Understanding the structure of ranked data

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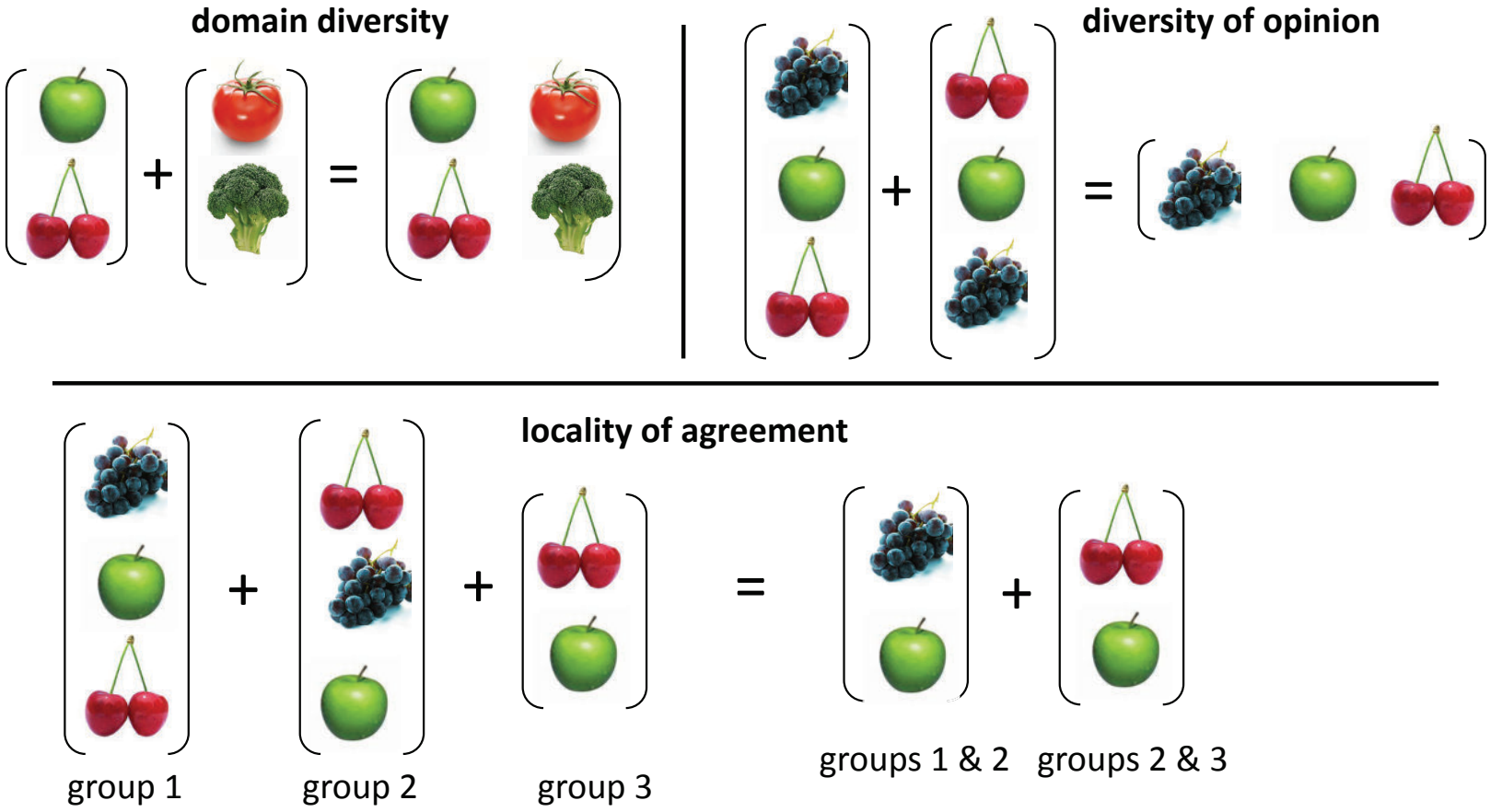
If there is a central question that can be seen as the motivating issue that inspires social choice theory, it is this: how can it be possible to arrive at cogent aggregative judgments about the society (for example, about "social welfare", or "the public interest", or "aggregate poverty"), given the diversity of preferences, concerns, and predicaments of the different individuals within the society?

Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize Lecture (Economics) 1998

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