Authenticity, reproductive decisions, and moral life:

The role of authenticity in reproductive decision making.

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I, Laura Custers, confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that authenticity is important in reproductive decision-making. By 'important', I mean the following. Reasons of authenticity have normative force, which is distinct from the normative force of reasons of morality. These norms should guide our behaviour in decisions about reproduction. In some cases, agents should give priority to reasons of authenticity even when these reasons conflict with the prescriptions of ethical theories.

First, I formulate and defend an account of authenticity based on Varga's and Frankfurt's work. My account of authenticity is centred around agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. Wholeheartedly endorsed commitments are desires the agent identifies with, which display the features of continuity, centrality, and submission.

Second, I develop a novel argument for the permissibility of causing disability based on the importance of authenticity. I argue that even if we assume that there is a negative relationship between well-being and disability, causing disability is sometimes permissible because of the importance of authenticity in reproductive decisions. In particular, I argue that it is permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for her to make an authentic procreative decision.

Third, I focus on the role of authenticity in the recent debate about decision-making in situations of moral uncertainty. I argue against hedging theories. These theories prescribe that in cases of moral uncertainty one should allow for an increase in the chances of acting wrongly, if this decreases the probability of acting severely wrongly. By looking at cases where agents make reproductive decisions based on the prescriptions of hedging theories, I argue that following the prescriptions of hedging theories conflict with the agent's ability to engage in authentic action.

Impact statement

This study aims to make the following academic contribution. To my knowledge, this is the first study which explicitly focusses on the importance of authentic reproductive decision-making in moral life. In previous research, several authors have concentrated on the history of the concept of authenticity. Moreover, they have presented reinterpretations of existentialist notions of authenticity and discussed authenticity in the context of autonomy and determinism. However, no research has been conducted to explore the normative force of authenticity in moral life in cases of reproductive decision-making.

The main academic contribution of this thesis is its potential to serve as a foundation for further research on the relationship between morality and authenticity. A subsidiary academic benefit is that Frankfurt's work on love is given new application in this thesis, which may provide an enriched understanding of Frankfurt's work for future philosophical research. Lastly, this thesis advances the philosophical conversation concerning moral uncertainty and the (im)permissibility of causing disability by introducing novel arguments based on the significance of authenticity.

Although this study's main aim is to further the academic debate in philosophy, benefits may be derived from this study outside the academic context. First, by underscoring the importance of authenticity in situations of reproductive decision-making, the ideas in this thesis contribute to advocating for reproductive freedom. This has consequences for the fields of laws and policy, since it is crucial to establish safeguards to protect reproductive freedom and to provide services which enable individuals to make authentic reproductive choices. Furthermore, the ideas about the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist may be of interest to people engaged with or connected to the disability rights movement. I argue that it is sometimes permissible to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, even if there is a negative relation between disability and well-being. My argument can be employed to counter critics who do not share the fundamental assumption widespread in the disability rights movement that disability does not make you intrinsically or automatically worse off.

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Introduction

With great tact, almost fearfully, she told me that she respected my decision, but no longer shared my point of view. She did now want to become pregnant. […] 'For years, you see, I was worried about repeating the same mistakes my mother made with me and my sister. I had to defuse this fear so I could summon up the courage to see that I actually do want a family. I want to have that experience, Laura. I dream about it.' (Nettel, 2020, p. 27)

In Nettel's novel *Still born*, Alina shares with her friend Laura that although she did not want to have children for a long time, she has had a change of heart and wants to bear a child (2020). From basing her reproductive decision on a consideration which seems 'less truly her own', namely her fear of repeating her mother's mistakes, her new decision is based on what is truly important to her: having a family. Her second decision has a quality which her first one lacks: it seems more authentic.

Intuitively, authenticity is something we care about as agents. We may praise someone for their authenticity, or dislike people because they are 'fake'. We judge someone who lives authentically to live a better life than someone who does not. Personally, we strive for authenticity in our relationships with others and ourselves.

Although we value authenticity in many aspects of our life, authenticity is more important for certain decisions than for others. We especially hope for our pivotal life decisions to be authentic. When we break up with our partners, decide to move across the world, or choose a profession, we aspire for our actions to align with our inner values. One important life decision individuals are confronted with revolves around reproductive choices.

The philosophical literature about authenticity primarily consists of an exploration of the history of the concept of authenticity and attempts to determine the correct account of authenticity. However, authenticity is a fundamentally practical concept. To make the concept operational and relevant in agents' lives, we must understand the normative force of authenticity and its implications for our life decisions.

According to various authors, the concept of authenticity springs from a concern with the social demands put on us (Trilling, 1972; Guignon, 2004; Varga, 2012; Williams (2002)). It is no surprise then than authenticity often conflicts with societal expectations. The incompatibility with social demands seems relatively harmless. Giving priority to considerations of authenticity is often experienced as liberating and may empower individuals part of oppressed groups to disengage from harmful social identities (Bauer, 2017, p. 570). [1]

Furthermore, considerations of authenticity may also conflict with moral obligations. In contrast with social demands, the clash with moral obligations seems problematic. Therefore, it is important that we understand how to weigh reasons of authenticity against moral obligations.

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[1] For a critique of viewing authenticity primarily as valuable because it helps agents disengage from harmful social pressures, see Feldman (2015). Feldman has developed a criticism of a notion of authenticity which focusses on psychological independence (2015, p. 29-33) According to him, without being subject to internalised norms which stem from social pressures, agents would miss out on a certain category of pleasures.

In this thesis, I am concerned with authenticity in the context of reproductive decisions. Specifically, I look at the normative force of authenticity in moral life within the context of reproductive decisions.

I begin by putting forward an account of authenticity (chapter 1). My account is based on Varga's account of authenticity, who argues that authenticity consists in agents' 'wholeheartedly endorsed commitments'. According to my account, wholeheartedly endorsed commitments are desires with which the agent identifies, and which display continuity, centrality and submission. An action is authentic if one of the agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitments bears on the action and the agent's action is in accordance with their wholeheartedly endorsed commitment.

In chapter 2 and 3, I look at two recent debates in moral philosophy. I argue that the normative force of authenticity forms a counterweight to the commands of morality. In certain circumstances, agents are not required to follow the demands of morality because of the importance of authenticity.

The first debate concerns the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person (chapter 2). I argue that even if we assume that there is a negative relationship between well-being and disability, causing disability is sometimes permissible because of the authenticity of agents. In particular, I argue that it is permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for her to make an authentic procreative decision.

Next, I focus on the recent debate about decision-making in situations of moral uncertainty (chapter 3). Various theorists have argued that agents are subject to a distinctive norm in situations of moral uncertainty, which makes what they ought to do dependent on their uncertainty about moral facts. One influential group of theories are hedging theories, which prescribe that one should allow for an increase in the chances of acting wrongly, if this decreases the probability of acting severely wrongly. I argue that, since hedging theories conflict with the agent's ability to engage in authentic action, they preclude the agent from being a fully morally conscientious agent.

Chapter 1: an account of authenticity

"I don't care to be pretty,' Blue shot back hotly, 'I care to look on the outside like I look on the inside.' (Stiefvater, 2013, p.).

One criticism against the concept of authenticity is that it is 'a vague, ambivalent, and overcharged concept' (Bauer, 2013, p. 567). If we cannot pinpoint what authenticity is, it is difficult to identify its normative force.

In this chapter, I aim to elucidate the concept of authenticity. I clarify the concept of authenticity by giving an account of authentic action and by providing an explanation of the importance of authenticity.

In this chapter, my aim is threefold.

First, I focus on a particular psychological structure of agents, namely wholeheartedly endorsed commitments (section 1.1). To explore this structure, I take Varga's account of authenticity as 'wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses' as a starting point (2012, p. 160). I present a problem for Varga's characterization of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments and argue that we can avoid the problem if we accept submission as a feature of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments.

Second, I give an account of authentic action and a characterization of the phenomenon of practical necessity (section 1.2). I argue that only if an agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitment bears on the action, is an action either authentic or inauthentic. If the action is in accordance with the wholeheartedly endorsed commitment, the action is authentic. In contrast, if the action goes against the agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitment, the action is inauthentic. Furthermore, I argue that if a wholeheartedly endorsed commitment bears directly on an action, it is often characterized by practical necessity.

Third, I concentrate on the importance of authenticity (section 1.3). I explore why we find it important to engage in authentic action. To explore this question, I begin by looking at the origin of the concept of authenticity. I give one view of the development of the concept of authenticity, which is defended by several philosophers. Next, I argue that authenticity is important for three reasons. Authentic action helps us to overturn external social pressures, it enables us to give expression to our wholeheartedly endorsed commitments, and it allows us to be optimally self-directing in the context of reproductive choices.

1.1: Wholeheartedly endorsed commitments
In the first part of this chapter, I will delve into a particular psychological structure agents possess, namely wholeheartedly endorsed commitments (section 1.1). I focus on wholeheartedly endorsed commitments because according to my account, wholeheartedly endorsed commitments explain why and whether actions are (in)authentic. In the second part of this chapter, I will shift from a focus on agents' psychological structures to authentic action in choice situations (section 1.2).

In section 1.1, I first set out Varga's account of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments, which he believes is at the heart of authenticity (section 1.1.1). Varga draws from Frankfurt's theory of the volitional structure of the will and builds on Frankfurt's account. According to Varga, wholeheartedly endorsed commitments are desires the agent identifies with, which

display continuity and centrality. Second, I argue that Varga's account is insufficient because of the other-interests-problem (section 1.1.2). I present examples where agents have wholeheartedly endorsed commitments according to Varga's account, but where intuitively, their commitment is not wholehearted. Third, I set out Frankfurt's account of love (section 1.1.3). Fourth, I propose that if we view wholeheartedly endorsing one's commitment as loving, which involves submission, we solve the other-interests-problem (section 1.1.4). I conclude that we should accept submission as a feature of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments.

1.1.1: Varga's account of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments
In this section, I set out Varga's account of authenticity.

In articulating his account of authenticity, Varga draws from Charles Taylor's and Harry Frankfurt's work (2012; 1991; 1988). Influenced by Frankfurt's writings about moral responsibility, Varga believes wholeheartedness is at the heart of authenticity (1988, p. 165; 2012, p. 81). According to Varga, authenticity consists in 'wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses' (2012, p. 160). I will unpack this claim in the next few paragraphs.

Borrowing Frankfurt's vocabulary, Varga distinguishes between first and second order desires (1988, p. 12-13; 2012, p. 79). If you have a desire to live a tranquil life (first order), but you do not desire (second order) to act in accordance with your desire to live a tranquil life (for example because you believe you are destined for great things), your first and second order desire conflict. In cases where they align, you identify with your first order desire.

Watson famously argued that Frankfurt's hierarchical theory of identification leads to a vicious regress (Watson, 1975, p. 218). By posing first order desires and second order volitions, Frankfurt aims to give greater authority to certain desires of the agent, namely to first order desires with which the agent identifies (of which the agent wants them to be their will). These desires are more truly one's own than desires with which the agent does not identify. However, Watson argues that second order volitions cannot fulfil this role, since second order volitions are just additional desires of the agent: 'Can't one be a wanton, so to speak, with respect to one's second-order desires and volitions?' 1975, p. 217). If an agent does not have a third order desire concerning one's second order volition, the first order desire with which the agent identifies does not seem to be 'more truly one's own' than the other first order desires the agent has. In turn, the third order desire needs a fourth order desire, and so on.

In his reply to Watson, Frankfurt introduces the concept of wholeheartedness (1988c, p. 172). Wholeheartedness is supposed to cut off the chain of increasingly higher orders (Frankfurt, 1988c, p. 170). According to Frankfurt, wholeheartedness entails that the agent makes a commitment 'in the belief that no further accurate inquiry would require him to change his mind' (Frankfurt, 1988c, p. 169). This way, the decision is made without reservation, and the agent makes the desire fully their own.

By wholeheartedly endorsing certain desires, agents constitute themselves (Frankfurt, 1988c, p. 170). They separate themselves from conflicting desires and create an internal preference ordering of the desires they identify with.

Varga interprets Frankfurt's theory about wholehearted identification in the following way. According to Varga, the identification is wholehearted if the identification has two features (2012, p. 81).

First, the identification with one's first order desire is central to one's self-understanding. The connection between your self-understanding and whatever you are committed to is so strong, that betraying your project would mean betraying yourself.

For example, imagine that you are deeply committed to animal welfare. You do not only try to improve the well-being of animals because you think it is morally the right thing to do, but because it is an important aspect of your life. You define yourself as a person who does not harm living beings. If you were to betray this commitment and would let go of it, you would change something fundamental that defines you as a person.

Second, the identification displays continuity. Not only is one committed to the content or goal of one's desire, one also wants to maintain the desire itself (Varga, 2012, p. 81). The agent cares about their project or object of care, but the agent is also concerned with their caring itself: they want to continue to care.[2]

For example if you start to care less about animal welfare, you may try to renew your commitment. You may remind yourself why animal welfare is important to you. This way, you are nurturing your commitment.

As an example of a wholeheartedly endorsed commitment, Varga gives the famous example of Martin Luther. Luther was faced with the choice between renouncing his criticisms of the Catholic church, or accepting a ban on his work and being made an outcast in society. He supposedly said, when asked to reject his views: "I cannot and will not recant anything […]. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." (as quoted in Varga, 2011, p. 68). According to Varga, Luther wholeheartedly endorses his commitment to his ideas about reform for the Catholic church.

