

Conditions, modifiers and holism

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ABSTRACT: This paper provides a framework for understanding two ways in which reasons can vary across contexts, namely through the effects of (i) conditions which take the form of enablers and disablers and which determine whether a consideration constitutes a reason at all, as well as (ii) modifiers which take the form of intensifiers and attenuators and which affect the weight of a reason. Making sense of these forms of context-dependence requires one to develop a fine-grained account of the way in which the weights of reasons are determined. In particular, one needs to distinguish that in virtue of which something is a reason (the source of the reason) from that which makes it the case that it is a reason (that which necessitates the reason). It will be shown that such a distinction is metaphysically robust and can be drawn in a non-arbitrary and non-pragmatic manner. Moreover, it will be established that the features of the context that condition or modify a reason cannot be included in the specification of the reason. On the basis of this account of conditions and modifiers, it will be shown that, despite context-dependence, intrinsicity as well as restricted forms of non-trivial separability can be preserved, thereby establishing that the additive theory of weighing reasons can be rendered consistent with these forms of context-dependence.

I Introduction

Reasons can vary across contexts. Contexts¹ differ in terms of whether a certain consideration constitutes a reason at all, as well as in terms of the weight and (possibly even) polarity of the reason. What counts in one context in favour of performing a certain action can fail to count at all in another context, or may even count against doing that action. This variability is commonly described as holism in the theory of reasons² and has been taken by some to provide support for particularism (though this contention has been much contested). This paper argues that there are significant differences between the ways in which reasons can vary, that different mechanisms need to be invoked in explicating the various ways in which reasons can depend on and interact with the context, and that it is important that the different types of context-dependence are not conflated. The paper provides a framework for understanding two ways in which reasons can vary across contexts, namely through the effects of (i) conditions which take the form of enablers and disablers, as well as (ii) modifiers which take the form of intensifiers and attenuators.

2 Sources, conditions, modifiers

Context-dependence results from the fact that there are different roles that considerations can play in generating reasons. Not everything that makes it the case that something is the particular reason that it is, i.e. a reason with a certain weight and polarity, plays the same role and is involved in the same way in making it the reason that it is. Instead, that which explains and necessitates the reason is frequently variegated. In particular, the necessitation base has to be distinguished into: 1. that in virtue of which something is a reason (the source or ground of the reason), 2. that on condition of which something is a reason (the conditions of the reason), and 3. that which affects the weight of the reason (the modifiers of the reason). Whilst there are cases in which the necessitating base³ constitutes the source of the reason, i.e. cases in which the reason is unconditional and not modified, there are also cases in which the source only forms part of the necessitating

¹Contexts consist in the extrinsic circumstances in which a consideration is to be found. How expansive contexts have to be, especially whether they have to encompass whole possible worlds, depends on the particular consideration at issue and the type of interactions and dependencies to which it can be subject.

²This characterisation of holism is incomplete. For instance, it ignores holism in terms of aggregation, i.e. the way in which reasons come together. The variety of holism that manifests itself in the form of variability across contexts is best construed as involving a holistic dependence of the ground of the reason on the context, and is to be distinguished from holistic versions whereby the ground of the reason itself is holistic (cf. footnote 17).

³Necessitating bases in this paper are restricted to bases that only include explanatorily relevant features.

base and in which conditions and modifiers give rise to context-dependence and thereby allow for variation across contexts.

In order for the distinction between sources, conditions, and modifiers to perform substantive explanatory work, two problems must be addressed (sections 2.1 & 2.2). First, it has to be shown that this distinction is robust, that there are genuine differences between these roles, so that it is not merely a superficial classification that is guided by considerations of salience or by pragmatic concerns. Second, it needs to be shown that sources, conditions, and modifiers are implicated in importantly different ways in generating reasons and that we need to be attentive to the differences in the roles that they perform, so that we cannot simply ignore these fine-grained distinctions and instead include everything in the specification of the reason.

2.1 A robust distinction?

The phenomenon of context-sensitivity, as well as the idea that some sort of distinction between sources and conditions or modifiers needs to be drawn, has been recognised for some time. However, the distinction lacks substantive support and has not been adequately theorised.⁴ Instead, it has primarily been defended by means of examples (cf. Dancy: 1993; Dancy: 2004). A number of contrast cases have been put forward, in which what is intuitively one and same consideration generates reasons with differing weights and polarities in different contexts, and in some contexts fails to do so altogether. Yet, there has not been any robust characterisation of this distinction.⁵ This is rather problematic since there are a number of factors that cast doubt on the claim that we are dealing with a deep distinction, making it particularly pressing to provide a rigorous and robust characterisation of the distinction.

⁴The most sophisticated account was developed by Nozick: 1968.

⁵Cullity tries to defend the idea that features of the context can be relevant without being part of the reason by means of the idea that “the content of a rational explanation is relative to background expectations of normality” (Cullity: 2002, p. 179). This kind of explanation is not sufficiently robust, given the context-sensitivity of what constitutes normality.

Zangwill attempts to distinguish between properties that are responsible and ones that are relevant, proposing to analyse this distinction by means of that between factual and counterfactual conditionals (cf. Zangwill: 2008, p. 115). This suggestion, however, is problematic since there does not seem to be any non-question-begging way of evaluating the factual conditional. The evaluation cannot simply require that both antecedent and consequent have to be true for the conditional to be true, given that this condition would be satisfied both in the case of those properties that are ‘responsible’ and those that are only ‘relevant’, which means that it is necessary to invoke a non-material conditional. This in turn means that it is necessary to specify some other way of evaluating the conditional that does not simply appeal to the truth-values of the antecedent and consequent. In particular, it would seem that one would have to appeal to the relation by means of which the antecedent and consequent are connected, such as a grounding relation that only holds in the case of responsible properties. The problem now, however, is that what is to be established is precisely that such a relation obtains and that it is robust and clearly characterisable.

PROBLEM 1

The intuitive support that has been provided is not particularly strong, since many of the examples that have been adduced can be explained away. As Crisp has argued, the intuitiveness of a number of the examples can be traced back to the fact that they involve non-ultimate reasons that derive their significance from more basic reasons, i.e. they are cases in which one and the same ultimate reason gives rise to different non-ultimate reasons in different contexts, such that the ultimate reason is invariant and what varies are only the non-ultimate reasons (cf. Crisp: 2000, pp. 36-40).⁶

PROBLEM 2

The distinction is also threatened by the idea that the intuitive support that it derives from various examples is merely due to the fact that we are only attentive to what is salient and ignore various background conditions that are taken for granted. “It gains an aura of plausibility because sometimes people’s understanding of their own reasons is incomplete” (Raz: 2000, p. 67). The suggestion is that when characterising the reason, we simply fail to include certain features in the specification of the reason. The explanation as to why these features are not mentioned in the specification of the reason is not that they play some distinctive role, but that there is no need to mention them since they are taken as given. We only provide a partial specification of the reason, because the other part is included in the background and as such does not need to be mentioned. Instead of there being a substantive and robust difference between sources and conditions or modifiers, there is just the appearance of such a difference that is generated by pragmatic factors and considerations of salience. What are taken to be conditions or modifiers are thus nothing but partial sources that fail to be salient and accordingly do not need to be mentioned. Thus, according to this deflationary proposal, all of the different factors are on a par, once one abstracts from considerations of salience, and jointly constitute the complete specification of the reason.⁷

PROBLEM 3

A related concern is that the intuitiveness of some of these examples is based on mis-individuating the reason-giving features. For instance, Dancy has

⁶One can distinguish a reason’s being ultimate (in the sense of being basic and not deriving its significance from anything else) from the reason’s being unconditional. This means that although non-ultimate reasons are (likely to be) variant, being an ultimate reason does not guarantee being an invariant reason. Accordingly, one can accept the debunking explanation of the examples at hand, whilst retaining a commitment to ultimate reasons that are conditional and as such vary across contexts.

⁷This suggestion is analogous to the usual deflationary account of the distinction between causes and conditions that distinguishes them by identifying the cause with the salient difference-maker, whilst relegating non-salient causal factors to the status of background conditions.

argued for the variability of the reason-giving force of pleasure. “It seems that the way in which pleasure and fun function as reasons is logically dependent on the nature of the activity we are enjoying” (Dancy: 1993, p. 61). Yet, what looks like a situation in which different contexts are such that one and the same feature, namely pleasure, is evaluated differently, actually turns out to be a case in which we have different features in the different contexts. This is because the intentional object of the pleasure is not separable from the pleasure. This means that malicious pleasure, for example, is best construed as a single state (cf. Hurka: 1998, p. 312) and not as a complex state that has pleasure as a part. Malicious pleasure and innocent pleasure do not share pleasure as a part in common but are instead two ways of being pleasant. That is, malicious pleasure is not to be analysed as pleasure plus maliciousness, but rather as pleasure that is realised in a malicious manner. Since pleasure is not separable from its intentional object, we are not dealing with a situation in which one and the same thing, namely pleasure, once constitutes a reason because it is taken in something that is appropriate, and once fails to do so due to being taken in something inappropriate. Rather, we are dealing with two different states, namely malicious pleasure and innocent pleasure, that constitute two different reasons.

