Religious Studies (2023), **59**, 18–33
doi:10.1017/S0034412521000561

CrossMark

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Contractualism, exclusionary reasons and the moral argument for theism

Aaron Rizzieri

Department of Arts and Sciences, Coconino Community College, Flagstaff, AZ, 86001, USA
email: aaron.rizzieri@gmail.com

(Received 16 July 2021; revised 14 December 2021; accepted 15 December 2021;
first published online 18 February 2022)

Abstract

Moral reasons take precedence over non-moral reasons either by outweighing non-moral practical reasons, or by excluding such reasons. Several prominent defenders of the moral argument for theism have incorporated the outweighing thesis. They claim we have categorically binding moral duties only if we always have most reason to be ethical. Furthermore, we always have most reason to be ethical only if theism is true. On the contrary, I argue that the excluding reasons thesis is correct and that this undermines a key premise in moral arguments developed by C. Stephen Evans, C. Stephen Layman, and William Lane Craig.

Key words: contractualism; moral argument for theism; exclusionary reasons; moral duties; Scanlon

Introduction

When one's moral reasons conflict with one's non-moral practical reasons we tend to agree that it is one's moral reasons that determine what a person is justified in doing. How are we to understand this precedence-taking feature of moral reasons? How we answer this question has profound significance for how we explain the moral duties we have to one another and how we assess several variations of the moral argument for theism. According to one family of views, moral reasons are paramount because they either always or nearly always outweigh non-moral reasons. On a competing family of views, moral reasons are pre-eminent because they exclude (i.e. sideline) non-moral reasons for action. Several recent moral arguments for theism rely on this first suggestion that moral reasons outweigh non-moral reasons.

C. Stephen Evans and C. Stephen Layman have argued that we have categorical and binding moral obligations towards one another only if we have most reason to act in accord with such obligations. (Layman (2002), (2006) and (2009); Evans (2013)) Furthermore, they hold that we have most reason to do so only if theism is true and the consequences of our moral choices carry forward into the afterlife. William Lane Craig argues for the closely related thesis that we have most reason to care about performing our moral duties only under these same two conditions. (Craig and Kurtz (2009)). A closely related line of thinking among defenders of some versions of the moral argument is that divine commands are either the best explanation, or the only possible ground, of our moral duties (Adams (1987), ch. 10; *Idem* (1999), ch. 11; Craig and Kurtz (2009); Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong (2004), 19–20; Evans (2013)).

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

These two related lines of thinking are vulnerable to an as-of-yet neglected challenge. First, perhaps we can make better sense of the precedence-taking nature of moral norms by detailing how moral reasons exclude rather than outweigh non-moral reasons. Second, perhaps we can explain the exclusionary nature of moral norms within a viable secular account of moral duties. If these two tasks can be accomplished, then moral arguments that rely on the premises that one always has most reasons to be ethical, and that theism is the best (or only) explanation of this fact, fail. Similarly, arguments grounded in the claim that divine commands are either necessary for, or are the best ground of, moral duties will also either fail or be weakened.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I unpack our notion of moral necessity and establish the ubiquity of the claim that moral reasons are pre-eminent because they outweigh non-moral practical reasons within leading secular ethical theories.[1] I then proceed to lay out several moral arguments for theism that rely on this same outweighing reasons thesis. This is followed by a statement of the excluding reasons explanation of why moral reasons take precedence over non-moral reasons. Furthermore, I state a number of reasons to prefer the excluding reasons thesis over the overriding reasons thesis. I pursue these two tasks within a broadly contractualist account of why moral reasons exclude non-moral reasons (Scanlon (1998)). The upshot is that there is a plausible secular account of moral duties on the market, and hence moral arguments for theism that rely on moral duties as a desideratum to be explained are either greatly weakened or fail altogether. I conclude our discussion in the final section.

Our concept of moral necessity

We are trying to ascertain how to best account for the precedence-taking nature of moral reasons. The precedence-taking feature of morality can be expressed using a variety of concepts. Consider the thoughtful words of Philippa Foot:

> People talk, for instance, about the binding force of morality, but it is not clear what this means if not that we *feel* we are unable to escape . . . But morality is supposed to be inescapable in some special way and this may turn out to be merely the reflection of the way morality is taught. Of course, we must try other ways of expressing the fugitive thought. It may be said, for instance, that moral norms have a kind of necessity since they tell us what we 'must do' or 'have to do'. The sense of this is again, obscure. (Foot (1972), 310–311)

In this passage, Foot uses several terms to express the idea that moral considerations are paramount. She speaks of moral norms binding the agent, and of a moral necessity that informs us of what we must or have to do. Foot also hints at a plausible account of where our concept of the morally obligatory originates when she says that we *feel* we are unable to escape the grasp of moral responsibilities and judgements.

Indeed, an entire host of moral philosophers have argued that our concept of moral necessity, our sense that we simply must behave ethically, originates in feelings present in common moral experiences (Strawson (1962); Mackie (1977); Wallace (1994); Adams (1999); Darwall (2006); Prinz (2007)). Strawson in particular has provided us with a highly lauded articulation of the view that our notion of moral wrongness arises from the 'reactive attitudes'. When someone wrongs us we often feel indignant. When we wrong others we feel guilty. These powerful emotive responses are plausible sources of our notion that we and others simply must behave ethically.[2]

Yet, tracing the origin of a normative concept to a set of paradigmatic experiences, reactions, or impressions that enable us to form the concept in question is insufficient

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for justifying the assumptions about the concept and the uses to which it is put. We still need a theoretical account that explains why we *must* be ethical. A good way to think about this question is in terms of how we might fill the following blank:

We must behave ethically on pains of ___.

How we fill this blank will be adequate only if the resulting statement explains why moral norms and reasons have the authority they are assumed to have in our day-to-day moral practices.

