

Intra-Personal Compromises

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Abstract

The most usual philosophical questions about compromises have been those related to *inter-personal* compromises, in which parties are compromising with each other, rather than *intra-personal* compromises, which are often psychologically demanding. This paper aims to fill the gap in the discussion and briefly analyze the nature of intra-personal compromises. The starting point here is the assumption that inter-personal compromises cannot be made without intra-personal compromises, although intra-personal compromises are common even when they are not linked to inter-personal compromises. The main question addressed in the paper is whether the intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts are similar to those intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others. I argue that they are more or less similar, although there are also some distinctive features in intra-personal compromises that are involved in inter-personal compromises. When a person makes an intra-personal compromise in the context of an inter-personal compromise she is forced to act under uncertainty, as she cannot know beforehand what options are really available. The price of the compromise is known only after the negotiation process. This is a special feature, or so I will claim.

Keywords: Inter-personal compromise, Intra-personal compromise, Bargaining, Uncertainty.

1. Introduction

Philosophical debate about compromises has concerned a variety of topics. Among other things, it has been asked whether compromises should be fair, what kinds of compromises are morally unacceptable and demonstrate lack of integrity, are compromises suitable for both conflicts of interests and conflicts of principles, what does it require to reach a compromise, and should we emphasize the processes rather than the results of compromises when evaluating them (Braybrooke 1982; Ceva 2016; Hall 2022; Huxtable 2014; Luban 1985). What is common to these and similar questions is that they all concern *inter-personal* compromises, that is, compromises in which parties compromise with each other. The most common philosophical questions about compromises have not been about *intra-personal*

compromises. A person may have to choose between her principles or values, and she may feel compromised by something after the choice. Intra-personal compromises are often unpleasant and difficult, but issues of a person's inner life have not been the focus of the discussion. Philosophers have rather been interested in the logic and features of inter-personal compromise.

There are some exceptions. Some authors have written about the regret that a person may feel when she makes concessions on matters of principled concern to her (Lepora 2012: 19; cf. Hall 2022: 225; Jones & O'Flynn 2012: 117; Lepore & Goodin 2013; O'Flynn & Setälä 2020: 9). In an encyclopedia entry, it is pointed out that although compromises connote to giving up one's principles, a compromising person is able to consider the needs of other people (Menkel-Meadow 2016). A few other points have also been made, including the claim that standard moral theories do not offer a proper account of intra-personal compromises (Hoffmaster & Hooker 2017; Margalit 2010: 6). However, in general, intra-personal compromises have not received major attention in philosophy. Probably, the reason for this negligence is the view that they are much like any other demanding and regretful decision a person can face.¹ If so, there is really no need to analyze intra-personal compromises—so much has already been written about hard choices, moral dilemmas, and other psychologically demanding decision-making problems (see e.g., Gowans 1987; Sinnott-Armstrong 1988; Statman 1995).

In this paper, I deviate from the usual philosophical approach to compromises and briefly examine the notion of intra-personal compromise. As some authors have correctly pointed out, intra-personal compromises come *logically prior* to inter-personal compromises (Hall 2022: 222; Lepora 2012: 2). When a person decides to agree to compromise with someone else, she must decide which principles, values, or interests she is willing to sacrifice, partly or completely. That is, she must be ready for an intra-personal compromise, if she wants to compromise with someone else. This is why it is important to understand the nature of intra-personal compromises. Inter-personal compromises presuppose concessions. An interesting question is whether there is something special in intra-personal compromises that occur in the context of inter-personal compromises. Are the intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts similar to those intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others? In what follows, I argue that the impression that they are similar is more or less correct. However, there are also some distinctive features in intra-personal compromises that are involved in inter-personal compromises. The intra-personal compromises that arise in the context of inter-personal compromise do not necessarily heighten responsibility but do involve extra uncertainty.

The paper proceeds as follows. I first introduce how inter-personal compromises are understood in this paper and distinguish between compromising and bargaining. Then, I present some examples of intra-personal compromises and explain what such compromises are. After that, I examine the similarities and possible differences between (a) the intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts and (b) intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others. Finally, I draw some conclusions and estimate the meaning of the debate.