The problem is thus that a dilemma arises. Either the reason-giving feature is characterised at a high level of abstraction (such as being pleasant in some way or other). In that case, one and the same feature is found in both contexts, but such an abstractly characterised feature only gives rise to non-ultimate reasons and is compatible with invariance at the level of ultimate reasons. Or it is a determinate feature (such as being pleasant in a particular way). In that case, one either ends up with different features in different contexts and hence with invariance rather than variability, or one ends up being committed to the problematic complex state interpretation, according to which innocent and malicious pleasures share pleasure as a common part.

Although much of the intuitive support that has been adduced in the literature falls prey to these problems, it will be shown that there is a metaphysically robust distinction between sources and conditions/modifiers that can be drawn in a non-arbitrary and non-pragmatic manner and that cannot be deflated or explained away by means of such debunking arguments (sections 3 & 4).

2.2 A sustainable distinction?

The idea that reasons can vary across contexts as a result of conditions and modifiers has been criticised on the basis that there must be something that explains the variation across contexts, that there must be something that makes it the case

that in one situation a certain consideration constitutes a reason but that in another it fails to do so, and that whatever it is that explains this variation should be included into the specification of the reason. According to this objection, the relevant features of the context should be included in the specification of the reason, given that a complete explanation will mention everything that accounts for the reason being present. Once the relevant features of the context are built into the reason, the reason will no longer be context-dependent. In this way, one ends up with a full explanation that is invariant. The set of facts that completely explains the reason will be sufficient for the reason and hence necessitate it, which implies that there will then no longer be any variability. The objection thus holds that the appearance of variability is simply due to the fact that what was identified as the reason was just a partial specification that needs to be supplemented to end up with a complete specification of the reason.⁸

Accordingly, in order to sustain the fine-grained distinction between sources, conditions and modifiers, it needs to be established that those features of the context that condition or modify a reason cannot be included as part of the specification of the reason. It will be shown that it is necessary to draw these fine-grained distinctions and that one cannot integrate conditions and modifiers into the specification of the reason (section 5).

3 Conditions

Whereas the source or ground of a reason is to be identified with the consideration that constitutes the reason, conditions are not themselves part of the reason. Rather than playing a role in constituting the reason, they merely determine whether the consideration in question does constitute a reason. If the conditions are satisfied (which can consist in the presence of enablers or the absence of disablers), then the ground does constitute a reason. Otherwise, if the relevant enablers are absent and/or disablers are present, then it will fail to do so. As a result, the ground of the reason is by itself insufficient for determining whether the reason exists whenever conditions apply.

The robustness of the distinction between sources and conditions can be established by considering cases involving disablers. This is because in such cases a specification of those things that are implicated in making it the case that something is a reason requires one to appeal to absences and hence to things that cannot play the role of a source and be part of the specification of the reason.

More precisely, in cases in which the ground of a reason can be disabled, a specification of those things that must be the case for something to be a reason

⁸Cf. Hooker: 2000, p. 14; Raz: 2000. The value-theoretic analogue of this proposal has been put forward by Zimmerman who argues that apparent cases of variation involve evaluatively incomplete states of affairs, and that one has to integrate the relevant context to achieve evaluative completeness, which then ensures invariance (cf. Zimmerman: 1983).

requires one to appeal to absences and hence to things that cannot play the role of a source and be part of the specification of the reason. In characterising a necessitation base Γ of reason R , which is such that $\Box(\Gamma \rightarrow R)$, we do not only specify what types of things have to be present and how they have to be related to each other, but also what types of things must be absent. Γ thus has to include absences. Absences, however, do not exist and do not instantiate any properties. As such, they cannot play a grounding-role. Since absences cannot be sources or grounds, in the same way as absences cannot be causes, it follows that the role that they play cannot be a grounding-role but only a condition-role.⁹

At this point the question arises as to how absences can be relevant at all. If they cannot be grounds, then how can they be conditions or play any explanatory role whatsoever? In response, we can note that the relevance of absences can be explained counterfactually. If the condition fails to be satisfied, i.e. if the thing in question is not absent but present, then there is something that can play a role and that can prevent the source from constituting a reason, namely a disabler. The absence is accordingly relevant, insofar as, were it not for this absence, the source of the reason would have been disabled, such that it would not have given rise to the relevant reason. Accordingly, what makes it the case that the consideration constitutes a reason is not that there is something that is present and that plays a positive role in making it a reason, but that certain things are absent that would prevent it from constituting a reason were they to be present. That is to say, absences are only relevant in that the reason is merely negatively dependent on them.¹⁰

The fact that absences cannot be assigned a grounding-role but can only play a condition-role allows us to specify a sufficient condition for something's being a mere condition rather than a partial source, namely that what must be the case for the thing to be a reason is that something is absent. That is, if the non-existence of x is required for Γ to be a reason, such that reason R would not be grounded in source Γ were x to be present, then the absence of x is a mere condition of Γ 's constituting a reason and not a partial source of the reason.

This criterion for determining whether something is a mere condition only constitutes a sufficient but not a necessary condition. This is because there can be conditions the satisfaction of which consists, not in the absence of disablers,

⁹It might be suggested that when an absence is invoked in explaining why something is a reason, what is really doing the work is something else that is present. In response, we can note that 1. the absence of disablers is not equivalent to the presence of an enabler, nor is that which makes it the case that disablers are absent an enabler (cf. section 3.1), and that 2. in certain cases these absences cannot be (fully) grounded in presences since the necessitation of the absence involves a totality fact, which implies that there is an irreducible role played by absences.

¹⁰One cannot argue that, even though the absence does not exist and cannot play a grounding-role, the fact to the effect that the disabler is absent is something that is present and that could play this role. This is because all the positive work is being done by the ground. The absence of the disabler only matters insofar as the grounding relation is negatively dependent on the disabler being absent, and not insofar as the fact that the disabler is absent is positively implicated.

but in the presence of enablers. Yet, the fact that we have a well-defined criterion clearly illustrates the need to distinguish what makes something a reason from what must be the case for it to be a reason. This sufficient condition in this way establishes that there is a substantive distinction between sources and conditions that is metaphysically robust and not merely an artefact of our classificatory practices.¹¹

3.1 Clarifying conditionality

Not only might one be concerned that the distinction between conditions and sources fails to be robust, but also that the notion of a condition cannot play a well-defined explanatory role because it is not sufficiently unified, referring instead to a cluster of heterogeneous phenomena. This kind of worry has, for instance, been voiced by Raz. “[T]he category of an enabler is very diverse, so diverse as to be of little use, and likely to mislead” (Raz: 2006, p. 106).

Whilst the way in which the notion of an enabler has been employed in the literature naturally invites this charge, we can see that this worry can be allayed once a few confusions are avoided. Avoiding these confusions allows us to establish that the notions of enablers and disablers are self-standing categories that operate in accordance with certain specific mechanisms and that are clearly distinguishable from other categories.

I. PRESENCE OF ENABLERS \neq ABSENCE OF DISABLERS

Enablers and disablers are closely related. Since an enabler is something the presence of which suffices for the ground to give rise to a reason, whilst the presence of a disabler is sufficient for the non-obtaining of the grounding relation, enabling and disabling conditions have to be mutually exclusive, i.e. the satisfaction of any one has to preclude the satisfaction of any other. Otherwise contradictory situations would arise whereby one and the same grounding relation would be both enabled and disabled at the same time. Accordingly, the presence of an enabler implies the absence of disablers, and the presence of a disabler implies the absence of enablers.

Yet, despite this close relation between them, one needs to keep them separate. In particular, it is important to note that it is not the case that the absence of enablers is equivalent to the presence of a disabler, or that the absence of disablers is equivalent to the presence of an enabler. Enablers and disablers are things that can be present and that can have certain effects on grounding relations. The relevance of enablers is explained in terms of what their presence brings about, in particular, how they make it possible for the grounding relation in question to obtain. The relevance of the

¹¹For a more detailed account of conditions that also provides criteria for classifying enablers, cf. “Conditional grounding” (Bader: manuscript).

absence of disablers, by contrast, is explained counterfactually in terms of what they would prevent and how they would undermine the grounding relation were they to be present. If enablers are absent, then this does not mean that there is a thing that is present that disables the source. Likewise, if disablers are absent, then this does not mean that something that is present functions as an enabler. In other words, enabling and disabling are not two sides of the same coin, but operate on the basis of different mechanisms.

