

Emotion and Ethics in Business: The Case of Ethical Dilemma

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Abstract

This article explores two phenomena involved in business ethics: emotions and dilemmas. We analyze the role of emotions in moral philosophy and its practical application in organizations. The interest in emotions reappears because of the role they play in the management of a dilemma, where emotions can be perceived as a catalyst or as a choice mechanism between alternative options in the process of resolving a dilemma. Suggesting a typology of dilemmas inspired by Lemmon, we present a theoretical model linking together emotions and reason depending on the nature of the dilemma. Five types of dilemmas are described in this article. We classify them around two axes: the nature of the situation and the nature of norms involved in these situations. The role of the faculties of emotion and reason will be explored according to the nature of the dilemma. At the end of the article, a series of research propositions concerning the attitude of the individual towards their emotions and their reason will be formulated for future research.

Keywords

Emotions, Ethical Dilemma, Typology, Ethic, Rationality and Reason

1. Introduction

A manager goes through a file, containing all information about an employee. For 3 years, this employee has had a good professional record. His performance appraisal makes him a person well appreciated by the management as well as by colleagues. This is a motivated person who has a positive attitude toward the job. The head of human resources admits that this is an excellent employee. However, the manager must make a decision, he must unfortunately lay off the em-

ployee. The decision remains exclusively his, because nobody will help him in this task. The reason for this layoff is the takeover of the company. The firm has been just bought with the formal condition of a reduction of the personnel costs. With his colleagues, the manager tried to avoid any form of brutal dismissals, but still, some people had been laid off. Based on the legal framework, the main criterion in such cases is seniority; the more a person works for the firm, the more he has chances to keep the job. But the manager feels different emotions because he knows that this employee is one the most motivating and the most competent, and, at the same time, he also knows that he is the only one who provides financial support to the family. The manager wonders if he could give this employee another job in the company making a sprain in the regulations. This could appear as a complaisant decision and compromise his professional ethics and values and put him at risk to his reputation. He finds it difficult to believe that other, less motivated and less competent employees, will be given priority to keep the job. He feels uncomfortable to face this situation. A question haunted him, what do I have to do? What decision should I make? Do I have to decide strictly on a legal basis or I should consider human aspects? On top of everything, the whole situation makes him anxious and he can't sleep. He feels frustration and anger, he begins to hate his job because he knows that whatever is the situation, he will not be comfortable with it.

This situation is drawn from empirical research on human resource managers (Cherré & Volkov, 2022). The first reaction for a researcher when he analyzes a problematic situation like this one, involving ethics, is to reconstruct a posteriori the twist of the thought of the protagonist during the situation to draw a normative explanation from it. However, is the cognitive framework used by the researcher appropriate and representative to replace attitudes, thoughts, and emotions of the person in a given situation? This question leads to another one, more particular, are we aware of all ethical phenomena experienced in that particular case? An ethical decision during a dilemma is more and more polemical because the specialists think that many elements are forgotten while we apply our rational logic (Monin et al., 2007; Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008). One of these missing parts, however promising for research in the study of ethical behaviour, is the phenomenon of emotion (Treviño et al., 2006). When we read the case study above, we discover that the manager is not exempt from emotions in his reaction to the situation. The anger and frustration will indeed play a role in his judgment in that case.

In our opinion, the current research clearly states that emotions play an active part in ethical decisions. Whether these emotions enhance or compete with the reason, they are present and to ignore them would be a mistake for both: decision makers and researchers. In this article, we will present our thoughts about the phenomenon of ethical dilemmas and the role of emotions in decisions involving ethics. We begin with a presentation of the function of emotions in ethics and precisely in ethics applied to management. By doing so we try to reintroduce the complexity of human nature in the perception of the dilemma and

its resolution during the process of decision-making. In this respect, classical models are based on premises or rational hypotheses, which do not take into account the special circumstances of any given situation on the individual's emotions (Klein, 2002; Gaspar et al., 2022). They presume a rational attitude when an individual is confronted with this kind of situation. However, our argument here is to question this assumption, because this sort of rational approach underestimates psychological, e.g. emotional consequences of the complex nature of the dilemma. To do so, we introduce moral philosophy and moral psychology as conceptual perspectives that can help to understand the ambivalence and uncertainty when an individual is facing an ethical dilemma. In other words, introducing the concept of emotion into the analysis of dilemmas would allow us to understand and offer better decision-making strategies for managers and also to open new research avenues in the ethics of business.

Firstly, we will introduce the debate about the concept of emotion in ethics. This debate is structured around moral philosophy and ethics applied to management. Secondly, we will present an original typology on the nature of the dilemma that the individuals can face, and then we will formulate a group of research hypotheses. We are concentrating on dispositions in the morality of the individuals dealing with a symbolic problematic situation: moral dilemma. We want to explore the factor of emotions and its influence on the decision-making process and the reciprocal role of reason and emotion.