¹ "Sometimes we talk of 'compromises' in an *intrapersonal* fashion: Every trade-off between values can be described as a 'compromise'" (Wendt 2019: 2856).

2. Inter-Personal Compromises

When people or other agents disagree, it is often advisable to seek consensus by offering reasons that help arrive at an agreed judgment on what is right or best. However, in a non-ideal world agreed judgment is regularly out of reach, and then parties can, for instance, vote, lot, or compromise (O’Flynn & Setälä 2020: 2). If they decide to compromise, what exactly do they do?

Inter-personal compromises involve two or more parties. When the parties settle disputes through mutual concessions, they compromise.² If only one party makes concessions, it is no longer a compromise (Archard 2012; Day 1989). Often, compromising parties are in asymmetrical positions, which means one side is powerful, while the other is weak (Golding 1979: 15). However, such parties can compromise if both sides make genuine concessions (and do not merely pretend to give up something). If the result is strikingly unequal and largely dictated by one party, we may cease to call it a ‘compromise’. However, it is not part of the meaning of ‘compromise’ that it is fair (Jones & O’Flynn 2012: 119). Many actual compromises are obviously unfair, although we are eager to call the results of negotiations ‘compromises’ especially in cases in which the results or the concessions of the parties seem equal and, in that sense, fair.

The motive behind an inter-personal compromise is that by agreeing to compromise one can gain something. The termination of a conflict is often mentioned as a goal of the compromise (Golding 1979), but parties usually try to get more than merely ‘peace’. A compromise ensures that each party gets at least something they value, and making a compromise is often preferable to continuation of a disagreement. Having at least one solution is better than not having a solution at all.³ The pragmatic justification for compromises is that it is often important to get *something* done (Menkel-Meadow 2016: 4).⁴ We can say that by compromising the parties get their second-best options, as the best option is not feasible, because of the disagreeing party (O’Flynn & Setälä 2020: 9; Wendt 2019: 2856). Notice, however, that when the negotiation process is still going on, the parties do not necessarily know which options will be available—although they know that the best option is not.

We can distinguish among three types of compromises. The following taxonomy is derived from Chiara Lepora (2012: 7-9). (1) In a substitution compromise, parties agree to do something different than what either of them primarily wanted. They substitute their goals, and do not preserve even parts of the original goals. (2) In an intersection compromise, compromising parties preserve some of their principles or goals. Only a subset of the principles or goals that each held from the onset is sacrificed. In this sense, intersection compromises require fewer concessions than substitution compromises. (3) In a conjunction compromise, parties originally have completely opposing principles (or goals), but they decide to agree to compromise so that both can preserve some of their original principles

² “A concession is an offer by a prospective co-operator to accept a particular utility less than that of his claim”. This is how David Gauthier (1986: 142) defines the term ‘concession’. See also Gauthier 1990: 180.

³ Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson (2012: 30) argue that “the greater the resistance to compromise, the greater the bias in favor of the status quo”.

⁴ Andrew Sabl (2018) writes about ‘necessary compromises’, which are compromises motivated by the knowledge that failure to meet a deadline to act would result in public harm.

(or goals). Conjunction compromises tend to be particularly unpleasant, as the parties should agree to pursue things they originally opposed.⁵

Many authors have emphasized that compromises need to be voluntary—otherwise they are not compromises. We may sometimes want to say that someone was ‘forced to compromise’, but in these cases we (usually) mean that the compromise was especially inconvenient for some party (cf. Braybrooke 1982), or we refer to the agreements which are not literally compromises at all, such as certain peace treaties. The voluntariness of an inter-personal compromise requires that the overt act of compromising, such as hand-shaking, verbal statement, or a signature, is unforced (however unpleasant it may be). But it also requires that the parties understand what they are sacrificing and what they are probably gaining from their concessions. Notice that the decision to agree to compromise in certain way can happen much earlier than the actual inter-personal action of compromising. This personal deliberation should also be voluntary, and not based on massive manipulation or an insolent deception, for instance. Of course, compromises can and often do involve elements of dishonesty. If I gently lead you to believe that my lowest price for selling X would be Y, but in fact I would be ready to sell X to you for half-Y, that seems acceptable. It seems acceptable, as parties need not reveal their cards during the negotiations (for a discussion, see Kuflik 1979: 47).

