

The Deliberative Constraint on Reasons

Abstract:

Must reasons be able to feature in our deliberation? Proponents of a deliberative constraint on reasons endorse an affirmative answer to this question. Deliberative constraints enjoy broad appeal and have been deployed as premises in support of a variety of controversial philosophical positions. Yet, despite their uses, deliberative constraints have not received systematic philosophical attention. This entry aims to fill this gap in the literature. First, I sketch what's at stake in the debate over whether a deliberative constraint is true. Then, I offer a taxonomy of the different versions of a deliberative constraint. Finally, I assess some of the arguments for and against a deliberative constraint.

Keywords:

Deliberative constraint; reasons; deliberation; reasoning

§1 Introduction

When we earnestly try to answer a question in thought – say, whether Joe Biden will win reelection – we *deliberate*. And when we deliberate, we consider our *reasons* for making up our mind one way or the other. But are reasons the sort of thing that *must* be able to feature in our deliberation? Proponents of a **deliberative constraint on reasons** endorse an affirmative answer to this question.

Deliberative constraints are perhaps most well-known for their use in the debate between evidentialists and pragmatists about reasons for belief. Shah (2006) famously uses a deliberative constraint as a premise in his argument that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. Yet this is just one use a deliberative constraint has been put to among many others, many of which concern reasons for responses other than belief. A deliberative constraint is often used to rule out so-called “wrong-kind” reasons for attitudes more broadly (Way, 2012). Kolodny (2005) uses one to argue that considerations of structural rationality don't constitute reasons. Schroeder (2007) uses one to distinguish between reasons and background conditions. Snedegar (2018) uses one to argue for contrastivism about reasons. Schultz (forthcoming) uses one to argue that there are no reasons for

emotions.

Deliberative constraints are not only used to rule out certain considerations from being reasons, but to elucidate the nature of reasons more broadly. For instance, Dancy's (2000, ch. 5) uses something like a deliberative constraint to argue that motivating reasons—the reasons *for which* one Φ s—must be facts, rather than propositions. Furthermore, Kearns & Star (2009) use a deliberative constraint to argue for the view that reasons for Φ ing are evidence one ought to Φ .

Yet despite its broad appeal, there seems to be no discussion concerning what the best version of a deliberative constraint is, nor is there discussion on what the best argument for a deliberative constraint is. Indeed, some simply assume that a deliberative constraint is true, whereas others offer a quick, rough-and-ready argument for one. This paper is an opinionated overview of the literature on deliberative constraints. I'll sketch what's at stake in this debate (§2), offer a taxonomy of different versions of a deliberative constraint (§3), and assess some of the arguments for and against a deliberative constraint (§4-6).

§2 The Stakes

Why does it matter whether or not a deliberative constraint is true? Here are three types of cases where a deliberative constraint apparently rules out certain considerations from being reasons:

MONETARY INCENTIVE: Someone offers you \$1,000,000 to believe that the number of stars in the sky is even, a proposition you lack any evidence for or against. That you'd receive \$1,000,000 would be immensely valuable to you. Is the fact that you'd receive this money a reason to believe that the number of stars in the sky is even?

INDIGESTION: You have to give a conference talk in one hour, but you have indigestion. Having indigestion during your talk would distract you, causing your talk to not go as well as if you didn't have indigestion. Is the fact that the talk would go better if you didn't have indigestion a reason not to have indigestion?

BIRTHDAY PARTY: Your friends are throwing you a surprise party. Is the fact that your friends are throwing you a surprise party a reason for you to intend to go to the surprise party?¹

In each case, a deliberative constraint rules out a fact from being a reason, but in subtly different ways. In MONETARY INCENTIVE, the problem with the consideration at play concerns *the sort of consideration that it is*: the fact that you'll receive money for believing a certain way isn't the sort of thing, on its own, that you can use in your deliberation about what to believe.² In this way, deliberative constraints are sometimes taken to rule out "wrong-kind" reasons for attitudes.³

In INDIGESTION, by contrast, the problem concerns *the sort of thing that can be the conclusion of deliberation*: although indigestion could be indirectly *caused* by deliberation, having (or not having) indigestion cannot be *the conclusion of* (an episode of) deliberation, where the conclusion is understood as an *answer* to a deliberative question. By attending to the kinds of states that can be deliberated to (or away from), a deliberative constraint can rule out there being reasons for entire classes of states.⁴

BIRTHDAY PARTY concerns another, perhaps less obvious way of ruling out certain considerations from being reasons. In BIRTHDAY PARTY, the problem concerns one's *awareness* of the relevant fact. Becoming aware that your friends are throwing you a surprise party effectively makes

¹ This example is adapted from Schroeder (2007).

² Cf. Shah (2006).

³ Cf. Way (2012).

⁴ Cf. Schultz (forthcoming).

this very fact false: it ceases to be a *surprise* party. BIRTHDAY PARTY is therefore illustrative of cases where one's *awareness* or *recognition* of a fact precludes its use in deliberation.⁵

§3 Taxonomizing

Many different versions of a deliberative constraint have been put forward in the literature. In this section, I sketch a few different axes along which deliberative constraints may differ. Furthermore, I'll distinguish deliberative constraints from nearby, but logically stronger theses: the reasoning-first view, and reasons internalism.

