

In Defense of Timidity

lexical discounting

range threshold

1. Setting the Table

The issue I address in this paper has recently received increased attention because of its importance for longtermism. Three influential publications were recently published on the topic by longtermists or longtermist-adjacent researchers (Beckstead & Thomas, 2023; Wilkinson, 2022; Kosonen, 2022). Wilkinson fully embraces recklessness and strongly rejects timidity. Beckstead and Thomas reject both recklessness and timidity. Kosonen also rejects both views, but she seems, *inter alia*, to consider discounting views to be the most plausible view.

1.3. The Definitions of Recklessness and Timidity

Recklessness

x x y y p
 x y p

Rule 1

much smaller

Rule 2

Rule 3

2.4. Decision Swamping and Lack of Risk-Aversiveness

p

a single trial

3. Objections to Discounting views

q

Table 4: Payoffs for Different Prospects: Original Background Independence

q

q

q

p

p

p

q

$p+q$

$p \quad q$

2.3. Objection 3: Continuity Axiom

p

Response

Figure 2: Continuous functions approaching the Heaviside step function, for increasingly narrow step width

$y = \begin{cases} p - t - p & \text{, probability threshold " } \\ \text{, step function defined within the range} \end{cases}$
" . In red: the Heaviside step function.

4. Conclusion

*Doing Good Better: Effective Altruism and a Radical New Way to Make a
Difference.*

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Synthese, vol.