

Editorial Note

Oftentimes many individual acts lead to a significantly (dis-)valuable outcome though the performance of each act makes no valuative difference to that outcome. Such cases give rise to a dilemma. For it seemingly doesn't matter whether one performs an act (or not) if it doesn't make a difference. Yet it matters a great deal when many of these acts are performed, provided they bring about a significant outcome. One might think, therefore, that at least *some* reason favours the performance of such acts. But in the absence of a valuative difference, it is difficult to say what that reason is, exactly.

The above dilemma arises in both *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* cases. For instance, in the intrapersonal case, it seemingly makes little difference to my goal of running the marathon whether I skip a single workout. Yet it makes a significant difference to my goal of running the marathon if I skip *all* of my workouts. And, in the interpersonal case, it seemingly makes no difference to the bad effects of climate change if I choose to be a vegan or not. Yet it makes a significant difference to the bad effects of climate change if we *all* choose to be vegans. This dilemma has generated a substantial body of literature in both ethics and rational choice. Surprisingly, however, there has been little crossover between the two fields of study.¹ The motivation for the special issue was to offer an avenue to explore new solutions or perspectives on the dilemma through the lens of one, or both of these fields.

This special issue contains a range of different articles. Some articles take on the intra- or interpersonal dilemma independently. Others address the problems together, looking at how they intersect and interact. While other articles tackle the various implications and ancillary problems to which the dilemma gives rise.

JAN WILLEM WIELAND contends that a paradox emerges when we look at the two dilemmas together. Namely, it seems permissible to defect in intrapersonal dilemmas when there is a solution in place to achieve one's long-term goal. But, he contends, the same may not hold in interpersonal dilemmas. It could still be problematic to defect even when there is a

¹ Notable exceptions include: Arntzenius and McCarthy (1997), Andreou (2006a, 2006b), and Soon (2021).

solution in place, according to which *other people* will achieve a collective goal. Yet, at least on the face of it, the structural similarity between the two cases leads one to believe there is no difference between them. Not all of these propositions can be true at the same time, and one of them has to go. Wieland argues that one reason it is impermissible to defect in interpersonal dilemmas is because defecting would be unfair. He tentatively suggests that fairness considerations only pertain to interpersonal cases and not to intrapersonal ones. So there is a relevant difference between the two cases after all. One difference he identifies is that, in intrapersonal cases, the perspective of the diachronic agent is leading (rather than any of its timeslices), while, in interpersonal cases, the perspective of the individuals in the group is leading (rather than the group itself). Wieland concludes that more work is required to further flesh out this difference, and indeed resolve the paradox.

TESSA SUPÈR casts doubt on Chrisoula Andreou's (2014, 2022) contention that her solution to intrapersonal dilemmas can be successfully transferred to interpersonal ones. Andreou (2014, 2022) maintains that actions occurring at a moment in time can be described by taking into account that i) they unfold over time; ii) they need not be described by solely referring to what 'fits in' the particular moment in time in which they occur; and iii) an accurate description of what happens at a moment in time goes beyond the intentional doings of the person. Once momentary actions that, if repeated, lead to outcomes that frustrate an individual's concerns are so described, it becomes clear that they are impermissible both in intra- and in interpersonal cases. By focusing on what she calls the 'attribution problem', Supèr argues that the story is more complex. While she concedes that Andreou's argument succeeds when applied to intrapersonal cases, she maintains that this is not true of interpersonal ones. Indeed, she suggests, a correct description of what an individual is doing at a moment in time should distinguish between what 'goes on' at a moment in time and what 'is being done by the individual in question' at that moment. Only the latter description of an action, Supèr suggests, may provide an individual with reasons to do, or refrain from doing, an action. Collective doings that bring about an unacceptable outcome, however, cannot be attributed to the individual who partakes in the collective doing. As such, while a collective doing can be correctly described as something unacceptable that goes on at a given moment in time and that is brought about by the relevant collective of individuals, it cannot be described as something unacceptable that each individual in the collective

is doing at a moment in time. As such, Supèr concludes, while Andreou's redescription of actions solves intrapersonal dilemmas, it cannot solve interpersonal ones, since it cannot say that the individual partaking in a collective doing with an outcome that frustrates her concerns is performing an impermissible action.