We should accordingly reject the claim that “there seems to be no difference between the presence of an enabler and the absence of a disabler, nor between the absence of an enabler and the presence of a disabler” (Dancy: 2007, p. 90; also cf. McKeever and Ridge: 2007, pp. 60-63). Likewise, we are to reject the inference that “if there are enablers, there must be such things as disablers; trivially, the absence of an enabler will disable what would otherwise be a reason” (Dancy: 2004, p. 41; also cf. Väyrynen: 2006, p. 715 footnote 27).¹² It is indeed correct that if enablers are absent, then the conditions on the consideration in question constituting a reason will fail to be satisfied and that the reason will in this sense be disabled. This, however, does not mean that there is a disabler the absence of which is required, where this requirement is explained counterfactually in terms of the way in which the disabler would undermine the grounding relation were it to be present. If we were to identify the absence of enablers with the presence of a disabler, then the absence of the disabler would consist in the absence of the absence of the enablers, which amounts to the presence of the enablers. Rather than the relevance of the supposed ‘disabler’ being explained in terms of how its presence would undermine the grounding relation, it would then be explained in terms of how its absence consists in the presence of something else, namely certain enablers, that makes it possible for the grounding relation to obtain.

Relatedly, that which makes it the case that disablers are absent is not itself an enabler, since it is possible for all disablers to be absent, yet for the grounding relation to not obtain due to the fact that this relation is not enabled. Moreover, that which makes it the case that no disablers are present will be highly heterogeneous, on the basis that (i) it is possible for there to be multiple disablers that need to be precluded, and (ii) particular disablers can be precluded in different ways. Since the various possible disablers of a grounding relation can be quite disjointed and heterogeneous, whatever makes it the case that all of these are absent is likely to be not particularly unified. As such, it is not suited for being an enabler that makes a ground-

¹²Given that there can be multiple enablers for Γ to ground R , this should be: ‘the absence of enablers will disable what would otherwise be a reason’.

ing relation possible. Whilst not being an enabler, it is something that has relevance, whereby its relevance is to be understood in terms of making it the case that the conditions are satisfied, rather than in terms of being that the presence of which the conditions being satisfied consists in. In other words, it is only indirectly relevant by cancelling threats to a grounding relation, rather than directly relevant by enabling the relation. In this way, it is the non-causal analogue of a double-preventer, i.e. the structures involved in precluding disablers are isomorphic to the causal structures involved in preventing preventers.

2. ENABLERS AND GROUNDING PRINCIPLES

In the same way that one should not confuse laws of nature as being conditions of causes, one should also not confuse normative grounding principles as being enablers.¹³ There is an important difference between those things that make it the case that certain considerations conditionally constitute reasons, and those things that need to be the case if the conditionally reason-giving features are to be enabled and to actually generate reasons. Only the latter, but not the former, are enablers.

When dealing with enablers we have something that is a conditional ground and that needs to be enabled in order for it to give rise to a reason. The source of the reason resides within the conditional ground, but only generates a reason under certain conditions. For Γ to be enabled by C , Γ must have the status of a conditional ground. This is because enablers are precisely things the presence of which enables conditional grounds. In particular, Γ has to be a conditional ground independently of any enablers, given that enablers classify as such only on the basis of Γ having this status. This means that what makes it the case that Γ is a conditional ground in the first place cannot itself be an enabler. In particular, normative grounding principles are not enablers, since it is they that make it the case that various considerations are (conditional) grounds.¹⁴ Here, we are not dealing with a specific ground that needs to be enabled, but rather with a class of entities that are imbued with (conditional) normative significance. These principles make it the case that certain kinds of things are (conditionally) good and reason-giving, i.e. they are bridge-principles connecting the non-normative with the normative. Thus, normative grounding principles need

¹³For an example of this confusion cf. Strandberg: 2008, p. 146. Dancy makes an analogous mistake in his discussion of the relevance of laws to causation: “The role of the laws lies elsewhere. They are the conditions required for those events to necessitate this one, and thereby they stand as enabling conditions for the explanation rather than as a proper part of it” (Dancy: 2004, p. 46).

¹⁴Normative grounding principles can either be construed in a robust manner whereby they govern grounding relations, or in a non-robust manner whereby they merely describe patterns of grounding relations. (The discussion will proceed on the assumption of a governing conception.)

to obtain for certain considerations to constitute reasons, without it being the case that they classify as enablers. This is because we do not have a conditional ground that needs to be enabled, but something that needs to be made into a conditional ground in the first place.

These principles are as much responsible for non-normative properties being such as to (conditionally) constitute reasons as they are for various facts being such as to constitute enablers and disablers. If the principle has conditions built in, then the relevant non-normative considerations only conditionally constitute a reason, and hence are conditional grounds. Rather than having the form ‘ Γ grounds R ’, they have the form ‘ Γ grounds R on condition that C ’. Normative grounding principles accordingly determine which things are conditions, but the principles themselves are not conditions. In other words, conditions and grounds are equally dependent on these principles, which implies that principles operate at a different level from both grounds and conditions. Relatedly, the need for these grounding principles is not restricted to conditional grounds. Such principles are equally required in the case of unconditional grounds, which means that the distinction between conditional and unconditional grounds is at a different level than that at which principles operate. To consider normative grounding principles to be enablers accordingly involves a confusion of two different levels.¹⁵

A necessary condition (and good indicator) for a consideration to unconditionally constitute a reason is sufficiency/necessitation, i.e. if Γ suffices for R such that $\Box(\Gamma \rightarrow R)$, then Γ is likely to unconditionally constitute R . If Γ is not sufficient, then (unless it is a mere partial ground) it only conditionally constitutes a reason. The problem now is that the relevant modality needs to be specified when evaluating whether the ground is sufficient for the reason, in the sense of necessitating the reason. The type of necessity has to be determined, namely whether \Box refers to metaphysical, normative or nomological necessity. That is, it needs to be specified what the range of possible scenarios is in which the ground Γ is to suffice for the reason R . This range is fixed by the normative grounding principles. It is they that specify the relevant modality. Accordingly, it is not even possible to make sense of what sufficiency would consist in independently of these principles. Put differently, for the notion of sufficiency to be defined, these principles already have to be in play. The contrast between those considerations that only conditionally constitute reasons and those that unconditionally do so is only applicable once the principles are fixed. The principles consequently cannot themselves be conditions, but are rather presupposed for the very applicability of conditions and thus play

¹⁵Cf. “Two levels of good-making” (Bader: manuscript).

an importantly different role.

If we were to treat principles as conditions, then not only would it not be possible for something to be an unconditional reason (since every non-normative consideration constitutes a reason only on the basis of some normative grounding principle), it would also be the case that pretty much anything would classify as conditionally constituting a reason. This is because, in the absence of substantive constraints on the shape that these grounding principles can take, pretty much anything could be made into a ground, given suitable bridge-principles. The category of a conditional ground (as well as the associated categories of enablers and disablers) would then indeed be of little use, and saying of some consideration that it would conditionally constitute a reason would not be saying very much at all.

3. DISABLERS AND ATTENUATORS

It is worth noting that a disabler is not equivalent to an attenuator where the reason is multiplied by 0. This is because, as we will see shortly, in the case of modification there is a distinction between the modified and the unmodified reason, which ensures that when a 0-multiplier is applied the unmodified reason remains and it is only the modified reason that is reduced to zero, whereas in the case of disablers there is no reason at all. Moreover, these cases differ in terms of the distinction between something not constituting a reason and something constituting a reason with zero weight, i.e. if the reason is disabled then the thing fails to constitute a reason altogether, whereas if it is modified with multiplier = 0 then it is a reason with zero magnitude.

Accordingly, the distinction between enablers and disabler is not to be understood as a special case of modification.¹⁶ Instead, conditions and modifiers constitute two genuinely different types of context-dependence. They involve different types of interaction between the source and the context, that are based on different mechanisms and that yield importantly different results.

¹⁶Contra Horty, who uses threshold values such that a consideration is disabled if an attenuator reduces its weight (which is understood by Horty in terms of an ordering of defaults) such that it ends up below the threshold (cf. Horty: 2007, p. 15).

Similarly, Schroeder has put forward what he calls the 'undercutting hypothesis', according to which cases of undercutting defeaters (which he identifies with disablers, cf. Schroeder: 2011, p. 334) are limiting cases of attenuation, insofar as they simply amount to cases of complete attenuation (cf. Schroeder: 2011, p. 335). This hypothesis, moreover, is not even intelligible if transvaluation should be possible whereby the polarity of a reason is reversed, i.e. if attenuation can involve multiplication by a negative factor, since in that case the notion of complete attenuation (or complete undercutting, as Schroeder calls it) will not be defined, given that there will not be a limiting case.

