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DO WE HAVE REASONS TO DO WHAT WE CANNOT DO?

Abstract

Bart Streumer utilizes the principle “*R*: We do not have reasons to do what we cannot do” in order to justify that ‘ought’ implies ‘can’. This thesis questions Streumer’s assumption and instead argues that we have reasons to do what is psychologically-, physically and maybe even metaphysically impossible but not conceptually or logically impossible. As is shown in the thesis we do not have reasons to do the latter, due to it being the case that we cannot even try to do what is conceptually or logically impossible. It is further argued that there will always be stronger contradicting reasons against doing what we cannot do, due to every reason in favor of doing what we cannot do being outweighed by the reason given by the fact that we cannot do it. This will in turn justify that ‘ought’ implies ‘can’. By allowing reasons to do what we cannot do, we will be able to accommodate for the moral residue in genuine moral dilemmas and other hard cases without attributing irrationality to agents who feel for instances guilt and regret after a genuine moral dilemma. It is also possible that we could generalize the results in this paper and have it replace Jonathan Dancy’s notion of “enabler”; albeit the thesis points to further research being required to strengthen the last two claims.

Keywords: Reasons, impossibility, Bart Streumer, Ulrike Heuer, Jonathan Dancy, reasons for actions.

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1. Introduction

Robin is trapped in an empty well and she will die unless she gets out. There is no one around, so there is no point in shouting for help. Robin is pathologically scared of climbing, and it is *ipso facto* psychologically impossible for Robin to climb out of the well. If she climbed out she would survive and go on to live a healthy and enjoyable life. Does Robin have a reason to climb out of the well, even though, it is psychologically impossible for Robin to do so?

If Robin flew out of the well she would live. Robin cannot fly and it is physically impossible for her to fly, but does Robin still have a reason to fly out of the well, even though it is physically impossible?

An evil demon appears and says that if Robin can make water not be H₂O the demon will get her out of the well. Does Robin have a reason to make water not be H₂O, even though it is metaphysically impossible for her to do so?

An evil demon appears and says that if Robin makes it the case that a logical law ceases to hold, such as making it the case that A is not A, the evil demon will get her out of the well. Does Robin have a reason to make it the case that A is not A, even though it is logically impossible?

There is also the additional question if it is the case that Robin ought to climb, fly, and make water not be H₂O, or change the laws of logic.

The question that this paper intends to answer is *whether or not we have reasons to do what we cannot do*. This is a question that arises regardless if you assume an internal or an external position regarding reasons. External and internal positions refer to the discussion whether reasons are grounded in desires, or in something external to our desires. For a thorough discussion regarding externalism/internalism see Derek Parfit in his *On What Matters* for an externalist defence (Parfit, 2011) and for an internalist defense see Ingmar Persson's *The Retreat of Reason* (Persson, 2005). In this paper the focus will be on how an externalist should answer the question at hand.¹ It should be taken as implicit that *reasons* refer to *pro-*

¹ Simplified, the problem arises for the internalist position if we have desires to do what we cannot do, and *ex hypothesi* we would then have a reason to do what we cannot do. A sketch for a solution would be to claim that desires to do what we cannot do would be irrational, since they would not survive cognitive psychotherapy, or

tanto practical reasons,² unless specified. It is important to be aware that the focus will be on *practical reasons*, i.e. reasons for actions and not reasons for beliefs, attitudes etc. The phrase “what we cannot do” in “reasons to do *what we cannot do*” is ambiguous, but refers to instances when it is in some sense *impossible* for us to ϕ . It is also important to separate the question “If we have reasons to do what we cannot do?” from a problem I will not discuss in this paper which is similar to the wrong kind of reasons-problem³: “Can F be a reason for ϕ 'ing even though Y cannot ϕ for that reason.

There exist different types of impossibilities, such as psychological, physiological, physical, metaphysical, mathematical, conceptual and logical impossibilities. I make no claims about whether this list is complete or not. Hopefully, the examples at the top of this section sufficiently illustrate the type of questions at hand, and some of the different types of impossibilities. The examples will be used throughout the paper. For simplicity I will sometimes refer to “reasons to do what we cannot do” as “impossible reasons”. This term is somewhat unfortunate since it seems to imply that the reasons themselves are impossible; please keep in mind while reading that this is not what is intended.

A reason why this question is worth investigating is presented by Bart Streumer, who in his “Reasons and Impossibility” presents a justification of the principle ‘*ought*’ implies ‘*can*’ (OiC) based on the premises:

- 1) There are no reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 2) We ought to do what we have most reasons to do.
- 3) If there are no reasons to do what we cannot do, it will never be the case that we will have most reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 4) (from 1 – 3) It will never be the case that we ought to do what we cannot do (OiC).

If the first premise proves to be false, it may seem that Streumer’s defense of OiC is in jeopardy. I will argue this is not the case, and that we can still use Streumer’s insights to

that the fully rational person as described by Michael Smith in *The Moral problem* (1994) would not have such a desire.

² A notion first introduced by Susan Hurley in *Natural Reasons: Personality and Polity* (1989, p 126-127) and Shelly Kagan in *The Limits of Morality* (1989, p. 17). This notion will be further explained in the next section.

³ The Wrong kind of reasons-problem (WKR) is presented by Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rönnow-Rasmussen in “The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-attitudes and Value” (2004). An example of a WKR is if an evil demon demands that you prefer a saucer of mud or he will punish you. This gives you a reason to prefer the mud, but it is the wrong kind of reason since your preferring of the saucer is not dependent on the saucer of mud being preferable but on behalf of not wanting to get punished (Rabinowicz & Rönnow-Rasmussen, 2004, p.402).

justify OiC, while at the same time shedding some light on our intuitions regarding genuine moral dilemmas by changing the argument to:

- 1) There are reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 2) There are always contradicting reasons that outweigh the reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 3) We ought to do what we have most reasons to do.
- 4) If there always are contradicting reasons that outweigh the reasons to do what we cannot do, it will never be the case that we have most reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 5) It will never be the case that we ought to do what we cannot do.

The paper will begin with an introductory discussion regarding normative reasons in general, in section 2. In section 3 I will outline different positions regarding *impossible reasons* which will develop into a discussion about different challenges to the postulation of *impossible reasons* such as that it would render us ontologically burdened, give us “crazy reasons”, or force us to give up the OiC-principle. In section 4, I will show how *impossible reasons* could shed some light on the moral residue of genuine moral and finally in section 5 I will outline a way to generalize the insights gained in the paper.

2. Reasons

A popular externalist view is presented by Tim Scanlon in *What We Owe to Each other*. He argues that reasons are primitive in the sense that they cannot be reduced to anything else. A reason is “a consideration that counts in favor of $[\phi]$ ” (Scanlon, 1998, p. 17). Elaborating on this, Derek Parfit, among others, argues that reasons are given by facts:⁴ “If I enjoy walnuts, this fact gives me a reason to eat them; but, if they would kill me, this fact gives me a stronger or weightier conflicting reason *not* to eat them.” (Parfit, 2011, p. 31-32).

A factor that contributes to the confusing philosophical discussion regarding the quite technical notion of “reasons” is that there is no standardized vocabulary on which the different researchers agree. Instead, different phrases are used to capture the same meaning and, even worse, the same phrases are used to capture different meanings. In an attempt to

⁴ I interpret Parfit’s claim to be compatible with Scanlon’s suggestion, but make no claim for this being the only interpretation available to us.

ease this confusion I will now state how I intend to use these phrases. The discussion about “reasons” is a mine-field and authors have two alternatives: either try to avoid the mine-field by being vague, or to adopt a substantive position. I opt for the latter alternative, well aware that I will be making controversial substantive claims, but I will make it explicit when I make such claims throughout this short exposé of reasons. It is my intention that this explicit way of going about it will add to the transparency of the account given in this paper.

Following Skorupski, there are different types of normative reasons:

Epistemic reasons - Reasons for beliefs, e.g.: the fact that the apple is green is a reason to believe that the apple is green.

Practical reasons - Reasons for actions, e.g.: the fact that the green apple is delicious is a reason to eat it.

Evaluative reasons - Reasons for feelings (feelings in a broad sense which include all affective responses to an object or circumstance),⁵ e.g.: the fact that P committed a random act of murder is a reason to have a (strong) negative attitude towards P. (Skorupski, 2010, p. 36)

Again I highlight that this paper’s focus is *practical reasons*.

It is, following Parfit, important to note the distinction between *real reasons* and *apparent reasons*. Parfit is a bit vague and seems to offer two separate definitions of what an *apparent reason* is. His first definition of an *apparent reason* goes as follows: “When we have beliefs whose truth would give us a reason to act in some way” (Parfit, 2011, p. 35). If these beliefs are true, the apparent reason is also a *real reason*. So an *apparent reason* is a state of affairs (the content of our belief) that we believe to be a fact, and this, if it obtained, would have reason-making features. It is a *real reason* if it actually is a fact with reason-making features. On the same page Parfit writes that we have a different kind of *apparent reason* when we believe to have some reason (Parfit, 2011, p. 35) i.e. when we hold something to be a reason. This use is slightly different from Parfit’s first definition but the difference will have no bearing on the topic for this paper so I will not linger on it.

⁵ *Evaluative reasons* are reasons regarding what has value, in accordance with the Fitting-attitudes-analysis of value which regards something being valuable *iff* we have reasons to have a *pro-attitude* towards it. This is of course a controversial claim, and this explanation of the different reasons is too thin in order to be adequate. I merely state this trichotomy of reasons for the purpose of transparency regarding my own views, and how I use the terms.