Moral dilemmas are emblematic, complex, emotionally intense, and difficult to resolve when decisions are not aligned with moral beliefs. Dealing with the consequences of these conflicting decisions can elicit intense emotional reactions and affect managers' decision-making. This can lead to absurd and irrational decisions. Understanding managers' moral dilemmas can help us anticipate and reflect on these experiences, and our desire to map and understand the complexity of moral dilemmas and their judgment process according to the influence of reason or emotion. We believe this understanding is essential to guide manager decision-making strategies according to the nature of the dilemma. This approach has been little explored so far, and remains innovative, as it is still very unenthusiastic in the domain of business ethics.

2. Debate around Emotions in Ethic

The results of several studies in neuroscience began to converge to the following: individuals' emotions and reasoning are requisitioned to resolve ethical problems, but automatic emotional processes have a tendency to predominate (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2003). In this context, the supporters of the primacy of emotions on reason insist that moral emotions such as self or common interest and well-being differ from basic emotions such as sadness, joy, or surprise (Haidt, 2003; Vélez, García, & Ostrosky-Solís, 2006, Linehan & O'Brien, 2017). These moral emotions focus on the interests or well-being of the society as a whole or, on the interests of at least another person than the one who feels emotion (Haidt, 2003). So, empathy and feeling for other people are been per-

ceived as moral emotions, and that explains the name of this perspective, named as the social intuitionist model (Vélez, García, & Ostrosky-Solís, 2006). The main contribution of these studies to current debate is that emotion is something unconscious, spontaneous, and not intentional. This view is very shaped by Kant perspective on emotion (Kant, 1949). These comments, in terms of moral psychology, change our understanding of emotion that goes from capricious, unstable, and passive to becoming intentional and serving as an engine of moral decision (Blasi, 1999; Fulmer & Barry, 2009).

However, the role of emotion has always been the object of philosophical debate. For example, Platon introduced a model of a divided self where reason rules over passions (Platon, 1995). Aristotle had a similar conception of reason as the wise master and the basis of the virtuous (Aristotle, 1972). Even if emotion is the stupid slave of reason, for Aristotle emotions are still correlated with the character of a virtuous person (Aristotle, 1972). The perception of emotion in ethics can go from a purely physiological phenomenon to a voluntary strategy of adaptation to a particular situation. The understanding of the function of emotion of Aristotle is similar to the modern concept expressed by some moral psychologists where emotion influences ethical judgment as well as reason (Damasio & Damasio, 2006; Mikolajczak et al., 2023).

Historically, there were few philosophical and intellectual traditions that were very critical about emotions. For example, Epicureanism—despite its popular understanding, and Stoicism are doctrines where the absence or control of emotions is a privileged means to live (Lurie, 2004; Vitell et al., 2013). At the same time, many contemporary philosophers of the Kantian or utilitarian tradition endorse a conception based on the sovereignty of reason by forbidding emotions. Feelings and emotions are supposed to be the adversary of reason and ethical judgment (Huebner et al., 2009; Teper et al., 2015; Cooper, 2021). These philosophers refute any involvement or influence of any contingent factor such as context or human psychology in situations involving moral judgment. According to them, moral judgments are supposed to be universal, impartial, and impersonal while emotional judgments are always arbitrary and individualistic (Blackwell, 1998 in Lurie, 2004). Hume (1991) does not share this point of view of emotions in ethics especially on their relations with moral judgment. According to him, passions and emotions remain necessary to guarantee motivation, which cannot come from reason. He insists that reason is the slave of passions (Hume, 1991). Also, the argument of Kant who invites us to decide and to act morally according to maxims of universal law or by pure respect moral law, does not understand that human action sometimes involves feelings and emotions. In this respect, Kantianism and utilitarianism are too rationalistic and do not conceive properly human nature (Williams, 2016; Lurie, 2004). It is only in the 20th century we saw that the rational doctrine left more space for the emergence of more “tolerant” philosophical concepts, which consider emotions in actions involving moral judgment.

In recent years, we have seen a return to the irrelevance of emotions in the field of ethics and moral judgment. The main accusation of these philosophies was to be too rationalistic and completely devoid of humanism (Williams, 2016). According to him, as a human being, we are not utilitarian, because we cannot consider our moral feelings simply as utilitarian objects. With emotion, we cannot manipulate them rationally. So we have to include them as equal parts of human beings. Now we witness a spreading of interest in emotion in diverse domains of management including the concept of moral emotions (De Sousa, 1996; Helion & Pizarro, 2015). The scientific debate on the role of emotion in ethical or moral judgment went far beyond traditional philosophical debate, and tolerated, even encouraged, some research applied ethics in management (Huebner et al., 2009; Kim, 2022). Aligned with these encouragements, we are interested in the more pragmatic avenue for the managers in this research field.

3. Debate Transgressing Its Borders

Ethical decision-making is a central phenomenon in the study of ethical behaviour and represents a rather more prescriptive branch of the ethics applied to management (Treviño et al., 2006). Another important phenomenon is the context where ethical decision-making behaviour takes place. Current research in ethical behaviour focuses on the process of decision-making guided by its “superior” vision of reason (Monin et al., 2008). This implicit debate between reason and emotions is very significant because the outcome of the debate will determine the validity of the research. If our moral judgments are not based on reason, then emotions take over and the opposite is also true.