The following is a clarificatory note. There is a difference between wholeheartedly endorsed commitments as a certain psychological structure of agents and the objects they are committed to. First, agents possess wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. Wholeheartedly endorsed commitments are a particular type of psychological structure of agents. Second, in wholeheartedly endorsing their commitments, agents are committed *to* something. The thing they are committed to may be an individual, (abstract) object or project. In the example of Luther, the object of commitment is his ideas about reform for the Catholic church.

Moving forward, I use the abbreviation 'WEC' to represent 'wholeheartedly endorsed commitment'. For the individual, object or project the agent is committed to, I will use the term 'object of commitment'.

1.1.2: A problem with Varga's account
To repeat, according to Varga, authenticity consists in wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. An agent's commitments are first-order desires with which the agent identifies: for which they have a second-order volition that their first-order desire is effective in action. Furthermore, an agent's commitment is wholehearted when the identification is central to their self-understanding and displays continuity.

To some extent, Varga's account is well-suited to explain what we mean when we use the term 'authenticity'. By adopting Frankfurt's theory of the volitional structure of the will,

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[2] This condition is based on Frankfurt's theory of caring. It is in particular grounded in Frankfurt's remark that in caring, the agent does not only care about a particular course of action, but they care about caring about it (Frankfurt 1988b, page 87).

Varga can explain why certain desires (and the actions that spring from them) are more fully one's own than other desires. Furthermore, Frankfurt's idea of agents separating and integrating desires and thereby constituting themselves seems closely related to the idea of authenticity. Moreover, we often think of agents who act in accordance with their wholeheartedly endorsed commitments as authentic. Think of someone who spends their life devoted to fighting injustice, whose identity is to a large degree constituted by this fact. Or imagine a father fully committed to the care of his daughter, who partly views himself as a caregiver. These people seem to live authentically to some degree.

However, in the next few paragraphs, I argue that Varga's theory is deficient. A commitment can display the requirements of centrality and continuity, while the agent does not wholeheartedly endorse their commitment.

Consider the following example:

Inheritance: Ananya and Amara are sisters. Ananya is deeply committed to Amara: she spends a lot of time with Amara, she helps Amara whenever necessary, and Amara is an important part of her life. Whenever she feels less inclined to be there for her sister, she thinks about why she loves her sister and changes her behaviour. Ananya's identity is partly constituted by her love for Amara: she sees herself as a loving sister. Whenever Ananya's commitment weakens, she revives her commitment by thinking of why she loves her sister.

Ananya and Amara are heirs to a considerable fortune. However, their mother has stipulated in writing that the sisters will only inherit if they continue to live in their family home. Amara has always enjoyed living in the town she grew up in. Ananya persuades Amara to relocate to the big city, by pointing out that she is not living her best life being stuck in this small town. By persuading her sister, Ananya is hoping to receive a larger portion of the inheritance.

After Amara moves away, Ananya remains as adamant in keeping in touch with her sister and being there for her as before Amara's move.

Intuitively, Ananya is not wholeheartedly committed to Amara. She places her own interests above Amara's well-being.

It is clear that Varga would not want to count Ananya's commitment to Amara as a commitment Ananya wholeheartedly endorses. Ananya's commitment is different from and weaker than Luther's commitment. However, it is difficult to explain why Ananya's commitment is not wholehearted based on Varga's account of authenticity.

First, Ananya's commitment displays continuity. Before and after the move, she is dedicated to her sister. She keeps in touch and tries to see her sister often. She renews her commitment when it starts to fade.

Second, Ananya's commitment is central to her self-understanding. There is no reason to assume this has changed after she persuaded her sister to move. Nor does the centrality of her commitment to her self-understanding after the move seem unreasonable. The way Ananya thinks about her sister and her relationship with her have remained the same.

Maybe Varga could object that the reason why Ananya is not wholeheartedly committed to Amara is not due to the conditions of centrality and continuity. Ananya betrayed her commitment by persuading her to move, leaving her uncommitted to Amara altogether.

However, it seems false that Ananya is not committed to Amara altogether. Her actions suggest that she has a desire to be there for Ananya and that she endorses this desire.

The problem for Varga's account is that it does not rule out cases where the agent gives priority to their own interests and those interests conflict with the interests of the object of commitment. For an agent to have a WEC, their commitment needs to trump considerations which clash with the interests of the object of commitment.

To be more specific: for an agent to have a WEC they need to submit their own interests to the interests of the beloved. I realize the previous claim is ambiguous at this stage of the chapter. I will explain this claim in section 1.1.4, where I argue that we should accept submission as a third feature of WECs, in addition to the conditions of continuity and centrality. However, before I do, I will set out Frankfurt's account of love in the next section.

1.1.3: Frankfurt on love
Frankfurt's theory of love is relevant for our purposes, because it sheds light on what it means for agents to have a wholeheartedly endorsed commitment. I claim that when agents wholeheartedly endorse one of their commitments, they love something in the Frankfurtian sense. This section outlines the features of love.

Before I set out the characteristics of love, I will make two preliminary remarks. To begin with, there is a difference between wanting, caring and loving. We do not care about everything we want, and we do not love everything we care about. Caring is a subspecies of wanting, and loving is a subspecies of caring (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 11; 1999c, p. 155). Next, although persons are among the things that we love, Frankfurt's theory of love extends beyond personal relationships. The object of love can be another type of individuals like a country or an organisation. However, it can also be an 'object of a more abstract sort' like (moral) ideals (Frankfurt, 1999b, p. 130).

Love has the following features.

First, loving is similar to caring in that the object of love is guiding for the agent. It is guiding in two ways. First, it directs agents' conduct over a longer period of time. Second, it determines agents' desires and priorities (Frankfurt, 1999a, p. 110-111; 1999b, p. 129). The first manner in which love is guiding is a reflection of the second way in which it is guiding.

Second, love is disinterested. The lover is concerned with the object of their love and what is good for the object of their love (Frankfurt 2004, p. 42 & 60). The lover wants to further the interests of the beloved without having ulterior motives in mind (1999c, p. 165-168). They are solely concerned with promoting what is good for the beloved for its own sake.

Third, in contrast to moral obligations, love is not impersonal. The object of love cannot be substituted for another similar object (Frankfurt,1999c, p. 166; 2004, p. 43-44). It matters what the object is. The obligations the lover experiences are specific: they are to further the good of the beloved. In contrast, if one acts on their moral obligation to others, it does not matter who the person is. For example, when someone acts out of the moral obligation to help the needy, it does not matter to them who the needy are.

Fourth, loving is not voluntary: 'it is a necessary feature of love that it is not under our direct and immediate control' (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 44).

Fifth, the object of our love acquires value because we love it (Frankfurt, 1999c, p. 172).

One way of perceiving the relationship between value and love is to consider the object of love to have a certain intrinsic value, which brings the lover to love the object. In this interpretation, the intrinsic value of the object grounds the love of the lover.

Frankfurt rejects this interpretation. Instead, the objects of our love gain value for us because we love them (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 39). We might originally come to love something because of its intrinsic value (although there are other ways in which we come to love things). However, the intrinsic value is not what makes us love them. Think of a parents love for their children. Presumably, the parent neither comes to love the child because of their intrinsic value, nor is their love grounded in their intrinsic value. In this way, loving is 'a creator of value' (Frankfurt, 1999c, 172). What we love necessarily has value for us.

Sixth, not only the objects of our love, but loving itself is important to us (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 51). Having relationships of love in our lives is valuable to us. For example, parents not just care about their children, they also care about the fact that they love their children (Frankfurt, 1999c, p. 173; 2004, p. 51). By loving their children, their lives are more fulfilling.

Frankfurt's explanation for the fact that loving itself is important to us is that love sets final ends for us (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 42). According to Frankfurt, our capacity to find things important stems from having final ends. Without final ends, we would not care about anything, as a means or a final end (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 53).

Although this is not essential for my purposes in this section, I want to point out that Frankfurt's explanation for the importance of love is insufficient. The fact that love provides us with final ends is not enough to explain the importance of love. We have various final ends which we do not find particularly important. My pleasure in eating a chocolate bar might be a final end for me, but it is not of any importance to me (Frankfurt, 1999c, p. 159).

Frankfurt does not have a conclusive answer to the question why love is important to us. He appeals to the idea of final ends and terminal value, but cannot explain why final ends of love are different from the final end of the pleasure of eating chocolate bars.

Relatedly, Frankfurt does not give an account of how we come to love certain things. He appeals to evolution to explain why most of us love certain things, like how parents love their children. He simply assumes that people (come to) love things, and that we relate to our objects of love in a different way than to other objects: 'It is in coming to love certain things […] that we become bound to final ends by more than adventitious impulse or a deliberate wilful choice' (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 55).

Although Frankfurt's account of love is not complete, Frankfurt's theory of love is valuable for my purposes. His theory helps us to shed light on the nature of WECs.

I argue that we can best understand Varga's idea of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments as loving in the Frankfurtian sense.

According to this conception of WEC, WECs are guiding, disinterested, personal and involuntary. The object of our wholeheartedly endorsed commitment acquires value because we relate to it in the way we do (because we love it). Furthermore, being situated in relations of wholeheartedly endorsed commitment is important to us independently of the projects, individuals or objects we are committed to.

1.1.4: Love as submission as a solution

In this section, I argue that in addition to Varga's conditions of centrality and continuity, we should accept a third condition for an agent to wholeheartedly endorse their commitment. This third feature is that the agent submits to what is good for the object of commitment, when the interests of the object of commitment clashes with the agent's interests. Accepting this condition allows us to avoid the other-interests-problem.

The idea of submitting to what is good for an agent's object of love stems from Frankfurt. He alludes to the idea of submission a few times in his writings, but he does not provide a detailed account of what submission entails. I will interpret his idea of submission in the following paragraphs and provide an account of what it means to submit to the interests of one's object of commitment.

According to Frankfurt, 'Love requires a person to *submit* to something which is beyond their voluntary control and which may be indifferent to his desires' (1988b, p. 89). In love, we submit to what is good for our beloved.

Frankfurt notes: 'Just as a means is subordinated to its end, the activity of the lover is subordinated to the interests of his beloved' (2004, p. 59). This implies that the activity of the lover is not concerned with their own interests. Their activity is grounded in the interests of their beloved, while their own interests seem irrelevant, or at least of secondary importance. [3]

An agent submits to their object of commitment when they reject the desires which conflict with the interests of their object of commitment. They reject these conflicting desires by letting go of their second order volitions for those desires.

To repeat, Varga argues that the structure of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments is a first-order desire and a second order volition (see section 1.2). For example, an agents' first order desire is to take care of their children, and their second order volition is that their first order desire to take care of their children is effective in action.

If the agent's desire to take care of their children is one of their WECs, they will reject their other desires which conflict with their desire to take care of their children. Imagine that the agent was a rock star before they got their child, and that their rock and roll lifestyle conflicts with taking care of their child. In that case, their desire to take care of their children is only one of their WECs if they let go of their desire to be a rock star.

By adding the condition of submission, Varga's account of WECs avoids the other-interests-problem. According to the other-interests-problem, agents intuitively are not wholeheartedly committed to their object of commitment if they give priority to their own interest over the interest of their object of commitment when these two conflict. By including the submission condition for agents to have a WEC, situations where the agent neglects to prioritize the interests of their object of commitment are excluded. For the agent to have a WEC, the agent must submit to the interests of the object of commitment by rejecting desires which conflict with the interests of their object of commitment.

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[3] This is not the only possible interpretation of Frankfurt's remarks about submission. He also says: 'The interests of his beloved are not actually other than his at all. They are his interests too. […] its interests are identical with his own' (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 61-62). However, this interpretation does not do justice to the idea of submission. If the interests of our beloved are one of our interests, it leaves open the possibility that the interests of our beloved do not trump our other trivial interests. For example, the fact that it would be good for my beloved if I would continue to live in the Netherlands could be trumped by my desire to move to Paris so I can regularly eat crepes.

If we consider the *Inheritance* example in light of the submission condition, we can see why Ananya is not wholeheartedly committed to Amara. When her desire to get rich conflicts with what is good for Amara (namely, to live in the town she loves), Ananya gives precedence to her own interests. In doing so, she does not submit to the interests of Amara. Therefore, she does not have a WEC to Amara's well-being.

1.2: Authenticity in choice situations
In the previous section, I concentrated on agents' psychological structure, namely the nature of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. In this section, instead of focussing on agents' psychological structure, we look at choice-situations agents are confronted with. First, I give an account of authentic and inauthentic action. I argue that most actions are neither authentic nor inauthentic. Only if a WEC bears directly on the agent's choice and action, is the action authentic or inauthentic. Second, I discuss the phenomenon of practical necessity. I argue that in cases where a WEC bears (directly) on an agent's action, the agent often experiences practical necessity.

1.2.1: Authentic and inauthentic action
To repeat, I accept Varga's account of authenticity. According to his account, authenticity consists in wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses. For an agent to have a WEC, their identification with their desire needs to be display centrality, continuity and submission.

Whether an action is (in)authentic depends on how the action is related to an agent's WECs.

I argue that actions are authentic if the agent acts in accordance with one of their WECs. Actions are inauthentic if the agent's action goes against their WEC. Actions are neither authentic nor inauthentic when none of their WECs bear on their action.

To understand what it means to act in accordance or against one of your WECs, consider again the case of Luther. Let's assume he has not yet decided whether to renounce his views. When faced with the choice to renounce his views, he may respond in two ways.

