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“Guarding Against Temptation: Rational Intentions and Intra-Personal Team Reasoning”

In philosophy of action, it is commonly thought that we can form intentions in order to resist temptations. However, there are a number of puzzles around why it is rational to form intentions and when it is rational to revise them. In decision theory, there is no room for intentions. It is conventional to analyze problems of intertemporal choice as if, at each time t at which the person has to make a decision, that decision is made by a distinct transient agent, the person at time t , who asks ‘what should I-now do?’. The considerations that move a decision-maker are all forwards looking, so the only resources that the agents have to guard against temptation are making pre-commitments or taking actions that change the preferences of their future selves. I incorporate intentions into decision theory by introducing the idea of the agent as a team-over-time and allowing the person to ask, ‘What should I-over-time do?’, resulting in a plan or intention. I then show how this framework can solve some of the puzzles around the rationality of forming and revising intentions.