Ethical decision-making and its study were always approached with the primacy of reason as a source of acquisition of knowledge and judgment. Mainstream models in this field are inspired by the work of Rest (1982) and place the decision-making in a conscious cognitive process as a series of rational stages where each of them has an objective. According to Piaget and Kohlberg (representatives of rationalistic psychology of Kantian inspiration), decision-making takes place before the cognitive capacities of the children are developed (Chiari & Morais, 2024). This faculty of the man to act and to think according to justice, moral standards, sense of duty, and obligation are challenged by different sciences. This schematic and exclusive vision dominated both fields of research: moral psychology and philosophy. Lawrence Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1976), one of the representatives of the rationalistic vision of the moral development of individuals widely influenced subsequent research on the decision-making process (Cherré, 2008). These positivist and rationalistic theoretical models emphasize rationality as the most important factor in ethical decision-making (Rest, 1982; Trevino, 1986; Schwartz, 2016). These mainstream works are sometimes challenged by other research giving a broader vision of decision-making, and insisting on the duality of reason and emotions in this domain (Damasio, 2001). In his book, *The Error of Descartes*, Damasio (2001) displays data from neurologi-

cal and behaviour studies and concludes that emotions are a necessary part of moral judgment, and they frame rational logic. This research suggests emotions and reason, moral judgment, and more broadly, social interactions, and cognitive and emotional functions work together to find a balanced decision to resolve a problematic situation. Without this capacity to include emotion in our ethical behaviour, “we would not be able to differentiate the horrible of the ordinary, we would function out of the moral conscience” (Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008: p. 275).

These findings are supported by other empirical studies in the field of decision-making by researchers in business ethics. Emotions play an important role when it comes to respecting rules as soon as individuals perceive a violation of justice in the norms and behaviours of a community (Schweitzer & Gibson, 2008; Levine & Schweitzer, 2015). In this respect, a management expert system, this type of artificial intelligence, guiding managerial decisions was criticized because they are exclusively based on rationality by excluding emotions from the decision-making process (Khalil, 1993; LaGrandeur, 2015). These emotions could be found in the decision to report or not the “bad” or inappropriate behaviour of our colleagues or managers (Henik, 2008; Alvino & Franco, 2017). Even in the domains of pure rational calculation, for example, in the decision to put money in offshore banks and save taxes, researchers found that emotion plays a moderator’s role in the decision to do so (Maciejovsky et al., 2012). This debate between reason and emotion, which mainly took place in philosophy and moral psychology, is now a part of business ethics and research says that whether emotions are positive or negative, they are directly linked to the choices of decisions (Connelly et al., 2004; Alvino & Franco, 2017). That is why we hear more and more often the call to integrate emotions into analytical frameworks of the process of decision-making to make the business environment and its decisions more human (Gaudine & Thorne, 2001; Lurie, 2004; Bernhard & Labaki, 2021). There are few empirical studies in applied ethics, that join the philosophers’ point of view that insists on the internalist vision that emphasizes the role of the individual and their emotions over the context in case of moral judgment (Prinz, 2006; Deonna & Teroni, 2012). The work of Haidt (2001) on intuition and emotions is of particular interest in this respect. However, we should carefully analyze this issue without falling into the purely intuitional conception of moral judgment.

4. Dilemma and Emotion: Duality to Rediscover

In our context, we define emotion as a general mode of sensitivity of the mental system facing the environment. It is a reactive behaviour, which involves at the same time the activation of some dispositions and also the presence of an objectified cognitive state of mind (Ben-Ze’ev, 2003). To sum up, emotions are therefore a mental mechanism that involves a variety of intellectual capacities and the use of different forms of intention such as motivation, cognition, and evaluation

(Ben-Ze'ev, 2003). According to this definition, emotions appear as a mechanism of information processing to adapt our conscience and our judgments to the environment. By conceiving emotion so, the questions of choices in our judgments and their links to emotions become essential, especially in the workplace (Ashkanasy et al., 2016). Besides the nature of emotions themselves, the question of moral emotions as voluntary choices, or even as “strategies” and choices also become very important (Sartre, 1995; De Sousa, 1996; Solomon, 2010). This voluntarist vision introduces emotions as a means to deal with any given situation by adopting natural or intentional behaviours inside of management practices in an organization (Sartre, 1995; Solomon, 2010).

By going so, emotions must be seen as a factor influencing practical and moral reason, and they are an integral part of it (Greenspan, 1988, 1995). What role do emotions play in a dilemma? How do emotions interfere in the process of ethical decision-making? We think that there are two ways to see the impact of emotions in an ethical dilemma. The first approach consists of integrating the Aristotelian vision of moral education based on learning to feel «good emotion» at the right moment (De Sousa, 1990). Aristotle assigns to emotion the role of moral knowledge similar to what it is possible to describe as perception sense in scientific study. Emotion is a sensory interpretation contributing to the basics of moral judgment (De Sousa, 1990). Two types of emotions come into sight then. Some are said positively and approved by the group such as empathy or commiseration. Others are considered as negative or discredited by the majority such as anger or jealousy. The second approach is defended by Greenspan (1988, 1995), for whom emotion becomes a source of moral motivation, which builds our truth (Greenspan, 1995). Emotion refines our ethical judgments because it can become a “prospective guilt” in case a person violates an obligation or a duty (Greenspan, 1995). Studies show that decisions can be driven by emotions, particularly when the choice of an option can allow to minimize guilt (expected emotion) or to make the decision less uncomfortable while facing a dilemma (anticipated emotion) (Monin et al., 2007; Bagnoli, 2022). Emotions in ethics could open new research areas that would help to break the deadlock of limited rationality in ethical decision-making (Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008; Chen et al., 2020).