First, he may choose to refuse to renounce his beliefs. In this case, Luther acts in accordance with his WECs. He articulates his commitment. By confirming his WEC, he strengthens his self-understanding as a person for whom their object of commitment is important.

Second, Luther may choose to renounce his views. He acts against his WEC and betrays his commitment. He also changes his self-understanding in this case: he cannot maintain his view of himself as fully dedicated to his criticisms of the Catholic church.

Luther acts authentically if he refuses to renounce his views. He acts inauthentically if he renounces his views.

As we saw, agents act authentically if their action is in accordance with their WEC, and inauthentically if their action goes against their WEC. Agents' actions are not always authentic or inauthentic. According to my account, if an agent's WECs do not bear on an action, the action is neither authentic nor inauthentic. Consider someone brushing their teeth. Their WECs do not bear on their action either positively (agreement with WEC) or negatively (goes against WEC).

I want to shortly concentrate on the situation where an agent acts against one of their WECs.

I argue that a consequence of acting against one of one's WECs is that the agent cannot uphold their WEC. In Luther's example, his action shows that he is not fully committed to his criticisms of the Catholic church. By acting against his WEC, he must give up his wholeheartedly endorsed commitment to his ideas about reform for the Catholic church.

Agents might deceive themselves and maintain that they are wholeheartedly committed. However, if they act against their WEC, their action reveals that they are not wholeheartedly committed.

It is important to note that I use an objective standard for when agents need to give up their WEC. However, this does not mean that whether an agent loses their WEC is not dependent on an agent's beliefs. As I will explain in the next chapter, whether an agent's action goes against their WEC depends on an agent's background beliefs. In some cases, the agent's background beliefs determine whether the action is of such a kind that it goes against their WEC. If the action is the type of action that forces the agent to give up their WEC, the agent loses their WEC. This is true even if the agent him- or herself denies that they need to give up their WEC in performing the action.

Thus far, I argued that actions can be authentic, inauthentic or neither authentic or inauthentic based on the way the action is related to an agent's WECs. Actions are authentic if they are in accordance with one of the agent's WECs; inauthentic if the action goes against one of the agent's WECs; and neither authentic nor inauthentic if none of the agent's WECs bear on the action.

Although correct, this picture is somewhat too simplistic. WECs can bear on the agent's actions in several ways, namely directly and indirectly. I will discuss the ways in which WECs bear on agents' actions in the next chapter (section 2.3). But first, in the next subsection, I examine the phenomenon of practical necessity in relation to authentic action.

1.2.2: Practical necessity

If an agent's WEC bears (directly) on one of the agent's choices, these choices often have a special type of phenomenology. They are often characterized by a sense of necessity and the unthinkability of alternative options (Varga, 2012, p. 108). In the literature, these cases are called cases of 'practical necessity' (see for example Williams 1981a; Watson, 2004).

Practical necessity is relevant for my purposes because the phenomenon is closely related to the idea authenticity. According to Varga, cases where agents experience practical necessity are 'prominent and emblematic when expressing ourselves' (2012, p. 107). Cases of practical necessities are often experienced as instances where agents fully express themselves. This is all the more interesting because cases of practical necessity involve a restriction on the will. The agent does not feel at liberty to act in accordance with each of their options, but feels strongly compelled to follow one course of action. However, as Frankfurt notes, agents do not experience a feeling of impotence, but of liberation (2004, p. 64). The restriction feels part of one's being.

In this section, I concentrate on cases of practical necessity. Giving a theory of practical necessity is not essential to my account of authenticity. However, because of the close relationship between practical necessity and authenticity, our understanding of authenticity is

be enriched by looking at practical necessity. First, I give Williams' account of what practical necessity is. Second, I indicate how practical necessity is relevant to my account of authenticity.

Williams views practical necessity as the result of a specific type of practical reasoning.

When agents are engaged in practical reasoning and try to answer the question of what they ought to do in a specific situation, at least two types of answers are possible. First, after deliberation, agents may conclude they ought to do something. In that case, A is the most appropriate option, having considered all the reasons and considerations that bear on the choice. Second, agents may feel that they must or must not act in a certain way. In this case, the action is not necessarily the most favoured option out of the options available to the agent but is the only possible action for the agent. The second case is a case of practical necessity.

An example of a case of practical necessity is the following. A parent has to choose between saving themselves when their house burns down or to attempt to save their child at the risk of getting injured. They conclude they must attempt to save their child at risk of their own health.

Agents in cases of practical necessity are confronted with the question of 'What ought I to do?' or 'Whether to A?'. According to Williams, the structure of practical necessity is therefore best represented by (a potential) deliberation of the agent (1995, 51). Only a subset of the conclusions of deliberations expresses practical necessity, as most deliberations end in the conclusion that one should or ought to do something (Altshuler, 2013, p. 42).

According to Williams, the deliberation does not have to be actual but may be potential (Williams, 1995, p. 51). This is illustrated by the fact that in the strongest cases of practical necessity, where the agent feels most necessitated to act in a certain way, the agent might never even think of other courses of action (Williams, 1981a, p. 128-129; Williams,1995, p. 51). What is important is that we understand the incapacity involved in practical necessity by appeal to a deliberation, by the considerations which the agent takes to bear on the question.

In cases of practical necessity, necessity can feature in agents' deliberations in two ways (Williams, 1981a, p. 127). The necessity or the incapacity can be primary. First, the agent may conclude they must do A. As a consequence, the agent cannot engage in alternative actions which exclude doing A. Second, the agent may conclude they must not do B. As a consequence, if there is only one alternative to B, namely C, the agent must do C. So, agents may be necessitated to do A, or incapable of doing B.

Cases of practical necessity are different from other types of practical reasoning in the following ways.

First, in cases of practical necessity, the other options available to the agents are not alternatives for the agent. The options become things the agent cannot do (Varga, 2011, p. 69).

Second, the conclusions of practical necessity differ from the conclusions of other types of practical reasoning. According to Williams, it is a consequence of the 'must not' in cases where the practical necessity is expressed as an incapacity, that in most circumstances, the agent will not *intentionally* do it (Williams, 1981a, p. 128). In this way, conclusions of practical necessity are predictive. Williams argues this is the case for cases where the practical necessity is expressed as an incapacity. However, the point that conclusions of practical necessity are predictive is also true for cases of practical necessity where the necessity and not the incapacity is primary. It is

a consequence of 'I must' that in most circumstances, the agent will perform the action, intentionally or unintentionally.[4]

In contrast, the 'ought to do' or 'should do' in the conclusions of other types of practical reasoning is not predictive in the same way. It is true that, barring akrasia, the agent in general will act in accordance with their conclusion. However, this is not an implication of 'ought', but is explained by the fact that people most often do what they have most reason to do (Williams, 1981a, p. 128).

Third, the 'must' of practical necessity can be a discovery for the agent. The feature of discovery is not present for other types of practical reasoning.

For example, imagine someone who was raised as a devout Christian. When they grew up, they distanced themselves completely from the Christian education they received. When faced with the choice whether to have sex before marriage, they conclude they must not have sex before marriage. The conclusion of practical necessity presents itself as a decision and as a discovery.

But also consider the following example (originally from Altshuler, 2014, 41). After opening the door for a policeman, a butler, who considers himself to be an honest man, is asked about the whereabouts of his employer. He concludes he must answer honestly, and does so. The butler already sees himself as an honest man, but the fact that he must be honest in this particular situation is a discovery.

In contrast, consider a deliberation which ends in a conclusion which contains 'I should' or 'I ought' or 'I will'. After deliberation, I conclude I should raise my hand (for example, to ask a question during a lecture). In this case, there is no element of discovery. Discovery does not seem to be a feature of other types of practical reasoning.

Physical and psychological capacities function as excluders in deliberations. Imagine I suffer from partial paralysis, and I cannot move my legs. In answering the question 'what ought I to do in a certain situation?', option B, C, and D are excluded in virtue of the fact that they involve the use of my legs. In contrast, moral incapacities are the conclusions of deliberation. They may function as excluders, but in that case, deliberation is assumed 'upstream' (Williams, 1995, p. 51).

I claim that when one of an agent's WEC bears on their action, in some cases agents experience practical necessity. To be more precise, the agent experiences practical necessity when one of their WECs bears *directly* on their action, as opposed to indirectly. This claim may be ambiguous at this point, but will become clear in the next chapter, when I discuss the different ways in which a WEC might bear on one's action (section 2.3).

To illustrate this point, consider again Luther's example. Seemingly, Luther does not consider his other possible courses of action (such as renouncing his views) as alternatives. He experiences a sense of necessity to refuse to renounce his views. In other words, he experiences practical necessity.

It is important for my purposes that, although practical necessity is often predictive for the behaviour of the agent, there is an important exception to this. In certain abnormal circumstances, the normal deliberative priorities of agents are suspended (Williams, 1995, p.

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[4] The second type of case, where the agent performs an action unintentionally before they have the chance to intentionally execute the action, does not contribute to the predictability.

54). Among such circumstances are cases of coercion, terror, or where the agent experiences a threat.

In this section (section 2.1), my aim was twofold. First, I set out my account of authentic, inauthentic and neither authentic nor inauthentic actions. Second, I focussed on the phenomenon of practical necessity. After I discussed Williams characterization of practical necessity, I claimed that in cases where a WEC bears (directly) on an agent's action, the agent experiences practical necessity.

1.3: The importance of authenticity

In this section, I concentrate on the question why authenticity is important for us. I will not provide and defend a comprehensive account of the importance of authenticity. In chapter two and three, when I put forward two arguments based on the importance of authenticity, I rely to some degree on the intuition that authenticity is valuable for agents. My objective in this section is to strengthen our intuition that authenticity is important to us, by giving three reasons for the importance of authenticity. I take my account of authenticity as wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses, which I put forward in the previous sections, as a starting point. I first set out one influential account about the origins of the idea of authenticity (section 1.3.1). This view on the development of the concept of authenticity is defended by various authors in the literature. Second, I give three reasons why authenticity is important for us if we accept a view of authenticity as wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses.

1.3.1: From sincerity to authenticity

I now present a view about the development of the concept of authenticity. This view is put forward by various philosophers, namely Trilling (1972), Guignon (2004), Varga (2012) and (to a lesser degree) Williams (2002). Trilling is the originator of many of the ideas which make up the view. Drawing on their writings, I present a synthesised overview of their shared view in the following section. I call this shared view the sincerity-to-authenticity view.

According to the sincerity-to-authenticity view, the ideal of authenticity became prominent during the 18th century.

Before that time, there were philosophers who appealed to the idea of an interior world in contrast to an exterior world, and who seemed to embrace an ideal similar to authenticity. Examples of such philosophers are Socrates ('Know thyself'), the Stoics and Augustine.

However, according to the view, the distinction between agent's interior and exterior world featuring in the work of these philosophers was not radical enough to accommodate the concept of authenticity (Varga, 2012, 13-14; Guignon, 2004, p. 7-9).

For Socrates (if we accept a Platonic reading), humans are part of the cosmos, which entails an ordering of all entities in the cosmos. Who one is, is determined by this ordering. In this context, the saying 'Know yourself' should be interpreted as knowing one's position in relation to everything else in the cosmos. Knowledge of one's inner states is only important insofar it allows you to match the ideal. By adjusting your feelings and desires which are not accordance with the ideal that determined your function, you can get closer to the ideal.

A similar idea features in the work of Augustine. According to Augustine, our proper orientation is towards God. However, our bodily desires and worldly activities distract us and

make us lose our proper direction to God. By engaging in inner reflection, we are meant to find our way back to God and take up our proper orientation.

According to the sincerity-to-authenticity view, what is missing for the concept of authenticity is the self as a 'unified, masterful, self-contained centre of experience and action' (Guignon, 2004, p. 9). Insofar as Socrates appeals to the idea of an inner world, it lacks the necessary characteristics. Although Augustine places more emphasis on the inner quest of the individual, for him, the self is not the centre of experience and action, God is. Although our will appears to be the cause of our actions, the true source is God, the First Cause. Only when a change occurs in the way the inner being of agents is viewed, can the concept of authenticity emerge.

The emergence of the ideal of sincerity highlighted the importance of the inner states of individuals. According to the sincerity-to-authenticity, sincerity is an important stepping-stone to the invention of authenticity.

Trilling remarks that the sixteenth century was marked by a fascination with dissimulation and pretence (Trilling, 1972, p. 12). People were intrigued by the phenomenon of feigning, and began to view acting in accordance with one's genuine feelings as virtuous. This led to the ideal of sincerity. The concept of sincerity features in Shakespeare's Hamlet and is exemplified by the following lines:

This above all: to thine own self be true
And it doth follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

First, note the apparent resemblance with the concept of authenticity: being true to oneself is part of what we mean when we describe someone as authentic, or when we aspire to be more authentic. However, the rest of the paragraph reveals that there is a different concept at work. The objective is not to give expression to one's self because this has inherent virtue, but because doing so serves the social goal of being true to others (Guignon, 2004, p.14). As such, sincerity is a social virtue, which consists in an alignment between one's avowals and actual feelings (Trilling, 1972, p. 2).

The ideal of sincerity emphasises the relationship between one's self and one's actions and roles. It therefore contributes to the development of the concept of authenticity.

However, those authors whose views make up the sincerity-to-authenticity view argue that the ideal of sincerity is inimical to concept of authenticity. Because the ultimate goal is to be true to others, what is important is the agent's outer manifestation. Priority is given to the individual's public roles and avowals and not to one's inner self. One's inner feelings and desires have to be altered so one's inner being lives up to one's roles (Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019, p. 583). By giving greater importance to external social relations than one's inner being, the ideal of sincerity stands in stark contrast to the ideal of authenticity.