Moral reasons are overriding: secular theories

Many ethical theorists hold that moral reasons are authoritative because they are either always or typically decisive because of their weight.[3] Richard Fumerton's major work in meta- and normative ethics is entitled, *Reason and Morality: A Defense of the Egocentric Perspective* (1990). The title is illuminating as Fumerton advocates a reduction of what one ought to do morally speaking to what one would be rational in doing from the perspective of an egoistic theory of rationality that places virtually no constraints on which ends of an agent have value for that agent in the reason generating sense. Hence, on Fumerton's view there is not a distinction in kind between moral reasons and practical reasons generally speaking. The ought of morality simply is the all-things-considered ought of practical reason. Such a view, if correct, would preserve the rational authority of morality. I suspect that whatever plausibility Fumerton's approach has is derived from this benefit. A cost of this approach, prohibitive in my view, is that there is no guarantee that the morally right thing for an individual to do will be at all responsive to the well-being and interests of other persons. Indeed, Fumerton refers to the other-regarding content platitudes, platitudes that the majority of moral thinkers going back to Plato have considered essential to moral norms, as mere 'conventional morality' (*ibid.*, 234–240).

Sharon Street argues for a view of practical and moral reasons which entails that the morally right thing to do simply is a function of what one has most reason to do, and what one has most reason to do is a function of the normative judgements one would make if one were to reason in accord with some internal coherence considerations on one's normative judgements (Street (2008), 223–224). Street, like Fumerton, does not hold that moral concepts are necessarily delimited by even minimal other-regarding requirements. Michael Smith is similar to Street in that he grounds the practical reasons one has in the actions and plans one would endorse in an idealized set of reflections on various mental states with which one begins. Whereas Street emphasizes the need to reflect on one's normative judgements, Smith emphasizes rational reflections on one's 'subjective motivational set' as defined by Bernard Williams.

For Williams, 'dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects . . . embodying commitments of the agent' make up one's 'subjective motivational set' (Williams (1981), 105). Smith makes a couple of adjustments to the details of what goes into a proper reflection on this set; yet, Smith's and William's conception of what grounds our practical reasons is largely the same (Smith (1991), 184) Unlike Fumerton and Street, and consistent with Williams, Smith accepts that other-regarding content platitudes such as 'right acts are often concerned to promote or sustain or contribute to human flourishing' and 'right acts are in some way expressive of equal concern and respect' are substance platitudes that partially define the ethical sphere (*ibid.*, 184). Yet, unlike Williams, Smith is optimistic that obeying these content platitudes is what is rational for most persons to do where 'rationality' is defined as described above. Hence, Smith thinks the reasons for action on which rational persons will converge have sufficiently other-regarding content (*ibid.*, 164–174). In summary, Smith is optimistic that at least most of us have an obligation to act in accord with these other-regarding

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

platitudes because he is optimistic that this is what we have most reason to do as determined by what we would desire under the set of conditions he marks out.[4]

Neo-Kantians such as Christine Korsgaard have attempted to ground reasons to follow other-regarding moral norms in the very fabric of rationality by insisting that moral norms are constitutive of our rationality and hence by violating these norms we are undermining our own rational agency (Korsgaard (1996), ch. 3). In addition, Philippa Foot has developed an account of moral norms that she considered to be revisionary in nature precisely because she did not think that everyone always has most reason, or indeed even some reason, to be ethical (Foot (1972)). On Foot's revised account, morality is merely a system of hypothetical imperatives as whether or not one possesses moral reasons for action depends on what one's interests are. That she viewed her own account as revisionary suggests that she thought we have a pre-theoretical, but non-essential, commitment to the view that moral norms are categorically reason giving. Finally, the error theorist Richard Joyce is an error theorist precisely because he does not think that we can make sense of the idea that other-regarding moral norms are categorically reason giving, even though he holds (*contra* Foot) that this is an essential commitment of our common moral perspective that cannot be abandoned without abandoning moral thinking itself (Joyce (1998)).

This survey of views is designed to show the multiplicity of ways in which secular moral philosophers have attempted to explain the precedence-taking nature of moral reasons by offering a theory of why one always, or at least typically, has most reason to be ethical. The ubiquity of these attempts lends theistic attempts to ground moral arguments for theism in the same desideratum some initial legitimacy. Let us now document some of these moral arguments before defending an alternative way of accounting for the preeminence of moral reasons.

Duties, the outweighing thesis, and some moral arguments for theism

In this section I document that several moral arguments for theism rely on the following pair of claims:

most reason: (a) everyone has most reason to be ethical and (b) theism is the best or only explanation for this.

moral duties: there is no secular account of why we have moral responsibilities towards one another that is as plausible as a divine command theory or other theistic account.

Two out of the three theistic accounts I discuss in the remainder of this section hold that it is the commands of a loving and just deity that generate valid moral obligations.[5] William Lane Craig and C. Stephen Evans reject a divine command account of moral goodness, and embed their divine command theory of obligation in either a natural law conception of such goodness (Evans), or in a quasi-Platonistic account of goodness in which God's character replaces the Form of the Good as the paradigm for moral goodness (Craig, following Adams). Layman does not offer the details of whatever underlying theory of the good he is presupposing, but he does not offer a divine command theory of such goods. This sort of embedding is designed to answer the infamous *Euthyphro* dilemma and prevent a *reductio* of divine command theory based on the possibility of evil divine commands.[6]

William Lane Craig

The first theistic philosopher we will look at is William Lane Craig. Craig is committed to *most reason* and *moral duties*. In a debate with secular humanist Paul Kurtz on whether

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

theism or secularism provides a better foundation for morality, Craig provides a clear statement of *most reason* in the context of arguing that a theist who accepts an afterlife apportioning of rewards and punishments can give an account of why we are accountable to behave ethically towards one another, but a secularist cannot.