The concept of dilemma is the main subject of this article. We think that dilemma is the crucial point in research on ethical behaviour (Cherré, 2013). By definition, a dilemma is something difficult to resolve and therefore, it requires deliberation, but also emotional reactions towards the situation. That is why, individuals tend to have the choice to be more direct and spontaneous. So, “...if we think of a typical situation involving the resolution of a moral dilemma, we risk ending up with a model of the moral judgment which puts a strong emphasis on the role of rational arguments. On the other hand, if we see a typical moral situation as one where we must judge the moral breaches of others, it is possible to conclude that morality involves quick judgments which have a strong emotional side and are not necessarily justified by reasoning.” (Monin et al., 2007: p.

99) Dilemma represents the critical incident of high exploratory value in research and our aim here is not to discredit reason to the advantage of emotions in the decision-making process, but to combine them to explore possible links (Monin et al., 2007; Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008).

The experience of the dilemma always served the moral philosophers; among others, we could think about the young student of Jean-Paul Sartre who hesitated during World War II whether he should enter the Resistance movement or go to work in Germany to be able to support his ill mother (Sartre, 1990). In moral psychology more “rationally oriented” researchers used Heinz’s choice dilemma to illustrate their model (Kohlberg, 1976). Currently, we see a rebound of interest in the phenomenon of a dilemma as tool of reflection on ethical behaviour (Greenspan, 1995; Tenbrunsel & Crowe, 2008). Besides the prisoner’s dilemma, which became the tool par excellence to analyze utilitarian behaviour in economics, a new interest in moral philosophy started with the double-effect dilemma of the trolley bus (Foot, 1983). Then, if we ask a question: why dilemma and emotions? We think that this kind of situation helps to better understand the moral nature of individuals, because, as psychoanalysis, an extremely ambiguous situation makes the person look deep inside at his soul and his personality (Sartre, 1943). In the next part of the article, we are going to present our thoughts on the impact of emotions in ethical dilemmas, because we think that this situation is symbolic and symptomatic today. Also, we are convinced that it can be a tremendous learning experience.

5. Dilemma, Underexplored Phenomenon

To our knowledge, the academic literature is rather silent about the role of emotions and the nature of ethical dilemmas. For instance, in moral philosophy, many philosophers simply reject the existence of a dilemma. Since a value or a principle (utility or duty) is recognized as superior, then the dilemma disappears by itself. For example, Kant (1949) and Mills (1993) are persuaded that if their doctrine is applied, the dilemma is nothing more than an image, which does not exist. Other philosophers admit the existence of dilemmas (Lemmon, 1962; Gowans, 1987) but the importance of dilemmas found a new appeal in contemporary thinking on ethics by Bernard Williams (Williams, 2016). He invites us to think of the ethics and moral dilemma out of the “sacrosanct of impartiality” of deontological approaches advocated by Kantian, i.e. utilitarian approach (Williams, 1981; Duhamel, 2003). He pleads for the integration of emotions and individuality to the center of the dilemma (Williams, 2016). He argues for a reconciliation between ethics and emotions to better understand the power of our ethical conceptions on our actions.

In his essay “The Ethical Coherence”, Williams (2016) points out that moral conflicts, such as dilemmas, in the first place are conflicts of desire and not conflicts of options or beliefs. For example, when we must choose between two moral duties, we will opt for one, but the other one will still exist in our minds.

Therefore, we choose a desire while another one (abandoned) will give us a feeling of regret (Williams, 2016). If it is categorically necessary to choose a duty in comparison with another one, it “seems impossible to be held by a logical representation, which supposes that conflict has as necessary consequence that one of the duties must be completely rejected (Williams, 1981: p. 121)”.

It seems that for the management practitioners' ethical dilemma is a key issue. This concept of exclusive and unilateral choice between two or several values is adopted by business ethics. Some academics and practitioners define an ethical dilemma in management as a problem, a situation, or an opportunity, that makes individuals choose between several “bad” solutions or non-ethical decisions (Treviño et al., 2006). These definitions are based on a choice between what is fair or unfair. The situations leading to dilemmas are often raised from discrimination, sexual harassment, conflict of interests, and confidentiality issues related to customers or organizational resources (Treviño & Nelson, 2021). However, managers cannot always be capable of admitting the ambiguity or moral dangerousness of a situation. To be able to recognize, experience and thinking are the best assets of the manager in this kind of situation (Lurie & Albin, 2007).