The reason why it is important that compromises are voluntary is simply the fact that only then do they have obligatory force. To be a party of a compromise is to have freely accepted a moral commitment (Jones & O’Flynn 2020: 119). Compromises can be compared to promises. A person may promise something because that something sounds good; but if that something ceases to sound good this does not imply that the person should not keep her promise. The reason for keeping a promise is not reducible to the reason for making it (Raz 1975).⁶ The same holds for inter-personal compromises. They have obligatory force even when a person is no longer willing to agree to compromise.⁷ No doubt, a person may start to think that justice and fairness requires her to disengage from a compromise. If so, then she needs to decide what is morally more important: keeping the agreement to compromise or promoting justice and fairness.⁸ However, in any case, an involuntary promise does not commit the promisor to keep the promise, and the same holds for compromises (cf. Owens 2006: 118).

Theodore Benditt (1979: 27) writes that a special feature of compromises is that the parties do not try to get as much as they can. However, this sounds

⁵ In a substitution compromise, side A wants actions a, b, c, and d, while side B wants actions e, f, g, and h. Then they pursue actions i, j, k, and l. In an intersection compromise, side A wants actions a, b, c, and d, while side B wants actions c, d, e, and f. Then, they pursue actions c and d. In a conjunction compromise, A wants actions a, b, c, and d, while B wants actions not-a, not-b, not-c, and not-d. If they then pursue (or let others pursue) actions a, b, not-c, and not-d, they have made a conjunction compromise (see Lepora 2012: 7-9).

⁶ If A wants to have a cup of coffee with B, A has a reason to meet B and may promise to meet B. Suppose that A promises to meet B. In this case, even if A would change her mind and would not want to have a cup of coffee with B, she would still have a reason to meet B, because of her promise.

⁷ Successful compromises involve an element of *trust* (Golding 1979: 18).

⁸ Suppose A and B make a compromise which is just and fair according to appropriate standards of distributive justice. In this case, their compromise has obligatory force not only because they have agreed to its conditions, but also because justice requires them to respect it (cf. Jones & O’Flynn 2012: 125).

unlikely. When a person needs to compromise major moral principles or human lives, she acts morally wrongly if she does not even try to make the best deal that she can. She should try to get as much as she can and if she succeeds, surely the question is still about a compromise. Of course, it is possible that the parties of a compromise do not try to get as much as they can. They can agree just because they think that, although the opponent's view is mistaken, the view makes some sense and it is therefore a *right* thing to compromise in a certain way.⁹ Notice also that a person can accept a suboptimal compromise, because she has advantages from giving up a bit, such as that she feels good about the compromise, or her friends will respect her. It is not always that you try to get all you can.

In ordinary language, the results of all kinds of bargaining processes can be called 'compromises', given that the processes end up to a solution in which all parties get something, but something less than what they aimed at and was available (Braybrooke 1982: 141; Jones & O'Flynn 2012: 120). However, in this paper, 'compromising' and 'bargaining' are distinguished. Following many authors, it is assumed that inter-personal compromises are related to matters that are of principled concern to the parties, and that resolutions over minor issues (such as a dispute over the price of a used car) are typically *not* genuine compromises but rather 'deals' (Benditt 1979; Hall 2022; Lepora 2012; Lister 2007).¹⁰ The point here is not that compromising requires 'mutual respect' while bargaining does not (see Bellamy 1999; Benditt 1979; Scott 1997). It is easy to imagine a case in which compromising parties do not respect each other—although their 'co-promise' implies that they have accepted some moral obligations towards each other. The point is that compromises are not merely *choices*, not even 'value choices', but concern matters that are considered *important*, morally or otherwise (Lepora 2012). When an employer and a trade union engage in hard bargaining over wages and working conditions and find a result that implies mutual concessions, we can say that they find a compromise (Jones & O'Flynn 2012: 120). If we do say so, we probably assume that the issue is of principled concern to the parties.