William reinforces this idea by pointing out that the demands of sincerity do not coincide with the demands of authenticity (2002, p. 183). In La nouvelle Héloise, Julie is sincere when she claims her marriage has given her back to herself after her affair with Saint-Preux. However, according to one interpretation of La nouvelle Héloise, the real Julie is the passionate Julie who entered into the affair.

According to the sincerity-to-authenticity view, a new worldview which was formed during the Enlightenment and the Romantic period made the transition from the ideal of sincerity to the ideal of authenticity possible. Guignon distinguishes five new ways of thinking which contributed to the erosion of the ideal of sincerity and its replacement by the ideal of authenticity (Guignon, 2004, p. 23-27).

First, the rise of modern science in the Enlightenment led to a repudiation of the of the existence of a fundamental order in the universe. Society came to be viewed as something man-made. The formerly accepted aims of life like tradition and station were eroded (Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019, p. 589).

Second, the importance of scientific research during the Enlightenment generated a particular understanding of the self, based on the impartial and observant role of the scientist. The view of the self that emerged was one where the self was regarded as a subject of experience, detached from the world, a self-defining and self-contained mind.

Third, during the Romantic period, rational reflection was viewed as suspect, and was replaced by an emphasis on an immersion in one's feelings. The weight that was placed on rational reflection in the modern worldview was thought to lead to fragmentation of the self. Being part of society led individuals away from the focus on their feelings and was viewed as one of the main causes of a lack of wholeness. By giving priority to our innermost feelings a sense of wholeness was to be regained.

Fourth, society was seen as harmful, and another cause for the lack of wholeness experienced by modern individuals. The idea of the corrupting effect of society is most clearly found in the work of Rousseau.

Fifth, the Self replaces God (and later, Nature too) as the 'highest and all-encompassing of all that is found in reality'. God and Nature were not eliminated, but were less central. First, although Rousseau never denies the importance of God, Nature takes up the position previously held for God in Rousseau's work. Nature is the force that should guide humans in their decisions, and Nature imbued us with the feelings and instincts that will help us do the right thing. For later Romantic thinkers, Nature is replaced by Man: 'for the romantics the ego is the measure of reality' (Reardon, 1973, p. 408). According to these philosophers, Nature is dependent on Man for its existence, as the mind is the ultimate source of Nature through its creative powers. An example is Fichte's transcendental idealism, according to which the self-positing I creates empirical reality by its own activity.

These developments created the awareness that it is not the social roles and public reputation that matters, but the self that underlies these social roles. As Trilling writes, it becomes clear that:

somewhere under all these roles there is Me, that poor old ultimate actuality, who, when all the roles have been played, would like to murmur "Off, off, you lendings!" and settle down with his own original actual self. (Trilling, 1972, p. 10).

The difference between the ideal of authenticity and the thinking that came before is the absence of an external standard prescribing what individuals' inner state should be. Instead, the individual is expected to find one's inner self, and base one's social persona on it (Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019, p. 584). The inner experience is viewed as having intrinsic value.

1.3.2: The normative force of authenticity

In this section, I suggest that authenticity is valuable to us because of three reasons. First, authenticity helps us overturn external social pressures. Second, authentic action contributes to furthering the interests of our objects of commitment. Furthermore, as I focus on reproductive decisions in the following chapters, I give one reason why authenticity is especially important to us in cases where agents make a reproductive decision.

In the previous section, we saw that the main difference between the concepts sincerity and authenticity is that the latter emphasizes the value of agent's inner states, independently of its content and effect on an agent's outer behaviour. According to my account of authenticity as wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses, the inner states that are especially relevant for authenticity are an agents' WECs.

The first reason why authenticity is important to us is the following. Because of the focus on agents' inner life, authentic action has the potential to challenge and overturn undesired social pressures (Bauer, 2013, p. 570).

Agents often internalise harmful external standards, which makes it hard to distance themselves from these standards. As I argued in the previous section, authentic action is often accompanied by a sense of necessity. Because of the experience of practical necessity, authenticity allows agents to act in accordance with their WECs instead of undesired social standards.

Second, engaging in authentic action is important for us because our objects of commitment are important to us.

It seems hard to deny that for most people, the individuals, objects of projects they are committed to give meaning to their lives. My description of Frankfurt's account of love highlighted how our objects of love are important to us, and gain value for us because we love them (section 1.1.3). Our objects of commitment acquire value for us because we are wholeheartedly committed to them.[5] Relatedly, Williams claims agents have 'ground projects', which give us reason to go on living (1981b, p. 11). Our ground projects are what propel us forward and provide us with valuable aims and ambitions.

The importance of our objects of commitment explains why authenticity is valuable to us. To further what is good for our objects of commitment, we are driven to translate our WECs into action. This is where authenticity comes in. We value authentic action because in acting authentically, we give expression to our WECs and promote the interests of our objects of commitment.

Lastly, I suggest an additional reason why authentic action is important to us in cases of reproductive choices.

Intuitively, it seems more important for certain decisions of the agent to be authentic than others. It seems especially important that decisions which determine the course of an agents' life are authentic. We find it particularly important that decisions like ending a relationship, relocating to another continent, or selecting a career path are authentic. One important life decision individuals are confronted with are our reproductive choices.

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[5] Of course, Frankfurt does not use the word 'wholeheartedly endorsed commitments', but speaks of relationships of love. I argued that we can best understand the idea of wholeheartedly endorsed commitments as loving in the Frankfurtian sense.

I argue that it is crucial for these decisions to be authentic, because this is required for the agent to be fully self-directing.

For most decisions, barring situations of coercion or pressure, we consider an agent to be self-directing if they approve of their action, irrespective of what caused them to approve of the action. For example, consider I am deciding which shoes I will buy. If I decide to buy Nike shoes because I know my best friend thinks Nike sneakers are cool, while I secretly like Adidas sneakers, this does not compromise my decision. I seem fully self-directing, even if I don't act on 'something that is more truly my own'.

However, for agents to be optimally self-directing in making decisions which determine the course if their lives, it is not enough if agent simply approves of the course of action.

Imagine that none of someone's important life decisions were related to her deepest values. Instead, she makes these decisions based on reasons which she has accepted, but which do not result from her WECs. For example, she has accepted the idea that one should lead a disciplined life, but she does not wholeheartedly endorse this value. If she then bases her life decisions on this value, she is not fully or optimally self-directing. She would be more self-directing if the values she bases her decisions on were their own in a stronger sense.

To illustrate my point, consider:

Pacifism. Elsa must decide whether she wants to conceive a child. None of Elsa's WECs bear positively on having a child. In contrast, one of Elsa's WECs is pacifism. She desires to be a war correspondent, which (for her) is incompatible with having a child. Because her parents told her it is important to have a large family and Elsa has internalized this value, Elsa decides to get pregnant.

My intuitive reaction is that something is wrong with Elsa's decision to have the child. Something important is left out of her decision: which option is authentic to her. Elsa is not optimally self-directing.

I suggest that two features of such decisions at least partially explain why agents are only fully self-directing if their decision is authentic. First, procreative decisions are decisions that have a deep and long-lasting effect on the person's life. Second, procreative decisions may lead to far-reaching obligations, if one becomes a parent. For one to fully commit to the obligations, their decision to have a child and take on such obligations should be based one's deeply held values.

Conclusion
In this chapter, I followed Varga in characterising authenticity as wholeheartedness regarding the commitments. WECs have the following structure: they consist of a first order desire the agent is identified with, which displays centrality to the agent's self-understanding and continuity. I argued that this characterisation of WECs faces the other-interests-problem. According to this problem, the account of WECs is over-inclusive: it includes cases where the agent gives priority to their own interests while those interests conflict with the interests of the object of commitment. I proposed a third feature of WECs, namely submission to the interests of the object of commitment.

Furthermore, I gave an account of authentic action, according to which an action is (in)authentic if their action is in accordance with or goes against the agent's WECs. Most actions are neither authentic nor inauthentic, because none of an agent's WECs bear on the action. Often, the agent experiences practical necessity when they engage in authentic action.

Lastly, I gave one view of the development of the concept of authenticity, according to which the concept emerges from the idea of sincerity. I argued that there are (at least) three reasons why we value authenticity. First, authentic action has the potential to overturn social pressures. Second, authentic action contributes to furthering the interests of our objects of commitment. Third, in the context of procreative decisions, agents are only optimally self-directing if their decision is authentic.

Chapter 2: Causing disability: an argument from authenticity

Armed with my account of authenticity, I will present two arguments based on the normative force of authenticity in the next two chapters. In this chapter, I focus on the debate about the permissibility of causing disability.

Philosophers have varied moral intuitions on numerous matters, like the significance of animal welfare, the permissibility of killing one person to save a hundred others, and the scope of free speech. Conversely, a consensus exists among philosophers that causing disability is impermissible, while causing non-disability is permissible and perhaps even required.

Lately, the impermissibility of causing disability has been put into question. Multiple authors have argued that in certain cases, it is permissible to cause disability (Barnes, 2016; Stramondo & Campbell, 2020; Wasserman, 2005). However, these authors predominantly embrace a contested view of the relationship between well-being and disability. According to this view, there is no negative relationship between disability and well-being (Barnes, 2016; Stramondo & Campbell, 2020). Given that philosophers who argue for the impermissibility of causing disability typically presuppose a negative relationship between disability and well-being, the arguments for the permissibility of causing disability do not fully address their concerns.

In this chapter, I present a new argument for the permissibility of causing disability. According to my argument, causing disability is sometimes permissible because of the authenticity of agents, even if we assume a negative relationship between well-being and disability. Specifically, I argue that it is permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for them to make an authentic procreative decision.

I start by presenting the topic of causing disability (section 3.1). Next, I advance that it is permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for them to make an authentic procreative decision (section 3.2). Lastly, I look at the relation between an agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitments and their procreative decision (section 3.3). I argue that causing a disabled person to exist is only permissible when causing a non-disabled person to exists entails a rejection of the agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitment.

2.1: Causing disability

I want to make two preliminary remarks. First, in this chapter, I only focus on physical disabilities, as opposed to cognitive or psychological disabilities. Second, I do not attempt to define 'disability'. Instead, following Barnes, I take paradigmatic cases of disability (she mentions mobility impairments, blindness, deafness, rheumatoid arthritis, achondroplasia) as examples (2014, p. 89). In this chapter, when I employ the term 'disability', I am referring to the category of phenomena that encompasses these types of things.

Disability may be caused in various ways. Following Barnes, I distinguish between three types of cases (Barnes, 2016, p. 147-161). In the first type of case, an agent causes an autonomous agent to become disabled (type one). In the second type of case, an agent causes an infant to become disabled (type two). In the third type of case, an agent causes a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person (type three).

Some moral considerations only apply to a specific type of case. For example, if someone causes an autonomous agent to become disabled, the wrong of the action can be explained by the transition costs involved: the pain and difficulty most people experience when they adapt to living with a disability (Barnes, 2016, p. 148). Furthermore, the wrong of causing an infant to become disabled involves a violation of the non-interference principle that it is impermissible to make significant changes to the development of a child (Barnes, 2016, p. 149). Hence, the wrongness of causing disability in type one and type two cases can be explained by moral considerations which do not relate to disability. In contrast, in type three cases, the wrongness must be explained by an appeal to disability, as neither transition costs nor interference principles are applicable. In this chapter, I focus on this third type of cases, where an agent causes a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person.

In the literature, cases where a disabled person is caused to exist instead of a non-disabled person are mainly discussed in the context of the non-identity problem, or in relation to prenatal testing and Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART).

Prenatal screening methods are frequently employed to prevent disability, as they are often utilized to terminate the pregnancy in cases where the foetus has an impairment. However, prenatal screening methods can also be employed to cause disability. Parents may use screening methods to select for a disabled child instead of a non-disabled child. An example of the use of ART to cause a disabled person to exist is In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), where parents choose an in vitro embryo with a certain impairment.

When a disabled person is caused to exist instead of a non-disabled person, the identity of the person caused to exist is changed. Instead of non-disabled person A, who would have existed if a particular spermatozoon fertilized a specific ovum, a disabled person B, who grew out of a different spermatozoon and/or different ovum, is caused to exist.[6]

When the impermissibility of causing a disabled person to exist is discussed in the literature, most of the time, no explicit argument for the impermissibility of causing a disabled person to exist is put forward. Instead, the authors presume that causing disability is wrong. For example, consider the following case of causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person. This example is based on an example by Parfit, but is adapted by Barnes (1984, p. 367; 2016, p. 159). The structure of the case is the same as Parfit's example.

Child now: A woman, Ellen, knows that if she becomes pregnant now the child she conceives will be born disabled. If she waits six months to become pregnant, however, the child she conceives will be born non-disabled. Ellen prefers not to wait, so she becomes pregnant right away. She gives birth to a daughter, Franny, who is disabled. (Barnes, 2016, p. 159).

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[6] As Parfit discusses, not all theories about personal identity accept that 'having grown from the particular pair of cells from which this person in fact grew' is a necessary condition for being a particular person (1984, p. 352). This entails that if one particular spermatozoon and ovum are replaced by another pair, this does not necessarily lead to the existence of a different person. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I accept that it is a necessary condition for the existence a particular person that they grew from the particular pair of cells from which this person in fact grew. The cases I discuss involve an agent intentionally changing one of, or both of the cells the person grows out of. Therefore, they change the identity of the person they cause to exist.