Here is the former claim:

> Third, if theism is true, we have a sound basis for moral accountability. On the theistic view, God holds all persons morally accountable for their actions. Evil and wrong will be punished; righteousness will be vindicated. Despite the inequities of this life, in the end the scales of God's justice will be balanced. We can even undertake acts of extreme self-sacrifice that run contrary to our self-interest, knowing that such acts are not empty and ultimately meaningless gestures. Thus the moral choices we make are infused with significance. ((Craig and Kurtz (2009), 31)

Here is the latter claim regarding secularism and moral accountability:

> Even if there were objective moral values and duties under atheism, they seem to be irrelevant because there's no moral accountability . . . if life ends at the grave, it makes no difference whether one lives as Stalin or as a saint . . . Acts of self-sacrifice are particularly inept on an atheistic worldview . . . On an atheistic view this is just stupid. We should resist the sociobiological pressures to such self-destructive activity and choose instead to act in our own self-interest. (*ibid.*, 33)

In these passages, Craig does not explicitly distinguish between moral reasons to behave ethically and self-interested reasons to be ethical. This is not to say that Craig wouldn't accept such a distinction, but his phrasing here suggests that we can understand the claim that one has most reason to be ethical (the (a) clause in *most reason*) as the claim that one's total practical reasons, both merely self-interested and moral, always favour being ethical. Craig is arguing that the (a) clause of *most reason* comes out true on theism, but not on atheism.[7]

In this debate, Craig is arguing for theism over secularism on the basis of the idea that theism does a better job explaining various features of morality. One of his arguments is that any adequate account of morality must entail the (a) clause of *most reason* in order to yield a satisfactory account of moral accountability.[8] Hence, Craig is indeed committed to *most reason* as he posits theism as the best explanation of why we have most reason to be ethical. Craig also makes it clear that he thinks we must posit divine commands in order to account for the objectivity and authoritative nature of moral duties thus supporting *moral duties* (*ibid.*, 30).

C. Stephen Evans

Another prominent theistic philosopher who argues in favour of *moral duties*, at least partially on the basis of *most reasons,* is C. Stephen Evans. Evans (2013) retains the following as a necessary condition for being obligated as his thoughtful monograph proceeds:

> To be morally obligated to perform an action is to have a powerful reason to perform that action, a reason many would describe as a decisive or overriding one. (*ibid.*, 9)

A little later on Evans describes why we would have overriding reasons to fulfil our obligations if theism is true:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Second, we can understand why moral reasons are overriding in character. If God has created humans such that their final goal is to enjoy a relationship with himself, then establishing and maintaining such a relationship is supremely important to humans. If moral obligations are constitutive of this relation . . . then those obligations take on an overriding importance if they make possible a relationship that has overriding importance. (*ibid*., 31)

In a similar vein of thought, Evans argues that a natural law theory of the good and right favoured by theists such as Mark C. Murphy would benefit from being augmented by a divine command theory of moral obligation because natural law accounts of the morally right can only succeed in grounding good reasons for one to engage in altruistic behaviour, but they cannot succeed in rendering such behaviour obligatory, especially to strangers (*ibid*., 68–74).[9]

This is because there would not be overriding reasons for everyone to engage in such altruism. But, argues Evans, if the natural law theorist were to add a divine command theory of obligation on top of her natural law account of practical reasons that stem from what is good for human flourishing, such a theorist would have a mechanism for explaining why everyone has overriding reasons to behave altruistically, even to strangers:

> It is not that on Murphy's view a person cannot have good reasons for acting altruistically; it is that it is hard to see why such a person could be obligated to do so.
>
> If, however, we add to the natural law ethic an account of moral obligations as generated by God's commands, things are entirely different. If God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and tells us that all human persons must be considered our neighbors, then we have powerful and overriding reasons to consider the good of others when acting. Nor will such a concern for others destroy or alienate us from a proper concern for our well-being, since obedience to God is linked tightly to that well-being.' (*ibid*., 73)

Notice Evans's emphasis on the overriding reasons one would have to care about others if God commanded that we do so. Evans is not suggesting we would still have a duty to consider the good of others apart from God commanding that we do so, but would simply lack reasons to care about fulfilling our duty. Rather, Evans's wording suggests that he thinks that in the absence of having most reason to φ we would lack a duty to φ.

Evans (*ibid*., ch. 5) then goes on to level criticisms of secular accounts of our moral duties. His criticisms of Simon Blackburn's quasi-realist expressivism, Gilbert Harman's culturally relative accounts of moral norms grounded in self-interest, and Ronald Milo's idealized social contract approach that has a lot in common with John Rawls's celebrated *A Theory of Justice* revolve around the idea that each proposed account of our moral duties robs moral norms of their ability to give everyone sufficient reason to be dutiful towards others.

C. Stephen Layman

I have saved the most explicit formulation of a moral argument that relies on *most reason* for last. C. Stephen Layman has defended the following argument:

(1) In every actual case, one has most reason to do what morality requires.
(2) If there is no God and no life after death, then there are cases in which morality requires that one make a great sacrifice that confers relatively modest benefits (or prevents relatively modest harms).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(3) If in a given circumstance one must make a great sacrifice in order to do what is morally required, but the sacrifice confers relatively modest benefits, then one does not have most reason to do what is morally required.
(4) If there is no God and no life after death, then in some cases one does not have most reason to do what is morally required.
(5) 'There is no God and no life after death' is false, i.e. either God exists or there is life after death. (Layman (2002), 309)

The conjunction of (1) and (4) is a statement of *most reason*. Whereas Layman is clearly committed to *most reason*, it is not crystal clear that he is committed to *moral duties.* Unlike Evans, Joyce, and Foot, Layman does not explicitly claim that if one lacks strong reasons to be ethical, then one does not have a duty to be ethical. Rather, he argues that one will lack most reason to perform her duty. Yet, Layman thinks we have a pre-theoretical intuition that ethical behaviour always has the authority of practical reason (*ibid.*, 306). Therefore, I think he is committed to *moral duties* as well. This is because he is conceptualizing moral authority primarily in terms of what has reason to do and he clearly thinks that a naturalist cannot defend a sufficiently robust account of our reasons to be ethical.[10]

Layman defends (3) by describing a plausible scenario that involves a woman stealing money that nobody will miss that much in order to greatly improve the quality of her very difficult life (*ibid.*, 307 and Layman (2009), 61). The envisioned scenario takes place on the assumption that neither God nor the afterlife is real. (4) follows from (2) and (3) by hypothetical syllogism. The conclusion follows from (1) and (4) by *modus tollens*. Layman then notes that even though the conclusion is a disjunct which asserts that 'either God exists or the afterlife is real', the secularist cannot rationally believe that an afterlife in which behaving ethically matters is plausible apart from theism. Hence, the argument provides evidential support for theism.