Suppose that a robber is in a position to take the victim's wallet but, after hearing some threats, agrees to take only half of the cash. Should we say that the robber and the victim found a compromise? Perhaps we should, but this is not clear (Benditt 1979: 30; Braybrooke 1982: 151). Probably, a better term can be a 'bargain', assuming that the parties did not consider the issue as principled concern. The victim would be upset, no doubt, but this does not imply that the issue was of major importance to her. She is likely to be upset simply because of the robbery and because the result of the bargaining process was so unfair. The question was of her money, after all.

3. Intra-Personal Compromises

In the abovementioned robbery example, the victim did not feel regret for the concession she decided to make. However, in genuine inter-personal compromises (that concern important matters) feelings of regret are almost defining features. This is because they involve intra-personal compromises that require painful sacrifices. A person who decides to agree to compromise with another party

⁹ For a distinction between goal-oriented and principled compromises, see Jones & O'Flynn 2012: 120-121.

¹⁰ The expression 'matters of principled concern' comes from Lepora 2012: 3.

has to solve an internal conflict of matters of principled concern. To some extent, she needs to rank her most important principles, values, and interests, as the opposing party does not allow her to pursue them all. In such cases, regret is an appropriate reaction (Hall 2022; Jones & O’Flynn 2012; Lepora & Goodin 2013). We sometimes speak about our or our interests having been ‘compromised’, using the very term.

In the philosophical literature, the concept of ‘intra-personal compromise’ has been used in two different ways. Let us call them the *literal meaning* and the *phenomenological meaning*. Those who defend the literal meaning think that intra-personal compromises resemble inter-personal compromises such that when a person’s principles (or values) conflict, they should be revised and weakened so that they are compatible again. None of the conflicting principles (or values) needs to be completely rejected—just like none of the parties needs to capitulate completely in inter-personal cases. Those who defend the phenomenological meaning accept that some intra-personal compromises require people to reject certain principles (or values or interests) completely. This is often how people feel when they agree to compromise while realizing the costs of the compromise. Thus, the label is ‘phenomenological’.

The literal meaning has been relatively common. Barry Hoffmaster and Cliff Hooker (2017: 55) write that an intra-personal compromise “occurs when obligations conflict and repudiating one obligation entirely to satisfy another entirely is unacceptable—for example, when a single parent cannot both raise a child satisfactorily and earn income that living together demands”. Similarly, P. Anne Scott (1997: 151) argues that if an internal conflict between principles is solved by just letting one principle to override another, “this is not in keeping the meaning of compromise” and it “is not what is suggested that should happen in a compromise situation”. Joseph H. Carens (1979: 125) shares the literal understanding of intra-personal compromises as follows:

In the language of economics, one makes marginal trade-offs among available alternatives. This kind of choice is a compromise, even if purely internal one. The individual wants both the career and the relationship. He would prefer not to sacrifice any aspect of either one. Nevertheless, the need to act in a particular situation may force him to make some sacrifice, and frequently an individual chooses a smaller partial sacrifice of both of his goals in preference to a larger sacrifice of one.

The literal meaning of ‘intra-personal compromise’ is understandable, given what is usually meant by inter-personal compromises. Inter-personal compromises require mutual concessions; perhaps intra-personal compromises require a sort of mutual concessions as well, although the conceding ‘parties’ are inside a person’s mind. However, the literal meaning does not do justice to our real experience of the dilemmas we sometimes need to solve. Although there are cases in which the ‘partial sacrifice’ of conflicting principles or values suffices, it is not uncommon that we need to put aside some important principles or values altogether. Sometimes, only these kinds of regretful major sacrifices allow us to make a compromise with someone else. Therefore, the phenomenological meaning of ‘intra-personal compromise’ is clearly better than the literal meaning. Unsurprisingly, the phenomenological meaning has many supporters (Hall 2022; Lepora & Goodin 2013; Wendt 2019).

