as the same property would foreclose precisely the examination that an ethics of intervention requires. The provisional deontic classifications should remain capable of revision when that examination reveals an omitted consideration.

5.9 Three-Level Interpretation and Historical Updating

The three GR reality levels organize what is asserted about the moral-reason register without settling the truth of normative propositions. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate metaphysical grounds of freedom, obligation, moral agency, and normativity remain open. At the level of *relational reality*, historically constituted undertakings, capacities, dependencies, decision procedures, and patterns of expectation may have identifiable effects on what agents can do and how their actions affect others. At the level of *manifestation reality*, requests, promises, refusals, messages, visible risks, and organizational records present aspects of those relations to observers. Normative principles supply an independent axis of justification to claims constructed with these levels; epistemic interpretation is a method of access, not a fourth ontological level.

A normatively relevant change can occur at several points in a history. New evidence may reveal that a proposed benefit depended on a mistranslation. A valid undertaking may create reliance where none existed previously. Fatigue may reduce the volunteer's ability to meet a commitment; an institutional replacement may restore a practical alternative. The same candidate option, written in ordinary language, can therefore have a different evidential and normative profile at stages t and $t + 1$. The indexes on $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ and $\widehat{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ are intended to expose this changing structure. An altered assessment need not indicate that morality itself has changed; sometimes the evidence, option individuation, or premise selection has changed. The investigation should identify which modification explains the result.

Table 5: Conditional moral-reason diagnostics. Each row is a hypothetical configuration; listed grounds identify candidate reasons and additional evidence needed before a final status is assigned.

Situation	Candidate grounds	Open factual or normative conditions	Status question
Sensitive referral	Need for prompt assistance; privacy; consent; competent escalation	Nature of risk, permitted disclosure, access to a safe referral, recipient interpretation	Whether limited disclosure is required, optional, or prohibited under a justified premise bundle
Interrupted accompaniment	Fidelity to assurances; reliance; present capacity; responsibility to transition	Source of promise, notice window, feasible replacement, changing burden	Whether continued presence, notice, handoff, or withdrawal is required or permitted

A more demanding case arises when the historically accepted normative premises are themselves contested. An institutional practice may once have treated volunteers' unpaid availability as an implicit commitment to continual service. The practice's persistence can be reconstructed as a relational fact, while its legitimacy remains open to philosophical challenge. The formal framework therefore retains a premise-bundle index rather than treating the most stable historical norm as automatically justified. A comparative investigation should record rival bundles and the practical differences they generate, with careful attention to whose testimony shaped each bundle.

5.10 Finite Diagnostics and Verification Obligations

Two constructed cases test the distinction between candidate reasons and certified deontic conclusions. They concern possible volunteer configurations and do not report events or policies at any particular institution. Table 5 makes the relevant grounds and potential defects explicit.

Sensitive referral with contested disclosure. A volunteer learns that a person may face an urgent risk. The person previously requested discretion concerning personal information. The volunteer can notify a trained coordinator, share the complete narrative with several staff members, ask the person for clarification, or maintain the present confidentiality pending additional information. Under a stated premise recognizing serious preventable harm, immediate escalation may have ethical force. Under a stated premise recognizing control over personal information, broad disclosure may attract a reason of opposition. The relevant action needs a specified recipient, content, timing, and procedure. A narrow confidential alert may be a distinct option with different normative features from general dissemination. Whether either is obligatory depends on evidence of risk, valid communicative authorization, available protective alternatives, and the defensibility of the principles invoked. The register can hold opposing reasons without automatically labeling the act permissible or prohibited.

Interrupted accompaniment and remedial commitments. A volunteer agreed to accompany a recipient at regular intervals. The recipient has reorganized travel around the arrangement. At a later stage, the volunteer's work and health demands change, limiting continued attendance. A coordinator can potentially organize a replacement, but the availability of that service has not been verified. The history supports inquiry into a reason grounded in reliance, a reason concerning the volunteer's present limits, and a reason to avoid a preventable abrupt disruption. The options include several possible transitions; some remain feasible only if a replacement can actually be secured. Classifying continued service as required from past reliance alone would ignore conditions of reasonable burden and institutional responsibility. Declaring immediate withdrawal fully permissible solely from the volunteer's initial freedom to participate would ignore the acquired historical relation. A defensible judgment may require a notice

or handoff procedure while permitting eventual withdrawal, but that result remains conditional on the asserted facts and norms.

These cases expose four verification demands. A *coverage audit* seeks affected persons and options omitted before reason registration. A *provenance audit* checks which records and interpretations support each moral ground. A *premise audit* tests whether the normative bundle has been argued for and whether rival grounds are available. A *status audit* checks that certification of obligation, optionality, or prohibition follows from stated premises and does not conceal unresolved feasibility or conflicting assessments. Passing such tests would strengthen the transparency of a proposed judgment; it would not establish the definitive moral truth of every premise. Sections 6, 10, and 18 develop the corresponding questions of supererogation, consent, and competing reasons in detail. For present purposes, the distinction between registered reasons and conditional deontic status constitutes the section's primary formal contribution.

6 Voluntary Assistance, Supererogation, and the Limits of Moral Demands

An ethics of volunteer intervention requires an account of what an agent owes to others, what an agent may give beyond an established requirement, and how the burdens of continued assistance should be justified. This section develops a provisional account of moral latitude and demandingness within historically constituted aid relations. It first locates supererogation within competing philosophical theories of beneficence, then distinguishes the formation of commitments from their extent, examines agent-relative and collectively distributed burdens, and proposes a conservative candidate classification for ethically valuable optional assistance. Two hypothetical cases test the account against emergency need and sustained institutional reliance. The method is normative and interpretive, with a limited formal interface to the ethical-situation record and the deontic classifications established in Sections 4 and 5. The proposed criteria organize deliberation; their substantive authority depends on arguments that the present formalism cannot independently supply.

6.1 Beneficence, Moral Merit, and the Domain of Obligation

Volunteers frequently perform acts regarded as generous: giving time without remuneration, accepting inconvenient duties, responding attentively to a stranger, or continuing an activity under personal strain. These descriptions concern several evaluative objects. The action may benefit another person, express a disposition of concern, realize an agent's commitment, satisfy a specific obligation, or exceed what others could reasonably require. Ethical assessment needs to identify which object is under consideration. The absence of payment says something about the economic organization of assistance; it does not settle the action's moral status. A paid professional may fulfill a demanding duty, while an unpaid volunteer may act under an acquired commitment. A recipient may legitimately expect continuity in a volunteer-run service even when the initial decision to volunteer was discretionary.

The traditional concept of *supererogation* designates morally commendable conduct that goes beyond the requirements of duty. Its coherence and boundaries are subjects of philosophical disagreement, including whether a morally optimal act can remain genuinely optional and how permission to omit it should be justified [23]. The section adopts the concept as a candidate analytical category. Attributed merit, the positive moral worth of a particular intervention, and its permissibility remain separate matters. A person may be praised for assisting during difficult circumstances even when the action was required; conversely, the fact that an act is optional does not show that it is morally praiseworthy. Ethical appraisal should also consider the means by which aid is delivered, the recipient's standing, and the burdens shifted onto other subjects.

A theory that treats morally superior available actions as invariably required may narrow or reject supererogation. A theory that admits agent-centered prerogatives may permit reasonable projects and attachments alongside beneficent conduct. Between these positions lie disputes over the severity of the other's need, the magnitude and distribution of the helper's sacrifice, and the extent of demands owed to

strangers. Our contribution is to keep these disputes visible at the site of intervention while resisting the administrative tendency to assign a single moral label to a volunteer's generosity.

6.2 Competing Accounts of Demandingness and Moral Latitude

One influential argument for demanding beneficence holds that agents should prevent serious suffering when they can do so without sacrificing something of comparable moral importance. Singer's argument thus challenges the intuitive boundaries of geographically distant responsibility and the moral comfort of treating substantial preventable harm as an occasion for optional charity [50]. Applying such an argument to a volunteer situation requires clarification of who possesses the relevant means, the actual sacrifice, the efficacy of the proposed action, and the availability of institutional alternatives. A volunteer who can make a simple, authorized emergency call faces a different practical situation from one expected to provide continuous specialized support without training.

The demandingness objection also admits several interpretations. Its focus may be cumulative sacrifice, displacement of personal commitments, an objectionably narrow range of permissible life plans, or disproportionate assignment of collective responsibilities to the most conscientious participants. Murphy's account foregrounds the problem of unfair burdens in conditions of nonideal compliance and develops a collective perspective on beneficence. The present paper draws on that distributional question without attributing its own relational scheme to Murphy or treating the book's argument as an endorsement of any fixed ceiling on duty [44]. A volunteer's moral position is affected by the organization's recruitment decisions, the contribution of other agents, the visibility of alternative resources, and whether repeated deficits are routinely assigned to those least able to refuse.

A separate concern involves the shape of a flourishing moral life. Wolf's critique of the ideal of a moral saint calls attention to personal excellence and attachments whose value may be obscured by an exclusive pursuit of moral maximization [60]. This consideration matters for the temporal evaluation of assistance. Studying, sustaining intimate relationships, securing one's livelihood, and preserving one's health may provide ethically significant grounds for limiting service. They also differ among agents and histories. The present analysis therefore avoids converting moral latitude into a single percentage of income, a universal maximum number of volunteer hours, or a fixed individual sacrifice threshold. Such metrics can assist narrowly defined institutional planning when justified by evidence and governing norms, but they cannot constitute a general theory of duty by themselves.

The competing approaches pose a genuine normative disagreement. Strong duties of aid may survive significant costs; legitimate agent-centered reasons may restrict some demands; collective arrangements may change which sacrifices an individual is fairly expected to bear. Their disagreements remain analytically productive. A provisional ethical judgment should state which account or combination of premises it uses and how an alternative account could change the result.

The nonideal case tests both sides of the demandingness dispute. Suppose five volunteers could each accept one additional shift at moderate personal cost, while a coordinating institution could also contract a qualified worker at a greater budgetary cost. A demanding account of beneficence might find a strong reason for the volunteers to help prevent an immediate service gap. A theory protecting personal projects may limit what any one volunteer owes, and an institutional theory may assign substantial responsibility to the organization that designed the coverage arrangement. Even if the additional volunteer shift is provisionally justified, its moral status cannot be inferred from the number of people helped or the organization's financial savings alone. The crucial normative questions include whether burdens are fairly assigned, whose earlier undertaking created reliance, which alternatives are genuinely accessible, and whether the arrangement would become a recurring expectation. Singer's demanding argument, the problem of supererogation, and Murphy's treatment of nonideal moral demands therefore cannot simply be averaged into a numerical compromise [50, 23, 44]. The GR contribution is to expose the changing assignment of reasons and burdens; a judgment about their acceptable distribution still requires a defended account of obligation.

6.3 Voluntary Entry, Accepted Undertakings, and Relational Reliance

Voluntary entry is a historical event whose normative consequences depend on what was offered, understood, accepted, and subsequently relied upon. Section 2 distinguishes choosing to participate from acquiring a conduct-specific commitment. Section 5.4 supplies the corresponding deontic vocabulary. A volunteer who has agreed to accompany someone on a defined date may have a reason, potentially a duty under justified premises, to honor the undertaking. The scope of that duty depends on the promise's content, the affected person's reasonable reliance, the foreseeability of harm, and the agent's changed capacities. The label *volunteer* neither cancels an undertaking nor extends it indefinitely.

A useful temporal distinction separates an initial permission to decline a role, the duties arising during an accepted episode of assistance, and the duties concerning an appropriate exit or transition. At the first stage, the person may have substantial latitude in choosing whether to join a programme, subject to independently defensible duties of rescue. At the second stage, the volunteer's specific acceptance and others' reliance may narrow permissible choices. At the third stage, a foreseeable inability to continue may generate obligations of notice, truthful explanation, suitable handoff, and reasonable mitigation. These do not entail continuing direct assistance at every cost. A later impossibility of performance should be assessed through the currently feasible alternatives and historical attribution, as examined in Section 5.6.

Relational reliance is itself produced through several positions. A coordinator may promise organizational continuity; a recipient may interpret repeated assistance as personal availability; a volunteer may accept only a bounded shift. Different agents can therefore be responsible for distinct components of a failed transition. The ethically relevant history includes who controlled the promises, schedules, and available substitutes. Directing every downstream obligation to the volunteer because that person is the most visible helper would conceal the agency of institutions and mediators. Equally, institutional assurances should be interpreted cautiously: an institution's capacity to allocate work need not confer authority to demand unsafe or indefinite sacrifice from an individual.

The central analytical task is to identify the *content and bearer* of an acquired duty rather than merely invoking the existence of trust. Trust can make a failure consequential, yet additional arguments are needed to establish who owes which remedial response. A commitment can also be renegotiated when the relevant parties have adequate information and a genuine opportunity to contest the proposed change.

6.4 Agent-Relative Burdens and Self-Regarding Reasons

The severity of an aid demand depends on the position of the particular agent. Two volunteers may face nominally identical assignments but differ substantially in travel time, earnings foregone, financial security, disability accommodation, dependents, physical capacity, uncertainty, and the effects of repeated exposure. An assessment based only on recorded hours will miss these distinctions. Nor should highly personal information automatically be collected to complete the record: the evidential benefit of additional detail has to be justified against privacy, classification, and power costs.

The relevant burdens are heterogeneous. Immediate physical danger, emotional exhaustion, loss of paid working time, foregone educational opportunities, diminished family commitments, and injury to the recipient through incompetent service each require different evidence and normative treatment. Their values need not be commensurable. The ethical-situation record in Equation 2 can preserve these matters within its evidence, commitment, feasibility, and affected-subject fields, while making explicit where the model remains underinformed. An adequate assessment needs to distinguish a burden already borne, a burden reasonably forecast, one voluntarily embraced after informed reflection, and one imposed through concealed expectations or institutional pressure.

Self-regarding reasons can have independent moral relevance. A volunteer may legitimately maintain bodily safety, a sustainable livelihood, personal relationships, and the capacities required for future responsible action. A reason to avoid burnout may concern the volunteer's own interests while also protecting recipients against unreliable or unsafe care. These reasons have different structures and should remain separately articulable. The argument for recognizing them is open to challenge by more demand-

ing accounts of beneficence; it nevertheless establishes an important methodological caution against treating the agent as a costless conduit for assistance.

An apparent willingness to accept heavy costs also deserves interpretive care. Consent to a particular burden may be produced amid status dependence, fear of disapproval, competitive displays of generosity, or a lack of practical alternatives. Such conditions influence the ethical evaluation of a claimed voluntary sacrifice. The fact that an individual heroically endures an institutional defect gives evidence of effort; it offers no automatic justification for reproducing the defect or for demanding equivalent endurance from peers.

6.5 Collective Responsibilities and the Distribution of Sacrifice

Volunteer programmes commonly function through multiple acting positions: recipients, volunteers, coordinating staff, funding organizations, public authorities, and informal supporters. A shortfall in aid can arise because individual agents have failed to act, because available resources are poorly coordinated, or because collectively relevant duties remain without an accountable bearer. These possibilities have different normative implications. Murphy’s discussion of compliance and collective beneficence supplies one important starting point for evaluating the unequal distribution of demands under imperfect institutional arrangements [44]; the specific coordination analysis here remains a GR proposal.

An institution can have a reason to build redundancy, monitor foreseeable overload, and arrange accessible routes for referral. A volunteer who discovers an unserved need may have a reason to report the gap, subject to justified confidentiality requirements. The inference that the volunteer must personally fill the entire gap requires separate premises concerning competence, available alternatives, burdens, and role-specific responsibility. Conversely, the existence of institutional responsibility does not always eliminate an urgent individual duty. Both types of reasons can arise in the same situation; the practical question concerns their actual scope and bearers.

A particularly difficult configuration occurs when an individual can prevent immediate harm through exceptional effort while the organization persistently fails to maintain adequate coverage. A defensible account should acknowledge the present recipient’s urgency, the agent’s available emergency response, and the longer-term unfairness of making the same person repeatedly compensate for organizational failure. The appropriate temporal response may involve a bounded rescue or referral combined with reporting, resourcing, and institutional correction. This is an illustration of a possible deliberative pattern, not a universal rule for resolving conflicts between immediate and structural duties.

Public praise can intensify this configuration. Honoring exceptional service may be appropriate, but a programme that celebrates extraordinary sacrifice while normalizing chronic understaffing can make withdrawal socially costly. Such a feedback mechanism links ethical judgment to recognition, symbolic credit, and political economy. The present section examines the agent-specific demand; Papers VI and VIII provide independent approaches to distributive justice and structural power. A coherent programme should compare their results while respecting the normative and explanatory questions that each theory answers.

6.6 A Conditional Candidate Test for Supererogatory Assistance

The preceding distinctions suggest a limited formal test whose purpose is to reveal missing premises in attributions of supererogation. Fix the agent-indexed situation $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ from Equation 2, a declared normative premise bundle B , and the conditional deontic assessment $\widehat{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ from Equation 5. Let $\text{Worth}_B(\omega)$ mean that a separately articulated normative argument supports the act’s positive ethical significance beyond its mandatory aspects. Let $\text{Agency}_B(\omega)$ mean that the voluntary undertaking, consent-sensitive means, and attribution to the agent have sufficient evidence for the proposed appraisal. These are *warrant predicates*, each requiring an argument rather than a direct observational label. Equation 6 defines a candidate set.

$$\text{CandSE}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} := \{\omega \in \Omega_{A,t}^\kappa : \widehat{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}(\omega) = \text{Opt}, \text{Worth}_B(\omega), \text{Agency}_B(\omega)\}. \quad (6)$$

The conjunction intentionally sets a demanding *certification standard* for the proposed research protocol; it is not presented as a philosophical definition accepted by all theories. The value Opt means that performing and omitting the action are both certified permissible under the same specified premise bundle and option individuation. Positive worth identifies a moral contribution whose defense is independent of the act's optionality. Agency requires suitable historical evidence that the intervention can fairly be attributed to an agent's informed undertaking. An unidentified recipient, unauthorized disclosure, or hidden institutional coercion may render one of these claims unresolved. Under such conditions the protocol withholds candidate certification; this is an epistemic withholding, not a categorical denial of moral worth.

The converse implication is equally important. An ethically admirable act can be required, especially where serious need and low sacrifice support an argued rescue duty. Such an act would fail the optionality condition while remaining admirable. Equally, an optional act may be trivial or even serve questionable aims, thereby failing the worth condition. Some philosophical accounts may reject the relevance of informed voluntary agency as a necessary condition for all forms of supererogation. The set in Equation 6 is accordingly a restricted, revisable research class, useful for tracing precisely where our candidate judgments arise.

The test does not compare different volunteers through a universal scale. Differences in obligation, costs, knowledge, and authority alter the agent-indexed evidence and potentially the applicable premise bundles. Nor does it resolve cases where the deontic procedure returns Und. At that point a responsible report retains the proposed grounds for merit, the unresolved duty question, and the objections. Describing an intervention as "probably supererogatory" should not become a surrogate for supplying the missing normative argument.

6.7 Institutional Praise, Recognition, and the Moralization of Service

Ethical worth and social praise are mediated through distinct processes. A recipient may express gratitude for a helpful intervention, a coordinator may recognize outstanding work, and a public institution may promote an exemplar of service. Each act of recognition has relational consequences, including encouragement, trust, reputational benefit, and changes in expected future conduct. Yet public praise can be directed toward a conspicuous volunteer while leaving the recipient's own contribution, a less visible worker's labor, or organizational failures unacknowledged. The resulting asymmetry requires a further inquiry into the justice of attribution, extending the concerns developed in Paper VI without turning an ethical merit judgment into a complete justice assessment.

The label "heroic" may be especially unstable. Its manifestation can make extraordinary assistance intelligible and admirable, while simultaneously creating a model against which ordinary conscientious volunteers are judged. Wolf's argument about the moral-saint ideal illuminates the potential loss of valued nonmoral pursuits when moral excellence is construed too narrowly [60]. The argument does not establish that admirable commitment is objectionable. It motivates scrutiny of the institutional step by which an exemplar becomes an informal requirement, or by which people who decline comparable sacrifice are exposed to blame.

A recipient's legitimate need does not depend on whether a supporter is celebrated, and the supporter should not be treated as owning the recipient's account merely because the assistance was generous. Consent and confidentiality questions survive positive judgments about the donor's motives. Similarly, repeated recognition may encourage an agent to undertake further commitments, which can alter future obligations; those obligations must be traced to specific undertakings and justified reliance. The public image of a "dedicated volunteer" cannot by itself replace that historical analysis.

From a GR perspective, praise belongs primarily to manifestations of relational organization and can reshape relational expectations over time. Whether the praise is accurate or justified requires epistemic and normative inquiry. The ultimate ontological status of generosity is left suspended. This three-level discipline prevents the visibility of exceptional service from functioning as proof of the service's moral category.

Table 6: Conditional diagnosis of demandingness in two hypothetical aid situations

Case	Initial agent-specific situation	Changed condition	Remaining normative question
Urgent contact	Volunteer can place a short authorized call with little apparent sacrifice	Language barriers, uncertain consent, or lack of legitimate referral authority	Whether aid, clarification, or constrained referral is required under specified risk and permission premises
Continuing coverage	Volunteer provides regular, bounded assistance with known scheduling commitments	Exhaustion accumulates; recipient relies on coordinator’s guarantee of uninterrupted service	Which transitions are owed by volunteer and institution, and which extraordinary continuation remains optional

6.8 Temporal Accumulation, Burnout, and Responsible Boundaries

Moral demandingness has a temporal structure. A single hour of assistance can be feasible without significant strain, while the repetition of similar hours amid employment, study, caregiving, travel, and emotional labor may progressively alter a volunteer’s capabilities. Repeated small demands can therefore create a serious cumulative burden. The ethically relevant trajectory includes fluctuations in capacity, the predictability of exhaustion, the availability of support, and the cumulative reliance created by past performance. None is captured adequately by a one-time judgment that a task was easy when first accepted.

It may be necessary to revise an agent’s situation record at successive stages t and $t + 1$. Increased fatigue can change feasible options in $\hat{F}_{A,t}^\kappa$; additional promises can change the commitments in $\mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa, \text{commit}}$; and a recipient’s new alternative arrangements can change the anticipated harm of withdrawal. A favorable evaluation of one episode does not settle the ethical status of a repeated policy. Likewise, a current decision to reduce participation need not erase residual responsibilities generated by earlier undertakings. Suitable notice, handoff, or clarification may be required according to the actual commitments and available capacities.

A responsible boundary is therefore a practical arrangement rather than a declaration that an agent owes nothing further. It can involve specifying the duration of commitments, clarifying tasks outside competence, distributing service among several agents, scheduling recovery, and preserving a recipient’s means of challenge or access to alternative assistance. These measures need institutional support where a volunteer lacks authority to implement them. A boundary can be too lax when it abandons foreseeable dependencies without reasonable transition, and too stringent when it turns an individual’s finite capacity into indefinite compulsory labor. Which description applies depends on factual and normative evidence rather than on a single abstract attitude toward self-sacrifice.

This analysis also suggests a problem for later empirical verification. If participants leave before a programme measures their exhaustion, the remaining highly committed volunteers may appear unusually resilient. Assessing the reasonableness of moral demands from their experience alone risks selection bias. Exit histories, unregistered burdens, and the institutional practices shaping them require suitable safeguards and independent evidence before research conclusions can be drawn.

6.9 Finite Cases: Emergency Assistance and Continuing Coverage

Two constructed cases test whether the proposed distinctions remain stable under changes in factual assumptions. They concern hypothetical situations only and assert no actual institutional practice. Table 6 identifies the principal sensitivities. The cases examine reasons, obligation claims, and institutional arrangements separately; no definitive moral verdict follows from the stipulations alone.

An urgent request with apparently low cost. A passerby participating in a community volunteer programme observes an unfamiliar person in apparent need of urgent assistance. The volunteer has a working phone and can contact a competent service through an established channel. Under premises requiring the prevention of grave harm at modest legitimate cost, a timely authorized call may be obligatory rather than supererogatory. Yet several details remain decisive: whether urgency is reasonably supported, which service is competent, what information may be transmitted, whether the person has refused, and whether an intervention exposes others to a serious risk. If the volunteer is asked to carry out a complex procedure beyond competence, the possibility of a call provides no warrant to perform the procedure. The case separates a plausible duty to initiate a competent response from admiration for costly or exceptional direct intervention.

A counterfactual change tests that separation. Suppose the competent service can be reached only after a long and risky journey that jeopardizes the volunteer's health or an equally serious obligation to a dependent. The degree of sacrifice and the available alternatives now differ. Singer-style and agent-prerogative approaches may offer different conclusions, and the present framework records those disagreements as competing normative premises. The original classification cannot be carried across the changed situation simply because the recipient's need remains severe.

Recurring coverage and the institution's promise. A volunteer accepts one shift per week at an assistance service. The coordinator promises a recipient that support will continue throughout a three-month period; no individual volunteer makes that promise. The volunteer later completes several additional shifts to compensate for persistent scheduling gaps. A participant may reasonably admire the extra contribution, but the absence of remuneration and the fact that the programme benefits do not establish its supererogatory status. The institution's responsibility for coverage, the volunteer's informed acceptance, and the recipient's actual reliance must be reconstructed. If the volunteer explicitly accepts one additional appointment and the recipient reasonably relies upon that undertaking, some duties specific to that appointment may arise. The distinction persists between declining indefinite future shifts and abandoning an accepted bounded obligation without transition.

Now assume that the volunteer develops significant fatigue and requests to leave the additional rota. The coordinator responds by appealing to the person's reputation for generosity rather than seeking a replacement. That appeal is evidence of an institutional pressure mechanism, while its moral force remains to be justified. A plan of timely notice, a documented handoff, and institutional replacement may satisfy some responsibilities even when continued personal service is unsustainable. If no replacement is available, the urgency of the recipient's position remains ethically material; it still does not transfer all institutional responsibility automatically to the volunteer. The case illustrates the need to evaluate present relief and longer-term burden distribution on different temporal horizons.

6.10 Conceptual Limits and the Next Ethical Inquiries

The present account offers four reusable distinctions. The voluntary origin of an activity is separated from specific duties arising after an undertaking. Moral merit is separated from obligation, strong optionality, and institutional praise. Agent-relative sacrifice is distinguished from organizationally distributed responsibility. Finally, a judgment concerning one intervention is distinguished from judgments about repeated participation and the institutional policy that sustains it. These distinctions yield a defensible method of questioning demands and attributions of generosity, while the validity of particular obligations continues to depend on disputed normative premises.

The conditional set in Equation 6 is deliberately conservative. It excludes unresolved cases from certification while allowing their candidate grounds to remain visible. It may also fail to represent valuable actions that some ethical theories would classify differently, including actions whose praiseworthiness does not depend on a strong conception of free choice. The practical burdens identified in this section require evidence and contextual interpretation; the model supplies neither a universally justified cost threshold nor a complete rule for prioritizing recipients. The perspective of affected subjects and the

possibility that institutional records are incomplete remain indispensable qualifications.

Three-level GR analysis helps locate the epistemic limits of the theory. At the level of ontological reality, the ultimate nature of moral value and agency remains suspended. At the level of relational reality, commitments, capacities, reliance, coordination, and repeated burdens form historically efficacious structures. At the level of manifestation reality, requests, refusals, praise, exhaustion reports, and institutional classifications make aspects of those structures accessible while allowing distortion and exclusion. A proposed ethical verdict concerns relations reconstructed through these manifestations and requires independent normative justification. The levels remain distinct even where changes in manifested recognition alter the practical organization of aid.

The next inquiry will focus on *need and vulnerability*: how situations of possible suffering become available to a helper as evidence, how misrecognition changes assistance reasons, and how persons whose claims are difficult to articulate can receive ethically serious consideration. That investigation will develop the epistemic formation of reasons without assuming that the seriousness of a manifested need immediately settles an individual volunteer's duty. The present section establishes the demandingness and latitude questions that any such account must retain.

7 Need, Vulnerability, and the Epistemic Formation of Assistance Reasons

A practical ethics of volunteer intervention must examine how an agent comes to regard another's situation as one calling for assistance. The question has an epistemic component, concerning what can be learned about another subject's needs, and a normative component, concerning the practical reasons that such knowledge may support. This section analyzes the formation of need-related assistance reasons within the historically indexed ethical-situation record of Section 4. Its objective is to distinguish the existence or possibility of deprivation, an observer's evidence and interpretation, the vulnerability of a subject to particular harms, and the justification of a practical response. The argument begins with need claims and vulnerability as distinct relational objects, introduces a provisional record of epistemic support, examines mechanisms of recognition and exclusion, and tests the account in two hypothetical aid configurations. The method is philosophical and conceptual, supplemented by a deliberately limited formal representation. No empirical claim is made that a subject's actual need can be read transparently from recorded manifestations.

7.1 Need Claims, Interests, and Standards of Assessment

An assertion that a subject needs something contains an object of need and an often implicit standard according to which a deficiency matters. A person may need assistance to reach a chosen destination, sustained access to food for survival, or a particular accommodation to participate in an institution on acceptable terms. These statements differ in their underlying ends, the substitutability of the proposed means, and the normative significance of leaving the condition unmet. Ordinary usage sometimes places needs near preferences or wants, yet philosophical discussions of need ask which claims possess a distinctive force and how that force bears on rights, interests, and practical obligations. Wiggins's discussion of claims of need provides an established point of reference for this question [59]. The present analysis treats it as an open substantive question whose answer depends on the kind of need and the justified evaluative standard.

A *candidate need claim* is therefore a situated proposition that some condition relevant to a subject's interests, capabilities, participation, or continued existence is insufficiently secured. The proposition requires an account of the relevant condition, the subject's circumstances, and the grounds for considering the deficiency important. This allows the inquiry to distinguish a subject's own articulated concern, an external observer's hypothesis, an institutional eligibility category, and a normative judgment that a particular condition warrants priority. These may converge, but their agreement is a finding to be supported, not a stipulation of the formalism. A need directed toward sustaining a particular life project

may be contingent upon that project; a proposed basic need may invoke broader reasons for concern. Neither class automatically identifies a permissible means of provision.

In practice the means and the end can be confused. A volunteer may hear that a recipient needs transport when the immediate issue is access to an appointment, for which alternative means may exist. An institution may record a need for interpretation while excluding the time needed to understand a consequential choice. Such descriptions matter because an intervention selected according to an overly narrow object can satisfy the recorded request while leaving its underlying significance unaddressed. A useful assessment retains the possibility that the observer, the recipient, and the institution individuate the relevant need differently. It also allows the recipient to contest the stated end and any proposed means.

7.2 Relational Vulnerability, Exposure, and Protective Capacity

Vulnerability concerns the ways a subject may be exposed to harms or losses under conditions in which protective options, resources, relationships, or capacities are constrained. Some exposure is associated with embodied conditions or the fragility of living arrangements. Other exposure is produced or amplified by inaccessible infrastructure, precarious institutional status, information asymmetry, language barriers, or dependence on a single intermediary. The edited scholarship on vulnerability and feminist ethics makes dependence, agency, structural conditions, and care salient, without reducing vulnerability to a timeless property of a class of people [34]. A GR interpretation proposes treating vulnerability as a historically situated relation among possible harms, the subject's abilities to respond, and the surrounding arrangements that enable or obstruct protection.

A subject may be capable in one practice yet particularly exposed in another. A person familiar with digital services may nevertheless lack access to a language used for a required administrative determination; a skilled volunteer may lack protection against unpredictable emotional demands. Likewise, help itself may modify vulnerability. Delegating all access to one helper can provide immediate relief and generate later dependency if no alternative route is available. The subject's apparent inability may be partly constituted by the design of the institution that asks for assistance. Any judgement about vulnerability should therefore specify the relevant threat, temporal horizon, exposure pathway, protective capacity, and institutional conditions.

The existence of vulnerability neither entails incapacity nor authorizes substitution of the helper's judgment for that of the affected subject. Competence, self-description, and resistance may coexist with high exposure to harm. Treating vulnerability as a reason for attention can be consistent with respect for refusal and shared decision-making. Treating it as an all-purpose justification for intervention invites paternalistic overreach. Moreover, some affected agents may be simultaneously vulnerable and responsible for matters within their competence. The relevant ethical work consists in specifying which risks make a difference, the kinds of support a person is able or willing to receive, and the restrictions that apply to a particular helper's possible actions.

7.3 Manifestations of Need and Limits of Third-Person Access

Need is commonly approached through partial manifestations: a spoken request, observed difficulty, a delay in participation, bodily or emotional expressions, a record of unmet service, or a third party's report. Each kind of evidence is produced within circumstances that affect what it can show. A request may omit an embarrassing concern; an institutional record may exclude people who never reached the intake process; a behavioral observation may admit multiple interpretations. Reported suffering deserves serious attention without warranting the inference that the observer possesses complete access to its character or intensity. The distinction is particularly important when communicative and cultural resources differ between helper and recipient.

Testimony carries epistemic significance of its own. Fricker's account of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice examines how credibility and shared interpretive resources can be unequally structured [17]. Carel and Kidd analyze these problems in healthcare, especially how clinical and institutional authority may disadvantage patients as knowers [9]. Volunteer environments may display related patterns when

institutional language, eligibility criteria, or assumptions about credibility determine which experiences enter the record. Extending the healthcare argument to a volunteer setting is an interpretive proposal requiring independent evidence about the actual practice and its participants.

Observation and testimony are not invariably interchangeable. A recipient’s account may be privileged evidence of their own experience while leaving uncertainty about causes, alternative treatments, or legal entitlements. Conversely, a third-party observation may reveal an access barrier that the recipient has normalized or has little opportunity to describe. The most responsible reconstruction may combine sources while preserving disagreement, provenance, and the possibility of mistaken interpretation. This generates an epistemic task for the volunteer: to learn which information is needed for the decision, whose experience and expertise are relevant, and which questions exceed the volunteer’s competence or authority.

7.4 An Epistemic Register of Candidate Need Claims

The ethical-situation record $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ in Equation 2 includes an evidence component $\mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa$ and a represented subject family $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$. It can be extended with a registry that makes interpretations and their sources explicit. For a fixed context κ and historical stage t , let Hyp_t^κ be a set of stated hypotheses about conditions relevant to particular subjects, $\mathcal{G}_t^\kappa$ a family of articulated relevance grounds, and $\mathcal{Z}$ a vocabulary of review statuses. The proposed register is defined in Equation 7.

$$\mathcal{N}_{A,t}^\kappa \subseteq \mathcal{U}_t^\kappa \times \text{Hyp}_t^\kappa \times \mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa \times \mathcal{G}_t^\kappa \times \mathcal{Z}, \quad \mathcal{Z} = \{\text{supported, contested, open, not supported}\}. \quad (7)$$

A tuple (u, h, e, g, z) records a potentially affected subject u , a stated hypothesis h about a condition, evidence or a traceable evidence bundle e , an articulated ground g for regarding the condition as significant, and the assessment status z under the current record. The entry is *candidate* throughout: *supported* means that the available evidence warrants further consideration of the stated hypothesis within a declared assessment standard; it does not certify ultimate truth, a legal claim, or a deontic result. *Not supported* means insufficient support under a specified record, and does not assert that the subject has no relevant need. A *contested* item may preserve conflicting testimony or disagreement about the applicable evaluative standard. An *open* item may represent a significant possibility for which the present information is inadequate.

The defined product has a strong coverage limitation. A subject absent from $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ has no tuple in $\mathcal{N}_{A,t}^\kappa$, regardless of possible deprivation outside the record. A practice that treats register emptiness as proof of universal sufficiency would therefore commit a closed-world inference without justification. To resist that mistake, the record should include a documented account of its population boundary, means of entry, missingness risks, and routes for revising subject recognition. These are methodological requirements for responsible use, not claims that the present model can enumerate unobserved people or measure unreported suffering. For an unregistered person, the appropriate initial output may therefore be a boundary challenge concerning the construction of $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ rather than a fabricated tuple containing a hypothetical subject and nonexistent testimony. Only evidence warranting expansion of the represented-subject register licenses the corresponding new candidate-need record. The distinction is carried into the coverage tests of Section 22.

The tuple is intentionally modest. No numerical severity scale is imposed; the available evidence need not be probabilistic; and $\mathcal{G}_t^\kappa$ contains declared evaluative considerations rather than universally valid grounds. Equation 7 describes a discipline for tracing an inference. Its fidelity depends on how hypotheses, subjects, provenance, and standards are chosen. In particular, the register cannot repair a systematic omission if every included observer shares the same institutional blind spot.

7.5 From Candidate Need to Agent-Specific Assistance Reasons

The appearance of a candidate need in $\mathcal{N}_{A,t}^\kappa$ can invite an inquiry into relevant actions, including listening, clarification, translation, referral, protection, and restraint. It does not settle the moral status of those

actions. The normative connection depends on a premise specifying why the type of concern matters, whether the particular agent bears responsibility, what burdens or risks the response imposes, and whether the action lies within legitimate authority. The conditional warrant relation $\text{Warr}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ of Equation 1 provides an interface for this step, while Section 5 keeps candidate reasons separate from obligations and permissions.

Several failures of inference are possible. The hypothesized need may be badly individuated. The evidence may be weak or distorted. A generally valid reason to assist persons facing harm may address an institution rather than a particular volunteer. A seemingly beneficial option may involve an unwarranted disclosure or specialized procedure beyond the agent’s competence. The agent’s available alternatives may be incomplete or assessed with excessive optimism. These failures attach to different parts of the practical argument and should be addressed at their respective levels. Recognition of substantial harm can support a reason to seek competent help while leaving the permissibility of direct intervention unresolved.

Need-related reasons may also conflict with each other. A volunteer may have reason to protect privacy and reason to make a referral; a recipient may value immediate assistance while reasonably resisting a paternalistic intervention; two potential beneficiaries may face urgent yet incomparable losses. An ethically serious analysis can preserve both reasons while investigating a narrower or staged option that respects more of the relevant constraints. The deontic question is whether the final classification follows from a defended premise bundle, an adequately individuated option family, and sufficient evidence. It does not follow merely from a label such as *vulnerable*, *urgent*, or *needy*.

7.6 Misrecognition, Credibility, and Institutional Selection

A need-recognition system can misfire by assigning an inappropriate need to a subject, failing to recognize a need that is materially present, or treating a useful sign as proof of its presumed cause. Examples include equating quietness with consent, mistaking a language barrier for low decision-making capacity, and taking repeated absence from an application process as evidence of low demand. Each error differs in its causal pathway and potential remedy. A process that invites only formally registered users to describe access barriers may systematically undercount precisely those whom its entry requirements exclude.

Credibility disparities can intensify these effects. If institutional officers expect coherent, rapid, standardized testimony, a person communicating through an interpreter or through intermittent signs may find their statements recorded with diminished specificity. Some disagreements arise from interpretation, some from differences in the underlying evaluative standard, and some from prejudice or unjust institutional design. The philosophical vocabulary of epistemic injustice is useful for constructing questions about these mechanisms [17, 9]; applying that diagnosis to a real institution requires evidence of how testimony was handled and whose epistemic participation was constrained.

An ethical response to these risks includes opportunities to correct records, accessible expression, deliberate review of ambiguous interpretations, and appropriately protected escalation. Those practices have costs and may conflict with urgency or confidentiality. The mere presence of a correction procedure also offers no guarantee that affected subjects can use it. The analysis should examine whether the subject knows about the route, possesses the practical means to invoke it, and faces retaliation or other burdens from doing so. Recognition is consequently a historically maintained capacity of an aid relation, with an identifiable distribution of epistemic work among volunteers, coordinators, interpreters, and participants.

7.7 Urgency, Uncertainty, and Proportionate Inquiry

Some possible needs permit extended deliberation. Other situations create a limited decision window. Under time pressure, an agent may have to act with incomplete information, yet incomplete information also raises the risk of unauthorized or harmful interference. Urgency is a hypothesis about consequences and the cost of delay; its evidential grounds should be made explicit. The response space should include actions that acquire information, protect immediate safety within competence, or summon an authorized

responder, alongside direct aid, refusal, and continued observation. The availability and risks of those alternatives can differ substantially across situations.

The proposed practical principle is procedural and conditional: under a defended risk-and-responsibility premise, investigate options that preserve reversibility, minimize avoidable intrusion, and obtain decision-relevant information at a cost proportionate to the concern and the time available. This is a candidate deliberative strategy, not a universally justified intervention rule. A clarification request may be appropriate in one context and dangerously slow in another. A protective act may be ethically defensible despite uncertainty where the stakes are grave, while an irreversible measure requires distinct authority and justificatory conditions. When the helper cannot evaluate the underlying risk competently, timely contact with an appropriate service may be the most relevant available alternative.

The framework must also distinguish *uncertainty about need* from *uncertainty about intervention effects*. The first concerns whether a condition is present and significant; the second concerns whether an action will alleviate that condition or generate new harms. Increased confidence in the former does not automatically reduce the latter. A recipient may clearly need access to a service while the volunteer remains unsure which referral route is safe, confidential, or authorized. Maintaining those uncertainties separately prevents a morally compelling statement of need from doing all the argumentative work required for the intervention.

7.8 Three-Level Reality and Historical Need Trajectories

The three GR reality levels place limits on what a need diagnosis purports to establish. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate metaphysics of subjective suffering, interests, and value remains suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, a subject's access to resources, institutional participation, protective capacities, and dependencies may be historically constituted and causally consequential. At the level of *manifestation reality*, requests, observable difficulties, silence, forms, institutional categories, and assessments render some features accessible within particular contexts. Epistemic reconstruction concerns relations among these manifestations and candidate relational objects. It is a methodological process rather than an additional ontological layer.

Need-related judgments are temporally sensitive. A timely referral may remove one access barrier and inadvertently create a new dependence on a single intermediary. A new accommodation may change the subject's options, while unchanged documentation may continue to represent the earlier deficiency. A volunteer may initially see a practical obstacle as a personal difficulty and later learn that a policy creates the obstacle for many participants. Revising a diagnosis then requires recording what changed: the subject's conditions, the available evidence, the interpretation, the applicable normative premises, or some combination of them. The historical sequence supplies more information than a snapshot labelled "need met."

In this respect, assistance can participate in the constitution of its own object of evaluation. Labels of need can guide the provision of resources, modify a person's institutional standing, and condition future eligibility. They may also shape self-understanding, especially where a participant is repeatedly required to identify as incapable in order to receive an accommodation. These are candidate relational mechanisms, not demonstrated regularities of a particular agency. They require careful investigation of participation, power, agency, and historical alternatives before any normative conclusion about the benefit or harm of a classificatory practice.

7.9 Finite Diagnostics: Unregistered Need and Contested Assistance

Two constructed situations test the boundaries of the epistemic register. The first probes evidence selection and missing subjects; the second probes the interpretation of expressed need and the practical authority to intervene. Both are hypothetical and neither reports a real institution's procedures. Table 7 sets out the main contrasts.

Table 7: Need-recognition tests in two hypothetical volunteer aid settings

Case	Manifested evidence	Risk of inferential error	Evidence or response that could change appraisal
Unregistered applicant	Few completed applications in a required language	Low recorded demand mistaken for low underlying need	Accessible outreach, attempted-entry records, protected testimony, and revised entry conditions
Contested accompaniment	Recipient asks for company yet declines a proposed referral	Expressed concern treated as blanket consent or evidence of incapacity	Clarification of preferred support, assessment of risks, competence and authority, and review of changing circumstances

An inaccessible intake pathway. A hypothetical volunteer programme accepts online intake applications in one language and subsequently records very few applicants from a neighboring language community. A volunteer notices people turning away from the intake point after reading the instructions. The institutional file initially contains no claims from those persons. The register in Equation 7 can include a candidate hypothesis about access barriers once an affected subject and traceable observations are admitted, but its absence before that admission says little about unrecorded need. The observations support further inquiry and a possible request to responsible staff for accessible information; they do not by themselves establish what each person needs or that the volunteer is authorized to collect identifiable data independently.

If an appropriately provided translated route subsequently permits many previously unrecorded applications, this change offers evidence against the earlier assumption that the absence of submissions indicated absence of need. It does not prove that every person in the community wanted the service or that the translation alone explains all changes. Rival explanations include outreach, scheduling changes, and altered eligibility. The ethical question then concerns who should take reasonable corrective action under the actual responsibility structure and how confidential testimony can be elicited without unnecessary exposure.

A request for companionship and refusal of referral. A volunteer visits a hypothetical participant who says that isolation is distressing and asks for continued conversation. The volunteer proposes a specialist referral, which the participant declines. One interpretation treats refusal as insufficient insight; another sees a reasoned preference for a different support relation. The participant's report supplies relevant first-person evidence of the experienced situation, while the competence and authority to infer a particular medical or psychological condition remain separate. A candidate need for connection or access to chosen opportunities may be appropriate to investigate; the referral's moral and institutional status depends on additional premises and evidence.

A counterfactual change makes the limits visible. If the participant later describes an imminent danger, the available reasons for timely competent assistance may become more urgent. If the participant instead demonstrates sustained capacity to arrange social contact and consistently rejects intrusive services, a proposal that overrides the refusal needs more substantial justification. Neither variation makes the initial volunteer's observations omniscient. The relevant questions concern evolving evidence, the participant's standing, competent communication, confidentiality, and the boundary between supportive engagement and unauthorized professional assessment.

7.10 Verification Boundaries and the Formation of Ethical Attention

This section contributes a reconstruction of need recognition as a sequence of provisional evidential and normative judgments. It distinguishes articulated requests, observed manifestations, historically conditioned exposure, interpreted need, agent-specific reasons, and the final moral status of an action.

Equation 7 makes the source and standard of a candidate diagnosis traceable, while the two diagnostic cases demonstrate how omissions and revisions may change the practical inquiry. The account preserves the distinctions established in Sections 3, 4, and 5.

Several research obligations remain. A real-world assessment would require ethically obtained evidence, procedures for protected participation and disagreement, an account of missing populations, and appropriate measurement of whether assistance improves the conditions it purports to address. Investigators should compare explanations for observed changes and avoid imputing hidden mental states from behavior alone. Conceptual precision regarding the term *need* does not settle distributive priority, intervention authority, or a volunteer's permissible burden. Such conclusions require the independently defended normative grounds established in the wider ethical inquiry.

The next investigation examines *moral attention, testimony, and interpretive error*. Its object is the conduct of listening, credibility appraisal, and correction as activities with their own ethical structure. The present analysis supplies the epistemic conditions under which a candidate need becomes an intelligible object of practical deliberation, together with a reminder that the omission of a person from the archive is itself a possible source of distortion requiring scrutiny.

8 Moral Attention, Testimony, and Interpretive Error

The ethics of volunteer intervention includes the practices by which a potential helper attends to another subject, receives testimony, forms interpretations, and corrects a mistaken understanding. These practices influence which concerns become visible and which actions are regarded as relevant. The present section examines attention and interpretation as historically situated and ethically assessable activities. It builds on the candidate-need record in Section 7 and the evidential and action-provenance distinctions of Section 3. Its objective is to reconstruct the stages between manifestation, uptake, interpretation, and practical appraisal without inferring intervention duties directly from communicated experiences. The method combines philosophical analysis, a limited provenance-preserving record, and two explicitly hypothetical diagnostic cases. It also considers competing explanations for interpretive failure, the rights and practical agency of speakers, and correction at the level of institutions as well as individuals.

8.1 Moral Attention as Historically Situated Selectivity

Attention is selective: an agent notices, examines, remembers, and prioritizes some features of a situation while others remain outside the field of active consideration. This selectivity may arise through limited time, competing tasks, learned expectations, language, salience, institutional categories, or the agent's previous relations with affected people. Philosophical accounts disagree about what constitutes attention and about its relations to cognition and agency; some also assign it an important role in moral perception and character [41]. The present paper adopts a narrower practical conception. *Moral attention* designates situated activity that selects and sustains examination of morally potentially relevant persons, communications, conditions, and alternatives under a defensible standard of inquiry. The designation proposes an object for ethical evaluation rather than a universally binding duty to observe every possible concern.

Attention shapes the evidence from which later judgments are formed. A volunteer who attends only to completed intake forms may encounter an apparently low level of demand, while a person unable to complete the form remains outside the observed applicant group. A helper who expects gratitude may attend readily to appreciation and treat a hesitant reply as unimportant. Such patterns can alter the questions that get asked and the evidence that survives in a file. A judgment produced from an incomplete record can be internally consistent and still rest upon an unjustifiably narrowed field of observation. An adequate review must therefore examine both the interpretation of admitted evidence and the process through which evidence became admissible.

A reasonable demand for attention is also agent-relative. An individual with limited language proficiency, an urgent competing task, or little specialist training cannot be required to infer everything that a

qualified team could establish through prolonged inquiry. Yet workload and role limitations can indicate responsibilities of supervision, accessible communication, or referral. The relevant appraisal concerns what could reasonably have been noticed or investigated under the particular responsibilities, capacities, resources, and risks. It may support a modest obligation to ask a clarifying question or to seek appropriate assistance while leaving more extensive interpretation outside a volunteer's remit. Such conclusions require specific normative premises, as established in Section 5.

8.2 Testimony, Communication, and the Speaker–Hearer Relation

A speaker's testimony may convey first-person information concerning an experience, a preference, a past event, or a practical constraint. The testimonial relation involves a speaker, an audience, an occasion, an available channel of communication, and an interpretive setting. The speaker may have privileged access to some aspects of the experience while remaining uncertain about causes, institutional remedies, or future consequences. The hearer may possess relevant procedural knowledge while lacking direct access to the speaker's life. This asymmetry creates complementary epistemic contributions and possible tensions. Their resolution requires attention to the particular proposition being assessed rather than a categorical ranking of first-person and professional knowledge.

Communication is not exhausted by a verbal assertion. A person may point to an inaccessible entrance, offer an incomplete account, use an interpreter, decline a request for explanation, or communicate through an assistive device. Some manifestations carry articulated propositions; others invite uncertain hypotheses. The medium affects what becomes available to an observer and what can be safely preserved. A volunteer who translates a request into a standard eligibility category is engaged in a consequential interpretive act even if no decision about assistance has yet been taken. This act can make information portable across an institution while also removing qualifiers and silencing uncertainties that were present in the original exchange.

Testimony must be evaluated with appropriate responsiveness and critical care. Taking a speaker seriously does not require regarding every inference as conclusively established. A respectful hearing can preserve the distinction between a reported experience, an allegation about its cause, and a proposed remedy. When a recipient reports feeling unsafe during an interaction, the feeling itself is directly relevant first-person testimony; identifying another person's intentions or determining whether a particular intervention is legally authorized involves further evidence and standards. Conversely, treating a report as merely subjective can incorrectly deprive the testimony of standing. A defensible record allows reported content to remain visible even when subsequent causal questions remain open.

8.3 Credibility, Social Position, and Testimonial Disadvantage

Credibility judgments may be shaped by the speaker's language, age, perceived capacity, institutional status, manner of expression, or the expectations attached to a role. In her account of epistemic injustice, Fricker examines ways in which identity prejudice can produce credibility deficits and how unequal interpretive resources can disadvantage persons in making sense of social experiences [17]. Such work offers a philosophical framework for questioning credibility practices in aid relations. It does not establish that every disagreement between a volunteer and recipient is prejudicial, or that a particular institution has committed epistemic injustice without evidence concerning its actual procedures and social context.

A useful diagnostic separates the grounds of a credibility judgment from the social attributes that may have influenced it. A concern about a specific contradiction in dates has a different evidential structure from a generalized presumption that certain recipients exaggerate. A recipient's limited command of the institution's working language may reduce the detail conveyed in a brief interview while offering little reason to downgrade the credibility of the underlying experience. An effective appraisal considers translation quality, the precise content of the claim, relevant corroboration, and alternative explanations of apparent inconsistency. It also examines whether supposedly neutral intake standards impose unequal burdens on particular populations.

The problem extends to practices of speaking and being heard. Dotson's analysis of testimonial silencing examines failures of hearers in linguistic exchanges, particularly under conditions of oppressive ignorance and speaker vulnerability [13]. The current inquiry takes from this work a caution about treating the mere existence of a channel as proof that testimony is meaningfully received. A participant may be invited to provide information while the categories of acceptable response rule out the intended concern. The stronger attribution of epistemic violence in Dotson's specific sense requires additional historical, structural, and interpretive argument. The preliminary GR model therefore represents silencing as a candidate mechanism to investigate, reserving substantive diagnoses for evidence that supports their scope.

8.4 Interpretive Frameworks and Hermeneutical Contestation

An interpretation connects communicated material to categories, causal hypotheses, and possible reasons for action. It can be influenced by institutional definitions of service eligibility, professional specialization, local conventions, relational familiarity, and prior cases. A recipient's request for accompaniment might be recorded as a transport difficulty, an access problem, an expression of anxiety, or a wish for company. Each interpretation highlights different potential responses and different obligations for the persons involved. The analytic issue is the historical and evidential warrant for selecting among interpretations, including whether several remain plausible for distinct purposes.

Interpretive resources are collectively and unevenly distributed. Medina's account of hermeneutical injustice emphasizes plural contexts, social silences, and shared interpretive responsibilities [40]. This perspective helps frame a methodological question: whose vocabulary and social experience shape the categories through which an institution hears requests? An official form may be efficient for routine cases while poorly expressing difficulties faced by persons at the margins of its design. The appropriate response could include revising categories, consulting differently positioned participants, or preserving narrative evidence alongside coded fields. The legitimacy and feasibility of these measures remain subject to local justification.

Interpretive disagreement is sometimes substantive rather than a remediable misunderstanding. A person may understand their own situation and disagree with the observer about what should be done. Multiple accounts can illuminate different dimensions without being reducible to one interpretation. A safe inquiry asks which proposition is being contested, what authority each participant has over the proposed action, and what would count as evidence for revision. The capacity of an institution to impose a classification does not establish its epistemic superiority. Equally, a participant's preferred classification does not by itself determine the legal scope or technical effectiveness of a requested intervention. The distinction between recognizing testimony and authorizing conduct remains fundamental.

8.5 Listening, Silence, and the Ethics of Solicitation

An attentive practice may include listening, deliberate silence, clarification, explanation, protection of confidentiality, or acceptance of a refusal to disclose. The significance of these activities depends on the relational context. Silence can manifest a considered decision, fatigue, a communication barrier, fear of consequences, uncertainty, or an inability to make a concern intelligible within available categories. A listener who treats silence as assent, incapacity, or evidence of no need introduces a substantive hypothesis whose grounds require examination. Conversely, persistent questioning may itself become intrusive when the speaker has declined to provide private information.

Solicitation names the process through which a helper or institution asks another subject to reveal information. It can create an opportunity for participation, but its conditions may influence the content and completeness of the disclosure. A person asked about intimate experiences in a public corridor may offer less information than in a confidential setting. A recipient may decline a request because the volunteer has no identifiable role in handling the data. In these cases a responsible response can involve explaining the purpose and limits of the inquiry, offering an alternative communication route, or

respecting the present boundary. The moral significance of disclosure cannot be assessed solely by the amount of information acquired.

Asymmetries in the costs of communicating should be examined. Requiring a participant to retell a difficult event to several intermediaries can impose emotional burdens and increase privacy risks. A volunteer’s desire to understand can also compete with the recipient’s desire to maintain control over their narrative. This does not justify a general prohibition on inquiry: in urgent conditions, limited questions may be important to obtaining competent assistance. The ethical choice concerns scope, timing, necessity, available alternatives, and authority. An institutional design that places all communicative labor on the recipient merits separate evaluation from the conduct of an individual volunteer with constrained options.