Robert Adam's rejection of *most reasons*

It is worth noting before we pass on to our final section, in which I develop a contractualist account of moral duties, that one of the most revered theistic architects of a moral system has expressed disagreement with the claim that it is intuitively appealing to think that everyone has overriding reasons to be ethical. Consider Robert Adams's discussion of Henry Sidgwick's argument that various religious hypotheses are lent some degree of plausibility by their ability to reconcile the demands of morality and self-interest, which is the same tension that Layman is seeking to reconcile:[11]

> I think it is plausible, however, to suppose that if we are to have such a harmony of self-interest with duty, we must have recourse to the supernatural and presumably to an enormously powerful and knowledgeable virtuous agent. *I doubt that this line of argument can provide a really strong support for any sort of theism*. For, on the basis of intuitive appeal, the premise that moral judgements have a force that implies that virtually everyone has reason to follow them will not bear nearly as much weight as the conviction that some acts are morally right and others wrong . . . (Adams (1987), 158, emphasis mine)

I agree with Adams that 'we always have most reason to be ethical' and the very similar 'the reasons we have to behave ethically are never outweighed by reasons to do what is in one's self-interest' are not highly plausible. Yet, examination of our moral practices only

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reveals a need to explain why moral reasons take precedence over non-moral reasons when it comes to justifying one's behaviour to others because they are the only type of reason that is relevant to that task. This is the true ground of whatever intuition we have that moral considerations are paramount.

A contractualist account of moral duties and excluding reasons

Let us approach our final topic by highlighting a social feature that is built into our concept of a moral duty that both divine command theorists and contractualists agree lies at the heart of our notion of a moral duty. Theistic philosophers Robert Adams and Nicholas Wolterstorff, and contractualists R. Jay Wallace, T. M. Scanlon, and Stephen Darwall have all taken the time to comment on an important insight into moral duty stated by J. S. Mill. (Scanlon (1998), 152; Adams (1999), 32; Darwall (2006), 27; Wolterstorff (2008), 375; Wallace (2019), 41) Here is the relevant quotation from Mill:

> We do not call anything wrong, unless we mean to imply that a person ought to be punished in some way or other for doing it – if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow creatures, if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience . . . It is part of the very notion of duty in every one of its forms that a person may rightfully be compelled to fulfill it . . . There are other things . . . which we wish that people should do, which we like or admire them for doing, perhaps dislike or despise them for not doing, but yet admit they are not bound to do; it is not a case of moral obligation; we do not blame them, that is, we do not think they are proper objects of punishment.[12] (Mill (1861), 48–49)

Robert Adams, in expressing agreement with Mill, insists that Mill is making a semantic point about the very concept of duty (*ibid*., 32–33). Duties are not only essentially to others; they involve a more specific feature. If one fails in one's duties to others then one is appropriately criticized, blamed, punished, or otherwise opposed for having done wrong.[13]

It is especially fascinating that Mill, the archetypal utilitarian, is making this point about the nature of duty. One would expect those who defend a maximizing theory of right action (i.e. one is obligated to maximize good consequences) to explain why one has a duty to perform right actions by referencing the reasons one has to maximize the good and explain the wrongness of an action in relation to the irrationality of being unresponsive to such reasons. Yet, Mill does not do this. At least, he did not merely do this. The key feature of the actions we are duty bound to perform that is built into the very semantics of 'duty' is that we owe it to others to perform these actions on pains of their justifiable opposition.[14] A closely related thought that has been embraced by contractualists and divine command theorists alike is that one needs to be capable of recognizing the fact that others would be justified in punishing one for φ-ing in order to be morally responsible for φ-ing.

The contractualist Stephen Darwall (2006, ch. 2) even develops this related thought by commenting on the divine command theorist Samuel Pufendorf.[15] Divine command theorists have a need to distinguish between the mere coercions of a divine tyrant and genuine moral commands that one is able to recognize one has a duty to obey. Darwall and Christine Korsgaard before him recognized that Pufendorf, a seventeenth-century German philosopher and political scientist, gave an early and clearly articulated expression of this concern (Korsgaard (1996), 21–27). Pufendorf suggested that a divine command could be a mere compulsion enforced by threat of sanction. Such compulsions are manipulative and hence do not warrant the honorific title 'moral obligation'. What is needed, according to Pufendorf, is

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ratification of that which is commanded as reasonable on the part of the addressee of the command. This is what Darwall has labelled 'Pufendorf's point' and he expresses it as follows:

> According to Pufendorf, moral obligation's connection to responsibility is explained by the fact that the moral law derives from God's commands. Moral commands are ultimately owed to God. But, Pufendorf also thought that obligations can arise in this way only if God addresses us as rational agents and if we and he understand this address in a certain way. Pufendorf's point was that genuine obligations can result only from an address that presupposed an addressee's second-personal competence. To intelligibly hold someone responsible, we must assume that she can hold herself responsible in her own reasoning and thought . . . For God to be able to obligate us by his command . . . God (and we) must assume that we can be moved not simply by a fear of sanctions . . . but by 'acknowledging of ourselves that the evil, which has been pointed out to him who deviates from an announced rule, falls upon him justly.'
>
> (Darwall (2006), 23)

Darwall's unpacking of Pufendorf is insightful. First, he highlights the same distinction in Pufendorf that Korsgaard highlighted, namely, the need to distinguish between mere compulsion and legitimate moral obligation. Second, Darwall connects a condition under which a moral obligation to follow a command is in place with one of the conditions under which a moral agent can reasonably be held accountable. More specifically, the agent must have the ability to understand the rationale and justification behind what she can reasonably be punished for.