Parfit does not use this case to argue that it is impermissible to cause disability. He simply assumes that Ellen's action is wrong. Instead, he is concerned with the non-identity problem.

The non-identity problem is the following problem. Many people have the intuition that Ellen commits a moral wrong by immediately getting pregnant. However, if Ellen would have waited to get pregnant, Franny would not have been born, but a different child would have existed. If we assume that Franny has a life worth living, Franny is not worse off by Ellen's action. As Ellen does not harm Franny by not waiting to get pregnant, why is Ellen's action morally objectionable?

In response to the non-identity problem, which calls for an explanation why it is wrong to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, philosophers either ground the wrong in the violation of an impersonal or personal duty of the parent (Wasserman, 2005, p. 133). In this thesis, I do not address the question of whether the wrong involved in causing disability should be perceived in impersonal terms of personal terms, as I am not concerned with providing a solution to the non-identity problem. Instead, I discuss whether there is always a wrong involved in causing disability.

To substantiate the assumption that causing disability is wrong, philosophers implicitly accept a bad difference view about disability (also known as the Standard View) (Barnes, 2014, p. 89; Stramondo & Campbell, 2018, p. 138). According to the bad difference view, disability is something that makes you worse off (Barnes, 2016, p. 55). Importantly, the bad difference view assumes that, even if society would be fully adapting to the needs of disabled people, being disabled would still make you worse off.

In contrast, according to the mere difference view, having a disability does not automatically make you worse off. While the bad difference view accepts a negative relationship between disability and well-being, even in the absence of ableism, proponents of the mere difference view believe the relationship is neutral (Barnes, 2016, p. 60).

Since a mere difference view does not entail one view on what disability is but may be supported by various models of disability, the commitments of a mere difference view are not always clear.

Proponents of a mere difference view can perfectly well acknowledge that in our society, which is full of social and physical impediments for disabled people, the average well-being of disabled people is lower than the well-being of non-disabled people (Barnes, 2014, p. 90; 2016, p. 56). What they should reject is that the lower average well-being is because of disability. Neither do they need to deny that being disabled involves the loss of intrinsic goods. Being disabled might entail the loss of some intrinsic goods. However, being disabled can also provide access other goods, which are unique to being disabled. Therefore, on average, being disable does not negatively relate to well-being.

2.2: Bad difference and authenticity
In this section, I develop an argument for the permissibility of causing disability. The argument entails that it is permissible to have a disabled child if this is the only way for the agent to make an authentic procreative decision. For the purposes of my argument, I assume that some version of a bad difference view about disability is correct.

To repeat, the impermissibility of causing a disabled person to exist instead of non-disabled person is often assumed on the basis of a bad difference view. The reasoning is the

following. If one causes a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, one causes a person with lower well-being to exist, instead of a person with higher well-being. It is impermissible to cause a person with lower well-being to exist if one can cause a person with higher well-being to exist.

If we assume a bad difference view, are there cases where the importance of making authentic procreative decisions overrides the harm caused by causing a person with lower well-being to exist? Consider the following case.

Deaf culture. Nicky is Deaf. She is deeply committed to Deaf Culture, and she is a central part of the Deaf community. On a daily basis, she is aware of all the things she appreciates about being Deaf, like her unique experience of the world through her command of sign language, her participation in activities that are distinctive to the Deaf community, and the people she met through the Deaf Community. One of her WECs is her commitment to Deaf Culture. Nicky could have a child with full hearing capacities. However, her most authentic decision is to have a Deaf child, as that decision is in accordance with her WEC to Deaf Culture. One of her (motivating) reasons to (decide to) have a Deaf child is her commitment to Deaf culture.[7]

My intuition is that it is permissible for Nicky to have a Deaf child, even if there is a negative relation between disability and well-being. Her decision to have a Deaf child stems from her commitment to Deaf Culture, which is central to her understanding of who she is. Having a child who is not Deaf would frustrate her ability to act authentically, and because of the impact of procreative decisions on agents' life, to live an authentic life.

Some might disagree, and believe that Nicky's decision to have a Deaf child is objectionable, even if Nicky's ability to make authentic procreative decisions is frustrated by not having a Deaf child. Having a child with less well-being, instead of a child with a higher level of well-being, is such a serious wrong that it is irrelevant that Nicky is prevented from making an authentic decision.

However, for other procreative decisions, most of us believe that making an authentic decision is of prime importance, irrespective of whether the decision causes a decrease in well-being of another agent. Consider the following example:

Terminate pregnancy. Winnie has to decide whether she will terminate her pregnancy or not. John, whose spermatozoon fertilized Winnie's ovum, is infertile. The chances of him being able to have a child if Winnie chooses to terminate the pregnancy are non-existent. Winnie chooses to terminate the pregnancy because this is in accordance with one of her WECs, and the decision expresses who she is and what she stands for.

In *Terminate pregnancy*, Winnie negatively affects the John's well-being in a profound way. However, we do not think that it is impermissible for Winnie to act the way she does. It seems important to us that she is allowed to act authentically, since it is such an important and personal decision which has an effect on the rest of her life.

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[7] Of course, her commitment to Deaf Culture would not be her only motivating reason to have a Deaf child. Her commitment to Deaf Culture would be a motivating reason in addition to motivating reasons like wanting to have a family, a desire to take care of a child, etc.

Why should we protect Winnie's ability to make an authentic decision, while Nicky's authentic action may be frustrated? The critic may point to two features of the cases that explain the difference.

First, one may argue that Nicky causes greater harm than Winnie, and that therefore, Nicky's action is impermissible, while Winnie's is not.

It seems unreasonable to suppose that the harm in *Deaf Culture* is necessarily more severe. This depends on the severity of the impairment of Nicky's child, how ableist the society is, and how much John desires to have a child. However, even if the harm caused in *Deaf Culture* is more severe, the critic would have to admit that it is not categorically impermissible to cause a disabled person to exist. Only if the harm exceeds a certain standard would it be impermissible to cause disability.

Second, it might be objected that Winnie can only act authentically if she causes John's well-being to decrease. There is no way for her to make an authentic procreative decision (terminate the pregnancy) without decreasing John's wellbeing. In contrast, Nicky could have a non-disabled child, and would thereby avoid causing someone to exist with a lower-than-average well-being.

This line of reasoning overlooks an important feature of the case: Nicky can only make an authentic procreative decision if she has a disabled child, and not a non-disabled child. In the same way some couples do not want to have a disabled child, because having a disabled child would not align with their WECs, having a non-disabled child is inauthentic to Nicky. Therefore, there is no viable alternative available to Nicky, just as there is none for Winnie.

A different example supports my previous point. Philosophers who argue that causing disability is impermissible acknowledge that, if an agent cannot have a non-disabled child, it is permissible for them to have a disabled child (Wasserman, 2005, p. 138). The philosophers advance that if agents have a choice between remaining childless, and having a disabled child, the impermissibility of causing disability is excused. Remaining childless is not viewed as a viable alternative to having a disabled child.

However, why is remaining childless not perceived as a viable alternative? Because this frustrates a deep and central desire of the potential parent. However, this is also true for the agent whose reproductive decision is only authentic if they have a disabled child. As having a non-disabled child goes against their WECs, and having a disabled child aligns with their WECs, having a non-disabled child is not a viable alternative for her. It is difficult to see why it is not permissible for such an agent to have a disabled child.

My previous analysis suggests a different judgement about cases like *Rare Condition*. Whether it is permissible for Ellen to have a disabled child instead of a non-disabled child depends on whether Ellen has a WEC which results in an authentic decision to have a disabled child. For example, imagine Ellen is profoundly committed to the disabled community (whether she is disabled or not). If she can only make an authentic reproductive decision to have a disabled child, because one of her WEC is her commitment to disability culture and community, then her decision to have a disabled child is permissible.

I do not claim that the importance of making authentic procreative decisions *always* overrides the decrease in well-being caused by causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person.

Two factors are especially relevant in determining whether the authenticity of the agent overrules the decrease in well-being.

First, if it is expected that the well-being of the child is significantly lower than the average well-being of a non-disabled child, this overrides the importance of the authenticity of procreative decisions. For example, if the child would have a disability which does not allow the child to live through childhood, or which is paired with severe chronic pain, the well-being is significantly lower than the average well-being of a non-disabled child. In those circumstances, the authenticity of the potential parent is not important enough to override the decrease in well-being of the child.

It is difficult to say when the decrease in well-being outweighs the importance of the authenticity of the decision. I do not have a definite answer to this question, and I suspect this question can only be addressed when we know the specific circumstances of the situation in question.

Second, it is important what the relationship is between an agents' WECs and their desire or action. In the following section, I focus on the ways in which a desire or action of the agent can relate to their WEC and what this entails for the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist.

2.3: The relation between WECs and agents' desire or action

To repeat, in chapter two I adopted Varga's account of authenticity. According to his account, authenticity consists in wholeheartedness regarding the commitments one endorses. When one wholeheartedly endorses a commitment, the commitment displays centrality, continuity, and submission of the agent's other interests to the interests of the object of commitment. Actions are authentic or inauthentic when an agent's WEC bears on the agent's action. The action is authentic if the action is in accordance with their WEC. The action is inauthentic if the action goes against their WEC.

In the previous chapter, I hinted at the fact that WECs can bear on agents' actions in different ways. To see this, consider the following two examples:

Bribe: One of a civil servant's WECs is to combat corruption. They decline an attempt to buy them off (alignment with WEC) or accept the bribe (goes against WEC).

Government support: one of a civil servant's WECs is to combat corruption. They disapprove and deny support for a corrupt political party (alignment with WEC) or choose to vote for a corrupt political party (goes against WEC).

In *Bribe*, the agent's WEC bears <u>directly</u> on the action. If they would accept the bribe, this goes directly against their WEC to fight corruption. After all, by accepting a bribe, they are doing the opposite of fighting corrupting: they are themselves engaged in corruption. In contrast, in *Government support*, the agent's action does not bear directly on their WEC, but <u>indirectly</u>. Their WEC pertains to their action to a degree, but the action of voting for a corrupt political party does not necessarily or always contradict their WEC.

In the following paragraphs, I first shortly indicate how desires relate to our actions. Then, I explain when an action bears directly and indirectly on an action. Lastly, I argue that

it is only permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person if their WEC bears directly on their procreative decision.

To see how our actions relate to our WECs, we must understand the relationship between our actions and our desires. After all, our WECs are in essence desires.

I argue that desires are connected to our actions via our reasons. Desires give rise to reasons for action. For example, if I desire some ice cream and I endorse this desire, that is a reason for me to get some ice cream. My reason will feature as a premise in my practical reasoning about what to do.

I claim that WECs, when the WEC is relevant to the situation an agent is in, give reasons for action. To argue for this claim, I argue that there are two exceptions to the claim that desires give rise to reasons for action. I argue that these exceptions are not applicable to the type desires that WECs are. Therefore, WECs, like other desires, provide reasons for action.

Two exceptions to the fact that desires give us reasons for action are the following.

First, arguably, only desires we are identified with can provide us with reasons for action (Frankfurt, 2006, p. 11).

To see this, consider Frankfurt's famous unwilling addict example, where an addict who hates his addiction is overcome by his desire for drugs (1988a, p. 17). The addict has a desire to take drugs, which they are not identified with. They also have the desire to refrain from taking drugs, which they are identified with. It seems that their desire to refrain from taking drugs provides them with a reason for action, in contrast to their desire to take drugs (Frankfurt, 2006, p. 11-13). Taking drugs is not part of their order of preferences and priorities.

Some object that desires agents are not identified with still provide us with reasons.[8] Since WECs are desires the agent identifies with, it is not necessary for my purposes to determine whether only desires the agent identifies with can provide reasons for action. The agent always identifies with their WEC, otherwise, the desire would not be a WEC.

The second exception to the claim that desires provide us with reasons for action are desires which do not give us a purpose. Schueler notes that sometimes when an agent has a desire, they have a positive attitude towards something without it providing a goal (2017, p. 306). If I want my favourite hockey team to win, this does not give me a goal or purpose for action.[9] I do not believe I can affect the outcome of the hockey game. Therefore, my desire does not give me a purpose for action. In contrast, in other cases, my desire does clearly provide me with a purpose. For example, when I want a croissant, this motivates me to walk to my favourite bakery.

However, in contrast to the category of desires which consists of a positive attitude without a purpose, WECs do generate a goal, namely, to do what is best for the object of commitment.

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[8] For example, someone might argue that John in the following example has a reason for action stemming from a desire he is not identified with. *Diet:* Johan is on a diet. He goes to his mother's birthday party, and is asked whether he wants a piece of cake. He has a desire not to eat the cake, which he identifies with. He also has a desire to eat the cake, which he does not identify with. He accepts the piece of cake and eats it.

[9] This is not always true. If I am the coach of a hockey team and this team is my favourite team, my desire might provide me with the purpose of training them hard or giving them better coaching advice.

Now that we established that WECs are the type of desires that give rise to reasons for action, we are in a position to understand the different ways in which WECs relate to agents' actions.

I advance that the difference between WECs bearing directly and indirectly on an agent's action is the following. First, if a WEC bears directly on the action, the agent loses their WEC *by virtue of* their action if they act against their WEC. Second, in contrast, if a WEC bears indirectly on an agent's action, the agent will not lose their WEC *by virtue of* their action. Instead, they lose their WEC is their motivating reason for their action is contrary to their WEC.