Whatever its nature or cause, the ethical dilemma represents a perplexed state of mind for the one who lives it, and in most cases it involves a difficult and not very pleasant choice (Fisher & Lovell, 2009). On the other hand, some tough choices are not necessarily based on the dichotomy of fair or unfair, and a real dilemma is rooted in challenging the deep human values and it results from the ambiguous situations lived in the daily execution of a job (Bird, 2002). It is generally accepted that ethical dilemmas are various and intrinsically linked to the context and to the characteristics of those who live and experience them. However, little research has explored the existence of a common phenomenon that triggers an ethical dilemma.

Research confirms that dilemmas do exist but for most researchers in ethics, the debate on the phenomenon is purely theoretical (Geva, 2006). On the contrary, field observations and case studies confirm the existence of *authentic* and real dilemmas (Tahssain & Cherré, 2012). This point of view comes from our empirical observations in recent years (Cherré, 2013). To put theory and practice together, in this article, we use a taxonomy of dilemmas proposed by Lemmon (1962) because we think that his analysis meets our conclusions from field research (Cherré & Volkov, 2022). According to Lemmon's conceptual intuition, the nature of an ethical dilemma is a function of the intensity of the situation and of the origin of internal or external norms possessed by an individual who has to deal with this moral conflict.

These two conditions are not emotionally neutral for the individual who experiences a dilemma. The role of emotions in the management of ethical dilemmas appears to us as an essential variable for recognizing the existence of a dilemma as well as for resolving it. Choosing an ambiguous and complex situation generates a considerable number of emotions. The impact of these emotions on

the ethical cognitive process cannot be ignored or downgraded. According to Aristotle, Hume, and contemporary philosophers, there is no doubt that emotions are a part of our moral thinking and doing. So, in this article, we present a conceptual framework establishing potential links between dilemmas and emotions, following some research hypotheses.

Typology of Dilemmas

We use Lemmon (1962)'s work to suggest a classification of ethical dilemmas that can occur in organizations. This classification is structured around two axes: the nature of norms and the nature of the situation of the dilemma. The choice between these axes comes from our way of thinking about phenomena as well as from our empirical research (Cherré, 2011). We think that this theoretical model gives an interesting framework for analyzing the nature of dilemmas in organizational set-up. The first axis represents the nature of conflicting norms within a given dilemma. It can go from rules, norms, or general moral principles to pragmatic and practical adoption of values on the borderline of prohibited or exceptional. The second axis exposes the nature of the situation and its issues. It begins with a clear situation: for example, to take or to buy some tool/device belonging to the organization. The situation is rather simple: in other words, the choice is between stealing and being honest and in that case, the limits of ethics are quite clear. Then this axis goes to a more complex situation and choices to be made are less obvious. The issue of the dilemma becomes more and more elusive and the sense of our ethical action can be incomprehensible. Within these two axes, we placed Lemmon (1962)'s five types of dilemmas (Figure 1).

The **dilemma of type 1** is where the individual acts in reply to a responsibility, a commitment, or a moral principle and where the situation is clear. In this situation, the person knows exactly what must be done (it could be linked to the person's duty/occupation or position in the organization); what could be done (for ex. to fulfill a commitment such as a psychological contract); or what is

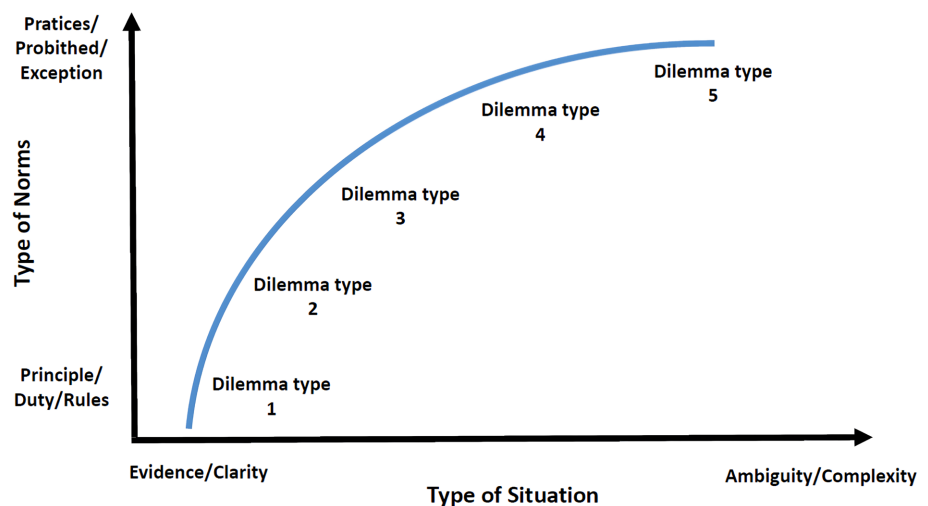


Figure 1. Lemmon (1962)'s typology of dilemmas.

good to do in a given situation according to moral principle (Lemmon, 1962). In the **dilemma of type 2**, the individual can be in a context where he/she exactly knows how to act when facing a dilemma, but he/she fails because of various reasons. Lemmon (1962) calls this type of situation with the term *akrasia*, which in Greek means the absence of control of our actions, our intentions, and our will. It becomes problematic when the individual is unfaithful and he/she becomes alien to his own decisions by not assuming the consequences of his actions (Lemmon, 1962). For example, it could happen when there is fraud in an organization, but the person who committed it pretends not to have the choice to do so or be punished, or saying that everybody does the same.