Dancy also seems to endorse this kind of problematic assimilation of enablers/disablers to intensifiers/modifiers, cf. Dancy: 2004, p. 42.

In fact, it is not even possible to model conditions by means of modifiers (i.e. represent disablers as modifiers = 0 and enablers as modifiers \neq 0). This is because the distinction between failing to constitute a reason and constituting a reason with zero weight has substantive consequences when it comes to the comparability of different alternatives and hence to the completeness of the ordering. Something that has positive weight is weightier than something that has zero weight. However, it is non-comparable to something failing to constitute a reason.

4. ENABLING ENABLERS?

Dancy has suggested that there can be enablers for enablers and that this possibility gives rise to difficulties for attempts at specifying principles. “[W]here there are enablers for enablers, and so on; since there are plenty of such cases, merely mentioning all the enablers will not end up with a guarantee” (Dancy: 2004, p. 91; also cf. Nozick: 1968, section VII). Once the possibility of conditions on conditions is admitted, there would not seem to be any limit on the complexity of principles. Not only will it not be the case that the ground Γ necessitates the reason. In addition, it will also not be the case that the combination of the ground and the condition, i.e. $\Gamma \wedge C$, necessitates the reason if the conditions C themselves are subject to further conditions C' that also need to be included in the principle. These further conditions, in turn, could also be subject to conditions C'' , and so on. One would have to specify conditions applying to conditions, and so on, i.e. one would have to specify principles along the lines of $\Box[(\Gamma \wedge C \wedge C' \wedge C'' \dots) \rightarrow R]$. Such principles could turn out to be infinitely complex, i.e. not finitely statable and hence not usable, leaving us with particularism.

In response we can note that the possibility of there being enablers for enablers cannot arise. The condition on the grounding relation consists in the relevant enablers being present (as well as disablers being absent). Now, enablers/disablers are characterised as those things the presence/absence of which suffices for the obtaining/non-obtaining of the grounding relation between Γ and R . This means that we do not have a distinction between source and condition when it comes to enabling and disabling. There is no such thing as conditional enabling, given that enabling is not a grounding relation that can be subject to conditions. That is, there is simply that which enables and the presence of which ensures that Γ grounds R .

All that can happen is that the enabler itself is conditionally grounded in something. That is, it is possible for Δ only to be conditionally an enabler for Γ , thereby making it possible for the thing doing the enabling to be enabled in being an enabler. Yet, it is not possible that the condition is only conditionally a condition. The condition in such cases will thus con-

sist in the enabler being present and not in its ground being present. In this sense, only enabled grounds of enablers classify as enablers. For instance, if an enabler is characterised normatively, then it may be the case that it is conditionally grounded in certain non-normative considerations, whereby certain enablers are required for this grounding relation to obtain. The enabler in this situation will consist in the normatively characterised condition, and not in the non-normative considerations that conditionally ground this normative condition. Whilst that which grounds the enabler might need to be enabled, the enabler itself does not require anything (or, at any rate, anything that would have to be the case would itself be part of the enabler).

If C is conditionally grounded in Δ , given C' , such that $\Box[(\Delta \wedge C') \rightarrow C]$, then the principle $\Box[(\Gamma \wedge C) \rightarrow R]$ can be transformed into the principle $\Box[(\Gamma \wedge \Delta \wedge C') \rightarrow R]$. If the goal is to have principles with non-normative antecedents, then this procedure has to be carried out for all normatively characterised conditions. In cases in which every non-normative ground of a normative condition is itself subject to a normative condition, this procedure will generate infinitely complex principles. This, however, is not because there will be enablers for enablers, but because the non-normative facts that ground the presence of Γ 's enablers will be infinitely complex. Accordingly, conditionality as such does not provide any support for particularism. Although conditions give rise to complexity, they do so in a systematic manner. Whenever reasons vary across contexts, there are clearly specifiable conditions that give rise to this variation. By specifying the ground together with the relevant conditions, one ends up with systematic principles. One needs a very particular constellation of conditions, together with the requirement that the antecedents of principles be specified in entirely non-normative terms, in order to end up with non-finitely storable principles.¹⁷

¹⁷It is only when it comes to cases in which the ground of the reason itself is holistic (in particular, contextualist rather than Moorean versions of this type of holism), that a plausible case can be made for particularism following from holism. Insofar as the ground of the reason itself involves the context, any change in context could in principle give rise to a change in the reason. This is because a suitable change in the context will go together with a change in the ground, and hence with a change in the reason. In fact, if the context becomes sufficiently encompassing, one ends up with the limit case of particularism, whereby reasons become so particular that they cannot be found in more than one context. The resulting version of particularism will not allow any context-dependence that involves variability, in the sense of one and the same consideration constituting different reasons in different contexts, but will instead make the very identity of reasons dependent on the contexts in which they are found (cf. "Organic wholes and organic parts", Bader: manuscript).

4 Modifiers

As in the case of conditions, modifiers are not part of the reason. Whereas conditions determine whether a consideration constitutes a reason at all, modifiers affect the weight of a reason. Modification involves either the intensification or the attenuation of a reason.¹⁸ Intensifiers strengthen the weight of a reason, functioning as multipliers > 1 . Attenuators can be understood as multipliers of < 1 , which also includes negative multipliers that bring about a switch of polarity (= transvaluation).

When modification occurs, there are two distinct (though, as we will see shortly, not disjoint) reasons. On the one hand, there is the unmodified reason and, on the other, the modified reason. These reasons are distinct and play different roles. The unmodified reason can be evaluated by abstracting from the context, whereas the modified reason is the one that we identify when assessing the consideration in question within the context in which it is to be found.

Abstracting from the context is not to be confused with employing an isolation test, i.e. with evaluating the thing considered under the supposition that it is the only existing thing. This is because considering it in isolation does not amount to considering it whilst abstracting from the context, but instead amounts to considering it in a very particular context, namely the context in which it is isolated. The isolation test runs into serious difficulties if there are modifiers that consist in certain things being absent, as happens for instance if one considers something's being rare or unique to strengthen the reason to preserve it. If there are such modifiers,¹⁹ then the isolation test amounts to placing it in a context in which these modifiers apply, which means that, contrary to what one set out to do, one will end up assessing a modified reason rather than the reason in its unmodified form. Instead of isolating it, one needs to abstract from the effects of the context, whether these effects derive from things that are present or things that are absent. This means that one has to restrict the evaluation to the ground of the reason, assessing to what extent something generates reasons in virtue of having such a ground.

The unmodified reason is always prior to the modified reason. The former is the input to the modification function, yielding the latter as its output. Sources and modifiers are thus not on an equal footing. They do not simultaneously determine the weight of the reason. Instead, the determination is sequential (where

¹⁸Modification can also have a neutral impact, in which case it does not lead to variation across contexts (cf. footnote 23).

¹⁹It is rather dubious that such modifiers do exist. Since rarity and uniqueness involve absences, one needs to explain how these absences can be relevant. However, it does not seem to be possible to use the strategy that we employed in the case of disablers, namely to explain their relevance counterfactually. Accordingly, anyone who holds that rarity/uniqueness matters has to answer the difficult question as to how absences can play a modification-role, even though they cannot play a grounding-role.

this has to be understood in a metaphysical rather than temporal manner). In this way, there is an asymmetric dependence, whereby the modifier depends on what is being modified, but not the other way around. The source by itself constitutes a reason and does not depend on the modifier. The modifier, by contrast, is (generally)²⁰ parasitic on the source and does not generate a reason by itself, but rather operates on preexisting reasons, thereby only acquiring significance when combined with that which it modifies.

For instance, rarity or uniqueness facts by themselves do not give rise to reasons. Instead of being themselves reason-giving, they modify preexisting reasons (though cf. footnote 19). They are only of significance when combined with independently reason-giving facts, but not on their own. That is, rarity as such does not generate reasons, and it is not the case that anything that is rare is of significance. Rather, rarity only matters when there is a reason to care about the thing in question in the first place. We need something that is (positively) valuable and that generates a reason to begin with. This reason can then be intensified or enhanced by its being rare, i.e. the thing can be made more valuable and the reason to preserve it can be made more weighty as a result of its being rare. By contrast, source facts are sufficient to generate reasons. Even though source facts do not by themselves determine the final evaluation (given that what they ground can be modified), they do by themselves establish that there is a reason.

A general feature of modification is that the modified reason and the unmodified reason are of the same type and that they are accordingly commensurable. If a reason is intensified or attenuated, it has to remain of the same type as the original reason. Otherwise, the modified reason would not be commensurable with the unmodified reason and it would hence not make any sense to say that the reason has been made stronger/weaker by the modifier, since this presupposes that the strength of the modified reason can be compared with that of the unmodified reason, which can only be done if they are of the same type and involve the same units.