Inter-personal compromises cannot be made without intra-personal compromises. But intra-personal compromises are relatively common even when they are not linked to inter-personal compromises. Let us consider some examples of intra-personal compromises that do not occur in the context of inter-personal compromises.

1. A JUDGE. Suppose that a judge has to make the final decision about whether an accused person is guilty. As a professional, she respects the presumption of innocence and thus presumes that the accused is not guilty, until the prosecutor has presented sufficient evidence in support of the view that the accused is guilty. She notices that sufficient evidence, as defined by the relevant regulations, has not been presented. However, as it happens, she is personally convinced that the accused is actually guilty (cf. Rääkkä 2014: 53). This view is based on evidence, but not on evidence of the right sort. She understands perfectly well that her personal impressions that uphold her view that the accused is guilty could not be used in decision-making. Nevertheless, this understanding causes her feelings of discomfort and regret. She would like to do justice to the victims of the crime—this is one of the major reasons why she is a judge in the first place. However, she also wants to respect the institutional rules that form the basis of democratic legislation. Thus, she announces that the accused is ‘not guilty’. Although the decision is psychologically painful—personally, she thinks that the accused is guilty—the resolution is not difficult in the sense of being complicated to make. In contrast, she finds it obvious to follow the guidance of the presumption of innocence. The decision she makes is related to matters of principled concern. But she is accustomed to making intra-personal compromises. She realizes that she has principles that may conflict, in this case the principle that she must respect institutional regulations and the one that victims have a right to get justice. However, she does not have contradictory beliefs. The belief that (a) the prosecutor has not presented sufficient and acceptable evidence in support of the view that the accused is guilty, and the belief that (b) the accused is guilty, are clearly compatible.¹¹ Some people criticize her for acting against her values. She understands the criticism, but thinks that, all things considered, she acted rightly.

2. A HOSPITAL CEO. A person in the highest-level management position in a hospital has to decide how to prioritize among different patient groups. She has a background in philosophy and bioethics and is very good at reasoning, which is required in ethical decision-making. She makes a proposal and informs about the conclusion and its grounds to relevant stakeholders: patients, nurses, medical doctors, and so on. Unfortunately, the community disagrees with her almost unanimously, and some of the comments are rather aggressive. They are not experts in bioethics and find it difficult to follow the CEO’s nuanced reasoning. They prefer to stay in old practices, although they confess that sometimes the familiar policies look a bit fuzzy and arbitrary. The head of the hospital makes the following decision: old practices will not be changed. The decision is purely pragmatic, as her aim is to secure good working conditions and patient safety (cf. Devolver & Douglas 2017: 114). She does not think that it is somehow epistemically relevant that so many people have old-fashioned intuitions. She knows that ethical dilemmas cannot be solved by voting. An opinion that looks wrong in the light

¹¹ I would like to thank Vincent Luzzi for the helpful discussion.

of reasons does not turn right just because so many support the opinion.¹² Of course, after noticing the number of opponents, she double checks her view. However, she does not think that the disagreement as such is a reason enough to reduce her confidence in the conclusion she has drawn.¹³ The decision not to reform the hospital's practices is painful, and she feels regret. She has always wanted to follow the best ethical practices that are realizable within the economic constraints. But now this principle has to go, for a while at least. She makes an intra-personal compromise and let pragmatic matters override her principle concerning the importance of ethics in hospital work. Some people blame her and say that she has sacrificed her integrity. However, this is not how she feels. Although she admits the moral costs of her decision, she thinks that, overall, she made the right decision. Hopefully, others will someday agree with her, she wonders. She is uncertain about the strength of the possible backlash in the future.