According to Korsgaard, Pufendorf not only accepted that one needs to understand the legitimacy of being punished for failing to comply with legitimate moral commands, Pufendorf also recognized what the rationale behind being duty-bound to perform an action is:

> Pufendorf and Hobbes thought that the content of morality is given by reason independently of the legislative will . . . No legislator is needed to give content, at least in a general way, to the ideas of the good and the right. What is good is what is naturally beneficial to people; *what is right and just is what makes harmonious social life possible*. (Korsgaard (1996), 23, emphasis mine)

The right, in Pufendorf's thought, concerned a specific type of good: the good of harmonious social life.

The idea that right actions are those that facilitate conditions under which persons can live in harmony is also the basis of contractualist accounts of right action. A question that naturally arises in this context is, can moral duties towards other human beings be exhaustively explained in terms of accountability relations that we sustain directly with each other? After all, Mill's and Pufendorf's insight that a failure to fulfil one's duty to φ entails that the proprietary of being punished for this failure could apply to humans who justifiably carry out such a punishment.[16] In order to find out the answer, let's now take a look at T. M. Scanlon's account of a morally wrong action.

T. M. Scanlon's account of a wrong action

Let us begin by stating Scanlon's definition of a wrong action. We will then detail how this definition of wrongness enables us to explain how moral accountability arises from our mutual awareness of the sorts of actions that people can justifiably criticize, punish, or

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

otherwise oppose. Here is one of Scanlon's formulations and accompanying explanatory comments:

> When I ask myself what reason the fact that an action would be wrong provides me with not to do it, my answer is that such an action would be one that I could not justify to others on grounds I could expect them to accept. This leads me to describe the subject matter of judgments of right and wrong by saying that they are judgments about what would be permitted by principles that could not be reasonably rejected, by people who were moved to find principles for the general regulation of behavior that others, similarly motivated could not reasonably reject. In particular, an act is wrong if and only if any principle that permitted it would be one that could be reasonably rejected by people with the motivation just described . . . (Scanlon (1998), 4, emphasis mine)

Scanlon, like Pufendorf, thinks that morally right actions are defined socially. This is why moral wrongness is effectively characterized from the perspective of those who are motivated to live together on mutually acceptable terms. Scanlon's suggestion that a morally wrong action is one that a person interested in living with others on mutually acceptable grounds could reasonably reject resonates with Mill's and Pufendorf's insight that wrong actions are actions that others can justifiably punish; as Mill's quote makes clear, 'punishment' should be understood broadly as including even mere justifiable criticisms. But, we need to be more specific here. We must fill in some details regarding what constitutes a reasonable rejection of another's behaviour.

It is here that I would like to develop a version of Scanlon's contractualism by making a suggestion regarding how one's action can be reasonably rejected by others who wish to live with one on mutually acceptable terms.[17] Unlike utilitarian reasoning, my characterization of how one comes to reasonably reject another's actions takes sufficient account of the 'separateness of persons'. Consider the following quote from Derek Parfit, who is commenting on Henry Sidgwick regarding the importance of the separateness of persons:

> Given the unity of each person's life, we each have strong reasons, Sidgwick claims, to care about our own well-being, in our life as a whole. And given the depth of the distinction between different people, it is rationally significant that one person's loss of happiness cannot be compensated for by gains to the happiness of others. Sidgwick here appeals to the separateness of persons, which has been claimed to be 'the fundamental fact for ethics'. (Parfit (2011), 133)

Due to the separateness of persons, each of us has limited experiential access to the good of others' happiness and limited experiential access to the evil of others' pain. This is why Parfit states that one's own pain can't be compensated for by another's happiness. This fact about the intimate connection we bear to reasons grounded in our concern for our own well-being and the well-being of those we care about, but not to strangers, is (in my view) what underlies our sense that maximizing theories such as act-utilitarianism demand too much of us in terms of sacrifice for the common good.

The quotes above from Craig, Evans, and Layman show that they too understand and agree that one has especially good reasons to be concerned about one's own welfare as they all push the line of thinking that theism makes sense of the overriding force of morality by making altruism within one's self-interest in the long run. If one has especially good reasons to care about one's own welfare based on the intimate acquaintance we maintain with ourselves, and if one recognizes that others have especially good reason to care about their own welfare, then one could reason as follows in order to discern

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in broad outline what we can reasonably expect of each other. Let us call the following extended argument *accountability*:

(P1) Having my basic needs met and having the opportunity to pursue my broader set of interests is *good for me.*
(P2) If having my basic needs met and having the opportunity to pursue my broader set of interests is *good for me*, then I have reasons to act that are based on these goods.
(P3) If I have reasons to act that are based on these goods, then I have reasons to attain basic necessities, pursue my broader set of interests, and oppose those who keep me from doing so.
(P4) Having your basic needs met and having the opportunity to pursue your broader set of interests is *good for you.*
(P5) If having your basic needs met and having the opportunity to pursue your broader set of interests is *good for you*, then you have reasons (of similar kind and strength) to act that are based on these goods.
(P6) If you have reasons to act that are based on these goods, then you have reasons to attain basic necessities, pursue your broader set of interests, and oppose those who keep you from doing so.
(C_1) We both have reasons (of similar kind and strength) to attain our basic needs, pursue our broader set of interests, and oppose those who keep us from doing so.
(P7) If we both have reasons (of similar kind and strength) to attain our basic needs, pursue our broader set of interests, and oppose those who keep us from doing so, then we have reason to acknowledge that each of us is justified in not letting the other get away with disproportionately favouring one's own interests over the other's.
(C_2) We have reason to acknowledge that each of us is justified in not letting the other get away with disproportionately favouring one's own interests over the other's.[18]

The reasoning exhibited in *accountability* relies only on one's ability to recognize that everyone has reason to meet their own basic needs and pursue their own interests.[19] The key to *accountability* is that everyone has reasons of similar kind and strength to do this. Therefore, it is easy to see that other persons have reasons to resist one when one acts as if one has especially good reasons to fulfil one's own needs and interests to the neglect of others' reasons to fulfil theirs.[20] This captures the Pufendorf/Mill point that a wrong action is one that others can justifiably punish. Similarly, *accountability* adds some precision to Scanlon's idea that wrong actions are those that others concerned to live on mutually acceptable terms can reasonably reject by specifying the nature of the reasons that underlie reasonable rejection. Such reasons are grounded in one's well-being and interests.[21]