The **dilemma of type 3** refers to the controversial situation where the individual is confronted with the values and norms of responsibility, commitment, and moral principles at the same time. According to Lemmon (1962), the individual knows exactly what must be done, but following his/her judgment, the individual will not act according to what has to be done. For example, our sense of duty could conflict with our sense of responsibility if it is necessary to act against our moral principles. The author gives an example of a friend who asks you to keep his gun and you promise him to give it back at the end of the day. Your friend comes back in the evening, but he is upset and asks for his weapon saying that he is going to kill his wife because she cheats on him. Do you have to keep your promise to turn him the gun (your obligation) or to refuse him and not be indirectly responsible for murder (other obligations)? In the organization, we can easily imagine the dilemma of the HR manager who lays off hundreds of workers knowing that the motivation of top decision-makers is a question of financial greediness and not a question of performance appraisal. To solve this ethical dilemma, the individual will choose between his values and his obligations by assessing the consequences of this choice for other people (Lemmon, 1962). The main issue in this type of dilemma is to carefully differentiate the sources of “duties” in conflict.

As for the **dilemma of type 4**, we face an even more complex situation when the individual suffers from a moral conflict. He/she has to make a decision involving three types of values (responsibility, commitment, and moral principle), but the consequences of every choice to other people are unknown to him. His/her existing frame of moral references does not apply to the situation. Given the complexity of the situation, the individual will have to reappraise his ethics (Sartre, 1943). Sartre illustrates it by the situation when a student must choose between staying with his ill mother in occupied France or leaving for London and joining the French military force to fulfill his convictions. This kind of situation could also happen in an organization. For example, you are a manager in a hospital and you must decide where to allocate budget money during a period of a high-risk epidemic. Would you take the budget the sum equal to a dozen surgeries on old people and put this sum to purchase the vaccine, which could potentially save thousands of lives if the epidemic spread? Because there is no pre-established moral solution, the individual facing this kind of choice remains

uncertain and the individual questions himself about the moral sense, which must guide his/her action (Lemmon, 1962).

For the **dilemma of type 5**, Lemmon (1962) maintains that this last moral situation is even more complex. In this type of situation, the individual has to make a decision that is morally absolutely not prepared. The dilemma of type 4 is rather a question of the applicability of moral judgment in any given situation. However, the dilemma of type 5 consists of creating a new moral perspective to answer the moral needs created by a dilemma. Therefore, the individual will have to adopt a new moral vision to solve an ethical dilemma, which does not fit to pre-established set of moral values. Here, the desire to remain authentic towards ourselves is fundamental. Imagine you work in the same firm as your child. You learn that he frauds the company for an important sum of money and accusations could put him in jail. Would you report it? In this case, an individual cannot be unfaithful, the whole situation does not allow him/her to do so. No determined or normative behaviour can be applied, but the individual has to find a solution.

We retain from the description of this typology that the more we advance along the axis of the situation and norms, the more we face situations where moral issues are complex and ambiguous, and which requires us to be creative in our ethical solutions. Dilemmas of types 4 and 5 recall norms of prohibited, exceptions, and practices. On the other hand, it is quite clear that a decision, even new and exceptional, will not be optimum under circumstances and will leave a feeling of dissatisfaction or guilt. In our research, meetings with the managers confirm that they are in a complex position, where they have to choose between unsatisfactory solutions (Cherré, 2008, 2011, 2013). This official report joins the theoretical intuitions of Williams (1981) and Sartre (1996) where emotions supervise the personal disposition to decide.

To round up, emotions appear as moral indicators which assess a given situation, ethical judgments of this situation, and also our relation to this situation. So, to ignore moral emotions could turn into to blindness the persons who experience them. The common saying, “to leave emotions at home” can explain why individuals coming to work remain silent about situations involving ethics (Bird, 2002). It is because they are ashamed to be only ones logical and rational. We note therefore that emotions play a very important role, but that this role can be conditioned by the event, which produces it (Greenspan, 1995; Tenbrunsel & Crowe, 2008). Two ways are open to us to explore a dichotomy between emotions and reason while facing the resolution of a dilemma. The first one is to use emotions to understand a given situation (Monin et al., 2007). The second one is the opposite. It starts with the nature of the situation to understand the role of emotions and reason in moral judgment. We prefer the latest approach in our reasoning. In this theoretical reflection, we start with the nature of the dilemma and we will try to understand the dichotomy of emotions/reason to develop our research hypotheses. In doing so, we extend the reflection of Solomon (2010) and from the proposed typology we are going to explore the role of emotions as

a mutual regulating concept of rationality in the management of dilemmas.