The next distinction is complex and has a long history. It is the vital distinction regarding *pro-tanto reasons*. *Pro-tanto reasons* are reasons in one aspect, for example the fact that Hitler was kind to dogs is a *pro-tanto* reason to be friendly towards Hitler, while other facts about Hitler are *pro-tanto* reasons against being friendly towards Hitler.⁶

The idea (but not the term itself) stems from W.D Ross who discusses so-called *prima facie duties* in *The Right and the Good* (1932) where he contrasts *prima facie* (i.e. what we would nowadays call *pro-tanto*) *duty* with *duty proper*, which refers to the action that must be done when all *pro-tanto* duties have been considered (Ross, 1939(2009), p. 19). The same distinction was applied to reasons, and in the process relabeled, by among others Shelly Kagan in *The Limits of Morality* (1989), as the contrast between *pro-tanto reasons* and *reasons all-things-considered*. Here, *all-things-considered* refers to “when all the reasons/facts are considered” in line with Ross’ use of the term *duty proper*. In other contexts *pro-tanto* reasons are contrasted with *most reasons* (Parfit, 2011, p. 1) (Heuer, 2008, p. 236) (Streumer, 2007, p. 354). The problem with *most reasons* is that it is an ambiguous term, which leaves a lot implicit that should be made explicit. It is unclear whether the term refers to the highest number of reasons (disregarding strength) in favor of an action, or the joint weight (or strength) of reasons. If one opts for the latter interpretation it is still unclear how the reasons are supposed to be “taken together”, as mere sums or something else? However, since *most reasons* is the term used by most of the author cited in this paper I will often make use of it in order for my argument to be valid even if one does not accept my new proposed term.

The problem with *reasons all-things-considered* is that there is another use of the term *all-things-considered* which focuses on an epistemological aspect of reasons. On this use *all-things-considered* refers to the issue whether the fact that *appears* to have reason-giving features *actually* has reason-giving features *all-things-considered*. An example could be that the fact that the ice-cream is enjoyable is, *all-things-considered*, a (*pro-tanto*) reason to eat it; or quoting James Lenman: “So even though the pleasurable-ness of smoking does not suffice to justify my smoking, all things considered, it is still a good reason for smoking” (Lenman, 2011). Another possibility suggested to me by Wlodek Rabinowicz is to contrast *pro-tanto*

⁶ If one wishes, one could get rid of the grammatical “reason for”/“reason against” and instead talk of reason x with weight y regarding ϕ . The reason should then be read as a reason in favor of ϕ if the weight is positive and a reason against ϕ if the weight is negative.

reasons with *conclusive reasons*.⁷ The problem with this is that the expression “*conclusive reasons*” says something about the strength of the reason in relation to other reasons, instead of saying something about its relation to *pro-tanto reasons*. A *conclusive reason* is a (*pro-tanto*) reason that out-weighs any other (*pro-tanto*) reason. *Conclusive reasons* are most often paired with *sufficient reasons*. *Sufficient reasons* are defined as reasons that do not get outweighed by any other (*pro-tanto*) reasons (Parfit, 2011, pp. 32-33). This distinction is parallel to the distinction between whether an act is obligatory or permissible.

My proposal is that we contrast *pro-tanto reasons* with *complete reasons*. A *complete reason* regarding an action is a reason concerning all (relevant)⁸ aspects; a complex reason containing all *pro-tanto reasons* (reasons regarding an aspect). When one correctly weighs the different *pro-tanto* reasons against each other, one gets a *real complete reason* for what one ought to believe/do/feel⁹. I am unsure of whether *complete reasons* are tied to specific actions, or if there are *complete reasons* regarding the entire set of action-alternatives. Arguably, it is a little bit of both. The set of alternative actions is surely an aspect of every specific action. If this is the case it implies that the alternative actions are involved in determining a *complete reason*, although, it is still the case that the complete reason calls for (or against) specific actions. A *complete reason* calls for the act which the conjunction of all the *conclusive reasons* calls for, or in the case of no *conclusive reasons* for any action, the *complete reason* calls for any of the actions which there are sufficient reasons in favour. Both *conclusive reasons* and *sufficient reasons* consist of a set which includes at least one *pro-tanto reason*. The term *complete reason* can be found in Toni Rönnow-Rasmussen’s article “Normative Reasons and the Agent-Neutral/Relative” where he defines a *complete reason* as “composed by all the (relevant) facts” (2009, p. 239). There are subtle differences between my proposal and Rönnow-Rasmussen’s proposal, but for our present purposes my own proposal could be interpreted in line with his proposal. This is because my notion of a *complete reason* is also, in the end, composed of all the relevant facts, due to all the relevant facts playing a role during the reason-weighting process.

It is possible that there for any given situation exist several *conclusive reasons*. One instance is when you have the opportunity that with little, or no, cost to yourself or anyone else make

⁷ I regard conclusive reasons and decisive reasons as synonyms.

⁸ It is controversial whether or not it is possible to define which aspects are “relevant” as is shown in (Rönnow-Rasmussen T. , 2009)

⁹ Of course, it will quite possibly never be the case that we are able to comprehend and weigh every aspect of every aspect of the relevant facts, but since we are dealing with normative reasons and not motivating reasons it is not obvious if this is a problem or not.

K happy. This fact gives you a conclusive reason to make K happy, since it outweighs any reasons against making K happy. If K is also your significant other, *ceteris paribus*, this fact also gives you a *conclusive reason* to make K happy. Note that, a reason being *conclusive* does not entail that it is a reason of great weight, but rather that it is weightier relative to any contradicting reasons. Another similar instance, concerning *sufficient reasons*, is where you have the opportunity to save one, but not both of two drowning people. In this instance you have *sufficient reason_A* to save person A, but you also have *sufficient reason_B* to save person B. Since, *ex hypothesi*, you do not have a set of reasons which defeats all of the other sets of reasons, the *complete reason* in this case could be formulated as *sufficient reason_A to save person A \wedge sufficient reason_B to save person B*. I also make the non-controversial postulation that we ought to comply with what you have most reason to do (complete reason in my terminology). This means that you ought to save A, B or both. However, given OiC, there is no “ought” affiliated with saving both since you cannot save both.¹⁰ This means that OiC relies on a *conclusive reason* against doing what we cannot do, or that we simply do not have any reasons to do what we cannot do (save both A and B). This means that the reason to save both is neither sufficient nor conclusive, since there is a conflicting reason against saving both A and B (or no reason for saving both A and B at all). A full description of the complete reason is *sufficient reason_A \wedge sufficient reason_B \wedge conclusive reason to not save both person A and person B*.

The notion of *weighing reasons* can be illustrated by the mechanical weighing of a scale where you place the *pro-tanto* reasons in favour of X on one side, and the *pro-tanto* reasons against X on the other side (Broome, Forthcoming, p. 59). This implies that reasons have weight. On the other hand, this does not imply that the weighing of reasons always has to lead to a determinate result. I will leave the question of determinacy open. Also, the weighing analogy might suggest to the reader that this is a matter of a purely additive weighing of reasons, but this is not necessarily so. The weighing-analogy is not perfect, since normally objects have precise numerical weights, while this is not necessarily the case with reasons. To quote Broome: “the weight of a reason will rarely be such a precise thing as a number. It is likely to be an entity of some vaguer sort. Weights will not therefore combine by simple addition.” (Broome, Forthcoming, p. 59). On top of that it is possible to argue that reasons will behave differently in different contexts through “organic’ interaction between different

¹⁰ I hope to show more extensively later in the paper why this is the case.

reasons” (Broome, Forthcoming, p. 59). This is all part of a recent debate regarding *holism* or *atomism* regarding reasons, for examples see Broomes forthcoming book *Rationality through Reasoning* and Jonathan Dancy’s *Ethics without Principles*.

It should also be noted that two *pro-tanto* reasons taken together, given that there are more than two *pro-tanto* reasons, are not a *complete reason* but rather a more complex *pro-tanto* reason. One could then illustrate the dichotomy between *pro-tanto* and *complete* as a continuum between more *pro-tanto* or more *complete*. With the most *pro-tanto reason* being individual aspects of the relevant reason-making facts and the fully complete reason covering all the aspects of the relevant reason-making facts.

After this short exposé on reasons we are ready to move on to the *impossible reasons*.

3. Impossible reasons and some challenges they face

If we consider the examples given at the beginning of the paper there is at least one thing we need to agree on before we proceed. That is, if Robin had the ability required to get out of the well there would undoubtedly be reasons for her to do so, although not necessarily most reasons¹¹. The question is how we should interpret the reasons involved when Robin does not have the ability to ϕ i.e. when it is in some way impossible for her to do what the reason would require of her. There are three views available regarding *impossible reasons*: the *conditional view* which claims that there are only reasons to ϕ if Robin has the ability to ϕ , the *exclusionary reasons view* which claims that the fact that it is impossible to ϕ gives us a reason that silences any reason in favor of ϕ ’ing; or allows us to disregard any reason to ϕ , and the *pro-tanto view* which claims that there are reasons to ϕ regardless of Robin’s ability:

Conditional: If conditions (1...n) hold then there is a reason for Robin to ϕ , where one of the necessary conditions that have to hold is that it is in some way not impossible for Robin to ϕ .¹²

This means that part of the reason-giving fact is necessarily that an agent has the ability to ϕ ¹³.

¹¹ There might be cases where there are heavier reasons towards staying in the well to die if for an example getting out of the well would result in a life of excruciating torture.