8.6 A Provenance-Preserving Interpretation Record

The preceding distinctions can be represented with a bounded interpretation record. For a situated listener A at historical stage t and context κ , let $\mathcal{T}_{A,t}^\kappa$ contain records whose entries retain the speaker or source s , the manifested content m , the communication channel c , a source-and-context pointer e , a finite family $\mathcal{I}$ of candidate interpretations, a family $\mathcal{D}$ of expressed objections or corrections, a partially specified evidential appraisal ν , and an available revision pathway ρ . Equation 8 defines the record type.

$$\mathcal{T}_{A,t}^\kappa \subseteq \text{Src}_t^\kappa \times \text{Man}_t^\kappa \times \text{Chan}_t^\kappa \times \text{Prov}_t^\kappa \times \mathcal{P}_{\text{fin}}(\text{Interp}_t^\kappa) \times \mathcal{P}_{\text{fin}}(\text{Contest}_t^\kappa) \times \text{Appraise}_{A,t}^\kappa \times \text{Revise}_t^\kappa. \quad (8)$$

Here $\mathcal{P}_{\text{fin}}$ is the set of finite subsets of the indicated domain. The source domain may include a person, a mediated utterance, or a documented institutional record, with distinctions among original speakers and intermediaries retained in provenance. A manifestation can include an explicit statement, nonverbal communication, a document, or a qualified observation of silence. The interpretation family records alternative hypotheses with their associated grounds rather than treating one entry as true by inclusion. The evidential appraisal ν records the observer’s support assessment, including unresolved or conflicting evidence; it is not a numerical probability unless an additional measurement model is provided. The revision pathway specifies who may contest a description and how an earlier record can be corrected without erasing its history.

Equation 8 is a representational proposal for traceability. It neither guarantees that a speaker’s words were faithfully transcribed nor ensures that every affected subject entered the source domain. Recording a correction does not establish that it was accepted, and an accepted correction can still be mistaken. The schema is therefore supplemented by an *entry audit*, examining excluded communications and inaccessible channels, and a *revision audit*, asking whether disagreement can meaningfully alter consequential classifications. Both are analytic procedures needing independent ethical and institutional justification. Their purpose is to expose the steps by which an interpretation becomes actionable while keeping the Section 7.4 need record and Section 5.2 practical-reason register distinct.

8.7 Contestability, Epistemic Repair, and Historical Updating

Interpretations should be revisable when additional testimony, better translation, newly visible circumstances, or competing explanations materially challenge their evidential basis. A correction process can distinguish errors of transcription, transmission, attribution, categorization, causal explanation, and normative evaluation. Each requires different evidence. A mistaken name in a referral document may be corrected by checking the source record; a contested account of why a participant refused assistance may require a new conversation under different communicative conditions. A dispute over whether the refusal ought to be overridden additionally raises a normative and authority question whose resolution cannot be reduced to evidential repair.

Historical updating has two aspects. First, beliefs about an earlier event may change as new sources become available. Second, the relationship itself may change because a prior interpretation was acted upon. A recipient repeatedly classified as unable to participate independently may become dependent

on a gatekeeping intermediary; correcting a file later may therefore leave operative effects requiring additional remedial work. In this sense, interpretive activities can participate in the formation of the relational conditions they purport to describe. That possibility is a causal hypothesis to be examined in particular histories, rather than a claim that all classifications transform their subjects.

A credible procedure for contestability needs to consider costs and power. A participant may technically possess a right to submit a correction yet lack access to the relevant language, technology, or decision-maker. An institutional record may accommodate notes of disagreement while continuing to act on the uncorrected field. An inquiry can therefore track access to correction, uptake of the correction, the reasons for acceptance or rejection, and subsequent changes in outcomes. Correction rights may belong to legal or administrative regimes whose exact scope requires jurisdiction-specific verification. The present analysis concerns potential ethical reasons to design effective correction routes, subject to the interests of other affected persons and justified confidentiality limits.

8.8 Attention under Urgency, Competence, and Privacy Constraints

Attentiveness should be assessed under real constraints rather than assumed to require limitless inquiry. In time-sensitive settings, delay in clarifying an ambiguous statement may permit avoidable harm; acting too quickly may lead to unwanted disclosure or intervention. The ethical-situation record of Section 4 includes multiple options precisely because requests for clarification, temporary protective conduct within competence, and contact with authorized responders can differ in feasibility and risk. The appropriate balance is a matter of reasoned local judgment, not a universal formula derived from the interpretation record.

Competence conditions what a volunteer may infer from testimony. A volunteer can listen to a complaint, recognize its significance to the speaker, and report a concern through an authorized channel without claiming the ability to diagnose a medical condition, decide legal entitlements, or adjudicate a complex dispute. Referral is itself a distinct action: explaining contact details, passing an anonymous concern, transmitting personal information, and securing consent for a named handoff have different implications. A capable institution should define communication and escalation roles sufficiently clearly to prevent apparent benevolence from standing in for expertise and authorization. Such institutional design claims remain proposals until assessed against actual rules and practice.

Privacy changes the epistemic relation. A record rich enough to support future review may expose sensitive details to persons who have no justified need to know them. The proposed provenance pointer in Equation 8 may therefore refer to a protected source accessible only through appropriate authorization, rather than duplicating its content in a broadly shared manuscript or operations file. If further inquiry would create disproportionate risks of disclosure, a less detailed or temporally deferred record may be preferable. The ethical assessment then requires explicit premises concerning confidentiality, contestability, foreseeable harm, and the legitimacy of the proposed decision. In hypothetical cases these remain analytic variables; no actual personal information is used.

8.9 Finite Diagnostics for Testimony and Interpretive Error

Two constructed cases test different sources of interpretive error. Both are hypothetical, with no assertion about the conduct of a real organization. Table 8 sets out the initial evidence, rival explanations, and potential correction pathways. Their purpose is to test the boundaries of the record in Equation 8 and its relation to the candidate-need and practical-reason registers.

A translated intake request. A volunteer receives an institutionally prepared summary indicating that a hypothetical applicant requested “transport.” The original exchange occurred through an informal interpreter. The helper assumes that access to a vehicle is the central problem. Subsequent clarification, freely agreed to by the applicant, suggests that the applicant can travel independently but cannot reliably navigate an unfamiliar service entrance without language assistance. The initial record preserved a broad need for support but misidentified its functional object. A corrected interpretation may support

Table 8: Diagnostic tests of testimonial uptake and interpretive correction in hypothetical aid relations

Situation	Admitted manifestation	Competing explanations	Discriminating inquiry and ethical boundary
Translated intake request	A form records “transport” after a mediated conversation	Mobility problem, language-mediated category substitution, or need for accompanied access	Check source wording with consent; provide accessible correction; preserve privacy and avoid assumed diagnosis
Reluctant account in accompaniment	A recipient offers short answers and declines further discussion	Considered privacy boundary, communication fatigue, distrust, or unexpressed concern	Offer optional later contact; explain purposes and limits; do not treat silence as permission or incapacity

an accessible-information option that the earlier description concealed. It does not establish that every translated summary is unreliable or that the volunteer should independently collect private information.

A counterfactual test changes the record. Suppose the applicant confirms that mobility is genuinely restricted and that the original interpreter summarized the request accurately. The earlier hypothesis of category substitution then loses support. Suppose instead that clarification is unavailable because it would expose the applicant’s personal details without consent. The record should retain competing hypotheses and recognize the limited evidence, rather than elevating one interpretation to fact. The moral reasons for further action depend on time, potential harms, competence, available alternatives, and the applicant’s wishes. This case illustrates how an epistemically better description can change the option family without determining the final deontic status.

Reluctance within an accompaniment relationship. A recipient who previously discussed difficulties with a volunteer begins answering questions briefly and declines to describe a recent event. The volunteer interprets the silence as an indicator of escalating vulnerability and considers notifying a coordinator. Another interpretation is that the recipient has deliberately set a boundary after repeated questioning. A third concerns fatigue or a breakdown in trust. The volunteer’s concern may be sincere, but sincerity supplies little evidence for choosing among these explanations. More proportionate options may include acknowledging the refusal, explaining the availability of later contact, and using an authorized supervisory route if independently supported immediate safety concerns exist.

Changing assumptions alters the appraisal. If the recipient expressly states an imminent danger and requests assistance, the time-sensitive moral reasons may become substantially different. If there is no indication of immediate risk and the recipient continues to decline disclosure, further pressure may impose costs without supplying warranted information. If a coordinator has already asked the volunteer to record and report the person’s private conversations, the authority and privacy implications require independent evaluation. The diagnostic thus locates the ethical issue in the coupling of interpreted manifestations, contested reasons, and institutional positions, while preserving the recipient’s agency and the distinction between uncertainty and permission.

8.10 Three-Level Reality, Philosophical Limits, and Research Tasks

The three-level GR distinction clarifies the epistemic standing of the proposed account. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate nature of conscious experience and the relation between another subject’s inner life and a listener’s representation remain suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, durable communication practices, distributions of credibility, dependencies, and institutional classifications can organize interactions and have historically consequential effects. At the level of *manifestation reality*, utterances, translated forms, hesitations, records, corrections, and observed practices are contextually

accessible expressions. Attention and interpretation are modes of access and historically situated activity operating across these relations; they do not constitute a fourth kind of reality or provide transparent access to another person's subjective experience.

The ethical force of an interpretation depends on additional grounds. Fricker's treatment of epistemic injustice, Dotson's analysis of testimonial silencing, and Medina's argument for interpretive plurality identify distinct philosophical problems [17, 13, 40]. The present paper uses their work as intellectual resources while developing a narrower, agent-specific inquiry into volunteer decisions. Their concepts should not be applied as diagnostic labels to particular persons or institutions without evidence adequate to their original scope. Moreover, the quality of an interpretation and the morality of an intervention remain separately assessable: an accurate understanding can accompany unauthorized conduct, and well-intentioned restraint can remain epistemically uninformed.

The section's contribution is a traceable account of the uptake, contestation, and revision of testimony in morally significant aid relations. The interpretation record in Equation 8 retains provenance and competing hypotheses; Table 8 tests errors of transmission and attribution; and the account of correction examines whether a participant can influence consequential representations. Subsequent inquiry must assess these proposals through protected participant engagement, actual communication practices, comparison of alternative interpretations, and suitably justified standards of institutional responsibility. The next section studies competence, scope of practice, and referral, where an ethically serious interpretation must be translated into action under bounded practical authority. No institution-specific or empirical finding follows from the present hypothetical diagnostics.

9 Competence, Scope of Practice, and Responsible Referral

Ethical assistance frequently begins when a volunteer recognizes a concern that exceeds the volunteer's knowledge, practical skill, institutional remit, or authority. The concern may warrant attention and a response even where direct intervention would be poorly justified. This section examines competence, scope of practice, and referral as distinct but historically coupled components of agent-specific ethical assessment. Its objective is to clarify the epistemic and normative conditions under which direct assistance, further inquiry, supervised action, referral, and restraint become available alternatives. The analysis inherits the typed ethical-situation record in Section 4, the candidate moral-reason framework in Section 5, the need-register discipline in Section 7, and the interpretation-provenance account in Section 8. A limited competence-and-authority record and two hypothetical diagnostics are proposed. The discussion remains a philosophical research construction; actual responsibilities depend on relevant training, organizational rules, jurisdiction, the person's preferences, and independently established emergency procedures.

9.1 Task-Relative Competence and the Evidence for Capability

Competence concerns an agent's ability to perform a specified kind of task under relevant conditions with a sufficiently defensible standard of performance. Such an assessment requires a task description, a performance standard, evidence bearing on the agent's capability, and the conditions in which the task would be undertaken. General experience in volunteering is an imperfect proxy for competence in medication management, diagnostic inference, crisis response, interpretation across languages, safeguarding assessment, or secure handling of personal information. Each task combines different technical and relational demands. A person may be competent to accompany a recipient to a reception desk while lacking the expertise necessary to interpret a medical recommendation. The recipient's trust and the volunteer's sincere concern can be important features of the relation, yet neither establishes the particular capability in question.

Competence is also conditional upon circumstances. An agent who usually performs a task adequately may encounter a situation involving unfamiliar equipment, a language barrier, exhaustion, ambiguous instructions, or an altered risk profile. Conversely, an agent without professional certification

may competently provide some practical support within a properly defined, trained, and supervised role. The classification must therefore identify the action being assessed, its setting and stakes, the relevant training and demonstrated performance, and the availability of supervision. An undetermined competence assessment signals a need for proportionate verification; it is neither a finding of incapacity nor grounds for assuming capability. A defensible judgment may permit low-risk clarification while recommending that a potentially consequential task be assessed by a qualified person.

An ethical appraisal additionally asks what the volunteer knows about the limits of their own skills. Overconfidence can produce false reassurance and poorly supported intervention. Excessive categorical distrust of one’s abilities may obscure genuinely feasible and low-risk contributions. The relevant standard is calibrated self-assessment joined to the ability to communicate uncertainty, seek assistance, and revise one’s assessment as evidence changes. Competence thus has both performance and reflective dimensions. The moral consequences of an error in self-assessment depend on the agent’s reasonable opportunities to recognize the limitation, the stakes, and the available alternatives. Evaluation should preserve this historical specificity rather than treating every unsuccessful outcome as proof of prior incompetence.

9.2 Role Delegation, Organizational Scope, and Legal Authority

A volunteer’s *role scope* concerns the tasks and relationships that an organization has assigned or authorized within its own governance arrangements. Such scope may be communicated through position descriptions, training, explicit delegation, supervision, safeguarding rules, or established service procedures. A legal scope of practice, where relevant, depends on jurisdiction-specific law, professional regulation, and institutional conditions. These sources have different normative and practical functions. An organizational instruction can delimit responsibility inside a project while leaving a legal question open; a legal permission can coexist with organizational restrictions; an agent’s factual competence can exceed either delegated or lawful authority. Accordingly, claims of authorization require evidence about the particular institution and jurisdiction. This manuscript makes no determination concerning any actual hospital, aid agency, profession, or local regulatory regime.

The IFRC’s *Volunteering Policy* articulates an organizational commitment to safe, inclusive, and sustainable volunteering within its network [28]. Its relevance here is illustrative: effective volunteer engagement relies on institutional arrangements as well as individual goodwill. The policy should be interpreted within its stated organizational domain. In a health-related setting, the WHO’s *Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030* likewise frames the reduction of avoidable harm as a matter involving systems and institutions as well as frontline practice [63]. These documents provide examples of safety-oriented organizational perspectives. They do not themselves supply a universal legal rule on what all volunteers may perform, nor can they establish that any particular referral pathway is safe or functioning.

A volunteer may confront incompatible signals: a recipient requests immediate help, a supervisor informally encourages action, and the volunteer’s role documentation provides little guidance. The source and legitimacy of each instruction should be examined. A coordinator’s desire for continuity does not confer a medical license, and a recipient’s request cannot automatically authorize a volunteer to disclose protected information. Equally, an overly narrow role description may conceal a feasible duty to summon an appropriate responder or convey a time-sensitive concern through an established channel. The latter possibility still needs an adequate normative basis and a supported account of the relevant rules, risks, and feasible options. The ethics of responsibility therefore evaluates both the volunteer’s decisions and the institution’s clarity of delegation and support.

9.3 Bounded Competence and Authority Assessment

The ethical-situation schema in Equation 2 accommodates historically indexed options and partially known constraints. To distinguish competence from authority within that structure, consider a candidate action $o \in \Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ and a local assessment record. Equation 9 introduces a conditional research representa-

tion, with each entry accompanied by its evidential provenance.

$$\mathfrak{B}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o) = (\hat{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o), \hat{D}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o), \hat{L}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o), \hat{S}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o), \hat{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o), \Pi_{A,t}^{\kappa}(o)). \quad (9)$$

Here $\hat{C}$ is an evidence-relative task-competence assessment; $\hat{D}$ records documented role delegation; $\hat{L}$ identifies the available evidence concerning applicable legal or regulatory authority; $\hat{S}$ concerns accessible supervision and institutional support; $\hat{R}$ records the foreseeable risk conditions and their uncertainty; and Π preserves the provenance, date, and qualification of these assessments. The hatted entries may remain supported, unsupported, disputed, or undetermined according to the evidence and the question under examination. Their domains and evaluative criteria differ: a single numerical score would conceal the distinction between demonstrated skill, delegated authority, lawful power, and safety support.

Equation 9 defines an *audit representation*, rather than an optimization rule or a complete deontic calculus. For example, an agent could have supported task competence and uncertain legal authorization; the record then retains that asymmetry. In another case an authorized duty could be assigned while adequate competence or supervision is absent. The latter configuration may indicate institutional deficiencies without rendering unsafe performance obligatory by definition. The proposed record should be read alongside the candidate-reason register in Section 5: moral demands require independent normative premises, and a preliminary technical classification cannot establish a permission to act. The representation is also limited by the visibility of options and persons; absence of a documented specialist or referral target does not prove that none exists.

9.4 Practical Restraint and the Preservation of Assistance Reasons

Recognizing a competence boundary may justify a change in the form of assistance. Where direct task performance carries poorly controlled risks, responsible alternatives may include acknowledging the concern, explaining the volunteer's role, clarifying the recipient's wishes, obtaining an authorized supervisor's guidance, enabling access to an appropriate service, or documenting an unresolved issue with proportionate safeguards. The options should be evaluated separately. Refraining from an unsupported clinical or legal judgment, for instance, can coexist with a strong reason to facilitate contact with someone qualified to evaluate the problem. An agent's lack of specialist competence thus leaves open questions about feasible and defensible indirect support.

Restraint is not automatically costless. A recipient may experience delay, embarrassment, repeated disclosure, or loss of trust when a volunteer abruptly redirects a request. A helper may also be tempted to withdraw entirely in order to avoid responsibility. The morally relevant alternative can involve a careful explanation of limitations and an accountable transition rather than either improvised specialist action or unexplained refusal. Some situations nonetheless warrant immediate disengagement to prevent coercion, physical danger, or a severe privacy violation. The assessment depends on specific risks, affected interests, and feasible responses. It should also consider whether organizational burdens have been displaced onto the recipient by vague responsibility boundaries.

The WHO and partner organizations' *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers* describes humane, supportive, and practical help that respects dignity, culture, and abilities, within its crisis-response setting [64]. Its distinction between accessible support and more specialized services illustrates why a supportive role can be significant without being equivalent to unrestricted professional intervention. Application to other settings requires an argued analogy and the applicable local rules. This paper consequently treats restraint as an ethically evaluable option shaped by the whole situation, not as a universal command to defer whenever expertise is incomplete.

9.5 Responsible Referral as a Relational and Temporal Process

Referral denotes a proposed transfer or connection through which a concern is communicated to another person, role, or service regarded as potentially better positioned to respond. It has a relational structure: a referring agent, an affected subject, an intended recipient of the information or request, an available

communication channel, and a historically situated set of expectations. The term can designate very different acts. A volunteer might provide publicly available contact information, offer to help arrange an appointment, seek supervisory advice without identifying a recipient, or initiate an authorized escalation under a governing safeguarding procedure. These actions differ in disclosure, authority, burden, timeliness, and possible consequences. Referral should therefore be individuated as an option within the ethical-situation record before being assessed as a moral response.

An ethically defensible referral may involve at least six separately assessable tasks: identifying a plausible recipient service, establishing the purpose and scope of the proposed contact, considering consent and the limits of information sharing, describing uncertainties without inflating them into conclusions, arranging a feasible handoff, and clarifying what follow-up responsibility remains. Which tasks are required depends on context, risk, and governing norms. Providing a telephone number alone may be adequate for a capable person requesting information, while it may fail a relied-upon recipient who cannot use the service and has been promised an accompanied transition. Conversely, acting as though a referral has been accepted without verifying the receiving pathway can create false reassurance. The stages of *proposed*, *transmitted*, *acknowledged*, *accepted*, and *completed* should not be conflated.

Referral creates an epistemic problem as well as a practical one. The receiving professional or team may need enough information to assess urgency and relevance, while the affected subject has interests in privacy, accuracy, and control over disclosure. A concise record can retain the original request, the referring agent's interpretation, uncertainty, and any expressed disagreement, building on Section 8. A mistaken category may otherwise propagate through several institutions and acquire unjustified authority through repetition. Consent and information-governance requirements should be evaluated independently from helpful intent. When an actual emergency rule permits or requires exceptional disclosure, the applicable threshold and authority need verification; the present theory supplies no generalized exception.

9.6 Referral Uptake, Continuity, and Remedial Responsibility

A referral can fail at several points. A destination may be unavailable, a recipient may encounter inaccessible language or transportation, the receiving service may decline the matter, or a record may be transmitted without reaching anyone capable of acting. Such failures may be attributable to different actors and institutional positions. A volunteer who reasonably provided information may have discharged a bounded commitment, whereas an organization that promised continuity may retain duties to maintain or repair an agreed pathway. Attribution therefore requires the earlier undertaking, the agent's available alternatives, the quality of communicated information, and the response of the receiving party. The existence of harm after referral, by itself, does not identify its cause or establish fault.

A proposed handoff may also change the relation. The recipient may understand that the initial volunteer has ceased involvement, although the receiving service has not taken responsibility. A coordinator may assume that a referral is complete because a digital ticket has been closed. An accurate historical record should distinguish the conclusion of the volunteer's authorized contribution from the acceptance of responsibility elsewhere. Under some commitments, the appropriate remedy may be to check whether the intended communication arrived; under others, extensive follow-up may be intrusive or unreasonable. The applicable duty cannot be read off a universal number of contact attempts. It requires the deontic and agent-relative analysis established in Section 5 and a review of the person's preferences and institutional duties.

History also affects which burdens become normalized. If a volunteer repeatedly compensates for a broken referral system through personal calls, informal translation, and unpaid accompaniment, the organization may come to rely on the individual as a substitute for a functioning service pathway. The immediate intervention can be morally valuable while the historical arrangement remains structurally problematic. Paper VI's separate relational-justice analysis is relevant here, but the present paper asks which responsibilities attach to particular agents under available alternatives. The issue includes institutional choices to improve accessible information, training, supervision, and continuity without converting

Table 9: Diagnostic comparisons for task competence, role authority, and referral continuity in hypothetical volunteer relations

Situation	Competing practical options	Critical evidence and normative questions	Counterfactual discriminator
Uncertain health-related request	Interpret symptoms, offer general access assistance, obtain authorized guidance, or initiate the designated referral route	Task competence; applicable instructions; expressed preferences; urgency; whether a receiving service is functioning	Confirmed immediate danger and verified emergency procedure versus uncertain, non-urgent concern
Inaccessible referral pathway	Provide a contact, assist with an agreed handoff, seek accessible alternatives, or document a failure	Prior reliance; privacy and permission; service accessibility; receiving acknowledgment; extent of the volunteer's undertaking	Verified accessible intake and recipient preference versus repeated rejection or missing handoff

exceptional volunteer generosity into an indefinite personal obligation.

9.7 Competence Boundaries across the Three Reality Levels

At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate constitution of capacities, subjective experience, and the relation between a helper's understanding and another being's welfare remain open. A record of competence cannot settle those ultimate questions. At the level of *relational reality*, acquired skills, institutional roles, patterns of reliance, legal and organizational positions, supervision structures, and referral practices can be sufficiently stable to organize consequential action. At the level of *manifestation reality*, certificates, training histories, demonstrations of performance, instructions, referral messages, recipient testimony, and records of acceptance make parts of those structures accessible to observers. Evidence regarding a manifestation may support a relational inference while leaving important capacities and institutional rules unobserved.

The three levels matter because a displayed credential, a recipient's report of good prior help, and an institution's task assignment can each be mistakenly treated as a complete description of capability. Each is a partial manifestation with different provenance and relevance. For some tasks, demonstrable training and supervised experience supply important evidence; for others, practical attentiveness, language ability, or knowledge of local navigation can be more directly relevant. Nor is competence fixed once acquired. New conditions, revised procedures, fatigue, or changing evidence may alter what is reasonable to attempt. The GR framework treats these changes as possible trajectories of relations while reserving substantive legal and moral conclusions for independent arguments.

The same distinction governs referral. A recorded transfer is a manifestation. A genuinely functioning receiving relationship is a historically constituted arrangement that may require separate confirmation. The moral status of a transfer still depends on the relevant norms of consent, confidentiality, risk, responsibility, and legitimate authority. These connections preserve methodological pluralism: philosophical analysis can clarify the relevant distinctions, empirical inquiry can investigate whether pathways function, and formal records can make provenance and gaps auditable. None of these modes alone establishes the whole ethical judgment.

9.8 Finite Diagnostic Cases for Competence and Referral

Table 9 compares two hypothetical situations, identifying what an analysis must establish before attributing moral adequacy to action, restraint, or referral. They are constructed tests of conceptual distinctions, not accounts of actual organizations or clinical recommendations.

A health-related request with uncertain implications. During a hypothetical community-support shift, a recipient describes a troubling physical sensation and asks a volunteer whether medication should be changed. The volunteer has experience with the institution's navigation procedures and is trusted by the recipient but lacks evidence of the relevant clinical competence or authority. The request conveys a concern worthy of attention; it supplies no justification for improvised diagnosis or medication advice. Candidate options can include clarifying the recipient's immediate request without collecting unnecessary sensitive details, explaining the volunteer's remit, and connecting the person through an appropriate authorized pathway. If the setting has a verified emergency process and facts meet its conditions, the options and timing may change. This philosophical example identifies variables to investigate and is not guidance for responding to symptoms in practice.

A counterfactual version changes the volunteer's role. Suppose the volunteer is also a currently qualified professional acting within an independently authorized clinical position. The relevant task competence and legal authority evidence may now be different, although the distinction between personal volunteer role and professional role still matters. Another version assumes a supervisor has informally encouraged the volunteer to reassure recipients without adequate training. Here the institutional delegation may be supported while competence remains unsettled. These contrasts show why neither recipient trust nor supervisory encouragement can be used as a universal proxy for capable and authorized intervention.

An inaccessible receiving pathway. A volunteer helps a hypothetical newly arrived resident who cannot reliably understand the language used by a service's online referral form. The volunteer provides a contact address and records the request as referred. The receiving organization has no demonstrated translation provision, and the resident subsequently reports being unable to use the service. Whether the volunteer has further personal obligations depends on any prior promise, the person's preferences, accessible alternatives, and the role's limits. The institution may face a separate responsibility to make its referral arrangements workable. Treating an administrative closure as an effective handoff would obscure both the epistemic and practical failure.

A counterfactual version assumes that accessible interpretation is confirmed, the recipient understands the process and prefers to contact the service independently. A bounded information referral might then be adequate. Another version assumes the recipient has consented to accompanied communication, that a responsible coordinator accepted the transition, and that receiving acknowledgment can be verified. That configuration can support a different appraisal of continuity. Both cases depend on information-sharing limits, the receiving institution's actual capacities, and the agent's feasible alternatives. A model with better provenance can expose omitted facts while remaining unable to certify the ultimate moral status without a justified normative basis.

9.9 Verification Tasks and the Ethical Meaning of a Competence Boundary

The proposed framework invites several forms of verification. Task standards and credentials require reliable, context-specific evidence; role assignments need current and accessible documents; legal authority needs jurisdiction- and profession-sensitive analysis; and referral pathways need evidence of actual operation. Interviewing volunteers may establish perceived guidance while leaving institutional practices unresolved. Recipients may report barriers that are absent from formal records. These different sources should be compared without assuming that one perspective automatically dominates another. Privacy, consent, and safeguarding concerns apply to any empirical investigation of referral practices, particularly when sensitive concerns are involved.

The competence-and-authority record in Equation 9 is deliberately modest. It can expose conflicts between supported skill and unsupported permission, or between role assignment and absent supervision. It cannot infer an ethically required action by adding its components, establish a legal entitlement, or predict how a receiving service will behave. Table 9 similarly identifies variables capable of revising initial interpretations. Counterevidence may include a previously unknown qualified responder, an express refusal of contact, an ineffective handoff, a better-supported lower-risk option, or an applicable rule that

changes the authority conditions. A judgment that remains unresolved should be represented as such.

The central ethical implication is an agent-relative responsibility to take competence limits seriously while preserving the possible claims of affected people. Depending on defensible premises and concrete circumstances, the agent may have reason to refrain from direct specialized intervention while supporting access to someone positioned to help. Referral itself is an ethically significant action whose quality depends on consent, information, continuity, and the allocation of responsibilities over time. The conceptual apparatus therefore prepares the examination of continuing authorization, refusal, and exit in the next section. The present analysis establishes neither a universal referral obligation nor a comprehensive professional scope rule, and its hypothetical examples imply no empirical finding about actual volunteers or institutions.

10 Consent, Refusal, Exit, and the Continuity of Authorization

Ethically responsible volunteer intervention requires a temporally adequate account of who may authorize which activity, how such authorization is communicated, and what follows when a participant refuses or withdraws. A consent signal can concern a limited task, a particular disclosure, an ongoing form of companionship, or an institutional process containing several distinguishable actions. The ethical consequences depend on what was understood, by whom, under which circumstances, and at which historical stage. This section develops a conditional, agent-specific framework for authorization and its continuity. Its objective is to separate the recognition of a participant's wishes, the validity and scope of an authorization claim, a volunteer's practical competence, and the moral reasons governing conduct following refusal or exit. The argument uses the situation record in Section 4, the reason and deontic distinctions in Section 5, the interpretation account in Section 8, and the task-boundary framework of Section 9. A provenance-sensitive record, two constructed cases, and explicit verification obligations support the analysis. The framework is a philosophical proposal; applicable legal consent standards and concrete institutional procedures require separate determination.

10.1 Authorization as a Scoped Relational Transaction

Consent is commonly discussed as an act of authorization that may alter whether another agent is permitted to undertake an otherwise restricted action. Its normative significance depends on the kind of action, the relevant subject's standing, and justified constraints on that alteration. Onora O'Neill emphasizes limitations in attempts to demand fully specific and exhaustive informed consent, while Manson and O'Neill develop the importance of communicative transactions whose practical meaning is shaped by context [46, 36]. These arguments arise in bioethics. Their relevance to volunteering is a carefully qualified analogy: consent can be analyzed as a communication with an action-specific normative function, while legal consequences and the standards appropriate to a particular form of assistance remain to be established separately. The GR proposal asks how that transaction is historically situated and made visible, as well as what additional justification is necessary for treating it as effective authorization.

A participant who agrees to receive directions has thereby communicated something different from agreement to public photography, transmission of medical information, physical assistance, or participation in an interview. A consent claim consequently needs an *action description* sufficiently clear to distinguish these cases. A request for help may establish a reason to respond without specifying that every means available to the volunteer is accepted. Equally, a participant's request for one form of assistance can coexist with an explicit refusal of another. Where service designs bundle several tasks, an ethical assessment should examine whether the bundled presentation created avoidable ambiguity, especially if access to one desired service was made dependent upon accepting an unrelated intrusion.

Authorization has a relational address. An affected person may authorize a named volunteer to perform a bounded activity while declining permission for wider organizational circulation of identifiable information. A coordinator may delegate responsibility to a volunteer without acquiring power to substitute that delegation for the recipient's own choice. A third-party representative may have a recog-

nized role in specific circumstances, yet the evidence for that standing and its limits must be identified. Each transaction therefore involves at least an authorizing position, a proposed acting position, the conduct within scope, communication conditions, and a historical stage. Even with these fields identified, the inference from a recorded agreement to ethically justified conduct requires independently defended premises concerning voluntariness, understanding, capacity where relevant, competing rights, and the authority of the acting person. A volunteer’s competence remains an additional condition addressed in Section 9.

10.2 Communication, Understanding, and Practical Voluntariness

Informed consent theory identifies multiple justifications for attending to communication, understanding, and freedom from controlling pressures. Eyal’s philosophical review distinguishes rationales involving protection, autonomy, trust, non-domination, and integrity, and also documents disagreement about the appropriate stringency and scope of consent requirements [16]. The present research should therefore avoid assuming a single, universally sufficient checklist for volunteer encounters. The communicative conditions can instead be examined in relation to the stakes of a proposed action, its intrusiveness, the participant’s circumstances, and the strength of the normative basis for a consent requirement. An offer of directions, an invitation to sustained companionship, and a request to circulate sensitive information differ markedly in the possible consequences of misunderstanding.

Understanding is also mediated. An institution may provide a multilingual explanation that is formally correct yet inaccessible to the person who must decide; an interpreter may paraphrase a significant condition; a volunteer may believe that a nod confirms the proposed referral when the participant understood only that their question was acknowledged. The provenance-sensitive interpretation framework of Section 8 helps keep the source message, translation, subsequent interpretation, and any contested reconstruction distinct. Practical voluntariness depends on more than the absence of an explicit threat. A participant who fears losing future access, disappointing a long-standing helper, or being judged ungrateful may experience pressures that are invisible in an agreement field. Their moral significance depends on a supported account of the power relation, reasonable alternatives, and justified standards of voluntary choice.

The person seeking authorization should have a proportionate opportunity to clarify or decline the relevant activity. A more extensive informational conversation is not invariably beneficial: repeated solicitation may itself be burdensome, intimidating, or intrusive. A person may reasonably prefer a concise explanation or delegate some communication choices within a valid scope. Conversely, a brief acceptance given under a misleading description should be treated differently from one following a clear explanation. The central object is the quality of the relevant communicative opportunity and the normative role of the resulting transaction, rather than its mere documentary length. For a specific institution, communication accessibility, required documentation, representative decision arrangements, and safeguarding protocols must be verified before any operational conclusion is drawn.

10.3 A Provenance-Sensitive Authorization Record

The situation record of Equation 2 includes relevant histories, evidence, and options. The present subsection proposes a narrower research object for analyzing assertions of authorization at a particular stage. Let u be a represented potentially affected subject, A the agent-position seeking to perform or coordinate an action, o a specified option in $\Omega_{A,t}^\kappa$, and $[t_0, t_1]$ a stated temporal scope. The candidate authorization record is given in Equation 10.

$$\mathfrak{A}_{u,A,t}^\kappa(o) = (u, A, o, [t_0, t_1], \Sigma, \Gamma, H_t, \hat{V}_t, \Pi_t). \quad (10)$$

Here Σ identifies the action’s described substantive scope, including bounded data use or third-party involvement where pertinent; Γ identifies the documented communication circumstances, including linguistic mediation, stated conditions, and the availability of refusal; H_t is a time-indexed event history

of communicated agreement, restriction, refusal, clarification, or withdrawal; $\hat{V}_t$ is a *partial evidential assessment* of whether a specific authorization claim is adequately supported under a declared criterion; and Π_t identifies the source, date, and provenance of the relevant material. The temporal interval is an analytical representation of the asserted scope, rather than a claim that every actual consent transaction has a determinate expiration time.

The record retains separate event and assessment types. The history may contain *affirmation*, *restriction*, *refusal*, *withdrawal*, *clarification*, and *dispute* as communication events; the evidential status of an authorization claim may be supported, unsupported, disputed, or undetermined. These terms serve the epistemic purpose of the register. They are not new legal categories, and a communication described as affirmative need not satisfy the conditions for normative validity. In particular, a missing refusal is an absence of one recorded event, not evidence of affirmative consent. The record also allows an expression of refusal to be supported while the interpretation of its precise scope remains contested. If the relevant person or communication never entered the represented-subject register, the record cannot certify that authorization was unnecessary.

Equation 10 is deliberately bounded. It introduces no unconditional axiom according to which a supported consent record makes every action permissible. A further judgment requires the action-specific validity grounds, any independent prohibition, the volunteer's competence, organizational delegation, legal authority where applicable, and the possibility of other affected subjects. The conditional warrant relation of Section 3.8 offers an interface for those grounds. A consistent deontic analysis should also preserve the distinction between an affirmatively permitted action and an action whose prohibition has merely not been established, following Section 5. The proposed record is useful chiefly because it makes unsupported transitions between these categories visible and contestable.

10.4 Continuity, Reconfirmation, and Changes in Practical Scope

An ongoing volunteer relationship is a history of interactions, rather than a single timeless choice. Earlier authorization may be relevant to later conduct, but the relevant action descriptions, relationships, risks, participants, and expectations can change. A recurring visit originally arranged as conversational companionship might later include requests for transport, social media contact, liaison with professional services, or record keeping. Each extension raises a question about the scope of the earlier transaction and the quality of the new communicative opportunity. Authorization continuity therefore requires attention to the identity of the action and the stage-specific circumstances that make its earlier justification pertinent. Reconfirmation may be reasonable after material changes, while routine repetition of questions whose answer remains clear can be unnecessarily burdensome.

Three temporal distinctions are analytically useful. The first concerns *retained scope*: whether a later activity falls within the description that participants reasonably understood. The second concerns *changed conditions*: whether a new risk, dependence, supervisory arrangement, or use of information alters the reasons for relying on the earlier communication. The third concerns *current standing*: whether the person remains able and willing to authorize the act under the applicable normative and institutional standards. Evidence of continuity in a schedule or digital system is distinct from evidence that authorization remains practically meaningful. A historical record should therefore permit later restricted permissions, renewed explanations, or explicit withdrawal to qualify an earlier broad entry.

This historical account also limits retrospective inference. If a participant later objects, the objection may show that earlier communications were misunderstood, that circumstances changed, or that the participant revised a previously considered decision. The three explanations have different implications for causal responsibility and appropriate repair. The mere occurrence of later refusal does not by itself prove that the original assent was invalid; nor does earlier assent establish an entitlement to ignore later opposition. A provenance-sensitive inquiry compares messages, action descriptions, dates, foreseeable consequences, and the degree of freedom available for revision. These investigations should be accompanied by ethical justification for the amount of personal information retained in the historical record.

10.5 Refusal, Silence, and Respectful Nonparticipation

Refusal is a practical expression that can bear distinct moral force depending on the object of refusal and the justified requirements of the situation. A recipient may decline referral while welcoming ordinary companionship, reject photography while accepting practical help, or request that one volunteer discontinue a task while another suitably authorized person provides it. The proper analytical unit is the refused action and its context, with care not to expand a limited refusal into an indiscriminate rejection of assistance. Likewise, the absence of an explicit yes is not equivalent to a global refusal. The available information may leave the recipient's current position unknown; that uncertainty calls for a bounded inquiry and a normative account of which actions, if any, remain available.

Silence can arise through fatigue, privacy preference, language barriers, inaccessible communication methods, fear, disagreement, or the absence of a meaningful invitation to speak. The interpretive options in Section 8 provide a way of recording these hypotheses without making silence itself an authorization token. An ethical response may include offering an accessible clarification, leaving an unobtrusive means of later contact, providing general information without initiating the contested intervention, or respecting a communicated wish to avoid further approaches. The choice among these possibilities requires assessment of likely intrusion, urgency, available support, and any applicable safeguarding or emergency rule. Repeated requests should also be scrutinized where persistence may erode the practical possibility of refusal.

Refusal can have relational consequences beyond the immediate act. It may affect scheduled support, eligibility assessments, the volunteer's sense of responsibility, or communication with coordinators. For that reason, recognition of refusal is not exhausted by marking a field in an administrative system. A participant needs, where reasonably possible, to understand the consequences of the specific choice without being threatened with unrelated losses or inappropriate retaliation. Ethical inquiry should differentiate an unavoidable consequence of declining a particular service from a designed penalty for exercising the option to refuse. The existence of such a penalty may require institutional criticism in the sense elaborated by Paper VI, while the immediate volunteer still faces independent duties concerning communication, privacy, and role-appropriate conduct.

10.6 Exit, Withdrawal, and Residual Responsibilities

Exit includes ending one's participation in an assistance relationship, ceasing a particular intervention, withdrawing a previous authorization, or leaving an institutional role. These actions need not carry identical normative implications. A recipient may revoke permission for future contact; a volunteer may withdraw from a repeated assignment; an organization may terminate a programme. Each event can alter the prospective range of authorized activity while leaving historical consequences in place. Distinguishing prospective authorization from responsibilities generated by an earlier act or commitment prevents a paradox in which honoring refusal would require denying every remedial obligation, or in which an earlier commitment would justify indefinite intrusive involvement.

A recipient's withdrawal can give the volunteer a reason to stop the affected activity and to seek appropriate clarification about the desired scope of subsequent contact. It may also create reasons to handle existing records responsibly, correct a prior misleading representation, or convey a necessary transition notice within legitimately established limits. Such obligations require their own grounds, and the participant's refusal may substantially constrain the means available to discharge them. The ethical value of a responsible handoff cannot license unlimited disclosure or repeated pursuit. A narrow request to stop a particular service should be distinguished from a more comprehensive request to end the relation, and institutions should make the relevant options intelligible when feasible.

Volunteer withdrawal presents a different problem. Entry into a volunteer role can be genuinely optional, while particular undertakings may have generated reasonable reliance. A helper who can no longer continue because of illness, exhaustion, changed competence, or other justified limits may have pro tanto reasons to give notice or cooperate in a proportionate transition, subject to what remains feasible and appropriate. Section 5 distinguishes such reasons from settled requirements, while Section 9 distin-

guishes referral transmission from effective uptake. Institutional planning matters here: the absence of a viable handoff route can represent a failure of service design, rather than proof that an individual volunteer must continue indefinitely. Exit and residual responsibility should consequently be assessed for recipients, volunteers, and coordinating institutions as separate agent-specific judgments.

10.7 Dependence, Pressure, and Unequal Relational Positions

Volunteer relations can produce asymmetries that alter the practical meaning of agreement and refusal. A person may rely on a volunteer for language access, feel indebted to an unpaid helper, or believe that raising an objection will jeopardize future assistance. A volunteer may similarly fear negative reputation, feel bound by gratitude from recipients, or be pressured by an institution to exceed an agreed role. These effects may develop gradually through repeated encounters and symbolic recognition. The historical and relational approach is valuable because a signed or orally confirmed agreement can coexist with changing practical constraints on exit. The inquiry must nevertheless avoid assuming that dependence automatically removes agency or invalidates expressed preferences. The relevant questions concern supported pressures, available alternatives, the person's understanding of them, and the normative criteria appropriate to the action.

Protective responses can include allowing a decision to be communicated through a different channel, separating consent solicitation from the provider whose approval is feared, permitting partial rather than all-or-nothing participation, and explaining how refusing one task affects other assistance. These are proposals whose suitability depends upon institutional capacities, confidentiality, and the preferences of affected subjects. In medical research, the World Medical Association's 2024 Declaration of Helsinki specifically addresses freedom to refuse or withdraw, the absence of reprisal, and additional caution in dependent relationships [65]. This is a domain-bound research-ethics illustration. Its procedures are neither automatically applicable to ordinary volunteer accompaniment nor proof of the requirements of an unidentified jurisdiction. Its importance for the present discussion lies in making relational dependence and the social conditions of choice explicit objects of ethical scrutiny.

A multidimensional analysis is preferable to treating voluntariness as a binary attribute read directly from a form. A subject can express a clear choice while facing limited alternatives; conversely, the presence of a power difference does not necessarily erase the subject's evaluative standpoint. Explanatory accounts of pressure should preserve testimony and countervailing evidence. Normative assessments require a theory of undue influence, the significance of alternatives, and the stakes of the act. Institutional duties to reduce avoidable pressure may be defensible even where individual consent validity remains undetermined. This distinction prevents the helper's uncertainty about validity from becoming a pretext for overriding the recipient's expressed wishes without sufficient grounds.

An adversarial test concerns the practical conditions of saying "no." Consider a recipient who can formally withdraw consent by visiting an office in person, although the recipient relies on the same service for transport and cannot reach that office without assistance. The consent record might accurately contain a withdrawal channel while the person's practical opportunity to use it remains severely restricted. Conversely, an accessible refusal does not erase separate duties of the organization to give truthful information or arrange a safe transition for activities already underway. The relevant inquiry should therefore trace the costs of refusal, the availability of an independent communication pathway, the recipient's understanding of consequences, and possible retaliation or loss of service. These are defeasible indicators of practical voluntariness, not a universal checklist that mechanically proves consent. The central error would be to infer continuing authorization either from silence after an inaccessible notification or from repeated acceptance under a standing threat of losing essential assistance.

The medical-research comparison also has a specific limit. The WMA's Declaration of Helsinki addresses research involving human participants, including data and material capable of identifying them. A hospital volunteer's help with navigating a ward is a different relationship even when the participants occupy the same building. A request for research consent and a request for permission to transmit appointment details therefore require separate descriptions of purpose, information recipient, anticipated

consequences, and governing rules. The GR account can investigate the relational conditions of both transactions, while the applicable standards for each remain domain-dependent [65].

10.8 Urgency, Represented Choice, and Exceptional Authority

Time-sensitive assistance may restrict opportunities for explanation, consultation, or delayed decision. These circumstances sharpen rather than dissolve the distinctions among uncertainty, competence, authority, and moral reasons. A volunteer confronted with an apparent emergency may have reasons to alert an authorized responder, provide publicly available directions to assistance, or undertake a trained and permitted low-risk action. Whether a contested intervention can occur without the person's ordinary affirmative consent is a further question requiring a relevant normative and legal basis, facts supporting the exceptional circumstances, and an account of proportionality and alternatives. This paper proposes no universal emergency exception. The same caution applies when a person has difficulty communicating or when another individual claims authority to decide for them.

Claims of representation should identify their source and limits. Family involvement, an institutionally designated contact, a professional's assessment, and legally recognized surrogate authority can play different roles. An interpreter helps communicate a person's views without thereby becoming the moral or legal decision-maker. A volunteer who receives an informal request from a third party should therefore distinguish the requester's testimony, the represented person's expressed wishes, and any separately substantiated authorization. In an emergency, factual uncertainty regarding another person's wishes and normative uncertainty regarding permissible conduct may coexist; they should be preserved in distinct fields of the ethical-situation record until appropriately resolved.

Retrospective review also matters. An intervention that prevented harm may still have involved contested authority or inadequate communication, just as a choice to refrain may require scrutiny if authorized protective options were available. Consequences supply evidence relevant to some assessments but do not settle all moral or legal questions. A later conversation may improve understanding, support apologies or repair, and change future practices. Such review is especially important where urgency becomes a recurrent institutional justification that progressively normalizes exceptions. The analysis calls for explicit independent grounds whenever a temporary protective rationale is extended into continuing control.

10.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Refusal and Authorization Change

Two entirely hypothetical histories illustrate the framework's distinguishing power. They are constructed for conceptual testing and report no institutional practice, participant data, or empirically observed effects. Table 10 identifies the authorized object, temporal change, and additional ethical inquiry. The cases are assessed with the register of Equation 10, the task-competence audit of Equation 9, and the candidate-reason distinctions of Section 5.

Referral information across communication stages. Suppose a volunteer offers a multilingual applicant the contact details of a specialized service. The applicant affirms that contact details would be useful. A coordinator later proposes sending a personally identifying summary to the service, believing that this is part of the same referral. The applicant objects after learning of the proposed transmission. The original agreement has evidence for one action description and limited evidence for another. Additional inquiry could establish whether the applicant misunderstood the original offer, whether the scope was initially explained more broadly, or whether the coordinator mistakenly grouped distinct actions together. A justified response may offer the information directly, seek fresh permission through an accessible channel, or explore another authorized route. The framework cannot determine which option is required until the privacy premises, actual institutional rules, feasibility, and participant's communication are specified. If the source expression was misinterpreted, correction should also consider whether the inaccurate record has already influenced downstream decisions.

Table 10: Constructed consent and exit histories in volunteer assistance, with competing interpretations and tests

History	Manifest authorization or refusal	Rival interpretations	Evidence and normative issue to test
Referral and information sharing	Agreement to receive a referral address; later objection to sending a named intake summary	Agreement covered only contact details; agreement was broader; translation created ambiguity	Review original phrasing, data scope, alternative referral means, corrected wishes, and independent disclosure authority
Companionship and exit	Recurring visits accepted; recipient asks for fewer visits while volunteer needs to end the role	Limited schedule change; full withdrawal; temporary communication fatigue	Clarify current preferences without pressure, evaluate prior promises and feasible transition, allocate institutional duties

Changing companionship and shared withdrawal. Suppose a recipient accepts weekly conversations with a volunteer for several months. The recipient then says they would like fewer visits, while the volunteer informs the coordinator that they can no longer continue on the current schedule. A prior assurance of continuity may have contributed to reliance, but it does not determine that either party must preserve the original frequency. Relevant questions include the precise meanings of the two announcements, the voluntariness of possible alternatives, the practicality of notice, and whether the organization can arrange support without coercive pressure on either participant. The volunteer’s responsibility for prior commitments can support proportionate cooperation with a transition, while the recipient’s expressed preference constrains unwanted continued contact. If the recipient’s reduced-visit request was intended as a temporary change, the institution should not record it as a permanent rejection without supporting evidence. A counterfactual in which the coordinator had designed a replacement pathway in advance tests whether the present burden is produced by poor institutional planning rather than by either individual’s moral deficiency.

These examples illuminate divergent failures. The first tests *scope inflation*, in which an authorization to receive information is interpreted as permission for disclosure. The second tests *temporal inflation*, in which a prior arrangement is treated as permanently binding despite later change. Each can coexist with legitimate moral reasons to provide care. Neither failure is correctly repaired simply by increasing the number of consent records; appropriate interpretation, accessible revision, and defended normative criteria remain necessary.

10.10 Three-Level Reality and Verification Responsibilities

At the level of *ontological reality*, ultimate questions about freedom, individual autonomy, and the metaphysical source of normative force remain suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, the research provisionally models historically generated authorizing positions, commitments, dependence, institutional delegation, reasons for trust, and changes in actual opportunity to withdraw. At the level of *manifestation reality*, these structures are approached through communicated requests, signed or oral agreements, translated statements, recorded restrictions, refusals, schedules, and corrective exchanges. The authorization record in Equation 10 is an evidence-indexed analytical construction across these levels. It does not add an independent epistemic ontology or convert a record into the moral property of valid consent.

Verification should separate several possible errors. A *provenance failure* occurs when the apparent source or timing of a communication is incorrect; a *scope failure* occurs when agreement is extended to an action outside its supported description; an *interpretive failure* arises from miscommunication, inaccessible translation, or unexplored ambiguity; a *normative failure* concerns inadequately defended standards of voluntariness, respect, or overriding authority; and an *institutional failure* occurs when purported options for refusal or withdrawal are practically inaccessible. These problems can interact, but

remedies differ. Factual disputes call for source and communication review; normative disputes call for reasoned justification; institutional barriers call for appropriately authorized changes to procedures. Any empirical evaluation would require participant protection, context-specific legal review, and evidence obtained under appropriate permissions. The framework remains open to criticism that its recognition of authorizing positions, communication standards, or relevant options may itself reproduce unequal power.

The section's restricted contribution is a historical account of consent as situated, scoped, and revisable authorization, coupled to agent-specific practical reasons and independently qualified permissions. The analytic distinction between refusal of a task and exit from a relation clarifies how limited residual responsibilities may continue without legitimizing coercive intervention. The next section develops paternalism and intrusion under disagreement, using the present account of expressed agency as one input to a broader inquiry about justification and power. The hypothetical diagnostics and conditional schema establish neither a universal rule for consent nor a finding concerning real service users or volunteers.

11 Paternalism, Intrusion, and Intervention under Disagreement

The ethics of volunteer intervention requires an account of situations in which an agent understands a response to be beneficial while the affected subject rejects the proposal, contests its description, or resists the authority claimed by the agent. Such disagreement is significant because assistance may change a recipient's opportunities, information, relationships, and position within an institution even when its stated objective is protective. This section examines the identification of paternalistic interference, the normative significance of practical autonomy, the limits of an agent's interpretation of another's good, and the conditions under which further inquiry, nonintrusive assistance, or a narrowly justified protective response may be considered. Its method is a conceptual analysis supported by a bounded evidence-record proposal and constructed diagnostic histories. The resulting distinctions extend the authorization analysis of Section 10, while leaving the more detailed treatment of emergency time constraints to the subsequent section.

11.1 Paternalistic Interference as a Contested Practical Object

Paternalism is commonly associated with interfering with a person's freedom or autonomy, without that person's consent, on grounds that the interference will advance the person's good. Gerald Dworkin's analysis also shows why the identification of paternalism involves contested boundaries: what qualifies as interference, what counts as nonconsent, and whose welfare is invoked may admit differing answers [15]. For volunteer aid, it is useful to describe three components separately: a proposed or enacted constraint on another subject's practical control, an asserted beneficiary-oriented rationale, and the evidential condition of the subject's authorization or opposition. An observer can provisionally reconstruct these components while remaining uncertain whether the event is paternalistic under every defensible definition.

A volunteer may recommend medical assessment, explain an eligibility condition, invite a recipient to reconsider a refusal, contact a supervisor, prevent access to an activity, or disclose personal information to another service. These acts vary in interference. Explanation ordinarily offers information; repeated pressure can alter the conditions of decision; unilateral restriction or disclosure can change what the person is able to control. The same spoken recommendation can also operate differently when a recipient has many alternatives and when a recipient reasonably believes continued access to needed support depends on acquiescence. A purely action-label classification is therefore inadequate. The relational history, practical stakes, communications, and available alternatives help characterize the interference.

The agent's motive remains relevant without settling its moral status. An attempt to avoid reputational damage for an organization may be represented as a concern for recipient safety. A genuinely beneficiary-directed action may still exceed legitimate authority. A measure motivated by the protection of third parties may resemble a paternalistic intervention in its effects but require a distinct justification. Mixed motives and distributed decision-making are especially common when volunteers act through

institutional processes. The present inquiry therefore treats a paternalism description as a provisional, contestable diagnosis and retains the separate question of whether the intervention could be justified.

11.2 Disagreement, Refusal, and the Structure of Interpretation

Disagreement can arise from different objects and should be individuated before an ethical response is proposed. A recipient may dispute the helper's description of the situation, estimate a risk differently, attach another value to the likely outcome, prefer a different means, reject the helper's entitlement to decide, or refuse any further discussion. The distinction matters because an apparent rejection of beneficial assistance may be a reasonable objection to its method or to an erroneous description. A person who declines an accompanied referral may still want the service through another channel. A person who rejects a coordinator's preferred timeline may seek assistance under a more private arrangement. Treating disagreement as evidence of a defective choice would obscure these alternatives.

Section 8 distinguishes testimony from an interpreter's reconstruction. That distinction becomes normatively salient when the interpretation is used to override the speaker. An agent might hear "I am fine" as a complete denial of need, an expression of discomfort, an effort to avoid public disclosure, or a request to end the conversation. The defensible evidential inference depends on language, context, previously established meanings, the stakes of error, and the subject's opportunity to correct the account. A recorded refusal can have a clear action-specific scope while the motives for refusal remain unknown. Its force need not depend upon the volunteer's access to the person's entire reasoning.

A further distinction concerns the ethics of inquiry. A proportionate invitation to clarify a misunderstood option may expand a person's control over the decision. Persistent questioning after a clear refusal may diminish that control, especially where the person is dependent on the volunteer for unrelated assistance. The same need for epistemic care that can justify asking a further question can therefore justify ending the discussion. The proper response is sensitive to the requested interaction, the costs of further engagement, foreseeable risks, and the subject's current expressed limits. Silence should not be converted into consent, and a request to stop explaining should not automatically be read as proof of adequate understanding.