6. Emotion and Reason in the Decision-Making Process

We would like to remind you that we do not campaign for an exclusive role of emotions in ethical decisions. The role of reason is still essential in this process, otherwise all human actions and thoughts would be only desired. Nevertheless, emotions also play a very important role in the process of ethical decision-making and the management of ethical dilemmas. In his effort to rethink the organization to make it more human, Lurie (2004) establishes three important aspects of ethics where emotions can help to make better ethical decisions. Following his steps, we think that the nature of the dilemma controls these phenomena as a second dominant internal source of these intellectual mechanisms. The role of emotions will be twofold:

1) Emotion is a preanalytical element of the process of ethical decision-making. Emotions help the rise of moral conscience (Greenspan, 1995). Emotions also help to have a better, more detailed vision of a situation. As with other psychological aspects, emotions are very sensitive to the details of personal and contextual situations and they allow a better understanding of the significance of the situation (Ben Ze'ev, 2003).

2) Emotion is part of a concomitant adaptation strategy with reason. Emotion helps to build knowledge, and judgment and to conduct action. And that is what we will explore hereafter in.

The relation of reason and emotion is therefore concomitant, meaning that these two psychic faculties are simultaneous and they co-exist and co-act in the process of decision-making or resolution of an ethical dilemma. Our hypothesis aims that the nature of the dilemma will determine the most appropriate indicator in the mind of the person to evaluate and decide while facing a dilemma. Following this logic, we introduce to our previous diagram figure a line representing duality between both faculties of knowledge and of judgment, e.g. emotions and reason (see Figure 2). The dynamics of this curve go as follows: the more the nature of the dilemma goes towards complexity and ambiguity and the nature of norms are practical, prohibited, or exceptional, the more we realize that the role of emotion can become a variable “strengthening” the reason (Greenspan, 1995). Here is our first research proposition:

RP 1: Are there links and, if so what kind they are between the natures of ethical dilemmas and emotions in the process of resolution of this dilemma?

Dilemmas 1 and 2 where reason is at the basis of judgment of dilemmas and backed by emotions. As we saw it previously, according to the deontological and utilitarian approach dilemmas could be easily resolved on the condition of applying rational principles to issues at stake. For them, there cannot be a conflict if a problem is identified and principles of rationality are applied. Then reason is the main indicator dominating emotions in the process of judgment. Reason is guided by principles of utility, justice, equity, goodwill, or selfishness. These values are norms shared in the group and internalized by the individual. These

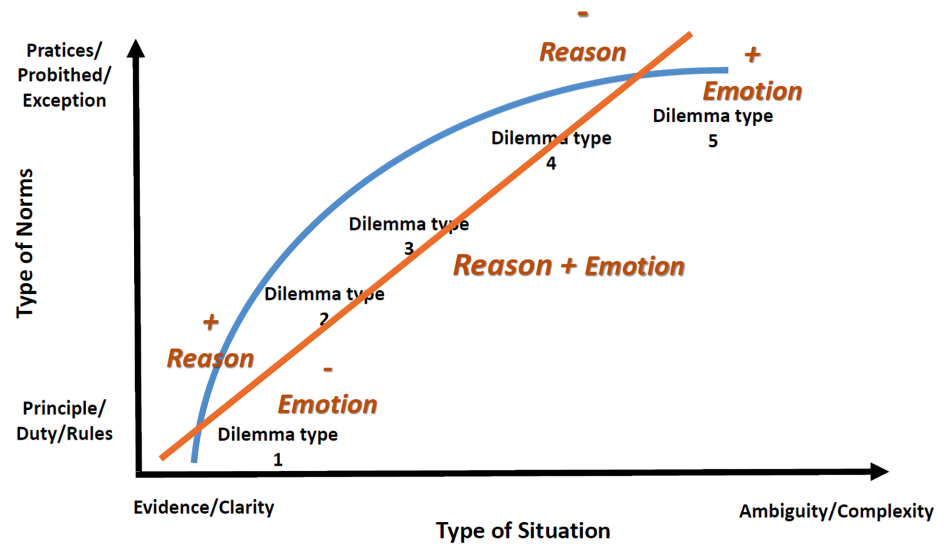


Figure 2. Potential links between dilemmas, reason, and emotions. From (Lemmon, 1962).

principles coming from outside are internalized by individuals through the process of socialization. Still, these principles have to be rationally approved by the individual and to be “adjusted” by emotions.

RP 2: The more the nature of an ethical dilemma is obvious and the nature of conflicting norms universal, the more the individual will have a reason as the main indicator of judgment.

Inside this dilemma, individuals act as reasonable human beings where reason guides and measures the process.

Dilemma 3 is a dilemma where emotions and reason serve as a basis for the moral judgment of the dilemma. With the dilemma of type 3, the individual is in the scenario of the authentic dilemma, as expressed by the British philosopher Williams (1981). For him, to choose in a situation of moral conflict is equivalent to completely evacuating not chosen duty, which is impossible for him. In the selection of a duty during a conflict, Williams (1981) insists on the existence of a moral residue and of a regret not being able to fulfill all obligations. According to Williams, that is where “genuine dilemma” comes from. Geva (2006) gives an explanation and definition, of how this authentic dilemma expressed by Williams (1981) could be transposed into business ethics. A true ethical dilemma comes from a situation when two or several moral or legitimate duties are in conflict and when consensus about how to resolve it does not exist (Geva, 2006). The controversy on the existence of genuine dilemmas comes from research (or from facts) that they are impossible to resolve. Quoting Bagnoli (2000) who said: “I would say that a moral dilemma is a kind of deliberative trap without a way to exit. The moral agents who live the experience of a moral dilemma feel misled and perplexed, not because they are not sure of their duties, but because they are excluded from the possibility to choose a way of an exit from a dilemma (Bélanger, 2011: p. 17).” Currently, the question of “conceptual existence” of the dilemma is still being discussed (Bélanger, 2011).