¹² I take this view to be standard view within philosophy which I attribute to among others Bart Streumer (2007) and Jonathan Dancy (2004).

Radical Exclusionary: If the exclusionary reason given by Robin not having the ability to ϕ obtains, it silences any reason for Robin to ϕ .¹⁴

Moderate Exclusionary: If the exclusionary reason given by Robin not having the ability to ϕ obtain it is a conclusive reason not to consider Robin's reasons for ϕ 'ing.¹⁵

It is indeed questionable if there is an actual difference between the *Conditional approach* and the *Radical Exclusionary approach*. The difference is, that the component that does the work in the *conditional approach* is a *constraint*, whereas in the *radical approach* it is a *reason* that puts the gag on the other reasons. It might be argued that the silencing of the reasons is just a metaphor, and that in the end they are saying the same thing, only using different metaphors. It is also possible to deny that the "silencing of reasons" is a metaphor, but rather what actually happens. It is possible to interpret the "silencing of reason" either as silencing the weight of the reason, or silencing the reason from existence; if the music volume gets turned down to zero, or if the music stops playing altogether. For our present purposes this difference in interpretation is of no immediate concern.

The difference between the two exclusionary positions is whether the exclusionary reason in some sense "silences" any reasons for ϕ 'ing, or if it just makes it the case that we do not have to consider them during our deliberation, regardless of their existence.

Pro-tanto: The fact that it is impossible for Robin to ϕ , and the fact ϕ 'ing would allow Robin to live a happy and enjoyable life gives the same type of reasons. The fact that it is impossible for Robin to ϕ gives a *pro-tanto reason* not to ϕ of strength S but the fact that ϕ 'ing would allow Robin to live a happy and enjoyable life gives a *pro-tanto reason* to ϕ of strength S' ; and these two have to be weighed against each other.

¹³ This does not commit one to the position that the fact that P can ϕ is a reason for P to ϕ , rather one could, as Dancy does, count the ability as an enabling condition, but not an actual favorer (reason) (Dancy, 2004, p. 40).

¹⁴ An example of a proponent of someone who would likely accept the *radical approach* is John McDowell who writes, "[T]his reason apprehended, not as outweighing or overriding any reasons for acting on other ways which would otherwise be constituted by other aspects of the situation (the present danger, say), but as silencing them." (McDowell, 1997, p. 146). However, keep in mind that when McDowell refers to "this reason" he refers to the reason to do the virtuous act, McDowell himself has not explicitly discussed the present issue and it is possible that he would not accept the position attributed to him. Regardless of McDowell's actual attitude to his appointment as the proponent of the *radical exclusionary view*, it is a possible (and perhaps plausible) view.

¹⁵ *The moderate exclusionary view* can be found in Joseph Raz's *Practical Reason and Norms*: "It [The exclusionary reason] is not itself either a reason for sending his son to a public school or against doing so. Nor does it change whatever reason there are. [...] They are, but Colin has, or believes he has, a reason to disregard them and not to act on them." (Raz, 1975, p. 39).

As the reader might note, at least the first three approaches yield the same results when deciding what we ought to do. Regardless if we claim that the reasons to do what we cannot do, do not exist in the first place, are silenced, or should be disregarded in our deliberation, we get the same end result: “It is not the case that you ought to do what you cannot do!”

The action-guiding verdict of a theory is not the only theoretical virtue from which we judge a theory of reasons. Other criteria's are how well the theories allocate blame/praise, their ontological commitments, if they give rise to new research and if they correspond to our common-sense view. As the *pro-tanto approach* is formulated, it is not clear whether or not it necessarily yields the same action-guiding verdict when it comes to doing what we cannot do. If it leads to the conclusion that we in the end ought to do what we cannot do, this would be detrimental to the theory since it would violate the well accepted, common-sense, principle of 'ought' implies 'can' (OiC). I will argue below that it is not the case that the *pro-tanto approach* will arrive at this conclusion; instead of violating OiC, it will give crucial support in favor of it.

There is one important aspect which separates the *pro-tanto approach* compared to the other approaches. When the *conditional approach* gets faced with a genuine moral dilemma it has to say that the optimal outcome does not give rise to reasons to act; it does not matter whether or not the optimal outcome is better (in the paradigmatic *Sophie's choice*¹⁶ saving both of her children would be the optimal outcome). Since the agent does not have the ability to produce the optimal outcome, she has no reason to do so, and thus the optimal outcome does not give reasons to act. This is counter-intuitive. It is the fact that the optimal outcome gives reasons to act that explains why it is a dilemma in the first place. In *Sophie's choice* the fact that saving both her children would be optimal matters a great deal, and gives weighty reasons in favor of realizing that outcome. This could help to explain the fact that she feels guilty, even if she produces the optimal outcome under the circumstances and saves one of the children. An additional strength of the *pro-tanto approach* is that it can help to explain the moral residue (feelings of guilt and blame or actual moral residue) that arises in genuine moral dilemmas. The moral residue of moral dilemmas is that the agent faced with a moral dilemma often feels guilt and remorse even though the agent did nothing blameworthy (McConnell, 2010). The *radical exclusionary* view would respond to the genuine moral dilemma by saying that the

¹⁶ *Sophie's choice* is originally a novel written by William Styron and the actual choice is when Sophie arrives at a German concentration camp during the Second World War and is given a choice. The choice is which of her two children will live, and unless she chooses, both children will be killed.

optimal outcome might give reasons to act, but no longer counts in favor of it since the reasons in favor of it are silenced. The *moderate exclusionary view* would claim that there might be reasons to save both but that these reasons should be disregarded regardless of their weight. This seems counter-intuitive as well. If reasons have weight they should *not* be disregarded when deliberating on what you ought to do. The *pro-tanto approach* treats reasons to do what you cannot do in the same way as it does ordinary reasons. Hence the *pro-tanto approach* says that you should take it into account when deliberating on what you ought to do. Being able to account for optimal outcomes and our intuitions regarding genuine moral dilemmas are big advantages for a theory of reasons, and I will show more thoroughly how the *pro-tanto approach* handles genuine moral dilemmas later on in this paper.

There are no knock-down arguments against any of the positions but I will argue for the *pro-tanto approach* due to its simplicity and the fact that not a lot of attention has been paid to it. I will do this by showing that the fears raised against it are unwarranted, and that it can solve many problems, but first I will go more into detail regarding the *Conditional approach* and fact-making features.

The first intuitive problem with the *conditional approach* is that it seems to get the reason-giving facts wrong. If a child is drowning it is the fact that the child is worth saving that does most of the normative work in explaining why there is a reason for P to save the child, not that someone could save the child. Consider a case where a child is drowning but all agents are paralyzed and unable to save the drowning child. Proponents of the conditional view would then be forced to say that there is no reason to save the drowning child, since there are no agents capable of saving the drowning child. This is a blatantly counter-intuitive conclusion. All of this does not mean that the *conditional approach* is forced to say that it is without value if the child was saved and horrible if the child drowned i.e. there are evaluative reasons to have a pro-attitude towards the child being saved and evaluative reasons to have a con-attitude towards the child drowning since there exist agents who possess the ability to have this attitude. Actually the *conditional* proponent is not forced to accept a *conditional approach* across the board, but could maintain a *conditional approach* regarding practical reasons but another position regarding evaluative reasons.

There is an additional question which is left unanswered – are reasons essentially reasons *for someone*? More precisely is being a reason necessarily, as Skorupski claims, a relation “between facts, *persons*, and beliefs, actions or feelings” (Skorupski, 2010, p 36, my italics).

If not, one could make a distinction between “reasons for ϕ' ing” and “reasons for P to ϕ , where P is a proxy for either any person (if it is an agent-neutral reason) or a specific person (if it is a personal-reason)¹⁷”. If one accepts “reasons for ϕ' ing” i.e that *being a* reason can be a relation solely between facts and beliefs, actions or feelings it will obviously turn out to be the case that there are reasons to do what we cannot do (however maybe not reasons *for us*). This is because we would then be able to construct cases where there are reasons for ϕ' ing which are reasons for *no one*; this would be the case in the drowning case if the agents, instead of being paralyzed, would be dead. This view seems hard to defend and perhaps, as Rönnow-Rasmussen claims, incomprehensible (Rönnow-Rasmussen T. , 2009, p. 234). None of the positions in this paper are committed to accept such reasons. In order to not complicate matters further the paper will only discuss whether or not we have *impossible reasons* as such that “reasons” are interpreted as to necessarily being *reasons for someone*.

The *pro-tanto approach* has no problem with the drowning child since it treats reasons to do what we cannot do as they would treat any other reason. It would say that the fact that a girl is drowning gives us reason to save her. It is in a sense an anti-exclusionary view. The interesting questions that this approach needs to answer regarding our current predicament are: What weight does reasons to do what we cannot do have, and what weight does the reason arising from the fact that we cannot do it have? Given how we answer these questions, we must ask ourselves if this this approach delivers plausible consequences? More strictly speaking: what weight do these two reasons have?

Impossible reason: A fact (or set of facts π_n) at time t gives a *pro-tanto* reason of weight y to ϕ (where ϕ is an act which is not possible for P to do.)