11.3 Autonomy, Relational Conditions, and Supported Agency

Respect for autonomy has several philosophical interpretations. It can concern decision-making capacities, independence from controlling influence, a person's endorsement of reasons, or the social conditions that make self-government possible. The debate surveyed by Christman includes relational approaches that attend to unequal socialization, power, and the development of self-trust, while resisting an uncomplicated identification of autonomy with either unconstrained choice or objective welfare [12]. These approaches offer resources for examining dependency in volunteer relations. They should be credited as independent philosophical traditions; the GR analysis develops a separate historical representation of assistance situations rather than claiming to originate relational autonomy theory.

An institutional programme may allow a recipient to select among options while controlling the information, timing, language, privacy, and social consequences associated with each option. Formal availability and practically meaningful choice can then diverge. A volunteer's respectful posture may help preserve room for disagreement, but a welcoming manner does not erase the institutional dependence that shapes the encounter. Conversely, the mere presence of relational influence need not invalidate the decision. People commonly decide through trusted support, discussion, translation, and cooperative arrangements. Ethical assessment should examine whether these processes sustain the person's effective standing in deliberation and whether their effects are compatible with defensible autonomy premises.

The inquiry also needs to distinguish autonomy-supportive action from substitutive decision-making. Accessible explanation, communication assistance, time to deliberate, a confidential channel to express reservations, and genuine alternatives may strengthen another person's practical agency. Acting on a presumed best interest without an adequately justified authority may replace that person's judgment with the helper's. Yet a recommendation is not invariably an intrusion, and intervention need not be

coercive to raise ethical questions. The relevant indicators include who can refuse, who controls the framing of options, what follows from refusal, and how disagreement is recorded and contested. An agent’s knowledge of additional possibilities may create an ethical reason to communicate them without granting authority to impose one of them.

11.4 An Evidence-Indexed Intrusion and Disagreement Record

A bounded formal object can make the inference from protective intention to justified interference auditable. Let A denote the agent under ethical appraisal, $u \in \mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ a represented subject, and $o \in \Omega_{A,t}^\kappa$ an intervention option in the ethical situation of Equation 2. Let B indicate a declared bundle of normative premises concerning agency, protection, third-party interests, and the authority required for the relevant kind of action. An *intrusion-and-disagreement record* is proposed in Equation 11.

$$\mathfrak{P}_{A,u,t}^{\kappa;B}(o) = (o, \Delta_{u,t}, J_{A,t}, X_{u,t}, \hat{A}_{u,A,t}, \mathcal{L}_{A,t}, \mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa, B, \Pi_t). \quad (11)$$

Here $\Delta_{u,t}$ records the object and communicated form of disagreement, including restrictions on further discussion where known. $J_{A,t}$ records the agent’s asserted justification and distinguished beneficiary- and third-party-related grounds. $X_{u,t}$ describes the proposed alteration of the person’s practical control, information, access, or relationships, with its degree and reversibility assessed provisionally. The partial field $\hat{A}_{u,A,t}$ references the authorization evidence developed in Equation 10; $\mathcal{L}_{A,t}$ enumerates identified lower-intrusion alternatives, including accessible explanation, consensual referral, delay, and nonintervention. The evidence record $\mathcal{E}_{A,t}^\kappa$ retains uncertainty and counterevidence, while Π_t preserves source and revision provenance. The introduced $X_{u,t}$ is a description of possible intrusion, not a measured coercion index.

The notation provides a comparison interface rather than an ethical scoring function. Under the specified premises B , analysts may ask whether the option is supported, opposed, or undetermined after considering the evidence, the agent’s role and competence, alternatives, and the rights or claims of affected subjects. Equation 11 defines no threshold at which autonomy is legitimately overridden and supplies no general inference from the expected size of a benefit to permission. Several versions of the record may coexist if investigators dispute the interpretation of refusal, the magnitude of possible harm, or the governing normative premises. The point of retaining rival records is to make contested assumptions visible rather than to disguise disagreement as an incomplete numerical calculation.

The object also inherits a coverage limitation from Section 4.3. A person missing from $\mathcal{U}_t^\kappa$ may be affected by the measure even if no disagreement is registered. Likewise, the mere absence of $\Delta_{u,t}$ in an institutional file establishes neither assent nor an absence of intrusion. Auditing whose voice was represented and whose decision was recorded is therefore logically prior to treating an apparently uncontested response as permissible. Where several parties participate in an intervention, distinct records may be needed for the volunteer, coordinator, and professional decision-maker to avoid collapsing evidence of shared involvement into a single agent’s authority.

11.5 Protective Grounds, Proportionality, and the Burden of Justification

The paternalism literature distinguishes, among other positions, “soft” views allowing limited interference to establish whether a decision is sufficiently informed and voluntary, and “hard” views allowing some interference even with informed voluntary choice [15]. The distinction identifies a genuine normative dispute; its vocabulary does not itself adjudicate volunteer practice. In a concrete case, participants may disagree about whether the person’s choice is voluntary, whether harm is sufficiently serious, who has standing to intervene, and whether the proposed means are warranted. These questions cannot be settled by invoking a general interest in protection.

The present proposal evaluates asserted protective grounds in an ordered argumentative manner. First, the possible harm and its evidential basis should be specified, including what the agent knows and what remains conjectural. Second, the scope of the subject’s apparent choice, reasons for dissent,

and circumstances of communication should be reconstructed as far as ethically reasonable. Third, the agent's role, competence, delegation, and applicable legal authority should be distinguished. Fourth, the available options should be examined for less intrusive alternatives that plausibly address the same concern. Finally, the claimed moral permission, obligation, or prohibition requires explicit premises that address the effects on agency as well as welfare and third-party interests. This is a proposed discipline for argument, with the sequence revisable when urgency or privacy changes the feasibility of inquiry.

There is a burden-of-justification asymmetry in many proposed overrides. The person proposing to restrict another's decisional control ordinarily bears a substantial argumentative burden to explain the authority and grounds for that restriction. This is a defeasible normative proposal compatible with important disagreements over capacity, emergency protection, and obligations toward third parties. It does not imply that a recipient must provide reasons for every refusal or that a volunteer can demand the recipient disclose private information as a condition of respecting a clear decision. Nor does the proposal assume that every low-intrusion action is permissible: unsolicited investigation or disclosure can impose serious expressive, informational, and relational harms despite limited physical interference.

11.6 Epistemic Asymmetry, Predicted Benefit, and Value Disagreement

A volunteer can possess information unavailable to a recipient, while the recipient possesses experiential, historical, and value-based knowledge unavailable to the volunteer. This asymmetry may support careful information exchange and may leave both participants with reason to revise an initial interpretation. It does not establish a stable hierarchy of moral authority. Predicting that a person will later welcome an intervention is a hypothesis about a possible future response; it differs from present authorization and may be wrong. Similarly, evidence that a service has helped other recipients does not establish that an unsolicited intervention will benefit the present individual under their actual constraints.

One form of disagreement concerns fact. A recipient might underestimate the procedural requirements of an application and revise a plan after receiving accurate information. Another form concerns value. A person may fully understand a referral's possible benefits while attaching greater importance to privacy, independence, family commitments, or avoiding institutional involvement. A third concerns trust in the decision-maker. Even accurate information may be discounted because prior encounters established credible reasons for concern about confidentiality or discrimination. Ethical analysis should avoid describing all three conditions as a single deficit of understanding. The relational inquiry can reconstruct their different histories and examine how they affect the availability of a mutually acceptable response.

Third-party representations further complicate the interpretation. A relative or coordinator may claim that the recipient "would want" a particular service. Such testimony can supply relevant evidence but carries its own provenance, possible conflicts, and scope limitations. An observer should distinguish a previously expressed preference, a present delegated authorization, a substituted estimate of the person's good, and an institution's independent safeguarding role. Section 10 provides the authorization record for these distinctions, while Section 9 limits the inference from recognized risk to the volunteer's capacity to provide specialized treatment. A protective intention does not erase either requirement.

The burden of justification becomes particularly demanding where an intervention is both intrusive and irreversibly discloses information. Suppose a volunteer predicts substantial benefit from sending a recipient's private account to an external agency, while the recipient has explicitly refused that transmission. The prediction, even if made in good faith, is a reason to examine the available protection mechanisms, not a standing permission to defeat the refusal. The analyst must distinguish a contested empirical forecast, the moral status of the information, the evidential basis for claiming incapacity or emergency, and the authority of the person who would decide on an exception. A genuinely imminent danger may alter the normative argument, but urgency still calls for separately specified premises about proportionality, competence, narrowly limited disclosure and later review. If the concern is speculative or a less intrusive referral is possible, the argument for overriding the refusal weakens. The record thus supports comparison of defended options without assuming either that every expressed preference

controls every case or that beneficent motives create their own exception to authorization.

11.7 Relational Power, Gratitude, and Institutionalized Intrusion

Intervention under disagreement can be shaped by power that precedes the immediate encounter. A volunteer may control access to a language channel, a coordinator may assign service eligibility, and an organization may decide how recipient narratives enter public reports. Such positions allow seemingly minor acts of suggestion or classification to affect future assistance. Pressure may also arise through expectations of gratitude. A recipient who depends on continuing support may find disagreement socially costly even when no formal sanction follows. The resulting pattern is a relational matter that should be investigated through observable policies, communications, historical dependence, and accessible opportunities for correction.

An ethical assessment needs to consider an inverse problem: the refusal of a service may reflect the conditions under which it was offered rather than an objection to the underlying goal. A recipient might refuse a housing referral because the only available route requires disclosure to an unfamiliar intermediary; another pathway could be acceptable. The significance of refusal depends on its documented scope and the subject's ability to propose alternatives. Care ethics supplies resources for analyzing attention and responsiveness to situated needs, while retaining the possibility that an ostensibly caring relation becomes controlling [56]. The present GR reconstruction adds historical and type-sensitive records, without claiming that care ethics is reducible to its formal vocabulary.

Institutions may routinize paternalistic conduct through defaults, scripts, intake categories, or technical interfaces. A system may present a preselected referral as the natural next step, require lengthy justification to decline it, or allow only a single explanation for opting out. These arrangements affect the practical distribution of decision costs. They also change which actions volunteers can realistically take. A fairness or efficiency argument for a default may be relevant, yet its justification requires scrutiny of the affected population, the availability of real alternatives, and the system's capacity to learn from corrections. The institutional presence of a default neither proves that it is wrongful nor provides a complete moral defense. It is a historically constituted object requiring empirical and normative evaluation.

11.8 Recipient Agency, Third-Party Protection, and Distributed Duties

A volunteer may face disagreements in which an intervention affects several subjects. Providing one person with access to a scarce resource can alter waiting times for others; disclosing a hazard to competent staff may protect several people while exposing a recipient's private information; respecting one individual's refusal may leave a dependent third party at risk. In such cases a single beneficiary-centered paternalism label captures only part of the situation. The analysis should separately identify the asserted grounds directed to the recipient, independent claims of third parties, and the responsibilities of the agents empowered to respond to each concern.

The distinction is particularly important for organizational roles. A volunteer's awareness of a possible risk may generate a reason to seek appropriate supervision, without supplying an independent right to disregard confidentiality or compel a recipient's participation. A coordinator may have different duties based on role-specific commitments and verified institutional rules, while a specialized professional may be authorized to evaluate a risk within defined circumstances. Such authority cannot be derived directly from benevolent aims or perceived intelligence. A protective decision should therefore retain a traceable account of who identified the risk, who interpreted the testimony, who decided, and who had standing under the applicable premises and rules.

An agent's refusal to perform an intrusive action can also create positive reasons for alternative conduct. They may include explaining accessible choices, helping the person find an independently chosen channel, correcting an inaccurate record, or taking a proportionate step to prevent foreseeable harm within role boundaries. The precise obligation remains conditional: a refusal to override cannot be converted into a universal duty to accompany a recipient indefinitely. Where institutional service design makes privacy-respecting assistance unavailable, the unresolved ethical burden may extend beyond the

Table 11: Hypothetical intervention disagreements and the additional grounds needed for ethical appraisal. These configurations test the proposed distinctions without reporting empirical outcomes or institution-specific rules.

Configuration	Contested practical object	Discriminating evidence and normative question
Declined referral	Sending personal details despite a clearly scoped refusal	Scope of refusal, alternative routes, confidentiality duties, claimed third-party interests, and competence or authority of the actor
Brief hazard interruption	A temporary pause when available communication leaves awareness of danger uncertain	Time-sensitive evidence, feasibility of immediate explanation, reversibility, acting authority, and grounds for a limited response
Service-linked publicity	Automatic story-sharing after consent to receive practical aid	Actual explanation of secondary use, dependency, consequences of opting out, consent specificity, and capacity for correction

individual volunteer. The programme's justice analysis of burden allocation and structural dependence offers an adjacent perspective, while the present paper asks what a situated agent can reasonably be required to do.

11.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Contested Intervention

Three constructed histories illustrate the distinctions. They are stipulated analytic cases, with no claim to depict any hospital, aid organization, or participant. The first concerns a person who requests companionship while declining contact with an external service. The volunteer predicts a benefit from referral and is tempted to send identifying details despite the refusal. The second concerns an apparent immediate hazard, a communication barrier, and uncertainty about whether a brief protective interruption would preserve informed choice. The third concerns an intake system that treats acceptance of one service as authorization for publicity about the recipient's experience. Table 11 contrasts the evidential and normative defects each history is designed to expose.

In the declined-referral history, the volunteer's confidence about likely benefit fails to establish consent or authority to disclose. A minimally intrusive clarification may be reasonable only within the recipient's communication limits. An authorized alternative pathway might preserve both the intended assistance and the refusal's scope. If no such pathway exists, the appropriate outcome may be an acknowledged unresolved need with a privacy-respecting offer to reconsider later. Whether any separate duty overrides confidentiality depends on independently verified law, policy, risks, and applicable ethical grounds; the constructed case supplies none of these by fiat.

The hazard-interruption history examines the limits of inference from apparent danger. A brief reversible pause to communicate a serious, immediate concern can have a different ethical profile from coercive or prolonged restriction despite clear informed refusal. The distinction requires more than assigning a danger score. It requires facts concerning timing, available communication, the subject's understanding, the scope of interference, authorized responders, and independent third-party claims where relevant. Section 12 will analyze such urgency conditions directly. The service-linked-publicity history shows a different failure: assistance and public storytelling may be bundled through a dependency relation, such that outward agreement to practical support cannot settle the legitimacy of subsequent disclosure. Its testing variables include choice architecture, the opportunity to decline publicity without losing assistance, provenance of authorization, and effective withdrawal procedures.

11.10 Three-Level Reality, Verification, and Ethical Restraint

The three GR reality levels apply to paternalism and disagreement with distinct explanatory roles. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate grounds of autonomy, moral value, agency, and the subjective significance of injury remain suspended. The analysis does not claim access to an unmediated welfare state or to another subject's complete experienced reasons. At the level of *relational reality*, historically constituted roles, dependencies, commitments, trust patterns, delegated powers, and recurring organizational practices can affect the practical possibility of refusing or contesting intervention. At the level of *manifestation reality*, speech, silence, refusal messages, translations, intake records, and observed conduct make some aspects of these relations accessible in context. The interpretation of manifestation is an epistemic operation; it does not create an additional ontological level.

Verification must proceed accordingly. A formal audit can check whether Equation 11 retains an evidence source, a trace of opposition, an explicit normative premise set, and a record of alternative options. An empirical inquiry can examine whether a recipient had an accessible opportunity to disagree, what consequences followed, and whether asserted protective benefits materialized. A normative inquiry must defend the obligations and limits of authority used to appraise those events. These are mutually informing and partly irreducible forms of inquiry. None is replaced by an attractive diagram, a filled institutional form, or a retrospective claim that the recipient ultimately benefited.

Several objections remain open. One view may hold that autonomy imposes stringent barriers against interference; another may permit carefully justified intrusion to prevent grave harm; a relational account may emphasize that the practical meaning of refusal depends on the background distribution of power and feasible options [15, 12]. The present framework can reconstruct where these views disagree and which consequences their adoption would have for case analysis. It does not independently prove that one defeats the others across the full range of volunteer settings. Ethical restraint here means adopting a defensible response to the identified grounds and authority limits, including the possibility of continued nonintrusive support, respectful withdrawal, or appropriately delegated protective assessment. The next section will examine how urgency, delay, and precaution alter the feasible structure of that judgment without erasing its dependence on explicit moral and institutional premises.

12 Urgency, Delay, and Precaution under Uncertainty

Volunteer assistance often requires practical judgment while evidence remains incomplete and the available interval for response is changing. Delay may preserve deliberative space, allow clarification of consent, or make referral to an authorized specialist possible. The same delay may expose an affected subject to avoidable deterioration, loss of access, or an irreversible institutional decision. Immediate action can preserve an opportunity for protection while introducing errors, privacy intrusions, and consequences beyond a volunteer's competence. This section develops a preliminary ethical analysis of these temporally coupled considerations. Its objective is to distinguish evidenced urgency, the consequences of delay, uncertainty about intervention, and independently justified reasons for precaution. The inquiry proceeds through philosophical distinctions, a bounded historical record, counterfactual diagnostic cases, and verification requirements. The framework remains conditional on substantive normative premises and specific institutional responsibilities.

12.1 Temporal Urgency as a Relational and Evidential Judgment

Urgency is frequently communicated through expressions such as "immediately," "at risk," or "before the office closes." Such expressions may refer to different kinds of time-sensitive change. A person's condition may worsen, an appointment may be lost, a temporary shelter may close, a procedural deadline may expire, or an abusive arrangement may become harder to leave. A helper can also experience urgency because a supervisor expects prompt performance, an organizational target is approaching, or the helper feels anxious about appearing passive. These circumstances may coexist, while their ethical

relevance differs. A credible description of urgency consequently requires identifying the threatened interest, the change expected with time, the evidential basis for that expectation, the available response window, and the subjects whose interests are affected.

A temporal description should also record who controls the clock. A person seeking assistance may be offered only a short decision period by an institution; the appearance of a recipient’s urgent need may therefore be generated in part by an eligibility procedure or service schedule. A volunteer’s inability to reach an authorized worker during a shift can create a separate institutional bottleneck. Such sources of urgency matter because adjusting the organizational constraint may offer a less intrusive response than pressing an individual to accept an immediate intervention. Conversely, a recipient can accurately describe a time-sensitive difficulty even when the volunteer has not yet established its cause. The epistemic discipline of Section 8 requires that reported urgency be represented as testimony with provenance, not silently converted into a confirmed prediction.

Risk and uncertainty have several recognized meanings. Hansson distinguishes decision problems with usable probabilities from those where probabilities are unavailable or only partially supported, while emphasizing the limitations of such classifications in practical settings [20]. In the present inquiry, “urgent” is a provisional conclusion about the time sensitivity of ethically relevant possibilities. It neither certifies a probability distribution nor settles whose proposed action is justified. A volunteer may possess sound evidence for an imminent deadline and little evidence about the consequences of accepting a particular referral. The two uncertainty claims should remain separate in the analysis.

12.2 Delay, Information Acquisition, and Changing Option Sets

The ethical comparison between acting and waiting depends on the options available at several stages. A decision to wait five minutes may enable an interpreter to join the conversation. Waiting one day may allow a specialist consultation, while causing a time-limited benefit to lapse. An instruction to “wait” can also mean leaving the person without a definite contact, abandoning a queue, or shifting responsibility to another office. These acts should be represented individually, with specified duration, communication, follow-up, and institutional conditions. Section 4 provides an indexed option set and a partial feasibility assessment; a time-sensitive inquiry must ask how the option set itself changes during deliberation.

Information gathering possesses costs as well as possible benefits. Clarification may expose sensitive information, exhaust a distressed recipient, or consume a limited opportunity for assistance. A further question might resolve whether disclosure has been authorized; another might repeat a demand the recipient has already declined. The moral assessment of inquiry therefore depends on how the proposed question relates to the uncertainty that matters, the recipient’s practical ability to decline, and the evidence likely to become available before the relevant opportunity closes. An agent should be able to explain why a particular clarification or escalation was relevant, without assuming that complete information can be obtained.

Tarsney, Thomas, and MacAskill distinguish fact-relative, belief-relative, and evidence-relative approaches to moral decision-making under uncertainty, illustrating why the action that would have been best with complete information may differ from the action that an agent can responsibly select with the available evidence [55]. The current proposal uses that distinction to identify an *assessment perspective*. Retrospective knowledge of a good outcome should not automatically validate the quality of the original decision process, and an unfortunate result does not by itself establish culpable negligence. Any claim about responsibility must also examine duties, available evidence, capacities, and the control actually exercised by the relevant agent.

12.3 A Time-Indexed Record of Threats, Alternatives, and Authority

A structured record can make the sources of temporal pressure and the limits of proposed intervention reviewable. Fix an agent-position A , historical stage t , and evidential resolution κ . Let $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ be the situation record of Equation 2. The supplementary *urgency-and-delay audit* in Equation 12 records time-dependent claims, rather than replacing the larger situation object.

$$\mathfrak{D}_{A,t}^\kappa = (\mathcal{T}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{L}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{V}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{R}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{P}_{A,t}^\kappa). \quad (12)$$

Here $\mathcal{T}_t^\kappa$ records identified clocks, deadlines, and possible time-sensitive changes, indexed by affected interests and evidence sources. The set $\mathcal{L}_{A,t}^\kappa$ collects the specified delay options, including durations and feasible means of clarification or escalation. The register $\mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^\kappa$ contains conditional hypotheses about consequences of acting or delaying, tagged as supported, contested, or unresolved rather than assigned invented probabilities. The register $\mathcal{V}_{A,t}^\kappa$ identifies affected subjects, their expressed preferences and risk tolerances where accessible, and possible exclusions from the record. The component $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^\kappa$ distinguishes competence, consent, organizational delegation, legal authority, and proposed routes to qualified support. Finally, $\mathcal{P}_{A,t}^\kappa$ records candidate normative premises, their objectors, and the provenance of subsequent decisions or revisions. Each component is a partial analytical construction. In particular, $\mathcal{T}_t^\kappa$ is allowed to contain incompatible time estimates, and the absence of a represented option does not establish its objective impossibility.

The record’s distinctive function is to preserve *cross-time comparison without replacing contestation with a single urgency score*. An inquiry may evaluate a rapid referral, a brief delay for interpretation, a limited protective pause, and continued nonintrusive accompaniment under different evidential specifications. Conditional ethical warrant is supplied by Equation 1; the record itself contains neither permission nor an emergency override. It remains possible for several candidate responses to be evidentially underdetermined, morally incomparable, or infeasible for the particular volunteer. The source of an urgency claim and the source of authority to act are independently documented.

12.4 Precaution, Asymmetric Error Costs, and Normative Premises

Precaution becomes relevant when the evidence does not resolve a potentially serious consequence and a decision still has to be made. The costs of false reassurance, unnecessary alarm, premature disclosure, wrongful restriction, and delayed support can be distributed unevenly among subjects. A narrowly protective response may be worth considering even while the underlying diagnosis remains uncertain. Yet invoking the word “precaution” cannot independently settle which risk matters, how severe it is, whose consent is needed, or how the costs of protection should be allocated.

The philosophy of risk distinguishes a specific legal and policy history of the precautionary principle from general personal cautiousness. Hansson describes policy contexts in which plausible indications of serious harm can be relevant even before a scientific claim is conclusively established [20]. Extending this discussion to volunteer ethics requires an explicit analogy: an aid setting is governed by its own normative, organizational, and legal constraints, and a policy principle about environmental or public-health risk does not automatically authorize individual interference. The present paper instead proposes a *precautionary question*: which evidence-supported, bounded responses might prevent a serious possibility of harm while respecting the relevant constraints and retaining avenues for review?

Precaution may support a brief inquiry, an accessible explanation, a request for authorized assistance, or a proportionate step to preserve an option. It may also support restraint where an unsupported act could create irreversible harm. The strength of such reasons depends on the quality of evidence, the seriousness and reversibility of potential consequences, the availability of alternatives, the agent’s competence, and the justificatory weight accorded to another person’s autonomy and risk preferences. Expected-utility reasoning may help when outcome distributions and value comparisons can responsibly be specified; it is an additional substantive model with assumptions, not a default resolution of heterogeneous moral claims. Philosophical analyses of moral uncertainty caution that agent-centered constraints and the moral significance of imposing risk cannot simply be assumed away by numerical aggregation [55].

12.5 Minimum Intrusion, Proportionality, and Reversibility

When time pressure is invoked to justify intervention, the relevant justification requires an account of its scope. An agent may have reason to notify an authorized responder while lacking grounds for broad disclosure to unrelated staff. A temporary measure that preserves immediate safety can differ normatively

from a permanent restriction on access or continuing control over the recipient's decisions. The former's ethical standing remains conditional on institutional responsibilities and case-specific evidence; its limited duration and reviewability constitute relevant considerations rather than conclusive permission.

Minimum intrusion is useful as a comparative inquiry within a sufficiently specified set of responses: among the options expected to preserve a justified protective objective, which restrict the affected subjects' options, privacy, dignity, and standing least? This inquiry requires a defended account of the protective objective, an examination of actual alternatives, and attention to burdens displaced onto third parties. The fact that one option is less intrusive than another does not show that either is authorized. Similarly, an action's reversibility may be incomplete. An erroneous alert can be withdrawn while leaving a record, a reputational consequence, or a breakdown of trust. The temporal account must therefore distinguish reversal of an administrative decision from repair of its relational effects.

Section 10 identifies the scope and revocability of authorization; Section 11 examines proposed protective grounds amid refusal. The present section adds that response time may modify available means without automatically reducing the ethical significance of either source of constraint. A recipient's expression of refusal can coexist with a serious third-party concern; resolving the resulting problem requires identifying whose claims are implicated and which source of authority, if any, is applicable. The assertion that a decision was urgent should be traceable to a distinct supported time-sensitive feature rather than to an agent's confidence in the moral correctness of the preferred action.

12.6 Competence Boundaries and Time-Critical Escalation

Time pressure can amplify the tendency to exceed one's role. Volunteers may see a possible problem before a specialist or supervisor is available, and the failure to act may feel morally unacceptable. Still, direct response, accurate communication, and appropriate escalation are different activities. The competence and referral analysis of Section 9 provides a distinction among task-specific capability, organizational delegation, legal authority, and responsible transfer. A volunteer can possess reason to seek rapid specialist assessment while lacking competence to perform the specialist act personally.

Organizational routes to qualified assistance can themselves be defective. A telephone number may be unanswered; a referral office may have closed; a recipient may lack the communication tools required to use a nominally available service. Treating a referral as complete when it has only been suggested can conceal a time-sensitive gap. The relevant process should therefore document, as far as the role permits, attempted contact, acknowledgement, practical access, the recipient's expressed position, and any next step that has actually been accepted by a responsible party. Duties arising from a failed handoff require a separate argument about the volunteer's feasible control, past assurances, and organizational arrangements. They should not be inferred merely from the existence of unmet need.

The WHO's *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers* describes supportive assistance in crises with attention to dignity, culture, abilities, and connection to appropriate support [64]. Its guidance helps illustrate the practical relevance of safe observation, respectful listening, and linking people with resources. The guide does not establish a general legal emergency power for volunteers, and its crisis-support context places limits on transfer to other aid roles. In the present theoretical inquiry, a time-critical encounter may call for prompt use of a locally verified escalation route; a recommendation to activate that route is distinct from authorization to undertake unfamiliar clinical, coercive, or investigative work.

12.7 Temporal Justice, Institutional Clocks, and Distributed Burdens

A narrow focus on an individual volunteer's decision can obscure the collective production of urgent situations. Understaffing may shift time-sensitive decisions onto minimally trained helpers. A restricted intake window may make a recipient's deliberation appear obstructive. Delayed translation may transform a routine information request into an apparent emergency at closing time. The distribution of staff time, waiting periods, communication channels, and exceptions can alter the substantive risks and op-

tions experienced by affected subjects. Such organizational features are part of the causal history from which agent-specific ethical reasons arise.

The ethical questions in Paper VII and the justice questions in Paper VI consequently interact without becoming identical. Paper VI asks whether the institution's procedural, distributive, epistemic, recognition, and relational arrangements are defensible. The present analysis asks what a situated agent has reason, permission, or obligation to do in the time-sensitive situation that those arrangements help produce. An individual volunteer may need to offer a bounded response even if an institution bears greater responsibility for the underlying bottleneck. Such practical circumstances do not extinguish the importance of institutional reform or establish a moral requirement for indefinite personal sacrifice.

Historical repetition is also significant. An isolated missed appointment may reflect a contingent communication problem; recurrent missed appointments for a language group may suggest a stable accessibility barrier, subject to further evidence. Documentation can make such patterns visible, although data collection must respect privacy, participants' wishes, and organizational rules. A defensible response may include an immediate case-specific action together with a separately authorized route for reporting a recurring procedural problem. The two tasks have different evidential and normative requirements. Their relation should be traced through the actual organization rather than assumed from the general ideal of efficient service.

12.8 Finite Diagnostic Histories and Counterfactual Tests

Three constructed cases test the usefulness and limits of the proposed distinctions. In the first, a volunteer at a public-support desk hears that a person may lose access to a temporary benefit at the end of the day. The available information is partly translated, and a qualified staff member can be contacted after a short interval. Immediate form submission without clarification might preserve the deadline yet transmit a consequential misunderstanding; waiting without any protective communication might allow the benefit window to close. The relevant counterfactual asks whether a brief clarification, notice of the possible deadline, or authorized temporary preservation of the application would have been feasible. No one of these responses can be declared obligatory from the abstract scenario alone.

The second case concerns a person who has refused the helper's proposed referral while appearing distressed. The volunteer believes delay may increase danger, but has limited evidence about the nature of the problem and lacks competence to diagnose it. The ethical record distinguishes the person's refusal, any independent evidence of immediate threat, and the volunteer's capacity to seek appropriately qualified assistance. Counterfactual analysis varies the specificity of the threatened harm, the accessibility of an authorized responder, the person's communicative opportunity, and the possibility of a less intrusive protective response. Urgency affects the set of plausible responses; it does not settle whether refusal may legitimately be overridden.

The third case concerns a recurring service for which volunteers are the sole practical contact outside ordinary office hours. An organization asks an exhausted volunteer to remain for several more hours because postponement may leave recipients unsupported. If that volunteer continues, significant personal costs may accumulate; if the volunteer leaves without a handoff, previously assured recipients may suffer. Counterfactual analysis considers what the volunteer promised, what the organization could mobilize, what notice was feasible, and whether the urgency was predictably generated by staffing decisions. The case links time pressure to historically acquired responsibilities and the limits of moral demands established in Section 1 and the discussion of supererogation in Section 6.

Table 12 compares the information needed to evaluate these histories. The table is a diagnostic device for theoretical scrutiny, and neither an emergency protocol nor evidence about existing service programmes.

The cases also distinguish *false urgency*, where a claimed deadline or danger is unsupported, from *hidden urgency*, where procedural filtering prevents a time-sensitive need from entering the volunteer's record. A careful analyst must examine both risks. Retrospective knowledge can identify mistakes in prediction while leaving open whether an agent used the best evidence and authority available at the

Table 12: Hypothetical time-sensitive aid situations and the evidential distinctions required for conditional ethical appraisal. Each row identifies possible competing concerns rather than an authorized action rule.

Case	Time-sensitive question and alternatives	Unresolved evidential and normative requirements
Benefit deadline	Whether a brief interpretive delay changes access; clarification, provisional preservation, or immediate submission	Verified deadline, translation accuracy, recipient preference, delegated authority, data-disclosure constraints
Distress and refusal	Whether waiting changes a credible threat; explanation, nonintrusive support, or qualified escalation	Threat evidence, refusal scope, competence, lawful authority, least intrusive feasible measures
Volunteer handoff	Whether departure interrupts reasonably assured support; notice, substitution, or limited continuation	Actual promise, available coverage, fatigue, organizational responsibility, recipient reliance

time. Conversely, consistent adherence to a deficient organizational procedure may warrant institutional criticism even when an individual worker acted reasonably within its limits.

12.9 Reason-Giving, Review, and the Temporal Burden of Justification

A decision under urgent conditions may require immediate communication without permitting exhaustive deliberation. The ethical standard for the resulting account should be proportionate to the agent's role, the seriousness of the matter, the time actually available, and the sensitivity of recorded information. An account need not reconstruct everything the agent thought. It should, within feasible and legitimate limits, identify the perceived threat, its source, the alternative responses considered, the basis for a referral or restraint, and the role of consent or refusal. A terse contemporaneous note can preserve a decision's provenance, while an elaborate form may consume the very interval during which a protective response remains possible. Thus documentation itself has a temporal cost and should be adapted to the setting under defensible organizational safeguards.

Subsequent review has a distinct function from contemporaneous decision-making. An inquiry can learn that a hazard was less severe than initially believed, that an interpretation was mistaken, or that an institution had an unused response option. Such findings may support correction and improvements to the organization, but responsibility for the original choice depends on the options and evidence that were reasonably accessible at the time. Conversely, describing a decision as understandable given the volunteer's local information does not absolve a coordinating institution that systematically withheld relevant instructions or maintained an inaccessible escalation route. The allocation of retrospective responsibility should therefore remain actor-specific and historically situated.

A further question concerns the voice of the recipient. A hurried decision may be experienced as intrusive even when its proponent considered it protective. Where appropriate and voluntary, post-event explanation and opportunities to correct the record can contribute to relational repair. They may also reveal risks omitted from the original appraisal. Consent to participate in a review remains separate from consent to the original intervention. Feedback should avoid pressuring recipients to confirm that an action was benevolent or appropriate. The historical record should preserve disagreement alongside revisions so that later evaluators can distinguish improvements in understanding from an artificial appearance of consensus.

12.10 Three-Level Reality, Verification, and Scope of Precaution

At the level of *ontological reality*, ultimate claims concerning the status of time, agency, suffering, and moral necessity remain suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, historically efficacious deadlines, commitments, organizational capacities, dependencies, and changes in feasible responses can be modeled

as parts of an assistance configuration. At the level of *manifestation reality*, testimony, timestamps, application records, symptoms as reported or observed within an appropriate competence boundary, refusal, and referral communications provide partial access to that configuration. Their interpretation remains evidence-sensitive. No inference from the manifested seriousness of a situation establishes ultimate ontology or unqualified moral necessity.

Validation of the proposed record requires distinct tests. A *representational audit* asks whether time claims, involved subjects, alternatives, and provenance are documented coherently. An *evidential audit* asks which predictions about delay or action have support, which depend on speculation, and which available sources contradict them. A *normative audit* makes explicit the grounds for prioritizing protection, autonomy, privacy, fairness, and agent-relative limits. An *institutional audit* examines competence, delegated authority, applicable rules, and actual escalation pathways. A *historical audit* asks whether decisions created reliance, altered access, or stabilized a recurring organizational vulnerability. All these tasks remain sensitive to exclusions from the represented population, including people who never reached a service interface.

The principal limitation is practical underdetermination. A formally clear audit can leave multiple justified interpretations and several permissible options. It can also disclose failures for which an individual volunteer lacks authority or resources to provide a remedy. The paper therefore proposes a disciplined language for clarifying urgent ethical situations rather than an automatically applicable emergency decision algorithm. Future work may compare actual deliberations only with appropriate participant protection, verified institutional context, and jurisdiction-specific legal review. Within these limits, urgency can be treated as a historically located change in the structure of reasons and options, while precaution remains an independently justified, proportionate and contestable mode of response.

13 Role Commitments, Promises, and Historically Acquired Duties

Volunteer relationships can generate practical responsibilities whose grounds are partly located in earlier interactions. A role may be accepted for a limited period, an assurance may guide another person's plans, and a pattern of reliable assistance may contribute to dependence on a particular supporter. The moral importance of these histories calls for an account that distinguishes what was undertaken, what others reasonably understood, how their options changed, and which duties can be justified after circumstances evolve. This section analyzes role commitments, promises, and acquired responsibilities as distinct yet interacting sources of candidate moral reasons. It begins with the philosophical grounds of special obligation, specifies the interpretation of roles and assurances, develops a provenance-sensitive formal record, and then examines conflict, transfer, revision, and diagnostic histories. The method is interpretive and conditionally formal: historical descriptions and institutional classifications furnish evidential inputs, while moral conclusions require independently defended premises.

13.1 Special Obligations and the Relational Grounds of Duties

A general duty of assistance, insofar as it is accepted, can be owed to persons by virtue of morally relevant interests or circumstances. A special obligation gives an agent a reason whose explanation includes a more particular relation: an undertaken role, a promise, a relationship of justified reliance, or a position that carries responsibilities toward specified persons. The difference concerns the ground of the reason, its addressees, and its conditions of revision. An identical action, such as calling a support service, might be supported by a general reason to avert a foreseeable harm and by an additional reason arising from a volunteer's assurance to make that call. Distinguishing the reasons matters when one ground is defeated or when responsibility must be distributed among several agents.

The philosophical literature offers competing accounts of how special obligations arise. Jeske distinguishes voluntarist explanations, associative and role-based accounts, and objections regarding the potentially unfair advantage given to insiders over outsiders [30]. A volunteer's history with a recipient may therefore matter without establishing an absolute moral priority over other applicants. For example,

a volunteer may have a reason to notify a recipient before canceling an agreed visit, while a coordinator retains an independent obligation to distribute scarce appointments on defensible terms. Additional services for one recipient should be assessed in light of the claims and needs of those excluded from the arrangement.

The inquiry recognizes three levels of analysis. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate meta-physical nature of an obligation and of the subjects who bear it is left open. At the level of *relational reality*, historically constituted undertakings, expectations, and reliance can influence planning, access, and mutual conduct. At the level of *manifestation reality*, spoken assurances, scheduling records, gestures, forms, correspondence, and acts of withdrawal provide context-dependent evidence of those relations. Normative reasons are investigated through this distinction without treating stable social expectations as morally sufficient by themselves. The moral force of an assurance remains a substantive object of ethical argument.

13.2 Voluntary Role Entry and the Interpretation of Undertakings

A volunteer role is commonly described by schedules, task descriptions, organization-specific practices, and understandings exchanged with coordinators or recipients. Such descriptions help identify the expected activity, yet their ethical significance depends on the conditions of entry and subsequent interpretation. Relevant conditions include what the prospective volunteer could reasonably understand, whether an assignment was accepted, what competence or resources were represented as available, and whether continued participation was practically optional. A broad identity label such as “volunteer” gives insufficient evidence for a specific duty to provide indefinite accompaniment, medical judgment, private transportation, or personal financial support.

Role responsibilities merit independent philosophical treatment. Hardimon emphasizes the institutional dimension of ethical life in examining obligations associated with occupying social roles [21]. In the present proposal, such scholarship motivates inquiry into the morally relevant characteristics of roles; it supplies no automatic rule that any formally assigned responsibility is justified. An institution may classify a task as normal volunteer service while shifting professional risk, uncompensated labor, or difficult care obligations to an individual with limited alternatives. Conversely, a narrowly and responsibly accepted role can generate specific reasons for continuity, accurate communication, and timely handoff even when the volunteer has no general duty to provide the underlying service personally.

The analysis should distinguish the *social content* of a role from its *morally supportable content*. Organizational rules and recurring practices are important evidence of the first. Voluntariness, impact on affected subjects, institutional legitimacy, feasible alternatives, and other moral principles bear on the second. The distinction also operates over time. A volunteer may consent to a two-month programme, accept a temporary extension, or agree to a particular referral during one visit. These are different transactions with different consequences. Accurate records should preserve the scope and sequence of each undertaking so that later claims of commitment can be examined without relying on an undifferentiated role identity.

13.3 Promises, Assurances, and the Conditions of Uptake

An explicit promise is an important candidate ground for special obligation. Its normative explanation remains philosophically contested. Habib distinguishes theories that appeal to normative power, social convention, the expectations generated by assurance, and interpersonal commitment; within expectational approaches, assurance, reliance, and trust have different explanatory roles [19]. The present paper does not settle those debates. It uses their distinctions to discipline the interpretation of volunteer communication and to prevent every encouraging statement from being classified as a promise.

Consider a volunteer who says, “I will come next Tuesday,” after a recipient asks whether a planned visit is confirmed. The utterance may function as a definite undertaking, particularly where its context establishes a mutually understood time and the volunteer’s agency over attendance. Another utterance, “I hope things will be easier next week,” primarily communicates goodwill or expectation. Intermediate

cases include “I will do my best to find someone,” “we should be able to help,” and “you can count on us.” Their moral implications depend partly on whether the utterance was intended and reasonably understood as an assurance, whether its content and conditions were sufficiently clear, and what authority the speaker possessed to commit others.

Scanlon’s contractualist treatment of promises places special weight on the assurance deliberately given and the expectations thereby generated, while connecting their evaluation to principles justifiable to others [49]. That approach offers a particularly useful point of comparison where a volunteer’s assurance changes a recipient’s subsequent planning. Other promissory theories place different weight on conventional uptake or the normative power of the promisor. A responsible analysis should accordingly avoid treating evidence of reliance as the sole necessary basis of promissory duty, and avoid treating an internal intention as sufficient proof that the other party received an intelligible undertaking.

Communication mediation introduces further difficulty. A translated schedule, an administrator’s assurance on behalf of volunteers, and an automated reminder may create different reasonable understandings of who is committed to what. If an organization announces, “Your volunteer will accompany you,” without securing the volunteer’s agreement, the institution’s representations can be morally significant even while the individual volunteer’s promissory responsibility remains unestablished. The ethical inquiry must trace speaking positions, the recipients of the representation, its purported authority, and any opportunity to correct the assurance before foreseeable dependence develops.

13.4 Reliance, Foreseeability, and Historical Change in Options

Reliance gives practical significance to the time between an undertaking and an expected performance. A recipient might decline another appointment, arrange childcare, disclose sensitive information for continuity, or reorganize their routine after receiving an assurance. These changes can increase the costs of withdrawal. Reliance can also arise gradually from a series of reliable practices that were never accompanied by an explicit promise. Historical assessment must distinguish evidence of an altered plan from the judgment that the plan was reasonably formed and from the further claim that the volunteer bears a responsibility for the resulting exposure.

Several causal questions are needed. Did the recipient know of the relevant assurance? Did they understand its scope? Would they likely have taken the same action without the assurance? Did another actor, such as a coordinator, encourage or require the dependence? Could the volunteer reasonably foresee the relevant consequence? A mismatch between historical sequence and actual causal contribution is possible: a recipient may already have decided to cancel an appointment, or the only accessible alternative may have been removed by an organization independently of the volunteer. Such alternatives constrain attribution even when a serious need is present.

Unilateral expectation is a further boundary case. A recipient’s belief that a volunteer will be permanently available may reflect repeated interaction, the institution’s communication, or an interpretation that the volunteer could not reasonably anticipate. Some such histories yield legitimate claims for clarification or considerate transition. Others may yield stronger reasons to preserve an undertaking. The moral differences depend on the quality of the assurance, the foreseeability and fairness of the induced reliance, the respective capacities of the parties, and obligations already assigned elsewhere. The historical model should preserve uncertainty where these elements remain contested.

Dependency is itself a relational and dynamic characteristic. Where a recurring service lacks adequate staffing, repeated generosity can gradually become a condition for recipients to access essential activities. A higher dependence level may strengthen the case for transition planning and institutional reform. It does not by itself justify forcing a particular volunteer to continue indefinitely. An ethical theory that converted every episode of reliance into unlimited individual duty would reward institutions for underproviding alternatives and would threaten the very voluntariness on which responsible participation depends.

13.5 A Provenance-Sensitive Register of Acquired Duty Claims

The formal task is to retain the distinct evidential grounds from which candidate acquired duties are argued. Fix a volunteer-position A , historical stage t , and evidential resolution κ . Let $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ denote the ethical-situation record of Equation 2. A *commitment-and-reliance audit* is proposed in Equation 13. The superscripts indicate analytical functions; the component registers may contain inconsistent or incomplete reports.

$$\mathfrak{B}_{A,t}^\kappa := (\mathcal{U}_{A,t}^{\text{role}}, \mathcal{P}_{A,t}^{\text{assur}}, \mathcal{D}_{A,t}^{\text{uptake}}, \mathcal{L}_{A,t}^{\text{reliance}}, \mathcal{X}_{A,t}^{\text{revision}}, \mathcal{N}_{A,t}^{\text{ground}})^\kappa. \quad (13)$$

The register $\mathcal{U}^{\text{role}}$ contains claimed undertakings and their agent, task, duration, competence, and conditions of entry. The register $\mathcal{P}^{\text{assur}}$ preserves communicative assurances, speakers, recipients, channels, and their proposed scope. The register $\mathcal{D}^{\text{uptake}}$ records evidence of interpretation and acceptance, including dissent or misunderstanding. The register $\mathcal{L}^{\text{reliance}}$ records reported changes in expectations, behavior, feasible alternatives, and attributed causes. The register $\mathcal{X}^{\text{revision}}$ preserves subsequent modifications, releases, refusals, failures, notice, and transitions. Finally, $\mathcal{N}^{\text{ground}}$ lists the distinct normative premises advanced to support, qualify, or challenge candidate duties. Each record should retain who supplied the information and what other accounts remain possible.

Equation 13 is an organizational formalism for evidence and reasons. It is neither an algorithm for creating obligations nor a universal classification of valid promises. A candidate claim could be recorded as a request for fulfillment, an obligation to explain, a duty of notification, a limited duty to assist transition, or a possible claim for remedy. These candidates require separate arguments. The ethical-warrant construction of Equation 1 specifies where proposed normative grounds enter; the deontic-status assessment of Equation 5 remains conditional and can return an unresolved outcome. In particular, a recorded undertaking does not by formal definition become obligatory, and a missing record does not prove the absence of a commitment.

A useful audit should also record *claim selection*. The most visible recipient and the most thoroughly documented promise may dominate the record, while the absence of other applicants, co-volunteers, or unpaid carers remains unexamined. Repeating the audit with an expanded set of affected subjects may alter the apparent practical reasons without changing any earlier utterance. The object is to make that dependence on evidential and normative scope transparent rather than conceal it under a single numerical score of commitment strength.

13.6 Competing Commitments, Feasibility, and the Scope of Performance

Accepted roles and assurances may generate reasons that conflict with other duties. A volunteer who promised to help a recipient attend an appointment may subsequently face a family emergency, become ill, discover a professional boundary, or receive an assignment affecting another recipient. Each case requires distinguishing the historical claim from the feasible responses now available. An obligation to attempt a specific task, if established, need not have the same content as an obligation to achieve its desired result. The undertaking may also have included conditions, limitations, or shared responsibility that were disregarded in later retellings.

A conflict can occur within the promissory relation itself. An assurance that assistance will be given confidentially may conflict with a later proposal to involve a third party. A promise to “do whatever is necessary” may have no defensible interpretation that authorizes intrusive questioning, unauthorized disclosure, or tasks outside competence. Section 10 supplies a separate analysis of authorization, and Section 9 distinguishes capability, delegation, and legitimate task performance. Fulfillment cannot be appraised solely by asking whether a volunteer acted consistently with the broadest literal interpretation of an earlier statement.

Ethical judgment is also sensitive to the difference between a defeated duty, an excused nonperformance, and a duty discharged through agreed substitution. Under one normative theory an emergency may override the specific requirement while leaving the recipient with a claim to an explanation. Under

another, the primary duty may persist conceptually despite justified inability to perform, with remedial reasons arising from the earlier undertaking. The present framework records these as rival analyses rather than presuming that a failure automatically cancels every associated responsibility. A conditional request for release, appropriate notification, or a qualified transfer can be evaluated independently of the availability of full performance.

A more formal priority rule would require a theory of the relative weight and defeasibility of reasons. The partial deontic structure of Section 5 intentionally leaves that matter open where the necessary premises are unavailable. A claim of established duty should name its bearer, claimant, content, temporal scope, supporting ground, and relevant conflicts. When evidential or normative warrants remain incomplete, the appropriately stated conclusion may be that fulfillment is strongly supported as a reason, that a transition is conditionally justified, or that further judgment remains unresolved.

13.7 Release, Transfer, and Residual Responsibilities

The revision of a commitment can occur through agreement, changed circumstances, impossibility, expiration, or an ethically justified decision to withdraw. Their effects differ. A recipient may release a volunteer from a specific assurance, a coordinator may arrange a substitute, or the volunteer may withdraw without a feasible replacement. A change in organizational assignment can relocate operational responsibility, while leaving questions about the previous agent's conduct for separate appraisal. The analysis must specify who has the authority to modify a particular commitment, what information was communicated, and whether the intended beneficiary can meaningfully participate in the transition.

Substitution is especially important in institutional aid. When a volunteer's undertaking is personal, simply naming another volunteer may fail to preserve its relevant content. A recipient may reasonably expect communication continuity, language accessibility, knowledge of prior circumstances, or a relationship of trust that a new worker has not yet developed. At the same time, requiring a particular helper to remain solely because a personal bond formed could impose disproportionate and potentially coercive burdens. The ethical question concerns the conditions for a responsible transition, including confidentiality-preserving information transfer, accessible notice, recipient choice where practicable, and verification that the proposed successor actually accepted the task.

Several residual duties are analytically possible: giving timely and truthful notice, correcting a mistaken expectation, disclosing an inability to perform to an authorized coordinator, cooperating in a proportionate handoff, or repairing a wrongful misrepresentation. Their existence and strength cannot be inferred from the word "withdrawal" alone. Some may arise from a justified promise, others from responsibility for avoidable harm or an independently held institutional duty. The formal audit should preserve these different grounds because their bearers can differ. A coordinator may have the duty to maintain a safe referral pathway even when a volunteer has been released from the original task.

Historical repair is also distinct from restoring the original arrangement. An apology, a corrected record, and a later handoff may address specific harms while an earlier lost opportunity remains irreversible. A fully successful replacement may substantially protect current interests without establishing that a prior withdrawal was morally justified. Both contemporaneous assessment and retrospective accountability should therefore remain available. This approach is consistent with the broader separation between historical causal provenance and normative appraisal in Paper VI, while retaining the agent-specific ethical emphasis of the current paper.

13.8 Institutional Dependence and the Moralization of Volunteer Roles

A recurrent pattern of unpaid support may become institutionalized through staffing plans, eligibility expectations, performance indicators, and reputational incentives. Institutions can publicly celebrate a volunteer's reliability and simultaneously build service continuity around the expectation that the volunteer will absorb further costs. Such arrangements may generate genuine obligations to recipients while also creating reasons to criticize how those obligations were distributed. Ethical analysis must there-

Table 13: Hypothetical histories testing promises, role expectations, and responsibility for reliance in volunteer assistance

History	Candidate commitment and reliance	Alternative account	Evidence and normative issue to test
Confirmed accompaniment	A volunteer confirms an appointment visit; the recipient forgoes another escort	Coordinator promised availability without the volunteer's assent; recipient had already changed plans	Who offered and received assurance, timing of decisions, foreseeable loss, alternative escort and feasible notice
Unbounded reassuring language	Repeated "I am here whenever needed" encourages expectations of permanent contact	Expression of care had context-specific scope; institutional presentation promoted a stronger interpretation	Speaker intent, uptake, communication context, realistic access, recipient's alternatives and possible clarification
Service reliant on unpaid continuity	An agency assigns recurring coverage after volunteers repeatedly fill a staffing gap	Individual volunteers consented only to separate shifts; agency controlled replacement arrangements	Role acceptance, institutional promises, distribution of burdens, replacement feasibility and unmet applicants

fore examine the relation between a personal undertaking and the social processes that make it appear necessary.

An organization that promises continuous support may owe responsibilities of planning and communication in its own capacity. Individual volunteers can have separate obligations associated with specific accepted tasks. The institution's need for continuity provides evidence about the consequences of service interruption; it is not, without additional argument, a moral warrant to expand every participant's availability. Similarly, a volunteer's justified limits do not settle how a recipient's continued needs should be addressed. The two questions must be coupled analytically while their respective grounds remain distinct.

Symbolic recognition can strengthen unspoken demands. A helper praised as "the only person who understands" a recipient may experience a powerful constraint on exit, and a recipient may be encouraged to feel personally indebted for a service presented as exceptional generosity. Expressions of gratitude, prestige, and intimacy can influence both participants' judgments of available alternatives. A responsible account should investigate whether the relationship genuinely includes a new assurance, whether reliance has reasonably changed, and which alternatives the institution could make accessible. It should also consider the rights and standing of volunteers and other recipients whose opportunities may be affected by concentrated service allocation.

The possibility of role-generated moral pressure supplies a counterexample to a simple inference from repeated performance to increased obligation. Ten repeated visits may provide stronger evidence of established routine than one visit, but a new claim of permanent availability still requires explanation. Some sequences may reasonably create more specific duties of notice; others may reveal that the organization has failed to make an ordinary and predictable staffing arrangement. The normative interpretation depends on those histories rather than on repetition as an automatically binding force.

13.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Assurance and Reliance

Three hypothetical histories probe different sources of acquired obligation and potential mistakes in their attribution. They are constructed conceptual tests, without participant data or claims about an actual institution. Table 13 specifies the rival grounds and the evidence necessary to adjudicate each case. The record in Equation 13 is used to retain the relevant provenance and unsettled judgments.

Confirmed accompaniment and reliance. Suppose a volunteer confirms that they will accompany a recipient to a scheduled office visit. Relying on the message, the recipient turns down an alternative escort. One day beforehand, the volunteer learns of a conflicting requirement and informs the coordinator. The volunteer's communication may provide evidence for a bounded promissory claim, while the recipient's altered plans support examination of reliance and foreseeable exposure. If a replacement escort is available, reasonable steps to connect the recipient with that person may provide a defensible means of transition. A competing history in which the coordinator issued the confirmation without the volunteer's assent would shift the attribution of assurance. A further counterfactual asks whether the recipient would have relinquished the alternative independently. Neither successful replacement nor subsequent harm alone fully determines the moral status of the earlier conduct.

Reassuring language and disputed scope. Suppose an isolated recipient repeatedly hears "I am here whenever needed" during emotionally supportive meetings and begins expecting responses late at night. The volunteer understands the phrase as an expression of care during scheduled programme hours. The competing interpretations are relevant even if both subjects act sincerely. The moral inquiry should examine foreseeable uptake, possible reliance, prior clarification, available communication channels, and the recipient's practical freedom to seek other support. A volunteer may have a strong reason to correct the misleading impression promptly and kindly, while an unlimited duty to respond at every hour remains unestablished. A hypothetical earlier explanation of service hours tests whether the expectation derives principally from the volunteer's assurances or a wider institutional communication failure.

Institutional reliance on donated labor. Suppose a volunteer programme becomes a de facto condition for a local service to operate, although the participants originally agreed to bounded shifts. When several volunteers request to leave, an administrator argues that recipients' dependence makes continuation morally mandatory. The dependence is an important fact about foreseeable consequences and institutional responsibility, yet additional premises are needed to attribute indefinite service duties to each departing volunteer. Counterfactual staffing policies, budget decisions, transparent notice, qualified replacements, and accessible recipient communication can clarify which harms were reasonably avoidable by the organization. A fair assessment also considers recipients not currently enrolled whose needs were crowded out by the same arrangement.

Together the three cases show why promise, expectation, and reliance should be investigated as connected but analytically separate mechanisms. Their different combinations can support different forms of notification, fulfillment, repair, or institutional accountability. They also reveal limitations of formal completeness: a consistent register can contain a misleading selection of affected persons, and a precisely documented assurance can remain normatively contested. Diagnostic success is therefore a matter of exposing the relevant dependencies and objections, rather than mechanically selecting a favored action.