3. A CRITICAL CITIZEN. A person would like to write an opinion piece about a war. She is an experienced researcher and would have an important message. Her analysis of the situation would be original and revealing. However, as it happens, the political climate is very hostile and the media and most politicians require that (in times like these) it is important to speak with a 'single voice'. People should not present diverse opinions as such activity would endanger 'national interests'. The critical citizen considers such pro-censorship views anti-democratic (and even semi-fascists), and this gives her a further incentive to write. However, she decides to remain silent.¹⁴ The reason for this decision is certainly not that she agrees that civic discussion is dangerous. But she understands that there is not much she can do. Presenting an analytical and historically learned opinion would not stop the war psychosis that can be seen everywhere in her country, and criticism would only harm her reputation which is presently good. It is important to keep it good, for someday she can possibly influence national policies (when times are different). The reason for her self-censorship is mainstream media and political atmosphere rather than 'extremists' or 'radicals', who are often blamed for silencing researchers. She makes an intra-personal compromise between the (a) principle that she has an obligation to correct gross public misunderstandings on important matters and the (b) principle that she should not spoil her reputation as a discerning and judicious citizen and expert for nothing. She lets the latter principle override the former, although this causes her feelings of regret. The decision is anything but easy, and it does not help that some of her friends criticize her. The criticism makes her think about whether she is just a coward and a self-deceiver.

¹² For a different view, see Earp et al 2021. The authors (Earp 2021: 108) argue that the data concerning people's actual ethical views can have 'normative implications'—and not only in the sense that, for pragmatic reasons, we should consider people's actual views. They also seem to claim that the burden of proof is on the side who opposes unanimous majority (Earp et al 2021: 99). But this cannot be right: surely the burden of proof is on the side who has not replied to the *reasons* presented in the discussion.

¹³ Klemens Kappels (2018: 89) argues that "[w]hen our moral commitments are challenged by disagreement, this should sometimes make us less confident in their truth".

¹⁴ In David Archard's (2012: 407) example a member of an advisory body should decide whether to consent to a consensus, as the weightiness of the decision "is enhanced if the committee can, given its members' differences of perspective and background, speak with a single voice".

These examples show that, at least in some cases, intra-personal compromises may require sacrifices of entire principles, not just parts of them. The above examples are rather similar but have small differences. In the ‘Judge’ example, the overriding principle is based on the importance of institutional rules. In the ‘Hospital CEO’ example, the main concern and the strongest value is pragmatic. In the ‘Critical Citizen’ example, the question is about omission rather than action. The examples show that deciding between principles can be but need not be easy. They also show that in intra-personal compromises a decision-maker faces non-ideal circumstances—a world that she would hope to be different—and makes the best decision that is feasible in those circumstances.¹⁵

4. Are Intra-Personal Compromises Special in the Context of Inter-Personal Compromises?

Let us now turn to the question of whether there is something special in intra-personal compromises that occur in the context of inter-personal compromises. Are the intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts similar to those intra-personal compromises that we make when compromising with others? Admittedly, they look rather similar, but let us consider three possible arguments in favor of the view that, in reality, they are slightly different.

Argument 1. When a person makes an intra-personal compromise which is also a decision to agree to an inter-personal compromise, she may realize that something morally bad can happen because of her decision—and not only because (due to the compromise) she is unable to do what is in her view the morally best option but also because by compromising she allows or enables the other side to do something bad. Compromising may thus *increase* a person’s moral responsibility. In their book *On Complicity and Compromise* (2013: 26-27) Chiara Lepora and Bob Goodin correctly point out that

a crucial part of compromise (agreeing the compromise) is a joint action, not a shared one. In a business partnership, all partners are fully liable for all the actions of all the other partners undertaken pursuant to the partnership. So too are all co-principals in a compromise morally liable for the existence of the compromise and all actions pursuant to it. [...] In compromise, each party not only retains responsibility for what he himself commits and omits; he also acquires contributory responsibility for what the other does as a result of his permitting, enabling, or inducing. The greater the wrongs that you facilitate, the more blame that you share. Multiplying the numbers in that sort of case increases rather than reduces the blame that you bear.