Finally, Scanlon's contractualist approach explains why moral reasons exclude nonmoral reasons. If an action is morally wrong because others can reasonably reject it, then it is part of the very function of a moral reason to enable one to justify one's actions to other people.[22] The second-personal contexts in which moral exchanges take place render the offering of certain types of reasons, such as merely egoistic or self-serving reasons, out of place.[23] Richard Joyce, who ironically enough does not hold to the excluding reasons thesis, has captured this feature of our moral judgements well with the following example regarding how we judge criminals:

> When we morally condemn a criminal we do not first ascertain the state of his desires. Were we to discover that his desires were well-served by his crimes . . . we do not respond, 'O' well, I suppose you ought to have done it after all.' (Joyce (1998), 42–43)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This example from Joyce captures the fact that merely egoistic reasons cannot serve as moral reasons (at least not typically) precisely because they cannot be used to justify our actions to other persons who either are the victims of one's actions or represent them.[24]

Summing up our case

I started this article by stating that there are two ways to explain the precedence-taking nature of moral reasons. First, such reasons might outweigh non-moral reasons. Second, they may simply exclude non-moral reasons. On a broadly contractualist view, non-moral reasons are excluded because they do not function as reasons that justify our actions to others on grounds that are mutually acceptable to all affected persons. The plausibility of Scanlon's account of moral wrongness, the example from Joyce just alluded to, the Pufendorf/Mill insight into the very nature of moral wrongness as involving justifiable punishment from others, and our general moral practices strongly favour the view that moral reasons take precedence by excluding non-moral reasons.

Scanlon's contractualism and the Mill/Pufendorf insight both highlight the role of reasons that other people have, not the reasons the actor performing an immoral action has, when it comes to discerning moral wrongness and the abdication of duty. That important divine command theorists such as Adams, Evans and Wolterstorff recognize this is illustrated by their interactions with Mill's insight.[25] Joyce's example illustrates this same point that whether or not one has a lot to gain from an action that negatively affects others is rarely relevant (but see n. 21) to whether or not one has wronged another person.

Similarly, whether or not one gains an immense reward in the form of a rich afterlife with God, is not relevant to whether or not an action is morally right or wrong. It follows from this fact that it is simply a red herring to argue that theism is a necessary (or best) ground for moral duties because theism entails that there is most reason to be ethical.[26] Contractualist accounts of moral wrongness properly place the locus of a morally wrong actions. Actions are wrong primarily because of the effects on the victims and not because of the effects on the perpetrator. This is why the making of restitution, apologizing, and asking for forgiveness are an essential part of making moral repair.[27]

Conclusion

Theism is not necessary to explain why moral reasons take precedence over non-moral reasons. Contractualist accounts of moral wrongness are sufficient to ground the broad outlines of the duties we have towards one another by providing an explanation of why moral reasons exclude non-moral reasons as opposed to outweighing them. I have been assuming that the only plausible ground one could have for affirming that 'one always has most reason to be ethical' is as an explanation of the fact that moral reasons take precedence over non-moral reasons. Our survey of a wide variety of secular ethical theorists and divine command theories provides evidence that grounding this pre-eminence is the purported function that having most reasons is supposed to explain. Furthermore, Philippa Foot (ethical revisionist) and Richard Joyce (error theorist) explicitly state that the impossibility of explaining just how it is that everyone has most reason to be ethical entails that we should banish categorically binding moral duties from our moral ontology.

If we do not need to appeal to the most reasons thesis in order to account for the manner in which we are bound by moral duties, then we have no grounds for affirming the most reasons thesis. We certainly do not have strong experiential grounds for thinking

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that everyone's total set of practical reasons favours behaving in a sufficiently ethical manner. Selfish persons in positions of power often fail to have sufficient reasons to treat other people fairly. Yet, what they are doing is still wrong because the victims of their actions have strong reasons to oppose them. Hence, the moral practice of opposing selfish persons who are performing harmful and unjust acts receives a solid grounding and explanation in a contractualist account of our moral duties. Since whether or not others who are concerned to live with each other on mutually acceptable grounds can reasonably reject one's actions is not a function of one's own interests, morality retains its non-hypothetical character.

Furthermore, since we all are motivated to protect our interests, we all have a reason to enforce moral norms on others if and when we can. Of course, people often cannot resist oppressors more powerful than themselves. But, because 'the good people always win' is not a known or even probable fact in need of explanation, the theist cannot use this claim in an argument for theism. Now, there is a whole other story to be told about the goods that can be accessed and instantiated by becoming ethical oneself; the life of virtue has plenty of its own rewards. Yet, the biggest puzzles concerning our moral duties revolve around how to explain duties that even evil persons have. Even an evil person *must* be ethical on pains of being justifiably punished or even killed by others.