The reasons are not only of the same type, but also have the same object due to sharing the same ground, i.e. though differing in weight and possibly also in polarity, both reasons are reasons to ϕ . The consideration constituting the unmodified reason also constitutes the modified reason, whereby the way in which this consideration counts in the latter case is modified by the context, such that the necessitation base of the former is a subset of that of the latter. As a result, it is not the case that the agent is faced with two separate and incommensurable reasons. Instead, the unmodified reason is included within the modified reason. The unmodified reason, accordingly, does not make a separate demand on the

²⁰The qualification 'generally' is required since the modifier, in addition to modifying another source, may also constitute a source in its own right, i.e. it is always parasitic qua being reason-giving due to being a modifier, whereas it may fail to be parasitic qua being reason-giving in some other way.

agent. The agent does not have the unmodified reason to ϕ in addition to the modified reason to ϕ . Rather, the former is part and parcel of the latter. As a result, there is no double-counting. Moreover, there is also no need to weigh them up or trade them off against each other. The agent simply has to be responsive to what the modified reason requires. By complying with the modified reason, the agent is thereby also fully responsive to the features giving rise to the unmodified reason.

From this we can see that not every case in which a multiplication function is at work constitutes a case involving modification. We have to distinguish between modification functions and transformation functions. This distinction depends on whether the multiplication involves a change of units. If that is the case, then one is dealing with a transformation rather than with a modification function. For instance, the prioritarian weighting function does not involve modification and is not to be understood along the lines of a discounting model (cf. footnote 22). It is rather a transformation or conversion function that specifies the functional relationship that holds between personal and impersonal good, whereby personal good is considered to have diminishing marginal moral value. It differs from modification in three important respects. First, this function is invertible and does not require any asymmetric dependence – neither type of good has to be understood as being dependent on the other. Second, the untransformed values are not part and parcel of the transformed values, but are instead distinct and make separate claims – personal good generates prudential reasons for the agent whose utility is at issue, whereas impersonal good generates moral reasons for everyone. Third, the inputs and outputs of the function are of different types and are not commensurable – personal and impersonal good are heterogeneous types of values that are measured on different scales.²¹

4.1 Modification and agent-relativity

The notion of modification (as well as the usefulness of the general framework) can be illustrated by considering the relation between agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons.²² In particular, agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons can be understood as being connected by a modification function, such that agent-relative

²¹The conversion function only specifies a descriptive functional relationship and does not have the form of an ethical trade-off function that fixes the relative importance of different goods and determines how they are to be weighed up.

²²Other applications of modification include various forms of discounting whereby reasons are attenuated. For instance, discounting the future involves modifiers, insofar as it amounts to attenuating the weights of reasons relating to future events, where the modification function is inversely related to the temporal distance of these events from the present. Within the context of a theory countenancing this form of discounting, one can either evaluate the strength of the reason whilst abstracting from the temporal location of the event, or one can evaluate it in the context in which it is actually to be found, which includes its temporal distance from the present. (Similarly for probabilistic discounting.)

reasons are nothing other than modified agent-neutral reason. The modification depends on the moral distance between the location of the value that is being assessed and the agent to which the evaluation is relativised, in such a way that the modification function is inversely related to moral distance. The modification function yields a multiplier = 1 in the case of a perfect stranger.²³ Reasons relating to those that are closer are intensified > 1 , whereas reasons regarding those that are more remote, such as one's enemies, are < 1 .

Agent-neutral reasons are thus identified when abstracting from the particular perspective of the agent. That is, when evaluating such reasons, one does not take into consideration which person the agent happens to be and which point of view he happens to occupy. Agent-relative reasons, by contrast, can be determined by centring the evaluation on the particular perspective of the agent, allowing one to take into consideration where values are located and in what relations they stand to the point of view on which the evaluation is centred, in particular what distance relations obtain in moral space.

This account is superior to alternative theories in a number of respects:²⁴

1. It explains how relative and neutral reasons are related, in particular the way in which relative reasons presuppose and depend on neutral reasons, since for there to be a modified reason, there needs to be an unmodified reason that can be the input of the relevant modification function.
2. When acting, one acts from the particular perspective one happens to occupy, which implies that one is to act on the basis of agent-relative reasons. Doing so is what it is to be responsive to the reasons that one has qua being the particular agent occupying a particular perspective.²⁵ Agent-neutral reasons do not need to be taken into consideration separately but are already built into the agent-relative reasons, given that they are the inputs to the modification function that has the agent-relative reasons as outputs. Accordingly, there is no need to weigh up agent-relative reasons against agent-neutral reasons. There is hence no need to determine the 'relative

²³It is worth noting that a reason that is modified by a multiplier = 1 is not the same thing as an unmodified reason. An unmodified reason is identified by abstracting from the context, whereas the modified reason involves a context that has a neutral effect. Accordingly, one can distinguish agent-relative from agent-neutral reasons in the case of a perfect stranger – these reasons are distinct reasons, even though they require exactly the same thing.

²⁴For a detailed treatment of this way of understanding the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons, as well as for criticisms of alternative accounts, cf. "Personal, general, and impersonal good" (Bader: manuscript).

²⁵If one accepts the agent-relative prerogative to the effect that it is always permissible to do what is impartially best, then it is permissible for an agent to set aside agent-relative reasons and abstract from his or her situation and instead act upon an impartial evaluation by maximising or optimising the agent-neutral ordering. (Switching between the relative and neutral orderings does not involve weighing them up or subsuming them in some other way under a common standpoint.)

weight' of these different reasons, which would be problematic given that there is no further perspective in addition to the impartial standpoint and the partial perspective one is occupying from which one could determine which one was more weighty. Rather than ordering or weighing relative against neutral reasons, all that is to be done is to determine how important and weighty different considerations are from the different perspectives.

3. By identifying the object of concern in terms of the ground of the reason, and not in terms of the modifier, this account ensures that both agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons are concerned with the very same object, i.e. that the agent is to act for the sake of the very same thing in each case.²⁶ Modifying the reason does not alter the object of concern, nor the manner in which one should be concerned for the object. That is, though one must appeal to facts about the way in which the object is related to the agent in explaining what makes it the case that the agent-relative reason obtains, these relational facts have no impact on what counts as the object of concern. In particular, the relational complex (consisting of the agent, the object and the relevant relations they stand in) does not end up being the object of concern.
4. It allows us to model different ethical theories, such as egoism, moderate partiality, and impartiality, in terms of differing modification functions. Such theories differ, in particular, in terms of whether the function is continuous or discontinuous, as well as constant or variable.

5 Complete specifications

As we saw in section 2.2, a common criticism of the idea that reasons can vary across contexts is that those features that explain why and how a reason varies should be included when specifying the reason, such that the specification of a reason is to be identified with its complete explanation.

It should be noted that what Raz calls 'the intelligibility of the domain of value' is not in any way threatened by the account of conditions and modifiers. The variation of reasons across contexts is not brute or arbitrary. Instead, variability can be explained in terms of the presence or absence of enablers and disablers, as well as of intensifiers and attenuators. This means that every reason has a necessitating base, and there is consequently no violation of supervenience.²⁷ What

²⁶The object of concern is that towards which the action is directed and for the sake of which one acts. This object corresponds to the bearer of value.

²⁷By taking the disjunction of all the minimal necessitation bases, i.e. $\Gamma' = \bigvee\{\Gamma : \Box(\Gamma \rightarrow R)\}$, we end up with a base that gives us a biconditional $\Box(\Gamma' \leftrightarrow R)$. The supervenience base corresponds to the properties that feature in the facts that are in Γ' . The base constructed in this way constitutes a minimal supervenience base and, as such, does not include any irrelevant

is at issue is thus not whether a full explanation that necessitates the reason can be given. Instead, the issue of contention is whether the full explanation is to be identified with the specification of the reason, whether that which necessitates the reason is the ground of the reason, i.e. whether “everything relevant for the evaluation of an action is part of the reasons for or against the action” (Raz: 2000, p. 60).²⁸

This section will establish that the features of the context that condition or modify a reason cannot be included in the specification of the reason and that the full explanation as to why one has a reason to ϕ is consequently not identical with the reason to ϕ .