The reason that you cannot ϕ : The fact (or set of facts π_n) at time t gives a *pro-tanto* reason of weight y' to ϕ (where π_n is the fact, or set of facts which makes it impossible for P to ϕ)

The question at hand is to determine the weight y . For the *impossible reason* it is easy. The weight of the reason, y , is determined by the fact (or set of facts, π_n), which constitutes the supervenience base for the reason in question. If we take the case of Robin who has fallen down a well, it is (presumably among other facts) the fact that flying out of the well would

¹⁷ As is shown in Toni Rönnow-Rasmussen's paper “Normative Reasons and the Agent Neutral/Relative Dichotomy” (Rönnow-Rasmussen T. , 2009) it is questionable if it possible to maintain the agent-neutral/personal-reasons dichotomy, but due to lack of space I bracket that discussion.

enable her to go on to live a healthy and enjoyable life which determines the weight of the reason for her to fly out of the well. Or if you are in a wheelchair incapable of swimming and see a little kid drowning, the weight of the reason to save the kid is determined by the set of facts π_n which includes facts such as the fact that kids not drowning is a good thing. Note that the smaller the set of facts π_n is the more *pro-tanto* the *pro-tanto* reason will be. The fact that the kid is in agony due to the drowning is a *pro-tanto* reason with a certain weight, y ; but the complex fact that the kid is in agony *and* will grow up to be the next Hitler is also a *pro-tanto* reason but with another weight y' . The even more complex fact including the agony of drowning and the growing up to become Hitler plus the fact that the kid's mother will be very saddened by the death of her kid is also a *pro-tanto* reason with yet another weight y^* which would be the joint weight of the three *pro-tanto* reasons.¹⁸

Deciding the weight, y' , of the reason against $\phi'ing$ which arises from the fact that you cannot ϕ is harder, since it is a matter of stating the exact weight of a specific reason rather than as in the first case of describing a general formula for deciding the weight of the reason.

The only weight I deem appropriate is an infinite weight, or at least some weight that always outweighs any reason to ϕ . The hard part is explaining why this is not terribly *ad hoc* and arbitrary. One line of reasoning is that it is intuitively an aspect which defeats all other aspects, and the only way of doing justice to this intuition is by describing it as a *pro-tanto reason* with an infinite weight. Just ascribing it with a big weight would not do justice to the idea that it always defeats the reasons against it. When we determine the weight of reasons for different courses of action a crucial factor in determining the weight is how efficient a course of action is to achieve a certain goal. If my goal is to get to the store as quickly as possible I can choose between taking the bike and walking to the store. Given normal circumstances, it seems natural to say that since cycling is a more efficient mean to my end, I have a weightier reason to take the bike instead of walking. There are means for me to use in order to reach the store that are, in a sense, even more efficient, which for some reason, are impossible for me to use successfully. One such means is flying. This might very well be a more efficient means for me to get to the store, if the goal is to get to the store quickly. Following the same logic as before, the reason to fly to the store is weightier than the reason to take the bike. Even though the reason to fly is weightier than the reason to take the bike it is not the case that I ought to fly to the store. This is because, before weighing the reason to fly to the store against the

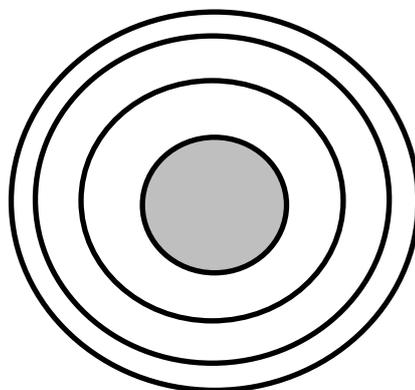
¹⁸ As I said before this weighing does not have to be purely additive; different reasons can interact with each other differently.

reason to take the bike to the store, the reason to fly has to be weighed against the reason that you cannot fly. Arguably the reason that you cannot ϕ must have an undeniable negative weight in order for it to always outweigh the reason to ϕ . The only undeniable weight is the infinite weight. Other candidates of *pro-tanto reasons* with an infinite weight could, according to Broome, be rigid deontic rules:

We could say that the [rigid deontic] rule is an extremely weighty pro tanto reason, that in practice will outweigh any reasons that are ranged against it. But that would not do justice to the idea that it is rigid. That idea implies it cannot possibly be outweighed, not merely that it will not in practice be outweighed. But we could go further and say the rule is a pro tanto reason that has an infinite weight. This means it cannot possibly be outweighed by any other reason, except perhaps another rigid rule. (Broome, Forthcoming, p. 66)

3.1 The argument from a burdened ontology

One consequence with accepting reasons to do what we cannot do is that we would end up with a huge amount of reasons. The new amount of reasons we would have can be illustrated in picture 1, but note that the picture is simplified and does not contain circles for every different sort of impossibility:



Picture 1

The innermost circle contains all fully possible reasons, the second innermost circle contains physically possible reasons (including those that are psychologically or physiologically impossible), the third circle all metaphysically possible reasons (including those that are physically impossible), the fourth circle contains all logically possible reasons (including all the aforementioned reasons).

If we allow *impossible reasons* we have to consider the entire picture instead of just the innermost circle. The question is if it is a problem that we get an increased amount of reasons;

if this will render us ontologically burdened. The first worry is if these reasons are of a different type than our normal reasons, or just more tokens of the same type of reasons. If they are of a different type, one could argue that, according to Occam's razor, it is a disadvantage for a theory if it postulates more ontological types than another theory. This would render us ontologically burdened. However the new reasons are not of a different type. According to the *pro-tanto view*, *impossible reasons* are just as any other *pro-tanto reasons*. Although the notion of "ontological types" is quite vague, and that *pro-tanto reasons* could in principle be partitioned into different ontological types (and the fact that a reason has an infinite weight could be thought of an indicator of type-difference) it is at least possible that the reasons are of the same ontological type as other reasons. On the other hand the exclusionary positions explicitly postulate *exclusionary reasons* as another type of reason, a second-order reason. That it is another type of reason is clear when we ponder the following quote from Raz where he claims that ordinary reasons do not conflict with *exclusionary reasons* because they are of a different type: "we should distinguish between first-order and second-order reasons for actions and that conflicts between first-order reasons are resolved by the relative strength of the conflicting reasons, but that this is not true of conflicts between first- and second-order reasons." (Raz, 1975, p. 36). With the *pro-tanto approach* we get a theory which is in fact less ontologically burdened than the *exclusionary* ones, in that it has fewer types but perhaps more tokens.¹⁹ We get a large bouquet with roses, not a bouquet with both roses and lilies.

The second question is whether or not the tokens are too many. In Bart Streumer's paper *Reason and Impossibility* he advances two arguments against reasons to do what we cannot do, i.e. *impossible reasons*, which focus on the amount of reasons there would be, *the argument from crazy reasons*, and, *the argument from deliberation*. In his paper he advances the claim R:

(R) There cannot be a reason for a person to perform an action if it is impossible that this person will perform this action. (Streumer, 2007, p. 358)

He defines something being impossible to do as it being the case that there exists no possible world that is nomologically and historically²⁰ accessible where we can do it (Streumer, 2007,

¹⁹ Actually the *moderate exclusionary view* has at least as many reason-tokens as *the pro-tanto view*.

²⁰ A possible world is a nomologically and historically accessible world, if and only if, its laws of nature and its past is the same as those of the actual world (Streumer, 2007, p. 357).

p. 369). As stated earlier in the paper Streumer uses this principle, plus the fact that one ought to do what one has most reasons to do, in order to prove the validity of OiC.

3.2 The argument from crazy reasons

If we can have reason to do what we cannot do, it seems that we would have reason to do crazy things such as travel back in time, jump 30.000 feet up in the air in order to rescue someone from a crashing airplane and according to Streumer “[i]t seems that there cannot be such crazy reasons.” (Streumer, 2007, p. 359)

Bart Streumer takes the intuition that these reasons are *crazy* as an objection to their existence. He does not offer any arguments why there cannot be such crazy reasons other than that it seems intuitive. Just to clarify, if someone had the ability to jump 30.000 feet up in the air it would not be *crazy* for that person to have a reason to jump 30.000 feet up in the air in order to save someone from a crashing plane. What makes these reasons crazy are not their substantive content, but rather that they are *impossible* to successfully act on.

Two philosophers who accept the objection that there cannot be any “crazy reasons” are Ulrike Heuer and Kimberley Brownlee but they differ on what constitutes “crazy reasons” (Heuer, 2008) (Brownlee, 2010). Ulrike Heuer in “Reasons and Impossibility” argues that “a person has a reason to ϕ even if she cannot ϕ , if there is a reason for ϕ ’ing and she can try to ϕ ” (Heuer, 2008, p. 242). This means that Heuer accepts the distinction discussed earlier in the this paper between reasons for ϕ ’ing, and reasons for P to ϕ . If one does not accept this distinction, it is possible to read Heuer as claiming “a person has a reason to ϕ if it is the case that, if the person had the ability to ϕ , she would have a reason to ϕ , and she can try to ϕ .” She further argues that *impossibility* is not well suited to explain the “craziness” of Streumer’s “crazy reasons”, because it would give us counter-intuitive results when the agent in question does not know that it is impossible: “Perhaps, even if I run, I cannot catch the bus which I see standing at my bus stop, but I can try. It may be false to say that I have a reason to run in this case, but it surely isn’t crazy” (Heuer, 2008, p. 242)²¹. It is unlikely that Streumer would accept this critique. Streumer could claim that what makes this situation “not crazy” is the phrase “perhaps”, since this means that it is either unclear whether or not she can catch the bus, or her apparent reasons are false. If it is unclear whether or not she can catch the bus it seems as if it is not clear whether or not it conflicts with Streumer’s principle *R*, which would

²¹ It is also questionable if Heuer describes the case correctly. She writes “It may be false to say that I have a reason to run in this case” (Heuer, 2009, p. 242) but rather she should say “It may be false to say that I have a reason to catch the bus in this case” since it is not impossible for her to run.

explain why we do not consider it (obviously) crazy. On the other hand, if it is the case that it is in fact impossible for her to catch the bus, but she believes that it is just highly unlikely, the content of that belief gives her apparent reasons to try and catch the bus. This is so because if her belief was true, that fact would give her real reasons to try and catch the bus. However Streumer's principle R is about real reasons, not apparent reasons. If we remove the phrase "perhaps" and she instead *knows* that it is impossible for her to catch the bus, following Streumer's intuitions, it seems that her reason to catch the bus is analogical to Streumer's case of a reason to jump 30.000 feet in to the air in order to rescue someone. This would make it a crazy reason.