In CHRISOULA ANDREOU'S article, intrapersonal dilemmas are analysed through the lens of managerial skills. Andreou focuses on poor self-control. On her view, many cases of poor self-control do not amount to diminished control by the self, but, rather, to cases of full control by the self combined with cyclic and stable preferences over time. Those cases include the intrapersonal dilemmas that we have mentioned at the beginning of this note. Once poor self-control is understood as she suggests, it becomes clear that intrapersonal dilemmas can be fruitfully analysed by using insights regarding managerial failures and successes. Andreou shows how drawing on such insights not only successfully explains many cases of poor self-control, but also provides recommendations on how to implement desirable self-control. More specifically, she suggests, poor self-control can take the form of micromanaging oneself by, for example, persistently and counterproductively meddling with the details of one's implementation plan(s). One successfully manages oneself, when, instead, one's efforts are focused on catching and correcting managerial errors, rather than on misguided attempts at optimizing at a 'lower' level. Her approach to self-control, then, allows one to avoid pitfalls due to micromanagement and to promote resilient behaviour.

TIMOTHY L WILLIAMSON replies to Andreou's article by zooming in on Andreou's modelling of poor self-control. While he agrees that analysing poor self-control through the lens of managerial skills is helpful, he argues that, in order to understand poor self-control, the 'foreign force' paradigm is a necessary complement to Andreou's model of poor self-control as arising from cyclic but stable preferences. To defend cyclic preferences as rational, Williamson suggests, one needs to assume what he calls 'The Weak Planning Perspective'. The Weak Planning Perspective states that rational agents can make plans and, absent a change in preferences or beliefs, they should carry out the plan if they find themselves in a situation envisaged by the plan. Building on this, Williamson claims that it is not possible that excessive deliberation alone (or micromanagement) at the moment of plan-implementation can be solely responsible for poor self-control. Rather, a person who controls herself poorly does so because, when she deviates from her initial plan, she is motivated by part of her

psychology that she does not fully identify with. The management analogy, Williamson concludes, is however helpful insofar as it suggests ways to reduce opportunities to face temptation. But this approach needs to be complemented with one that suggests ways to ‘empower’ one’s control in those moments in which one is tempted to deviate from one’s initial plan because of parts of one’s psychology that one does not identify with.

Cyclic preferences have been central to a number of debates within rational choice theory besides the one on intrapersonal dilemmas. One of them concerns the modelling of so-called ‘hard choices’.² On the standard understanding, a choice between alternatives is hard when the choosing individual deems the alternatives ‘incommensurable’.³ In his contribution to this special issue, SERGIO TENENBAUM engages with hard choices. He distinguishes between different kinds of hardness (affective, volitional, and deliberative) and suggests that the hardness that is of concern to philosophers is deliberative hardness. Having sharpened the hardness of hard choices, he contends that other accounts of incommensurability are unable to capture the hardness of some of these choices. More specifically, he argues, some accounts of hard choices are unable to explain on what grounds the choosing individual should, or should not, be required to deliberate in the face of hard choices. After all, he continues, the deontic verdict for the options is known to the individual and choosing any of the options is permissible. He thus provides an alternative theory of rationality (the Extended Theory of Rationality – see also Tenenbaum (2020)), which, together with Kantian insights, can explain why choosing without deliberation is rationally impermissible. According to what Tenenbaum calls ‘the Kantian condition’, rational action amounts to making the right choice for the right reasons. Accepting the Kantian condition as a requirement of rationality becomes particularly plausible if one accepts, as Tenenbaum does, the Extended Theory of Rationality. The Extended Theory of Rationality, together with the Kantian condition, satisfactorily explains why nondeliberation is rationally impermissible in the face of hard choices and, thus, why these choices are hard.

² See, for instance, Hare’s (2010) and Jitendranath’s (2024) discussion.