13.10 Three-Level Interpretation, Verification, and Research Interfaces

Role commitments and acquired duties operate across the three GR reality levels with different standards of access. Ontological restraint leaves open the ultimate status of persons, promises, and normative relations. At the relational level, an assurance or a repeated practice can causally affect expectations, dependency, and the options available to participants. At the manifestation level, testimony, institutional schedules, messages, refusals, and changes in behavior disclose selected aspects of these processes. Records may be incomplete, mediated through translation, or shaped by institutional power. Their evidential status should be specified whenever the analysis makes claims about intention, uptake, reliance, or responsibility.

Empirical verification would require reconstructing sequences of communication and action with suitable privacy protection, examining rival causal accounts, and checking whether affected subjects can contest recorded interpretations. It would also require attention to those absent from the relationship: applicants waiting for help, co-volunteers bearing redistributed tasks, and institutional staff with separate

obligations. Normative verification requires explicit consideration of competing accounts of promising and special obligation, the justifiability of role expectations, and the limits imposed by competence, authorization, and fair burden distribution. A philosophical account that recognizes the force of assurances may still disagree about the circumstances in which release, excuse, or repair is appropriate.

The section's contribution is a *conditional ethics of historically acquired responsibility*. Voluntary entry, promising, warranted reliance, and role participation provide distinguishable potential grounds for duties; their practical force evolves with later events and relevant normative premises. Such responsibility can support continuity and remedial attention while remaining sensitive to an agent's capacities, recipient agency, and institutional alternatives. The next inquiry, concerning distributed agency and coordination, will examine how these responsibilities are jointly produced and attributed across volunteer, coordinator, organization, and recipient positions. The present account establishes the relational and evidential interfaces for that analysis while retaining the unresolved philosophical question of which grounds ultimately warrant particular moral demands.

14 Distributed Agency, Coordination, and Responsibility Attribution

Volunteer aid is frequently produced through sequences of interdependent actions: one participant receives a request, another interprets it, a coordinator assigns a task, an organization maintains resources and eligibility rules, and a volunteer performs or declines the designated action. An outcome may depend on this organization even when none of its participants intended the outcome in precisely the form in which it occurred. The ethical question concerns how responsibilities can be identified under such distributed conditions without conflating contributions, capacities, promises, powers, and moral fault. This section develops a preliminary account of distributed agency and responsibility attribution. It first specifies the conceptual positions and coordination relations involved, distinguishes descriptive from normative questions, introduces a provenance-sensitive responsibility record, and examines retrospective, prospective, and collective assessments. Three finite histories test the proposed distinctions. The method combines analytical philosophy, limited formal representation, and hypothetical causal comparison; it leaves institutional facts, legal standards, and substantive moral principles open to independent verification.

14.1 Distributed Action and the Identification of Acting Positions

A description such as “the aid programme refused the request” compresses a potentially complex course of events. The initial application may have been screened by a form, interpreted by a coordinator, subject to an organization-wide eligibility criterion, and communicated by a volunteer with little discretion. Responsibility cannot be assessed adequately until the relevant positions and acts have been identified at a useful resolution. A record of institutional action should distinguish the person who supplied information, the agent who classified it, the role that authorized a decision, the procedure that limited available options, and the people exposed to its effects. Their relevance depends on the research question, and one participant may occupy several positions across the same history.

The ethical-situation tuple introduced in Equation 2 identifies a situated acting position, affected subjects, history, evidence, options, feasibility, and constraints. Distributed action calls for a related multi-position representation in which one person's apparently feasible option may depend on another participant's response. A volunteer can competently relay a request while lacking access to the organization's full eligibility record. A coordinator can possess authority to revise assignments while lacking firsthand knowledge of the recipient's communication. An organization may control translation services, budgets, and complaint pathways without any one officer controlling their historical development. These distinctions matter for locating both practical ability and the limits of reasonable expectation.

Shared agency itself is a contested philosophical object. Bratman's planning theory identifies interconnected individual intentions and coordination structures as resources for describing shared activity [8]. Such a description may illuminate jointly planned volunteer work, although coordinated conduct can

also result from procedures, habits, technology, and asymmetrical delegation without a shared intention across participants. The present model therefore begins from observed and reconstructed interactions. Whether a particular pattern constitutes a genuinely shared action is a question to be supported by its planning and interaction evidence, and whether its participants bear moral responsibility requires further argument.

14.2 Coordination Relations, Delegation, and Practical Control

Coordination has several identifiable mechanisms: task allocation, information routing, supervision, delegation, sequence-dependent handoff, monitoring, and revision. An arrangement may operate reliably even when participants understand only their local assignments. Reliability is ethically significant where affected persons organize their decisions around the expected coordination, yet it can obscure who possesses the power to correct a failure. Accordingly, the inquiry examines the relation between assigned responsibility and effective control, including differences between the authority stated in a role description and the options practically available at the relevant time.

Delegation has at least three separable aspects. The first is a representational claim that an agent has been designated to act for another person or organization. The second is a practical transfer or organization of tasks, information, and resources. The third is the normative validity of allowing that agent to act in the proposed capacity. A coordinator's message may establish the first, make the second possible, and leave the third dependent on recipient consent, institutional legitimacy, professional rules, or legal jurisdiction. The distinction established for scope of practice in Section 9 accordingly applies to delegated work: available skill and apparent delegation remain separate from the authority to disclose confidential information or undertake an intrusive measure.

Practical control is frequently partial. An agent may select an option from an existing menu without controlling the menu's creation; an organization may establish eligibility categories without predicting a particular misclassification; a volunteer may recognize an error without possessing a channel through which to reverse the decision. Degrees of discretion, access, supervision, and the feasibility of seeking review are relevant to judgments about each role. The existence of an instruction is evidence of what an agent was asked to do. The fairness and authority of the instruction, and the reasonableness of compliance or challenge, remain normative questions. A useful allocation analysis therefore retains both the content of the assignment and the history of available alternatives.

14.3 Causal Contribution and the Evidential Limits of Attribution

An outcome can have multiple contributing conditions. Suppose a recipient misses an appointment after an incomplete translation, a delayed coordinator review, and a volunteer's unsuccessful referral. The outcome may depend jointly on these events, on earlier scheduling decisions, and on an inaccessible transport system. A sequence record can identify temporal ordering and plausible mechanisms, while the claim that a particular event made a difference requires specified causal assumptions and appropriate comparisons. A repeated description of the outcome as "caused by the volunteer" would conceal the level at which the relevant mechanism operated.

Counterfactual questions can distinguish causal hypotheses without presupposing a unique cause. Would the appointment have been missed if the volunteer had relayed the same request with accurate translation? Would a timely organizational review have supplied an effective alternative? Would a different recipient-facing notice have prevented reliance on an unavailable service? The counterfactuals may be interdependent: correcting the first translation can change what a coordinator notices, while an institutional accessibility policy can determine whether a referral has any useful destination. A local difference-making claim is therefore indexed to specified background conditions and an intervention description. Uncertainty about these conditions must remain visible.

Causal contribution and moral attribution have different standards. A participant may contribute to an adverse outcome through a reasonable action performed with limited information. Another agent may have deliberately concealed evidence yet failed to affect the eventual outcome because an independent

procedure corrected the record. These possibilities allow causal, epistemic, and moral questions to diverge. The descriptive account inherited from Paper I and its provenance analysis in Section 3 supply useful tools for locating actions and evidential dependencies; they do not by themselves determine blameworthiness, duties of repair, or legitimate authority. For that assessment one must examine knowledge, avoidability, accepted commitments, fair expectations, and the specific normative grounds proposed.

14.4 A Provenance-Sensitive Record of Distributed Responsibility

The present section proposes a typed research record for a bounded history and a specified outcome or concern. Let $\mathcal{P}_t^\kappa$ denote the represented acting positions, $\mathcal{G}_t^\kappa$ the relevant task-and-information dependencies, and $\mathcal{E}_t^\kappa$ the evidence available at a stated resolution. Let $\mathcal{A}_t^\kappa$ collect purported authorities and undertakings, $\mathcal{C}_t^\kappa$ the candidate causal pathways, $\mathcal{V}_t^\kappa$ the documented variations in control and feasible options, $\mathcal{N}_t^\kappa$ the explicit normative premise candidates, and $\mathcal{J}_t^\kappa$ the provisional attribution claims together with their contestation status. The proposed *distributed responsibility audit* is defined in Equation 14.

$$\mathcal{D}_t^\kappa := (\mathcal{P}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{G}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{E}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{A}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{C}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{V}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{N}_t^\kappa, \mathcal{J}_t^\kappa). \quad (14)$$

Equation 14 organizes sources and candidate claims; it supplies neither a responsibility score nor an algorithm that assigns duties. The components have different evidential statuses. $\mathcal{E}_t^\kappa$ consists of reports, actions, and other accessible manifestations with provenance. $\mathcal{G}_t^\kappa$ and $\mathcal{C}_t^\kappa$ contain reconstructed dependencies and causal hypotheses that may require independent testing. $\mathcal{A}_t^\kappa$ can contain contested assertions of authority, while $\mathcal{N}_t^\kappa$ explicitly identifies moral assumptions that are proposed for justification. $\mathcal{J}_t^\kappa$ may distinguish causal involvement, failure to meet an accepted responsibility, forward-looking capacity to repair, and a proposed finding of blameworthiness. An attribution entry remains a claim even when a database stores it in a field labelled “responsibility.”

The temporal index records when an appraisal is made and which history is included; the context index κ specifies the observational and analytical granularity. A later report may expand $\mathcal{P}_t^\kappa$ to include an omitted interpreter, an unseen dependent person, or a subcontracted service. Such an expansion can alter candidate causal and normative claims without changing the earlier occurrence of an event. The audit therefore requires revision provenance: who entered a record, who challenged it, what evidence changed, and which earlier interpretations remain accessible for evaluation. It also requires attention to the privacy costs of reconstructing interpersonal communications, especially where recipients and volunteers have unequal power to decline additional documentation.

14.5 Attribution Categories and Normative Grounds

A differentiated attribution should state the kind of responsibility claimed. *Causal involvement* concerns the contribution of actions or structures to an outcome, under an indicated causal model. *Role-performance responsibility* concerns a task or practice whose content and acceptance have been established. *Accountability* concerns whether and to whom an agent should provide reasons, information, or a procedure of review. *Remedial responsibility* concerns who should now contribute to preventing recurrence or addressing a present harm. *Blameworthiness* makes a further judgment about fault under a defensible moral standard. These categories can coexist for one agent, but their grounds and consequences differ.

The distinction between responsibility of a group, responsibility shared among persons, and responsibility of individuals remains contested in moral philosophy. Smiley surveys the disputes over collective agency, the distribution of blame, and forward-looking repair [53]. Her distinctions caution against inferring an individual’s guilt solely from organizational membership or assuming that the absence of an identifiable individual culprit leaves every practical obligation unassigned. A volunteer may have the task of communicating a correction without being culpable for the faulty policy; an organization may bear a credible obligation to revise an administrative process even where retrospective individual blame cannot be established. These are candidate judgments requiring separate norms, evidence, and appropriate opportunities for response.

A further complication is the use of responsibility language for a socially desirable solution. The participant who can respond most effectively may be selected as a remedial actor even when others created the risk. Such selection can be justified by urgency, capacity, fairness, institutional obligation, or a combination of reasons; each basis has limits. It can also create new injustice where the burden falls repeatedly on a volunteer who lacks resources or authority. The agent able to help immediately and the institution responsible for securing an enduring solution may therefore have complementary but different obligations. A prospective assignment should identify the task's scope, resources, accountable decision-maker, and conditions for revision, rather than silently converting assistance capacity into indefinite liability.

14.6 Shared Intentions and Conditional Group Agency

Some organized aid activities are appropriately described as jointly intended. Volunteers may coordinate a transport roster through common planning, shared expectations, and mutually adjusted commitments. Other arrangements operate through a durable organizational policy that none of the acting volunteers personally selected. The difference matters when attributing a collective undertaking, interpreting an instruction, and assessing which agents had opportunities to object or revise the plan. It also matters for the question of whether responsibility should be attributed to a unified organization, to cooperating individuals, or to an interdependent yet uncoordinated set of contributors.

List and Pettit defend a theory of group agency in which organized collective procedures can support a distinctive group-level standpoint under relevant structural conditions [33]. Their framework identifies a philosophical possibility and a set of demanding organizational questions. The present paper does not presume that every volunteer programme satisfies those conditions, and it leaves open whether a particular institution meets the moral conditions for collective accountability. Group-level descriptions may be explanatorily indispensable at some resolutions without providing a direct license to attribute intentions or fault to each member. Conversely, an organization can have publicly identifiable duties through legitimate institutional commitments even when the stronger metaphysical thesis of autonomous group moral agency is disputed.

This distinction also clarifies the recipient's position. Recipients can participate in collective planning, propose options, interpret needs, and refuse purportedly joint projects. Their inclusion as acting subjects does not imply that they share responsibility for failures caused by inaccessible procedures or improperly delegated authority. In many support arrangements, the people most affected have the least control over eligibility rules, data infrastructures, and staffing. Treating participation in a relationship as evidence of equal practical power would reproduce precisely the exclusion that a relational analysis should make available for scrutiny. A group-agency proposal must accordingly be tested against actual authority and the capacity of affected subjects to contest its decisions.

A hard case for allocation arises when responsibility to repair is detached from blame for the original event. Imagine that an inaccessible intake rule was created before the current staff joined an organization. The present coordinator may be competent to correct the rule, while having neither authored the rule nor knowingly contributed to the original exclusion. A volunteer may have correctly warned about the problem without access to implementation authority. The institution may have a strong prospective reason to correct the practice, even if no individual currently merits blame for its creation. Young's social-connection account gives a distinctive political account of forward-looking responsibility concerning unjust structural processes; it should not be recast as a finding of personal negligence or as a theorem that every connected person bears the same duty [66]. Likewise, the presence of coordinated tasks does not, without evidence of interlocking plans or another adequate group-agency account, establish the intentional action of a single collective subject [8, 33]. The proposed responsibility register should therefore state the precise bearer and grounding of each kind of attribution.

14.7 Structural Responsibility and Prospective Repair

Responsibility may arise from the persistence of institutional arrangements rather than from one isolated defective choice. An eligibility system can repeatedly mishandle requests in minoritized languages even where an individual volunteer follows every permitted step. A scheduling programme can depend on unpaid overtime while praising individual dedication and concealing the absence of sustainable staffing. These histories raise prospective questions concerning who can change the system, whose interests were discounted in its design, and which institutions or participants have fair grounds for undertaking remedial work.

Young's social-connection model distinguishes responsibilities for addressing structural injustice from the backward-looking allocation of fault [66]. The model is relevant here as an established philosophical proposal concerning participation in and transformation of unjust processes. It does not demonstrate by itself that every observed institutional limitation is unjust, or specify one universally correct allocation among volunteers, managers, funders, and public authorities. Such conclusions require evidence of the mechanism, principles concerning just institutional arrangements, and a judgment about the agents who can reasonably participate in change.

Prospective repair has several possible objects: urgent replacement assistance, correction of an inaccurate classification, protection of information, revised training, appropriate staffing, accessible appeals, or redistribution of burdens. Each may belong to a different practical position. Short-term assistance can be necessary while structural reform remains unresolved; structural reform can be warranted even where an earlier event caused no documented injury. A careful attribution account keeps local needs, longer-term institutional obligations, and the burden of collective transformation jointly visible without collapsing them into one numerical resource-allocation rule. Where the organization creates a dependency, it cannot settle the moral distribution of repair simply by observing that an individual volunteer has continued to prevent harm.

14.8 Historical Handoffs, Information Loss, and Responsibility Gaps

Distributed histories often contain temporal boundaries between tasks. A volunteer forwards a request to a coordinator; the coordinator places it in a queue; a specialist service sends an automated acknowledgment; the recipient receives no usable appointment. Every participant may truthfully describe having completed a local task while the overall assistance relation remains incomplete. The ethical significance of this gap depends on what the respective commitments established, whether completion statuses were understood, and who possessed a reasonable ability to detect or correct the failure. The referral stages distinguished in Section 9 provide a more discriminating vocabulary than the unqualified label "referred."

Information loss can occur at translation, classification, delegation, platform migration, or transfer between organizations. An audit should therefore retain source-level evidence, the reason for the selected categorization, and any acknowledged uncertainty. A record of successful transmission differs from evidence that a receiving service has accepted a request, that the recipient can access it, and that a substantive need has been addressed. Yet insisting on completed outcomes as the sole definition of responsible action would make an individual volunteer accountable for events outside reasonable competence or control. The relevant duties of notice, verification, follow-up, and escalation require grounding in the accepted role, the severity of the risks, available support, and the normative justification of the particular demand.

A responsibility gap may also be deliberately produced. Procedures can define each participant's accountability so narrowly that predictable harms remain outside every formal job description. An organization that assigns no one to monitor failed handoffs thereby shapes the distribution of unaddressed needs. The existence of such a gap is an institutional fact to be established; judging it unjust or morally negligent requires argument about foreseeable consequences and a defensible distribution of duties. Where volunteer capacities are constrained, prospective obligations to redesign the interface may be stronger for agents controlling it than for individuals who merely use it. Claimants should have effective means of disputing both the description of the gap and the proposed allocation of responsibility.

Table 14: Hypothetical distributed aid histories and competing grounds of responsibility

History	Distributed mechanism	Rival account	Evidence and normative questions
Translated intake request	Volunteer, coordinator, interpreter and platform jointly shape an eligibility classification	An omission originates in translation, in the form's required categories, or in later review	Translation provenance, correction access, role discretion, causal alternatives, authority to repair
Unstaffed continuity promise	An organization guarantees accompaniment using separately accepted volunteer shifts	An individual promised an extra shift, or the organization projected continuity without assent	Assurance source, shift agreements, replacement resources, reliance, fair allocation of remedial burdens
Time-critical multi-agent referral	One helper recognizes urgency, another controls escalation, and a third receives the referral	Procedural delay or a technical failure, with different available counterfactual paths	Time-stamped handoffs, specialist competence, recipient authorization, feasible alternatives, review authority

14.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Coordinated Aid

Three constructed histories probe the difference among causal contribution, organizational authority, special undertaking, and prospective remedial responsibility. They describe no actual organization or participant. Table 14 specifies the principal competing interpretations and the evidence a serious appraisal would require. Each case can be represented through Equation 14; the record's analytical completeness is itself subject to challenge.

A request altered through mediation. A person presents a request using an interpreter. The translated account omits a limitation affecting access to the proposed service. The coordinator classifies the request according to a form that offers few categories, and the volunteer transmits a referral based on the classification. When the recipient returns after an unsuccessful visit, the organization initially attributes the failure to the volunteer's poor communication. An audit must determine who controlled translation, which original information was accessible to each actor, whether the categories supported the relevant meaning, and how correction requests were handled. If accurate translation would still have led to an inaccessible destination, a different institutional mechanism is implicated. The volunteer's causal presence in the chain alone establishes neither exclusive fault nor a general duty to redesign the system. Local duties of correction and prospective organizational duties can remain independently arguable.

A continuity commitment generated by the organization. A charity promises that every enrolled person will receive accompaniment for a series of appointments. Individual volunteers consent to particular shifts; administrators repeatedly leave unfilled shifts without a replacement plan. A recipient turns down a different escort because the organizational message appears reliable. When a volunteer becomes unavailable, the charity publicly criticizes that person for abandoning the recipient. The critical evidence concerns the source and scope of the assurance, actual volunteer undertakings, known scheduling vulnerabilities, recipient reliance, and practicable replacement steps. A volunteer may have reasons to give timely notice or to assist with a feasible handoff under Section 13. The organization's own commitment and control over staffing supply an independent candidate ground for remedial responsibility. Neither sympathy for the recipient nor admiration of volunteering resolves the distribution by itself.

A time-critical referral through divided authority. A volunteer notices circumstances suggesting a serious and time-sensitive need, but lacks the competence for specialist intervention. A coordinator holds authority to escalate, and an external service must decide whether to accept a referral. The volunteer promptly reports the concern; the coordinator waits for additional information; an automated acknowledgement is mistaken for acceptance. The outcome may worsen. Ethical appraisal examines the evidential standing of the perceived urgency, the costs of delay, the authorization to disclose information, and each actor's feasible response. A realistic counterfactual might show that immediate escalation would have made no difference because the external service was closed; another might show that the coordinator could have reached an available alternative. Assessment of prospective repair then identifies the tasks required to prevent similar confusion, including clarification of acknowledgement statuses and escalation responsibilities. These judgments remain sensitive to uncertainty and avoid converting hindsight into a fictitious contemporaneous ability to predict the outcome.

The cases demonstrate that both excess and deficit attribution are possible. An individual can be assigned blame for a policy they neither selected nor controlled; alternatively, a collective label can obscure a particular official's knowledge or intentional concealment. The audit should be capable of detecting both errors. Its purpose is to make rival hypotheses, omitted positions, normative premises, and opportunities for correction examinable, including the interests of subjects who never reached the programme's formal intake register.

14.10 Three-Level Interpretation, Verification, and Normative Limits

The three GR reality levels remain methodologically distinct in the assessment of distributed responsibility. At the *ontological* level, the ultimate nature of agency, collective subjectivity, and moral responsibility remains unsettled. At the *relational* level, organizations, roles, information pathways, historical commitments, power over resources, and dependencies can be modeled as causally consequential structures. At the *manifestation* level, task assignments, communications, decisions, scheduling records, testimony, and institutional labels render selected parts of those structures accessible. The same manifestation can support several relational reconstructions, while no record independently establishes a final moral verdict. Epistemic inquiry and normative reasoning retain separate tasks within this framework.

Empirical verification would require task-specific records, appropriately protected testimony, decision and communication timestamps, access to alternative explanations, and meaningful correction rights. It would also require an explicit account of unregistered recipients, informal volunteer labor, and organizational units absent from the recorded workflow. Causal judgments should be assessed against realistic counterfactuals and the possibility of interaction among contributing conditions. Normative appraisal must specify grounds for obligations, standards of blameworthiness, the legitimacy of delegated authority, and just distributions of remedial burdens. Research methods themselves may generate risks: collecting ever more detailed personal records can threaten privacy, and soliciting testimony can impose additional burdens on those already dependent on services.

The preliminary proposal accordingly distinguishes *responsibility for a task*, *responsibility for an outcome*, and *responsibility to respond* as questions with different evidential and moral demands. Distributed aid relations can produce consequences requiring joint repair even where individualized fault is uncertain; identifying that requirement and allocating it fairly still call for substantive moral argument. The section supplies a typed and revisable account of coordination, provenance, and competing attributions rather than a comprehensive rule for distributing blame. Subsequent inquiry into care, boundaries, institutional pressure, and ethical conflict can use these distinctions without treating organizational effectiveness as moral legitimacy or the language of collectivity as a substitute for subject-specific evidence.

15 Volunteer Well-Being, Burnout, and Self-Regarding Reasons

Volunteer aid creates ethically consequential relations for supporters as well as recipients. A volunteer can exercise judgment, extend another person's opportunities, and assume bounded responsibilities while

also experiencing cumulative fatigue, insecurity, conflicting commitments, or reduced practical capacity. The ethical assessment of assistance therefore requires an account of the volunteer as a potentially affected subject with legitimate interests and reasons of their own. This section develops that account through conceptual distinctions, cautious engagement with research on burnout and voluntary work, a provenance-sensitive representation of support burdens, and hypothetical histories of continuing care. Its objective is to identify grounds for self-regarding concern and institutional responsibility without converting volunteer well-being into a universal limit on duties or presenting psychological classifications as moral verdicts. The method combines moral philosophy, interpretive reconstruction, bounded formalization, and evidence-sensitive counterfactual comparison.

15.1 The Volunteer as a Subject of Ethical Concern

An assistance arrangement often identifies the recipient as the primary bearer of unmet needs and the volunteer as a source of time, skill, and attention. That description isolates an important asymmetry in the immediate exchange, yet it offers an incomplete account of the participants' morally relevant circumstances. The volunteer can have dependents, a paid occupation, a continuing education commitment, health-related limitations, and needs for rest, self-direction, privacy, and social participation. These interests remain relevant when the person willingly enters an aid relationship. The ethical-situation record of Equation 2 consequently permits the acting position *A* to be included within the potentially affected-subject register under an independently specified account of relevant interests.

The volunteer's inclusion should preserve the interests of the recipient and other affected subjects. Difficult cases can involve an additional appointment that greatly benefits one recipient while imposing a substantial time or psychological burden on one supporter. Another arrangement can shift immediate work from a volunteer to a salaried coordinator or to family members of the recipient. The analytical question is how these effects should enter the ethical assessment, rather than whether the helper's interests invariably defeat or defer to those of the person assisted. In particular, recognizing self-regarding reasons does not create a new privilege to disregard accepted undertakings; denying their relevance would conversely leave the demands placed on helpers inadequately examined.

The subject's relevant circumstances are historical. A task initially feasible after training may become difficult after repeated overnight shifts, personal bereavement, or additional responsibilities outside the programme. The nature of an accepted assignment can likewise change when its stated duration expires and an institution informally asks for continued coverage. Section 13 established that undertaking, assurance, and reliance require independent reconstruction. The present section asks how these commitments coexist with changes to the volunteer's capacities and self-regarding reasons. This produces an agent-sensitive assessment whose temporal index is ethically important, rather than an inference that past willingness settles future capacity or moral obligation.

15.2 Exhaustion, Burnout Terminology, and Evidential Scope

Exhaustion, distress, disengagement, and dissatisfaction can appear in volunteers' self-reports and institutional descriptions. Their meanings vary across instruments and contexts. Maslach and Leiter's research survey characterizes burnout in occupational studies by a multidimensional pattern involving exhaustion, cynicism or mental distance, and reduced efficacy, while locating the phenomenon within broader social and organizational conditions [37]. The World Health Organization's ICD-11 account likewise classifies burnout as an *occupational phenomenon*, with a specifically workplace-related definition, and expressly distinguishes it from a medical condition [62]. The present analysis respects that classification boundary. It does not assume that a volunteer's fatigue, anxiety, trauma exposure, or reduced enthusiasm satisfies a clinical diagnosis or even the ICD-11 occupational definition.

There are empirical grounds for studying related experiences in volunteering without erasing this difference. Magrone and colleagues examined work-home interference, selected burnout measures, organizational support, and intentions to leave in a sample of Italian volunteers; the reported relationships varied by measured dimension, with particular findings concerning cynicism and perceived support [35].

A longitudinal investigation of volunteer firefighters by Huynh and colleagues applies a job-demands–resources perspective to exhaustion, engagement, and retention in a distinct and demanding volunteer setting [26]. The studies support treating volunteer demands and resources as empirically investigable, while their populations, operationalizations, observational designs, and research purposes limit generalization. They do not establish a universally effective intervention or provide a moral criterion for the amount of work a particular volunteer owes.

The study of well-being consequently requires several descriptive distinctions. *Reported fatigue* is a situated expression whose provenance and communication conditions can be recorded. *Functional limitation* is a claim concerning capacities relevant to some task, supported or contested through an appropriate assessment. *Burnout-related measures* are constructs defined by particular research instruments and settings. *Moral distress* may denote the experience of facing conflicting or obstructed moral commitments, but an individual’s report of such distress does not, by itself, identify which obligation was valid or who acted wrongly. This vocabulary permits research without diagnosing participants through moral theory. It also guards against a converse error: an institution’s failure to record exhaustion cannot establish that its work arrangement imposed no significant burden.

The empirical finding requires finer discrimination. In the reported sample of 220 Italian volunteers, Magrone and colleagues found a significant mediating role for cynicism, while emotional exhaustion did not show the same significant mediation in the tested relationship between work–home interference and intentions to leave. Organizational appreciation and task support moderated the investigated indirect relationship. These results describe that sample, those measured constructs, and that analytic design; they offer neither a diagnostic rule for a particular volunteer nor a universal prediction of who will withdraw. In particular, a self-report of fatigue can be relevant to capacity and ethical burden even where no burnout classification is warranted [35, 62].

15.3 Self-Regarding Reasons and the Controversy over Duties to Oneself

An agent can have reasons to rest, preserve health, maintain significant relationships, sustain independent projects, and protect future capacities. These reasons can concern foreseeable welfare, respect for one’s agency, commitments to other people, or a proposed duty owed to oneself. The distinctions matter because they have different philosophical grounds. Muñoz’s survey of obligations to oneself distinguishes obligations *concerning* the agent from obligations purportedly *owed to* that same agent, and examines contested theories of self-care, self-respect, and the authority to waive a claim against oneself [43]. The present framework does not resolve that dispute by definition. It records self-regarding reasons and asks which justificatory account, if any, establishes a corresponding duty.

One possible argument is prudential: a volunteer has serious reason to protect their capacities because those capacities support a valuable life and future commitments. Another concerns interpersonal obligations: continued overextension may impair the person’s capacity to care for dependents or honor promises outside the aid programme. A third concerns respect or standing: a person’s own agency should count within a practice of ethically justified assistance. These considerations can overlap, yet an interest in recovery, a duty to one’s family, and a supposed duty owed directly to oneself are analytically different. Their convergence in a decision to reduce work does not prove their normative equivalence.

The debate over moral demandingness in Section 6 also remains relevant. Singer’s demanding assistance argument, Wolf’s examination of ideals of moral sainthood, and Heyd’s account of supererogation provide different resources for evaluating extraordinary service [50, 60, 23]. A person can have sufficient reason to contribute additional care without thereby being under an unlimited personal requirement to do so. Conversely, the availability of a self-regarding reason does not automatically release an agent from a specific duty whose existence and scope have been independently defended. The ethical problem is to assess both sets of reasons under disclosed assumptions and an adequately represented set of affected subjects. The model preserves legitimate philosophical disagreement where competing normative theories yield different conclusions.

15.4 Cumulative Demands, Resources, and Relational Feedback

Volunteer burdens are often distributed across time and across domains of life. One difficult shift may be followed by another, and the combined effects can include interrupted sleep, travel costs, emotional vigilance, loss of income, reduced time for family commitments, and fewer opportunities for recovery. Some effects arise from the activity itself; others arise from uncertainty about scheduling, inadequate training, or the need to correct errors produced elsewhere in an organization. Organizational appreciation and supervision may help in specific circumstances, although praise can also increase expectations of continued sacrifice. A resource analysis therefore has to identify *which* demand a proposed support measure is expected to address and under what mechanism.

A useful working distinction separates *exposure* to demands, *experienced burden*, *available support*, and *practical adaptation*. Exposure may be evidenced by hours, travel, interruptions, or challenging interactions; experienced burden is accessed through reports and bounded assessments; support includes accessible training, scheduling autonomy, paid-staff backup, supervision, and pathways for appeal; adaptation involves the actions through which an agent or institution changes conditions. Their histories may couple without being fully recoverable from one another. A volunteer can report low burden while facing escalating responsibilities whose effects are delayed; another may report substantial distress under relatively few recorded hours because the task conflicts with a morally significant commitment or presents an unfamiliar risk.

Temporal feedback is especially important where an organization interprets extra work as evidence of spare capacity. A temporary willingness to cover one unfilled shift can be incorporated into a future staffing expectation. When the expectation produces reliance, the volunteer’s refusal becomes more costly to explain, and the next additional shift can appear to be required by the dependency generated partly through earlier generosity. This process can form a self-reinforcing arrangement in which exceptional efforts become baseline institutional resources. The descriptive mechanism is plausible but requires case-specific evidence of assignment, adaptation, and reliance. Its moral significance requires separate premises about fair burden distribution, valid commitments, and responsibility for building sustainable alternatives.

Some supports can themselves be ethically problematic. A public award may supply recognition while increasing visibility and pressure; mandatory peer disclosure sessions may create privacy and emotional costs; monitoring of “resilience” may become a condition for receiving desirable assignments. The appropriate design cannot be inferred from a single satisfaction score. An ethical inquiry should examine the intervention’s effects on volunteers’ control, prospects of voice, protection from retaliation, and the institution’s willingness to revise staffing and referral systems. This expands the analysis from individual endurance toward the relations governing demands and resources.

15.5 A Provenance-Sensitive Audit of Volunteer Burdens

A minimal formal record can make those distinctions explicit without constructing a clinical instrument or a scalar measure of moral worth. Fix a volunteer-position A , a stage t , and an evidential resolution κ . Let $\mathcal{H}_{A,\leq t}^{\text{load}}$ be the sourced history of tasks and demands; $\mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\text{report}}$ the volunteer’s voluntarily disclosed manifestations of burden and well-being; $\mathcal{S}_{A,t}^{\text{support}}$ the support actually accessible; $\mathcal{F}_{A,t}^{\text{capacity}}$ the partial, task-sensitive evidence concerning capacities; $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\text{reliance}}$ the relevant commitments and dependencies; $\mathcal{O}_{A,t}^{\text{option}}$ the options for alteration or transition; and $\mathcal{N}_{A,t}^{\text{ground}}$ the candidate normative premises for both self-regarding and other-regarding reasons. Equation 15 defines the proposed *volunteer-burden audit*.

$$\mathfrak{W}_{A,t}^{\kappa} := (\mathcal{H}_{A,\leq t}^{\text{load}}, \mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\text{report}}, \mathcal{S}_{A,t}^{\text{support}}, \mathcal{F}_{A,t}^{\text{capacity}}, \mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\text{reliance}}, \mathcal{O}_{A,t}^{\text{option}}, \mathcal{N}_{A,t}^{\text{ground}})^{\kappa}. \quad (15)$$

The audit in Equation 15 is a typed organizational device. Its components intentionally retain different epistemic standings. Recorded work hours may be relatively straightforward event data, while cumulative emotional burden and prospective consequences require interpretation. Statements about task

competence must be tied to the task, setting, and appropriate evidence. Candidate normative premises remain in a separate field because evidence of high demands cannot alone establish that an institution violated a duty, just as evidence of meaningful recipient benefit cannot establish that the volunteer was obliged to absorb the full cost. A missing report is an absence within the present record, potentially caused by limited language access, fear of exclusion, reputational concerns, or a decision to preserve privacy. It is neither evidence of good well-being nor proof of hidden suffering.

The audit connects to existing formal objects. The situation record of Equation 2 specifies the time-indexed agent, feasible options, commitments, and relevant subjects. The partial feasibility predicate of Equation 3 remains appropriate when fatigue changes whether a particular task can be carried out. The acquired-commitment register of Equation 13 preserves assurances that can affect transition duties, and the distributed-responsibility record of Equation 14 distinguishes individual action from institutional task allocation. Finally, the ethical-warrant interface of Equation 1 supplies the place where explicit moral grounds can support a candidate practical reason. None of these links implements an automatic prioritization of self-care over recipients or an algorithm for identifying burnout.

A research application of the audit would require additional safeguards. Volunteers should be able to contest role descriptions and interpretations and, where appropriate, refuse the collection of intimate information without punitive inference. Access to sensitive reports, retention periods, and the treatment of third-party information require an independent ethical and institutional justification. Comparison across volunteers also raises selection problems: those who have exited, cannot afford to participate, or avoid disclosure may be missing from the observed population. A complete research design should document these limitations before interpreting records as representative of an institution's well-being conditions.

15.6 Capacity, Moral Distress, and the Quality of Assistance

The ethical significance of burden includes possible effects on assistance quality. Sustained exhaustion may reduce an agent's ability to attend carefully, remember instructions, notice changes in consent, or complete a responsible handoff. Yet reported fatigue does not establish incompetence or authorize others to exclude a person from all assistance roles. Task-specific evidence and opportunities for supervision are required. Section 9 developed the distinction among skill, authorization, competence evidence, and justified referral. The same distinction applies when a person's capacities vary over time. A volunteer may remain competent to offer companionship while seeking relief from time-critical documentation, or competently identify the need for an escalation while lacking capacity to carry out a specialist task.

The volunteer can also experience a conflict between sincerely held moral commitments and the restrictions of an institutional role. A supporter may believe that a recipient deserves additional assistance while being instructed to end a conversation, or may recognize an unsafe procedure while fearing that raising the concern will compromise a valued programme. The expression *moral distress* can be useful as a provisional descriptive category for such experiences. It should be distinguished from a verified institutional wrongdoing, a clinically assessed condition, and a philosophical conclusion that the volunteer's preferred action was obligatory. A conflict may arise because two legitimate obligations compete, because evidence is inconclusive, or because institutional power blocks an ethically warranted response. Each explanation generates different possibilities for revision.

Available responses include consultation, temporary task reassignment, procedural challenge, protected reporting, and graduated reduction of involvement. Their appropriateness depends on urgency, competence, confidentiality, and the effects on affected subjects. Simply instructing a distressed volunteer to become more resilient can obscure an actionable institutional source of the conflict. Equally, an instruction to exit immediately may ignore a short, feasible handoff that would protect a recipient without imposing disproportionate burdens. The defensible course requires identifying what the volunteer can reasonably accomplish, which obligations are legitimately allocated to the organization, and how a recipient can obtain continuity or clarification during changes in participation.

A further epistemic problem concerns pressure to produce an institutionally convenient account of

well-being. Positive self-reports may reflect satisfaction, a sincere commitment to service, fear of losing membership, or an expectation that the volunteer should remain cheerful. Negative reports may identify difficult conditions, a mismatched task, interpersonal conflict, or a temporary unrelated hardship. Treating either as self-interpreting would collapse testimony into an administrative label. Section 8 offers the requisite interpretive discipline: preserve testimony, context, rival readings, and conditions of correction. A morally serious response to burden can begin with attentive and voluntary inquiry without requiring a conclusion about diagnosis or blame.

15.7 Institutional Demands, Recognition, and Burden Allocation

When a programme uses voluntary labor to meet repeated service requirements, workload distribution becomes a joint ethical and institutional question. An organization may be better positioned than an individual volunteer to recruit additional participants, contract paid coverage, redesign eligibility criteria, introduce translation support, or suspend an unsustainable service promise. A volunteer may have good reason to communicate emerging constraints promptly, while the organization may have independent reasons to avoid allocating a system-wide shortfall to the participant least willing to disappoint others. The institutional reasons require a separate normative basis and evidence about what the organization can control.

Praise and appreciation occupy an ambivalent position. Recognition can affirm a person's contribution and support belonging; it can also create a reputational role from which withdrawal becomes difficult. The empirical study of Magrone and colleagues treats organizational appreciation and task support as distinguishable resources in a specific volunteer sample [35]. The present ethical argument adds a different question: when does praise become a vehicle for expectation inflation or pressure? Public celebration of the volunteer who never declines an extra shift may indirectly communicate that others lack dedication. The evidence of this mechanism would include scheduling demands, responses to refusal, differential recognition, and the participants' interpretations. The framework does not assume that appreciation is inherently manipulative or intrinsically sufficient to remedy structural shortages.

The costs of an arrangement may fall outside the formal programme. Household members can absorb additional care work when a volunteer is repeatedly absent; co-volunteers can inherit uncompleted tasks; recipients can face discontinuity when fatigued helpers leave without support; salaried personnel may be required to fix recurring administrative failures. These are partially coupled cost-bearing relations. A plausible evaluation therefore examines who gains dependable assistance, whose time and recovery are consumed, who controls staffing policy, and who can challenge an allocation. It also attends to absent participants whose experiences do not appear in the volunteering register. Such analysis connects the present paper's agent-specific reasons with Paper VI's distributive and relational justice questions, while keeping their normative objects separate.

The existence of institutional responsibility does not eliminate every individual duty. Under an accepted, bounded appointment, a volunteer may still owe timely notice or a reasonable handoff when possible. Conversely, an institution's promise of service continuity cannot create unlimited work obligations for volunteers who did not make or accept that promise. Section 14 supplies a multi-agent framework for locating the authorities, capacities, and task dependencies at issue. Attribution of an ethically relevant burden is thus richer than identifying the person who performed the final task; it concerns the historical organization through which repeated demands were produced and sustained.

15.8 Boundaries, Withdrawal, and Transitional Responsibilities

A volunteer's boundary can be ethically significant through several mechanisms: preserving the person's practical agency, protecting ongoing commitments outside the programme, reducing a foreseeable risk of error, and prompting more sustainable institutional arrangements. The boundary can take the form of a maximum shift length, refusal of an unauthorized task, request for supervision, a pause, or a planned exit. Its justification depends on the scope of the relevant role, existing promises, foreseeable effects, and actual alternatives. Ethical argument should therefore distinguish a permissible reduction of future

Table 15: Diagnostic comparison of volunteer well-being, responsibility, and organizational arrangements in three hypothetical histories

History	Initially supported account	Counterfactual change	Remaining ethical determination
Recurring shifts	Repeated voluntary cover and reported cumulative fatigue	Coordinator supplies reliable replacement and scheduled recovery	Scope of acquired duties and fair allocation of future coverage
Sensitive encounter	Volunteer reports distress after a difficult communication	Confidential supervision and a competent handoff become available	Self-regarding reasons, recipient continuity and disclosure limits
Service dependency	Programme relies on one volunteer for a recurring access service	Recipient receives an institutional continuity guarantee independent of that volunteer	Responsibility for transition, service design and prospective repair

participation from a sudden interruption of a specifically accepted undertaking. Both are historically situated options, and their effects need separate assessment.

The reasons favoring transition can conflict. A volunteer may face a serious well-being burden; a recipient may depend on the volunteer's established presence; an organization may have failed to recruit replacement staff; and a short delay might permit a safer handoff. The existence of recipient dependence can support duties to notify, explain, assist a transfer, or pursue suitable escalation under independently defended premises. The same dependence can strengthen institutional responsibility to supply an alternative. The volunteer's historical participation is not a sufficient ground for permanent liability. The ethical-warrant and partial deontic-status constructions of Sections 3 and 5 permit the analyst to record these as conditional, potentially conflicting claims.

Responsibility for a transition should be interpreted in relation to the available options. If advance notice is possible and likely to protect the recipient, its omission may require explanation under a valid commitment. If the volunteer faces an immediate serious risk or cannot communicate safely, a previously plausible handoff may cease to be feasible. The latter situation may create a stronger duty for a coordinator or organization to act. A description such as "the volunteer abandoned the recipient" should thus be tested against the actual agreement, accessible alternatives, reasonableness of notice, and causal role of institutional arrangements. Moral fault cannot be established solely by the disruption caused by departure.

Boundary-setting also interacts with the voluntariness of future participation. An organization that repeatedly requests "just one final shift" can prolong an ostensibly temporary obligation. Effective release processes, time-bounded commitments, clear escalation routes, and recipient-facing continuity plans can protect the freedom of participation while reducing foreseeable harm. The normative case for any particular arrangement remains context-dependent. It is sufficient for the present argument that preserving the possibility of morally responsible withdrawal is part of designing a practice in which care, recipient dignity, and volunteer agency can coexist.

15.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Volunteer Burden

Three constructed histories test the proposed distinctions under changes in the relevant evidence and normative assumptions. They are hypothetical and provide no finding concerning an actual organization, volunteer, or recipient. Table 15 summarizes their mechanisms and open questions. The cases are selected to distinguish an individual burden, a limitation on competence, and an institutionally produced dependency.

Recurring shifts and a changing capacity. A volunteer accepts a weekly accompaniment shift, then covers two additional shifts for several weeks because another participant is unavailable. The coordina-

tor describes the coverage as indispensable. The volunteer reports declining recovery time and difficulty fulfilling a family commitment. One possible view treats each additional shift as a fresh choice; another emphasizes that repeated acceptance may have generated recipient expectations for particular appointments. The evidence must identify precisely which appointments the volunteer agreed to perform, who promised continuity to recipients, and whether a reasonable transition was offered. Suppose a replacement becomes available after notice. The practical and moral consequences of withdrawal change, even though the volunteer's prior generosity remains part of the history. If a replacement is unavailable because the organization never maintained a staffing contingency, that absence cannot, without further argument, assign all prospective responsibility to the same individual.

Distress after a sensitive encounter. A volunteer receives an upsetting account during an authorized companionship visit. The person wants to be heard and asks that the information remain confidential. The volunteer feels distressed and is uncertain whether the matter requires referral to a specialist service. The relevant assessment separates the volunteer's need for support, the recipient's communication conditions, risks that might justify an exceptional disclosure under a specific governing framework, and the limits of the volunteer's competence. A hypothetical confidential supervisor could support the volunteer without automatically receiving all identifying details. Whether disclosure is permitted remains dependent on actual consent, risk, professional or legal rules where applicable, and specific normative premises. The volunteer's distress supports serious attention to possible burden while establishing neither a diagnosis nor a permission to disclose.

A service maintained by personal sacrifice. An organization advertises weekly multilingual assistance, but only one volunteer is able to perform the language support and the organization allocates no replacement or interpretation budget. Over time the volunteer repeatedly misses other commitments to maintain the service. The recipients may reasonably rely on the advertised continuity; the institution's public representation may explain this reliance more directly than anything the volunteer personally promised. The volunteer eventually announces a planned exit. A transition arrangement could include a revised public notice, informed referrals, a temporary service adjustment, and institutional recruitment. The normative burden should be assessed against the institution's control of service design, the volunteer's accepted tasks, the recipients' actual interests, and feasible alternatives. If the institution had instead contracted reliable language access, both dependency and the moral consequences of individual exit might have differed substantially.

Across the cases, high recipient need and significant volunteer burden can coexist. The evidence does not automatically rank those interests or generate a universal sacrifice limit. The tests instead reveal where a comparison depends on disputed assumptions: whether a commitment was valid, whether an alternative was genuinely accessible, whether confidential support could be provided, and whether institutional repair was possible. A future empirical study would require attention to departed volunteers, unregistered burdens, complaints, alternative causal histories, and the ethically defensible collection of participant testimony.

15.10 Three-Level GR Interpretation and Research Obligations

The three-level GR distinction offers an interpretive discipline for the present analysis. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate nature of agency, well-being, moral worth, and suffering remains suspended. The paper therefore makes no ontological claim that a questionnaire measure or a philosophical classification exhausts a subject's experience. At the level of *relational reality*, tasks, commitments, support systems, dependency, recovery opportunities, historical expectations, and the organization of unpaid labor can constitute comparatively stable and causally efficacious relations. At the level of *manifestation reality*, volunteer reports, shift schedules, refusals, administrative labels, signs of fatigue, and appeals for additional help present selected and potentially distorted evidence of those relations. Interpretive

reconstruction and normative judgment require their own warrant; neither constitutes a fourth reality level.

The present framework remains preliminary in several respects. The record in Equation 15 is a proposed provenance device, without psychometric validation, numerical parameterization, or institutional implementation. Empirical claims concerning burnout and volunteer retention depend on studied populations, instruments, and research design. Questions of self-directed duties remain contested, and the justification of an individual boundary or organizational allocation cannot be settled by observing fatigue alone. The status of consent, confidentiality, occupational protection, and required accommodation also varies across legal and institutional settings. Accordingly, the present section supplies neither a diagnostic instrument, a clinical protocol, nor an authorized volunteering policy.

The analytical gain lies in maintaining several distinctions under historical change. The volunteer is an affected subject as well as an acting position; their capacities and commitments evolve through participation. A burden can be personally experienced while institutionally generated; moral admiration can coexist with unjustified demands; and serious recipient need can coexist with legitimate reasons for bounded withdrawal. Research can therefore examine the coupling of volunteer well-being, service continuity, and organizational responsibility without presuming that one dimension absorbs the others. The next section, on institutional delegation and ethical authority, will investigate how organizations acquire, exercise, and justify authority over volunteers' tasks and the consequences of that authority for recipients and supporters.

16 Institutional Delegation, Supervision, and Ethical Authority

Volunteer assistance frequently takes place within an organization that allocates tasks, determines eligibility, authorizes access to information, provides supervision, and represents its procedures as reliable to recipients. These arrangements affect what volunteers can do and what recipients may reasonably expect. They also raise a normative question concerning the authority of an institution to direct assistance when its organizational objectives, volunteers' practical judgments, and recipients' interests diverge. The present section develops an account of institutional delegation and supervision that distinguishes organizational facts from ethical justification. It first specifies relevant forms of authority and the temporal scope of delegation, then examines supervisory knowledge, accountability, instruction conflicts, and the distribution of supervisory burdens. A provenance-sensitive record and three hypothetical institutional histories support the analysis. Throughout, the argument is a preliminary normative and formal proposal; it does not infer specific legal requirements or institutional practices from generic philosophical principles.

16.1 Organizational Direction and the Grounds of Ethical Authority

An organization may control the timetable, premises, resources, information systems, and access conditions of an assistance activity. Control permits the issuing of instructions and may create predictable expectations of compliance. Whether a directive gives a volunteer an additional moral reason to act is a further question. The philosophical literature on authority distinguishes the possession of power, the operation of an effective or *de facto* authority, and morally justified authority. These categories are developed especially in political philosophy, where their bearing on citizens' duties is disputed [11]. The present paper adopts the distinctions as an analytical comparison, while recognizing that a charitable coordinator's limited authority differs fundamentally from a state's coercive claim to rule.

At least four grounds may bear on an organization's ethical claim to direct a volunteer. The volunteer may have knowingly accepted a specific and revisable undertaking; the organization may possess task-specific expertise or better information; a coordinated procedure may protect recipients against foreseeable discontinuity; and an institutional assignment may be embedded in an independently defensible allocation of responsibilities. Each ground has limits. An agreement has a scope and possible defects of voluntariness; expertise may be absent or unevenly distributed; a procedure can preserve harmful practices as well as valuable continuity; and an assigned duty may distribute burdens unfairly. Consequently,

an institutional instruction needs both a descriptive provenance and an examination of the moral premises offered in its support.

The question also concerns the recipient's position. An organization may control the volunteer's access to a service while lacking permission to decide every matter for the recipient. An authorized volunteer coordinator can legitimately regulate internal scheduling without thereby acquiring general authority over a recipient's bodily choices, testimony, personal information, or exit from assistance. The institutional source of an instruction, the people it addresses, and its intended practical effects must therefore be identified separately.

16.2 Types of Institutional Powers and Relational Positions

Institutional assistance involves several analytically distinct capacities. *Assignment power* allocates a defined task to a willing participant; *operational control* determines access to resources or systems; *epistemic competence* supplies evidence for specialist judgments; *supervisory power* establishes review and escalation arrangements; *legal authorization* depends on applicable rules and facts; and *moral authority* concerns whether a proposed direction has justified normative force for the subjects involved. These powers may coincide in one office, but their grounds differ. A person who can amend a digital eligibility record may lack sufficient linguistic competence to interpret an applicant's narrative. A clinician may offer technical advice without having authority to disclose a volunteer's confidential information. A recipient can possess practical knowledge relevant to the service while holding no formal organizational title.

Authority may also be distributed across levels. A programme administrator sets a general policy; a coordinator makes a case-specific assignment; a volunteer interprets an immediate situation; the recipient accepts or refuses a proposed service; and an external professional determines the suitability of a specialized referral. A command received at the point of service may therefore contain several historical decisions whose authors, purposes, and conditions are no longer visible. Section 14 distinguishes such task chains from unified moral agency. The present argument adds an inquiry into whether the right to *direct* was properly transmitted at each interface and whether those subject to the direction can effectively seek correction.

The practical importance of these distinctions appears in existing volunteer governance instruments. The IFRC Volunteering Policy articulates commitments within the IFRC network, including safer and sustainable volunteering [28]; the United Nations Volunteers Conditions of Service describe assignment-specific policies and rules applicable to UN Volunteers [57]. These are examples of differently scoped institutional governance, not universal legal standards for every volunteer, and the present study does not purport to interpret their operative terms for any particular assignment. Their existence illustrates why ethical assessments require identification of the institution, version of applicable rules, participant category, and historical context.

The institutional framework itself also has a bounded source of authority. United Nations Volunteers' Conditions of Service, effective from 1 April 2026, specify contractual and conduct conditions for UN Volunteers within the applicable assignment arrangements, with separate terms for other UNV initiatives such as Online Volunteering. These rules illustrate the importance of identifying the assignment instrument and organizational principal. They do not establish the rules of a municipal hospital's volunteer programme, and their contractual existence does not establish the moral legitimacy of every instruction issued under them. Where a coordinator cites an external programme's rule, the audit must record the rule's applicability before assessing compliance or dissent [57].

16.3 Delegation, Acceptance, and Limits of Assigned Tasks

An intelligible delegation has a delegating position, an addressee, a task, an authorized scope, relevant conditions, and a means of determining whether the assignment has been accepted. The *act of issuing* a task can be verified from an instruction log, while the *validity* of that instruction depends on organizational and other applicable rules. The *ethical force* of compliance depends on further arguments

concerning accepted commitments, protected interests, and competing duties. An incomplete delegation may be especially consequential where it implies powers that were never explicitly conferred, such as assessing mental capacity, conducting clinical screening, or sharing sensitive information with an unrelated party.

Acceptance can itself be graded. A volunteer may agree to accompany a recipient to a public-service counter yet decline to interpret confidential medical advice. Consent to a shift schedule does not necessarily authorize unscheduled overtime or an indefinitely expanded role. Changes in task content, risk, information access, or burden can alter the conditions under which the original agreement was made. Section 13 examines how accepted undertakings and actual reliance generate candidate special obligations; Section 10 separately examines the recipient's continuing authorization. Institutional delegation should preserve both histories instead of treating either assent as a blanket permission covering future activity.

Delegation also raises a question of the institution's retained responsibility. An organization might delegate the performance of a translation, accompaniment, or referral but remain the agent best positioned to train participants, safeguard records, supply oversight, or replace an unavailable volunteer. The inference from assigned action to exclusive downstream responsibility is therefore suspect. Whether the organization has a moral duty to retain oversight depends on its policy choices, knowledge, practical control, assurances, available resources, and the interests at stake. Role obligations are philosophically contested even where an organizational position is well-defined [21]; the mere existence of a role does not settle the content of every moral duty attached to it.

16.4 Supervision as an Epistemic and Protective Relation

Supervision is often characterized in managerial language as monitoring volunteers' performance. Its ethical significance extends to the organization of reliable understanding. A competent supervisor may help the volunteer recognize uncertainty, distinguish a request from a diagnosis, detect an inappropriate task, seek advice without unnecessary disclosure, and arrange a viable referral. In this sense, supervision mediates between local manifestations and the organization's wider resources for interpretation and action. Section 8 provides a separate account of testimony and interpretive correction; Section 9 specifies why referral requires confirmation beyond a sent message.

The absence of supervision is analytically different from its insufficiency and misuse. An absent supervisor may leave a volunteer without an escalation pathway. A supervisor who responds but misunderstands the scope of an issue may provide mistaken reassurance. A supervisor may possess relevant information yet lack power to implement a remedy. And an apparently thorough supervisory system may pressure volunteers to disclose private experiences or may interpret recipient disagreement as evidence of noncompliance. These cases implicate different remedies: contact coverage, training, redistribution of decision rights, institutional correction, and privacy protection. Their moral assessment requires examination of what could reasonably have been expected of each position given the evidence available at the time.

Supervision should remain bidirectional in a qualified sense. Volunteers can communicate observed problems and their own limits; recipients can correct interpretations that intermediaries have recorded about them; organizations can supply resources and accessible channels for review. These relations need safeguards against retaliation, retaliation fears, information misuse, and the loss of confidentiality. A volunteer's account of distress warrants serious and appropriately bounded attention, while an institutional desire to document performance does not automatically authorize clinical inquiry. The same separation holds for recipient testimony: supervisory access to a workflow need not entail unrestricted access to the person's private narrative.