Notes

1. I discuss the ubiquity of this assumption in secular accounts of morality in order to show that the error the theist makes when insisting that moral duties entail having most reason to behave ethically is a very natural one to make. This is not an *ad hoc* assumption that theists make to support their view.
2. The philosophers just cited are also in broad agreement with Strawson that these reactive attitudes are primarily geared towards detecting and sanctioning negative actions (Prinz (2007)). Examples of such attitudes/emotions include indignation, resentment, guilt, and blame (Strawson (1962); Darwall (2006)). Robert Adam's penetrating discussion of moral horror is also worth mentioning in this context (Adams (1999), ch. 4).
3. For a thorough and satisfying overview of many of these approaches see Brink (1992). R. Jay Wallace refers to the attempt to show that moral reasons outweigh non-moral reasons as the dominance thesis. Following Brink, I am treating Korsgaard's approach below as a dominance approach, but Wallace classifies her approach differently (Wallace (2019), 32–34).
4. Williams was not confident that this is the case but does not see the need to identify irrationality as the specific problem of the immoralist (Williams (1981), 110). Of course, one may be sceptical of the convergence Smith envisions given the enormous diversity of motivations people have and the merely epistemic and procedural elements that are involved in rationally deliberating upon those motivations. As Christian Miller (2013) has detailed in his meta-analysis of the empirical literature on character, people tend to possess compartmentalized pockets of virtuous and vicious motivations that are hard to alter.
5. Robert Adams, who is perhaps the most influential contemporary divine command theorist, also holds this view (Adams (1987), ch. 7; *Idem* (1999), ch. 1). Layman is not a divine command theorist regarding moral duties. His views are unpacked below.
6. For a revised *Euthyphro* dilemma designed to show that God's character is not the ground of moral values even if God is morally good, see Morriston (2012, 21–23). The basic idea is that a loving and just God would be morally good because such a God is loving and just. It is not the case that being loving and just would be good because God is loving and just. Morriston is criticizing Craig's view that the very existence of moral values depends upon their existence as paradigms of goodness in God's nature. It is worth noting that Craig gets his theory largely from Adams (1999), yet Adams denies that a morally good God must exist in order for moral values to exist (*ibid.*, 47).
7. It is easy to see the advantages a theist has over secular moral philosophers who try to ground one's duty to φ in having most reason to φ. Situations in which one's egoistic reasons to behave selfishly outweigh one's moral reasons to take others into account are ubiquitous on the assumption that one's relationship with God and a plethora of afterlife goods are not at stake. As noted earlier in this section, Fumerton and Street gave up the other-regarding content of morality as essential in order to argue one has most reason to be ethical and Smith is being naively optimistic when he asserts that if people were fully rational they would desire to act in sufficiently altruistic ways given what people's actual motivations are like.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

8. Craig distinguishes between the claim that we have objective moral duties if theism is true but not if naturalism is true, and the claim that we are accountable to follow through on these duties if theism is true but not if naturalism is true, because theism when conjoined with an afterlife judgement hypothesis entails that becoming virtuous and behaving ethically is necessarily in one's self-interest. See his contributions to Craig and Kurtz (2009), ch. 1. Wielenberg (2014, 59) has criticized Craig for his use of the proposition 'morality and self-interest never diverge in the long run' on the grounds that it cannot serve as a datum that needs to be explained by any adequate moral theory precisely because we have no good reason to think this is true. I agree with this contention and below I indicate that Robert Adams does as well.

In contrast to Craig, C. Stephen Layman argues that we have categorically binding moral duties because we have most reason to treat each other decently. Hence, on Layman's outlook, such duties couldn't exist if we didn't have most reason to obey them. Layman's approach is more in tune with how a variety of theorists, secular and theistic, have viewed the connection between reasons and duties. We will discuss Layman's views in more detail later on.

9. A host of philosophers have argued that we need to be able to close an important gap between the reasons good states of affairs provide us with to instantiate them and the duties we have to others to sufficiently respect their interests. Theists such as Wolterstorff (2008, ch. 7) have criticized ancient *eudaimonists* for being unable to close the gap. Adams (1999, chs 10 and 11) accentuates his Platonically tinged theistic account of the good with a divine command theory in part to close this gap. In addition, the broadly contractualist authors, to whom we will return our focus later, highlight the need to ground duties to others in direct obligations towards them. See especially Darwall (2013a), ch. 2.

10. Layman (2007, 233–235) makes it clear that he is not a divine command theorist. On Layman's view, we need to fulfil our moral obligations to others on pains of becoming vicious and alienated from God. It is the naturally resulting bad consequence of becoming vicious, and the naturally resulting good consequences stem from knowing God that undergirds the additional reasons a theist has to fulfil her duties.

11. Lengthy discussions of Sidgwick's argument are contained in Parfit (2011, ch. 6) and Bagget and Walls (2019, ch. 4) Sidgwick held to a duality of reasons within practical reason that were more or less incommensurable and depended on the perspective one was adopting (Frankena, 1974). Parfit criticizes this incommensurability thesis but thought that Sidgwick had latched onto one of the deepest problems in all of moral philosophy. Bagget and Walls express agreement with Sidgwick's suggestion that the ability to harmonize egoistic and moral reasoning is a theoretical advantage for any system of thought that can pull it off.

12. I have quoted the exact same portion of Mill that Adams (1999, 32) quotes.

13. Evans (2013, 27) makes the same point about duties, but he doesn't quote Mill.

14. Of course, Mill also thought that when one reflected on which actions others were justified in opposing, one would discover that it is the actions that failed to maximize (expected?) utility. This raises a puzzle regarding what Mill thought truly made an action wrong. Is an action wrong because it fails to maximize expected utility, or is it wrong because others are justified in opposing us and even punishing us for doing it? Wolterstorff (2008), 375) notes this puzzle (or one like it) for the Mill scholar. If the former is the case, then we need an explanation why others' indignation or resentment always appropriately latches on to one for failing to maximize the good. If the latter is the case, we need some sort of claim about how a duty to maximize the good originates in what people are justified in resenting or having other reactive attitudes towards. See Strawson (1962).

15. I am referring to Darwall (2006, ch. 12) as a contractualist because he dedicates a chapter of his flagship book to showing how his view of morality as a set of second-personal accountability relations dovetails rather nicely with a contractualist account of moral wrongness.

16. Darwall (2013b, ch. 9) highlights just this tension in Pufendorf's thought. God can claim legitimate authority because God is a sociable being with moral powers whose commands are in line with what is reasonable for the addressee to ratify as a reasonable demand. Why can't others have such authority, especially over how we treat them, as well?

17. Scanlon's own accounts of moral/practical reasons and how these are related to what is of value are insightful, influential, and important (Scanlon (1998), chs 1–4; *Idem* (2013)). They are also the cause for much debate and consternation (e.g. McPherson, 2011). Therefore, I will offer my own picture of how one arrives at the conclusion that another's actions are one's that one can reasonably reject. My own picture is compatible with a broadly Humean account of practical reasons as defended by Schroeder (2007) and Williams (1981), or an account of practical reasons grounded in one's concerns for one's well-being.