³ Different authors have argued for different accounts of ‘incommensurable alternatives’. Among the most prominent ways to flesh out the meaning of incommensurable alternatives, there are ‘incomparable alternatives’, ‘alternatives on a par’, ‘alternatives that are roughly equal’, alternatives that are related by multiple ‘eligible’ comparative relation, or related by a vague comparative relation. See, among many others, Broome (1997), Raz (1997), Chang (2002, 2004, 2014, 2015, 2017), Sugden (2009), Hare (2010), Constantinescu (2012), Qizilbash (2014), Andersson (2016), and Schulz (2023).

In her reply to Tenenbaum, RUTH CHANG raises three worries about capturing hard choices as Tenenbaum proposes. First, she maintains, fleshing out hard choices as deliberatively hard prevents one from recognising that some choices can still be hard even in well-formed choice situations where deliberation has come to an end. Second, Tenenbaum's account suggests that hard choices require ordinary deliberation. And yet, Chang claims, it seems that hard choices should at least allow for a different kind of deliberation or a distinctive kind of rational response. Third, she contends, deliberative hardness may be present even in cases that one would intuitively deem 'easy' choices. These three worries support Chang's more fundamental concern that Tenenbaum's account fails to capture the distinctive hardness of hard choices. She suggests that these defects can be cured by understanding hard choices as cases in which options are on a par and the choosing individual can create reasons to choose. She argues that hard choices are distinctively hard *volitionally*, not deliberatively.

Moving away from the intrapersonal, and on the interpersonal, FRANK HINDRIKS looks at the problem of *collective harm*.⁴ Hindriks argues that we can explain why it is often impermissible to contribute to collective harms by looking at the probability that an individual contribution might make a difference to a collective harm. An individual act is *impermissible* just in case the chance that the act will bring about harm is higher than it should be. An individual act is *permissible* just in case the chance of bringing about harm is below this threshold. Hindriks calls this the 'threshold probability account'. The central merit of this account is that it captures the intuition that it is often permissible to contribute to a collective harm *up until a certain point* but not thereafter. The view therefore avoids over-generating. It does not prohibit acts where the likelihood of bringing about harm is very, if not extremely, low, whilst simultaneously explaining why it is impermissible to contribute to collective harms in various other cases.

MATTIAS GUNNEMYR and CAROLINE TORPE TOUBORG offer a response to Hindriks' article. First, they defend their own 'security' view (Gunnemyr & Touborg, 2023) against two objections from Hindriks. Then they raise an objection to Hindriks' account. Gunnemyr and Touborg argue that Hindriks' threshold account yields counterintuitive results. This is because the threshold account relies on two conditional probabilities: (1) the probability that harm will occur given your act, and (2) the probability

⁴ For an overview, see Nefsky, 2019.

that harm will *not* occur given your omission. You are prohibited from performing said act just in case both of the probabilities are above a given threshold. But, Gunnemyr and Touborg maintain, this gives counterintuitive results in cases of pre-emption. For example, suppose a child is building an elaborate sandcastle on the beach. Furthermore, suppose that Suzy throws a rock at the sandcastle that is certain to smash it, while, moments later, Billy throws a rock that certainly *would have* smashed it, had Suzy not thrown hers. In this case, Hindriks' account says that throwing the rock is permissible. For, although the probability of harm given Suzy's act is 1, which is presumably above the threshold, the probability of avoiding harm given Suzy's omission is 0, which is presumably below the threshold. Therefore, since the act of throwing does not exceed *both* probability thresholds, Hindriks' account deems it permissible. According to Gunnemyr and Touborg, this verdict is counterintuitive. Next, Gunnemyr and Touborg point out that Hindriks' account faces difficulties in low-probability cases, too. To see this, suppose there is a very low probability that, if I throw a ball, it will destroy a child's sandcastle. But suppose that I 'get lucky' and do in fact destroy the sandcastle. Gunnemyr and Touborg claim this act is permissible on Hindriks' account, but this verdict, they argue, is counterintuitive. Intuitively, throwing the ball is wrong *despite* the low chance it has of destroying the sandcastle. Hence, Gunnemyr and Touborg conclude that Hindriks' account yields verdicts that conflict with our considered moral judgements.