16.5 A Provenance-Sensitive Audit of Delegation and Supervision

The following finite record is proposed to make institutional judgments inspectable. Let O designate an organizational position, A a potential volunteer addressee, t a decision time, and κ the institutional and

interpretive context. Equation 16 defines a typed *candidate delegation–supervision audit* rather than a measure of valid or legitimate authority.

$$\mathcal{D}_{O,A,t}^{\kappa} = (\mathcal{I}_{O,A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{G}_{O,A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{S}_{O,A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{U}_t^{\kappa}, \mathcal{E}_t^{\kappa}, \mathcal{V}_t^{\kappa}, \mathcal{B}_t^{\kappa}). \quad (16)$$

Here $\mathcal{I}$ records the source, recipient, timing, and actual uptake of instructions; $\mathcal{T}$ describes task content and duration; $\mathcal{G}$ describes claimed permissions, scope boundaries, and available grounds of delegation; $\mathcal{C}$ concerns task-specific competence and capacities; $\mathcal{S}$ records supervision, escalation, and responsive oversight; $\mathcal{U}$ enumerates recognized and potentially omitted affected positions; $\mathcal{E}$ records situated evidence, uncertainty, and provenance; $\mathcal{V}$ records contestation, revision, and release channels; and $\mathcal{B}$ lists explicitly proposed normative bases. These slots are typed registers whose detailed realization is problem-dependent. In particular, their presence in a data structure does not establish that the corresponding objects exist, are complete, or satisfy their claimed normativity.

The record is linked to earlier constructions through partial compatibility, rather than through a pre-supposed one-to-one equivalence. The ethical-situation record of Section 4 concerns the agent’s situated options; the competency audit of Section 9 concerns task-specific capability and authority; the authorization account of Section 10 concerns the recipient’s choice; and the distributed-responsibility audit of Section 14 concerns causal and moral attribution across participants. The present audit identifies the *institutional interfaces* among those objects. When records disagree, the disagreement becomes an object of inquiry rather than an invitation to assume that the latest institutional entry is authoritative.

The proposed record supports a conditional analysis of institutional instruction. For a directive to supply a presumptive reason for action, an argument must specify an appropriately authorized source, a sufficiently definite task, competent and voluntary acceptance where relevant, the status of affected subjects’ authorization, and substantive moral grounds for compliance. These are possible justificatory considerations, not a jointly sufficient moral theorem. Some reasons are defeasible; legal constraints and the seriousness of foreseeable harm can change the permissible options; and competing normative theories disagree about when an instruction has exclusionary force. No scalar “legitimacy score” is implied by Equation 16.

An institution’s claim of emergency authority may also be internally inconsistent with its own support arrangements. Suppose a volunteer is instructed to undertake a specialized procedure because no supervisor is available. The organization may control the staffing decision that produced the supervision gap, while the volunteer lacks the relevant competence and the recipient has not authorized the procedure. The organizational order is then evidence of a request made under pressure, not proof of an ethical obligation to comply. A defensible assessment needs to compare available actions such as contacting an external qualified service, communicating the capacity limit, maintaining ordinary support within scope, or invoking an applicable safety procedure. The analysis also needs to ask whether the institution has created a recurring false choice between unsafe compliance and apparent abandonment. A volunteer’s reason to decline a particular procedure may coexist with duties of truthful escalation and appropriate assistance; institutional failure to provide supervision can sustain a separate prospective responsibility to redesign the workflow. Legitimate authority requires arguments about scope, competence, affected subjects, and review, beyond the bare efficacy of an instruction [11].

16.6 Contestability, Recipient Standing, and Reviewable Decisions

Formal arrangements can be operationally efficient while limiting the ability of recipients and volunteers to challenge the terms of assistance. An organization may classify a recipient as ineligible, designate an interpreter, deny a referral, or remove a volunteer from a shift. Each action can alter opportunities for those affected. Ethically relevant review requires identifying who can raise objections, which records can be inspected or corrected, what burdens of evidence apply, and whether review can occur while a remedy remains practically meaningful. The theory of relational justice in Paper VI analyzes procedural, recognitional, epistemic, distributive, and relational claims; the present analysis investigates how a particular agent’s duties are shaped by the institutional conditions in which such claims arise.

A refusal by a recipient should remain capable of changing the assistance process even when the organization has strong administrative reasons to prefer completion. Where a restriction is proposed because another person's rights or safety are at stake, the nature and evidential basis of the competing claim need to be specified. Where the recipient cannot communicate through the established channel, meaningful review may require translation, accessible formats, supported decision-making, or another appropriate procedure, subject to justified privacy and institutional constraints. A review system that exists on paper but is practically inaccessible can produce false reassurance that a decision was consensual.

Volunteers also require contestability. A person may challenge an unsafe assignment, a misleading description of competence, a punitive response to refusal, or an institution's assumption that occasional generosity entails permanent availability. A procedure that demands detailed disclosure of private distress as the sole means of declining a task can itself impose ethically salient burdens. Institutional explanations should therefore be sufficient for accountability while proportionate to the information genuinely required. The grounds for any organizational sanction, where applicable, remain dependent on the institution's operative rules and jurisdiction-specific law, which the current framework does not attempt to determine.

16.7 Instruction Conflicts, Dissent, and Responsible Escalation

A supervisor may ask a volunteer to carry out a task the volunteer considers intrusive, unsafe, or inadequately authorized. The ethical alternatives depend on the precise content of the instruction, the volunteer's competence, the affected subject's position, urgency, and actual access to review. Following an instruction can sometimes serve a moral reason for coordination, but may also conflict with privacy, consent, nonmaleficence, or justified commitments to another participant. Refusal is likewise ethically textured: declining unauthorized specialist treatment differs from declining a bounded and accepted task whose timely completion another person reasonably depends upon.

The argument of Section 5 treats moral reasons and candidate deontic positions as conditional and potentially conflicting. Applied institutionally, this suggests a structured response: identify the relevant direction and its claimed source; secure only such information as is appropriately accessible; state a bounded concern; seek clarification or a competent escalation channel; and consider how to protect affected subjects during the interval. This sequence is a conceptual deliberation aid, rather than a universal operations protocol. Different domains, including emergency healthcare, safeguarding, and ordinary administrative support, can impose materially different legal and professional requirements that require separate verification.

There are also costs of dissent. A coordinator may have better information unavailable to the volunteer; a volunteer may misunderstand the consequences of delay; or institutional incentives may discourage candid challenge. A reasonable analysis should therefore assess the possibility of good-faith error on both sides alongside power asymmetry. An organization that treats every request for clarification as disloyalty can suppress early warnings. A volunteer who treats personal conviction as unrestricted authority over recipients may reproduce paternalism. Reviewability and reason-giving provide a way to address both risks while preserving the possibility that a particular dispute remains unresolved under the available evidence and premises.

16.8 Supervisory Work, Resources, and the Distribution of Burdens

Supervision requires time, competent personnel, information resources, accessible interfaces, and channels for corrective action. Its costs may be obscured when an organization's published service commitments describe only the visible contact between volunteer and recipient. If administrative work is transferred informally to experienced volunteers, those persons may become de facto coordinators without the resources, authority, or safeguards appropriate to their responsibilities. A well-designed delegation architecture therefore requires examination of the conditions under which supervision is possible as well as the standards by which its performance is assessed.

Table 16: Hypothetical delegation and supervision histories, with competing ethical appraisals

History	Organizational mechanism	Rival interpretation	Critical evidence and grounds
Data sharing during referral	Coordinator directs a volunteer to upload a recipient's narrative to a shared system	A bounded referral authorization exists; or sharing exceeds recipient consent and delegated scope	Consent and task records, access privileges, purpose limitation, foreseeable risk, available alternatives
Absent escalation supervisor	Volunteer reports a time-sensitive concern; assigned supervisor cannot be reached	Unexpected outage; or a repeated, known gap in staffed escalation coverage	Time logs, contingency rules, accepted tasks, staffing control, alternative competent resources
Unsafe shift and contested exit	A volunteer seeks to leave a role after accumulating unsupervised assignments	Failure of an accepted duty; or justified boundary against expanding institutional demands	Undertakings, reliance, current capacity, advance notice, replacement authority, retaliation protection

The volunteer well-being analysis of Section 15 provides evidence-sensitive categories for accumulated demands and self-regarding interests. A supervisory structure may reduce preventable error while increasing paperwork, surveillance, and exposure to emotionally demanding reports. Conversely, weak oversight may preserve superficial flexibility at the cost of making volunteers personally responsible for every unplanned event. The normative question concerns reasonable allocations of work and risk among organizational positions, not the maximization of oversight as an unconditional good. Institutional resource limitations are relevant empirical conditions, but they do not independently settle whose burdens are permissible.

The institutional history matters here. A one-off supervision failure can reflect unexpected absence; repeated gaps can follow from durable staffing choices, ignored warnings, or policies that reward service volume while omitting administrative support. Historical evidence may justify a stronger prospective duty for those who set the organizational budget or control training than for a volunteer with no capacity to change either. The social-connection approach to structural responsibility developed by Young provides one separate philosophical comparator for prospective responsibility [66]; its particular account should be assessed on its own grounds rather than presented as a theorem of the GR model.

16.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Delegated Assistance

Three deliberately constructed histories test different sources of institutional authority and potential errors in responsibility attribution. They describe no actual hospital, humanitarian body, or volunteer programme. Table 16 lists contrasting reconstructions and requirements for evaluation. The cases can be recorded using Equation 16, with explicit room for absent evidence and disputed normative premises.

Disclosure required by a coordinator. A volunteer helping with a referral is told to paste the recipient's full private narrative into an online system. The recipient previously authorized a brief referral to one named service, but neither the volunteer nor coordinator has established who can access the platform. One interpretation treats the upload as ordinary completion of a delegated task; another regards it as a scope-expanding disclosure requiring renewed authorization or another justified basis. A defensible audit examines the exact instruction, the legitimate purpose of transfer, potential limits on access, and what less revealing alternatives are feasible. An administrator's technical ability to grant access is an institutional fact; its moral and legal sufficiency are separate questions. The volunteer's limited power to change the platform also matters to the attribution of prospective remedial responsibility.

A supervision gap in a time-sensitive referral. A volunteer observes circumstances suggesting the need for prompt specialist assessment. The assigned supervisor does not respond. Earlier training required escalation through one phone number, but staffing records suggest that the phone is routinely unattended during the relevant hours. The volunteer is uncertain whether to continue waiting, seek another authorized channel, or notify the recipient that the referral remains incomplete. Several factual and normative issues remain open: whether the concern was correctly understood, which alternatives were available at the time, how the organization represented supervisory coverage, and what the volunteer had accepted responsibility to do. A later adverse outcome can motivate inquiry without proving that the volunteer had a feasible path to prevent it. Institutional knowledge of the recurring gap may support an independent argument for structural repair.

Exit after unsupervised role expansion. A volunteer initially accepts two short accompaniment shifts monthly. Over several months, the coordinator adds translation, private case documentation, and emergency contact responsibilities, presenting them as minor extensions of the original role. When the volunteer asks to cease the added work, the organization cites continuity promises made to recipients. The critical distinction concerns whose promises they were, what the volunteer actually accepted, what recipients reasonably relied upon, and who could arrange a replacement. A proportionate handoff may be ethically relevant when feasible, while compelled indefinite service or retaliatory exclusion demands independent justification. The practical burdens identified here connect supervisory authority, role-generated reliance, and the volunteer's self-regarding reasons.

Across the three histories, organizational description and personal narrative can conflict. A procedure recorded as "completed" may refer only to the sending of information; a coordinator recorded as "available" may be practically inaccessible; and a volunteer recorded as "noncompliant" may have identified an unauthorized task. An audit that preserves the sources and limits of each description can make the disagreement visible. Its purpose is to enable evaluation and correction, including contestation by recipients whose positions were omitted from the initial records.

16.10 Three-Level Interpretation, Verification, and Open Normative Questions

The three-level GR distinction supplies a disciplined account of what the institutional analysis claims. At the *ontological* level, the ultimate status of an organization as a subject, the metaphysical grounds of obligation, and the nature of practical authority remain suspended. At the *relational* level, organizational roles, delegation chains, supervision systems, resource dependencies, and historical commitments can be modeled as durable and causally consequential relational organizations. At the *manifestation* level, task assignments, access logs, reported experiences, policy documents, supervisory communications, and recipient objections provide partial and revisable modes of access. The relation between these levels is mediated by interpretation and evidence; neither observed obedience nor a completed workflow automatically establishes rightful authority.

Verification would require specific organizational rules with version histories, applicable laws and professional standards where relevant, records of task acceptance, confidentially obtained participant accounts, actual supervisory capacities, and access to competing causal explanations. A defensible study would also ask whose position was omitted before a record could be made. Institutional information may be sensitive; collection and publication require careful purpose limitation, authorized access, and protection against identifiable harm. The current manuscript draws no institutional finding from its illustrative cases. Its normative propositions remain contingent on explicit grounds, feasible alternatives, and reasonable opportunities for disagreement and correction.

The proposed analysis identifies a productive tension: institutions may increase safe assistance by organizing supervision and shared action, while the same mechanisms can concentrate interpretive power and expose volunteers and recipients to unjustified directions. Delegation and supervision therefore have ethically significant generative and constraining effects that vary with their design and history. The appropriate scope of obedience, dissent, protection, and remedial responsibility is a further normative

question in each context. The institutional audit offers a structured vocabulary for pursuing it, providing continuity with the recipient-agency inquiry of the next section while retaining the independent authority of participants' testimony, consent, and claims.

17 The Recipient's Agency and the Ethics of Co-Produced Support

Volunteer assistance takes shape through interactions in which a person described institutionally as a *recipient* may interpret a need, disclose or withhold information, negotiate a plan, supply practical knowledge, perform part of an activity, refuse an offer, and alter the subsequent conduct of a volunteer or organization. Such capacities and actions require ethical attention because the means and meaning of assistance may be partly constituted through the recipient's participation. The present section develops a preliminary account of recipient agency and co-produced support within Generative Relational (GR) theory. It distinguishes contribution to a service from authority over its design, examines circumstances in which participation is constrained or burdensome, and proposes a provenance-sensitive representation of voice, influence, contribution, and revision. The analysis combines conceptual reconstruction, comparisons with public-service coproduction scholarship, and three hypothetical aid histories. It preserves the separate questions of what occurred, which participants could influence decisions, and what normative conclusions are justified.

17.1 Recipient Positions and Situated Practical Agency

The expression *recipient* designates a role relative to a particular assistance relation. It does not establish passivity, incapacity, or a permanent social identity. A person receiving help may simultaneously be an organizer of household care, a translator for a family member, a source of procedural information, an advocate for other service users, and a participant whose refusal changes the assistance process. These activities belong to distinct contexts and histories. A relational analysis must identify the relevant acting position and its opportunities, constraints, and effects rather than infer a global degree of agency from the fact of receiving aid.

A useful starting point is to separate *practical contribution*, *expressive participation*, and *decisional influence*. Practical contribution includes supplying local information, undertaking a feasible part of an activity, and helping to adapt arrangements. Expressive participation comprises testimony, interpretation, preference, disagreement, and silence when silence is meaningfully contextualized. Decisional influence concerns whether such participation can change available options, priorities, resources, consent conditions, and actual decisions. An individual may contribute extensive labor while having little say over the service's rules. Conversely, a person may exercise substantial decisional authority by declining an intervention, even when illness, language barriers, or resource limits prevent extensive practical contribution. These forms of agency can coexist and evolve unevenly.

Relational agency also has a temporal aspect. A newly arrived person may initially rely on a volunteer to explain unfamiliar arrangements. Repeated communication can increase confidence and clarify available options; a restrictive institutional routine may instead make reliance more entrenched. The same observed acceptance can therefore occur under different histories of knowledge, trust, scarcity, and fear of losing access. The ethical task is to reconstruct the choice situation carefully. Apparent agreement, procedural compliance, and measured satisfaction offer partial evidence, while records of accessible alternatives, prior refusals, and subsequent changes can help distinguish competing explanations.

17.2 Coproduction as an Analytical Comparison

The public-administration literature supplies established accounts of *coproduction*, although its objects and evaluative questions vary. Ostrom examines the transformation of contributions originating across organizational boundaries into goods and services, illustrating the dependence of such arrangements on public institutions and citizen participation in particular development settings [47]. Bovaird develops

an account of user and community coproduction in public services that extends beyond consultative engagement and raises governance problems in multistakeholder systems [6]. These accounts describe institutional production relations with analytical purposes distinct from the ethical appraisal of an individual volunteer's conduct.

For the present inquiry, *co-produced support* refers provisionally to an assistance trajectory in which contributions from an affected recipient position and at least one supporting position condition how a task, response, or practical arrangement is formed and modified. Contributions may include information, interpretive judgments, enacted choices, practical effort, relational coordination, and corrections to a shared plan. This working definition describes a relational organization. It neither stipulates that its contributors exercise equal authority nor awards positive moral value simply because the arrangement is jointly constituted. The descriptive question of joint production and the normative question of justified participation should be assessed separately.

This separation matters because an organization may use the language of coproduction to celebrate recipients' effort while imposing additional tasks on those already facing material or communicative disadvantages. Bovaird and Loeffler explicitly note that user and community coproduction is resource-dependent and that citizens are willing to contribute within limited domains meaningful to them [7]. Their public-service analysis supplies a useful warning against treating recipient contributions as freely available inputs. The proposed GR extension examines how those demands are historically allocated, represented, recognized, and contested within a particular aid relation. It leaves open whether a given task is an appropriate request, an optional opportunity, a necessary accommodation, or an unjustified transfer of institutional work.

A further conceptual boundary concerns reciprocal benefit. A recipient who helps adapt a referral may enable a volunteer to respond more accurately; both positions can thereby develop new capabilities. Shared benefit is possible, but neither mutual learning nor observable productivity is sufficient for justified consent, fair burden distribution, or legitimate institutional design. A recipient's contribution may be necessary because an institution has provided inadequate translation or logistical support. In that history, the effectiveness of coproduction could conceal an avoidable structural failure. A complete ethical analysis must retain the counterfactual possibility that the institution could have supplied the relevant resource itself.

The empirical comparison has a narrower domain than co-production in general. Chauhan's investigation concerns formally employed peer-support workers in the English National Health Service and distinguishes neutralized, enhanced, and tokenistic forms of co-production through the interaction of voice, experience, identity, and organizational power. Its findings concern salaried service-user positions in that institutional setting; they cannot establish the incidence of tokenism among unpaid recipients in voluntary programmes. They nevertheless supply a disciplined challenge to the proposed ethical interpretation: formal inclusion and even remuneration leave open whether the affected person can change decisions, question professional categories, and contest how experiential knowledge is used [10].

17.3 Voice, Influence, and the Distribution of Decision Power

The existence of an invitation to participate gives incomplete evidence about the influence participants can exercise. A consultation may collect preferences after significant choices have already been fixed. A feedback form can solicit testimony while giving its authors no power to revise eligibility criteria or schedules. Conversely, a person may possess a limited but decisive opportunity to refuse one intervention while lacking influence over the organization of the wider service. Identifying the scope of influence is therefore more informative than recording participation as a binary event.

Arnstein's historically situated ladder of citizen participation foregrounds distinctions between nominal involvement and participation associated with actual decision power [3]. The ladder addresses urban planning and public programmes, and its categories cannot be transferred mechanically into interpersonal aid. Its enduring analytical challenge is relevant here: institutions can use the language of participation while retaining control over what is discussable, whose knowledge is credible, and which decisions are

revisable. The present analysis uses that challenge as a comparator, with decision power examined by task, stage, and affected position rather than assigned a universal participation rank.

A practical examination should reconstruct who could propose an option, who could reject it, who controlled the information on which it was evaluated, who could revise the decision, and who would bear the consequences of an error. These powers may be divided among a recipient, a volunteer, a coordinator, a specialist service, and a household member. Their distribution may also change: a recipient can request a modified arrangement, obtain a new communication aid, or contest a translation, while an institution can remove an earlier choice through scheduling or administrative reclassification. An account of *meaningful influence* thus needs the history of an actual decision channel, the recipient's accessible alternatives, and the outcome of attempted objections.

Participation can be meaningful without requiring every practical decision to be made jointly. Some urgent, specialized, or legally constrained tasks require different kinds of authority, and a person may choose to delegate a narrow decision. The relevant ethical question concerns the reasons and safeguards by which that arrangement is established. A well-supported choice to delegate preserves a form of agency; a compelled signature that obscures the possibility of refusal may undermine it. The paper's earlier distinctions between consent scope, competence, supervision, and legitimate authority remain necessary when reconstructing each case (Sections 16 and 10).

17.4 Capability Constraints, Access Conditions, and Representation

Practical agency depends on relational conditions. Language access, time, transportation, childcare, digital infrastructure, privacy, physical accessibility, financial resources, and the availability of supportive communication can determine whether a nominal invitation can be exercised. A person who cannot open an online portal may possess a clear preference and sound understanding while being excluded from the only channel through which the preference can affect a decision. The ethically salient deficit may lie in an institutional interface rather than in the person's capacity to form judgments.

Evidence from public-service coproduction suggests that resource and knowledge constraints can shape participation and its distributional consequences. Jakobsen and Andersen study how a particular educational intervention aimed at reducing knowledge-related constraints affected disadvantaged participants, in a field-experimental setting [29]. This finding warrants a limited inference about the importance of enabling resources; it does not establish that every aid programme should adopt a common participatory technique or that all contributions produce beneficial results. For volunteer relations, a case-specific assessment should ask which supports are available, who controls them, and whether nonparticipation would change access to a needed service.

Representation introduces additional relational positions. A family member, interpreter, appointed representative, or volunteer may communicate with an institution on a recipient's behalf. Their assistance can enable access, but the representation has a purpose, evidential provenance, and possible scope of authorization. An interpreter can clarify what a person said without acquiring authority to substitute the interpreter's preferred decision. A household member may offer indispensable contextual information while disagreeing with the recipient. A volunteer can responsibly convey a request and still remain uncertain about its normative implications. Such differences require careful treatment of whose account is being reported, whose judgment is being inferred, and who is authorized to make the relevant choice.

The analysis must also recognize the limits of its own focus on articulated voice. Very young children, subjects with severe communication barriers, and people temporarily unable to express preferences may have important interests even when no communicative response can be obtained. Accessible assistance, careful observation, and appropriate representative procedures can enlarge epistemic access without resolving every dispute about standing or substitute decisions. The present human-focused paper leaves the broader cross-species and artificial-subject questions to the later heterogeneous-subject programme. Within its current scope, absence of testimony should remain an evidential condition, not a declaration that the affected person lacks agency or morally relevant interests.

17.5 Participation Burdens and the Possibility of Coercive Coproduction

An invitation to co-produce assistance may carry a significant burden. A service user could be required to narrate distress repeatedly, translate for other recipients, maintain electronic case records, travel to consultation meetings, or instruct each successive volunteer about a disability accommodation. Such work may be meaningful and willingly undertaken in one arrangement, exhausting or coercive in another. The burden includes time and effort as well as emotional exposure, risks of disclosure, and the opportunity cost of activities abandoned to keep assistance available.

The ethical concern intensifies when a person’s access to an essential service depends upon participation that is publicly described as voluntary. In such a setting, refusal may remain formally available while the feasible alternatives are prohibitively costly. The institution may also attach symbolic value to recipient resilience and gratitude, producing pressure to display cooperation or to conceal criticism. Participation counts can then increase even as the affected position’s practical freedom or influence diminishes. These mechanisms need historical evidence of options, communications, and consequences rather than an inference from the organization’s stated intentions.

Research on employed service-user roles further illustrates the diversity of power relations within coproduction. Chauhan studies how the formal employment of service users can mediate rather than automatically eliminate power imbalances [10]. Its interview-based findings concern a specific public-sector coproduction context. For the present ethics proposal, the important comparative question is how an institution’s role definitions and control over recognition influence whose contribution has practical effect. The resulting analysis should distinguish the possible empowerment of a participant from uncompensated work imposed through dependence.

The burden of participation must also be examined in relation to volunteers and coordinators. An organization with inadequate staffing may ask recipients to compensate for gaps while expecting unpaid volunteers to supervise the process. A recipient’s additional labor can shift pressures across an entire service relation; a more participatory vocabulary may coexist with diminished organizational responsibility. The allocation of those costs connects the present section to the earlier analysis of volunteer well-being in Section 15 and distributed responsibility in Section 14. Whether particular burdens are permissible remains a substantive ethical and justice question, with consent, fair alternatives, competence, and independent institutional obligations requiring separate assessment.

17.6 A Provenance-Sensitive Audit of Recipient Participation

A limited formal representation can help distinguish recipient action, institutional recognition, and ethical appraisal. Fix a volunteer position A , a recipient position B , a historical stage t , and an evidential resolution κ . The ethical situation $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$, introduced in Equation 2, supplies available options and relevant histories as seen from the volunteer’s situated evidential position. For a particular joint activity, the following *participation-and-influence audit* retains additional evidence about the recipient’s position and its relation to the assistance trajectory. The registers in Equation 17 are typed collections of proposed observations, reports, and normative claims rather than objectively complete sets.

$$\mathfrak{P}_{A,B,t}^\kappa := (\mathcal{V}_{B,t}^{\text{voice}}, \mathcal{O}_{B,t}^{\text{options}}, \mathcal{T}_{A,B,t}^{\text{contrib}}, \mathcal{I}_{B,t}^{\text{influence}}, \mathcal{A}_{B,t}^{\text{authorization}}, \mathcal{B}_{B,t}^{\text{burden}}, \mathcal{R}_{B,t}^{\text{revision}}, \mathcal{G}_{A,B,t}^{\text{grounds}})^\kappa. \quad (17)$$

The voice register $\mathcal{V}^{\text{voice}}$ associates a manifestation or reported preference with its speaker, channel, interpreter, time, and uncertainty. The options register $\mathcal{O}^{\text{options}}$ stores perceived alternatives, accessibility conditions, and feasible exits. The contribution register $\mathcal{T}^{\text{contrib}}$ identifies reported informational, practical, organizational, and interpretive contributions by each position, preserving the possibility of omissions. The influence register $\mathcal{I}^{\text{influence}}$ connects a participant’s contribution or refusal with an alleged change in plans, rules, available options, or action, together with rival causal accounts. The authorization register $\mathcal{A}^{\text{authorization}}$ records the scope and temporal status of relevant permissions and objections. The burden register $\mathcal{B}^{\text{burden}}$ preserves time, work, disclosure, exposure, and reported losses, including who chose or imposed the burden. The revision register $\mathcal{R}^{\text{revision}}$ records responses to correction, resistance,

changes of preference, delegation, and exit. Finally, $\mathcal{G}^{\text{grounds}}$ contains candidate normative premises used to evaluate the participation arrangement.

Each entry requires provenance and should support contestation by the position it purports to describe wherever such contestation is feasible. An entry marked “participated” can refer to attendance, an expressed preference, an act of work, or an actual change to a decision; the register preserves these distinctions. Similarly, the influence component contains evidential hypotheses rather than presuming an intervention’s recorded success was caused by the recipient’s participation. Counterfactual inquiry can examine whether the institutional decision would likely have differed without the recipient’s expressed view, whether other actors supplied similar information, and whether a prior rule restricted the range of acceptable outcomes.

Equation 17 deliberately leaves normative status outside its descriptive components. A well-documented contribution does not generate a moral duty to contribute; an influential choice need not be informed or free; and an excellent clinical or administrative result does not by itself justify the participatory process. Normative assessment requires explicit reasons, including appropriate protections against coercion, fair burdens, decision competence, consent conditions, and standing to disagree. The conditional-warrant record of Equation 1 identifies the separate point at which such premises enter. Incomplete information can therefore yield an unresolved judgment even when the occurrence of contribution is well documented.

17.7 Negotiation, Refusal, and the Ethics of Shared Adjustment

Co-produced support often develops through successive adjustments rather than a single act of agreement. A recipient requests a shorter accompaniment; a volunteer explains an access constraint; both identify a different meeting point; the coordinator adjusts a time slot; a new need or competing obligation leads to further revision. Such trajectories may involve reciprocal learning, yet their ethical appraisal depends on which choices were actually available, who could refuse, and whether participants understood the practical effects of changing the arrangement. The temporal structure matters because an earlier authorization can be narrower than a later activity.

A recipient’s disagreement can perform several functions. It may supply new evidence about personal circumstances, dispute the volunteer’s interpretation of a need, challenge an institutional classification, withdraw authorization for a task, or identify an unrecognized risk. These forms of disagreement create different practical reasons for the supporter. A refusal of one intervention can leave open a request for information, companionship, or an alternative referral. It may also end the authorized basis for a particular action while leaving independent moral concerns about imminent risks or third-party interests to be assessed separately. The consent and disagreement frameworks of Sections 10 and 11 supply the relevant boundaries.

Negotiation does not entail reciprocal responsibility for every resulting outcome. The participant who supplies information can be mistaken; the volunteer may be unable to execute a requested task; the institution may control resources or rules unavailable to either. Claims about joint responsibility should therefore remain differentiated by actual control, commitments, competence, and normative grounds. In particular, a recipient’s agreement to help design a plan should not be converted into blame for institutional failure to supply promised resources. Nor does the distribution of intellectual or practical contributions itself resolve who may disclose private information or make a specialist decision.

The possibility of *delegated choice* adds another nuance. A recipient may prefer an assistant to choose among two accessible arrangements because the choice is burdensome or technically complex. When the delegation is meaningful, bounded, and revisable, it can express agency through an authorized redistribution of tasks. An assessment that equates agency with the volume of direct participation would misclassify this case. Conversely, an organization may claim that a decision was delegated when the recipient had insufficient information or no credible opportunity to refuse. Records of scope, uptake, alternatives, and subsequent contestation help distinguish these histories while preserving their uncertainties.

17.8 Historical Co-Formation and Relational Dependence

An assistance relationship may transform the practical capacities and understandings of both recipient and supporter. The recipient learns an institution's procedures; the volunteer discovers a previously neglected barrier; a coordinator changes the intake workflow; repeated successes or disappointments alter subsequent expectations. In the vocabulary of earlier GR work, these transformations can be reconstructed as changes within history-bearing relational positions. Whether they reach the stronger threshold of subject co-formation examined in Paper III requires additional evidence about durable changes in constitutive organization. Ordinary learning or a modified plan is insufficient by itself to establish that stronger conclusion.

Historical development can also deepen dependency. A recipient may rely increasingly on one volunteer because the service is predictable, while the organization neglects alternative provision. The recipient's participation in the relationship could be extensive, yet their ability to withdraw, contest, or negotiate may diminish as reliance grows. A different history might show increasing control over service design and greater independence. The same immediate manifestation of frequent communication can thus accompany different long-run relational trajectories. Distinguishing them requires information about alternative supports, the organization of dependence, and the actual effects of attempted revisions.

A preliminary ethical evaluation should therefore consider whether a participatory arrangement preserves opportunities for future choice, including the capacities to challenge, exit, or re-enter the service. This is a proposed consideration, whose moral weight depends on independently argued values of agency, fair access, reliability, and protection. It cannot be deduced solely from a formal description of relational generativity. A relationship can become more tightly coordinated while making one person's life less manageable. Effective service delivery and the continued possibility of self-direction deserve independent attention.

The issue also concerns power over the history by which participation is remembered. An institution can credit a jointly designed process entirely to its staff, omit the recipient's corrections, or interpret resistance as a lack of cooperation. A recipient may likewise be represented through a single event that obscures earlier contributions or later changes of view. Preserving multiple versions of a plan, their provenance, and opportunities for correction helps prevent historical erasure. Whether a particular act of recognition constitutes justice, compensation, or a moral duty belongs to further normative argument and the independent justice framework of Paper VI.

17.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Co-Produced Support

Three hypothetical histories examine distinct configurations of recipient participation, authority, and burden. They are constructed for analytic testing and do not describe observed practice at a hospital, humanitarian organization, or other named institution. Table 17 summarizes the competing interpretations and the evidence needed to distinguish them. Each can be traced with Equation 17 without treating the formal register as a moral verdict.

Multilingual intake redesign. A recipient reports that an intake form's translated category wrongly describes the assistance sought. A volunteer helps convey the correction, while an administrator invites the recipient to review several revised questions. The next form version adopts one suggestion but leaves the main eligibility rule unchanged. A celebratory report labels the programme co-produced. The historical account needs to distinguish the recipient's substantive interpretive contribution from their decision power over the rule that shaped access. It should also ask whether a properly resourced translation service should have detected the error without placing review work on the applicant. Subsequent complaint records may reveal that the correction improved access for others, or that a less visible group remained excluded. The success of one revision therefore supports a bounded descriptive claim while leaving broader ethical conclusions open.

Table 17: Constructed recipient-participation histories and their competing ethical interpretations

History	Apparent contribution	Competing interpretation	Critical evidence and normative questions
Multilingual intake redesign	Recipient corrects translation and proposes a more accessible form	Meaningful influence on service design; or one-off unpaid repair of a persistent access barrier	Version history, uptake of corrections, alternative translation support, recipient burden, control over final rules
Participation linked to eligibility	Recipient joins advisory meetings and supplies detailed case records	Voluntary co-design; or pressure to contribute labor to retain access	Notice of conditions, feasible refusal, eligibility decisions, accommodation, time and disclosure burdens
Supported choice in accompaniment	Recipient delegates scheduling while retaining a right to revise	Agency expressed through bounded delegation; or deference under dependency and inaccessible options	Authorized scope, communication support, changes of preference, access to alternatives, handoff and review

Eligibility-linked advisory participation. A recipient receiving ongoing assistance is encouraged to join a monthly advisory group, provide detailed personal narratives, and help train incoming volunteers. Staff describe the group as optional, but the recipient believes refusal will weaken future eligibility and notices that frequent contributors receive quicker appointments. One reading emphasizes the value of lived knowledge and reciprocal learning; another identifies a dependence-conditioned transfer of administrative labor. Relevant evidence includes communications about participation, actual allocation procedures, accessibility and compensation, perceived consequences of refusal, confidentiality arrangements, and how advisory recommendations influence decisions. Even if participation improves service performance, the ethical assessment must separately evaluate the choice conditions and burden distribution.

Supported choice and bounded delegation. A person who finds telephone scheduling inaccessible asks a trusted volunteer to select an appointment from two previously discussed time windows. The volunteer chooses one, confirms it, and later hears that the person's availability has changed. The initial delegation could be a meaningful exercise of agency that reduced administrative burden. It could also have been misunderstood as unrestricted authority if the volunteer subsequently makes unrelated changes without renewed discussion. The evidential and normative analysis must trace the delegation's scope, the accessible means of correction, the competence of the volunteer, and the institution's responsibility to supply suitable communication channels. The person's ability to make the scheduling choice directly is only one dimension of agency; the option to delegate and later revise also matters.

The cases deliberately resist a common shortcut: identifying the preferred outcome and working backward to declare the process participatory. An assessment must account for the participants who could not enter the process, the ways institutional recognition filtered their positions, and the alternatives that remained unavailable. Evidence of useful recipient contributions, organizational success, or joint learning is compatible with both ethically defensible and ethically problematic histories. The proposed model gains analytical value by keeping these interpretations contestable.

17.10 Three-Level Interpretation, Verification, and Normative Limits

The three GR levels delimit the present proposal's claims about recipient agency. At the *ontological* level, the ultimate constitution of agency, the metaphysical status of subjects, and the foundations of moral standing remain suspended. At the *relational* level, history-bearing recipient and supporter positions,

capacities to influence action, participation rules, dependencies, and institutional distributions of work can be modeled as consequential arrangements. At the *manifestation* level, utterances, consent records, decisions, refusals, translated messages, complaint histories, and accessible or inaccessible interfaces make selected aspects of those arrangements available for interpretation. The observed manifestation is partial, and rival explanations may fit the same report. Epistemic reconstruction is a method of inquiry across these levels, without constituting an additional level of reality.

Empirical verification would require careful observation of actual opportunities for involvement, records of how proposed changes were handled, protected and accessible testimony from affected subjects, and evidence concerning alternatives and burden allocation. Studies should seek discrepant cases where apparent participation did not influence decisions or where influence occurred with little observable activity. They should examine participants who never reached the programme's register, and avoid interpreting a silence induced by fear, fatigue, or inaccessibility as consent. The mere availability of an audit framework does not justify collecting identifiable personal narratives; specific research permissions, proportional data practices, and protections against retaliation would be needed.

Normative appraisal remains separately justified and revisable. It should identify the moral reasons for respecting the recipient's agency, the scope of legitimate delegation, the conditions of acceptable participation requests, institutional obligations to provide access, and the appropriate distribution of consequential burdens. Empirical evidence about participation can constrain these arguments but cannot determine their moral authority by itself. Conversely, endorsing a principle of recipient agency provides no license to assume the recipient is willing, capable, or obliged to undertake unpaid production tasks in every assistance context.

The section's principal contribution is a conditional account of *recipient agency within the historical formation of support*. It distinguishes being heard, contributing, exercising influence, authorizing a bounded decision, and bearing participation costs, while treating co-production as a relation that can enable or constrain these capacities. It therefore supplies a bridge between the ethical treatment of consent, distributed responsibility, and institutional authority and the following inquiry into competing practical reasons and the allocation of burdens. The adequacy of that bridge depends on verified evidence, explicit normative grounds, and continued openness to relationships that resist the proposed categories.

18 Competing Moral Reasons, Burden Allocation, and Defeasible Judgments

Volunteer interventions may have several defensible moral grounds without yielding a uniquely justified choice. A volunteer can have reason to protect confidential information, respond to a potentially urgent need, honor a prior assurance, preserve a recipient's agency, and protect finite personal capacities. These reasons can concern different persons, temporal horizons, or components of an intervention. Their simultaneous presence raises questions about practical conflict, the allocation of consequential burdens, and the conditions under which a judgment may remain defensible yet revisable. This section develops a preliminary, agent-sensitive account of such judgments in Generative Relational (GR) ethics. It first separates kinds of conflict and possible defeats of reasons, then examines heterogeneous burdens and a bounded formal assessment record, and finally tests the account through three constructed histories. The method combines analytical ethics, conditional formal reconstruction, and historical comparison. The section's aim is to establish transparent conditions for practical deliberation while preserving the limits of the evidence and of the proposed normative premises.

18.1 Sources and Types of Conflict in Situated Intervention

An ethical conflict can arise between considerations that are each relevant under an explicitly argued norm. A recipient's expressed preference can favor restricted disclosure, while evidence of a substantial risk to another person may favor a narrowly authorized communication. An accepted accompaniment commitment can support a volunteer's attendance, while worsening capacity can supply reason to arrange

a substitute. In each instance the analysis must identify the subject of the consideration, the object of the proposed action, the applicable conditions, and the warrant for treating the consideration as morally significant. Conflict among descriptions of a situation, competing predictions about outcomes, and disagreement over governing norms are different analytical objects.

Three forms of conflict are especially important. *Option conflict* occurs when two proposed courses of conduct cannot both be performed under the relevant time, resource, or institutional conditions. *Reason conflict* occurs when qualified considerations favor incompatible conduct or favor and oppose a single option. *Normative disagreement* concerns the justificatory standing of a proposed ground, including disputes about the weight of autonomy, prevention of harm, promise-keeping, or the acceptability of personal sacrifice. Each form can occur without the others. Two agents may agree that only one interpreter is available but disagree about who should receive the appointment; alternatively, they may share the same options and evidence while applying different moral premises.

A fourth source of apparent conflict lies in option individuation. A request described as “sharing case details” can contain an authorized referral, a disclosure of irrelevant personal history, and the preservation of identifying information in an unsuitable repository. Treating these acts as one indivisible option obscures possibilities for partial compliance or safer alternatives. The ethical-situation record in Equation 2 and the reason register in Equation 4 support a more exact reconstruction. Before ranking actions, an analyst should ask whether the named options are specific enough for reasons to attach to the relevant components. Feasibility must remain evidence-relative, as Equation 3 already stipulates.

The philosophical literature is divided on whether some conflicts constitute genuine moral dilemmas whose requirements remain incompatible even under adequate information. McConnell surveys both attempts to resolve such conflicts and accounts that preserve moral residue or conflicting requirements [38]. The present proposal does not decide that metaethical dispute. It distinguishes a documented clash of candidate reasons from the stronger assertion that two undefeated, all-things-considered duties remain jointly impossible. Calling a case a dilemma should therefore be an argued conclusion, with the scope of the moral theory and feasible options stated, rather than a rhetorical description of difficulty.

18.2 Moral Grounds, Evidential Defeat, and Normative Reconsideration

The existence of a candidate reason in $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ does not determine its continued force. New information may undermine its factual support; an alternative interpretation may challenge its application; a further reason may oppose the same option; and a newly available course of conduct may satisfy more of the relevant concerns. These revisions differ. An *evidential rebuttal* challenges a claim about the facts, such as whether a recipient actually authorized disclosure. An *undercutting challenge* concerns a proposed inferential connection, such as whether a coordinator’s request supplies an adequate moral reason for sending sensitive data. An *opposing reason* may leave the original consideration intact while supporting a conflicting option. A *scope correction* changes the action or affected population to which a consideration applies.

Horty’s account of reasons as defaults provides an established formal investigation of how reasons interact, including undercutting defeaters and alternative deontic logics for moral conflict [24]. His approach supplies a comparison for the present inquiry. GR’s historical registers are proposed instruments for tracking the provenance, context and revisions of reasons; they do not inherit Horty’s logical semantics by analogy, and the terminology of defeat does not entail that every context possesses a complete priority ranking. A precise claim of defeat must disclose the defeating consideration, the operation by which it changes the conclusion, and the scope of that operation.

Consider a volunteer who believes that forwarding a full intake form is necessary for rapid referral. A supervisor may show that a recipient’s name and contact preference suffice, under an appropriate referral procedure. The reason to facilitate access can remain valid while the earlier proposed means loses its alleged necessity. Conversely, discovery of an overlooked dependent may introduce a reason affecting a previously acceptable plan. In the first case the principal revision concerns means and evidence. In the second it concerns the coverage of affected subjects. Neither event shows that the moral force of

assistance has been measured or eliminated.

This analysis also distinguishes *defeasible justification* from epistemic indecision. A qualified judgment may presently have adequate grounds, while remaining open to specified defeating evidence or objections. Another judgment may lack a sufficient basis even for provisional endorsement. Treating both as merely “uncertain” erases the relevant difference. The record of possible defeaters should state what would challenge the judgment and whether the challenge is currently supported, prospective, or purely hypothetical. Such distinctions are essential when delays are costly and action cannot be postponed indefinitely.

18.3 Burden Incidence across Recipients, Volunteers, and Institutions

The moral appraisal of an option must consider who is expected to perform work, who bears exposure or delay, who has control over alternatives, and who receives its benefits. A volunteer’s effort, a recipient’s privacy risk, a coordinator’s administrative burden, and an institution’s staffing cost arise in different relational positions. Their ethical salience cannot be inferred from their common appearance as “costs.” Some are voluntarily accepted expenditures; others are imposed under constrained choice, or arise because an organization withholds infrastructure. A burden can also change over time: a single emergency accommodation may become a recurring expectation that systematically displaces institutional responsibility.

At least four types of burden warrant separate treatment. *Performance burdens* concern time, concentration, labor, and skill requirements. *Exposure burdens* include informational, physical, social, reputational, and other risks. *Dependency burdens* concern lost alternatives and the effects of relying on a service controlled by another. *Voice and contestation burdens* arise when affected people must repeatedly explain, translate, document, or defend their claims to remain eligible for attention. Each may be unequally distributed, even in a relation that provides genuine assistance. Section 15 analyzes cumulative burdens on volunteers; Section 17 explains how purportedly participatory arrangements can transfer unpaid work to recipients.

Burden incidence differs from moral liability. An agent may bear a significant cost without having caused the situation; an organization may acquire a prospective duty to supply a resource even if no individual employee intentionally produced the relevant failure. Historical records of control, available alternatives, contractual assignments, and reasonable reliance are pertinent to responsibility attribution. Section 14 provides the corresponding distinction between causal contribution, accepted role responsibility, accountability and repair. A proposed transfer of burden requires separate justification; its efficiency, convenience or historical normality does not settle the moral question.

A numerical summation of recorded burdens would be methodologically fragile. One entry may concern an administrative hour, another an irreversible breach of confidentiality, and another the loss of a recipient’s opportunity to decline participation. Quantification can be appropriate for questions with defensible metrics, such as staffing hours or documented waiting periods. It cannot silently convert diverse claims into a universal utility unit. The framework therefore treats burden descriptions as typed, contested, and time-indexed evidence. Where normative comparisons are justified, their premises must explain the admissible scope and relative significance of the compared burdens.

18.4 A Bounded Audit of Competing Reasons and Candidate Judgments

The preceding distinctions motivate a local formal device for reconstructing practical deliberation. Fix the agent A , time t , evidential resolution κ , and expressly declared normative premise bundle B , as in Sections 4 and 5. Let $\Omega_{A,t}^{\text{cand}} \subseteq \Omega_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ be the currently represented options; membership does not certify feasibility. Retain $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ as the candidate-reason register. Let $\mathcal{L}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ record typed burden incidences, identifying persons or positions, burden type, temporal extent, evidence and relevant contestation. Let $\mathcal{X}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ record potential defeaters and corrections to reason claims; $\mathcal{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{judg}}$ record stated candidate judgments

with supporting and opposing arguments; and $\mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{gap}}$ record coverage gaps, including potentially affected positions excluded from available registers. The proposed *conflict-and-burden audit* is defined in Equation 18.

$$\mathfrak{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} := (\Omega_{A,t}^{\text{cand}}, \mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{L}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{X}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{judg}}, \mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{gap}}). \quad (18)$$

Each component has a distinct inferential role. Ω^{cand} identifies the represented practical menu; $\mathcal{R}$ identifies candidate moral grounds; $\mathcal{L}$ identifies who would bear which kind of burden under which hypothesis; $\mathcal{X}$ makes counterarguments and defects in inference inspectable; $\mathcal{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{judg}}$ preserves proposed judgments and their conditions; and $\mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{gap}}$ makes incompleteness explicit. The components may contain allegations as well as well-supported findings, provided that their evidential status and provenance are specified. Equation 18 is a structured audit, not a logical calculus producing obligations from raw observations.

A candidate judgment record in $\mathcal{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,\text{judg}}$ should disclose at least its option or option pair, the claim being advanced, premises, source evidence, relevant affected positions, and a set of outstanding objections. It should also distinguish four appraisal conditions in prose: *supported relative to specified premises*; *normatively incomparable under an adequately developed assessment*; *undetermined because evidence or premises are insufficient*; and *excluded by a justified constraint*. These labels describe the outcome of a stated deliberative procedure. A claim of incomparability requires reasons to think the considered normative grounds are resistant to a justified comparison; a mere failure to gather evidence warrants the third category. A justified constraint likewise needs an argument and cannot be read directly from legal or institutional classification.

One consistency requirement is especially important. Comparisons across options require a common subject coverage, temporal horizon, premise bundle and option resolution, or an express translation with a documented justification. Comparing option ω_1 with ω_2 while omitting a dependent, then comparing ω_2 with ω_3 after introducing that dependent, produces changing assessment domains. The resulting pairwise claims do not establish a coherent global order. Paper VI’s analysis of claim-sensitive dominance provides a structurally related caution, while the present audit addresses *agent-specific reasons and options*, retaining their independent moral premises. Formal coherence at a fixed specification remains distinct from the legitimacy of that specification. A statement that one option prevails over another also requires either a disclosed decision rule that is valid for the relevant options or an explicit case-specific argument; the audit alone supplies no ordering. In particular, a finite collection of reasons, defeaters, and burdens should not be counted or aggregated into an implicit priority metric.

A finite countermodel limits what can be inferred from the reason register. Let two actions, a (limited authorized referral) and b (a broad disclosure), each have one recorded consideration in favor and one against. If the reasons for a concern timely access and the risks of incomplete information, while those for b concern speed and privacy, a one-to-one count gives no legitimate ordering. Multiplying the privacy objection to b into three database entries changes the count without changing the underlying moral concern. Conversely, combining different recipients’ privacy claims into one aggregate entry can conceal whose burden is imposed. A rule that ranks options by record count would therefore fail under changes in representation that leave the substantive reasons fixed. The present account requires an explicit ground-specific warrant for overriding an objection, a fixed population of relevant subjects, and an identified action horizon. The burden fields record where costs fall; they do not supply interpersonal aggregation weights. The dossier can certify a conditional response or preserve a reasoned conflict, while any choice of substantive moral comparator remains independently contestable.

18.5 Judgment Conditions, Practical Guidance, and Moral Residue

A defeasible judgment may be practically warranted under specified premises even though further information could alter it. For example, when a volunteer has verified a recipient’s requested communication method, is appropriately authorized, and has a competent referral option, a limited referral may be provisionally justified. That endorsement can include explicit conditions against unnecessary disclosure

and in favor of review when the person's preferences change. Evidence that the communication method was mistranslated would defeat one of the stated premises and require renewed assessment. By contrast, if a volunteer knows neither the intended addressee nor the recipient's authorization, the absence of a prohibition record cannot establish that full disclosure is permissible.

Defeasible judgment is also compatible with the continued presence of a serious opposing reason. An ethically defensible decision under an urgent constraint may nonetheless leave an unmet assurance, impose an unwelcome delay, or expose a recipient to a limited risk. Whether those remainder effects require apology, restitution, explanation, or institutional repair is a further normative question. The concept of moral residue is debated in the literature on moral dilemmas [38]. Here the notion is used conservatively: the analyst should record surviving burdens and claims whose normative status remains to be argued, without inferring that every imperfect outcome is a moral violation.

The conditional deontic-status map introduced in Section 5.3 remains useful, but its output *Und* is intentionally broad. Section 18.4 introduces distinctions within the justification record that explain why a certification is absent. A genuine disagreement over undefeated duties, a reasoned finding of incomparability, an unresolved empirical question, and an omitted subject should not be treated as interchangeable. The new distinction does not expand the deontic map to a universally complete logic. It informs the dossier that accompanies its existing partial statuses.

Practical guidance need not await conclusive theoretical settlement in every case. Agents may have defensible procedural reasons to communicate uncertainty, consult a responsible supervisor, preserve reversible alternatives, seek a recipient's interpretation, or document a temporary measure. Such responses require attention to feasibility, urgency, authority, and privacy. They remain substantive choices that can create burdens of their own. An institution should therefore resist presenting "further deliberation" as a costless alternative when delay predictably deprives a person of time-sensitive assistance.

18.6 Temporal Changes, Defeaters, and Revision Responsibility

The salience of moral reasons changes with historical relations even when the underlying moral principles are held fixed. An earlier promise may produce a reliance-dependent reason, a recipient's later refusal may restrict authorization, and a volunteer's altered capacity may change feasible performance. New staff, funding or translation support can introduce options that were unavailable at the earlier stage. At time $t + 1$, a revision of $\mathfrak{C}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ should identify which evidence, subject set, option set, burden hypothesis or normative premise has changed. The history is relevant because later claims may depend on the pathway by which reliance and restricted alternatives arose.

Revision can have several distinct ethical objects. *Epistemic correction* revises an inaccurate record. *Prospective adjustment* changes the conduct expected in light of new information or capacities. *Remedial response* addresses harm or unmet commitments already generated. *Structural change* adjusts the institutional conditions that repeatedly impose the same conflict on vulnerable participants. A record correction does not necessarily undo the consequences of a mistaken referral, and a replacement volunteer does not automatically settle every responsibility arising from an earlier assurance. The acquired-duty discussion in Section 13 and the supervision analysis in Section 16 provide the historical and organizational dimensions of these questions.

A justified revision may also require an account of who is authorized to reopen a decision. A coordinator may update a schedule while lacking authority to revise a person's consent preferences. A recipient may contest the interpretation of a statement without determining an institution's legal record-retention duties. A volunteer may report a capacity limit while remaining subject to specific agreed communication obligations. Deliberative processes should preserve these differences rather than conflate the ability to edit a record with a right to decide the underlying moral issue.

Defeasibility consequently raises a second-order question of *revision responsibility*: who is positioned, competent and legitimately empowered to recognize a relevant change, communicate it, and organize a fair response? An organization that depends on informal moral improvisation may systematically shift that monitoring labor to volunteers and recipients. Documentation may improve accountabil-

ity, but collecting sensitive reports also creates privacy costs. The appropriate revision process depends on substantive moral and institutional premises, not on record completeness alone.

18.7 Responsibility for Burdens under Unequal Power

The distribution of practical burdens depends on who controls resources, recognized categories and decision procedures. The same requested “compromise” can be experienced differently by a well-resourced organization, an unpaid volunteer with limited availability, and a recipient whose access depends on complying with an unfamiliar administrative procedure. A purportedly cooperative decision may permit all parties to express a preference while leaving one party with little influence over the available alternatives. The analysis should therefore reconstruct the conditions under which options were offered, objections could be made, and burdens could be declined.

The ethical relevance of inequality is not exhausted by interpersonal politeness. A volunteer may choose to absorb an additional shift to avoid a recipient’s immediate loss of assistance. The choice can be generous and may be morally appropriate under the circumstances. It can also conceal an organizational design that repeatedly assigns uncompensated work to the most conscientious participants. Likewise, a recipient may translate documents for others out of solidarity, while a programme treats that contribution as proof that paid accessibility support is unnecessary. These are analytically coupled outcomes: local help can alleviate deprivation while reproducing the structure that generates the demand for such help.

Section 17 distinguishes contribution from actual decision influence, and Section 15 distinguishes finite personal capacity from unlimited duties of generosity. In the present framework, an assessment of an individual’s immediate responsibility should be accompanied by an independent inquiry into the institution’s prospective duties, resources and authority. Such a division does not imply that any one institutional remedy is universally owed. It clarifies the respective objects of moral argument: whether the volunteer should perform a particular act, whether an institution should alter a support arrangement, and how the interests of recipients should inform both judgments.

The relationship with Paper VI’s relational-justice framework is important but bounded. Burden allocation can be an ethical consideration for agents and a justice concern regarding structures, eligibility rules and authority. The two analyses may share evidence while asking different normative questions. Their translations require justified bridges between individual reasons and institutional claims. Using the label “unfair” without identifying the relevant standard, affected positions and responsible bearers would prematurely settle the very questions under investigation.

18.8 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Conflicting Reasons

Three constructed histories test how competing moral reasons can generate different burdens and provisional responses. They are hypothetical, report no real participant’s experience, and do not establish a policy for hospitals or volunteer organizations. Table 18 organizes the main conflicts, candidate burdens and evidence capable of challenging a preliminary assessment. Each case should be traced through Equation 18; the table does not supply verdicts.

Urgent translated referral. A volunteer translates a request for assistance. A coordinator urges immediate transmission of a complete intake form to an external service, citing a possible deadline. The recipient has permitted an appointment inquiry but has expressly restricted circulation of unrelated personal information. Candidate reasons favor prompt assistance, respect for the specified authorization, protection of personal information, and adherence to competence and referral boundaries. A narrow inquiry using authorized fields may be feasible, but the deadline and the external service’s information requirements have not yet been confirmed. The analysis must distinguish an evidenced time constraint from an institutional preference for faster processing, and test whether an apparently effective option can be divided into permissible and contested components. If new evidence shows that the full form is unnecessary, the claimed necessity of broad disclosure is undercut while the reason for timely assistance remains intact.