First, if a WEC bears directly on the action, the agent loses their WEC *by virtue of* their action if they act against their WEC. To repeat, in chapter 1 (section 1.2.1), I argued that if agents act against their WEC, they 'betray' their commitment. Their action reveals that they are not wholeheartedly committed to their object of commitment. For example, if Luther would have chosen to renounce his views, his action would have demonstrated that he is not wholeheartedly committed to his ideas of reform for the Catholic church.

Second, in contrast, if a WEC bears indirectly on the action of the agent, they will not lose their WEC *by virtue of* their action. Consider the agent in *Government* support. Imagine the agent chooses to vote for a corrupt political party. The action itself, voting for a corrupt political party, does not indicate that the agent is not wholeheartedly committed to fighting corruption. He might vote for the party because they promise free health insurance, or more support for the elderly. His action of voting for a corrupt political party does not express a rejection of his WEC to fight corruption.

However, if a WEC bears indirectly on an action and their action goes against their WEC, the agent may lose their WEC because of their motivating reason. When they lose their WEC, it is not *by virtue of* their action. If their motivating reason for their action is contrary to their WEC, they lose their WEC. I will explain this claim in the following paragraphs.

As we saw, WECs give agents reasons for action. The reason stemming from the WEC may be a normative reason or a motivating reason for action. Normative reasons count in favour of someone acting in a certain way (Alvarez, 2016, p. 2). In contrast, motivating reasons answer the question why someone acts the way they do. One and the same reason can be a normative reason, a motivating reason or both, depending on the context.

If a WEC bears indirectly on an action, the agent risks losing their WEC when their action goes against their WEC and (one of) their motivating reason(s) is contrary to their WEC. In *Government support*, if the civil servant votes for the corrupt political party because they view the party's corruptness as a virtue, then they lose their WEC to fight corruption, and their action is inauthentic. Their motivating reason reveals that they are not wholeheartedly committed (or at all committed) to fighting corruption, because they value the fact that the party is corrupt. However, if their motivating reason is not contrary to their WEC, for example when they vote for the party because of the party's promise of free health insurance, they do not lose their WEC.

To summarize. First, if a WEC bears directly on an action (and the action goes against the WEC), the agent loses their WEC by virtue of the action. Their action is inauthentic. Second, if a WEC bears indirectly on an action (and the action goes against the WEC), the agent does not lose their WEC by virtue of the action. Their motivating reason may be contrary to their WEC, or neutral towards their WEC. If their motivating reason is contrary to their

WEC, their action is inauthentic. If their motivating reason is neutral, their action is neither authentic nor inauthentic.

It is important to note that when a WEC bears directly on an action (and the action goes against the WEC), it is irrelevant whether the motivating reason is contrary to the WEC. Even if the motivating reason is not contrary to the WEC, the action is inauthentic. Imagine Luther renounces his criticisms of the Catholic church so he can live a quiet life. It is irrelevant that his motivating reason is not contrary to his WEC. By acting the way he does he betrays his WEC and is not wholeheartedly committed to his views anymore.

This is not true for cases where a WEC bears directly on an agent's action and the action is in accordance with the WEC. For the action to be authentic, their motivating reason needs to be their WEC. Imagine Luther refuses to renounce his views, but only because one of his close friends is immensely proud of him for doing so. In that case, his action is not authentic, even though his action is in accordance with his WEC.

Based on the previous discussion I give a more detailed version of the account of authenticity I set out in chapter 1.

An action is authentic iff one of the agent's WECs bears directly or indirectly on their action, the action is in accordance with the agent's WEC, and their motivating reason is their WEC.

An action is inauthentic iff:
1. A WEC bears directly on an action and the action goes against an agent's WEC, or
2. A WEC bears indirectly on an action, their action goes against the agent's WEC, and their motivating reason is contrary to their WEC.

An action is neither authentic nor inauthentic iff:
1. An agent's WECs do not bear on the action, or
2. An agent's WEC bears indirectly on the action but their motivating reason is neither their WEC nor is contrary to their WEC.

Before I move on, I want to point out a certain ambiguity in the idea of a WEC bearing directly on the agent' action. Whether an action goes against someone's WECs, depends on the agent's background beliefs. Imagine someone who is wholeheartedly committed to their marriage with their partner. This person believes that sleeping with someone other than their partner is the unequivocal end of a romantic relationship with their partner. If they then choose to sleep with someone else, the action bears directly on their WEC. By sleeping with someone else, they lose their commitment to their marriage. This stands in stark contrast to the situation where an agent who believes in polygamy sleeps with someone other than their partner.

To determine whether an agent loses their WEC, we need to look at whether the action itself is a rejection of the WEC (WEC bears indirectly on action), or at whether the agent has a motivating reason which is contrary to their WEC (WEC bears directly on action). Whether the agent loses their WEC is not dependent on the agent's realization that their action is a rejection of their WEC, or their realization that they have a contrary motivating reason. In this sense, I propose that we use an objective standard to determine whether the agent loses their WEC. Whether the agent loses their WEC is not dependent on whether the agent *believes* their

action is a rejection of their WEC or *believes* they have a contrary motivating reason. However, whether an action is a rejection of an agent's WECs is dependent on the agent's background beliefs. So, whether an agent loses a WEC is in an important sense dependent on the background beliefs of the agent.

How does the previous discussion relate to the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person?

I argue that if a WEC bears <u>directly</u> on their decision, the authenticity of the agent's decision outweighs the decrease in well-being. In those cases, the agent stands to lose something profoundly significant. As I argued, if the agent's WEC bears directly on their action and the agent acts against their WEC, they reveal that they are not wholeheartedly committed to their object of commitment. As a result, they lose their WEC.

In *Deaf Culture*, the agent's WEC bears directly on Nicky's action. She views having a non-disabled child as a repudiation of Deaf Culture and community, because it denies the value of being deaf. Therefore, if she would have a non-disabled child, she would lose her WEC to Deaf culture.

Whether Nicky's WEC bears directly or indirectly on her decisions depends on Nicky's background beliefs. Only if Nicky views having a non-disabled child as a repudiation of Deaf Culture, does her WEC bear directly on her decision.

If Nicky stands to lose her WEC, it is permissible for her to cause a disabled person to exist instead of causing a non-disabled person to exist. This conclusion is subject to the condition that the well-being of the child is not significantly lower than the average well-being of a non-disabled child.

I am not certain whether in cases where an agent's WEC bears indirectly on the decision, it is permissible for agents to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person. If the agent's decision is in accordance with their WEC and their motivating reason is their WEC, the agent's action is authentic. However, the difference with the previous type of cases is that the agent is not necessitated to give up their WEC by making an alternative reproductive decision. So the cost to the agent is considerable less if the agent's WEC bears indirectly on the agent's action. I suspect that we can only determine if it is permissible to cause a disabled child to exist if the agent's WEC bears indirectly on their decision if we know the specifics of the case. In particular, we need to know the decrease in well-being of the disabled child compared to the average well-being of a non-disabled child.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person. I argued that it is permissible to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for her to make an authentic procreative decision. Furthermore, I argued that the permissibility depends on the relation between the agent's wholeheartedly endorsed commitments and their action. Causing a disabled person to exist is permissible when the agent's WEC bears directly on the agent's procreative decision. This is because in such instances, if the agent causes a non-disabled person to exist instead of a disabled person, the agent loses their wholeheartedly endorsed commitment.

Chapter 3: Authenticity and moral hedging

'Would not one tiny crime be wiped out by a thousand of good deeds?'
'And how could such an atrocious thing come into in my head? What filthy things my heart is capable of. Yes, filthy above all, disgusting, loathsome, loathsome!'
(Dostoevsky, 1963, p. 149 & 47)

Raskolnikov vacillates between a conviction in (a version of) of utilitarianism, which he interprets as justifying the killing of one woman to aid the poor, and his belief in the monstrosity of taking another human's life. Although not explicitly labelled as such, he suffers from moral uncertainty. While not all of us may experience uncertainty about the impermissibility of ending the life of an innocent person, I expect that the phenomenon of uncertainty about both descriptive and moral facts of the world is familiar to many of us. As time or resources for resolving uncertainty are not always available, and because uncertainty about certain topics is inescapable, we frequently need to act in the face of uncertainty.

In the previous chapter, I developed an argument for the permissibility of causing a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, based on the importance of authenticity for agents. In this chapter, I formulate an analogous argument against hedging theories in situations of moral uncertainty.

I focus on the recent debate about decision-making in situations of moral uncertainty. Various theorists have argued that agents are subject to a distinctive norm in situations of moral uncertainty, which makes what they ought to do dependent on their uncertainty about moral facts. However, there is disagreement about what such a norm requires. One influential group of theories are hedging theories, which prescribe that one should allow for an increase in the chances of acting wrongly, if this decreases the probability of acting severely wrongly (MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 45).

I argue that hedging theories are susceptible to an argument based on the importance of authenticity. The argument holds that, since hedging theories conflict with the agent's ability to engage in authentic action, they preclude the agent from being a fully morally conscientious agent. First, I introduce the topic of moral uncertainty and present one example of a hedging theory, namely MEC (section 3.1). Then, I develop the argument from authenticity against hedging theories (section 3.2). I go on to discuss how the authenticity view is susceptible to an objection by Harman (section 3.3). Harman develops an argument against proponents of a normatively subjective norm. Although her argument is not directly applicable to my authenticity argument, an analogous objection can be made against the authenticity argument. According to this objection, which I call Harman 2, the authenticity view implies that acting from wholeheartedly endorsed commitments exculpates the agent. However, this is false: if an agent's action is authentic but immoral, the agent is blameworthy. Authenticity does not exculpate. In reply, I argue that if we accept that the normative force of reasons of authenticity is distinct from the normative force of reasons of morality, acting from wholeheartedly endorsed commitments does not morally exculpate the agent.

In this section, I introduce the debate about moral uncertainty (section 3.1.1), and I present MEC as an example of a hedging theory (section 3.1.2).

3.1.1: Moral uncertainty

During the recent pandemic, many had to make decisions in situations of uncertainty. Doctors had to decide which medicine to administer to patients, without knowing whether a particular medicine would improve or worsen the patient's situation. Citizens deliberated whether it was morally wrong to use public transport, as they were unsure of their obligations to strangers.

These examples show that our uncertainty is of different kinds. The doctors are uncertain about descriptive facts: they are unsure of the consequences of their actions. In contrast, the citizens are uncertain about normative facts: they do not know whether they are under a stringent obligation to avoid harming strangers. Although normative uncertainty includes various kinds of uncertainty (like uncertainty about what it is epistemically rational to believe, or instrumentally rational to do), I will focus on moral uncertainty in this chapter (MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 2-3, Hedden, 2016, p. 2).

Actions are subject to *objective* and *subjective* norms. What one objectively ought to do depends on how the world (in fact) is, as opposed to the agent's beliefs about the world (Podgorski, 2020, p. 45; Hedden, 2016, p. 103). In contrast, subjective norms make what one ought to do dependent on the agent's beliefs about the world and their uncertainty. *Descriptively* subjective norms make what an agent ought to do dependent on their uncertainty about descriptive facts (Podgorski, 2020, p. 45). *Normatively* subjective norms make what an agent ought to do dependent on their uncertainty about normative facts, in addition to descriptive facts.[10]

It is generally accepted that actions are governed by descriptively subjective norms, in addition to objective norms. Imagine a doctor is helping a hospitalised patient who has covid. The doctor is uncertain whether the patient suffers from a new variant of the virus, Epsilon. Administering anti-viral drug E will cure the patient if they suffer from the Epsilon variant, but will kill them if they suffer from another variant. Anti-viral drug W will cure every variant of the virus, but will leave the patient with a permanent cough. In some sense, the doctor should administer drug E, as the patient suffers from the Epsilon variant. But in another sense, which perhaps seems more practically important, the doctor should prescribe drug W, as administering drug E seems overly risky. This suggests that the doctor's action is governed by a descriptively subjective norm in addition to objective norms.

In contrast, the status of normatively subjective norms is less established. Philosophers who argue that normatively subjective norms matter for what one ought to do typically rely on two arguments.

First, they assert that our intuitions about dominance cases substantiate the importance of normatively subjective norms. Imagine you can choose between having the foie gras for dinner tonight, or the vegan risotto (see MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 15 for the example). You have

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[10] In principle, it is possible defend the existence of norms that are sensitive to normative facts but not to descriptive facts. However, to the best of my knowledge, no one argues for such a claim in the literature.

no preference for either one. You think that animal welfare is not of moral value, but you are not fully certain. In a sense, the vegan risotto dominates the foie gras, as eating the vegan risotto is permissible whether animal welfare is of moral value or not. Choosing the foie gras seems morally risky, and it seems that you would be morally blameworthy for taking this risk.

Second, they argue for an analogy with descriptively subjective norms (MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 15; Podgorski, 2020, p. 46). There are three reasons for the introduction of descriptively subjective norms. First, objective norms are often inaccessible to agents. In our previous example, the doctor is not in a position to know that she should administer drug E. Second, objective norms are inadequately action-guiding. Because the doctor is not in a position to know that she should administer drug E, she cannot act accordingly, except by fluke. Third, we need subjective norms to explain our practices of praise and blame (Hedden, 2016, p. 122). If the doctor would administer drug E, she seems blameworthy even though she acts in accordance with the relevant objective norm.

These three reasons are held to substantiate the acceptance of normatively subjective norms in the same way that they support descriptively subjective norms. Imagine you are deciding between the risotto and the foie gras, and it turns out animal welfare is of no moral consequence. The objective norm governing your action is inaccessible; it cannot guide your action; and it cannot fully explain our intuitions about blame (since you still seem blameworthy if you order the foie gras).

