

The Ripple Amplification Argument

A Haimesian argument for favoring even small acts of good and rejecting even small acts of evil once properly identified.

Core Claim

Because we cannot fully predict the reach of our actions, and because small inputs can produce exponentially large consequences in interconnected systems, we are morally obligated to favor even the smallest acts of good and avoid even the smallest acts of evil once identified.

Argument

- 1 **P1.** In complex systems, small initial changes can scale into disproportionately large downstream effects.
- 2 **P2.** Modern work on chaos and quantum information scrambling shows that tiny disturbances can amplify rapidly in highly interconnected systems.
- 3 **P3.** Human life is also networked and interconnected: behavior, emotion, generosity, fear, cruelty, and example spread socially.
- 4 **P4.** Because human beings cannot fully predict the long-range consequences of their actions, apparently minor acts may carry hidden weight.
- 5 **P5.** If small acts can become socially magnified, then seemingly small goods may help far beyond their first target, and seemingly small evils may wound far beyond their first victim.
- 6 **P6.** Moral prudence therefore requires action at the smallest scale: once an act is properly identified as good, it should be favored; once an act is properly identified as evil, it should be avoided.

Conclusion. Small moral acts are never safely small. In a world of amplification, uncertainty, and interconnected consequence, the wise person should intentionally cultivate small goods and reject small evils before they spread.

Why This Matters

This argument does not claim that physics directly proves morality. Rather, it uses what modern science reveals about amplification in complex systems as a powerful support and analogy for moral life. If nature itself shows that small inputs can become large outcomes, then moral seriousness should begin earlier, not later. A kind word, a refusal to lie, a small generosity, a minor cruelty, or a quiet betrayal may all travel farther than the actor can see.

Haimesian Framing

The Haimesian System treats this not as sentimental optimism, but as disciplined moral caution. One should not romanticize every tiny action; one should recognize that moral scale is often hidden. Because the future spread of an action is not fully visible, the morally serious person must treat even small deeds as potentially weighty. This strengthens the duty to do small goods deliberately and to reject small evils before they mature into larger harms.

Practical Principle

When in doubt about the scale of a consequence, err toward mercy, honesty, restraint, and small acts of real help. Do not wait for an action to become grand before calling it good; do not excuse a wrong merely because it looks minor.

Reference Notes

- Recent experimental work on quantum chaos and information scrambling reported exponential growth of chaos from tiny imperfections during time-reversal in a many-body system.
- Research on prosocial contagion shows that generosity and helping behavior can spread through networks and peer influence, supporting the social side of ripple effects.