RP 3: In case of a vague and unclassifiable nature of ethical dilemmas where the nature of conflictual norms is confusing and not clear, the individual will have a mix of reason and emotion, or in other words, irrationality will be an indicator of judgment.

Within this dilemma, the individual is free to create because he/she has no compass. That is why, he can get lost.

Dilemmas 4 and 5 where emotions are based on judgment and backed by reason. If two or several rationally accepted principles are in conflict during a dilemma, can we use reason to choose between these alternatives? Some research invites us to think of the ethics and moral dilemmas out of the “sanctuary of impartiality” of the rational deontological approaches of Kantian and utilitarian type (Duhamel, 2003; Williams, 2016). Some specialists in moral philosophy want to replace the integrity of emotions and the individuality of the moral agents (those who live in a dilemma) in the center of the dilemma (Williams, 1981; Greenspan, 1995). According to them, “It takes more than philosophy” to understand the impact of moral conception on our ethics. Williams introduces a notion of reconciliation between psychological elements such as subjectivism, moral I, and emotions to include the ethical power of our conception of our actions on the source of power as well as our actions. In his work, “The Ethical Coherence”, Williams (1981) points out that true moral conflicts, such as dilemmas, are, first of all, conflicts of desire and not conflicts of options or belief.

According to Lurie (2004), emotion has a positive contribution to deliberation or ethical judgment because these latest allow individuals to have a more particularistic and detailed vision of a situation and relations. Emotions play the role of a regulator in our moral motivation and they have moral sense (Blasi, 1999). Emotions do not necessarily appear spontaneously, but they can come from a consciously motivated regulation because reason gives no more guide to action. The famous dilemma of the trolley bus is a good example of it: to choose to save several persons in a tram which rushes into a wall either by pushing a fat man who will slow it down or by redirecting this tram towards a way where there is a worker who will be killed, but who finishes on a security buffer. Emotion can fill a space notably existing when between our logical actions and rational: In this example, all conflicting reasons cancel each other and emotions dominate. “*Emotions are affective conditions, allowing an attitude of concern, of interest, of attention, and care on the persons and the situation. As explained above, emotions are not theoretical states, they include a practical interest linked to a will to act and to change the present or future circumstances. Emotions have an important motivational component (Ben Ze’ev, 2003: p. 60).*” More nature of the dilemma is of types 4 and 5, more emotion gives the directions to follow.

RP 4: The more the nature of an ethical dilemma is ambiguous and complex and where the nature of conflicting norms is from the domain of the concrete and exceptional, the more the individual will have emotions as indicators of judgment.

Inside these types of dilemmas, individuals act morally flustered and nervous

and emotions become the compass of the process. This dilemma allows the individual to express his humanity (Lurie, 2004).

7. Conclusion

In this article, we tried to demonstrate the importance of emotions during all stages of the decision-making process in an ethical dilemma. Also, it gives an additional explanation to the exclusively rational understanding of these phenomena. We think that moral philosophy and emotions have to be included in further research on ethical behaviour and ethical decision-making in organizations. Some emotions should be analyzed more closely because they could have a significant impact on ethical decision-making and the development of dilemmas (Eisenberg, 2000). The first one would be empathy with its capacity to share the emotions of other people and it would produce three types of empathy: empathy of agent, emotional empathy, and situational empathy (Teper et al., 2015). Another interesting link would be to analyze situational empathy with different forms of dilemmas. The second emotion is guilt and its role as a regulatory agent in the decision-making process and shame would be moderating emotion in our moral motivation (Shipley & van Riper, 2022). Finally, pride and emotional intelligence could be considered an evaluator of our ethical decision (Cabral & de Oliveira Carvalho, 2014; Teper et al., 2015, Shipley & van Riper, 2022). To sum up, we deem that emotions have a large potential for future research.

With the nature of the dilemma, we would be able to anticipate the attitudes and decisions of an individual. Will he/she act according to logic or according to a particular emotion? This model will have the advantage of apprehending the impacts of a dilemma situation to those who could experience it. Links between moral emotions and mental health in the workplace could be interesting to explore too. This model also allows us to analyze conditions, which affect the nature of dilemmas and their unpleasant consequences. Finally, this model accepts the existence of a diversity of answers and choices of human beings were both, emotions and reasons have their place (Lurie, 2004).

Our reflection gives the potential to extend research on moral emotions in the contingency context. Our contribution here is to present a theoretical framework for interpreting qualitative research and to verify the role of emotions as stated. Furthermore, this framework could be tested to interpret previously experienced managers' situations and to do so on a bigger scale. We believe that these thoughts advance our knowledge in the domain of ethical behaviour and could link psychology and business ethics.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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