Table 18: Constructed conflicts among volunteer-aid reasons, burden incidence, and possible defeating evidence

Constructed history	Candidate conflict	Potential burden transfer	Critical assessment evidence
Urgent translated referral	Prompt access, confidentiality, informed authorization, competence	Privacy exposure for recipient; delay or escalation work for helper	Recipient's stated preferences, necessary data fields, actual urgency, authorized referral channels
Volunteer capacity change	Acquired assurance, continuity of assistance, finite self-regarding capacities	Fatigue for volunteer; disruption for recipient; staffing work for institution	Notice and uptake, actual capacities, substitution options, coordination and earlier reliance
Eligibility-linked co-design	Recipient voice, responsive design, meaningful choice, access to service	Unpaid administrative work and sensitive disclosure imposed on applicants	Eligibility conditions, ability to refuse, actual decision influence, accommodations and compensation

Changing volunteer capacity. A volunteer has repeatedly accompanied one recipient and previously confirmed another appointment. The volunteer now experiences a capacity limitation and cannot reliably attend. The recipient has changed plans in reliance on the assurance and would lose access if no substitute is arranged. Several reasons remain salient: honoring the undertaking, avoiding unsafe or unsustainable service, communicating promptly, respecting the recipient's preference among available substitutes, and pressing the institution to provide continuity. The choice between personal attendance and abrupt cancellation is an artificially restricted option set when a supervised transfer may be possible. Evidence of the actual substitution pathway and the timing of communication can change the ethical appraisal. Even if withdrawal is justified, responsibility for notice and institutional transition may persist under specified premises.

Eligibility-linked co-design. An aid programme asks recipients to contribute personal narratives and translations to improve future intake procedures. Staff praise the opportunity as participatory and say that contributions are optional. Applicants observe that frequent contributors receive earlier meetings, though the allocation rule is opaque. The programme obtains better service descriptions, while participants incur time and privacy burdens. The ethical assessment cannot infer voluntariness from the existence of a signed form or infer decisional influence from the quantity of unpaid work. It requires evidence about accessible refusal, the transparency of eligibility criteria, who could revise decisions, and organizational alternatives to reliance on recipient labor. The case illustrates how an apparently successful intervention can distribute the costs of institutional learning inequitably without establishing that the participants had equal authority.

The three cases also test sensitivity to omitted subjects and options. A person who cannot access the intake channel, a volunteer who has already resigned, or a recipient unable to attend advisory meetings may remain outside the record. Such absence does not establish that their interests are morally irrelevant. A comparison among recorded options should state the limitations of its coverage and identify the additional testimony or records that could change the conclusion. The purpose of finite diagnostics is to expose where a proposed inference might fail, including failures of option identification, evidential access and normative premises.

18.9 Three-Level GR Interpretation and Verification Requirements

The three GR reality levels specify the scope of the proposed ethics of conflicting reasons. At the *ontological* level, ultimate claims about what subjects, reasons and moral values are in themselves remain suspended. At the *relational* level, historically constituted positions, commitments, dependencies, capacities, authority structures and opportunities for action can be described as consequential arrangements. At the *manifestation* level, statements, records, acts, refusals, signs of fatigue, referral histories and institutional decisions become available to interpretation in context. Reason registers and normative judgments are scholarly reconstructions of those manifestations and histories; they do not form a separate ontological reality level or independently establish moral truth.

Empirical work would need evidence on the options that were actually accessible at each decision point; time-stamped authorization and communication; records of tasks, burdens and supervision; and protected accounts from affected subjects. Competing explanations should be actively tested. An apparent choice may reflect informed preference or the absence of a realistic alternative. A repeated failure may result from a volunteer's omission or from a structurally unavailable referral route. A record of no objections may reflect genuine acceptance or a lack of safe channels for complaint. Research must justify the collection and retention of sensitive records and offer appropriate protections against surveillance, retaliation and coerced disclosure.

The philosophical verification task is distinct. A valid conclusion requires premises concerning moral standing, the force of commitments, justified authority, the relevance of harms and benefits, and the degree of burden that can reasonably be demanded from particular agents. These premises are open to competing ethical theories. The audit is useful when it makes the disagreements inspectable, the burden transfers visible, and the conclusions revisable. It is insufficient when its formal organization substitutes for an argument about the legitimacy of those premises. A fully specified description may still permit several defensible answers or reveal a disagreement that the present framework cannot resolve.

18.10 The Analytical Scope of Defeasible Practical Judgment

The proposed account of competing reasons integrates the previous analyses of evidence, commitment, competence, consent, distributed responsibility, institutional authority and recipient agency. Its distinctive object is the *conditional justification of agent-specific practical responses under heterogeneous burdens and evolving relational histories*. Candidate reasons should remain traceable to evidence and explicit normative premises; burdens should remain attributable to their affected positions; and any assertion that a reason is defeated, an option excluded or a judgment revised should identify the relevant justificatory step. This structure improves the possibility of disagreement, correction and accountability without presupposing that a complete moral ordering can be produced for every situation.

A further philosophical limit concerns the transition from morally defensible *response* to morally exemplary *person*. Choosing an acceptable option in a constrained situation does not demonstrate that an agent's history was just or that all resulting harms were excused. Equally, a recipient's dissatisfaction or a volunteer's regret does not independently establish a breach of duty. Histories of reliance, available alternatives and responsibility for repair require their own reconstruction. Institutional designs should not treat personal moral resilience as a replacement for adequate staffing, translation, supervision or appeal mechanisms.

The resulting section provides a bounded foundation for subsequent inquiry into restraint and nonintervention. A justified decision can consist in acting, declining an intrusive proposal, requesting competent assistance, transferring a commitment, or revising the terms of support. The ethical status of each response depends on the configuration of reasons, available options, affected subjects and governing premises. Section 18 thus identifies what needs to be preserved when deliberation remains defeasible: its provenance, its burdens, its unresolved objections and the conditions under which later evidence should prompt reconsideration.

19 Nonintervention, Withdrawal, and the Ethics of Restraint

An ethics of volunteer intervention requires an account of what an agent may appropriately leave undone, decline, suspend, or bring to an end. Aid relations can make direct action morally salient while also generating reasons to respect another subject's refusal, preserve confidentiality, avoid exceeding competence, and protect the finite capacity of supporters. A decision to refrain from a proposed intervention may protect a person's agency; the same outward inaction may also register a missed commitment, unavailable institutional alternative, or avoidable abandonment. This section develops a preliminary Generative Relational (GR) account of these possibilities. It first individuates nonintervention, omission, withdrawal, and transfer as historically distinct responses; then reconstructs their evidential and normative conditions; and finally applies a bounded formal audit to three hypothetical aid histories. The method combines philosophical analysis of omission and special obligation, conditional normative reconstruction, and comparative historical diagnostics. Its object is the justification of particular practical responses, with attention to their affected subjects, temporal horizons, and surviving duties.

19.1 Practical Forms of Restraint in Situated Assistance

The expression *restraint* can describe several forms of conduct with distinct objects and consequences. A volunteer might refrain from a proposed medical judgment, decline to transmit information, pause a difficult conversation to seek clarification, refuse an unauthorized assignment, or stop performing a recurring accompaniment task. An observer may record all of these as an absence of the expected action. Ethical appraisal requires a more precise description. A restraint decision has an agent, a contemplated task, a historical setting, a relevant interval, affected subjects, and alternative responses that remain accessible under the agent's competencies and authority. For example, declining clinical interpretation while facilitating access to qualified assistance differs from ceasing all communication with a person seeking support.

A preliminary taxonomy distinguishes *prospective non-entry*, where an agent declines a relationship or task before undertaking it; *bounded nonperformance*, where an agent refrains from a particular action within an ongoing relationship; *temporary suspension*, where an intended action is paused for inquiry or safety; *qualified withdrawal*, where previously accepted performance is brought to an end subject to notice and transition questions; and *discontinued involvement*, where an agent ceases participation without an established replacement. Each description is historical and evidence-relative. The expression "abandonment" is a proposed normative characterization requiring additional argument concerning justified expectations, available alternatives, and the affected party's vulnerability.

The taxonomy also prevents a familiar equivocation between an action and a composite service. A volunteer who refuses to perform an unauthorized task may still be capable of recognizing a request, communicating a limitation, or contacting a legitimate supervisor. Conversely, what an institution calls a "referral" may amount to forwarding information without ensuring that another party is available to receive it. Section 9 already distinguishes task competence from authorization and the stages of referral. The present analysis extends that distinction to the ethical appraisal of an attempted transition and to the circumstances in which proposed alternatives are merely nominal.

19.2 Omissions, Causal Contribution, and the Grounds of Responsibility

Omission is partly an action-description relative to an expected or available performance. To characterize an agent as having omitted an intervention, an inquiry ordinarily needs a specified alternative action, a time at which it might have occurred, and some account of the practical opportunity to perform it. Characterizing the omission as wrongful further requires a justified obligation or other relevant normative premise. The philosophical debate over doing and allowing harm illustrates why causal, descriptive, and moral asymmetries remain contested [61]. An outcome following nonintervention therefore supplies neither a self-standing proof of preventability nor an automatic attribution of fault.

Consider a recipient who loses access to a time-sensitive service. One historical reconstruction may attribute the missed opportunity to a volunteer's failure to relay a confirmed appointment. Another may identify an institutional system that provided no accessible appointment information, assigned the volunteer a task beyond training, and lacked a substitute contact. These explanations may coexist. A counterfactual inquiry should specify the feasible intervention being considered, which information was accessible at that moment, whether another participant would likely have responded, and the uncertainty surrounding the outcome. A causal contribution by omission can be possible without establishing an unlimited individual obligation to have prevented the outcome.

The stronger moral question concerns whether a particular actor had a duty to act in the specified way, at that time, given reasonable access to information, feasible alternatives, accepted commitments, and burdens. Section 13 develops the possible force of undertakings and induced reliance, while Section 18 retains incompatible considerations and defeaters in a separate judgment record. Moral responsibility may remain disputed after the causal reconstruction is complete. Other questions concern the prospective duty to repair the condition and the institutional capacity best placed to do so. Assigning remedial work to a different actor can be justified without thereby excusing a past wrong or proving that the actor performing repair caused it.

19.3 Restraint Respecting Refusal and the Limits of Access

A recipient's explicit refusal of a proposed intervention supplies a salient ethical reason for restraint, whose force must be assessed with regard to the proposed action, the communicated scope of refusal, competence, and any independently supported competing duty. The consent framework of Section 10 treats authorization as bounded and historically revisable. A refusal of personal-information disclosure, for example, may coexist with a request for a general explanation of service alternatives. Respecting the former need not extinguish the latter. The option "do nothing" can conceal several actions whose normative statuses differ: withholding unauthorized disclosure, providing nonintrusive information, inviting further discussion, or closing the channel entirely.

A supporter's belief that an intervention would be beneficial remains a reason requiring scrutiny of its evidential and normative basis. Paternalistic interference can involve overriding another person's decision while claiming to secure that person's welfare, but the permissibility of an intervention depends on further conditions [15, 12]. In cases involving contested understanding, safe clarification and accessible communication may sometimes be justified. The practical response should not convert repeated questioning into a disguised effort to secure a desired answer. Where the recipient cannot safely refuse because access to other services is threatened, a signed form or continued attendance has limited evidential value for free agreement.

The analysis also accounts for a subject's wish to have no further contact. Ethical consideration of that preference may require the helper to stop sending messages or making inquiries, while preserving data-privacy responsibilities concerning materials already collected. A volunteer's concern for the person's future welfare can remain significant even where further contact is unwelcome. The morally relevant alternatives may then lie at the institutional level, such as improving access to general information without contacting the individual. Claims of overriding authority in urgent or third-party situations require their own legal, factual, and normative examination. The present theory offers no general license to disregard an expressed refusal whenever the helper predicts a benefit.

19.4 Withdrawal from Historically Acquired Undertakings

Withdrawal differs from prospective non-entry because previous acts may have changed other participants' options. A volunteer who has repeatedly accompanied a recipient, confirmed a future visit, or become the only person familiar with a translation pathway occupies a historical position partly generated by those interactions. The ethical significance of the position depends on the scope and uptake of assurances, the reasonableness of reliance, foreseeability, and the available avenues of transition. Analyses of promises and special obligations illuminate the normative controversy without settling it [19, 30].

Role acceptance, repeated kindness, and institutional recognition must be examined separately from any claim that a volunteer has undertaken an indefinite personal duty.

A change in capacity can make previously feasible performance unsafe, unreliable, or excessively burdensome. Section 15 treats volunteer health and personal commitments as interests of a morally relevant subject. That analysis does not imply that every withdrawal is justified or that previously accepted commitments vanish upon the announcement of a personal preference. It suggests the need to reconstruct available responses: completing a bounded task, requesting relief, renegotiating timing, arranging a supported substitute, explaining a limitation, or formally transferring information within authorized bounds. Changes in the permissible action set may alter the scope of performance while leaving residual responsibilities concerning notice, confidentiality, and reasonable transition.

An institution may contribute to dependence by assigning one volunteer recurring coverage and failing to establish back-up procedures. Such an arrangement can create legitimate recipient expectations as well as excessive informal pressure on the volunteer. The organization may bear prospective duties to sustain a service that it advertises, independently of whether the particular volunteer remains available. The volunteer's historical contribution does not establish that the organization may transfer its continuing service obligations to that individual. Conversely, an institution's role does not erase an agent's own accepted assurance to warn someone of an imminent change. Distinguishing these grounds supports both ethical limits on demand and attention to those who reasonably relied on earlier assistance.

19.5 Notice, Transfer, and the Completion of a Transition

A responsible transition can involve notifying an affected person, clarifying which tasks will end, identifying available alternatives, transferring narrowly authorized information, checking whether a prospective recipient has actually accepted the referral, and identifying unresolved needs. These elements have different feasibility and moral status. Their relevance depends on the undertaking, risks and available channels, and should not be recast as an unconditional requirement of continuous personal contact. Sometimes notifying a person through a trusted intermediary is more appropriate than direct communication; sometimes an expressed refusal limits permissible contact. Where a volunteer lacks access to a competent receiving service, a written referral alone may supply weak grounds for claiming that support has been transferred.

The distinction between *referral attempted* and *handoff completed* is especially important. A message sent to a shared inbox may document a volunteer's attempt, but it may leave the intended receiving party unaware, unavailable, or without authority to act. An acknowledged transfer may still fail if the recipient cannot practically access the new service. Evidence of completion therefore concerns uptake and practical access as well as transmission. The agent who has responsibility to verify uptake depends on the particular institutional and moral allocation of duties. A conservative audit can record the uncertainty even where the original volunteer has justifiably completed their personal obligation.

Regulated professional relationships offer a bounded comparison. The American Medical Association's Code of Medical Ethics, Opinion 1.1.5, identifies advance notice and appropriate facilitation of transfer in physician–patient termination [2]. That opinion articulates duties within a professional fiduciary relationship and cannot be imported as a universal volunteer rule. It nevertheless helps identify a distinguishable normative problem: the manner in which a relationship ends can affect continuity even when the termination itself is justified. The present proposal examines whether analogous reasons arise through a particular volunteer assurance, institutional undertaking, or known dependency, and specifies what would be required to support each inference.

The physician–patient comparison marks a boundary rather than a portable standard for volunteers. AMA Opinion 1.1.5 grounds a physician's notification and transfer responsibilities in the fiduciary duties of the clinical relationship. A volunteer who has agreed to a single escorted visit occupies a different normative position from a treating physician who proposes to end ongoing care. A community organization may nevertheless have independent reasons to require confirmation of handoff, especially if it has induced long-term reliance. Any claim that a particular volunteer owes a further period of service

requires evidence of the accepted undertaking, feasible alternatives, affected reliance, and the applicable institutional and legal conditions. Importing a professional rule without those premises would erase the distinction between analogy and authority [2].

19.6 A Provenance-Sensitive Restraint and Exit Audit

A bounded representation can help keep these distinctions traceable. Fix an acting position A , stage t , evidential resolution κ , and an expressly justified, revisable bundle B of candidate normative premises, following Sections 4 and 5. Let $\Omega_{A,t}^{\text{res}}$ be the represented options of refraining, pausing, refusing, withdrawing, transferring, or continuing specified components of support. The set may omit feasible alternatives and its membership does not by itself establish permission. Let $\mathcal{I}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ record antecedent undertakings, receipt and uptake of assurances, authorization scope, and relevant historical reliance. Let $\mathcal{P}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ register possibly affected positions with their expressed preferences and potential omissions from the evidence. Let $\mathcal{F}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ record partial assessments of competence, capacity, time constraints, and alternative pathways. Let $\mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ record notice, attempted referral, demonstrated receiving-party uptake, and unresolved transitions. Let $\mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ retain candidate reasons for and against each response, and let $\mathcal{J}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ record qualified judgments, objections, and conditions for reopening. The restraint-and-exit audit is defined in Equation 19.

$$\mathfrak{W}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} := (\Omega_{A,t}^{\text{res}}, \mathcal{I}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{P}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{F}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa}, \mathcal{R}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{J}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}). \quad (19)$$

Each component is a typed descriptive or interpretive register, except that the last two explicitly depend on contested normative premises. The same evidence can support several candidate assessments, and records should disclose both the supporting and opposing grounds. $\mathcal{I}$ preserves the difference between a documented undertaking and an inference about an unlimited duty; $\mathcal{P}$ prevents absence from a service register from being treated as evidence of irrelevance; $\mathcal{F}$ preserves unknown practical capacity; and $\mathcal{T}$ distinguishes a transmitted referral from demonstrated uptake. $\mathcal{J}$ may register a provisionally supported judgment, normative incomparability supported by argument, unresolved evidence, or an exclusion based on an independently justified constraint. These statuses are inherited as methodological distinctions from Section 18, without asserting a universal deontic ordering.

Equation 19 is a record structure and introduces no moral theorem. In particular, its tuple membership does not prove that an omitted action was feasible, that a continuing relationship was authorized, or that withdrawal breached a duty. The construction makes a possible inference auditable: any move from a historical fact to a claim of obligation must identify the relevant premise in B , evidence, affected position, alternative responses, and objections. For comparability across time, the analyst should state whether differences between $\mathfrak{W}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ and a later audit arise through altered undertakings, source evidence, affected-subject coverage, capacities, institutional options, or normative premises. Without an explicit translation, comparing candidate judgments with different subject sets and premise bundles risks an artificial conclusion of improvement or deterioration.

19.7 Justified Restraint, Neglect, and Contested Abandonment

An account of justified restraint requires positive reasons and suitable evidence for the selected response. Relevant grounds may include a recipient's refusal, absence of legitimate authority, substantial risk of intrusive harm, unavailable competence, preservation of a confidentiality obligation, or a volunteer's finite capacity. The force of these grounds depends on the nature of the contemplated task, the evidence supporting the threat or request, and the existence of alternatives with different burdens. An agent can have justified reason to stop a particular intervention while retaining reason to clarify an option, alert a responsible institution within authorized scope, or correct an earlier misrepresentation. The relevant normative premises must be defended rather than inferred from the virtue attributed to restraint.

The proposed categories *neglect* and *abandonment* involve stronger normative claims. Neglect ordinarily implies an unjustified failure with respect to some defensible expectation or duty; abandonment

emphasizes the problematic termination of an ongoing relation, often in conditions of known dependence and absent adequate transition. Their use as verdicts therefore presupposes specified obligations, the practical opportunity to act, appropriate regard for the recipient's preferences, and a supported account of what the actor reasonably knew. A service recipient's disappointment and a volunteer's guilt may provide important manifestation evidence while remaining insufficient, separately, to establish fault. Likewise, institutional policy breach and moral wrongfulness overlap in some cases but are not equivalent by definition.

Four contrasts sharpen the ethical test. *Withdrawal with justified notice* is distinguished from *unannounced disappearance* by the evidence concerning reliance and accessible channels. *Protective non-disclosure* is distinguished from *refusal to facilitate any competent help* by the scope of authorization and alternative assistance. *Suspension for clarification* is distinguished from *indefinite administrative delay* by the expected informational value, time costs, and availability of review. *Declining an unreasonable demand* is distinguished from *evading an accepted bounded undertaking* by the provenance of the commitment and the feasibility of responsible transition. These contrasts define questions for inquiry, not mechanically decisive checklists.

A further difficulty concerns moral demandingness. An institution may portray continued service as the price of being a good volunteer, thereby moving a collective failure into the identity and conscience of one participant. Philosophical disagreements about supererogation and duties to oneself remain pertinent [23, 43]. A permissible withdrawal may still occasion a recipient's loss, but that loss does not automatically establish that the volunteer ought to sustain the service personally. Ethical evaluation should identify the organizational alternatives and consider who is reasonably positioned to prevent repeating the harm. A defensible account of restraint must be able to criticize both unjustified disengagement and coercive demands for indefinite generosity.

A diagnostic case of apparent abandonment should preserve the difference between a failed commitment and an impossible or unauthorized continuation. Suppose a volunteer has already provided notice, proposes a transition, and learns that the assigned coordinator has failed to contact the recipient. A review that observes only the recipient's eventual loss of assistance may wrongly attribute abandonment entirely to the volunteer. Yet a review that observes only the volunteer's notice can also wrongly presume that the recipient received or understood the message. The ethical history must distinguish sending, receipt, uptake, the actual availability of a substitute, and the parties' capacities to avert the disruption. Under some premise bundles, the volunteer may retain a bounded follow-up obligation; under others, the institution's responsibility for continuity will be central. The example tests the proposed exit audit against both forms of one-sided attribution. Its result depends on the content of the prior undertaking, practical alternatives, and evidence available at the relevant stages.

19.8 Institutional Design and Relational Dependence

Institutions influence withdrawal through recruitment promises, scheduling systems, reserve capacity, recognition practices, and access to complaints. A programme that advertises reliable support while assigning essential work to a single unpaid participant creates foreseeable vulnerabilities when the participant becomes unavailable. The later exit may be causally important without being the sole, or even primary, source of an institutional continuity failure. Under a defended theory of organizational responsibility, the institution may have duties to disclose service limitations, preserve redundancy, provide supervised handoffs, or prevent misleading assurances. These claims concern the organisation's own commitments and capacities, not an unrestricted claim over volunteer time.

The recipient's agency also matters in the design of alternatives. A substitute selected without consultation may perpetuate dependency or disregard meaningful preferences. A recipient can request that specific information remain confidential even when such a restriction makes seamless transfer more difficult. Conversely, an organization may have independent duties to protect other subjects or maintain a safe service, subject to context-specific authority. An adequate institutional procedure thus needs to distinguish individual consent, permitted information transfer, role-based responsibility, and the feasibility

Table 19: Hypothetical restraints and withdrawals: competing grounds, transition questions, and defeaters

Constructed history	Reasons for restraint or withdrawal	Remaining transition or relational questions	Evidence capable of revising appraisal
Recipient declines referral	Respect for refusal, scope of authorization, nonintrusion	Whether permitted information or later contact is welcome; independent third-party duties	Recipient's expressed scope, accessible language, urgency and lawful authority
Recurring accompaniment ends	Volunteer capacity, finite commitments, preservation of quality	Notice, reliance, receiving-party uptake and organizational substitute	Earlier assurances, feasible notice, scheduling and actual replacement availability
Multilingual support channel closes	Volunteer safety and role limits; institutional inability to compel service	Unreached applicants, advertised service continuity, accessible replacement	Historical service announcements, omitted populations, language access and policy coverage

of an accessible successor. A nominally available institution is not an effective alternative if its language, eligibility, schedule, or geography make access practically impossible.

The United Nations Volunteers Conditions of Service exemplify one institutional system in which formal assignment conditions have specified application and temporal effect [57]. Such contractual provisions can clarify relevant duties for covered participants, but they cannot substitute for moral analysis or determine terms for all volunteer organizations. Empirical study should identify the operative agreement, the dates and scope of any applicable rules, actual supervisory practice, and the channels available for contestation. The ethical question then includes whether an institution's present arrangements distribute continuity burdens fairly and preserve a voluntary participant's meaningful ability to exit.

19.9 Finite Diagnostic Histories of Nonintervention and Exit

Three constructed histories test the proposed distinctions under changing relational conditions. They are hypothetical configurations and provide no evidence about identifiable participants, hospitals, charities, or the practices of any organization. Table 19 identifies the central uncertainty in each case. The cases should be assessed with the options and evidential gaps of Equation 19 rather than assigned a predetermined moral outcome.

Refused referral with continuing informational need. A recipient asks a volunteer for information about an external support service but later declines transmission of a personal record. The volunteer has evidence suggesting the service might be useful but lacks grounds to assume that the recipient accepts disclosure. Respecting the refusal can support limited nonintervention. The available alternatives nevertheless require separate assessment: supplying general contact information, offering to clarify terms, ceasing further conversation when requested, or notifying an authorized officer if an independently justified duty arises. A retrospective adverse outcome does not alone prove the volunteer should have disregarded the refusal. The analysis could change if the initial refusal were based on mistranslation, a narrowly authorized form of contact had been overlooked, or a legally governed protective duty toward another subject had been established.

Accompaniment withdrawal with uncertain handoff. A volunteer has provided weekly accompaniment and earlier assured one person that the next visit would occur. The volunteer's capacity changes

and a supervised coordinator agrees to seek a substitute. The volunteer notifies the coordinator, who enters a name on a shift list; the intended replacement has yet to confirm acceptance, and the recipient relies on the promised visit. A blanket judgment that withdrawal is forbidden overlooks the volunteer's capacity and institutional responsibility; a blanket judgment that all responsibility ended with the message overlooks the assured task and actual uptake. The relevant questions include the reliability of the original promise, whether direct notice is feasible and welcome, what the institution has undertaken, and whether confirmation of transfer can reasonably be expected from a particular actor.

Closure of a translated intake channel. A volunteer-operated translation channel has become the practical gateway for assistance seekers with a particular language background. Following repeated overload and the loss of supervision, the volunteer withdraws. The institution publicly retains a multilingual-access claim but provides no functioning alternative. Some applicants never reach a complaint or registration system, so an internal report lists no outstanding beneficiaries. The volunteer may have defensible reasons to exit an unsafe or unbounded role. An ethical assessment of the programme requires separate analysis of the institution's advertised commitments, omitted applicants, staffing choices, and access to correction. A zero count of recorded adverse cases has little force when closure itself prevents relevant experiences from entering the register. Prospective institutional repair may be important even when the volunteer bears no independently established duty to resume personal service.

The three histories illustrate that the ethical status of withdrawal can depend on events preceding a decision, and that a defensible decision can leave a significant residual need. Counterfactual tests should include additional feasible options, recipient-preferred forms of communication, and alternative allocations of institutional resources. Adversarial tests should also examine whether those described as having been abandoned understood the original undertaking differently, whether the supposed substitute had accepted responsibility, and whether a person was absent from the record because they lacked access to it. Such evidence can alter both the practical comparison and the attribution of responsibility for the unresolved burden.

19.10 Three-Level GR Interpretation, Verification, and Research Limits

The proposed account preserves the three GR reality levels. At the *ontological* level, claims about the ultimate nature of a subject, moral obligation, or relational existence remain suspended. At the *relational* level, undertakings, dependency, authority, continuity arrangements, practical capacities, and exit pathways are historically constituted structures with consequences for the persons involved. At the *manifestation* level, confirmations, refusal messages, appointment records, observed fatigue, complaints, institutional announcements, and missing communication enter context-sensitive interpretation. The audit in Equation 19 reconstructs evidentially accessible histories and proposed ethical judgments. It neither constitutes another level of reality nor turns manifested behavior into an infallible account of private intention.

Empirical verification would require time-stamped consent and communications, suitably protected interviews with recipients and volunteers, records of promised services, supervision and feasible transfers, and measures capable of detecting populations excluded from ordinary registration. Such work must minimize surveillance risks and support meaningful participation, especially where organizations control access to aid. Causal claims about what a volunteer could have prevented should be evaluated against competing explanations involving institutional capacity, recipient choice, unavailable alternatives, and uncertainty in outcomes. Evidence of apparent satisfaction may be affected by dependence or fear of losing assistance. Evidence of distress requires careful interpretation and does not by itself determine duty or blame.

Normative verification remains a separate task. One must argue for the force of a recipient's refusal, the scope of an accepted commitment, the relevant demandingness limits, and the distribution of obligations across volunteers and institutions. The resulting judgments may be provisional, genuinely contested, or incomplete. The analysis offers neither a universal threshold for abandonment nor

a jurisdiction-independent rule for notice periods or emergency disclosure. Its narrower contribution is a traceable separation of restraint, withdrawal, referral and continuity, together with the evidence and normative premises needed to assess each response. Those distinctions prepare the historical analysis of ethical commitments in Section 20, in which repeated action, reliance, feedback and institutional adaptation may change the available avenues of responsible support.

20 Historical Feedback, Dependence, and Revision of Ethical Commitments

The ethical significance of volunteer intervention can change as repeated assistance alters what participants expect, how they plan, and which alternatives remain practically accessible. A commitment that initially concerns one bounded task may later coexist with an institutionally supported expectation of continuity, a recipient's reliance, a volunteer's declining capacity, and new opportunities for substitution. Historical development therefore affects both the descriptive circumstances of intervention and the reasons advanced to justify particular responses. This section develops a preliminary Generative Relational (GR) account of those changes. It distinguishes evidence of feedback, trust, and dependence from warranted normative claims; examines mechanisms through which commitments are retained, revised, redistributed, or released; proposes a provenance-sensitive cross-stage audit; and tests the account using three constructed histories. The method combines relational-historical reconstruction, conditional ethical argument, and finite counterfactual diagnostics. Its object is the historically changing justification of agent-specific ethical commitments, including the possibility that responsibility for continuity belongs principally to an institution.

20.1 Historical Feedback as an Object of Ethical Inquiry

A volunteer relationship can be represented as a sequence of interactions that changes the conditions of later interaction. A successful accompaniment can increase confidence in the volunteer's availability; the resulting confidence may influence a recipient's subsequent scheduling, disclosure, and reliance. Repeated requests can also increase the volunteer's practical competence and knowledge of the recipient's situation. In parallel, organizational managers may treat reliable informal assistance as a stable service input and adjust staffing or referral arrangements. These changes are linked: altered expectations influence conduct, conduct affects the resources that organizations allocate, and that allocation conditions the options subsequently available to recipients and volunteers. The relation between these mechanisms is itself an analytical object.

The historical character of an ethical relation should be specified more precisely than the simple fact that conduct occurred earlier. A *feedback hypothesis* identifies an earlier event, a proposed mechanism through which it altered a later state, and observations that could distinguish that mechanism from alternatives. For instance, the continuing availability of a volunteer may have contributed to a recipient's decision to cancel a paid interpretation service. Alternatively, an institutional rule may have eliminated the paid service independently of the volunteer's conduct. Temporal ordering supports an inquiry into either hypothesis; the relevant causal difference requires additional evidence. The principle of path dependence is consequently used here with restraint. Pierson's analysis of increasing returns concerns a specified class of political processes and supplies a possible methodological comparator, rather than a demonstrated dynamic of volunteering [48].

Repeated intervention may generate stability, dependency, learning, frustration, or withdrawal. An account of *historical feedback* should allow trajectories in which successful collaboration reduces dependency, as well as trajectories in which apparently beneficial support creates a fragile single-person service. The ethical evaluation of either trajectory requires independent premises about reasonable reliance, recipient agency, justified burdens, and the availability of alternatives. An observed self-sustaining routine is neither presumptively good nor presumptively bad merely because it persists.

20.2 Dependence, Reliance, and Their Causal Histories

Dependence refers here to an evidence-relative relation in which a subject's practical access to an activity, service, or capability is conditioned by the availability, decisions, or continued contributions of another position or institutional arrangement. Its object should be stated: a person may depend on a volunteer for transportation on a particular day while retaining considerable decision authority over other aspects of life. *Reliance* concerns the historically situated adjustment of plans or expectations in response to another's represented or observed availability. The two can be coupled while retaining different provenance. Structural dependence may arise without a promise, and reliance may arise from an assurance even where alternative provision remains available.

Several histories can produce the same manifested pattern of repeated assistance. A recipient may actively prefer the ongoing relation; the organization may fail to provide another channel; an inaccessible application procedure may filter out alternative services; or the volunteer's assistance may improve the recipient's capacity to choose. Discriminating evidence includes prior options, actual accessibility, communicated assurances, participant preferences, and changes in those items over time. Dependence should not be reconstructed solely from the frequency of contact or from the absence of documented alternative requests. As Section 7 emphasizes, institutional records may systematically omit people who cannot reach the service interface.

The potential moral relevance of dependence has at least three components. First, it can provide evidence of vulnerability arising from lost alternatives. Second, it can affect the foreseeable consequences of a proposed withdrawal. Third, it can support a prospective claim for institutional restructuring when repeated service depends on the indefinite contribution of an individual volunteer. Each inference requires a normative bridge. A recipient's serious vulnerability does not independently demonstrate that the volunteer has an unlimited duty of personal performance, while justified personal withdrawal does not automatically settle what an organization owes to people whom its services have made dependent.

20.3 Trust, Assurance, and Relational Vulnerability

Trust requires a different analysis from practical dependence. A person may use a service because no alternative exists while distrusting its personnel; a person may trust a volunteer's discretion yet rarely request assistance. Trust can involve expectations about competence, confidentiality, care, and future responsiveness that are only partially articulated. Baier's philosophical analysis foregrounds the vulnerability of placing valued matters within another's discretion and provides a useful comparator for the present account [5]. The proposed GR use is restricted to the evidence-supported formation and revision of trust-bearing relations. It does not treat observed cooperation as a transparent measure of subjective trust.

Trust may be reciprocally formed. An institution that reliably honors a volunteer's declared limits may increase the volunteer's willingness to accept bounded commitments; that willingness may facilitate continuity for recipients. Conversely, an institution that repeatedly treats informal help as guaranteed may erode trust even when aggregate recorded service delivery remains stable. Recipients may also change their willingness to disclose, refuse, or request clarification when a relationship becomes predictable. Such mechanisms should be examined through the participating positions and their different access to information, not reduced to a single relationship-level trust score.

The distinction between trust and justified assurance matters ethically. A volunteer's caring expression may be understood by a recipient as a promise of continuing availability, while the volunteer understood it as an offer for one visit. Evidence of both interpretations is relevant. A justified duty of clarification or transition may arise under some premises even when an unlimited promise was never made. The analysis of promises and uptake in Section 13 supplies the relevant historical provenance, and the consent analysis in Section 10 preserves the recipient's authority to decline a proposed form of support.

20.4 The Temporal Composition of Commitment Claims

A commitment claim can change through distinct events: undertaking a defined role, making an assurance, communicating its scope, receiving evidence of uptake, observing reliance, encountering a change of circumstance, proposing a revision, receiving an objection, and effecting an agreed or contested transition. These events should be individuated because their sequence and source may matter. A promise communicated after a recipient has already made a plan cannot be assumed to have induced that earlier plan. A recipient's reliance on a coordinator's guarantee may warrant a claim against an organization even if a volunteer never personally provided that guarantee.

The commitment-and-reliance audit in Equation 13 already records role undertakings, assurances, uptake, reliance, revision events, and candidate normative grounds. The present analysis adds temporal relations among such records. The relevant time is not merely calendar time: the ethical significance of a delay depends on appointment windows, the accessibility of alternatives, confidentiality concerns, and what actors could reasonably have learned at each decision point. In this respect, the urgency analysis of Section 12 remains an independent constraint on interpreting later outcomes.

The moral force of a commitment may persist in qualified form when its object changes. If personal attendance is no longer feasible, a reason to facilitate an appropriate handoff may remain. The scope of that reason depends on the original undertaking, avoidable exposure, authority, and cost; its bearer may be a volunteer, coordinator, institution, or some combination. Distinguishing the *continuation of personal performance* from the *continuation of a relational responsibility* is therefore essential. Likewise, a promise may be released by its intended beneficiary, a role assignment may expire institutionally, and an earlier breach may still require explanation or repair. These temporal differences resist a single binary field marking a commitment as simply active or inactive.

20.5 Institutional Substitution and the Formation of Service Dependence

Organizations can amplify individual histories through staffing choices, formalization of informal routines, allocation rules, and the public representation of service capacity. A programme may announce recurring multilingual assistance after repeated successful help by one volunteer. The announcement can alter recipients' expectations and discourage them from seeking other pathways. Managers may then withdraw resources from alternative translation arrangements. The resulting dependence has several participants and causal stages, even if the final service failure appears to coincide with the volunteer's absence. Analysis of distributed responsibility from Section 14 helps distinguish those stages from justified blame.

Institutional substitution can also diminish dependence on a particular person. Additional trained volunteers, adequately funded translation, accessible appointment systems, and accountable coordination can distribute tasks while preserving recipients' ability to choose. A substitute is ethically relevant only where the person can practically reach the new channel, it possesses the competence and authority required, and the transition respects applicable information boundaries. Section 9 distinguishes a transmitted referral from an accessible completed transfer; a claim of institutional continuity requires corresponding evidence.

A further ambiguity arises when organizations characterize personal devotion as a service resource. In this circumstance, favorable outcomes may coexist with unequal burden allocation and diminished exit options for the volunteer. Walker's expressive-collaborative account of responsibility practices emphasizes the historically organized and unequal power of participants to establish moral expectations [58]. The present GR proposal translates that concern into the historical reconstruction of who changed the terms of a commitment, whose objections counted, and who gained decision authority. This is an explicitly proposed analytical extension rather than an attribution of GR formalism to Walker. Appropriate institutional reform may involve redistributing resources and authority even if no individual actor can be shown to have caused every episode of dependence.

20.6 Revision, Release, and the Conditions of Effective Change

Commitments can be revised through renegotiation, changed capacities, a recipient's altered preference, expiration of an undertaking, a documented failure, an agreed substitution, or an institution's redesign of a service. The ethical consequence of a revision depends on its authority, communication, effects on affected parties, and remaining reasons. A coordinator can change a schedule within an organizational role; such a change may leave an independently supported moral claim concerning notice or prior reliance unresolved. A recipient can withdraw consent for a specific intrusive act, while other independently justified duties concerning third parties may still require separate assessment. The precise authority of a revision thus must be determined for the object it modifies.

Four evidential distinctions help assess effective revision. A proposed change differs from one communicated to the affected subject. Communication differs from understood uptake. An acknowledged substitute differs from an alternative that is practically available. Practical availability, in turn, differs from a normatively adequate redistribution of burden or authority. These distinctions explain why an institution may truthfully report that a volunteer has been replaced while recipients still face inaccessible new procedures or must contribute unpaid translation to regain access. The record should preserve such discrepancies between administrative completion and relational consequences.

Revision can also be initiated by contestation. A recipient may reject the terms on which assistance is offered; a volunteer may object to an unsupported expansion of duties; a coordinator may challenge an unreliable handoff. Where objections alter the feasible options or illuminate excluded subjects, the original judgment should be reopened with an identified reason. The provisional categories in Section 18 allow a previously defended response to become unresolved after new evidence, or a formerly unavailable response to become conditionally justified following institutional change. Revision here denotes an event and an inquiry, while *normative improvement* denotes a further conclusion requiring explicit standards. Increased efficiency or decreased volunteer hours alone cannot settle that conclusion.

20.7 A Cross-Stage Audit of Feedback and Ethical Commitment Revision

A compact formal record can make the historical reconstruction inspectable while retaining the limits of existing ethical-situation and deontic formalisms. Fix an acting position A , an ordered finite set of stages $T = (t_0, \dots, t_n)$, a possibly changing evidential resolution $\kappa = (\kappa_0, \dots, \kappa_n)$, and a sequence of explicitly defended candidate premise bundles $\mathbf{B} = (B_0, \dots, B_n)$. Let $\mathbf{W}$ be the stage-indexed restraint-and-exit records $\mathfrak{W}_{A,t_i}^{\kappa_i;B_i}$ from Equation 19. Let $\mathbf{E}$ register expressed expectations, assurances, evidence of trust or distrust, and the limitations of access to these reports. Let $\mathbf{D}$ retain reported dependence and reliance, with specified activities, alternatives, affected persons, and competing causal hypotheses. Let $\mathbf{K}$ record capacities and institutionally accessible substitutes. Let $\mathbf{X}$ contain proposed revisions, objections, communications, uptake, and observed transitions. Let $\mathbf{J}$ preserve candidate ethical judgments with their premises and unresolved objections. Finally, let $\mathbf{P}$ record source provenance and partial correspondences between stages, including changes in subject coverage and the meaning of categories. The proposed cross-stage audit is defined in Equation 20.

$$\mathfrak{H}_{A,T}^{\kappa;\mathbf{B}} := (\mathbf{W}, \mathbf{E}, \mathbf{D}, \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{X}, \mathbf{J}, \mathbf{P}). \quad (20)$$

The seven components are record types rather than quantities with a common numerical scale. Historical claims are supported through separately identified observations and mechanism hypotheses, and normative claims are indexed to B_i . In particular, $\mathbf{P}$ may contain partial mappings where a recipient changes representation, a volunteer leaves the institution, or an earlier category is redefined. If the included subjects, available options, evidential standards, or normative premises differ at two stages, changes in $\mathbf{J}$ cannot be read as an ordering of moral improvement without an additional justified comparison. The audit thus retains the claim-selection and comparability safeguards developed in Paper VI and in Section 18.

Equation 20 records candidate feedback sequences; it asserts no deterministic evolution law. A proposed transition mechanism can be supported by time-ordered testimony, independently confirmed

changes in staffing, accessible alternative services, and documented reliance, but it can also be challenged by rival explanations. The analyst should state which observed changes follow from earlier actions, which merely coincide with them, and which remain beyond the available evidence. Similarly, a recorded rise in trust or dependence does not generate a duty by mathematical definition. The relevant ethical warrant must still be articulated through the candidate normative grounds already introduced in Section 3.

20.8 Retrospective Appraisal and Prospective Responsibilities

Historical appraisal must distinguish what a participant reasonably knew at the moment of a decision from information that later became available. A volunteer who responsibly notified a coordinator of an impending absence may not have known that the receiving channel would fail; later discovery of the failure can strengthen prospective reasons to seek correction without retrospectively establishing knowledge of the original defect. Conversely, an institution that repeatedly received reports of inaccessible referral may be unable to justify continuing to treat an unchanged procedure as reliable. The assessment should identify what changed in the relevant evidence, capacity, and authority, rather than substituting an adverse outcome for a reasoned attribution of fault.

Prospective responsibilities can also diverge from retrospective blame. A coordinator with the authority and resources to repair an access channel may have stronger current reasons to do so than a volunteer who originally supplied an imperfect translation. The volunteer may remain responsible for correcting a knowingly inaccurate record while the institution bears the costs of rebuilding the channel. Distinct forms of responsibility for causal contribution, role fulfillment, answerability, and repair were introduced in Section 14. In a historical analysis, each should receive its own bearer, content, grounds, time horizon, and evidence.

Historical feedback may also alter the practical scope of a justified commitment. A recipient's newly acquired capability can reduce the assistance required; more competent institutional provision may make transfer appropriate; escalating strain can strengthen the volunteer's self-regarding reasons. Neither the persistence nor the dissolution of the previous arrangement establishes a moral verdict independently. A defended judgment should explain the acceptable distribution of remaining burdens, whether the recipient's refusal or preference has been considered, and whether the proposed alternative is feasible for the affected subjects. Where evidence is incomplete or normative premises conflict, qualified or unresolved conclusions are appropriate.

20.9 Constructed Histories of Feedback, Dependence, and Revision

Three finite constructed histories examine distinct ways in which assistance can alter its own conditions. They are thought experiments rather than reports of volunteers, recipients, or actual institutions. Table 20 identifies the feedback hypotheses and the evidence that would be needed to discriminate between rival accounts. It does not assign numerical moral worth or decide whether any intervention is required.

Repeated accompaniment. Over several months a volunteer regularly accompanies a recipient to appointments. The recipient comes to coordinate work shifts around the visits and ceases contacting an alternative service. When the volunteer's capacity changes, both parties disagree about what was promised. One explanation attributes the reliance to explicit assurances; another identifies the institution's repeated confirmation of appointments as the principal source of expectation. A third points to the alleged alternative service's lack of practical accessibility. The audit distinguishes these accounts using communication and uptake records, while considering the volunteer's ability to notify and the institution's capacity to arrange a substitute. A conditional duty of transition may be justified without assuming continuing personal attendance is required indefinitely.

Multilingual service substitution. An aid organization uses a volunteer interpreter for a recurring application session. Administrators cite the successful service when reducing expenditure on contracted

Table 20: Constructed historical feedback mechanisms in volunteer aid and the evidence needed to assess commitment revision

Constructed history	Candidate feedback and dependency mechanism	Revision or burden question	Discriminating evidence
Repeated accompaniment	Reliable visits alter recipient scheduling and perceived alternatives	Limits of personal continuity and reasonable transfer	Assurance scope, changed plans, alternative access, notification uptake
Multilingual service substitution	Institutional staffing adjusts to repeated unpaid interpretation	Institutional reform versus transferred unpaid burdens	Staffing decisions, records of inaccessible channels, substitute competence, actual service access
Negotiated collaborative support	Recipients acquire practical competence and contest service terms	Redistribution of decision influence, privacy and effort	Expressed preferences, power to decline, evidence of practical influence, changed burdens

interpretation. The volunteer subsequently leaves and the organization reports that a generic translation application replaces the role. Applicants report that the new channel cannot handle relevant documents and that they must translate personal records themselves. The history is compatible with an institutional cost-transfer hypothesis, but an independent budget reduction or changed demand could also explain the substitution. Evaluation requires evidence on staffing choices, applicant access, privacy and competence risks, and the burdens of corrective work. The organization's responsibility to revise its procedure should be argued separately from claims about the departing volunteer.

Negotiated collaborative support. A support programme initially requires recipients to rely on volunteers to arrange all appointments. Over time, recipients learn to use an accessible scheduling interface and request greater control over information shared on their behalf. A coordinator presents the transition as evidence that volunteer obligations can be withdrawn immediately. Some recipients affirm the new autonomy, while others cannot use the revised interface. The same institutional change may expand agency for one group and deepen exclusion for another. Comparing historical stages requires a stable definition of access, identification of newly excluded subjects, and assessment of who can challenge the changed procedure. Under suitable grounds, a reduction in personal dependency may constitute improvement; its normative status remains conditional on the full pattern of effects.

These histories also exhibit feedback between ethical evaluation and subsequent behavior. A premature finding that an individual volunteer bears sole responsibility may discourage disclosure of future capacity limits, making coordination less reliable. A policy of treating written substitution as sufficient may incentivize superficial closure records. Conversely, accessible complaint and renegotiation procedures may improve the information available to all positions. Such possible mechanisms are hypotheses for examination, not established causal regularities; empirical testing would have to control for selection, institutional incentives, and competing temporal changes.

20.10 Three-Level GR Interpretation and Verification Obligations

At the *ontological* level, the ultimate metaphysical status of subjects, trust, responsibility, and moral value remains suspended. Historical language here neither establishes an underlying field of obligation nor settles whether a moral requirement exists independently of relational recognition. At the *relational* level, accepted tasks, histories of assurance, patterns of reliance, institutional resource choices, acquired competencies, and available channels form historically constituted, potentially consequential relations. At the

manifestation level, participant testimony, schedules, records of contact, observed action, communicated revisions, and institutional reports become available for interpretation and dispute. The cross-stage audit is an epistemic and normative research instrument addressing manifestations and reconstructed relations; it introduces no fourth reality level.

A rigorous empirical application would require appropriately authorized longitudinal evidence, specified identities of affected positions, timestamps, actual service-access tests, information about unavailable alternatives, and protected opportunities for dissent. The most visible users and volunteers may be unrepresentative of the populations unable to reach the service. Comparisons should report whose testimonies are absent and when relevant privacy restrictions limit permissible data collection. A purported feedback mechanism should be challenged against alternative explanations, including external policy changes, administrative reclassification, and independently evolving recipient capacities. No quantity of historical observation alone validates a moral premise about whose sacrifices may be demanded.

Normative evaluation must justify the scope of undertakings, the moral force of reliance, the requirements for feasible transition, recipient and volunteer agency, and the allocation of institutional duties. Baier's analysis of trust, Walker's account of responsibility practices, and Pierson's study of political path dependence inform distinct aspects of inquiry; none supplies a universal ethical decision procedure for aid relations. The proposed GR contribution is a typed and provenance-sensitive analysis of their possible coupling, together with procedures for exposing evidential and normative uncertainty. Section 20 thereby supplies a historical bridge to the following finite diagnostic cases: ethical appraisal concerns both a decision at one stage and the relational conditions that decisions cumulatively alter, while remaining revisable when evidence, affected subjects, or defensible normative premises change.

21 Finite Diagnostic Cases for Volunteer Intervention

The proposed ethics of volunteer intervention requires a form of diagnostic assessment capable of examining several relational mechanisms within the same situated history. An action may respond to a genuine need while exceeding delegated competence; a referral may preserve an appropriate boundary while failing through an institutional handoff; and a programme may expand recipient participation while making eligibility depend on uncompensated work. This section tests the analytical resources developed in Sections 4–20 through four finite, constructed cases. Each test specifies an ethical situation, rival practical options, candidate moral reasons, affected positions, and potentially decisive changes in the stipulated facts. The method is counterfactual and argumentative: the cases investigate what the proposed concepts distinguish, which inferences require additional premises, and where their current coverage remains incomplete. They establish neither empirical predictions nor settled universal verdicts about volunteering.

21.1 Diagnostic Purpose, Selection, and Epistemic Standing

A finite diagnostic case is an explicitly constructed configuration used to challenge the scope and consistency of a preliminary theoretical framework. Its value depends on what it can discriminate. An example that simply restates a desirable outcome does little to test a theory of ethical intervention. A stronger case holds some conditions fixed while varying authorization, access to evidence, available options, control over resources, or the grounds for assigning responsibility. The analyst can then ask whether the proposed verdict changes for the right reason and whether the framework makes relevant omissions visible.

Four cases are selected to cover different relational configurations. Case I concerns a language-mediated access procedure in which an institutional classification can erase a person before an ethical claim is recorded. Case II concerns a time-sensitive request that a volunteer is not professionally authorized to satisfy. Case III concerns the withdrawal of recurring assistance after a recipient and organization have become reliant upon it. Case IV concerns a programme advertising co-production while allocating meaningful influence and participation burdens unevenly. These configurations deliberately combine problems addressed in earlier sections. Their overlap permits inspection of the relations among

mechanisms rather than treating consent, competence, historical reliance, or self-regarding reasons as independent variables with preset numerical weights.

All actors, procedures, intervals, and outcomes are stipulated for analytical purposes. No case describes a named hospital, volunteer organisation, or real recipient. A stipulated event is evidence *within the example* only. In an empirical application, the analogous proposition would require appropriately authorized records, participant testimony, independent contextual investigation, and safeguards against the harm of research itself. The cases therefore assess conceptual discriminatory capacity and conditional normative coherence. They do not validate a causal model, measure moral value, or establish the frequency of any failure mechanism.

21.2 A Common Case Specification and Comparability Conditions

The basic descriptive input remains the agent-relative ethical situation $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^{\kappa}$ of Equation 2. Candidate moral reasons and deontic positions remain governed by Equations 4 and 5. Historical claims may be linked to the cross-stage audit of Equation 20. For a case indexed by i , fix an acting position A_i , a finite ordered set of stages T_i , a recorded evidential resolution κ_i , and a declared bundle B_i of candidate normative premises. Let $\mathcal{X}_i$ contain specifically defined alterations to evidence, subject coverage, option feasibility, or contested premises. Let $\mathcal{J}_i$ record conditional candidate appraisals, including supporting and defeating arguments. Let $\mathcal{V}_i$ identify what evidence, argument, or institutional verification would distinguish rival accounts. The case-test dossier is given in Equation 21.

$$\mathfrak{D}_i^{\kappa_i; B_i} := \left((\mathfrak{S}_{A_i, t}^{\kappa_i})_{t \in T_i}, \mathfrak{C}_{A_i, t_i}^{\kappa_i; B_i}, \mathcal{X}_i, \mathcal{J}_i, \mathcal{V}_i \right). \quad (21)$$

Here $t_i \in T_i$ is the focal decision stage and $\mathfrak{C}$ is the previously defined conflict-and-burden audit of Equation 18. The dossier composes existing objects with an explicit counterfactual test specification; it introduces no new logical operator for obligations and no objectively complete register of affected persons. The component $\mathcal{X}_i$ contains hypotheses to be evaluated, not actual changes to the historical record. The conclusions in $\mathcal{J}_i$ depend on a specified evidential and normative interpretation, and $\mathcal{V}_i$ is a research obligation rather than a claim that verification has already occurred.

Comparisons require a common decision stage, action granularity, subject domain, and premise bundle, or a documented argument for translating between specifications. If an altered case reveals a previously unrepresented recipient, the resulting assessment is a *new specification*; its output may appropriately differ from the earlier one. If an imagined alternative is infeasible for a recipient, it cannot be used as a costless escape from the initial conflict. An analysis that describes the options differently for competing parties must first repair the mismatch before claiming a dominance relation. These safeguards carry forward the defeasibility and coverage analysis of Section 18 without importing a single scalar measure of moral goodness from Paper VI.

21.3 Case I: Interpreted Access and the Unregistered Applicant

Consider a community assistance desk allocating appointments for a benefit with a closing time. A volunteer A provides interpretation, a coordinator C supervises registration, and applicants B_1 and B_2 speak different languages. The appointment portal records only submissions completed in its main interface language. The coordinator instructs A to process the visible queue first. Applicant B_1 can complete the form independently. Applicant B_2 attempts to communicate a missing eligibility item, but the available interpretation channel ends before the field can be completed. The system consequently produces an apparently exhaustive list containing B_1 and omitting B_2 .

The available options include processing the recorded application, reporting the unresolved translation problem, seeking an accessible extension or qualified interpreter, and transmitting a minimal referral under an appropriate information-sharing basis. Their feasibility is partial: an extension may be possible but has not been confirmed, and an interpreter may be reachable only after the deadline. The reason

to honor procedural requirements supports accurate records; reasons of fair access and epistemic attention support investigating the omitted applicant. Privacy constrains what details may be disclosed to obtain assistance. The question of whether *A* has an individual duty to secure an appointment remains dependent on competence, role commitments, institutional authority, and feasible alternatives.

The first counterfactual alteration supplies confirmation that an accessible extension is available. A limited request for extension then becomes a feasible alternative that may address urgency without unauthorized disclosure. The second alteration removes any such channel and stipulates that the volunteer has already communicated a reliable promise of follow-up. Reasons arising from that assurance now deserve independent consideration, although they do not create unlimited competence or organizational power. The third alteration reveals that the excluded field concerns a third-party household member whose own disclosure preferences differ. The set of affected positions and the authorization question change together. A case record cannot preserve its earlier conclusion merely by updating a single eligibility field.

The principal diagnostic failure would be treating an empty entry as proof that no claimant needs assistance. Evidence that B_2 is absent from the recorded queue establishes only the limits of that queue's construction. The morally relevant facts include the history of attempted communication, interface design, notice of the exclusion, and the coordinator's capacity to correct it. Verification would require a time-stamped account of the translation failure, accessibility of extension procedures, precisely scoped disclosure permissions, and the affected person's opportunity to contest an institutional reconstruction of the encounter.

