



Choice: An Essay on Pluralisms, Value Conflicts and Decision-Making

Anders Herlitz

Ph.D. thesis defence on 8 June 2012

Abstract

This thesis examines decision-making in value conflicts, and argues in favour of a unified approach to decision-making which accepts partial success of a plurality of decision-making methods, and uses these as alternative heuristic tools the appropriateness of which is established and guided by interpretative and creative reasoning. This general conclusion is reached via a number of steps. First, an uncontroversial form of *prima facie* pluralism is accepted as the point of departure. Second, the diversity of value conflicts as well as the variety of different relations that values can have to each other (the *degree of comparability*) is established. Third, the impact of representations and the importance of the selection of matter for reasoning are illustrated and named the *problem with representation*. This, fourthly, undermines the possibilities of monistic value theories to dissolve conflicts, but also means that explanatory models of values need to account for both currencies of values and the way in which representations of the world are created. Such types of explanatory models are dubbed *explanatory pluralism*. Once the problem with representation and the need for explanatory pluralism are settled, it is shown that prevalent approaches to decision-making (including maximizing methods, subsumption under principles, and through Aristotelian approaches that assign importance to judgement) all have some merit, but all fail to account for the complexities surrounding what it is like to make a choice in a value conflict. The only way of dealing with these complexities is by combining a plurality of first order methods so that these can be matched with particular situations with the assistance of interpretative and creative reasoning. A

unified approach to decision-making that furthermore accepts the necessity of its procedural nature as well as the dialectical relation between holding a value and making a decision manages best to deal with the identified problems.



Jury: John Skorupski (University of St. Andrews), Dennis Patterson (EUI), Steven Lukes (New York University), Christine Chwaszcza (University of Cologne, formerly EUI) (Supervisor)

Bio:

Anders was born in Göteborg, Sweden, and also started studying philosophy and economics at the university there. He then continued his studies in Paris for some time, where he realized that the questions that interested him also within economics would be best addressed from the perspective of philosophy. A part from these disciplines he has also studied literature at length, as well as various sub-disciplines of history. His current research interests meet at the point where the question of how to deal with and merge alternative and not perfectly compatible understandings of the world arise.