18. One might ask what the import of 'justified' is in (C_2). Indeed, an especially helpful anonymous reviewer has asked. The sort of justification involved is moral justification. That justification is grounded in one's awareness of the comparable practical reasons each of us has to protect one's own interests and the interests of those about whom one cares.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

19. Of course, meeting one's basic needs is a type of interest. But, needs are worth highlighting due to the weightiness of the reasons they generate in comparison with other types of interests we have. Basic human needs are also universal and our need to secure them accounts for the universality of at least a rather minimalist ethic.
20. The reasoning in *accountability* is embedded in negative statements of the golden rule, 'don't do unto others what you wouldn't want them to do unto you'. The justification of this rule lies in the fact that one couldn't reasonably expect others to put up with actions that one wouldn't put up with oneself. Again, this is because others have reasons for action of roughly the same self-centred (though not necessarily selfish) type and strength.
21. The truths of the statements contained in (P1) to (P6) are grounded in the reasons for action any human being will have who has retained a concern for her well-being and who has the ability to recognize that others have comparable reasons. Hence, they have a grounding that is necessary *de re*. (P1) to (P6) are grounded in the moral psychology of a normal person.
22. Wallace (2019, ch. 3) captures the exclusionary nature of moral reasons based on the fact that others have a stake in whether or not one performs morally significant actions.
23. The notion of a second personal context has recently been emphasized in the literature by Stephen Darwall. He describes a second-personal standpoint as one that 'you and I take up when we acknowledge claims on one another's will and conduct' (Darwall (2006), 6). It is within this standpoint that moral obligations and duties are operative.
24. I can think of some occasions where appeal to merely self-interested reasons could serve to justify one's actions to another. These occasions involve situations in which the actor has a tremendous amount to gain from (e.g.) breaking a promise, and the effect on the patient is minimal. For example, let us say that I have promised to meet you at noon for coffee but I come across a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a large amount of money by merely participating in an event which excludes my keeping our meeting. I would owe you an apology, but by explaining the extraordinary circumstances I could probably get you to see that you probably would have done the same thing and excuse my missing the appointment. At the very least, it would be reasonable for you to be less upset with me.
25. I cite the relevant texts above. Adams, unlike Evans, does not endorse the view that an action is wrong only if one has most reason to avoid doing it. Hence, I am not targeting his views in this essay. Wolterstorff's views are harder to classify both in terms of the contribution divine commands make to his overall view of rights and obligations, and in terms of the role that having most reason to be ethical plays in his theory. For Wolterstorff (2008, chs 13–16), concepts such as human dignity, respect and worth take centre stage and theism comes into play primarily in relation to grounding these notions.
26. Of course, it wouldn't follow from the fact that there would be most reason to be ethical on theism, that anyone would *have* these reasons. There is an epistemic dimension to possessing reasons. For an informative discussion of subjective (reasons people have) and objective (reasons that are out there) reasons see Schroeder (2008).
27. This point is widely acknowledged by both the contractualists and divine command theorists alike whom we have been citing. Adams and Wolterstorff are two divine command theorists who take great pains to highlight these interpersonal practices. Darwall and Wallace develop these themes as well. See their works that have been cited above.

References

Adams R (1987) *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Adams R (1999) *Finite and Infinite Goods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Baggett D and Walls JL (2019) *The Moral Argument: A History*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Brink DO (1992) A puzzle about the rational authority of morality. *Philosophical Perspectives* 6, 1–26.
Craig WL and Kurtz P (2009) The Kurtz/Craig Debate: Is Goodness Without God Good Enough? In Garcia RK and King NL (eds), *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough?* Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, pp. 25–48.
Craig WL and Sinnot-Armstrong W (2004) *God?: A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Darwall S (2006) *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect and Accountability*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard university Press.
Darwall S (2013*a*) *Morality, Authority, and Law: Essays in Second Personal Ethics I*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Darwall S (2013*b*) *Honor, History, and Relationship: Essays in Second Personal Ethics II*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Evans CS (2013) *God and Moral Obligations*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Foot P (1972) Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives. *The Philosophical Review* 81, 303–316.
Frankena W (1974) Sidgwick and the dualism of practical reason. *The Monist* 58, 449–467.
Fumerton R (1990) *Reason and Morality: A Defense of the Egocentric Perspective*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Joyce R (1998) *The Myth of Morality*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Korsgaard C (1996) *The Sources of Normativity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Layman CS (2002) God and the moral order. Faith and Philosophy: *Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 19, 304–316.
Layman CS (2006) God and the moral order: replies to objections. Faith and Philosophy: *Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 23, 209–212.
Layman CS (2009) A moral argument for the existence of God. In Garcia RK and King NL (eds), *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough?* Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, pp. 49–66.
Mackie JL (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
McPherson T (2011) Against quietist normative realism. *Philosophical Studies* 154, 223–240.
Mill JS (1861/2001) *Utilitarianism*, 2nd edn. Sher G (ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
Miller C (2013) *Moral Character: An Empirical Theory*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Morriston W (2012) God and the ontological foundations of morality. *Religious Studies* 48, 15–34.
Parfit D (2011) *On What Matters*, vol. 1. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Prinz J (2007) *The Emotional Construction of Morals*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Scanlon TM (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
Schroeder M (2007) *Slaves of the Passions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Schroeder M (2008) Having reasons. *Philosophical Studies* 139, 57–71.
Smith M (1991) *The Moral Problem*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Strawson PF (1962) Freedom and resentment. *Proceeding of the British Academy* 48, 1–25.
Street S (2008) Constructivism about reasons. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 3, 207–245.
Wallace RJ (1994) *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Wallace RJ (2019) *The Moral Nexus*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Wielenberg EJ (2014) *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Williams B (1981) *Moral Luck*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Wolterstorff N (2008) *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cite this article: Rizzieri A (2023). Contractualism, exclusionary reasons and the moral argument for theism. *Religious Studies* **59**, 18–33. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412521000561 Published online by Cambridge University Press