5.1 Collapsing reasons

A decisive problem for the complete specification approach is that, unless one is willing to countenance the fine-grained distinctions between sources and conditions/modifiers, one ends up conflating certain reasons. For instance, cases of mutual conditioning (or mutual modification), where the source of one reason is the enabler for another reason and vice versa, are such that these different reasons have the same necessitation base. Reason $R(\phi)$ is grounded in Γ and enabled by Δ , whereas $R(\psi)$ is grounded in Δ but enabled by Γ . These reasons are both necessitated by $\{\Gamma, \Delta\}$. This means that these reasons will be collapsed if the specification of a reason is identified with its complete explanation, since sameness of complete explanation then implies sameness of reason. Although there are two different reasons, the complete specification approach is only able to recognise the existence of one reason, as it does not countenance the fine-grained differences in terms of the roles played by the components of the necessitation base

features that are not explanatorily relevant.

²⁸Dancy has objected to the idea of a complete explanation that “what we have here is not a relation between partial and complete explanations, but between nested explanations, the second of which is concerned in some way with the success of the first” (Dancy: 2004, p. 97; also cf. pp. 47-49). The explanation that cites everything that plays a role in making it the case that the source grounds the reason is an explanation that accounts for the success of the explanation of the existence of the reason in terms of the ground being present. This, however, is not to be confused with an explanation that cites everything that plays a role in making it the case that the reason exists. It is this latter explanation that is complete. That is, there are two partial explanations. On the one hand, there is the explanation of the reason in terms of the ground. On the other, there is the explanation of the obtaining of the grounding relation in terms of the relevant conditions being satisfied. These explanations are nested, i.e. the latter explains why the former succeeds. In addition to these partial explanations, there is the complete explanation, which corresponds to the combination of the partial explanations, and which cites all the facts relevant for the existence of the reason (these facts form a necessitation base). When concerned with the relation between the explanation of the reason in terms of the ground and the complete explanation citing all the facts playing a role in making it the case that the reason exists, we are dealing not with a nesting relation but with a parthood relation, i.e. the set of facts cited by the former is a subset of the facts cited by the latter, which makes it the case that the former explanation is a partial explanation.

that differentiate these reasons.

The situation is especially troublesome when these reasons differ in terms of their weight, their objects and so on, for instance when $R(\phi)$ is stronger than $R(\psi)$. All of these differences amongst the reasons will not be explicable in terms of their necessitation base in such cases – after all, they share the same base. The problem for the complete specification approach is thus not just that it cannot explain their distinctness, i.e. why there are two reasons rather than just one, but also that it cannot explain the differences in their nature, e.g. why the reasons differ in terms of their weights. Far from it being the case that the defender of context-sensitivity is saddled with a failure of supervenience, it is the person wishing to identify the reason with its complete explanation who is unable to uphold supervenience, given that the same base corresponds to different reasons in these sorts of cases.

The problem is that necessitation is not unique in this case but one-many. We have many reasons, but only one base that necessitates them. The reasons are distinguished, not in terms of that which necessitates the obtaining of these reasons, but in terms of their sources and conditions. Adequately differentiating these reasons requires one to draw the relevant fine-grained distinctions and explain how the different parts of the same necessitation base play different roles in each case. That is, the collapse can be avoided once one distinguishes sources from conditions/modifiers, since one can then differentiate the explanations of the two reasons in terms of the different roles that are played by the explanans. Though citing the same facts, the explanations will differ in terms of whether a particular fact is cited as a source or as an enabler. In other words, one needs to impose structure on the base, specifying not only which features it contains but also what roles are played by the different components, such that $R(\phi)$ is explained in terms of $\{\text{source} = \Gamma, \text{enabler} = \Delta\}$, whereas $R(\psi)$ is explained in terms of $\{\text{source} = \Delta, \text{enabler} = \Gamma\}$.²⁹

It might be responded that the reasons could be distinguished counterfactually, i.e. that, even though one and the same necessitation base explains both

²⁹Examples of mutual modification can straightforwardly be constructed if modification based on rarity is accepted. This happens, for instance, in a case in which F_{ness} is a good-maker that can be intensified by rarity and in which x is F , y is F and a totality fact T to the effect that nothing other than x and y is F obtains. The necessitating base for the reason to ϕ (= to preserve x), which includes both source and modifier, will be $\{F_x, F_y, T\}$. The reason for ψ -ing (= preserving y) will likewise be necessitated by this very same base, leading the complete specification approach to collapse these reasons. The fine-grained approach, by contrast, can differentiate these reasons on the basis that, whilst F_x is the source of $R(\phi)$ and F_y together with T account for the modification, F_y is the source of $R(\psi)$ and the modification is explained by F_x and T .

We can slightly alter the case, such that rarity applies to the abstractly characterised type F^* which includes both F' and F'' , where F' and F'' differ in terms of the strength of the reason that they generate. Here the relevant totality fact T^* consists in nothing other than x and y being F^* . Again, we end up with one and the same necessitating base for two distinct reasons, whereby these reasons even differ in terms of strength, i.e. $R(\phi) = m$ and $R(\psi) = n$ where $m \neq n$.

$R(\phi)$ and $R(\psi)$, if the world had been different in a certain way, then one would still have had $R(\phi)$ but not $R(\psi)$. The specification of the reason would then not be exhausted by its complete explanation, but would also make reference to the relevant modal facts. This response, however, is inadequate.

1. This strategy does not work in cases in which Γ can only be enabled by Δ and vice versa, since $R(\phi)$ and $R(\psi)$ will share the same necessitation base in all worlds.
2. A merely counterfactual distinction is problematic since facts obtaining in the actual world should suffice to distinguish these reasons.
3. Even if such counterfactual differences could explain the distinctness of the reasons, it is dubious that they can explain the differences in terms of their nature, i.e. their differing weights, objects and so on.
4. There is the problem that one needs to provide an account of how these counterfactual differences can arise. Something must account for the fact that, had things been different, one would no longer have had $R(\psi)$ but still $R(\phi)$, even though they share the same base in the actual world. The proposed strategy seems to invert the direction of explanation. Intuitively, it is the fact that these reasons differ that explains that they can come apart in counterfactual scenarios, rather than it being the case that the counterfactual differences are invoked to explain why the reasons are distinct.

The fine-grained account allows us to distinguish the reasons, as regards both their identity and their nature, in terms of facts obtaining in the actual world. In particular, they are distinguished insofar as, though being necessitated by the same facts, they differ in terms of which facts fill which roles. Moreover, it can straightforwardly explain the counterfactual differences amongst the reasons in terms of the source of $R(\phi)$ being present both in the actual world and in the counterfactual world under consideration, whereas that of $R(\psi)$ is only present in the actual world. That is, what makes it the case that both worlds are such that $R(\phi)$ obtains, even though the worlds differ, is (i) that they agree in terms of the source of $R(\phi)$ being present, and (ii) that they do not differ in terms of whether the conditions on the reason are satisfied or whether the reason is modified, but only in terms of what makes this the case, i.e. whilst the source of $R(\psi)$ fills this role in the actual world, something else functions as the relevant role-filler in the counterfactual scenario, which is unproblematic since these are multiply realisable roles. By appealing to the distinction between sources and conditions/modifiers, we can accordingly distinguish that part of the world that constitutes the source of the reason (which is shared amongst them) and that part which ensures that the condition is satisfied or that the reason is modified (in terms of which the worlds differ).

5.2 Overgenerating reasons

The complete specification approach is not only to be rejected because it collapses reasons, but also because it over-generates reasons. As we have seen, there will always be a complete explanation of a reason. In fact, there will frequently be many complete explanations.³⁰ This is because many conditions are disjunctive and can be satisfied in different ways. This happens, on the one hand, when a ground can be enabled by different enablers, i.e. when the presence of each of e_1 and e_2 is sufficient for Γ to constitute a reason, and, on the other, whenever there is a conjunctive disabler that can be disjunctively cancelled since the condition on the consideration in question constituting a reason then consists in some conjunct or other being absent. For instance, where d_1 and d_2 jointly (but not individually) disable the source Γ from constituting reason R , the absence of each of d_1 and d_2 will be sufficient for the source to constitute the reason. Put differently, if $(d_1 \wedge d_2)$ is a disabler of Γ constituting reason R , then the condition consists in $\neg(d_1 \wedge d_2)$, which implies that $\Box(\Gamma \wedge \neg d_1 \rightarrow R)$, $\Box(\Gamma \wedge \neg d_2 \rightarrow R)$ as well as $\Box(\Gamma \wedge \neg d_1 \wedge \neg d_2 \rightarrow R)$.

Accordingly, there will be multiple complete explanations and multiple necessitating bases whenever we are dealing with multiply satisfiable conditions, i.e. with cases in which the conditions on Γ constituting reason R can be satisfied in different ways, such that there are different things that can make it the case that the conditions are satisfied and that can hence necessitate R when they are combined with Γ .

If the specification of the reason were to coincide with its full explanation, then problems would result. There being multiple explanations would imply that one would end up with multiple reasons whenever there are disjunctive conditions that are multiply satisfied. This is problematic, first, because there is intuitively only one reason and, second, because it leads to double-counting. The problem is, again, that necessitation fails to be unique, though this time it is many-one rather than one-many. We have many bases, but only one reason that is necessitated by them.