21.4 Case II: Urgent Distress, Restricted Competence, and Escalation Failure

In a hypothetical reception area, recipient *B* communicates a concerning change in condition to volunteer *A*. The recipient requests an intervention associated with a specialized health professional. The volunteer has training in ordinary orientation and communication support, but lacks the competence and authority required to perform that specialist act. A designated escalation channel exists on paper; its first contact is temporarily unavailable. Another competent channel may be accessible through a different coordinator, and its response time is uncertain. The recipient also indicates a wish to limit disclosure to the persons needed to arrange support.

The ethical question concerns the available combination of recognition, communication, restraint, and escalation. The value of rapid assistance supplies a reason to seek a competent response. The risks of acting beyond competence, the recipient's information preferences, and the independent status of institutional authorization supply reasons to limit *A*'s direct conduct. A proposed option "help now" is too coarse to evaluate: obtaining competent assistance, remaining present within one's role, sharing necessary information through an authorized route, and attempting the specialist intervention are distinct acts. Their feasibility and normative standing differ.

Four perturbations expose the framework's limits. First, a competent supervisor becomes immediately reachable; the set of available options changes without changing the recipient's reported need. Second, the recipient withdraws authorization for routine disclosure but the case stipulates an independently credible and serious third-party risk. That additional concern requires a separate argument about the scope of any permissible communication and applicable institutional rules. Third, the apparent urgency is based on a mistranslated statement: the evidential ground for temporal pressure is challenged without eliminating the ethical relevance of listening. Fourth, the institution has received repeated prior reports that the escalation line is inaccessible. This historical fact can strengthen a prospective institutional reason to repair the procedure, independently of whether the volunteer was at fault for its present failure.

A defensible conditional assessment may favor immediate contact with an authorized competent responder and proportionate support within the volunteer's role while withholding the specialist act. It remains conditional on the precise facts of urgency, competence, permission, and alternatives. Neither urgency alone nor perceived benevolence resolves a disagreement over disclosure or professional scope. Verification would require the applicable organization's actual escalation arrangements, current compe-

tence and supervision records, the recipient's communication and permission history, and an ethically authorized account of the incident. The hypothetical example is an analytical test and supplies no actionable emergency protocol.

21.5 Case III: Recurring Accompaniment and a Contested Withdrawal

Recipient *B* has regularly attended appointments with assistance from volunteer *A*. Over several weeks, the organization has ceased arranging a backup worker because the accompaniment appeared reliable. The recipient has reorganized travel plans around the repeated arrangement. The volunteer then reports increasing personal burden and states an intention to discontinue the recurring task. A coordinator proposes that *A* continue without a fixed endpoint while an institutional replacement is sought. The volunteer had accepted a limited sequence of appointments and previously supplied an assurance about the next visit; the two undertakings have different scope and temporal standing.

The candidate moral reasons include respect for the volunteer's finite capacities, concern for the recipient's mobility and reliance, fidelity to the limited assurance, and an institutional responsibility to restore workable staffing. The options include notice, a bounded and feasible final commitment, recipient-directed rescheduling, transfer to another qualified helper, and withdrawal with an agreed transition plan. None can be labeled costless without examining the recipient's accessible transport alternatives and the volunteer's actual capacity. An institution's insistence on continuation can create additional pressure while shifting structural costs onto one unpaid person.

In the first alteration, the organization produces a reliable and acceptable substitute who can begin before the next appointment. Reasons for continuing the same volunteer's direct performance may diminish while reasons for communicating the transition remain. In the second alteration, the coordinator merely enters a substitute into the staffing database, but the replacement has not accepted the role and the recipient cannot reach the assigned meeting point. The administrative handoff is incomplete as a practical transfer. In the third alteration, the volunteer's capacity becomes severely restricted, changing the feasibility of further performance without extinguishing every potentially reasonable obligation to communicate information already held or to identify the outstanding promise. In the fourth, the recipient expressly prefers a different support arrangement even though the volunteer offers to continue; the recipient's agency changes the target of ethical assessment.

The historical feedback audit of Equation 20 can register the causal hypotheses linking repeated service, institutional substitution, reliance, and loss of alternatives. The restraint-and-exit audit of Equation 19 can then distinguish advance notice, proposed transfer, and achieved accessible transition. A judgment of abandonment would require a specified applicable duty, demonstrated feasible alternatives, and grounds for attributing responsibility to *A*. A judgment that withdrawal is justified may coexist with serious prospective institutional duties. The relevant evidence includes assurances actually communicated, constraints known when they were made, accessible substitute provision, and the recipient's expressed preferences.

21.6 Case IV: Co-Produced Allocation and the Transfer of Participation Burdens

A volunteer-supported service introduces a participatory scheme for allocating scarce appointments. Recipients are invited to contribute to the design of a multilingual intake form. Participation is described as voluntary, but nonparticipants receive reduced opportunities to correct errors and slower access to appointments. A subset of recipients performs substantial translation and testing work without compensation. A committee publicly reports high participation rates, while final eligibility criteria remain under the control of a manager. Volunteer *A* is assigned to collect feedback and explain the scheme; recipient *B* identifies that the new form systematically disadvantages people who cannot attend evening consultation sessions.

The participation audit of Equation 17 distinguishes being heard, contributing labor, influencing an actual rule, refusing involvement, and bearing costs. The number of consultation attendees measures a manifestation of participation under a particular recording practice. It does not by itself show influence

Table 21: Integrated diagnostic cases: candidate reasons, relational omissions, and decisive tests.

Case	Competing candidate considerations	Primary risk of analytic omission	A discriminating alteration
I: Access	Timely processing; epistemic attention; privacy	Applicant absent from the register; language-dependent opportunity	Confirm accessible extension or reveal a previously omitted household member
II: Urgency	Protection; competence; recipient control of disclosure	Treating escalation, direct specialist action, and disclosure as one option	Supply an available competent responder or challenge the translation of urgency
III: Exit	Accepted assurance; self-regarding limits; service continuity	Equating recorded replacement with feasible transition	Replace a database assignment with an accepted, accessible handoff
IV: Participation	Recipient influence; fair access; finite labor demands	Equating attendance with power, or contribution with duty	Remove participation penalties and grant reviewable decision influence

over eligibility rules or justify work burdens. Candidate reasons favor obtaining informed recipient input and correcting exclusionary rules. Competing considerations include recipient time, privacy, dependence on access, the volunteer's limited authority to promise reform, and the organization's continuing duty to manage eligibility fairly.

The first alteration grants participants a documented capacity to modify the rule and a credible option to decline research participation without access penalties. This strengthens the account of meaningful influence, subject to evidence that the decision route operated. The second preserves consultation attendance but removes actual influence and adds access penalties for nonparticipation. A report of high engagement then becomes compatible with coercive institutional effects. The third stipulates that a recipient requests delegation of a technical design choice while retaining access to understandable options and subsequent review. Delegation may express agency, even when direct participation declines. The fourth introduces a previously excluded group unable to use the consultation languages; the purportedly representative participant set is now demonstrably incomplete.

A conditional ethical appraisal of the scheme requires more than a conclusion about improved form usability. It must address whether the affected persons could exercise agency, whether burdens were fairly assumed, whether authority was truthfully represented, and whether corrected rules altered practical opportunities. The coordinator may have stronger present powers to remedy access conditions than the volunteer who gathered feedback. Verification would involve actual decision rights, communication and consent records, burden reports, before-and-after access patterns, and challenges to the scheme from those absent from its participation statistics. A favorable service outcome does not settle the moral status of the participation process.

21.7 Cross-Case Comparison of Ethical Failure Modes

The four diagnostic histories share a common method while placing different inferential transitions under pressure. Table 21 records the principal candidate reasons, the underexamined relation, and a potentially decisive perturbation for each case. The table does not rank the cases by moral seriousness. It is intended to reveal which earlier formal object provides the relevant evidence and where independent normative argument remains indispensable.

The matrix also reveals a recurrent institutional interface. In Case I, language access determines whether a subject enters the decision domain. In Case II, the availability of a supervisor determines which actions remain practically responsible. In Case III, staffing decisions condition the feasibility of exit. In Case IV, rules governing participation determine whose knowledge can shape a service. Institu-

tional arrangements consequently alter the grounds and practical significance of individual reasons while leaving the attribution of moral duty to a specified agent open to separate justification. No general principle making the volunteer the residual bearer of institutional failure follows from these configurations.

A cross-case reversal illustrates the danger of a closed subject register. In a preliminary reconstruction of Case I, a telephone referral may appear to dominate an in-person intake because the represented applicant saves travel and receives timely information. Once another subject is identified who must expose private records to make the call on the applicant's behalf, the same action can carry an unrecorded privacy cost. The earlier conclusion is then conditional on an incomplete subject family. This change does not demonstrate that telephone referral is wrongful; it invalidates the stronger inference that it was robust to all relevant burdens. The test must compare the same individuated actions over a disclosed subject set and time horizon, then identify exactly what changed when a subject or option was added. The four cases thereby assess the *failure sensitivity* of the research instruments rather than measuring how often they produce favorable verdicts. An alternative explanation of a failed referral, such as an incorrect destination rather than a volunteer's inattention, must remain available for testing.

21.8 Adversarial Tests of Judgment, Incomparability, and Hidden Costs

The dossiers permit several adversarial tests whose results would challenge premature ethical conclusions. A *coverage test* introduces a previously unrepresented person and asks whether the judgment was expressed with an unjustifiably complete subject domain. The language-excluded applicant in Case I and the absent consultation population in Case IV show how a procedural record may conceal the very positions that would contest its adequacy. The correct analytic response is to reconstruct the evidential and normative domain, rather than to append the missing person as a negligible weight.

An *option-granularity test* divides an allegedly binary choice into feasible components. Case II distinguishes communication, qualified escalation, presence, disclosure, and unauthorized technical action. A conclusion that "intervene" is obligatory or "do nothing" is permissible can fail because it treats heterogeneous acts as a single unit. A *feasibility test* removes an imagined alternative: a named substitute whose accessibility has not been established cannot settle Case III. A *burden-transfer test* introduces the time, disclosure, and uncompensated labor assigned to the recipient in Case IV. The recorded improvement in aggregate service throughput may remain true while the ethical case for the allocation of costs is undermined.

A *premise-variation test* keeps the stipulated facts stable while altering an explicitly defended normative assumption, such as whether a limited promise creates a transferable duty of follow-up or whether a particular risk justifies restricted disclosure despite objection. Divergent judgments under the two bundles would expose genuine normative dependence, even with perfect empirical agreement. An *evidence-variation test*, by contrast, holds normative commitments fixed and changes a contested factual premise such as the availability of translation or whether a proposed handoff was accepted. These tests should not be conflated. An unresolved observation warrants further evidence; a defended normative incomparability requires arguments for the absence of a warranted ordering under the stated premises. A conditional endorsement is defeasible when a specified alteration defeats its grounds. The four outcomes described in Section 18.5 remain distinct.

Cross-case comparison also supplies a caution against retrospective certainty. An adverse outcome need not establish that the earlier choice was unjustified on the evidence then accessible; a favorable outcome cannot retroactively authorize an action that lacked a legitimate basis. The relevant historical dossier should preserve the information available at the decision point, subsequent evidence, and grounds for any prospective correction. The case method thereby examines the transitions among observation, causal hypotheses, candidate moral reasons, conditional judgments, and practical responsibility without presuming that their validity follows from one another.

A further adversarial manipulation varies the *type* of missing information while holding the candidate action fixed. In the interpreted-access case, missing translation might conceal the applicant's requested service, while a missing consent record might conceal the applicant's authorization for transmitting per-

sonal details. Resolving the first uncertainty could increase the case for assistance without resolving the second. In the withdrawal case, proof that an organization received a volunteer's notice could establish transmission while leaving practical replacement unverified. These tests prevent a single generic "documentation complete" judgment from being treated as evidence of need, consent, competence, and handoff simultaneously.

21.9 Three-Level Reality and the Limits of Diagnostic Transfer

At the level of *ontological reality*, the examples make no claim about the ultimate metaphysical constitution of subjects, agency, or moral properties. At the level of *relational reality*, their objects are historically organized assistance relations, undertaking structures, communication channels, institutional rules, feasible options, and the causally or normatively relevant ways these may condition one another. At the level of *manifestation reality*, forms, testimony, interpreted utterances, task records, appointments, documented handoffs, reported fatigue, and participation counts provide access to selected aspects of these relations. An apparently complete manifestation can reflect the exclusions embedded in its production. These three levels should remain analytically distinguished throughout the diagnostic reconstruction.

A case comparison remains conditional on a fixed set of represented subjects, a specified temporal horizon, a declared premise bundle, and an explicitly individuated option family. If a diagnostic change adds an overlooked applicant, removes a purportedly available referral, or exposes a previously undisclosed labor burden, the earlier judgment and the later one answer different questions. The comparison must record the changed domain before attributing any difference to normative reasoning. A purportedly robust result that survives only because every scenario excludes the same affected population is robust merely within that exclusion. Equally, a theoretically attractive option does not become feasible simply because its proposed benefits are comparatively large. These constraints apply to all four constructed histories in this section.

21.10 Verification Protocol, Falsification Routes, and Practical Limits

A diagnostic result should specify how an independent investigator could identify a mistaken reconstruction. For each case dossier, verification proceeds through a proposed sequence: examine whether the stated options were actually accessible at the relevant stage; check which persons were included in the source record and whether that domain was defensible; compare candidate causal explanations with observations that discriminate among them; inspect the scope and provenance of consent, delegation, or assurances; articulate and contest the normative premises; and test the resulting assessment under the documented alterations. Such procedures are conditional research commitments, not an assurance that evidence of each kind can be collected safely or lawfully.

The cases also require distinct falsification routes. Case I's claim of an inaccessible translation pathway would be challenged by contemporaneous evidence of a functional, communicated alternative; a later-created accessibility policy does not by itself establish its past availability. Case II's allegation of unavailable escalation would be challenged by evidence that a competent, authorized responder was reachable in the specified window; that evidence would leave the separate question of disclosure legitimacy open. Case III's claim of successful handoff would fail if the replacement declined, the route was inaccessible, or the recipient had been misinformed. Case IV's claim of empowered participation would be challenged by evidence that rule changes occurred independently of the feedback process, that contributors had no contestable influence, or that access penalties persisted. The same outcome can consequently support competing histories, and a research design must retain rival explanations rather than merely code the preferred one.

The four tests support a limited conclusion concerning the current formalism: it can represent heterogeneous, historically linked reasons and provide a disciplined location for challenges to coverage, feasibility, authority, competence, causation, and normative warrant. They do not prove that any recorded premises are morally correct or empirically well measured. A future application would need an independently justified research protocol, appropriate permissions, safeguards for sensitive data, attention to the

unequal burdens of participation, and direct consideration of those subject to the practices being studied. A real organization might follow rules absent from these cases; legal permissions and duties would need jurisdiction-specific verification. Formal consistency checks should also examine whether every case can be reconstructed with the source definitions without inventing undeclared options or silently changing the relevant domain.

The case suite supplies the transition to the next section's verification architecture. Section 22 can treat each dossier as a candidate research question: which evidence would support a relevant need, how a causal feedback mechanism might be distinguished from a rival explanation, which normative premises remain contestable, and how a provisional ethical judgment should be reopened after new evidence or an institutional change. The resulting research programme preserves the agency of recipients and volunteers while resisting automatic equivalences among helpful consequences, institutional approval, and moral justification.

22 Verification, Normative Uncertainty, and Practical Deliberation

An ethics of volunteer intervention should make its assessments answerable to evidence, formal scrutiny, relevant objections, and changes in historical circumstances. The preceding sections construct situated ethical records, candidate moral reasons, partial deontic assessments, and analyses of consent, competence, burdens, and acquired commitments. These constructions identify possible grounds of deliberation, yet their use in a practical judgment raises distinct questions concerning the accuracy of the recorded situation, the adequacy of the available alternatives, the support for causal expectations, and the defensibility of normative premises. This section develops a differentiated verification architecture for those questions. It first specifies the objects and levels of assessment, then derives a provenance-sensitive review record, develops formal, empirical, and normative tests, and applies these to the finite diagnostic cases of Section 21. Its method combines conditional formal reconstruction, adversarial counterexamples, historical and empirical verification proposals, and philosophical analysis of public justification. The resulting procedure is a research instrument, not an empirically validated decision system or an institutional rule.

22.1 Objects of Verification and Their Different Epistemic Burdens

The primary unit of inquiry is an agent-specific ethical assessment at a particular decision stage. A volunteer may claim that a referral was possible, that the recipient understood the proposal, that an institutional supervisor was authorized to receive particular information, or that withdrawing assistance would breach an acquired duty. Each claim requires a different kind of support. A record of a supervisor's position can establish who issued an instruction within a documented organization; it cannot by itself establish the instruction's moral legitimacy. A transcript can substantiate words uttered through a translation channel while leaving the speaker's intended meaning uncertain. An outcome can establish that an intended benefit occurred while leaving open which intervention caused the outcome and whether the means were justified.

At least six assessment objects therefore require separation: the internal consistency of formal definitions; the provenance and coverage of descriptive evidence; the interpretation of actions, needs, consent, and communication; causal claims concerning alternatives and historical effects; normative arguments concerning moral reasons and permissions; and the practical procedure by which a provisional decision is reached and revisited. Their evidential dependencies overlap, but success in one does not entail success in the others. The National Academies' distinction between computational reproducibility using the same inputs and replicability with independently collected data is relevant as a methodological comparator [45]. In the present philosophical manuscript, syntactic reproducibility means recovering the same formal output under the same declared assumptions. It is not equivalent to independently corroborating the underlying moral premises, and it is especially remote from empirically replicating claims about an organization's real behavior.

The evidence required also depends on the research question. A hypothetical case such as the unregistered applicant in Section 21.3 can test whether a concept permits missing persons to be represented; it cannot measure their prevalence in actual registration systems. A philosophical objection can reveal inconsistent or inadequately justified normative claims; it does not supply a substitute for consent to collect sensitive testimony. A useful verification architecture records these distinctions before a composite ethical appraisal is attempted.

22.2 A Provenance-Sensitive Ethical Verification Record

The ethical-situation record $\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa$ in Equation 2 supplies an agent, a historical and evidential context, affected subjects, practical options, and partially assessed feasibility. The conditional warrant relation in Equation 1 introduces explicitly defended normative bases. The conflict-and-burden audit in Equation 18 preserves incompatible practical reasons and their distribution across subjects. A verification record should review these inherited objects rather than redefine them or silently combine their distinct evidential and justificatory roles.

Fix a decision stage t , an acting position A , evidential resolution κ , and a declared normative premise bundle B . Let $\mathcal{P}_{A,t}^\kappa$ be an indexed set of propositions accompanied by provenance, source restrictions, and coverage qualifications. Let $\mathcal{G}_{A,t}^\kappa$ contain proposed interpretations and causal hypotheses together with rival interpretations, and let $\mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ contain candidate normative arguments, their supporting and opposing reasons, and the scope of their conclusions. Let $\mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ be a finite family of specified challenges to propositions, subject coverage, option feasibility, and normative premises. Let $\mathcal{U}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ record the results and limits of such challenges. Finally, let $\mathcal{O}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ identify unresolved objections, required evidence, authorized review positions, and prospective revision tasks. The proposed audit is given in Equation 22.

$$\mathfrak{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B} := (\mathfrak{S}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{P}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{G}_{A,t}^\kappa, \mathcal{Q}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{U}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}, \mathcal{O}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}). \quad (22)$$

Equation 22 is a typed record schema. Its entries are propositions, documented hypotheses, arguments, tests, results, and review obligations, rather than numbers that can be added to obtain moral value. The bundle B indexes the normative assumptions under discussion, not an authority that automatically makes them legitimate. A complete audit must preserve the bridge from the situation record to the candidate-reason register of Equation 4, and from those reasons to the conditional deontic classification of Equation 5. At each step, the assessor should state the source facts, interpretive inferences, additional normative premises, and possible counterexamples. Reproducibility of the recorded transition demonstrates only that a declared inference procedure was followed consistently. The moral adequacy of its premises, the coverage of unregistered subjects, and the legal or institutional legitimacy of the proposed intervention remain separate burdens. The index κ identifies the relevant evidence and interpretation context, not an exhaustive view of reality. The review record must allow an affected subject to be missing from its present coverage and a practically significant option to remain unrecognized. Such incompleteness is itself a question for assessment. The construction neither defines a universal algorithm for moral deliberation nor entails that all its fields can lawfully or safely be populated in every institutional setting.

Table 22 organizes the principal checks, the kinds of failures they may disclose, and the permissible scope of the resulting conclusions.

22.3 Formal Validity, Reproduction, and Proof Obligations

Formal verification begins with the validity of the objects and inferences on which an assessment depends. Types of acting agents, potentially affected subjects, evidential records, options, and commitments should remain stable across a comparison. A deontic statement should specify its agent, action, time, conditions, and moral grounds. The transition from a pro tanto reason to a claim of obligation requires a justified premise concerning competing reasons; a label of permission should be supported rather than inferred from absence of a proved prohibition. Section 5 preserves these distinctions, and Section 18 identifies the consequences of changing the comparison domain without notice.

Table 22: Verification layers for situated ethical assessments, with distinct evidence and inference limits.

Layer	Principal verification question	Limitation of a successful check
Formal	Do the definitions, types, references, and stated inferences hold?	Establishes internal validity under assumptions
Evidential	Are sources traceable, time-indexed, and adequately inclusive?	Records may still omit persons or events
Interpretive	Are rival readings of testimony, consent, or need considered?	Plausible reading need not be conclusive
Causal	Can a proposed effect be distinguished from rival histories?	Association and narrative coherence are insufficient
Normative	Are moral premises, objections, and their scope defensible?	Coherence does not establish public legitimacy
Practical	Could affected parties challenge and revise the appraisal?	A review pathway may be ineffective in practice

A reproducibility test can ask another reader to reconstruct an assessment from the same versioned evidence record, option definitions, and normative premises. The reader should recover the same classifications only to the extent that the stated rules determine them. If a result relies on an undeclared priority rule or an unspecified view of a recipient's interests, the reconstruction is underdetermined. This is an informative failure of formal specification. By contrast, the inability to select a unique morally best option where the premises genuinely admit several alternatives can be an appropriate output of a deliberately partial framework. The distinction matters because formal indeterminacy, normative incomparability, and an inconsistent axiom set require different kinds of revision.

A proof obligation becomes especially demanding when an argument orders several decisions. Pair-wise reasons may be evaluated relative to different subjects or independently defended normative bundles. Conclusions reached under changing domains do not automatically compose into a transitive ranking. The existing moral-reason register was designed for explicit, revisable appraisals rather than a total order. A future comparison theorem would therefore need to state precisely its domain, shared assumptions, admissible defeaters, coherence conditions, and conclusion. Small finite countermodels can identify failures of an asserted implication, while their successful enumeration cannot establish moral soundness or a theorem over unbounded domains. A mechanical check should be described with its input definitions and artifacts when computational claims are made.

22.4 Testimony, Documentation, and Subject-Coverage Verification

An evidential audit should trace a claim back to the channel through which its manifestation became available. In multilingual assistance, the original utterance, interpreter's rendition, form entry, administrative categorization, and subsequent use of the record are distinct stages. A discrepancy at one stage can propagate into a seemingly stable institutional fact. The interpretation audit developed in Section 8 provides a means of retaining competing readings and later corrections. The need register of Section 7 makes it possible to ask which standards have been used to recognize a condition as significant. Verification requires careful treatment of source reliability, the person's opportunities for correction, and the potential harms of collecting or disclosing more information.

Subject coverage has a particular epistemic structure. The set of persons present in a database is defined partly by access arrangements, eligibility rules, language pathways, and administrative discretion. An apparently complete dataset can therefore be complete relative to a deficient process. A useful challenge is to seek evidence of attempted but unregistered access, to compare institutional records with appropriately obtained accounts from excluded positions, and to inspect how inclusion itself is decided. This examination may be limited by privacy, confidentiality, and the unequal practical ability to contest institutional descriptions. Such limits should be recorded as constraints on conclusions, rather than filled with speculative assumptions about absent people.

Temporal provenance matters as well. Evidence obtained after an intervention may correct an account of what occurred, yet its later availability should not be retroactively inserted into the actor's information state at the decision time. The ethical assessment of an agent's deliberation may depend on what competent inquiry could reasonably have established then; the explanation of the subsequent outcome uses later observations. Both questions can be relevant without yielding the same answer. A retrospective record that merges them risks construing an unforeseeable adverse outcome as proof of culpable choice or a fortunate outcome as proof of justified intrusion.

22.5 Causal Claims, Rival Histories, and Counterfactual Discipline

Historical feedback is a central GR research object because assistance can alter subsequent reliance, institutional incentives, recipient options, and the volunteer's future capacities. Section 20 models these changes as possible feedback mechanisms. Establishing that an event occurred before another event, or that the two belong to the same relational history, does not establish that one caused the other. For example, repeated volunteer visits might coincide with improved access to services while a new eligibility policy, another caregiver, or an independently changing condition supplies the principal explanation. The narrative of benevolent assistance is not an adequate causal control.

Empirical causal inference requires a defensible comparison, a specified outcome, attention to confounding and selection, and assumptions suited to the study design. Hernán and Robins develop an extensive methodological account of such requirements across observational and longitudinal settings [22]. The present manuscript borrows their insistence on precisely formulated causal questions, not a claim that the constructed cases can identify causal effects. Institutional dependence, for example, could result from increased returns to coordination, a budget reduction, administrative inertia, a lack of replacement providers, or some combination. Each proposed mechanism suggests different evidence and distinct policy implications.

Counterfactual discipline is especially important for claims about feasible alternatives. If a proposed interpreter, supervisor, or replacement volunteer was inaccessible during the decision interval, that alternative cannot establish that a safer path was available to the acting person. If the proposed alternative was documented and accessible, its omission can defeat a claim that intrusive action was necessary. The audit should state how the counterfactual is supported, what remains assumed, and which rival explanations would lead to different judgments. Finite hypothetical variations can reveal conceptual sensitivities; empirical verification requires independently gathered evidence under appropriate permissions.

22.6 Normative Premises, Reflective Deliberation, and Public Reasons

Even an excellent descriptive reconstruction leaves an ethical question open. The claim that recipients should control the disclosure of sensitive information, that an accepted undertaking generates a duty of follow-up, or that severe cost to a volunteer limits an assistance demand rests on substantive moral arguments. Those arguments may involve autonomy, protection against harm, contractual assurance, fairness, care, institutional responsibility, or other justified principles. The present framework indexes candidate reasons under *B* so that their origin and possible contestation remain inspectable. Their inclusion in the audit is a proposal to consider them, rather than a proof of their correctness.

Reflective equilibrium is a prominent philosophical method for critically revising moral judgments, principles, and background considerations in light of one another. Knight's account also examines objections concerning the selection of considered judgments and the public reach of an individual's equilibrium [32]. A GR-oriented deliberation may use this approach as a methodological comparison: a principle invoked in one case should be tested against structurally similar situations, including cases involving different agents, histories, or burdens. Such comparison may expose a principle as too broad, an intuition as dependent on a hidden status hierarchy, or a proposed exception as inconsistent with its purported ground. Agreement between one analyst's principles and judgments, however, is insufficient to establish legitimacy for persons whose interests are affected but whose voices were excluded from their formation.

Values can also influence what is counted as sufficient evidence when the potential consequences of a mistaken inference differ. Douglas’s analysis of values and the limits of the value-free ideal provides a philosophical account of this issue in scientific reasoning [14]. It should not be converted into an automatic threshold of acceptable risk for volunteer action. In a particular case, the costs of erroneously disregarding an urgent need and the costs of erroneously overriding a refusal may pull in different directions. Their ethical relevance demands publicly contestable reasons, appropriate competence, and explicit attention to those bearing the consequences. An unresolved difference between defensible theories should remain visible even if a practical decision must eventually be made.

Verification also faces a representation problem when the people most affected cannot supply records in the format an institution recognizes. A formally exhaustive review of the existing application database could reproduce an exclusion that occurred before registration. Accordingly, a coverage audit should include accessible routes for external testimony, alternative communication modes, and documented reasons for treating an absence of evidence as informative. Such additional inquiry can itself impose labor, disclosure risk and costs on excluded persons. A defensible protocol must therefore state what constitutes a reasonable evidential effort given urgency, research resources, privacy and the available burden-sharing arrangements. Importantly, failure to discover an excluded subject is not a proof that every possibly affected subject was included. It should limit the domain of the robustness claim. The same principle constrains source-to-claim verification: checking the bibliographic existence of a cited theory does not show that the exact proposition attributed to it follows from that source.

22.7 Uncertainty Classes, Robustness, and Revisable Judgment

The framework distinguishes factual uncertainty concerning whether an event, need, or option exists; interpretive uncertainty concerning testimony and manifested intent; causal uncertainty concerning intervention effects; feasibility uncertainty concerning which actions can be completed; normative uncertainty concerning competing moral grounds; and institutional or legal uncertainty concerning the scope of valid authority. These forms may be coupled, yet a remedy targeting one may leave another untouched. Additional translation evidence may clarify the recipient’s expressed wish but not determine whether a volunteer has authorization to disclose it. A defensible institutional rule may settle a task assignment while leaving the moral basis of the rule contested.

Robustness can be tested relative to a finite, openly declared family of alterations in $\mathcal{T}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$. A practical assessment may remain conditionally supported under corrected translation, newly recorded participants, a feasible referral, or an alternative moral principle. Where the conclusion changes, the record should identify the alteration and the premise or observation on which the change depends. Where the conclusion stays the same, the scope of the tests remains finite: robustness to examined variations does not establish general ethical optimality. The results component $\mathcal{U}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B}$ should allow a test to be passed, failed, or unassessable because relevant information is unavailable or collection would be inappropriate.

There are at least three distinct reasons why a verdict may remain open. Evidence can be insufficient to determine which practical options existed; the premises can yield a genuine normative incomparability among adequately specified options; or the deliberation can lack a legitimately constituted decision procedure despite substantial factual agreement. The first invites proportionate inquiry where appropriate, the second invites further philosophical argument or a defensible decision procedure, and the third invites institutional and political scrutiny of authority. None should be recoded as a numerical tie. Likewise, a defeasible conclusion should indicate potential defeating evidence or grounds rather than relying on a general disclaimer that new information might someday emerge.

22.8 Four Diagnostic Protocols and Their Failure Conditions

The cases in Section 21 can be converted into four finite verification protocols. The first concerns an applicant excluded by language-mediated access. The diagnostic claim is that the institutional queue omitted an attempted application because a translation or interface barrier prevented registration. Supporting evidence would include the time of attempted access, the usable language channels, the closing

deadline, contemporaneous logs, and the applicant's appropriately obtained testimony. The claim would be challenged by evidence of an accessible, communicated, functioning alternative available in the relevant interval. Even if the exclusion is established, the moral responsibility of the particular volunteer remains dependent on agency, role, feasible action, authority, and historical commitments.

The second case concerns urgent distress and an unavailable escalation channel. A verification protocol should distinguish actual specialist competence, the limited acts within a volunteer's role, the availability of timely authorized referral, and the specific content of a recipient's authorization or refusal. Evidence that a trained responder was reachable would weaken the claim that the volunteer faced only unsafe choices. Evidence that the proposed contact was unavailable might strengthen the case for urgent coordination but would not independently permit an unauthorized technical intervention or unnecessary disclosure. Time-indexed records must preserve which options were genuinely available at the decision moment.

The third case concerns withdrawal from volunteer-dependent assistance. It tests whether an organization can show a completed and accessible handoff, beyond a new name on a staffing register. Relevant observations include the replacement's acceptance, the recipient's understanding, accessibility of the new service, and the volunteer's earlier assurances. A purported transfer would fail the practical verification test if no replacement had agreed, if the handoff was inaccessible, or if its communication was materially misleading. Residual moral obligations would still require the independent arguments developed in Section 13 and the analysis of restraint in Section 19.

The fourth case concerns co-produced support and hidden participation burdens. Attendance, consultation, influence over rules, and uncompensated work are separate observations. Records of meetings would not suffice to show substantive influence; relevant evidence would track changes to decisions, contestation opportunities, participants who could not attend, and costs imposed by participation. A counterfactual in which penalties for nonparticipation are removed may alter the voluntariness of the arrangement while leaving unequal decision power intact. These protocols deliberately permit results that leave normative questions open. The aim is to reveal where an ethical conclusion depends on a material omission, contested mechanism, or hidden premise.

22.9 Research Ethics, Confidentiality, and the Burden of Verification

Verification is itself a relational practice with costs and power effects. Interviewing recipients about perceived neglect may expose them to retaliation or unwanted disclosure. Asking volunteers to recount distress may impose psychological or reputational burdens. Linking administrative records can reveal sensitive information that the relevant person authorized for a narrow service purpose but not for research. An institution's wish to validate its own procedures can influence which participants are invited, which hypotheses are considered, and who may challenge conclusions. Ethical adequacy therefore cannot be inferred simply from the sophistication of a proposed verification method.

A future empirical application would require an independently justified protocol that addresses applicable institutional review and jurisdiction-specific legal requirements, consent to research participation, data minimization, access control, retention, withdrawal, and the possibility of refusing participation without loss of service. It should distinguish the power to collect data from the reasons that might justify collecting them. It should also examine whether individuals who have the least time, money, language access, or institutional confidence are systematically absent from consultation. Participants' involvement in reviewing an interpretation may improve its accuracy, while the cost of that review should be made visible and should not automatically be shifted onto them. The publication of formal audit templates should not imply that a named organization has approved their use.

When the evidence required for a decisive assessment cannot ethically be obtained, the appropriate scholarly result may be a documented limitation. Invented measurements, speculative subject attributions, and spurious numerical precision would undermine the very accountability that the audit is intended to support. Similarly, the constructed case suite must remain labelled hypothetical. The present source files are theoretical artifacts; their integrity checks evaluate formal reproducibility and bibliographic

consistency, not the conduct or authorization of research with human participants.

Bibliographic integrity deserves a similarly scoped interpretation. A matching citation key and a reliable publication record establish traceability to an identifiable work; they do not show that a specific paragraph faithfully represents the author's argument. A claim-level audit should therefore store the precise proposition attributed, the source passage or section checked, its domain and any counterqualification, and the difference between the source author's conclusion and the present GR extension. Where the publisher abstract alone has been inspected, a limitation such as "abstract-level support" should remain visible. This standard is especially important when an institutional handbook, a philosophical entry, and a small empirical study appear alongside one another: they support different classes of assertion.

22.10 Practical Deliberation, Independent Review, and Framework Limits

A bounded practical deliberation can proceed by documenting the acting position and the options available at the relevant time; recording the affected subjects and the possibility of omissions; identifying evidentially supported need and risk; specifying competence, consent, delegation, and historical commitments; articulating the normative reasons and their defeaters; and examining which alternatives remain responsibly available. The record then states a conditional candidate decision, residual burdens or obligations, objections that remain unsettled, and the conditions for review. This is a structured sequence of questions rather than a command to maximize a common index of moral value.

Independent review matters because the person producing an ethical assessment may also control the institution, hold privileged evidence, or bear interests in the outcome. A contestation procedure can provide opportunities for affected subjects, volunteers, supervisors, and qualified independent reviewers to challenge an inference according to their standing and the permissible use of information. The existence of a formal channel does not establish that such participation is free, intelligible, accessible, or consequential. A decision may require timely action despite incomplete agreement; in such circumstances its justification should remain limited to the grounds and circumstances actually defended, and any residual obligations should be assigned through a distinct argument.

The verification architecture thereby places a principled limit on the ambitions of the preliminary ethics. A formally coherent representation helps identify the premises and evidential claims on which intervention judgments depend. Historical and empirical inquiry can challenge those claims, while philosophical argument can evaluate and revise normative premises. Practical deliberation additionally requires competent and legitimate actors, viable alternatives, and a means of recognizing continuing duties and consequences. The framework supplies no general guarantee that these requirements can all be satisfied or reconciled. Its legitimate contribution is the traceable, contestable reconstruction of situated reasons and decisions under relational uncertainty. That contribution supports the next section's philosophical positioning of the proposed ethics, where its relationship to existing moral traditions and unresolved metaethical questions can be examined directly.

23 Philosophical Positioning of the Proposed Ethics

The proposed Generative Relational ethics of volunteer intervention requires a philosophical positioning because a descriptive reconstruction of situated action cannot, by itself, determine the authority of a moral reason. The ethical-situation record in Equation 2, the conditional warrant relation in Equation 1, and the verification architecture of Section 22 make practical reasoning inspectable while leaving the justification of its normative premises open. The present section situates that research instrument among several established families of moral theory. It first identifies the level at which comparisons are legitimate, then examines deontological, consequentialist, care-ethical, virtue-ethical, and contractualist arguments. It subsequently develops a comparative account of persistent disagreements, tests the limits of translation through two constructed aid situations, and states the distinctive and provisional commitments of the GR proposal. The method is philosophical comparison informed by formal provenance and historical

interpretation; the resulting position is an articulated proposal rather than a derivation of ethical truth from relational ontology.

23.1 Objects of Philosophical Comparison and Normative Inheritance

The ethical object reconstructed in this manuscript is an agent-relative practical situation in which specific actions, omissions, alternatives, affected subjects, institutional arrangements, and historical commitments are available under partial evidence. Philosophical theories may evaluate that situation by different grounds: a duty of respect, a comparative expectation of benefit, a requirement of attentive care, an exercise of practical wisdom, or a principle that persons can reasonably justify to one another. Similar conclusions reached through these grounds need not be equivalent conclusions. A volunteer who declines unauthorized access to a recipient's private record may act in accordance with a constraint of respect; the same refusal may also reduce expected harm or express trustworthy character. Agreement concerning that response leaves open disagreements about why it is required, whether exceptions exist, and what the response implies in another case.

A disciplined comparison distinguishes at least four objects. The first is a descriptive question concerning what happened and what options were accessible. The second is a normative-grounding question concerning what makes a consideration morally authoritative. The third is a practical-deliberation question concerning which reasons apply to this agent under these conditions. The fourth is a question of retrospective or prospective responsibility concerning who should answer for an outcome, prevent recurrence, or bear repair obligations. The GR formalism develops representations of the first and provides typed interfaces with the other three; it cannot adjudicate the remaining questions merely by recording them.

This distinction preserves intellectual provenance. Historical subject formation is a central commitment of the GR representation, while duty, utility, care, virtue, and reasonable rejection belong to distinct philosophical debates with independent arguments. A map associating one GR field with a concept in another theory is useful when it clarifies an evidential or inferential interface. Establishing philosophical equivalence would require showing that each theory's normative grounds, inferential implications, and relevant counterexamples are preserved. The present paper undertakes the more limited task of examining compatibility, tension, and explanatory complementarity.

23.2 Deontological Duties, Respect, and the Limits of Institutional Commands

Deontological approaches emphasize constraints, obligations, permissions, and the morally significant character of actions and reasons. Kantian moral philosophy offers a particularly influential account of duties grounded in practical reason and respect for persons, including a requirement against treating persons merely as means [31]. The Kantian grounding should be distinguished both from a list of institutional instructions and from a generic requirement to secure beneficial outcomes. Within a volunteer programme, a coordinator may have organizational authority to assign an intake task, but the fact of an instruction does not establish that collecting additional private information is morally justified. A question concerning respect for the recipient has to be answered through arguments appropriate to the claimed duty.

The GR account can contribute a precise record of which person was addressed, what action was authorized, what information was obtained, how consent was manifested, and what institutional pressures altered the option set. Its treatment of consent in Section 10 can therefore support applications of respect-based reasoning. A reported expression of consent is evidence requiring contextual interpretation, while the normative conditions for valid consent belong to a further moral argument. Where comprehension, practical refusal, or delegated decision authority remains uncertain, a description of signed forms is insufficient to settle the ethical question.

A limit also emerges. The scope of Kantian moral standing cannot be expanded to artificial or otherwise heterogeneous subjects merely by labelling them GR relational beings. Kantian accounts invoke contested features such as rational nature, autonomy, and the ability to legislate practical principles. The

heterogeneous-subject extension of this research programme must accordingly re-examine the relevant premises rather than assume that the descriptive generality of a relational model secures the normative generality of a deontological claim. The deontological interface is productive because it exposes the moral work that a purportedly neutral record cannot perform.

23.3 Consequentialist Appraisal, Uncertain Outcomes, and Moral Demandingness

Consequentialist ethical theories investigate moral assessments grounded in consequences, while differing over the relevant good, whether outcomes are actual or expected, which objects of assessment are primary, and whether values should be aggregated [51]. Classic aggregative utilitarianism is one important member of this family, with demanding implications for rescue and assistance in some settings [50]. The variety within consequentialism matters here. A reconstruction that equates all outcome-based ethics with a single sum of benefits would misdescribe pluralist, rule-oriented, and nonaggregative accounts.

Volunteer interventions present consequentialist questions with distinctive evidential limitations. The effects of communicating confidential information, arranging a timely referral, or withdrawing from a sustained assistance relation unfold through several participants and institutional channels. Section 22 therefore distinguishes observable outcomes from causal attribution and supported predictions. A successful referral following an unauthorized disclosure cannot itself establish that the disclosure was necessary for the success. Equally, an unsuccessful result need not show that an earlier precaution was irrational under the evidence and time constraints then available. An outcome-oriented appraisal should specify whether it evaluates actual consequences, reasonably expected consequences, or a policy governing repeated actions.

Consequentialism also sharpens the problem of moral demands. A volunteer might be able to increase another person's welfare by accepting repeated night shifts, while cumulative demands affect the volunteer's work, relationships, health, and future ability to assist. The relationship between objective benefit and justified sacrifice is contested, and the debate on supererogation resists the automatic conversion of every favorable action into an obligation [23, 60]. A GR historical burden record can identify the distribution of costs and the emergence of institutional dependence; the moral standard for comparing these costs with prospective benefits remains a defended normative premise. The present theory therefore offers an evidential aid to outcome assessment without treating an anticipated benefit as a conclusive warrant.

23.4 Care Ethics, Dependency, and the Political Organization of Assistance

Care ethics offers a historically significant challenge to moral views that abstract too quickly from concrete dependencies, vulnerabilities, attention, and the work through which people sustain one another. Joan Tronto's account treats caring practices and their political organization as ethically significant, including the responsibilities and inequalities embedded in care arrangements [56]. The GR proposal shares an analytical interest in historically particular relations, practical attention, and reciprocal transformation. This intersection should be understood as a compatible domain of inquiry, with the origins and arguments of care ethics retained independently.

The care-ethical perspective is especially useful for evaluating an assistance arrangement that appears successful in a narrow transaction record. A volunteer may complete all assigned visits while the recipient experiences humiliation through routine questioning, or an institution may celebrate exceptional volunteer compassion while failing to resource the service. The moral object includes qualities of attention, responsiveness, dependency, labor, and power that a count of completed tasks cannot express. The attention and testimony analyses of Sections 8 and 7, together with the volunteer-burden analysis in Section 15, make these features more accessible to structured examination.

A philosophical difference nevertheless persists. An account of how relationships generate needs and roles does not establish that a relationship is caring, or that existing dependencies deserve preservation. Some dependencies arise through unjust access barriers, institutional withdrawal, or unequal burdens on women, volunteers, and recipients. The ethical significance of sustaining a relation must therefore be

assessed together with its conditions of formation, the availability of alternatives, and the distribution of labor. The proposal's emphasis on historically constituted generativity is not a substitute for a care-ethical argument concerning whose needs are recognized, what counts as an adequate response, and who is permitted or required to provide it.

23.5 Virtue Ethics, Practical Wisdom, and the Character of Supporters

Virtue ethics places virtues, character, and practical wisdom at the center of ethical assessment, in contrast to approaches that make duties or outcomes explanatory fundamentals. Distinct variants disagree on the grounding of virtue and the relationship between traits and right action [25]. Volunteer activity gives these questions substantial practical content. Attentiveness, honesty about competence, patience, courage in reporting a systemic failure, and the capacity to withdraw without humiliating a recipient may be relevant excellences of character. Their worth, however, depends on circumstances and interpretation. A form of persistence that appears admirable in one history may become heedless in another.

The GR account helps trace the historical formation and manifestation of these capacities. It can document that a volunteer has repeatedly acknowledged corrections, made competent referrals, respected restrictions on personal information, and challenged harmful orders. Such a record gives potential evidence relevant to a character appraisal, but it does not determine an agent's virtue. A pattern of compliance may reflect genuine integrity, fear of sanction, or limited options. Conversely, an isolated error may reflect an unforeseeable change in conditions rather than a stable vice. Questions of motivation, judgment, and character require additional interpretive standards and evidence.

The relationship between practical wisdom and institutional structure is particularly important. A volunteer working with inaccessible information or without supervision cannot be expected to compensate indefinitely through personal moral excellence. Institutional design may enable or obstruct virtuous action by shaping training, channels of consultation, safe opportunities to refuse tasks, and the allocation of burdens. A virtue-oriented critique can therefore address both practical discernment and the social organization in which character is exercised. The present GR framework may contribute a history-sensitive description of that organization while leaving the evaluation of practical wisdom to independently reasoned virtue ethics.

23.6 Contractualist Justification, Mutual Recognition, and Reasonable Rejection

Scanlonian contractualism asks whether principles regulating behavior could be reasonably rejected by persons who have reasons to object to them. Its central concern includes justificatory relations among persons, with significant differences from utilitarian aggregation [49, 4]. This approach directly challenges a common temptation in aid: the claim that a beneficial aggregate outcome is sufficient to justify placing substantial burdens on an identifiable recipient or volunteer. Under a contractualist examination, the grounds on which each affected person might reasonably reject a principle become central to the argument.

Consider a programme that makes unpaid participation in service redesign a practical condition for receiving earlier appointments. Its organizers may expect better collective performance through additional recipient feedback. The contractualist question concerns the principle that permits the programme to condition access in this manner, the individual burdens imposed by that principle, and the justifiability of alternative allocation arrangements. Affected persons' reasons must be represented with care; registration counts and attendance statistics may leave excluded applicants without an apparent voice. The GR audit of recipient co-production in Section 17 can expose such omissions, while the standard of reasonable rejection supplies a further normative test independent of the data structure.

The translation has important limits. Contractualism has debates concerning scope, future persons, non-human animals, aggregation and standing. The GR research programme deliberately includes heterogeneous subjects as a later question, but a relational representation alone does not settle whether or how every such subject enters a Scanlonian justificatory relation. Furthermore, actual agreement by a

Table 23: Philosophical interfaces of the proposed GR ethics of volunteer intervention

Tradition	Principal normative question	Relevant GR evidence or structure	Translation limit
Deontology	Which duties and constraints govern the action?	Authorization histories, affected persons, role boundaries	Descriptive standing alone does not prove a duty or constraint
Consequentialism	Which consequences and values determine the appraisal?	Alternative trajectories, causal hypotheses, burden histories	Recorded outcomes do not establish a value function or causal identification
Care ethics	How are needs, responsiveness and caring labor organized?	Attention, dependency, recognition and practical support relations	Relational persistence need not constitute morally adequate care
Virtue ethics	What character and practical wisdom are exercised?	Situated conduct, correction, learning and institutional opportunities	A behavior history alone does not determine motive or virtue
Contractualism	Which principles could affected persons reasonably reject?	Distribution of claims, agency, burdens and excluded subjects	Recorded consent is distinct from reasonable non-rejection

recipient is conceptually different from the moral test of reasonable rejection. Institutional consent and contractualist justification should thus remain separate assessments, even when they inform one another.

23.7 A Comparative Matrix of Normative Grounds and Diagnostic Objections

The traditions considered here supply distinct kinds of criticism of assistance practices. Table 23 identifies the characteristic question, the evidential contribution available from the GR reconstruction, and a limit on theoretical translation. Its entries are indicative of major arguments within each tradition, not exhaustive definitions or claims of uniform doctrinal agreement. Their overlap is significant: an account emphasizing consequences may also value rights or virtues, while virtue and care theorists can attend to outcomes. The comparisons become informative where one tradition supplies a criticism that another leaves underdeveloped.

One philosophical danger is the creation of a selective hybrid: drawing on a duty when privacy is salient, on consequences when efficiency is salient, and on care when an agent's goodwill is at issue, while suppressing their conflicts. The present approach avoids describing such a selection as a unified normative theory. A defensible use of plural sources must explain why a particular premise bears authority in a particular argument, disclose rival standards, and identify which disagreements remain unresolved. The conditional warrant relation of Equation 1 accommodates different premise bundles; it provides a location for disputes and their consequences, rather than a rule that dissolves them.

23.8 Competing Interpretations of Two Constructed Intervention Histories

Two constructed histories show why plural normative positioning matters. These examples are analytic hypotheticals; they do not report institutional behavior or participant testimony. Their role is to test whether the GR representation can preserve rival normative assessments without inventing evidence or prematurely announcing a verdict.

Restricted disclosure during urgent referral. A recipient authorizes a volunteer to inquire about the availability of an appointment. A coordinator proposes transmitting the complete intake record to an external provider, believing that a deadline will otherwise be missed. The volunteer has insufficient information about whether the provider requires the additional details. A deontological inquiry asks about

the permissible scope of disclosure, respect for the recipient and the moral force of authorization. Consequentialist reasoning examines supported forecasts of the harms of delay and disclosure, distinguishing an expected improvement from causal necessity. A care-ethical analysis examines the quality of listening and the recipient's vulnerability in an asymmetric relationship. Virtue ethics asks whether competent restraint, truthful explanation and responsible initiative manifest good practical judgment. Contractualism examines whether affected persons could reasonably reject a principle that permits broad disclosure merely because an institution predicts a benefit. None of these questions is settled by the bare fact that a referral is eventually completed.

An important diagnostic counterexample concerns option granularity. If a narrow inquiry using only authorized information is feasible, the putative conflict between full disclosure and abandoning assistance may be partly an artifact of a poorly individuated option set. The GR record requires an account of alternatives, their information requirements, and actual institutional channels. If the narrow option is unavailable, substantive disagreement may persist: one theory may assign controlling weight to a strong constraint, while another may regard anticipated serious harm as justification for an exception. At that stage the manuscript should identify the competing grounds and the evidential conditions that distinguish them, leaving the unresolved moral argument visible.

Volunteer withdrawal following repeated assurance. A volunteer has maintained a multilingual accompaniment service and previously confirmed another appointment. After substantial fatigue and changed family commitments, the volunteer seeks to withdraw. A recipient has relied on the assurance, while the organization has no documented substitute. Duty-based reasoning asks about the scope and possible discharge of the undertaking. Consequentialist assessment considers the probable disruption from withdrawal and the cumulative cost of continued service, taking account of institutional alternatives. Care ethics examines concrete vulnerability and the relational quality of a handoff. Virtue ethics considers honesty, prudent recognition of limits and responsiveness in the manner of exit. Contractualism asks whether proposed arrangements can be justified to the recipient and the volunteer while avoiding a policy that makes a community service depend indefinitely on one person's extraordinary sacrifice.

A defensible preliminary assessment may recommend prompt notice, honest discussion, authorized transfer, and organizational remediation. Those responses can often be supported across several theories, but their convergence alone does not prove identical underlying reasons or an indefinite duty to attend personally. Evidence of the volunteer's initial assurance, the recipient's actual reliance, and accessible handoff arrangements matters to the practical analysis. These two histories illustrate the comparative role of Sections 21 and 22: the aim is to identify what a claimed judgment presupposes and what new information or objection could change it.

A counterexample clarifies the extent of philosophical pluralism. Suppose an institutional rule would significantly improve aggregate service speed yet require publishing an identifiable recipient's refusal of a medical referral. A consequentialist assessment might favor or oppose the policy depending on its account of the good, the causal estimates and future effects on trust. A rights-based duty account may treat publication as presumptively impermissible even if some aggregate benefit is expected. A contractualist argument considers the reasons an affected person has to reject principles authorizing such disclosure, without reducing reasonable rejection to a tally of preferences [4, 49]. A care-ethical inquiry examines the power relations through which the refusal becomes public, while virtue ethics examines practical judgment and truthful restraint. The descriptive record can expose unrecognized options, such as anonymized reporting, but it cannot guarantee that remaining disagreements are merely evidential. Once the same facts and feasible alternatives are fixed, different theories may still give different answers. A pluralistic GR presentation should disclose that disagreement and the assumptions behind any provisional recommendation, rather than quietly choosing whichever theory yields the preferred outcome.

23.9 Relational Constitution, Moral Standing, and Three-Level Reality

The GR research framework makes a specific contribution to ethical inquiry by treating agent positions, practical possibilities, dependencies, and institutional rules as historically formed and mutually conditioned. At the level of *ontological reality*, the ultimate status of subjects, moral properties, and relations remains suspended. At the level of *relational reality*, sufficiently stable social and practical structures may affect conduct, expectations, access, and agency. At the level of *manifestation reality*, statements, recorded decisions, acts, refusals, and signs of distress become available within interpretive contexts. These levels organize a description of morally relevant processes; they do not determine a moral ontology or create an independent level for scholarly inference.

The descriptive breadth of the framework yields both an opportunity and an important restraint. A relational record can register an animal, an artificial system, or an unfamiliar agent-position as a candidate affected subject without first deciding the ultimate nature of its experiences. Such registration may guard against prematurely excluding possible interests from inquiry. Yet normative standing, the grounds of protection, and attribution of responsibility require further arguments concerning capacities, vulnerability, consciousness, interests or other proposed criteria. Different philosophical traditions will pose different questions about those criteria. The present paper's principal applications remain situated volunteer and aid relations; Papers X–XVI address the heterogeneous-subject extensions with their own epistemic and jurisprudential difficulties.

A second restraint concerns generativity. Historical relations may generate new capacities, trust, obligations, dependence, or opportunities for further interaction. Describing that process as generative establishes no general rule that preserving the relation is morally good. Continued assistance can stabilize an exclusionary institution, make a recipient dependent on unpaid labor, or intensify a volunteer's vulnerability. Even changes that appear enabling require assessment of who benefits, who bears costs, which alternatives are excluded, and which moral standards justify the conclusion. The proposed ethics therefore treats relational formation as an object of explanation and normative contestation, with value judgments attached through explicitly stated grounds.

23.10 Philosophical Objections and the Provisional Ethical Position

The philosophical proposal faces several objections. A *normative-dependence objection* notes that a framework importing different moral premises may offer little independent normative guidance. The response is limited but substantive: the framework aims to improve the specification of morally relevant circumstances, trace the provenance of reasons, identify omissions and burden transfers, and make competing claims revisable. These are contributions to responsible reasoning even where a foundational ethical disagreement persists. They do not amount to a new supreme moral principle. An *eclecticism objection* adds that selecting whichever theory supports a preferred intervention risks disguised arbitrariness. The response requires recording the selection of premise bundles, rival tests and affected objections before a practical conclusion is announced. A conclusion reached by selective omission is a failure of justification within the proposed procedure.

A *relativism objection* asks whether emphasizing historical formation leaves moral criticism hostage to institutional norms. Historical provenance explains how standards become effective; their moral legitimacy must be argued separately. Indeed, a record showing how an apparently voluntary expectation emerged through staffing shortages, dependency and constrained refusal can support criticism of an entrenched practice. An *epistemic-power objection* asks who has authority to identify subjects, specify options, interpret testimony, and declare relevant normative considerations. The partial records of Sections 21 and 22 make those operations contestable, but only ethically warranted inclusion, protection and review practices can address the institutional inequalities involved.