Lepora and Goodin do not say so, but could this be a feature that distinguishes between the intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others from those intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts? This is an interesting option, as usual intra-personal compromises

¹⁵ In intra-personal compromises a person does not have ‘contradictory’ principles. The person’s principles conflict merely because of circumstances, as there is no sufficient evidence of guilt (‘Judge’), the community happens to disagree with her (‘Hospital CEO’), and the political atmosphere is corrupted (‘Critical Citizen’).

increase a person's responsibility only in the sense that they tend to involve moral costs. Usual intra-personal compromises do not lead to *collective responsibility*.

However, some intra-personal compromises that are not linked to inter-personal compromises do lead to collective responsibility. Let us consider the 'Hospital CEO' example. It is not an inter-personal compromise, as it does not involve mutual concessions. However, it does increase a person's moral responsibility, as the CEO's decision makes it possible that mistaken and morally problematic prioritizing practices continue. Intra-personal compromises that are not linked to inter-personal compromises can have the same problem as the intra-personal compromises that occur in the context of inter-personal compromises. Therefore, the first argument for the view that the intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others differ from the ones we accept in all kinds of contexts, is not convincing.

Argument 2. Let us consider another option. Inter-personal compromises may lead to *residual obligations*. As inter-personal compromises may include moral costs, these costs may imply an obligation to pay the costs. This point is made by Edward Hall who has especially in mind political compromises. He criticizes Lepora's and Goodin's approach and argues that "their framework presents choosing to compromise as much like any other morally difficult decision agents may make because all genuinely difficult moral decisions can be analyzed in terms of the goods and bads of commission or omission" (Hall 2022: 222). According to Hall, Lepora and Goodin's view "obscures some salient ways that political compromises differ morally from other regretful decisions ordinary agents sometimes make" (Hall 2022: 222-223). In Hall's view, compromises (at least in politics) lead almost necessarily to residual obligations, which is a special feature of political compromises. He writes that

however a politician chooses to negotiate a weighty compromise, residual moral claims of the relevant kind are likely to arise. To the extent that representatives take their role responsibility to be faithful and committed advocates seriously they have reason not to accord with the requirements of ethics in compromise. At the same time, to the extent that representatives take the requirements of ethics in compromise seriously, they have reason not to negotiate toughly. Reasonable grievances about the way that a political compromise was negotiated can, therefore, be made from either direction even if the decision to compromise can be vindicated all-things-considered from the perspective of both parties. If a politician accords with the requirements of ethics in compromise, their representees might reasonably complain that this has come at the cost of them being a good advocate. On the other hand, if a politician prioritizes being an effective advocate, they can be charged with violating the requirements of ethics in compromise (Hall 2022: 229-230).

Could it be that the intra-personal compromises that we make when compromising with others are special because only such intra-personal compromises lead to residual obligations? This is an intriguing option, as it seems clear that the usual intra-personal compromises that we make in all kinds of contexts do *not* lead to residual obligations. If we accept Hall's assumption that the intra-personal compromises that are linked to inter-personal compromises (in politics) tend to lead

to residual obligations, then perhaps we can conclude that the intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others *are* special.¹⁶

However, this conclusion would be too hasty. Consider the ‘Critical Citizen’ example. It is conceivable that when an expert decides not to contribute to the public debate although she would have an important message to tell, the decision leads to some residual obligations. At the very least, she should explain (and possibly apologize) to her friends why she did what she did. Perhaps she should also—because of her omission—do at least something. Maybe she should encourage others to participate in the public discussion. Or perhaps she should present her views to a smaller audience, or write anonymously (if it is not crucial that it is *she* who makes the point). In any case, it is possible or even probable that she does have some residual obligations due to her intra-personal compromise, although that compromise is not linked to any inter-personal compromise. Therefore, the second argument fails to establish that the intra-personal compromises that occur in the context of inter-personal compromises are special.¹⁷

Argument 3. As mentioned earlier, the parties of an inter-personal compromise do not know which options are actually feasible, if the negotiations are still going on. One may think that a party is not in a position to make autonomous decisions, as the other side can control which options are available. This is partly correct but notice that the problem concerns both sides. Donald Strickland (1980: 807) makes an interesting point when he argues that there is a “hidden role of coercion and fate in compromises: either third parties impose a compromise, or nature does”. The role of *fate* is something that seems to define inter-personal compromises, and thus it is also present in the intra-personal compromises that necessarily occurs in the context of inter-personal compromises.