One cannot appeal to the usual methods for avoiding double-counting in terms of one necessitation base being a part of another, or in terms of one necessitation base having non-basic/derivative significance whereas the other has basic significance. This is because, though overlapping, the necessitation bases will have non-empty complements and will have non-derivative significance. These methods can, at best, be used when it comes to explaining why one is not to double-count both the necessitating base involving the absence of d_1 as well as the necessitating base involving the absence of both d_1 and d_2 , i.e. the base $\{\Gamma, \neg d_1\}$ is

³⁰There can be different complete explanations because completeness requires sufficiency but not maximality. Complete explanations do not need to be maximal explanations, in the same way that complete causes do not need to be maximal causes (e.g. if e is overdetermined by c_1 and c_2 , then c_1 will be a complete cause as will be c_2 , whilst $c_1 \wedge c_2$ will be the maximal cause).

a part of the base $\{\Gamma, \neg d_1, \neg d_2\}$.³¹ Yet, they cannot address the issue of double-counting both the base that includes the absence of d_1 as well as the base that includes the absence of d_2 , each of which is sufficient to necessitate the reason and constitutes a full explanation, since the bases $\{\Gamma, \neg d_1\}$ and $\{\Gamma, \neg d_2\}$ do not stand in the requisite parthood relation.

Instead, in order to explain why these bases necessitate the same reason, rather than each necessitating a different reason, and in order to avoid double-counting, one needs to appeal to the fact that these bases share the same ground Γ and are subject to the same conditions, and that they only differ in terms of what ensures that the relevant conditions are satisfied. This makes it possible for one and the same reason to have multiple complete explanations, insofar as there are different ways of satisfying the conditions on the source constituting the reason. That is, once we introduce the relevant fine-grained structure into the necessitation base, such that the base of R_1 is characterised as $\{\text{source} = \Gamma, \neg d_1 \text{ ensuring satisfaction of condition} = C\}$ ³² whereas the base of R_2 is characterised as $\{\text{source} = \Gamma, \neg d_2 \text{ ensuring satisfaction of condition} = C\}$, then we can see that $R_1 = R_2$, given that $\text{source}(R_1) = \Gamma = \text{source}(R_2)$ and $\text{condition}(R_1) = C = \text{condition}(R_2)$, and that these bases of the same reason only differ in terms of that which makes it the case that the condition on Γ constituting a reason is satisfied. Reasons are thus to be individuated in terms of their sources and conditions, and not in terms of their necessitating bases. The specification of the reason is consequently not to be identified with its complete explanation.

5.3 Different roles

A further problem for the complete specification approach is that by identifying the specification of the reason with its complete explanation, one ends up misconstruing the different roles played by the various factors that are cited in this explanation and thereby ends up mischaracterising the reason as well as the response that is required of us. Although sources, conditions and modifiers all feature in the full explanation as to why one has reason to ϕ , they feature in the explanation in different ways, i.e. not everything that is part of the necessitating base is implicated in the same way in generating the reason. Given that different features play different roles and explain different aspects of the reason, we can see that a more fine-grained understanding of the explanation and specification of

³¹In fact, it is far from clear whether these methods suffice even in that case. First, the fact that the satisfaction of the condition is overdetermined by $\neg d_1$ and $\neg d_2$ does not in any way imply that this necessitating base gives rise to non-basic value, which implies that the basic/non-basic distinction is not able to avoid overcounting in these cases. Second, attempts to avoid overcounting by appealing to sub-set considerations applied to necessitation bases are highly problematic on the grounds that they are too strong and mistakenly rule out cases of holistic pattern goods.

³²It is worth noting that the condition does not consist in $\neg d_1$, but that $\neg d_1$ is only that which makes it the case that the condition is satisfied, where $C = \neg(d_1 \wedge d_2)$.

the reason is required.

Integrating all of these features of the context into the specification of the reason amounts to denying these fine-grained differences and, accordingly, obscures the logic of reasons. It obscures the internal structure of the situation, ignoring important differences amongst those things that make it the case that there is a reason. This is problematic since sources, conditions, and modifiers each have distinctive roles to play. They account for different features of the reason and for different aspects of the response that is required of us. In particular, they respectively determine (i) which object one is to respond to as well as how one is to respond to it, (ii) whether one is to respond to it, and (iii) to what extent one is to respond to it. One needs to give a fine-grained characterisation of the way in which considerations end up constituting reasons that identifies these different features and thereby allows us to adequately determine the precise way in which we are to respond to them.

Conditions and modifiers play a relatively limited role. On the one hand, conditions determine whether there is a reason, whether the object is to be valued. Given that conditions apply to the source, we are to value it iff the conditions are satisfied, i.e. iff the relevant enablers are present and disablers are absent. If enablers are absent and/or disablers are present, then it lacks value and fails to constitute a reason. Accordingly, it is not to be valued and no response is required of us. On the other hand, modifiers play a role in determining to what extent it is to be valued and how strong the reason is to which it gives rise, namely more than what would be required by the source alone in the case of intensifiers and less in the case of attenuators

The ground of the reason, by contrast, plays a more substantial role. In particular, it determines both the object of concern and the way in which one is to value it. First, the ground determines what is to be valued and for the sake of which one is to act, i.e. the object of concern corresponds to the object instantiating the properties that constitute the source of the reason. Second, the ground determines how we are to value and respond to it, namely finally iff the source is intrinsic and non-finally iff the source is extrinsic. It is precisely the fact that the source determines these features that explains why the reason is to be specified in terms of the ground.

Including conditions and modifiers in the specification of the reason leads to problems in each case, insofar as one will both respond to the wrong object and respond to it in the wrong way:

1. Integrating the context ensures that one misidentifies the bearer of value and thereby mischaracterises the object of concern. Since the source, rather than the necessitating base, determines the object of concern, one will end up directing one's attitudes towards the wrong object.

For instance, in the case of agent-relative reasons where facts about moral closeness play a role in modifying agent-neutral reasons, one would end up

having to respond to the relational complex consisting not only of what is intuitively the object, but also of the subject. This, however, would require one to misdirect one's concern, and moreover would have the problematic consequence that the object of an agent-neutral reason would be distinct from the object of the corresponding agent-relative reason. This problem can be avoided by holding that facts involving the subject, though playing a role in generating the agent-relative reason, are not part of the ground of this reason, and consequently do not determine the object of concern. On this account, agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons require different ways of relating to the same object of concern, rather than involving different objects. They differ in terms of how one is to respond, in particular how strong the claim is that they make on us, not in terms of the object to which one is to respond.

2. The distinction between final and non-final reasons is to be explained in terms of whether the source is intrinsic or extrinsic. This implies that reasons will be misclassified if one integrates the context into the specification of the reason. Since the source, rather than the necessitating base, determines how we are to respond to the object, one will end up responding in the wrong way.

In cases in which there are extrinsic conditions or modifiers, the complete specification strategy would imply that the specification of the reason would be extrinsic. This, in turn, would imply that one would have a non-final reason. In order to avoid this mistake, one needs to separate out the different parts of the necessitation base, so that one can distinguish the object's having an intrinsic ground from there being extrinsic conditions/modifiers and hence understand why the thing is to be valued finally but only in certain contexts. The fact that that which determines whether the thing has value is extrinsic in no way implies that that which determines how one is to value it is also extrinsic. The extrinsicness of the condition does not imply the extrinsicness of the ground.

These distinctions will be elided by the complete specification approach. On such an account, we will simply have whatever necessitates the reason, whatever makes it the case that it is a reason, and this necessitation base will be extrinsic.³³ Given that it is extrinsic, one then ends up with the mistaken result that the thing is to be valued non-finally (except if appealing to a misguided disalignment of these distinctions that pulls apart intrinsic

³³At any rate, it will be extrinsic to the object of concern. As we have seen, it is dubious whether the complete specification strategy can identify the correct object of concern. If the object is identified in terms of the necessitation base, then it might end up being intrinsic after all, but intrinsic to the wrong object. (Whether it will be intrinsic to the necessitation base depends on whether the base involves negative facts and as such requires absences.)

value and final value, which undermines the possibility of systematically accounting for how things are to be valued in terms of how things have value).