A further *action-guidance objection* questions whether a plural and revisable framework is adequate for urgent decisions. The account offers a bounded response: identify time-sensitive threats and feasible alternatives, apply independently supported constraints and responsibilities, seek competent consultation where possible, and state the remaining uncertainty. Rapid decisions may be necessary; their necessity

does not transform an uncertain assumption into moral certainty. Subsequent review should assess what evidence and options existed at the time and which remedies are warranted under later knowledge.

The provisional philosophical position is thus a *historically situated, agent-relative, provenance-sensitive ethics of volunteer intervention with explicit normative pluralism and conditional justification*. Its distinctive scholarly claim concerns the usefulness of reconstructing practical situations across evolving relational positions while preserving separations among causal efficacy, consent, competence, duty, legitimacy and justice. Its limits are equally integral: the formalism neither generates moral standing from relational description nor determines the relative authority of competing ethical traditions. Continued work requires comparative philosophical criticism, empirically and ethically appropriate evidence, and institutional analysis of whose reasons are permitted to count. These responsibilities guide the interfaces developed in the following section without pre-empting its further research questions.

The pluralist procedure faces an additional *selection-of-grounds objection*. Imagine a programme that publicly announces a care-ethical rationale for listening to recipients but uses an exclusively output-maximizing criterion when allocating scarce interpreters. Even if each rationale is recognizable within a major philosophical tradition, changing the selected ground when challenged can insulate organizational preferences from criticism. A defensible reconstruction should ask whether the institution declared a principled basis for using different grounds in the two decisions, whether affected persons could challenge that choice, and whether the criteria would be applied consistently to similarly situated parties. The proposed GR audit can expose this pattern; it cannot by itself determine which moral theory ought to prevail.

24 Interfaces with Justice, Political Economy, History, and Heterogeneous Subjects

The ethics of volunteer intervention concerns the practical reasons, permissions, obligations, and responsibilities of situated agents. Such judgments are made within assistance arrangements whose distributive structure, economic reproduction, historical development, and participants' moral standing may themselves require inquiry. The present section specifies interfaces between the agent-relative ethics developed in this paper and four connected research domains: relational justice, political economy, historical system formation, and assistance involving heterogeneous subjects. It also identifies the separate tasks of humanitarian governance and jurisprudence. The method is a comparative and conditional reconstruction of analytical objects, inferential dependencies, and prospective research tests. The section first distinguishes the forms of theoretical transfer, then examines each interface and a constructed cross-domain history, and finally sets out the conditions under which a later paper could extend the present results responsibly. The analysis coordinates a research programme while retaining the explanatory and normative independence of its component inquiries.

24.1 Analytical Inheritance, Normative Translation, and Explanatory Coupling

The first interface problem is to specify what can be carried from one inquiry into another. The account of practical reasoning developed in Sections 4 and 5 distinguishes descriptive situation records, candidate moral reasons, and conditional deontic judgments. The justice analysis of Paper VI, in turn, organizes claims concerning distribution, procedure, recognition, epistemic standing, and relational positioning. An economic history may explain why an organization lacks particular resources or why an unpaid role became necessary to routine provision. These objects can concern the same persons and events, but the answer to a question within one domain does not necessarily answer another domain's question.

Three interface relations will be used. *Analytical inheritance* carries a well-defined object, distinction, or evidential record into a new inquiry while preserving its provenance and type. For example, a recorded instance of delegated access to an appointment system may be pertinent to an ethics of confidentiality and a justice inquiry into institutional voice. *Normative translation* considers whether a claim articulated in one normative vocabulary can be reconstructed in another. A claim concerning unfair

exclusion may support a volunteer's reason to challenge a procedure, subject to additional arguments identifying the duty bearer, the agent's available options, and the justification for the challenge. *Explanatory coupling* investigates whether structures examined in two inquiries condition one another over time. Resource dependence may increase the pressure on volunteers to perform beyond their competence, and repeated voluntary performance may subsequently influence budgetary decisions.

An interface is evidentially adequate only within an explicitly specified domain: relevant subjects, temporal stages, practices, descriptions, and counterfactual options must be identified; inherited records must retain their limitations; and any new normative or causal proposition must supply premises adequate to its own claim. The last requirement is particularly important where several theories appear to converge. Agreement over a practical recommendation need not establish identity of the grounds from which it follows. A proposed interface can therefore be fruitful even when full theoretical equivalence remains unsupported. The subsequent discussion applies this test to a series of partly overlapping research objects.

24.2 Relational Justice and Agent-Specific Ethical Reasons

Paper VI treats justice as a profile of claims, positions, and institutional arrangements whose dimensions remain analytically distinguishable. Paper VII asks which reasons apply to an agent situated within such arrangements, including whether the agent ought to intervene, decline a task, consult a supervisor, disclose information, or pursue institutional review. The central interface concerns the passage from a potentially justified claim about an arrangement to a potentially justified practical reason for a particular agent. An unequal distribution of translation assistance can be an object of distributive and epistemic justice assessment; identifying the duty of a particular volunteer to alter that distribution requires further analysis of role, competence, feasibility, authority, and competing commitments. The conditional warrant architecture of Equation 1 provides a place to record those further premises without treating the justice finding as a complete practical directive.

The two inquiries also differ in their objects of criticism. A volunteer may perform a locally justified referral within an unjust allocation system; the referral can alleviate a person's immediate difficulty while leaving a pattern of exclusion intact. Conversely, an institution may have a relatively fair appointment procedure while a particular volunteer acts carelessly toward an applicant. The former case requires a connection between local duties and structural reform; the latter requires an agent-focused inquiry into attention, competent action, and responsibility. Paper VI's multidimensional justice profile and Paper VII's typed moral-reason record are complementary instruments because neither exhausts the other's questions. The organization of the evidence should make the differences inspectable.

Justice claims also affect who has standing to criticize the ethical analyst. The need register in Section 7 and the participatory analysis in Section 17 recognize subjects whose needs or objections may disappear before formal registration. Paper VI asks whether that omission constitutes a recognitional, epistemic, procedural, or relational injustice. Paper VII additionally asks what a particular supporter, translator, supervisor, or researcher has reason to do upon discovering it. An apparently comprehensive ethical decision procedure can continue excluding such subjects when its comparison domain is fixed by the same administrative system that omitted them. The verification protocol in Section 22 therefore requires a coverage test as well as an assessment of reasons already registered.

A difficult boundary concerns the relation between injustice and moral blame. An organization can reproduce a structural burden despite the absence of an identifiable individual with full causal control. As the account of distributed responsibility in Section 14 indicates, prospective repair, role accountability, and individual blame may have different bearers and standards. A translation from injustice to blame must therefore be separately justified. Likewise, a justified moral objection to one action does not necessarily establish that a later participant has legal standing to enforce a remedy. These distinctions permit coordination with jurisprudence while preserving the specificity of both justice and practical ethics.

24.3 Political Economy, Resource Dependence, and the Distribution of Assistance Labor

Paper VIII is planned to investigate the political economy and power relations through which volunteer assistance is resourced, coordinated, valued, and reproduced. Its objects will include money, time, skilled labor, information, symbolic credit, organizational access, and the conditions under which particular participants can make or refuse demands. These objects matter to the ethics of intervention because a feasible option set is historically and institutionally produced. A volunteer's apparent choice between remaining late and leaving a recipient unsupported may have arisen from recurrent staffing choices, eligibility rules, funding restrictions, and a publicly celebrated expectation of exceptional sacrifice. An ethical assessment of the volunteer's conduct remains incomplete when the institutionally produced alternative set is treated as fixed and morally innocent.

The immediate interface lies in the relation between a *cost bearer* and an *agent of decision*. An institution may decide to expand a service, while the additional time cost falls on a recipient who must repeatedly explain a need, a volunteer who performs unpaid coordination, or a family member whose work schedule becomes less flexible. The burden architecture of Section 18 can identify these positions and record evidence of their costs. Political-economic inquiry must additionally establish mechanisms of cost transfer, resource control, incentives, bargaining capacity, and institutional reproduction. Neither the historical existence of uncompensated labor nor its social usefulness is by itself a complete moral assessment. Its justification depends on the relevant commitments, voluntariness, available alternatives, affected interests, and claims concerning fair distributions.

A second interface concerns scarcity. Some operational choices are constrained by current resource limitations, whereas other limitations are partially reproduced through institutional decisions. A request that exceeds a volunteer's competence can create an immediate duty to seek appropriate supervision or referral; repeated inability to provide such referrals may ground a different claim about the organization's resource allocation. A political-economic reconstruction could compare what alternatives were technically feasible, which were financially authorized, which were excluded by policy, and who benefited from those exclusions. This comparison helps distinguish an agent's reasonable limitation at one stage from a potentially avoidable organizational limitation sustained over many stages.

The framework also invites inquiry into value circulation and symbolic recognition. Public acknowledgment may encourage participation and support funding, while selectively rewarding visible heroic work over ordinary maintenance, coordination, translation, and recipient contributions. Sections 6 and 15 already identify the ethical risks of converting praise into a new practical demand. Paper VIII can examine whether recognition circulates toward those performing less visible work, whether donors' criteria alter the forms of assistance considered legitimate, and whether resource flows permit those affected to contest the arrangement. These are prospective analytical tasks, not empirical claims established by this manuscript. The political economy of aid needs its own evidential design before causal explanations can be treated as supported.

24.4 Historical System Formation and the Revision of Ethical Positions

Paper IX is planned to examine historical formation and transformation in relational systems of volunteering and aid. Paper VII already uses history to determine whether a promise was made, an expectation encouraged, a refusal communicated, or reliance created. Section 20 extends this approach by reconstructing how assistance and the organization of dependence mutually influence one another. The historical paper will require a broader object: the evolution of institutional practices, trust networks, replacement pathways, categories of need, resource arrangements, and norms across multiple participants and temporal scales.

A useful distinction is between *sequence*, *mechanism*, and *normative appraisal*. The fact that one event followed another establishes temporal ordering. An explanation that earlier decisions constrained subsequent possibilities requires evidence of a causal mechanism and relevant alternatives. A further claim that the resulting trajectory was ethically better or worse requires defended standards and information about who was affected. Historical-institutionalist work on path dependence and increasing returns

provides useful accounts of self-reinforcing processes, with mechanisms that must be established case by case [48]. The GR proposal can use these historical questions while avoiding an inference that stable or persistent relations are necessarily morally justified.

A volunteer service may initially respond to an unmet need through an exceptional effort. Repetition can then establish a trusted routine, change recipient expectations, and influence how the organization budgets or recruits. If an institution subsequently treats the routine as guaranteed while the volunteer remains formally free to leave, the practical consequences of withdrawal can be severe. Historical reconstruction identifies how a formerly optional undertaking became a significant reliance relation. Ethical reasoning must still decide what responsibilities arise for the volunteer, coordinator, institution, and other parties. The answer may involve transitional assistance, candid communication, contingency planning, or organizational reform. The historical mechanism does not determine a universal entitlement to continued voluntary labor.

Historical inquiry can also reveal why seemingly successful revisions fail. A revised policy may permit recipients to refuse publicity, yet funding incentives and access procedures may continue making refusal costly. A volunteer may formally relinquish a role while remaining the only person capable of using a legacy translation system. A service may claim to decentralize authority while retaining a single institution's control of information and appeals. The relevant test is whether available options, power to contest, resource access, and exposure to harm have actually changed. This anticipates Paper IX's task of examining coupling among trust, power, dependence, and institutional change. A historical object can remain analytically shared while its ethical, political-economic, and justice appraisals continue to require different grounds.

24.5 Moral Considerability and Assistance among Heterogeneous Subjects

Papers X–XII are planned to investigate suffering recognition, uncertain subjectivity, and humanitarian assistance across heterogeneous subjects. Their potential cases include interactions involving human beings, nonhuman animals, artificial systems, and hypothetical extraterrestrial agents. The extension begins with a distinction between the *capacity to affect a relation*, the *capacity to act*, the *capacity to experience interests or harms*, *moral considerability*, and the *authority to make or answer normative claims*. A GR relational description may support an inquiry into all five; it does not by itself demonstrate their equivalence.

Philosophical debate on nonhuman animals illustrates this distinction. Gruen and Monsó discuss competing grounds for animals' moral considerability, including sentience, personhood, interests, and relational considerations; the disagreement concerns both the basis and implications of moral standing [18]. The ethics of artificial intelligence likewise distinguishes machine capacities, possible moral agency, moral patiency, and legal or institutional responsibility. Müller's survey presents these as separate and contested debates, including disagreements about relational arguments for machine moral status [42]. The present research does not infer machine consciousness or suffering from fluent communication, adaptive behavior, or historical relational efficacy. It also refrains from treating a lack of access to another subject's subjective state as a proof that no morally relevant experience exists.

These limits yield two different kinds of uncertainty. *Epistemic uncertainty* concerns whether a subject possesses a relevant capacity, experience, or interest, and whether available manifestations are reliable evidence of it. *Normative uncertainty* concerns which capacities, interests, or relations should ground moral consideration and what protective duties follow. Inference from one to the other requires additional argument. For a nonhuman animal, behavioral and biological evidence may be pertinent to welfare assessment without resolving all disputes about the content of its interests. For an artificial system, a reported aversive state may be a design output whose evidential significance is unsettled. For an unknown extraterrestrial subject, even available categories of agency and communication could require re-examination. Such cases demand plural methods, graded evidence, and explicit limits on extrapolation.

Paper VII contributes a procedural research architecture rather than a settled expansion of its moral

domain. It provides an agent-specific record of what is believed, what evidence supports the belief, what options are available, who may be affected, and what premises might warrant precaution, restraint, or intervention. A later heterogeneous-subject paper must defend the underlying subjecthood and moral-status criteria and address the costs of false inclusion and false exclusion. There may be reasons for provisional protection under uncertainty, but any proposed precautionary rule must specify its scope, possible harms to other subjects, authority for implementing it, and opportunities for revision. The moral question remains substantive even when the record is formally complete.

24.6 Humanitarian Principles, Protection, and Institutional Scope

The heterogeneous-subject programme also invites a careful distinction between general moral reasons for providing assistance, humanitarian organizational principles, and obligations established by positive law. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's Fundamental Principles include humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality. These principles govern the Movement's institutional identity and practice within their defined scope [27]. Their relevance to this paper is comparative: they make visible relations between a commitment to alleviate suffering, judgments concerning need, organizational independence, and the practical conditions for offering assistance. The principles should not be presented as a universal list of legal duties binding every volunteer or every potential subject.

A further distinction is needed between *humanitarian concern* and *international humanitarian law*. In armed conflict, legal protections and duties depend upon applicable legal instruments, the classification of the situation, the identities and statuses of relevant parties, and the jurisdiction and institutional role of the actor. A moral question concerning whether to help an apparently suffering artificial or extraterrestrial being does not establish the applicability of the law of armed conflict to that being. Equally, a proposed humanitarian response to a conflict between two artificial systems requires prior inquiry into whether there are subjects capable of being harmed in a morally relevant sense, who possesses authority to intervene, and what collateral consequences might be produced.

This separation makes humanitarian extension more tractable. Paper X can study recognition of possible suffering and the epistemic conditions of attributing experiences. Paper XI can examine ethical permission, precaution, restraint, and aid under uncertainty. Paper XII can consider the architecture of humanitarian assistance when the status and types of participants vary. These studies may engage humanitarian principles as comparators or inspirations, but each must articulate its own normative argument, institutional scope, and empirical evidence. Analogical use of a humanitarian norm can clarify a problem; it cannot extend an institution's legal mandate through terminology alone.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent principles are also internally differentiated: humanity and impartiality directly structure humanitarian purposes and needs-based assistance; neutrality and independence concern conditions of access and operational autonomy; voluntary service, unity, and universality concern additional dimensions of Movement identity and organization. Their precise status derives from the Movement's history and institutional commitments. The same labels, transferred into an experimental system for artificial agents, would therefore amount to a new normative proposal requiring its own justification. The fact that a platform has been described as "neutral" would not settle whether it fairly represents disputed interests, nor would a rule of impartial allocation identify which candidate artificial subjects have morally relevant needs [27].

24.7 Legal Standing, Responsibility, and Adjudicative Authority

Papers XIII–XVI are intended to develop the jurisprudential consequences of heterogeneous subjects and assistance relations. Their problems include legal subjecthood, responsibility and sanctionability, adjudicative authority, representation, enforcement, social-contract membership, shared nomos, and legal obligations of protection. The present ethics contributes distinctions that can organize these questions but cannot settle them. A subject may merit moral consideration without being recognized as a legal person under a particular legal system. An institution may be legally competent to act while facing a

serious ethical objection concerning intrusion or exclusion. An artificial system may produce accurate classifications while lacking legal authority to adjudicate claims.

The research should preserve at least five separations. Moral patiency concerns whether and why interests or welfare of a being count in ethical appraisal. Moral agency concerns capacities and grounds for responsibility for conduct. Legal personality and legal standing concern statuses constituted by legal sources and procedures. Adjudicative authority concerns who may legitimately issue binding judgments. Enforcement authority concerns who may compel compliance and under which procedural constraints. The extension from one status to another is a distinct argument. In particular, delegating decisions to a technically capable artificial system raises questions about reviewability, procedural rights, appeal, institutional accountability, and the lawful delegation of public power. Its relative computational performance, even if established, cannot settle those questions.

The separation is equally important for social contract and nomos formation. A heterogeneous group may develop stable rules, reciprocal expectations, mediated dispute procedures, and mutual recognition. These arrangements are relevant to the GR study of historically generated norms. Their existence supplies evidence of a normative order in a descriptive sense, while the order's justice, the legitimacy of its governance, and its recognition under a particular legal system are further questions. An account of a nonhuman participant's ability to communicate refusal may inform the design of procedures for representation; it does not alone establish the participant's legal rights. Papers XIII–XVI can use these differences to formulate questions for comparative legal research and normative jurisprudence without collapsing them into the preceding ethics paper.

24.8 Constructed Cross-Domain History of a Multispecies Assistance Platform

Consider a wholly hypothetical assistance platform coordinating food distribution, veterinary support for companion animals, translation, and appointment referrals after a regional evacuation. Volunteers interpret messages through a software system that recommends urgency levels. Recipients may describe their own needs and the needs of animals dependent upon them. The organization asks volunteers to make publicly visible accounts of successful cases to attract further resources. As capacity becomes strained, the platform introduces a rule that regular recipients must participate in feedback sessions before additional appointments can be scheduled. No actual organization's practices or legal duties are asserted by the construction.

A local ethical assessment concerns the volunteer asked to submit an applicant's personal narrative to a public channel. The candidate reasons include expected benefit through funding, privacy, relevant consent, the urgency of other recipients' needs, competence to interpret translated information, and obligations acquired through previous assurances. The volunteer's authorized options may include anonymized reporting, requesting specific consent, consulting a coordinator, declining unauthorized publication, or referring the issue to an appropriate supervisor. An adequate assessment keeps observed consent, mere acquiescence, and conditions of practical refusal distinct. The framework of Sections 10, 16, and 18 can reconstruct these reasons and their evidential limits.

The justice inquiry concerns the institution's broader arrangements. Applicants with limited language access may face systematically longer delays, persons who refuse publicity may have fewer appointment opportunities, and affected subjects may be missing from administrative records. Whether each difference constitutes injustice requires evidence of comparative access, the grounds of allocation, feasible alternatives, and defensible norms. The political-economic inquiry asks why the platform depends on publicity, which actors control funding and data, who performs unpaid translation, and whether the requirement to attend feedback sessions transfers institutional costs to those already burdened. The historical inquiry investigates whether repeated volunteer rescue and apparent recipient agreement stabilize a system of dependence, and what actual institutional changes could reopen excluded choices.

The heterogeneous-subject inquiry concerns animals whose welfare is affected and the classification system's role in decisions. Existing human testimony may support claims about animals' circumstances while the assessment of animal welfare requires additional relevant expertise and evidence. The soft-

Table 24: Interfaces between the ethics of volunteer intervention and associated GR research inquiries

Target inquiry	Reusable object or question	Additional requirement	Illustrative inference failure
Relational justice (VI)	Affected subjects, burdens, reasons, contested procedures	Independent justice premises and claim coverage	Individual benefit treated as evidence of institutional fairness
Political economy (VIII)	Option constraints, unpaid work, resource and credit flows	Causal mechanisms, allocation records, feasible alternatives	Declared scarcity treated as an unavoidable fact
Historical dynamics (IX)	Reliance, commitments, repeated conduct, reopening	Longitudinal evidence and rival explanations	Historical persistence equated with normative legitimacy
Heterogeneous ethics (X–XII)	Candidate harm, partial evidence, restraint, precaution	Arguments for moral status and type-appropriate evidence	Functional response equated with subjective experience
Jurisprudence (XIII–XVI)	Agency, representation, responsibility, authority disputes	Applicable law, jurisdiction, procedure, institutional powers	Moral concern or technical competence equated with legal standing

ware’s ability to categorize requests identifies a functional role, with no automatic inference about its own moral status or adjudicative authority. If a later version of the platform made claims regarding its own welfare, researchers would need to distinguish the production of such statements from evidence adequate to justify a moral-status assessment. The jurisprudential inquiry would examine the actual legal status of personal data, responsibility for erroneous referral, protection of animals, and authority to issue or review eligibility decisions under an identified jurisdiction.

A cross-domain counterfactual makes the distinctions particularly clear. Suppose the platform abolishes mandatory feedback sessions while preserving its funding structure and volunteer workload. This may remove one burden on recipients without addressing dependence on unpaid interpretation or selective publicity. Suppose instead the organization increases funding but retains an inaccessible appeals mechanism. Resource improvement may coexist with procedural exclusion. A further variation assigns an AI system final authority to reject applications while providing fuller factual explanations. Improved informational accuracy would require separate assessment from the legitimacy of the delegated decision. None of these variations alone determines an overall ethical, justice, economic, historical, or legal verdict. They establish discriminating research questions for later evidence and normative argument.

24.9 Comparative Research Interfaces and Verification Requirements

A comparative interface requires specific outputs and failure tests. Table 24 identifies, for the principal future inquiries, what may be inherited from the present ethics, what must be independently established, and which category error would compromise the resulting claim. The entries are a research design rather than validated findings. They preserve a common case record where helpful, while allowing the target inquiry to revise the scope of subjects, temporal boundaries, evidential channels, and relevant alternatives.

Verification should begin with an explicit source-and-destination inventory. The researcher specifies the original object, the type of proposed transfer, the normative and causal premises introduced at the destination, and the aspects of the original evidence that fail to carry over. For a proposed causal coupling, the verification plan should identify possible observations or counterfactual histories capable of distinguishing the hypothesis from rival explanations. For a normative translation, it should state the disputed grounds and explain why the proposed reason binds or permits a particular agent. For a legal claim, it should identify the legal sources, jurisdiction, status of the parties, and relevant institutional

procedures. Sections 21 and 22 already provide diagnostic coverage and verification disciplines that can be reused conditionally for this purpose.

Two additional risks require explicit review. First, a method intended to improve inclusion may expand the analyst's power to classify others while withholding those subjects' opportunities to contest classifications. The process of defining the target domain should therefore itself be open to reasoned scrutiny where relevant and practicable. Second, the research programme could gradually treat the GR framework as an authority for conclusions that its descriptive and formal constructions merely help articulate. To limit that risk, each transferred claim should retain an identifiable source of justification and a stated failure condition. In particular, mathematical consistency, cross-paper terminological agreement, and bibliographic accuracy constitute valuable but limited forms of verification; they do not establish empirical truth, moral authority, or lawful implementation.

A heterogeneous-subject example exposes an additional translation limit. Suppose an assistance platform flags apparently distressed behavior in an artificial agent. The signal may justify examination of the system's functioning, its interactions and the possibility of harm, while leaving open whether it has welfare interests, subjective experiences, or moral standing. Any proposal to protect it can be grounded provisionally in precautionary duties toward humans, animal co-participants or the integrity of shared institutions; a stronger claim of duties owed to that artificial agent requires a separate moral argument. Legal standing, liability for a harmful action and authority to adjudicate are further distinct questions. The same restraint applies to alien or hybrid subjects for which conventional tests of communication or suffering may be unreliable. Extending a GR record to these cases is a hypothesis about representational scope, not evidence that the proposed subject satisfies a particular ethical or juridical criterion.

24.10 Programme Boundaries and Outstanding Research Obligations

The interfaces developed here support a coordinated but plural research programme. The principal continuity is historical and relational: actions, positions, resources, expectations, and rules are treated as formed and transformed within relations, and their accessible manifestations are examined through partial evidence. The principal discontinuities concern what each inquiry must justify. Ethics evaluates situated practical reasons; justice considers claims and arrangements; political economy explains resource and power structures; history investigates sequences and mechanisms of change; the heterogeneous-subject papers examine moral considerability under uncertain forms of agency and experience; jurisprudence identifies legal status, powers, and institutional duties. Each inquiry can expose omissions in another, yet none automatically supplies all missing premises.

The three-level GR distinction remains relevant throughout. Ultimate ontological claims concerning subjecthood, suffering, or moral reality remain open. Relational reality provides a proposed vocabulary for historically effective positions, practices, and structures. Manifestation reality concerns testimony, conduct, records, language, technological outputs, and other ways those positions become accessible. The researcher's claims about such manifestations remain epistemic and interpretive propositions, and ethical or legal conclusions require their respective normative or institutional grounds. These distinctions become particularly demanding where a later study crosses species boundaries, considers machine sentience, or uses analogies with international humanitarian protection.

Subsequent papers face at least four substantive obligations. Political-economic analysis must establish actual mechanisms of cost and power transfer rather than rely upon morally evocative labels. Historical analysis must test continuity and change against rival causal explanations. Heterogeneous-subject ethics must defend criteria of moral consideration, competence-sensitive methods of evidence, and the costs of mistakes under uncertainty. Jurisprudential inquiry must establish the relevant legal materials and distinguish proposed norms from existing law. The present paper's own immediate responsibility is narrower: Section 25 synthesizes the ethical framework, identifies what follows conditionally from its assumptions, and states which results await independent testing or normative argument. Until those requirements are met, the interfaces here remain explicit research commitments rather than validated institutional prescriptions.

25 Foundational Synthesis and Open Ethical Obligations

The ethics of volunteer intervention developed in this paper investigates how situated agents acquire, interpret, contest, and discharge practical responsibilities in historically changing relations of assistance. Its central objects are particular options available to particular agents, the affected subjects whose positions must be considered, the evidence through which an intervention becomes assessable, and the moral grounds invoked to justify conduct. This concluding section consolidates the proposed account while specifying the boundaries of its claims. The argument proceeds through a reconstruction of its analytical and normative architecture, an assessment of commitments and distributed burdens, an appraisal of deliberation and historical revision, and a set of verification obligations. The synthesis is conceptual and philosophical, supported by formal bookkeeping and hypothetical diagnostic histories. It makes no claim that the resulting framework has been validated as a clinical, legal, or organizational decision system.

25.1 The Object and Scope of an Agent-Relative Ethics of Assistance

A volunteer intervention takes place within an arrangement of differentiated positions. A recipient may request support, a volunteer may offer it, a coordinator may assign a task, and an institution may control eligibility, information, or continuity. Their actions may share consequences while arising from different roles, histories, capacities, and permissions. The central normative question of the present paper concerns what a specified agent has adequate reason or obligation to do at a specified stage of that arrangement. Assessments of a programme's general distributive fairness, political-economic reproduction, or legal authorization are relevant to this question through defined interfaces, and each retains additional requirements of justification.

The ethical-situation construction of Section 4 gives the inquiry an explicit domain: the acting position, candidate affected subjects, a historical record, available evidence, relevant commitments, option descriptions, partial feasibility judgments, and practical constraints. These are evidence-relative analytical inputs. A volunteer's practical horizon may contain offering limited help, seeking clarification, referring a request, reporting a safeguarding concern through an authorized channel, declining an unauthorized task, or arranging a responsible withdrawal. A narrower description of options can artificially produce a dilemma; an inflated description can invent capabilities and institutional channels that do not exist. Ethical analysis therefore includes the justification and correction of the option set itself.

Agent-relative evaluation should be distinguished from moral favoritism toward the volunteer. The reasons an agent can properly act upon depend partly on knowledge, feasible capacities, accepted undertakings, standing, and authority. The interests and reasonable objections of affected persons remain material to those reasons. A recipient's participation can change the content of an intervention, while an organizational decision may alter what the volunteer can accomplish. Agent-relativity accordingly specifies an attribution problem within a multi-position relation. It does not preclude institutional criticism or responsibilities toward subjects whose interests fall outside the initial dyad.

25.2 Three-Level Reality and the Provenance of Ethical Evidence

The three GR reality levels delimit the evidential reach of the account. *Ontological reality* denotes the ultimate status of beings and their experiences, which the present programme suspends rather than claiming to settle. *Relational reality* concerns historically constituted arrangements, dependencies, capacities, and positions that are sufficiently stable to affect subsequent possibilities. *Manifestation reality* concerns testimony, observed conduct, records, refusals, gestures, and other context-dependent presentations through which these arrangements become accessible and interpretable. A classification made by a researcher or organization is an epistemic and administrative act performed in this world; it does not supply a fourth GR reality level.

The resulting methodological discipline is especially important for need and consent. Section 7 distinguishes a candidate need, evidence by which it is recognized, and the practical reasons an agent may subsequently have. Section 8 tracks interpretive provenance and the possibility of mishearing, silencing,

or overconfident inference. Section 10 then examines the scope and temporal limits of authorization. Evidence that an individual accepted one form of assistance may be relevant to that act while leaving subsequent publication, specialist referral, or expanded intervention independently assessable.

A particularly consequential failure can occur before any claim or testimony is entered. A person may be invisible to a register because access requires a language they cannot use, attendance they cannot afford, or credentials they lack. A perfectly reproduced dataset may then provide a faithful description of an exclusionary sampling mechanism. The candidate-subject domain and the opportunity to contest its boundaries must be considered alongside recorded observations. Even careful inclusion cannot establish perfect knowledge of another's suffering, preferences, or capacities. The epistemic aim is a disciplined and corrigible representation adequate to a specified ethical question.

25.3 Moral Reasons, Deontic Positions, and Normative Grounding

The movement from evidence to obligation remains a substantive philosophical task. Section 3 introduces a conditional warrant connecting evidence, proposed normative grounds, and candidate practical reasons. Section 5 distinguishes reasons favoring an action from all-things-considered assessments of requirement, prohibition, or permission. The typed records help identify the content and provenance of an argument, while their formal coherence cannot supply the argument's moral authority.

This separation preserves several categories whose conflation would distort the ethics of helping. Beneficence may count in favor of assistance, yet the volunteer may face countervailing reasons of competence, consent, self-regarding responsibility, or duties to other persons. A permissible option may still be morally regrettable, and an admirable option may exceed what another party may reasonably demand. An assessment may remain undetermined because the available evidence is incomplete, or because independent moral principles remain contested. Genuine incomparability, when defended through explicit premises, differs from both situations. The distinctions set limits on any attempt to make the framework an automatic recommendation procedure. In particular, the value Und in Equation 5 should not be conflated with an argument establishing genuine moral incomparability. It may arise through missing evidence, unresolved disagreement, insufficiently individuated options, or incomplete subject coverage. Section 18 retains those distinct explanations in its corrected judgment and coverage fields, $\mathcal{V}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,judg}$ and $\mathcal{M}_{A,t}^{\kappa;B,gap}$. This qualification matters where a superficially coherent moral assessment is based on a register that excludes some affected subjects.

Section 6 treats exceptional voluntary contributions and the demands of sacrifice. The resulting account is deliberately sensitive to disagreement over demandingness: urgent need can provide serious reasons to help, while another person's need alone does not specify which particular individual must bear indefinitely expanding costs. Duties to cooperate, arrange safe referral, or alert a responsible institution may sometimes be justified even where direct intervention exceeds the agent's competence or authority. Such duties must be tied to recognizable grounds and situational feasibility. The moral distinction between refraining from an unqualified act and simply disregarding an accepted responsibility is therefore preserved.

25.4 Agency, Authorization, and the Limits of Benevolent Power

Volunteer aid frequently takes place amid asymmetric access to resources, specialized knowledge, institutional decisions, or communication channels. An agent may believe that an intervention would improve another's situation while facing a refusal or disagreement. Section 11 specifies the contested grounds, possible intrusion, independent third-party interests, and less intrusive alternatives. Benevolent intention belongs in the evidential and moral description, while an interference's justification depends on more than anticipated benefit. Similarly, competence to carry out a task and authorization to perform it have different sources and different failure conditions, as Sections 9 and 16 demonstrate.

The recipient's agency is a constitutive component of the assistance process. Section 17 distinguishes the opportunity to speak, actual influence on decisions, contribution to service provision, and burdens

imposed in the name of participation. A consultation forum can display a recipient's involvement while leaving eligibility rules or decision authority untouched. An institution may also require labor or publicity as a condition of support, making ostensibly collaborative assistance difficult to refuse. Ethical appraisal should therefore follow changes in practical options and authority as well as expressions of satisfaction or consent.

The same discipline applies to the volunteer. An organizational instruction may shape legitimate role expectations and access to supervision, yet the existence of direction is separate from the justification of its content. A volunteer should be able to identify the limits of delegated authority, ask for competent oversight, and contest assignments that exceed feasible capability or authorized scope. Meaningful recipient and volunteer review depends on institutional practices and actual resources, rather than solely on written statements about participation. The proposed framework analyzes these differences; it is not an independently valid specification of the legal rules governing any hospital, charity, or humanitarian agency.

25.5 Historical Commitment, Trust, and Responsible Withdrawal

Voluntary entry into an assistance relationship may affect later moral reasons. Confirmed appointments, promises, patterns of availability, and communicated assurances can alter recipients' planning and dependence. Sections 13 and 20 distinguish the historical events that constitute an undertaking from the normative grounds that can make reliance morally significant. Repetition may increase predictability and trust while reducing alternatives, including through organizational choices to substitute unpaid activity for sustained service capacity. A temporal sequence alone supports neither an attribution of fault nor a finding that the underlying arrangement is ethically justified.

Historically acquired duties remain sensitive to their content, participants, available alternatives, and changed circumstances. An assurance to attend an appointment ordinarily differs from a claim that one individual will provide all necessary support indefinitely. A material change in competence, health, resources, or family responsibility can alter which actions are feasible and which duties can reasonably be discharged in their original form. In such situations a revised ethical appraisal may distinguish communication, mitigation, attempted referral, acceptance by another service, actual continuity, and repair of foreseeable reliance costs. These are separately ascertainable events.

The analysis of restraint and withdrawal in Section 19 consequently treats ending an act and completing a responsibility as potentially different transitions. Respect for refusal may justify a limited response, while a volunteer leaving an ongoing undertaking may retain some responsibilities for accurate notice and a feasible transition. Institutions may hold stronger prospective responsibilities for recurring service arrangements that they designed or permitted to rely upon unpaid labor. The assignment of these responsibilities requires premises concerning control, role, reasonable expectations, available means, and the actual affected persons. Historical continuity supports a more precise account of these obligations without producing permanent claims over the time or person of a volunteer.

25.6 Distributed Responsibility and the Allocation of Burdens

An assistance outcome may depend on translation, scheduling, eligibility rules, funding, referral infrastructure, volunteer decisions, and recipient choices. The distributed-agency analysis of Section 14 separates causal contribution, responsibility for an accepted task, moral accountability, and prospective remedial responsibility. A volunteer who transmits a message, a supervisor who limits referral routes, and an institution that determines eligibility may occupy different positions in the same process. Harmful outcomes alone cannot establish an individual actor's blameworthiness; prospective duties to prevent recurrence may nevertheless attach to agents with relevant control or institutional resources.

Burden distribution is part of the ethical question rather than a neutral background constraint. Requiring participants to attend feedback sessions, provide personal stories, translate unpaid, or maintain an under-resourced service can alter the feasibility of the very options presented as voluntary. Section 15 attends to the volunteer's accumulating costs and the distinction between ethically relevant fatigue reports

and clinical diagnosis. Section 18 then places burdens beside competing reasons without assuming that they share a natural quantitative unit. A claim that a decision is reasonable should identify whose costs were included and whether alternatives could have redistributed them.

The relation between responsibility and justice is thus one of partial dependence and continued distinction. Paper VI's five-dimensional justice framework raises institutional questions of distribution, procedure, recognition, epistemic standing, and relational positioning. The present paper asks what an agent ought to do in a specified setting. A defensible local volunteer decision may coexist with unfair institutional conditions; an institutional reform may change the practical reasons facing an individual without itself completing all commitments already undertaken. Section 24 provides an explicit research contract for such transfers. A broader structural critique should not be inferred solely from an agent's particular dilemma, and a justified structural reform does not erase the immediate needs of persons affected during transition.

25.7 Practical Deliberation, Defeasible Judgment, and Revision

The paper's provisional practical method begins by reconstructing the agent's situation, identifying affected subjects and feasible options, recording testimony and relevant institutional channels, and stating the moral grounds invoked for each candidate response. Independent constraints concerning consent, specialist competence, legal or organizational scope, and time-sensitive protection must be considered within their verified domains. A defended judgment should specify relevant rival options, objections, reasons for accepting or rejecting those objections, and what would trigger revision. This is a discipline for accountable inquiry rather than a universally sufficient rule of action.

Deliberation can yield several epistemically different results. A particular action may be conditionally justified on a clearly stated premise bundle. Two responses may be defended as incomparable under a relevant plural normative standard. An assessment may remain underdetermined because evidence of consequences, authorization, feasibility, or affected subjects is missing. A response may also be excluded by an independently justified constraint, without having been assessed as worse on a scalar measure. Section 22 differentiates these states and specifies the tests required before moving from a local conclusion to an institutional recommendation.

Urgent conditions place additional pressure upon deliberation. Section 12 treats waiting, partial inquiry, protective measures, authorized escalation, and direct assistance as potentially distinct options whose temporal costs must be investigated. A time-limited choice can be necessary under uncertainty and remain open to later examination. Retrospective review should reconstruct the information available at the relevant moment, subsequent evidence about consequences, and the independent moral standards for responsibility and repair. It should avoid treating a fortunate result as proof of sound initial reasoning or an adverse result as sufficient proof of wrongful conduct.

25.8 Inferential Boundaries and Research Failure Tests

The paper's integrative ambition creates recurring risks of inferential overreach. Table 25 records the main transitions and the evidential or justificatory conditions required to sustain them. The table synthesizes the verification architecture of Section 22 and the diagnostic tests of Section 21. It is designed for targeted manuscript criticism and future empirical research, including research that could require revision of the proposed categories.

The listed failure conditions can be approached through counterexamples. A language-restricted intake system can challenge completeness claims for an evidential register; an authorized narrow referral can challenge an artificially binary option set; a recorded handoff without receiving-party uptake can challenge continuity claims; a compulsory participation scheme can challenge claims of co-production. Section 21 uses constructed histories to display these vulnerabilities. Their conceptual force is to specify what a proposed method must detect. Empirical conclusions require evidence from settings whose institutional facts, legal conditions, participant perspectives, and causal alternatives have been appropriately established.

Table 25: Inferential boundaries and possible failure tests in the preliminary ethics of volunteer intervention

Transition	Required support	Example of an overextended inference
Manifestation to candidate need	Traceable testimony, interpretation and coverage of potentially affected subjects	Institutional nonregistration treated as absence of need
Candidate need to agent-specific reason	Independently justified moral grounds, standing and action options	Identified hardship treated as an unlimited personal duty
Reason to deontic judgment	Relevant rival reasons, authorization, constraints and justified assessment rule	Beneficial outcome treated as proof of permission
Delegated task to accountable action	Role provenance, competence, actual control and supervision routes	Organizational assignment treated as moral or legal entitlement
Historical reliance to continuing duty	Uptake, reasonable expectations, changed capacities and accessible transitions	Long-standing help treated as an irrevocable service promise
Local judgment to programme extension	Independent causal, institutional, normative and legal source requirements	Volunteer deliberation treated as a sufficient justice or legal verdict

Formal consistency testing has a correspondingly bounded role. A well-typed provenance record can be checked for valid references, coherent domains, and correctly related assumptions. Such testing does not validate the moral grounds, establish completeness of the observed population, or make inferred feelings certain. The same holds when repeated conclusions remain stable under changes in an explicitly considered premise family: stability within a restricted family leaves open the possibility of systematic omission. Robustness requires scrutiny of what was excluded from the varied specifications as well as of what remained constant within them.

Three attempted shortcuts now serve as research failure tests. First, a densely documented history cannot turn a contested candidate reason into a duty without a substantive normative bridge. Second, multiple records supporting an action cannot rank it above another if the records duplicate reasons or exclude a subject who bears the principal cost. Third, successful organizational coordination does not establish a collective agent, valid delegation, or an institution's exclusive possession of remedial responsibility. Each shortcut can be exposed by a targeted countermodel, a change in the affected-subject domain, or a rival account of available authority. In all three cases the proposed typed records are useful insofar as they make the missing inference identifiable. Their limitation is equally important: identifying the gap is a research result concerning the argument's status, not a proof of the moral judgment that would fill it.

25.9 Open Ethical, Empirical, and Institutional Obligations

Several philosophical tasks remain open. The proposal requires sustained criticism concerning the grounds of duties to rescue, the distinction between duties and supererogation, competing conceptions of autonomy, the justification of paternalistic exceptions, the authority of institutional directions, and the limits of responsibility for historical reliance. The comparison in Section 23 preserves major differences among deontological, consequentialist, care-ethical, virtue-ethical, and contractualist arguments. It offers a common vocabulary for presenting their reasons in cases; it does not derive their convergence or adjudicate their deepest disagreements. Later revision should therefore test the extent to which the framework yields informative disagreement descriptions and principled practical recommendations under challenging normative premises.

A second obligation concerns empirical and interpretive research. Candidate constructs for need, reliance, capacity, volunteer burden, recipient agency, and service continuity require operational definitions suited to each setting. Research should investigate selection into institutional records, asymmetric access to appeal, decision-making authority, and rival explanations for observed historical changes. Actual subject accounts warrant protections concerning consent, confidentiality, unnecessary exposure, withdrawal, and meaningful opportunities to challenge representation where these are practicable and

ethically appropriate. Hypothetical examples in the manuscript provide neither observational confirmation nor permission to collect personal data. The evidence needed to validate a particular application should be specified before that application is claimed to work.

A third obligation concerns institutional and legal variation. Volunteer roles, supervision channels, safeguarding responsibilities, privacy rules, and professional practice boundaries differ between organizations and jurisdictions. The present distinctions can guide questions posed to an institution, while an operational policy requires verified local standards, competent review, and legally applicable sources. Transfer to humanitarian emergencies and heterogeneous subjects further requires independent arguments regarding moral patiency, agency, suffering evidence, representation, and lawful authority. A system's technical ability to classify a request is insufficient to establish either an ability to suffer or a legitimate power to adjudicate. Paper VIII and the subsequent programme are expected to analyze resources, historical dynamics, heterogeneous subjects, and jurisprudence through their own research designs.

A fourth obligation is reflexive. The production of a framework for aid generates classificatory power over those it seeks to describe. The analyst chooses categories, records some forms of testimony more readily than others, and defines which alternatives count as feasible. Scholarly responsibility therefore includes maintaining a visible distinction between what the source material warrants, what is reconstructed through GR, what is proposed as an ethical premise, and what remains unsettled. A citation ledger, source-control history, transparent limitations, and appropriate human review can support this responsibility. They are enabling procedures, with their ethical adequacy still dependent on actual use and on the subjects whose lives a future study could affect.

The immediate source-provenance obligation is more specific than a count of verified records. Before public release, claims that extend normative duties beyond their original professional setting, empirical findings beyond their sampled population, or humanitarian principles beyond their institutional bearer require passage-level review. The accompanying audit distinguishes bibliographic existence, abstract-level relevance, and checked argument-level support. A source-only test can confirm that a citation resolves; a scholarly audit must additionally determine whether the citation bears the argumentative weight placed upon it. The corresponding open philosophical obligation is to test whether reasons for imposing assistance costs remain defensible when the set of affected subjects, the feasible alternatives, and the distribution of institutional power are altered.

25.10 Foundational Result and Programme Continuity

The principal result of this preliminary paper is an integrated, historically situated and provenance-sensitive architecture for analyzing agent-relative moral reasons in volunteer intervention. It combines a typed ethical-situation record, candidate reasons, conditional deontic appraisals, and more specialized accounts of need, interpretation, competence, consent, disagreement, urgency, undertakings, distributed responsibility, self-regarding burdens, recipient participation, restraint, historical feedback, and verification. Its analytical value lies in recovering the relevant subjects, tracing how an option or obligation became possible, and distinguishing the evidence for a judgment from the normative premises on which it rests. The records can help identify omitted parties, displaced burdens, unaccepted handoffs, unjustified claims of authority, and conditions under which a previous judgment deserves revision.

The framework remains a proposal rather than an established general ethical theory or validated institutional system. Its formalisms are representations of inferential responsibilities; its cases are hypothetical; and its practical conclusions depend on independent moral premises and case-sensitive evidence. Relational generativity is a historical and explanatory notion here, whose moral appraisal depends on the actual opportunities, vulnerabilities, autonomy, and responsibilities it helps constitute. This preserves a distinctive GR question: how changing relations alter the agents, alternatives, evidence, and moral reasons through which assistance can be judged. It also preserves the limits of that question: causal efficacy, institutional durability, moral justification, justice, and legal validity remain different determinations.

The resulting research obligation is to retain revisability without obscuring practical responsibility.

In an actual situation, an agent may have to decide under constraints and uncertainty; a careful ethical account should reconstruct what could reasonably have been known and done, identify residual affected interests, and preserve routes for later explanation and repair. For the broader programme, the appropriate continuation is a critical revision of the completed manuscript followed by independent inquiry into political economy, history, and heterogeneous-subject questions. Each extension should inherit only what has been defined and defended, make its additional premises visible, and remain open to counterevidence and moral objection.

References

- [1] Maria Alvarez and Jonathan Way. *Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Substantive revision August 22, 2024. 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [2] American Medical Association. *Terminating a Patient–Physician Relationship*. Opinion 1.1.5, current official online text; physician–patient scope. AMA Code of Medical Ethics. URL: <https://code-medical-ethics.ama-assn.org/ethics-opinions/terminating-patient-physician-relationship> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [3] Sherry R. Arnstein. “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”. In: *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35.4 (1969), pp. 216–224. DOI: 10.1080/01944366908977225.
- [4] Elizabeth Ashford and Tim Mulgan. *Contractualism*. Substantive revision April 20, 2018. 2018. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contractualism/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [5] Annette Baier. “Trust and Antitrust”. In: *Ethics* 96.2 (1986), pp. 231–260. DOI: 10.1086/292745.
- [6] Tony Bovaird. “Beyond Engagement and Participation: User and Community Coproduction of Public Services”. In: *Public Administration Review* 67.5 (2007), pp. 846–860. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00773.x.
- [7] Tony Bovaird and Elke Loeffler. “From Engagement to Co-Production: The Contribution of Users and Communities to Outcomes and Public Value”. In: *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 23.4 (2012), pp. 1119–1138. DOI: 10.1007/s11266-012-9309-6.
- [8] Michael E. Bratman. *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*. Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780199897933. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199897933.001.0001.
- [9] Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd. “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis”. In: *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 17.4 (2014), pp. 529–540. DOI: 10.1007/s11019-014-9560-2.
- [10] Trishna Chauhan. “Neutralized, Enhanced, Tokenistic: The Influence of Formal Employment of Service-Users on Processes of Co-Production”. In: *Public Administration* 101.3 (2023), pp. 1014–1032. DOI: 10.1111/padm.12839.
- [11] Tom Christiano. *Authority*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Spring 2025 archived edition, philosophical analysis of political authority. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2025/entries/authority/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [12] John Christman. *Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy*. Substantive revision August 22, 2025; relational autonomy discussion. Aug. 22, 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/autonomy-moral/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [13] Kristie Dotson. “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing”. In: *Hypatia* 26.2 (2011), pp. 236–257. DOI: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x.
- [14] Heather E. Douglas. *Science, Policy, and the Value-Free Ideal*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. URL: <https://upittpress.org/books/9780822960263/>.
- [15] Gerald Dworkin. *Paternalism*. Substantive revision September 9, 2020. Sept. 9, 2020. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [16] Nir Eyal. *Informed Consent*. Substantive revision February 20, 2025. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/informed-consent/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [17] Miranda Fricker. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press, 2007. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001.

- [18] Lori Gruen and Susana Monsó. *The Moral Status of Animals*. Fall 2024 archived edition; substantive revision August 12, 2024. 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/moral-animal/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [19] Allen Habib. *Promises*. Substantive revision June 17, 2022. 2022. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/promises/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [20] Sven Ove Hansson. *Risk*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. 2023. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/risk/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [21] Michael O. Hardimon. "Role Obligations". In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 91.7 (1994), pp. 333–363. DOI: 10.2307/2940934.
- [22] Miguel A. Hernán and James M. Robins. *Causal Inference: What If*. Boca Raton: Chapman and Hall/CRC, 2020. URL: <https://miguelhernan.org/whatifbook>.
- [23] David Heyd. *Supererogation*. Substantive revision March 4, 2024. Mar. 4, 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/supererogation/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [24] John F. Horty. *Reasons as Defaults*. Oxford University Press, 2012. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199744077.001.0001.
- [25] Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove. *Virtue Ethics*. Substantive revision May 3, 2026. 2026. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [26] Jasmine Huynh, Despoina Xanthopoulou, and Tim Windsor. "A Longitudinal Investigation of Job Demands–Resources Theory in Volunteer Firefighters Working for the Nonprofit Sector". In: *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* (2024). DOI: 10.1002/nml.21602.
- [27] International Committee of the Red Cross. *Our Fundamental Principles*. Undated institutional presentation; accessed 2026-10-09. International Committee of the Red Cross. URL: <https://www.icrc.org/en/our-fundamental-principles> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [28] International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *Volunteering Policy*. Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Aug. 2022. URL: <https://www.ifrc.org/document/volunteering-policy> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [29] Morten Jakobsen and Simon Calmar Andersen. "Coproduction and Equity in Public Service Delivery". In: *Public Administration Review* 73.5 (2013), pp. 704–713. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12094.
- [30] Diane Jeske. *Special Obligations*. Substantive revision August 6, 2019. 2019. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/special-obligations/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [31] Robert Johnson and Adam Cureton. *Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Substantive revision October 2, 2025. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [32] Carl Knight. *Reflective Equilibrium*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Summer 2025 archived edition; entry first published 2023. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2025/entries/reflective-equilibrium/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [33] Christian List and Philip Pettit. *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents*. Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780199591565. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199591565.001.0001.
- [34] Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers, and Susan Dodds, eds. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2013. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199316649.001.0001.
- [35] Monica Magrone et al. "A New Look at Job Demands, Resources, and Volunteers' Intentions to Leave: The Role of Work–Home Interference and Burnout". In: *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 35 (2024), pp. 1118–1130. DOI: 10.1007/s11266-024-00679-y.
- [36] Neil C. Manson and Onora O'Neill. *Rethinking Informed Consent in Bioethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. DOI: 10.1017/CB09780511814600.
- [37] Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter. "Understanding the Burnout Experience: Recent Research and Its Implications for Psychiatry". In: *World Psychiatry* 15.2 (2016), pp. 103–111. DOI: 10.1002/wps.20311.
- [38] Terrance McConnell. *Moral Dilemmas*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Spring 2024 archived edition. 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/moral-dilemmas/> (visited on 10/09/2026).

- [39] Paul McNamara and Frederik Van De Putte. *Deontic Logic*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Verified citation metadata and discussion of conditional obligations, contrary-to-duty cases, and competing deontic systems. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2025/entries/logic-deontic/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [40] José Medina. “Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities”. In: *Social Epistemology* 26.2 (2012), pp. 201–220. DOI: 10.1080/02691728.2011.652214.
- [41] Christopher Mole. *Attention*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. 2026. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2026/entries/attention/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [42] Vincent C. Müller. *Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics*. Fall 2026 archived edition; substantive revision March 27, 2026. 2026. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2026/entries/ethics-ai/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [43] Daniel Muñoz. *Obligations to Oneself*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Winter 2024 archived edition. 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2024/entries/self-obligations/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [44] Liam B. Murphy. *Moral Demands in Nonideal Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN: 9780195079760. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780195079760.001.0001.
- [45] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Reproducibility and Replicability in Science*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2019. DOI: 10.17226/25303.
- [46] Onora O’Neill. “Some Limits of Informed Consent”. In: *Journal of Medical Ethics* 29.1 (2003), pp. 4–7. DOI: 10.1136/jme.29.1.4.
- [47] Elinor Ostrom. “Crossing the Great Divide: Coproduction, Synergy, and Development”. In: *World Development* 24.6 (1996), pp. 1073–1087. DOI: 10.1016/0305-750X(96)00023-X.
- [48] Paul Pierson. “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics”. In: *American Political Science Review* 94.2 (2000), pp. 251–267. DOI: 10.2307/2586011.
- [49] T. M. Scanlon. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. ISBN: 9780674950894. URL: <https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/publications/what-we-owe-each-other>.
- [50] Peter Singer. “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”. In: *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1.3 (1972), pp. 229–243. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265052>.
- [51] Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. *Consequentialism*. Substantive revision October 4, 2023. 2023. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [52] Anthony Skelton. *William David Ross*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Ross’s pluralistic account and prima facie duties; archived edition. 2026. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2026/entries/william-david-ross/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [53] Marion Smiley. *Collective Responsibility*. First published 2005, substantively revised December 2022. Dec. 19, 2022. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-responsibility/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [54] Matthew Talbert. *Moral Responsibility*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. 2026 archived edition; substantial revision June 3, 2024. 2026. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2026/entries/moral-responsibility/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [55] Christian Tarsney, Teruji Thomas, and William MacAskill. *Moral Decision-Making Under Uncertainty*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. 2024. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/moral-decision-uncertainty/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [56] Joan C. Tronto. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge, 1993. URL: <https://experts.umn.edu/en/publications/moral-boundaries-a-political-argument-for-an-ethic-of-care/>.
- [57] United Nations Volunteers. *Conditions of Service*. Official UNV Conditions of Service update; applies to UN Volunteers under the relevant programme and assignments. Apr. 1, 2026. URL: <https://www.unv.org/conditions-service> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [58] Margaret Urban Walker. *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2007. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195315394.001.0001.

- [59] David Wiggins. “Claims of Need”. In: *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 1–57. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198237198.003.0001.
- [60] Susan Wolf. “Moral Saints”. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 79.8 (1982), pp. 419–439. DOI: 10.2307/2026228.
- [61] Fiona Woollard, Frances Howard-Snyder, and Charlotte Unruh. *Doing vs. Allowing Harm*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Substantive revision July 8, 2025. 2025. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/doing-allowing/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [62] World Health Organization. *Burn-out an “Occupational Phenomenon”: International Classification of Diseases*. May 28, 2019. URL: <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [63] World Health Organization. *Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030: Towards Eliminating Avoidable Harm in Health Care*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2021. URL: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240032705> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [64] World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation, and World Vision International. *Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2011. URL: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241548205> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [65] World Medical Association. *WMA Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants*. World Medical Association. 2024. URL: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/> (visited on 10/09/2026).
- [66] Iris Marion Young. *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780195392388. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195392388.001.0001.