Heuer claims that a better explanation for what constitutes a crazy reason is not that they are impossible to successfully act on. Rather, she claims, what makes them crazy is that we cannot even *try* to act on them (Heuer, 2008, pp. 241-242). Heuer claims that her proposal will allow us to determine which reasons are crazy beyond mere intuitions (Heuer, 2008, p. 242). Of course the key operator for Heuer's argument to be plausible is what counts as "trying". According to Heuer it is not enough to act with the intention of ϕ 'ing in order for it to count as trying to ϕ . In order for it to count as trying, we must take *efficient steps* which will bring us closer to ϕ 'ing. She defines taking efficient steps as:

Efficient steps: A person takes an efficient step towards ϕ -ing (and trying to ϕ is an example), if her action is done with the intention to ϕ , and if it is a necessary part of a plan that, if completed, achieves the intended result. (Heuer, 2008, p. 241)

This means that we, borrowing Heuer's example, cannot have reasons to paint the number seven red, since nothing we would do would even count as trying. This is because nothing you would do could get you closer to painting the number seven red (Heuer, 2008, p. 241). The reader should note the difference between painting the number seven red and painting a red seven where the first is an abstract seven and the latter is a written seven. The latter action is not at all impossible, or even demanding. According to Heuer this also applies to at least some instances of physical impossibility such as snatching a child who is about to get hit by a car out of harm's way in Paris if you, yourself are in London (Heuer, 2008, p. 240).

What reasons are there for taking efficient steps, i.e. trying? According to Heuer we have reasons to take efficient steps towards ϕ 'ing if we have reasons to ϕ . She also notes that we can have reasons to try to ϕ independent of what ϕ 'ing achieves. Such reasons would be of the sort that unless you try, an evil demon will punishes you, or in order to win a bet etcetera

(Heuer, 2008, p. 242). She calls the first category of reasons success-related reasons because these reasons come from facts about what ϕ' ing will bring about, and the other type non-success-related reasons because these reasons come from conditions external to ϕ' ing. (Heuer, 2008, p. 243) She further claims that we will never have most reasons, i.e. ought, to try to do what we cannot do, and gives two arguments to why this is the case: 1) taking efficient steps normally has costs (time, energy etc) and since we cannot do it, trying will not be worth the costs, 2) disregarding the non-success-related reasons, Heuer claims that it is not the case that we ought to take the means to an end if the means are not sufficient for realizing the end. Heuer calls this the *sufficiency condition*. She takes *trying* to be on par with *taking the means to an end* (Heuer, 2008, p. 243). When discussing doing things which are impossible for us to do, it is not the case that we can realize the end, alas, Heuer draws the conclusion that we will not fulfill the *sufficiency condition*,²² Therefore it will never be the case that we will have most reason to take efficient steps, i.e. try, to do what we cannot do. Every reason in favor of ϕ' ing would be defeated by the *sufficiency condition* (Heuer, 2008, p. 244). “The upshot is that while impossibility needn’t affect whether a person has a reason and perhaps even an undefeated reasons for doing something, she ought not to try to do it [...] (as long as we restrict ourselves to the success related reasons for taking efficient steps)” (Heuer, 2008, p. 244). The quote from Heuer seems problematic since she claims that we could have undefeated reasons to ϕ , even if we cannot ϕ . It seems plausible to assume that if reasons to ϕ are undefeated, ϕ' ing could be what we have most reason to do, or at least sufficient reasons to do. This would imply that it is possible that we ought to do it, but this contradicts her previous statement. The argument goes as follows

- 1) *Sufficiency condition* It is not the case that P ought to take efficient steps (means) towards an end, if those steps (means) are insufficient for realizing the end
- 2) *Impossibility* If it is impossible that P ϕ' s, her trying will never satisfy the *sufficiency condition*
- 3) (from 1-2) It is never the case that P ought to take efficient steps towards ϕ' ing
- 4) P ought to do what P has most reasons to do.
- 5) If P has an undefeated reason to ϕ , it is possible that P has most reasons to ϕ
- 6) It is possible that P has undefeated reasons to ϕ , even though it is impossible that P ϕ' s

²² The avid reader might already have noted that it is questionable whether or not the means taken could in fact be sufficient *if* the plan that they are a part of is completed (which is the only thing the efficient steps-definition demands). I will get to this objection later on when discussing Streumer’s critique of Heuer’s proposal.

- 7) (from 5-6) It is possible that P ought to ϕ even though it is impossible that P ϕ 's
- 8) 3 and 7 contradict each other.

It is unclear how to interpret how Heuer thinks the *sufficiency condition* defeats the reasons in favor for ϕ 'ing. Her claim that the *sufficiency condition* says that it is not the case that we *ought* to take the means to an end if the means are not sufficient for realizing that end, should be able to be cashed out as: "It is not the case that we *have most reasons* to take a means if it is not sufficient for realizing an end". This implies that there is no instance of reason-weighing where the reasons to take the means (even though it is not sufficient for realizing an end) have more weight than the reasons against taking the means. This is the case when there is no weighing (*the conditional approach*), when the reasons for taking the means has zero weight or should be disregarded (*the exclusionary approaches*) or when there *always* is a reason with more weight against taking the means (*the pro-tanto approach*). Due to Heuer defending the claim that we sometimes have reasons to do what we cannot do, it seems plausible to assume that Heuer would adhere to either *the exclusionary approach* or *the pro-tanto approach*.

Sometimes it is the case that we at $t1$ cannot ϕ , but can remove obstacles that will enable us to ϕ at $t2$. Heuer argues that according to Streumer's view we would have no reasons to remove these obstacles at $t1$, which would enable us to ϕ at $t2$:

I cannot play the piano, say. Is there, therefore, no reason for me to do it? If there was no reason to play the piano for someone who can't play it already, there would presumably be no reason to learn to play it either. Reasons for learning something require that there is a reason for doing what (as yet) one cannot do. The reasons for learning to ϕ are derivative reasons: they derive from the reason to do whatever it is that one learns to do. (Heuer, 2008, p. 237)

To recap, her last argument goes as follows:

- 1) We have reasons to learn to do things (such as play the piano)
- 2) We cannot play the piano
- 3) Reasons for learning are derivative reasons
- 4) Derivative reasons are reasons that derive their weight from other reasons
- 5) If the derivative reasons connected to ϕ 'ing has weight, it implies that we have reasons to ϕ .

- 6) We have derivative reasons (which has weight) to learn to play the piano, hence we have reason to play the piano.
- 7) (from 2, 6) We have reasons to play the piano even if we cannot play the piano.

Streumer, in his reply to Heuer, remarks that he defined “impossible to ϕ ” as there being no nomologically and historically accessible possible world where the agent ϕ s. But if you at t_1 can remove obstacles (such as the lack of ability to play the piano) which will enable you in t_2 to ϕ (play the piano) there is a nomologically and historically accessible possible world where you ϕ , and hence his principle R does not exclude these cases (Streumer, 2010, p. 80). This is a denial of premise 2, if premise 2 is interpreted as it being impossible for us to play the piano. Streumer also criticizes Heuer’s definition of efficient steps as being ambiguous (Streumer, 2010, p. 83). On one reading it seems to be the case that even if the plan is impossible to complete, all that matters, is that the action is a necessary part of a plan that *if* completed would achieve the intended result. Streumer states:

[S]uppose that I plan to travel back in time to prevent the crusades, slavery and the two world wars. It is true of this plan that it achieves the intended result if it is completed, even though it is, of course, impossible for me to complete this plan (Streumer, 2010, p. 83).

The same would at least apply to Heuer’s own case of snatching a child out of harm’s way when the child is in Paris and you are in London. Whether or not it applies to the case of painting the number seven red is an intricate matter which I will get back to. As has been stated previously Heuer claims that we do *not* have reasons in the case aforementioned. Because of this, it is not likely that we should interpret her claim in this manner. Streumer argues the most plausible alternative interpretation is if we add a clause that claims that the plan has to be possible for the agent to complete (Streumer, 2010, p. 83). However if we add that clause it seems as if it is consistent with Streumer’s R , and that it in the end is indeed *impossibility* that explains what makes reasons crazy. Heuer is not likely to accept this interpretation either since she argues against R , but I find it difficult to see any other interpretations.

Brownlee notes that Heuer’s case of piano-playing is ill described; it is not “I cannot play, therefore I have no reason play”. Rather, the case is “I can learn to play the piano, therefore I have reason to learn to play” (Brownlee, 2010, p. 435). Although in this interpretation the reasons to learn are no longer derivative, or at least what Heuer would call “non-success-

related reasons”. Instead, the reasons come from the activity of learning itself, and do not conflict with *R* (Brownlee, 2010, p. 436). Brownlee develops the notion of valuable activity and claims that we can have reason to do what we cannot do when it comes to reasons regarding “genuinely valuable ideals” (Brownlee, 2010, p. 434). She claims that this is the case even when, as Heuer suggests, we cannot take efficient steps towards getting closer to realizing the ideals.