Conditionality and modification thus turn out to be compatible with intrinsicity. Whether values/reasons are intrinsic or extrinsic depends on whether their source is intrinsic or extrinsic, and not on the conditions and modifiers to which they are subject. Accordingly, even though a thing may be subject to extrinsic conditions or modifiers, as long as the ground is intrinsic the value/reason will be intrinsic.³⁴

6 Additivity

When assessing what one has most reason to do in a given context, one needs to weigh up the various pro tanto reasons that speak in favour of/against the various alternatives amongst which one is to choose. Once reasons can interact and vary across contexts due to there being conditions and modifiers, it becomes unclear whether one can simply add up the various pro tanto reasons to determine where the balance of reason lies, or whether more complicated non-additive functions have to be brought in. The worry then is that conditionality and modification might turn out to be incompatible with the additive theory of weighing reasons.

The overall or all-things-considered reason to ϕ is a function of the various pro tanto reasons that speak in favour of or against ϕ -ing.³⁵ In particular, where the balance of reasons lies is a function of the pro tanto reasons to bring about the various aspects of the state of affairs resulting from ϕ -ing. Every state can be carved up into various factors $X, Y, Z \dots$, having different features $x_1, x_2, x_3 \dots, y_1, y_2, y_3 \dots$, etc. (whereby these features need not be atomistic but can include holistic features). A state of affairs can then be understood as an element of the Cartesian product $X \times Y \times Z \times \dots$. The features of the different factors into which states are decomposed correspond to the different pro tanto reasons.

The weight of the reason to bring about the state is thus a function of the weights of the pro tanto reasons to bring about the various features of this state, i.e. $R(\phi) = f[R(x_\phi), R(y_\phi), R(z_\phi) \dots]$. According to the additive theory of weighing reasons, this function is an additive function, i.e. $R(\phi) = R(x_\phi) + R(y_\phi) + R(z_\phi) \dots$. The function will be additive if it is strongly separable (given that there are at least three factors, and given that certain continuity assumptions are satisfied).³⁶ A function is strongly separable if the different factors (both complex and

³⁴Cf. "Relativised intrinsicity" (Bader: manuscript).

³⁵The overall reason to ϕ is not to be understood as a further reason. Cf. "To talk of what there is overall reason to do (and note that 'reason' in this phrase is not a count noun) is to talk about where the contributory reasons come down – on this side or on that" (Dancy: 2004, p. 16).

³⁶In cases where the vector only has two locations the hexagon condition, which states that if $(x_1, y_2) = (x_2, y_1)$ and $(x_3, y_1) = (x_2, y_2) = (x_1, y_3)$ then $(x_2, y_3) = (x_3, y_2)$, is required for the function

simple) each make separable contributions that can be evaluated independently of the other factors.³⁷

SEPARABILITY Factor X is separable from factor Y iff $\forall x_1, x_2 \in X, \forall y_1, y_2 \in Y$

$$(x_1, y_1) \geq (x_2, y_1) \leftrightarrow (x_1, y_2) \geq (x_2, y_2)$$

Conditionality might be thought to generate problems for separability, and hence for the additive theory of weighing reasons. This is because the contribution of a factor that is conditionally reason-giving depends on whether or not the condition is satisfied. The contribution accordingly can vary and, as such, fails to be separable and independently evaluable.

Two different cases of conditionality need to be distinguished, depending on whether or not the condition shows up in a different factor, which determines whether conditionality implies interaction amongst factors.

1. FACTOR INTERACTION

The condition on the X-factor does show up in another factor if the condition consists in the Y-factor taking on one of $y_1 \dots y_i$ as its value, whereas the condition fails to be satisfied if it takes on $y_j \dots y_n$. In this type of case, the contribution of the X-factor will not be separable, since there will be variability depending on whether the Y-factor involves satisfaction or non-satisfaction of the condition. In other words, it becomes possible for $(x_1, y_1) > (x_2, y_1)$, even though $(x_1, y_2) = (x_2, y_2)$, which amounts to a failure of separability.

2. NO FACTOR INTERACTION

If the condition does not show up in a different factor, there will be variability as to how one and the same vector will be ordered. That is, in one context $(x_1, y_1) > (x_2, y_1)$, yet in another context in which the condition of the X-factor is not satisfied $(x_1, y_1) = (x_2, y_1)$. One and the same vector will be evaluated differently, depending on whether or not the condition is satisfied. The contribution of the X-factor in this way does not depend on the Y-factor, but on something that is extraneous to the vector.

The cases in which there is no factor interaction can be dealt with in a straightforward manner. One can refine the individuation by building facts about the condition into the factor. Instead of carving things up in terms of factor X, one can use factor X_C . The features of this factor are the same features as those of X but restricted to cases in which condition C is satisfied, i.e. $X_C = \{x : x \in X \wedge C\}$.

to be additive.

³⁷Whether a function is separable or not is dependent on how states are carved up. In order for separability (and hence additivity) to not be trivialised, it is necessary to impose constraints on which factorisations are admissible, cf. “Admissible factorisations and hyperintensional independence” (Bader: manuscript).

Since the condition is built into the factor, one cannot have one and the same vector being evaluated differently due to differences in terms of whether or not the condition is satisfied. The factorisation $X_C, Y, Z \dots$ will accordingly be strongly separable and hence additive.

Problems only arise if the condition shows up in some other factor Y . In that case, there will be interaction amongst the factors, which undermines (non-trivial) separability. Individuating the features in a way that makes reference to the condition, i.e. using the X_C -factor rather than the X -factor, implies a failure of logical independence, i.e. the factorisation will not satisfy the rectangular field assumption. This is because one cannot combine every feature of X_C with every feature of Y . In particular, X_C -features are not combinable with any Y -feature y_j where y_j implies that condition C is not satisfied. The interaction amongst the factors in this way ensures that there is only limited recombability, such that features of the X_C -factor will not be combinable with some features of the Y -factor.

As a result, there will not be any admissible factorisation with respect to which the ordering is separable. Either one employs an admissible factorisation that satisfies the logical independence condition, but then one ends up with a non-separable and hence non-additive function. Or one employs an inadmissible factorisation that violates the logical independence criterion, in which case one can have a function that is separable though only trivially so, where the extent of triviality is determined by the extent to which recombination is restricted.

Alternatively, instead of refining the X -factor, one can restrict the evaluation, by assessing separability with respect to subspaces of the Cartesian product, namely the maximal subspaces for which the rectangular field assumption holds. This gives us a notion of local separability, which can be entirely non-trivial since the factors will satisfy the logical independence criterion over the restriction. The more significant the restriction, i.e. the smaller the number of cases (= the smaller the subspaces) in which separability holds, the greater the trivialisation of the global separability claim. That is, the extent of trivialisation corresponds to the extent of the localisation that is required.

In particular, one can restrict the Y -factor either to those features that involve the condition on X being satisfied, or to those that involve the failure of the satisfaction of the condition. On the one hand, one can localise the separability claim to the subspace in which the condition is satisfied, i.e. if the condition consists in Y taking on one of $y_1 \dots y_i$ as its value, then there will be a separable function over $X \times Y_{/y_1 \dots y_i} \times Z \dots$. On the other hand, one can have a localisation to the subspace in which the condition fails to be satisfied, i.e. a separable function over $X \times Y_{/y_1 \dots y_i} \times Z \dots$ (which reduces to $Y_{/y_1 \dots y_i} \times Z \dots$, since the X -factor becomes an inessential factor in this subspace that makes no difference, given that the condition fails to be satisfied). This means that, in addition to a non-additive representation of the entire product space, there will be different

homomorphisms into additive structures for the various subspaces.

The resulting localised or restricted commitment to additivity allows one to treat some cases additively, namely those that involve comparisons of vectors that are members of the same subspace, whereas others involving different subspaces have to be treated non-additively. Conditionality and modification³⁸ are accordingly compatible with non-trivial restricted separability/additivity principles when there is factor interaction. In cases in which there is no factor interaction, they are even compatible with unrestricted principles. As such, they differ from other forms of holism (where the ground of the reason itself is holistic, cf. footnote 17), which do not allow for such restricted separability principles but either lead to failures of separability or to trivial separability claims based on inadmissible factorisations.

7 Conclusion

Thus, we have seen that 1. there is a robust distinction between sources, conditions and modifiers, that 2. one needs to carefully distinguish the different types of context-dependence as well as the different mechanisms by means of which they operate, that 3. attempts at integrating all features that form part of the necessitating base into the specification of the reason fail due to the fact that different features play different roles, in particular that not being sensitive to the relevant fine-grained differences can lead to the collapse as well as over-generation of reasons and moreover leads one to misidentify the object of concern as well as how one is to respond to it, and that 4. intrinsicality as well as restricted forms of non-trivial separability can be preserved, rendering the additive theory of weighing reasons compatible with conditionality and modification.³⁹

³⁸Modification can be treated in an analogous manner, though the requisite refinements will be much more extensive, given that one does not just have to distinguish those cases in which the condition is satisfied from those in which it fails to be satisfied, but instead needs to refine the individuation in terms of all the different types of modifiers.

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