Those who reject the relevance of normatively subjective norms have put forward three main objections to positing these norms.

First, opponents argue that agents who let their actions be guided by N-subjective norms care about the wrong thing: they care about the rightness and wrongness of their actions, instead of the aspects of the world that make an action right or wrong (Weatherson, 2002, p. 695; MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 21). For example, an agent should care for their sick parents because they want to be there for them, and not solely because they think it is the right thing to do. Agents who only engage in moral actions because they believe it is the right action, are worse moral agents than those who perform actions for example out of concern for others (Weatherson, 2002, p. 695). This is the fetishism objection.

Second, Harman has developed the blame objection (2015). According to this objection, normative uncertainty does not function analogously to descriptive uncertainty, as normative uncertainty does not exculpate (Harman, 2015, p. 57). I will come back to Harman's objection in section 3.3.

Third, various authors have put forward the inter-theoretic value comparison objection (Gracely, 1996; Hedden, 2016, p. 108). According to the inter-theoretic value comparison objection, it is impossible to compare degrees of wrongness between different moral theories. As hedging theories instruct the agent to compare degrees of wrongness between moral theories, this is an objection against hedging theories.

Philosophers who despite these objections accept the existence of normatively subjective norms hold various accounts of what this norm requires. In the following section, I set out one account of decision-making under normative uncertainty, namely MEC.

3.1.2: MEC
In cases of moral uncertainty, some decisions or actions seem intuitively better than others. For example, if option A is permissible and option B is not permissible according to all the moral theories an agent has credence in, it seems that the agent should prefer option A over B. MacAskill et. al. call such options 'appropriate', and they offer the following general account of when options are appropriate:

Maximising Expected Choiceworthiness (MEC): 'When we can determine the expected choiceworthiness of different options, A is an appropriate option iff A has the maximal expected choiceworthiness.' (2020, p. 48).

To determine which option has maximal expected choiceworthiness, we need to know how each of the theories an agent has credence in ranks the options available to the agent. Each theory implies a ranking of the agent's options in terms of their choiceworthiness, which represents 'the strength of reasons for choosing an option' relative to the moral theory (MacAskill et. al, 2020, p. 4). An option is permissible if it is maximally choiceworthy, and impermissible if it is not maximally choiceworthy.

For example, imagine an agent has credences in both act consequentialism and a non-consequentialist theory. According to act consequentialism, option A is more choiceworthy than option B, because it maximises the good. Option A is also more choiceworthy than option B according to the non-consequentialist theory, because option B violates someone's rights. According to both theories, option A has the maximal expected choiceworthiness, and it is therefore the appropriate option.

As MEC compares the choiceworthiness of options over all the moral theories the agent has credence in, MEC is only applicable to cases where the moral theories allow for intertheoretic value comparisons (MacAskill et. al, 2020, p. 9). If, as some philosophers argue, intertheoretic value comparisons are often impossible, then this is an important limit to the applicability of MEC.[11] I will not pursue this issue here.

Furthermore, the agent's credence in various moral theories is not the only thing taken into account in deciding which option is appropriate, for their credence about the prudential reasons for or against their options are also part of the equation.

MEC directs the agent to allow for trade-offs between their credence in a theory and the degree of wrongness that it ascribes to their options. Sometimes, the theory one has most credence in (theory 1) permits an action which is severely wrong according to a second theory one has some credence in (theory 2) (see table 1). In that case, MEC might instruct the agent to act in accordance with theory 2, even if this means they commit a minor wrong according to theory 1.

Table 1: Trade-off MEC

	Theory 1 – 90%	Theory 2 - 10%
Option A	Permissible	Severely wrong

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[11] See Gracely and Hedden for arguments supporting the impossibility of intertheoretic value comparisons (1996); 2016). In contrast, MacAskill et al. argue for the possibility of intertheoretic value comparisons (2020).

| Option B | Minor wrong | Permissible |

As the agent should follow the theory they have less credence in, the direct connection between the agent's credences and their action is severed. To illustrate how the trade-offs which MEC prescribes sever the direct connection between an agent's action and their credences, consider Susan and the Medicine II (see table 2) (an example by MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 16). Susan is a doctor who is uncertain about the value of the welfare of non-human animals. She must decide whether to give the one available dose of drug to Anne, a human (option A); to Charlotte, a chimpanzee (option B); or to split the drug (option C). If Susan chooses option A, Charlotte will die, and Anne will survive at half the level of welfare she had before. Option B entails that Anne will die, but Charlotte will survive at the level of welfare she had before she got sick. If Susan chooses option C, both will survive and live at 49% of the level of welfare they had before. Susan's credences regarding the value of the welfare of non-human animals are equally divided.

Table 2: Susan and the Medicine II (MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 17)

	Chimpanzee welfare is of no moral value – 50%	Chimpanzee welfare is of full moral value – 50%
A	Permissible	Severely wrong
B	Severely wrong	Permissible
C	Slightly wrong	Slightly wrong

According to MEC, C is the most choiceworthy option. C is only somewhat less choiceworthy than the best option according to both moral theories. In contrast, B and A are severely wrong according to one of the moral theories. Therefore, it would be morally reckless not to choose option C (MacAskill et al., 2020, p. 18). Interestingly, C is a slightly wrong action according to both moral theories Susan has credence in. MEC thus prescribes a course of action that is in some sense at odds with Susan's credences.

3.2: The authenticity argument against hedging theories
In this section, I develop an objection against hedging theories, which I call the authenticity objection. First, I give an example to illustrate the intuitive appeal of my objection (section 3.2.1). Then, I argue that hedging theories preclude authentic action and are therefore problematic (section 3.2.2).

3.2.1: The intuitive case for the authenticity argument
Consider the following example (example A).[12] You are pregnant, and you are considering whether to have an abortion. However, you are unsure whether having the abortion is morally permissible. You are 90% confident that having the abortion is morally permissible, and 10% confident that having the abortion is severely morally wrong (see table 3). Because you have a small credence in the impermissibility of having the abortion, and you do not want to risk

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[12] The decision whether to have an abortion is often put forward as an example of the application of hedging theories. See for example, Lockhart and Hedden (2000, p. 22; 2016, p. 102 & 106).

committing a serious wrong act, you decide not to have the abortion. In doing so, you are following the prescription of MEC: not having the abortion is the most appropriate option according to MEC. Having the abortion is severely wrong according to one theory, while not having the abortion is permissible according to all of the moral theories you have credence in. It is therefore the option which has the maximal expected choiceworthiness.

Table 3: example A

	Abortion is murder (10%)	Abortion is not murder (90 %)
Abortion	Severely wrong	Permissible
No abortion	Permissible	Permissible

However, intuitively, something relevant seems left out of your deliberation. Imagine you go to your friend and explain your situation. You tell them that you have decided to not have the abortion and carry to term, because you want to avoid the risk of performing a morally wrong action. It seems reasonable for your friend to ask you to set aside the moral considerations for a moment, and to think about what you want to do. Which decisions aligns with your values and fits your personal history? Which action expresses 'who you are'? In addition to moral concerns, it seems important that the agent makes an authentic decision.

To bring out the intuition that considerations of authenticity are important even more, consider the previous case with the addition of two details (example B). First, your credence in the fact that abortion is murder stems from the wide-spread stigma surrounding abortion. Second, your credence in the fact that abortion is permissible stems from your endorsement of a woman's right to decide over her own body, which you identify deeply with. It seems wrong not to have the abortion while this action accords much better with one's deeply held values.

I will address one objection against the importance of authenticity at the outset. Proponents of MEC would object to my examples that there is an alternative explanation for our intuition that there is something wrong with not having the abortion to avoid moral risk. In addition to our moral credences, prudential reasons have to be taken into account to determine which option has the maximal expected choiceworthiness (MacAskill, 2020, p. 52-53). If there are prudential reasons for having an abortion and abortion turns out not to be murder, it is slightly wrong not to have an abortion (see table 4). That is why intuitively, it seems wrong to not have the abortion in example A and B.

Table 4: example with prudential reasons

	Abortion is murder (10%)	Abortion is not murder (90%) + prudential reasons not to have the abortion
Abortion	Severely wrong	Permissible
No abortion	Permissible	Slightly wrong

However, prudential reasons cannot account for the intuitions in example A and B. Imagine in example A and B, prudential reasons are taken into account, like the financial advantage of not carrying to term. First, the question of what is in line with the agent's values

and their idea of their future remains to be asked, and remains relevant for what the agent should do. This suggests that prudential reasons alone do not explain our intuition. Second, prudential reasons only seem to affect the agent's decision if they have very low credence in the fact that abortion is murder.[13] In that case, prudential reasons might tip the balance in favour of having the abortion, since it is slightly wrong not to have the abortion based on prudential reasons. However, if the agent thinks it is likely that abortion is murder, moral considerations seem to easily trump prudential ones. Reasons of authenticity seem to have more sway over the agent's decision. Even if the agent is 20% confident that abortion is murder, which action is authentic to them matters.

As a further response to the objection that prudential reasons explain our intuitions in example A and B, consider the following example (example C). Imagine there is a referendum on the legalization of abortion. Again, you are 90% confident that having an abortion is morally permissible, and 10% confident that having an abortion is severely morally wrong. MEC seems to require you to vote against the legalization of abortion, to avoid committing a seriously wrong act. We again have the intuition that reasons of authenticity should have been included in your deliberation. However, in this example you have no prudential reasons at stake either way.

Some might find abortion such a contentious topic that their intuitions about examples A, B and C are unclear. As an alternative, consider the following example (example D). Marie has three children. She is considering whether she will use contraception in the future. She is 90% confident that it is permissible to use contraception. She is 10% confident that it is morally wrong to use contraception, because the Roman Catholic Church forbids the use of contraception as it damages the institution of marriage (see table 5). She decides not to use contraception because she does not want to risk committing a seriously wrong moral action, and gets pregnant a few months later. Similarly to the previous example, something seems left out of Marie's decision-making process: which option aligns best with her values and her sense of who she is.

Table 5: example D

	Using contraception is morally wrong (10%)	Using contraception is not morally wrong (90%)
Using contraception	Gravely wrong	Permissible
No contraception	Permissible	Permissible

3.2.2: The authenticity argument against hedging theories
To repeat, I argued for an account of authentic action in chapter one and two. According to this account, actions are authentic iff one of the agent's WECs bears directly or indirectly on their action, the action is in accordance with the agent's WEC, and their motivating reason is their WEC. In contrast, actions are inauthentic iff the action goes against the agent's WEC (WEC bears directly on action) or the agent has a motivating reason which is contrary to their WEC (WEC bears indirectly on action). Lastly, an agent's action is neither authentic nor inauthentic when an agent's WEC does not bear on the action.

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[13] For example, if the agent is only 1% confident that abortion is murder.

We are now in a position to see why the authenticity of agents forms an objection against hedging theories. The argument goes as follows.

To begin, I argue that agents are only fully morally conscientious if their moral actions are authentic. The idea behind the requirement is that morality not only requires one to perform the right action, but for one to be a virtuous agent, with the appropriate priorities. This is expressed in the commitments one chooses to wholeheartedly endorse. I claim that an agent whose moral actions spring from their WECs is *more* morally conscientious than a similar agent whose actions are not connected to their WECs. An agent who saves a child because they are deeply committed to helping others seems to be a better moral agent than one who decides to be helpful this one time, but who is normally a deeply unobliging person.

This requirement is both applicable to agents in situations of moral uncertainty, as well as agents who do not experience uncertainty. For agents who do not experience uncertainty, the requirement is less stringent than it may seem. Agents can be fully morally conscientious agents if their action is morally right and they are not aware of their commitments. The condition for authentic action is that one of the agent's motivating reasons is their WEC.[14] An agent may perfectly well be unaware of their WEC and/or the motivating reason stemming from their WEC, while still performing the action because of their WEC.

For example, this could be the case when the agent is not conscious of their motivating reason because they are habituated to act a certain way, or when they act out of intuition. In these cases, it is important that when the agent does consider their motivation for action, for example at a later point in time, (one of) their motivating reason(s) is their WECs. Alternatively, the agent may be aware of their motivating reason, but is not conscious of the fact that their motivating reason is one of their WECs.

As I argued in chapter 1, when none of an agent's WECs bear on an action, their action is neither authentic nor inauthentic. It is likely that for most agents, at least some of their moral actions will not be authentic, because none of their WEC bear on the action. This does not change the fact that agents should strive to be fully morally conscientious and for their actions to be authentic. An optimally morally conscientious agent will have WECs which concur with their moral beliefs.[15]

Second, frequently, an agent's moral beliefs are also their WECs. I just noted that for optimally morally conscientious agents, their WECs and their moral beliefs coincide. Although for most of us, our WECs will not perfectly align with our moral beliefs, it is to be expected that there is considerable overlap. Our WECs often form the basis for our moral beliefs. For example, my WEC to not harm living beings may also be one of my moral beliefs. Or, I may have a belief in utilitarianism and a WEC to maximising happiness.

Third, following the prescriptions of hedging theories negates the potential authenticity of the actions of agents. As we saw in Susan and the Medicine II, hedging theories prescribe actions which are severed from the agent's moral credences. Moreover, even if by accident, the action which is prescribed by a hedging theory is the same action the agent would engage in if they were guided by their WECs, the action is not authentic. Because the agent makes their

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[14] In addition to their WEC bearing on the action, and their action being in accordance with their WEC. I assume this is the case.