This means that Brownlee is more liberal with what *impossible reasons* there are, than Heuer is. Her main point is that there are cases where we have reasons for actions where the successful completion of the action is secondary or irrelevant. What is important in these cases is the activity itself. This is the case when the activity is the cultivation of genuinely valuable ideals (Brownlee, 2010, p. 442). If Heuer’s key operator is *trying*, Brownlee’s key operator is her conception of ideals. She defines an ideal as a “conception of perfection or a model of excellence around which we can orient our thought and actions [...] As models of excellence ideals can guide us in the development and enrichment of various aspects of our lives including character, motivation and intentions, actions, goals, commitments, reflections and relationships” (Brownlee, 2010, p. 439) One such activity could be a violist’s cultivation of the ideal of virtuosity (Brownlee, 2010, p. 442). Brownlee claims that this conception of ideals is analogous of T.H. Irwin’s conception of Aristotle’s concept of virtue (Irwin, 1998). Just as with the exercise of virtue, “the core behavior undertaken to cultivate an ideal is to varying degrees constitutive of that ideal itself and not merely independent, instrumentally useful means for pursuing it” (Brownlee, 2010, p. 440). A key aspect of Brownlee’s concept of ideals, and what makes it relevant to our discussion, is that ideals “often are in different ways and for different reasons unrealizable” (Brownlee, 2010, p. 440), i.e. impossible to realize, either by their never-endingness, or their limitless progressiveness (Brownlee, 2010, p. 441). This means that no matter how hard we try we will not get *closer* to realizing it, in Heuer’s sense, because the goal (the ideal) has no determinate end-point. If this is the case it means that we cannot take efficient steps towards getting closer to our goal which would imply that reasons for ideals, and derivative reasons for ideals (such as trying to realize an ideal), would be deemed as “crazy”²³ by Heuer. More importantly the entire concept of cultivating an ideal is not well suited for Heuer’s means-to-and-end definition of trying (a

²³ Saying that the reasons are crazy is ambiguous, rather than the reasons being crazy, the reasons do not exist at all, and the notion of “crazy reasons” should be read out as: “if they would be reasons, that would be crazy! Therefore they do not exist”

definition which Heuer utilizes as a test to decide whether reasons are crazy or not). The activity of cultivating an ideal is not instrumental; the activity itself is constitutive of the ideal:

The violist does not ‘get closer’ to her ideal of virtuosity because, although she can realize fragments of the ideal, there is no fixed-end point to virtuosity, and her cultivation of virtuosity is constitutive, not instrumental (Brownlee, 2010, p. 443, single quotation marks in original).

Furthermore it does not seem clear, and it can at least be argued, that ideals are not possible to make as specific as Heuer needs them to be in order for them to be able to play a role in Heuer’s “plans”. If this is true, it strengthens Brownlee’s argument that Heuer’s *efficient steps-definition* cannot handle reasons to try to realize ideals. However there seems to be something problematic about Brownlee’s position. Granted that we cannot take efficient steps in order to come closer to realize the ideal, since the ideal is never-ending, unspecifiable or the ideal has a limitless progressiveness, it seems misguided to say that when the violinist cultivates her virtuosity she tries to realize her ideal. Rather, and just because the cultivation is constitutive and not instrumental, she tries to constitute a part of the ideal. Since the activity is constitutive of the ideal itself, the reasons for the activity are not derivative of the ideal but rather reasons for the activity period. This activity is not impossible. This, however, would end up in the position that we have reason to engage in an activity which is constitutive of an ideal, but no reason for the ideal itself. This should come as no surprise. Ideals are not a state which one attains, but rather consist of the continuous activity itself. If this interpretation is correct Brownlee’s ideals do not conflict with Streumer’s principle *R* after all.

I believe that these writers are on to something. I agree with Heuer that *impossibility* does not explain why *impossible reasons* would be labeled as *crazy reasons* and, therefore, not exist. I also agree with Heuer in saying that her test of whether or not we can try to act on the reason, beyond mere intuition, explains what makes reasons crazy. However I also agree with Streumer when he argues that what he calls crazy reasons could indeed figure in Heuer’s efficient steps as a necessary part of a plan that *if* completed would realize the goal. But I do not share his conclusion that this entails that we should add a clause which claims that the plan has to be possible for P to complete. Rather it means that the test allows for more reasons than Heuer originally intended it to. It allows for reasons that are psychologically²⁴,

²⁴ It is debatable whether or not the example made at the top of this paper would count as *psychologically impossible*. The reader is free to replace it with any other example of psychological impossibility; such an example could be actively holding two contradicting beliefs, or (truly) doubting that one exists. If the reader denies that OiC applies to psychological impossibility, or that psychological impossibility does not exist the reader is free to disregard it, and due to lack of space I will not be able to thoroughly investigate the matter.

physiologically and physically impossible. Since they can figure in a plan, that if completed would achieve the intended result, such as the reason to jump up 30.000 feet in the air and save a passenger from a crashing plane. The test however does not allow reasons regarding logically or conceptually impossible acts, such as making a square triangle or violating the law of identity. This is because there is no intelligible plan that *if* completed would achieve the end result, just as we cannot intelligibly entertain the idea of a squared triangle. The initial objection to this suggestion is that it is indeed possible to intelligible entertain a plan that *if* completed would achieve the end result. Such a scenario could occur if we make a bet that I shall receive chocolate, if I paint the number seven red. I could then formulate a plan: “Fetch red paint, a brush and paint the number seven red, and if I complete this plan I will achieve the goal of getting chocolate”. This plan would be a pseudo-plan. If the task was the simpler task of painting a red seven the plan would be: “Fetch red paint, a brush and paint a red seven, and if I complete this plan I will achieve the goal of getting chocolate” which in turn could be cashed out in numerous ways such as dipping the brush in the red paint and then draw the paint-dipped brush across a paper in a specific manner in order to get a red seven. The plan of painting the number seven red cannot be cashed out in these more specific terms. In fact, there is no possible world where this plan is completed. This is what makes painting the number seven red unintelligible and explains why it can only appear in pseudo-plans. This means that the *pro-tanto approach* does not have to endorse reasons to do what is logically or conceptually impossible to do. The *pro-tanto approach* (and the exclusionary approaches) has to accept reasons to do what we cannot do *iff* what it is a reason for is possible to be an intelligible part of a plan that if completed would achieve the goal.

There is however one contender for a plan which seems intelligible but is mathematically impossible to complete, and that is the plan to count all the natural numbers. We know how we would go about. We would start with 1, 2, 3, 4 ... of course it is the case that we will never have counted all of the natural numbers because you will always be able to say “ $n+1$ ”. None the less it seems as if we could cash out the plan into different stages. The problem with this objection is that we cannot cash out the last stage or the end result. This means that there are some steps in the plan to count all the natural numbers which are intelligible but some steps are still unintelligible which implies that the plan is still ultimately unintelligible.

The question whether or not we have reasons to do what is metaphysically possible of course hinges on if there can be intelligible plans for achieving what is metaphysically impossible to

do, such as making it the case that water is *not* H₂O. This is a substantive metaphysical question, which I will leave open.²⁵

An additional objection against Heuer's test concerns if the test needs that the person entertains the plan. The objection goes that there are reasons which exist but cannot play a necessary part of a plan that *if* completed would achieve the intended end. Such reasons would be reasons that the agent cannot entertain in a plan without the reason going away. Mark Schroeder gives an example of such a case in his *Slaves of Passion*: Nate loves surprise-parties in his honor *iff* they are successful surprise-parties. As a matter of fact there is a surprise party in his honor at his house. This fact is a reason for Nate to go home. However, Nate cannot act on that reason without it going away. He can act in correspondence with the reason but not act *on that* reason (Schroeder, 2007, p. 33). This means that the reason cannot surface in a plan that *if* completed would achieve the result. This objection has some thrust, but I think that it ultimately misses the mark because the only thing it proves is that *Nate* cannot have such a plan but *someone* could. Heuer does not mention if the plan has to be a plan for the specific person or not, so we should interpret her charitably.

This means that positions prone to accept reasons to do what we cannot do, only have to accept reasons to do what we cannot do, when the impossibilities involved are within the first two, and perhaps the third, concentric circles of picture 1.

It seems to me that the intuition that Streumer seeks when he uses the phrasing such as it being "crazy" to have reasons to jump 30.000 feet up in the air etcetera, is really the intuition that it would be crazy if it were the case that P *ought* to jump 30.000 feet up in the air to save someone even when P cannot do it. If this is so, he is indeed correct in claiming that it is *impossibility* that explains why it is not the case that one ought to jump 30.000 feet up in the air to save someone. But it is not as Streumer claims, because *impossible reasons* would be crazy, instead the impossibility gives rise to a reason of an infinite negative weight against jumping 30.000 feet up in the air to save someone which will outweigh any reasons to jump 30.000 feet up in the air to save someone. This brings us into Streumer's second argument against there being reasons to do what we cannot do, namely that allowing *impossible reasons* will entail that we have to give up OiC.

²⁵ One possible line of argument could be that since it is only metaphysically impossible, but not logically impossible it is the case that there exists a possible world where the plan is completed, i.e. where I make it the case that water is not H₂O.

3.3 The argument from deliberation

Given the enormous amount of suffering there has been and the enormous amount of pleasure one could bring about by doing impossible deeds, might it not be the case that we ought to, after deliberation, do things which we cannot do and hence be blameworthy for not doing what we cannot do? Would we not get a complete reason, after every reasons' weight has been weighed, to do the impossible? This would imply that we ought to do what we cannot do.