An important collective harm case is that of climate change. LUKE ELSON'S article looks at the moral permissibility of carbon offsets and defends them against a number of objections. The main objection is that carbon offsets do not satisfy the requirements of justice because they do not correct the harm that befalls a particular person as a consequence of your emissions. Elson rejects this objection. He argues that there is a symmetry between your *act of emitting* and your *act of offsetting*. Both emitting and offsetting harm and benefit *in expectation*. Hence none of these acts affect particular individuals, and are thus on a par. The impersonal nature of this combination, {emit+offset}, makes it congenial behind the veil of ignorance. The reason is that it imposes benefit and risk upon each individual equally. The fact that offsetting could be accepted behind the veil of ignorance thus gives us reason to think that it's morally just after all. Furthermore, Elson denies that {emit+offset} amounts to 'playing God'. He argues that there is no morally privileged baseline to which we can compare our interventions, given that the atmosphere is a chaotic

system. Whatever we do (including the null act of doing nothing) affects who may or may not be harmed as a result of one's emissions. Hence, we are intricately bound up within the system, as opposed to God, who is outside of it. The upshot of Elson's argument is that carbon offsetting is morally permissible. It allows us to engage in valuable activities (which is preferable to doing nothing), whilst at the same time meeting the requirements of justice.

Yet for all that, KIAN MINTZ-WOO raises a number of objections to Elson. He points out that the injustice done by emitting may be worse in the case of climate change because it makes corrective justice impossible to realise. Mintz-Woo also suggests that the do/allow distinction could undermine some points in Elson's argument. Another consideration is that it may be rationally permissible to be risk-averse, so it is not obvious that expected harms ought to be judged on par with expected benefits. Mintz-Woo concludes his critical comment with a more general point. He argues that what is needed to tackle climate change are policies that change individuals' incentives, thus giving those who are not motivated to change their behaviour a reason to do so. Mintz-Woo ends by claiming that it would be better if moral philosophers refocused efforts away from individual ethics and turned to matters of policy and incentives instead.

In the context of the special issue, Tessa Supèr and Annalisa Costella interviewed CHRISOULA ANDREOU to gain further insights on her views about intra- and interpersonal dilemmas as well as their structural analogy. In the interview, she said that her interest in intrapersonal dilemmas grew out of an interest in practical reason and puzzles associated with rationality in intrapersonal cases. As it is well-known, she has argued that intrapersonal dilemmas as well as cases of temptation can arise from cyclic but stable preferences. Supèr and Costella asked for the benefits of insisting on the rationality or appropriateness of having such preferences. She replied that she came to the conclusion that viewing cyclic preferences as irrational is unnecessarily dogmatic and insisted on differentiating the rationality of having such preferences from the (ir)rationality of acting on them. Her intuition that intrapersonal dilemmas and interpersonal ones were relevantly analogous was sparked by the work of George Ainslie. In reiterating that she does not see any relevant dissimilarity between intra- and interpersonal dilemmas, she remarked that, if such a dissimilarity were to be found, a failure of transferring solution from one dilemma to the other would be expected and not cast doubt on the solution. Reflecting on her overall body of work, she stated that it is largely

focused on rationality, irrationality, and preference structures and choice situations that raise challenges for effective choice over time. She also disclosed that changing themes in her work are often generated by reflection on the significance of how we make choices and evaluate actions in relation to other philosophical topics.

We hope that this collection of contributions will stimulate the reader to further discuss the intra- and interpersonal dilemma. And that the special issue positively contributes to, and shapes future discussion.

We are grateful to everyone who made this issue possible and for all of the hard work that has gone into it. We are especially grateful to the authors for their stimulating articles, as well to the referees for their excellent advice, and for the time and effort that they put into the issue. We would like to pay a special thanks to our editor-in-chief, Ruth Korte. And we wish to thank David Holroyd and James Grayot for assisting us in the editorial work. Finally, we would like to thank the Erasmus Institute of Philosophy and Economics and the Erasmus School of Philosophy for supporting the *EJPE*.

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