[15] This does not mean that the normative force of authenticity is the same as the normative force of morality. I further expand on this point in section 3.3.

decision and engages in the action based on the reasoning prescribed by hedging theories, they act out of risk avoidance, and not their WECs. As we saw, an action can be authentic if the connection between the agent's WECs and their action is unconscious, for example through intuition or habit. However, this is not the case if one follows the prescriptions of hedging theories. The action results from the agent's acceptance of the hedging theory, not their WECs.

Because following the prescriptions of hedging theories precludes the agent from acting authentically, and agents are only fully morally conscientious if their moral actions are authentic, hedging frustrates an agent's status as a fully morally conscientious agents.

We can now explain our intuitions in the abortion examples A and B that I introduced in section 2.1. Following the course of action MEC prescribes to her, the agent's action is cut off from her WECs. She acts the way she does out of risk aversion. If she would not have acted in accordance with MEC, she could have based her decision on her WECs. Irrespective of which option she chooses (to have the abortion or not), she could have based her decision on the following. Via her moral credences in a moral theory, she could have based her decision on her commitment to a woman's right to decide over her own body. Alternatively, she could have acted on an intuition, which unconscious to her sprung from her feminist commitments. Or, she could have acted out of a habit to put herself first, where her motivating reason would be self-love, which is one of her WECs. Although following one of these decision-making procedures would not have guaranteed authentic action, it would have given her a fair chance. In contrast, MEC severs the connection between her WECs and her action, which is why intuitively following MEC in the abortion case seems wrong to us. The agent is not a fully morally conscientious agent if she follows MEC, because her action is inauthentic.

Whether an action is authentic depends on whether the agent has a WEC as their motivating reason (in addition to their WEC bearing on the action and the action being in accordance with the WEC). Hedging theories and MEC are theories about what it is morally right to do. Hence, it is not MEC or hedging themselves which precludes authentic action, but *following the prescriptions of* MEC or other hedging theories which precludes authentic action.

Based on the previous, a proponent of MEC might object that the charge that MEC thwarts authentic action is incorrect. MEC is simply a theory of right action, it does not necessarily affect the agential cognitive structure which makes actions (in)authentic. However, we saw in section 3.1.1 that an important reason for accepting a normatively subjective norm is that objective norms are not action-guiding. If MEC is not supposed to be action guiding, we might ask ourselves why we should accept it at all. If MEC is action-guiding, it does affect agent's cognitive structure, because it provides motivating reasons for agents. Therefore, it precludes authentic action.

An important objection to the authenticity argument is that an action might result from a WEC via the use of a hedging account. If so, my argument that the authenticity of agents forms an objection against hedging theories seems flawed, since hedging theories do not necessarily preclude authentic action.

I agree that an action *could* result from a WEC via the use of a hedging theory. If one of the agent's WECs is risk avoidance, the use of hedging theories is exactly what enables an agent to act authentically. However, for other WECs, it is unclear how hedging theories can establish a link between an agent's WEC and their action if the agent's WEC is not risk avoidance. When an agent acts based on MEC, they accept that what determines their decision is which action

has the maximal expected choiceworthiness. This choiceworthiness is based on their credences in moral theories, which might be connected to the agent's WECs. However, MacAskill et. al. explicitly argue that the reasons for accepting first order moral theories are not relevant for accepting MEC or not (2020, p. 52). As we saw, accepting MEC is based on intuitions about risk (moral dominance cases). I therefore maintain that if one acts based on MEC, one's action is not connected to one's WECs. A possible exception is if an agent's action is based on both MEC and their credence in a moral theory, intuition or habit. However, in that case their action is connected to their WEC not because of the use of MEC, but in spite of it.

It is important to note that I do not argue for a normatively subjective norm. My theory makes the authenticity and moral conscientiousness of agents dependent on whether their motivating reason for their action is their WEC. However, it does not make authenticity and moral conscientiousness dependent on the agent's beliefs about their WECs. Instead, whether an action is authentic or not depends on whether, in fact, independent on the agent's beliefs, the world is such that there is a connection between their WECs and their actions. Instead of arguing for a normatively subjective norm, I argue that a normatively objective norm of authenticity applies to cases of moral uncertainty.

It is worth clarifying the connection between the view I have developed in this section and a rival to MEC known as My Favourite Theory (MFT). According to MFT, an option is appropriate if it is permissible according to the theory one has most credence in (MacAskill et al., p. 40). So, if one is mostly convinced of theory A, but thinks theory B might have some plausibility, one should act in accordance with theory A. The view I have developed in this section differs from MFT in at least two important ways. First, MFT advances a normatively subjective norm instead of an objective norm. It makes what an agent ought to do dependent on the agent's beliefs about various moral theories, instead of on how the world (in fact) is. Second, MFT makes the appropriate course of action directly dependent on the agent's moral credences. In contrast, according to the authenticity view, the connection with the agent's WECs is most important. This connection can be established through an agents moral credences, as the agent's moral beliefs may be the same as (one of) their WECs. However, this is different from the direct connection between one's credences and the appropriate action which MFT advances.

3.3: Harman's objection
Harman has developed an objection against what she calls 'uncertaintists', those who accept the existence of normatively subjective norms for cases of moral uncertainty (such as MEC). Her objection is relevant for my authenticity argument.

Harman's argument is as follows.

1. According to the uncertaintist, if an agent is certain that she ought to do x, then the agent should do x (Harman, 2015, p. 56).
2. An agent is only blameworthy for her behavior if she acts in a contrary fashion to the subjective norms applicable to her (Harman, 2015, p. 56).
3. [From 1,2] The uncertaintist is committed to the view that having credence in a false view is exculpatory.
4. Having credence in a false view is not exculpatory.

5. Therefore, uncertaintism is false.

Although Harman's objection is aimed against proponents of a normatively subjective norm, her argument is relevant for my view, because an analogous objection can be made against the authenticity argument (which I will call Harman 2). The authenticity argument proposes that agents should act according to a normatively objective norm, namely the demands of authenticity. However, what if the agent acts authentically but in a deeply immoral way? It seems that the authenticity argument would imply that acting in accordance with one's WECs is exculpatory, because she acts in accordance with the norm applicable to her.

I will give a reply to the objection which builds on Geyer's reply to Harman. Geyer asserts the Culpability Principle: 'If one ought to F according to some norm, N, then one is not culpable for Fing with respect to N' (2018, p. 402-403). This norm formalizes the idea that if an agent acts in accordance with for example a prudential norm, they can still be culpable for their action with respect to a moral norm.

My reply to Harman 2 is as follows.

First, I accept the Culpability Principle.

Second, I argue that the normative force of authenticity is not moral, but is a distinct type of normativity. So, one should not just act authentically because it is morally good to act authentically, but because authenticity has a different kind of authoritative power over us. This view is for example accepted by Bell (forthcoming, p. 22).

According to the Culpability Principle, because the norms of morality and authenticity are distinct, the agent who acts in accordance with their WECs can still be morally culpable if they violate a moral norm. So, an agent who acts authentically but commits a moral wrong is still morally blameworthy for their action. Therefore, the authenticity view is not susceptible to Harman 2.

The previous discussion brings up an important point, namely the relation between moral reasons and reasons of authenticity. The relation between moral reasons and reasons of authenticity is complex. However, I want to address two points.

First, the critic might worry that my claim that the normativity of authenticity is different from that of morality conflicts with my assertion that an agent is only fully morally conscientious if their moral actions are authentic. The critic may think that this requirement of authenticity means that the importance of authentic action stems from moral normativity.

However, the claim about the distinctness of the normativity of authenticity and morality does not necessarily conflict with my claim that only authentic agents are fully morally conscientious. Being fully morally conscientious entails more than just acting in accordance with moral norms. As Weatherson argues, one example of a further demand on agents is to care about the right sort of features of the world, namely the right- and wrongmakers (Weatherson, 2002, 695). I advance that another requirement for agents to be fully morally conscientious is that they act authentically. This means that for the morally conscientious agents, the norms of morality and authenticity concur. Their WECs are such that it is authentic to them to act morally. In this picture, most people are not fully morally conscientious throughout their lives. Instead, they might be fully morally conscientious with regards to a specific action, or might achieve moral conscientiousness to various degrees.

Second, the authenticity argument reveals a conflict between authenticity and morality. According to proponents of MEC, acting in accordance with MEC is a moral requirement. As I argued in section 3.2, acting in accordance with MEC precludes authentic action. Therefore, there is a conflict between authenticity and moral norms for agents in situations of moral uncertainty. In section 3.2, I argued for the importance of acting authentically in situations of moral uncertainty. However, I did not address whether considerations of authenticity always trump considerations of moral risk in situations of moral uncertainty.

I claim that in cases where an agent is exercising their reproductive freedom, considerations of authenticity defeat MEC's prescriptions.

As I noted in chapter 1, two features of procreative decisions explain why it is so important to make authentic procreative decisions. First, procreative decisions are decisions that have a deep and long-lasting effect on the person's life. Therefore, it is important that the decision is expressive of one's WECs, instead of basing the decision on less fundamental considerations. Second, procreative decisions may lead to far-reaching obligations if one becomes a parent. For one to fully commit to the obligations, their decision to have a child and take on such obligations should be based one's deeply held values.

However, considerations of authenticity are not always overriding. In some instances, MEC's prescriptions may trump considerations of authenticity. This depends on the type of decision we are considering. If the decision is important for the course of an agent's life, considerations of authenticity seem to override the prescriptions of MEC. However, if the decision is relatively inconsequential for the agent's subsequent course of life, prescriptions of MEC seem to prevail.

Lastly, bear in mind that for each agent, there is a class of actions which are neither authentic nor inauthentic. This is because their WECs do not bear on the actions. For these actions, if a prescription of MEC applies to one of these actions, there is no reason from authenticity not to follow the prescription of MEC. The authenticity argument does not apply to these actions. However, there may of course be other good reasons to reject MEC, and for the agent not to follow the prescription.

Conclusion
In this chapter, I developed an objection to hedging theories, namely the authenticity objection against hedging theories.

According to the authenticity objection against hedging theories, following the prescriptions of hedging theories frustrates agents' status as fully morally conscientious agents because it precludes authentic action. This is because hedging theories prescribe agents to choose the option with the greatest expected choiceworthiness instead of allowing their action to result from their WECs.

I discussed the objection that the authenticity view exculpates agents who engage in immoral actions which have resulted from their WECs. I argued that the prescriptions issued by authenticity are not morally normative, but have distinctive normative force. Therefore, an agent who acts immorally but authentically is morally culpable.

Lastly, I noted that the authenticity argument reveals a conflict between moral requirements in the form of MEC, and considerations of authenticity. I claimed that in cases

where an agent is exercising their reproductive freedom, considerations of authenticity defeat MEC's prescriptions.

Conclusion

Intuitively, authenticity is important to us. By this, I mean that authenticity has normative force for us: we find it important to live and act authentically. The normative force of authenticity is even more prominent in the context of our important life decisions, like our reproductive decisions. An important feature of our reproductive decision-making is that reasons of authenticity sometimes conflict with moral reasons. In such situations, it is unclear what significance should be given to each type of reason in our decision-making.

To explore what the normative force of authenticity entails for our reproductive decision-making, I build on Varga's account of authenticity which revolves around agents wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. I argued that wholeheartedly endorsed commitments are desires the agent identifies with, which display centrality, continuity and submission.

Then, I formulated an account of authentic action. According to my account of authentic action, actions are authentic iff one of the agent's WECs bears directly or indirectly on their action, the action is in accordance with the agent's WEC, and their motivating reason is their WEC. In contrast, actions are inauthentic iff the action goes against the agent's WEC (WEC bears directly on action) or the agent has a motivating reason which is contrary to their WEC (WEC bears indirectly on action). Lastly, an agent's action is neither authentic nor inauthentic when an agent's WEC does not bear on the action.

Armed with my account of authenticity, I focussed on two recent debates in moral philosophy, namely the debate about causing disability (chapter 2) and moral uncertainty (chapter 3). In both chapters, I developed an argument based on the importance of making authentic reproductive decisions.

First, I looked at cases where the agent causes a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person. In this context, I developed a novel argument for the permissibility of causing disability based on the normative force of authenticity. I argued that even if we assume that there is a negative relationship between well-being and disability, causing disability is sometimes permissible because of the importance of authenticity in reproductive decisions. In particular, I argue that it is permissible for an agent to cause a disabled person to exist instead of a non-disabled person, if having a disabled child is the only way for her to make an authentic procreative decision.

Second, I focussed on cases where agents make reproductive decisions in situations of moral uncertainty. I argued against hedging theories. These theories prescribe that in cases of moral uncertainty one should allow for an increase in the chances of acting wrongly, if this decreases the probability of acting severely wrongly. Hedging theories prescribe specific reproductive decisions to agents. I argued that following the prescriptions of hedging theories precludes authentic action. This is because hedging theories prescribe the agent to choose the option with the greatest expected choiceworthiness instead of allowing their action to result from their WEC. In this way, they prevent the agent from being a fully morally conscientious agent.

In closing, the most important thing to emphasize is this. Based on my discussion, reasons of authenticity can override moral reasons in specific situations. By depriving agents of the opportunity to act authentically, they may be forced to act against their wholeheartedly endorsed commitments. There is a cost involved in acting against one's WECs. Agents run the

risk of 'betraying' the object of love and thereby relinquishing their commitment. This leads to a fundamental change in their self-understanding and has a profound effect on the agent. Before disregarding reasons of authenticity in moral discussions, we should think twice.

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