Given the enormous amount of suffering that was caused by the crusades, slavery and the two world wars, this person will then almost always have to conclude that there is most reason for him or her to travel back in time and prevent the crusades, slavery and the two world wars. And this person will then have to try to travel back in time to prevent the crusades, slavery and the two world wars, even though it is pointless for this person to try to do this. (Streumer, 2007, p. 365)

What Streumer claims is that if reasons for traveling back in time²⁶ and preventing the crusades, slavery and two world wars exist they are most likely weightier than the reasons not to travel back in time and prevent the crusades, slavery and two world wars. Among the reasons against traveling back in time is the reason that we cannot travel back in time and prevent the crusades, slavery and two world wars. If Streumer's claim is true it entails that we have to get rid of OiC if we accept *impossible reasons*. What weight should we attribute the reason to travel back in time and do these things? I agree with Streumer that these reasons will carry a lot of weight. However it has already been established that the reason that we cannot ϕ has an infinite weight, so in order for it to be the case that we have a *complete reason* (most reason in Streumer's terminology) to travel back in time and do these things, the weight of these reasons has to be more than, or at least, infinite. This is not the case. If we compare the reasons in favor of traveling back in time and stopping the crusades, slavery and two world wars with the reasons in favor of traveling back in time and stopping the crusades, slavery, two world wars and the witch-hunt it seems that the reasons for doing the latter are weightier. This is impossible if the reasons, which did not include preventing the witch-hunt, were already of infinite weight. Hence it seems as if the weight of the reason to travel back in time and prevent the crusades, slavery and two world wars is finite. This means that it would not outweigh the reason that you cannot do these things. We could strengthen Streumer's objection if we change his example to say: There is an infinite amount of reasons with a

²⁶ Since I want to utilize Streumer's own examples in order to avoid arguing against a straw-man I bracket the potential problem that travelling back in time might be *logically impossible* and that we therefore would have no reason to travel back in time, even according to the *pro-tanto approach*.

positive finite weight connected to the infinite amount possible actions we could do but cannot do. This means that if we take all these reasons together we get an infinite conjunction of positive reasons. Would the reason to perform this conjunction have an infinite weight? If this is the case, when we weigh this reason against the reason arising from the fact that it is impossible to perform this conjunction, we get infinities on both sides. Since none of the reasons would outweigh the other, it means that we would have *sufficient reasons* to do either. However, this is not enough for Streumer's argument since he claims that we would strictly speaking have *most reasons* to do what we cannot do. This does not seem to be the case²⁷. However, this line of argument seems questionable.

Is it the correct procedure to weigh reasons? Take the case of Robin who is stuck in a well. According to the *pro-tanto approach* she has a reason to fly out of the well. She also has a reason to jump out of the well, even though she cannot jump out of the well. Do we place both of these reasons on one side of the scale and the reason that she cannot do these things on the other? Arguably we do not. Since their weight is regarding two different actions, they belong on different scales. Each single reason for an action (fly, jump teleport etc) has a finite weight. On scale nr 1 we place the reason to fly out of the well on one side, and the reason that she cannot fly out of the well on the other side of the scale in order to decide if she ought to fly out of the well or not. On scale nr 2 (I apologize for abusing the scale-metaphor) we place the reason to jump out of the well on one side of the scale and the reason that she cannot fly on the other side of the scale in order to decide if she ought to jump out of the well or not. This means that regardless if there is an infinite amount of reasons to get out of the well that come from the infinite amount of possible actions that would get us out of the well (fly, jump, teleport etc) every single one of these reasons to act gets paired against its own instance of the reason that you cannot do it (fly, jump teleport etc). Since every specific reason would lose on its respective scale, it would not imply that we ever ought to do what we cannot do.

Sadly, this counter-argument is targeting a straw-man. The described case is a case of two different impossible ways of achieving the same good result. The conjunction previously discussed is regarding a lot of impossible ways to achieve a lot of different good results. The reasons for performing this conjunction cannot be criticized by saying that each of these

²⁷ It might however be the case that one would want a stronger definition of OiC which is not that 'ought' implies 'can', but rather 'sufficient reasons' implies 'can'. This would claim that for an action to be (rationally) allowed it has to be an action which one can perform.

actions has to be weighed on its own scale.²⁸ Another possible solution is that the organic interaction between reasons ensures that reasons in favor of actions never reach an infinite weight. While not obviously false, and perhaps even intuitively appealing, it seems *ad hoc*. A third line of argument is: If you have something which is infinite, removing or adding something to it is without effect; infinity minus one, is still infinity. If we assume that the reason to realise the conjunction has an infinite weight this seems to imply that: If you add a horrible act to the conjunction, it would not affect the weight of the reason to perform the conjunction. It would still be infinity. You could continue this process almost *ad infinitum*. This seems highly implausible. If we after the process of adding horrible acts were to remove these acts it seems as if the weight of the reason to realize the conjunction would go up. This is not the case if the weight of the reason for the conjunction is already infinite. This is not a definite proof, but it is enough to allow us to say that it is not obviously false that the conjunction is of finite weight. Throughout the paper I will be operating *as if* it is the case that the conjunction is of finite weight; aware of it being a big *if*.

It seems that Streumer's argument can be strengthened even further. What about the reason to do what is more than infinitely good? What weight does this reason have, if we assume that the weight of a reason is in some sense proportionate with the amount of good it will produce? When I use the term good, I use it in a broad sense which is not committed to any specific view of goodness. If it is proportionate, even in a weak sense, it seems plausible to assume that the weight of the reason to do more than an infinite good would be of more than an infinite weight. If this is the case, either OiC or the *pro-tanto approach* has to be abandoned. If this reason exists and we were to abandon OiC but keep the *pro-tanto approach* it would imply that we at all times ought to do more than an infinite good. This is an extreme position that seems hard to defend. However, if it can be shown that it is logically impossible to have more than an infinite weight the *pro-tanto approach* does not have to accept the reason to do more than an infinite good because. I make no claims of being an expert of on philosophy of mathematics but I do believe that every infinite set has the same weight regardless of cardinality. It is true that there is such a thing as "more than infinite" in the sense that it axiomatically follows that the number of subset is greater than the elements of a set and if we have the set infinite set of all the natural numbers, we can create a set with higher cardinality. If we assume that every element in the set of all the natural numbers has an equal weight it will be the case that the new set containing all the subsets of the set of all natural numbers will

²⁸ I would like to thank Wlodek Rabinowicz for bringing my attention to this.

have the same weight as the set of all natural numbers. This is because even if we can construct larger sets the amount weight-contributing elements will remain the same. This is in accordance with the earlier discussion where it was argued for that we have no reasons to do what is logically impossible.

Ultimately it may be the case that the weighing metaphor breaks down when one utilizes infinite weight. A possible trade-off is weakening the OiC from a principle to a matter of practical outcome. In order to make sense of the weighing metaphor but in exchange violate the intuition that OiC is a principle one could weaken the claim that the reason arising from the fact that we cannot do it has an infinite weight to the only claim that the reason arising from the fact that we cannot do it has a weight which outweighs any reasons in favor of doing it. This trade-off has the advantage of only having to deal with finite weights and it does not have to give an *ad hoc* justification of why reason has an infinite weight. The disadvantages are that it is vaguer, and that OiC principle-status is weakened.

Regardless of which route you choose this means that it will never be the case that *P ought* to do what *P* cannot do, because there will never be a weighing of reasons where the reasons to ϕ , when it is impossible to ϕ , will outweigh the reasons not to ϕ . This means that we can reconstruct Streumer's justification of OiC which, to remind the reader, went as follows:

- 1) There are no reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 2) We ought to do what we have most reasons to do.
- 3) If there are no reasons to do what we cannot do, it will never be the case that we will have most reasons to do what we cannot do.
- 4) (from 1 – 3) It will never be the case that we ought to do what we cannot do (OiC).

Instead we will end up with the following justification for OiC:

- 1) We have reasons to ϕ (when ϕ' ing is psychologically-, physiologically, physically and perhaps metaphysical impossible).
- 2) We do not have reasons to ϕ , when ϕ' ing is mathematically, conceptually or logically impossible.
- 3) The reason given by the fact that we cannot ϕ , always has a greater weight than the reason to ϕ .

- 4) If a reason to ϕ gets outweighed by a reason not to ϕ , or if there are no reasons to ϕ , it is not the case that we have most reason, or in my terminology complete reason to ϕ .
- 5) (1-4) It is never the case that we have most reasons, or in my terminology complete reason to do what we cannot do.
- 6) We ought to do what we have most reasons, or in my terminology complete reason to do.
- 7) (from 5-6) It is never the case that we ought to do what we cannot do.

3.4 The argument from too long deliberation

There is another objection against *impossible reasons* regarding our deliberation. Namely that if we allow *impossible reasons*, we would end up with a significantly higher amount of reasons to consider during our deliberation. The objection goes that the sheer number of reasons would make it harder (too hard) to correctly deliberate. This is how Heuer interprets Streumer's "argument from deliberation" (Heuer, 2008, p. 240). This is not a serious objection. If we go along with the argument and agree that allowing *impossible reasons* would in fact make it harder to deliberate, this seems to be an argument against our moral psychology, our reasoning capabilities, not an argument against *impossible reasons per se*. A complex theoretical model might be harder to use, but that does not say anything about the validity of the model. However, this might be a bit too uncharitable towards the argument. Rather the argument should go: Deliberating is necessary as a way for us to arrive at what we ought to do. It is important that we know what we ought to do. If a theory makes it harder to know what we ought to do, this is at least an unwanted side-effect. This means that if we have two theories that are on par when it comes to explaining every other phenomenon, but one of the theories would allow us to more easily deliberate, we should choose that theory. This is a sound argument, but the force of the argument rest on the premise that there is another theory that is on par in every other aspect.