In the intra-personal compromises that are linked to inter-personal compromises there are elements of uncertainty which are absent in usual intra-personal compromises. In the ‘Judge’, the ‘Hospital CEO’, and the ‘Critical Citizen’ examples the decision-maker *knows* exactly what she needs to sacrifice in order to get what she wants. She knows the price of the values or principles she does not want to betray. However, this is not the case in the context of inter-personal compromises where none of the parties knows which options are available—given that the negotiations continue and no party can alone determine its direction and coerce the other party or parties. In a sense, the parties need to have trust in fate and hope for the best. The price of the compromise is known only after the negotiation process.¹⁸ A person who is ready for an inter-personal compromise and willing to negotiate needs to act almost blindly, at least for a while—until all cards

¹⁶ Obviously, one may want to reject Hall’s (2022: 230) claim that “if a politician prioritizes being an effective advocate, they can be charged with violating the requirements of ethics in compromise”. Why would the ethics of compromise demand that one is not a tough negotiator?

¹⁷ Here I assume that residual obligations would arise however the critical citizen solves her dilemma.

¹⁸ Of course, a person can decide what would be the highest price she is ready to pay, but this does not change the fact that the available options are not clear for her (until the negotiations are over).

are on the table. The result of the compromise, both within oneself and with others, can come as a surprise.¹⁹

When a person makes an inter-personal compromise, she feels and thinks in certain ways and wants and values certain things. All this is colored by a particular sort of uncertainty that seems to be a special feature of intra-personal compromise that is involved in the process. Understood in this way, the intra-personal compromises that we make when compromising with others differ slightly from the ones we accept in all kinds of contexts. The difference is not likely to be morally important, but there is a difference, at least in usual cases.²⁰

5. Concluding Remarks

I have argued that the most usual philosophical questions about compromises have been those related to inter-personal compromises rather than intra-personal compromises. This paper has aimed to fill the gap in the discussion and briefly analyze the nature of intra-personal compromises. I asked whether the intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts are similar to those intra-personal compromises that we make when we compromise with others. I argued that they are more or less similar, although there are also some distinctive features in the intra-personal compromises that are involved in inter-personal compromises. When a person makes an intra-personal compromise in the context of an inter-personal compromise she is forced to act under uncertainty, as she cannot know beforehand what options are really available. This is a special feature. Obviously, there can also be other distinctive features. I considered only three possible arguments for the view that intra-personal compromises that we accept in all kinds of contexts differ from those intra-personal compromises that we make when compromising with others.

In the philosophical literature, the concept of ‘intra-personal compromise’ has been used in two different ways. Some authors think that intra-personal compromises resemble inter-personal compromises so that when a person’s principles conflict, they should be revised and weakened so that they are compatible again. None of the conflicting principles (or values) needs to be completely rejected—just like in inter-personal cases none of the parties needs to capitulate completely. Others accept that some intra-personal compromises require people to reject certain principles completely. I argued that the latter is a better way to understand intra-personal compromises, as it mirrors our real-life practices in making intra-personal compromises.

Presently, in world politics and elsewhere, it is more important than ever to understand the importance of being able to compromise. Parties are more likely to reach successful compromises when they adopt a problem-solving attitude rather than a purely strategic one. They should consider their disagreement as a problem to be solved rather than a battle to be won or lost (Carens 1979: 127). The problem-solving orientation will help the parties, and intra-personal courage

¹⁹ If a person knows of my inner conflicts, she can try to take advantage of them in settling on an agreement between us. Even if she does not, my being conflicted while the other is a bit single-minded can weaken my position.

²⁰ I do not deny that someone may come up with an example of an intra-personal compromise that (1) is not linked to inter-personal compromises, but (2) is still colored by uncertainty. Obviously, a person can be ignorant of available options for a variety of reasons.

should guide individual decision-makers despite the uncertainty of the circumstances.²¹

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