Abstract:
Sen's critique of the homo economicus conception of choice asserts that agents who 'displace' their goals, and instead choose on the basis of others', are not therefore irrational. I first defend Sen against the objection that violations of "self-goal choice" undermine coherent deliberation. My critique of Sen then introduces the notion of 'negative goals' and shows that the process of adopting others' aims remains constrained by those 'goals' that determine the spectrum of actions that an agent considers permissible. Only on rare occasions are we pushed to violate even these negative goals that play a central role for our identities.

Keywords: Rational choice theory, homo economicus, practical identity, self-goal choice, commitment.