Another way to counter this objection is: If the argument that regards it never being the case that one has most reasons/complete reason to do what one cannot do succeeds, the argument from too long deliberation falls flat. If we know that it will never be the case that we ought to do what we cannot do, a suitable heuristic for deliberation would be to assume that the reasons for doing what one cannot do will be outweighed. This brings the *pro-tanto approach* closer to the *moderate exclusionary view* in terms of how our deliberating would work. The

small difference would be that the *moderate exclusionary view* would claim that the fact that one cannot do it is a reason not to regard any reasons in favor of it, while for *the pro-tanto approach* it is only a good heuristic.

4. Moral residue in genuine moral dilemmas

Agents facing genuine moral dilemmas often feel guilt or remorse, such as Sartre's student who will feel remorse regardless whether he chooses to go to war or stay with his mother, or Sophie who will feel a great deal of remorse and guilt regardless of which of her two children she chooses to save.²⁹ Examples could be made endlessly. What is important to note is 1) agents who face moral dilemmas often experience negative emotions such as regret, remorse, guilt, 2) it is not obviously inappropriate for the agents to feel this, 3) we usually attribute such feelings as appropriate if the agent has done something that she ought not to do (McConnell, 2010).

This is not to say that other theories cannot handle the moral residue. I only claim that a possible explanation for these feelings is that they are what we feel when we know that we are not complying with a reason of considerable strength. A stronger position could be modifying 3) to say that the feelings of regret and so on are appropriate when we do not comply with a reason, to the extent of the strength of that reason. This explains why the feeling of regret, guilt, and etcetera is inescapable, and perhaps even appropriate, when faced with genuine moral dilemmas. This could also explain why we often feel regret and such in more mundane, but still hard, cases when we have to choose between two alternatives which both have weighty reasons (but not necessarily conclusive reasons) in their favor. It would also explain the moral residue that could plausibly be claimed to exist when P fails to keep a promise, even though it was impossible for P to keep it. The moral residue could be everything from feelings of guilt (to some extent) or the appropriateness of P apologizing for not keeping the promise, or P owing an explanation why P did not keep the promise.

One initial problem with this suggestion is that there is a risk of explosions of cases where we could, appropriately, feel guilt, regret or shame. Given that the approach concedes that there are reasons to do what we cannot do, it seems that the suggestion implies that it would not be inappropriate for Robin to feel guilt or regret to some extent because she cannot fly out of the well or prevent the Second World War. Even though it is intuitive to me, I have learned that

²⁹ The moral residue of Sophie's genuine moral dilemma is one of the primary themes in the original novel *Sophie's choice* by William Styron.

this is a hard bullet to bite for most people. If one does not want to accept that the reasons determine whether or not it is appropriate to feel guilt, regret or apologize one would presumably argue that it is ‘oughts’ that determine this. This would render Sophie irrational when she feels guilt and regret because she ought not save both of her children. This is also a hard bullet to bite. So it seems that both positions have some counter-intuitive conclusions.

These claims and the question whether ‘reasons’ or ‘oughts’ determine the appropriateness of moral residue need an entirely new paper in order to be feasibly defended. I will leave it as a possible positive outcome of allowing *impossible reasons* which is in need of further inquiry.

5. Enablers and reasons

There is a possible generalization from the results regarding reasons to do what we cannot do, and the strength of the reason which stems from the fact that we cannot do it.

In *Ethics without Principles* Jonathan Dancy introduces the distinction between *favorer* and *enabler/enabling condition* (Dancy, 2004). *Favorers* are to be understood as facts which count in favor of acting in some way, while *enablers* do not favor acting, but rather enable the *favorer* to get off the ground. Dancy’s own example is “(1) I promised to do it. (2) My promise was not given under duress. (3) I am able to do it. (4) There is no greater reason not to do it. (5) So: I do it)” (Dancy, 2004, p. 38). (1) is a favorer and (2)-(3) are in different ways enabling conditions. While 4 is not an enabling condition for (1) to get off the ground it is an enabler for the move from (1) to (5) (Dancy, 2004, p. 40). How this distinction is supposed to be understood in more detail is still under great debate, and in a review of Dancy’s book Joseph Raz writes that the concept of being an enabler “is very diverse, so diverse as to be of little use, and likely to mislead.” (Raz, 2006, p. 106). I will leave the interpretive issues on the side, and focus on what is relevant to this paper, namely premise (3). Dancy argues that (3) is a (general)³⁰ enabling condition and not a reason/favorer. Dancy writes:

I think there is a conclusive reason for saying that it [(3)] is not [a favourer], which is that if it were, all favoured actions would share one and the same favourer: that they are actions of which the agent is capable. But it is not the case that if an action is favoured, we already know at least one of the reasons for doing it, namely that the agent is capable of doing it. (Dancy, 2004, p. 40)

³⁰ A general enabler is an enabler that is needed in general, which is in opposition to specific enablers such as “(2) my promise was not given under duress”. Specific enablers are relative to specific contexts and actions (Dancy, 2004, p. 40).

I do not find Dancy's argument compelling. He later writes that it is intrinsically implausible if the structure of reasons alone should guarantee that all right actions share a common favorer, which it would be if (3) was counted as a favorer (Dancy, 2004, pp. 40-41) but gives no argument of why this is so. I agree with him so far that having the ability is not a reason for any action. However, (3) should not be considered as an enabler, rather the absence of (3) is a reason against keeping the promise. So there is an asymmetry. Being able to do it is not a reason to do it, nor an enabler, but not being able to do it is a reason against doing it. And as has been shown it is a reason which will always outweigh any reason to do it. This means that if (3) does not obtain, (4) does not obtain. The proposed generalization of the account given in this paper is to treat the absence of Dancy's enabling condition as reasons against doing it with, with (4) being a special case since it is trivially true that if (4) does not obtain there are reasons which outweigh the reason to do it. The absence of an enabling condition does not have always outweigh any other reasons. If we take "(2) My promise was not given under duress" it is not the case that if (2) is absent one has complete reason not to do what was promised under duress. There might be other reasons which make it the case that you in the end ought to do what you promised, even if your promise was given under duress. However, it is a reason against doing it. This is a leaner approach than Dancy's since it posits less theoretical notions, and not as Raz described Dancy's distinction, "so diverse to be of little use, and likely to mislead". Due to lack of available space there will be no attempt to adequately explore this generalization, and possible problems with it. Instead it can function as a starting point for further research. That the account of reasons given in this paper gives rise to new research should be considered a theoretic virtue of the theory.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed whether or not it is plausible to assume that we have reasons to do what we cannot do, and what consequences the existence of these reasons have. In section two there is a short exposé on reasons, where I make some vital qualifications and stipulations in order to give transparency to my own account. In section three I presented different possible positions regarding reasons to do what we cannot do (*the conditional*, *the radical exclusionary*, *the moderate exclusionary* and *the pro-tanto*). All of the positions exhibit their own sort of problems, albeit none of them were shown to have conclusive arguments against them. I chose to explore *the pro-tanto-position* and showed that it would possibly render us with a leaner ontology than the exclusionary positions.

In polemic with Bart Streumer I addressed his “argument from crazy reasons”, by showing that, in accordance with Ulrike Heuer, it is not *impossibility* as such that explains why reasons to do what we cannot do would be “crazy reasons”. Rather, it is that there is nothing the agent could do that would even count as trying, where trying is defined as doing an action with the intention to ϕ , and if it is a necessary part of a plan that *if* completed would achieve the intended result. Heuer interprets this as rendering some instances of reasons to do what is *physically impossible* to do as “crazy”. Instead I take the more liberal view stating that this is possible even when dealing with physical impossibility. I opt for reasons being “crazy” and i.e. not existing *iff* it is unintelligible to have a plan that if completed would achieve the intended result. This is the case when we are dealing with logical or conceptual impossibility because no actions could be able to be a necessary part of a plan that if completed would achieve the intended result. In section three I also address Streumer’s “argument form deliberation” which claims that if we allow reasons to do what we cannot do it would force us to surrender the ‘ought’ implies ‘can’-principle since it would be the case that we would have most reasons (complete reason) to do what we cannot do. I show that this is not the case since the fact that P cannot ϕ , gives P a reason against $\phi'ing$ of an infinite weight which will in practice outweigh any reason in favor of $\phi'ing$. I also open the door for the weaker claim that the reason might not be of an infinite weight, but will in practice outweigh any other reason. With this I reconstruct Streumer’s justification of OiC. In the end of section three I reject “the argument from too long deliberation” due to it either not being a problem at all; or a problem for our ability to deliberate and only indirectly, if at all, a problem for a theory of practical reasons.

In section four I discuss an apparent advantage with allowing reasons to do what we cannot do is that it can give us an intuitive explanation of the reasons involved in genuine moral dilemmas and could explain the moral residue that arises in such cases, and perhaps even more mundane cases such as a case where it is impossible to keep a promise which one made. However this apparent advantage is debatable and is in need of additional research since there seems to be a risk of implying that there will be an explosion of cases of moral residue.

In section five I try to generalize the conclusions from the discussions regarding reasons to do what we cannot do, as a way to reformulate Dancy’s distinction between favorers/enablers by solely relying on reasons.

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