First, terms like “reasoning” and “deliberating” can be used to denote different types of mental processes. Sometimes we use these terms narrowly, to denote following explicit patterns of reasoning that resemble *argument-forms*, such as modus ponens.⁶ Other times we use these terms broadly to include not just explicit patterns of reasoning, but also activities like weighing pros and cons. In the broadest sense, deliberation is just the cluster of mental activities associated with asking oneself a question in thought and using any number of one's mental resources to answer it.⁷ Different deliberative constraints might employ narrower or broader conceptions of deliberation, although proponents of deliberative constraints are rarely explicit about which conception they have in mind.

Second, deliberative constraints differ with respect to whether they are agent-specific or agent-neutral. Agent-specific deliberative constraints maintain that for some fact to be a reason *for a particular agent*, that agent *herself* must be able to use the fact in her deliberation (perhaps holding certain facts

⁵ These might not be the only ways in which a deliberative constraint rules out what reasons there are. Logins (2022, ch. 2) argues that Moore-paradoxical cases are also problem cases for a deliberative constraint. These might fall under the general rubric of BIRTHDAY PARTY-style cases.

⁶ Cf. Boghossian (2014), who says reasoning amounts to instantiating a *rule of inference* in one's thought, although perhaps this is less narrow than having to follow explicit patterns of reasoning resembling argument-forms. For perhaps argument-forms – but not rules of inference – are all deductive.

⁷ Cf. Hieronymi (2006); Friedman (2017).

about her psychology, such as her desires, fixed).⁸ Agent-neutral versions, by contrast, maintain that for some fact to be a reason, it must be possible that *someone* – perhaps someone suitably motivated, or even an ideal agent – could use the fact in their deliberation.⁹

Third, deliberative constraints differ with respect to whether they endorse a *normative* or *non-normative* relationship between reasons and deliberation. The normative relationship is something like: for some fact to be a reason, it must be *appropriate* to use it in deliberation.¹⁰ The non-normative relationship, by contrast, just maintains that it must be *possible* or *intelligible* to use some fact in deliberation, never mind whether it'd be appropriate to do so. Plausibly, an appropriateness-based deliberative constraint is logically stronger than a possibility-based deliberative constraint, for it's reasonable to assume that it's appropriate to use some consideration in deliberation only if one *can* use it in deliberation.

Finally, deliberative constraints differ with respect to how “intellectualized” they are. A more intellectualized deliberative constraint might maintain that it's not enough that one *can* use some fact in their deliberation, but that one must be able to do so *under the guise* of its being a normative reason.¹¹ Depending on how we understand the modality of the relevant ability, this might require possessing the requisite conceptual resources to understand what reasons are.

Taken together, these four axes alongside which deliberative constraints may differ yield many different candidate deliberative constraints, too numerous to list here. Rather, I will simply state my own preferred deliberative constraint, which the reader may use as an example to fix ideas when I am talking of the deliberative constraint more generally:

⁸ Cf. Shah (2006), Kolodny (2005), and Schultz (forthcoming).

⁹ Cf. Schroeder (2007) and Snedegar (2018).

¹⁰ Cf. Schroeder (2007).

¹¹ Cf. Kolodny (2005).

My Preferred Deliberative Constraint. A fact F is a reason for an agent A to Φ only if A can deliberate to (or away from) Φ ing at least partly on the basis of F (REFERENCE REDACTED).¹²

Let's now contrast claims positing deliberative constraints with different, though related, claims. Deliberative constraints are *necessary* conditions on reasons. Yet some philosophers have embraced an even stronger relationship between reasons and deliberation: the reasoning-first views of reasons. Reasoning-first views are views about the *constitution* of normative reasons: for example, the view that reasons *are* premises of good reasoning, or the view that reasons-facts are explained by reasoning-facts. Thus, the reasoning-first view states both a necessary and *sufficient* condition on reasons. These views have been defended by Manne (2014), Setiya (2014), Way (2017), Hieronymi (2021), among others, and criticized by Schmidt (2020). Schmidt, however, only criticizes the *sufficiency* claim; so her objections apply to the reasoning-first view, but not deliberative constraints more broadly.

Deliberative constraints must also be distinguished from another view with which they are often confused: reasons internalism. Most prominently associated with Williams (1981), reasons internalism is the view that for some consideration to be a reason for you to Φ , this consideration must be capable of moving you to Φ via a “sound deliberative route” from your desires (or “motivational set”) to an intention to Φ . Thus construed, reasons internalism entails a deliberative constraint: if reasons must be able to move you to Φ via a sound deliberative route, then reasons must be able to feature in your deliberation. Yet, deliberative constraints are logically weaker in that they don't themselves require any connection between reasons and *desires*, whereas reasons internalism does.

¹² “ Φ ” should be construed broadly to include attitudes and states – i.e. having a belief that P , having a headache, etc. I'll discuss whether deliberative constraints also range over actions in §5.

§4 Arguments for a Deliberative Constraint

§4.1 *Shah's Williams-inspired Argument*

Shah (2006) offers an argument for his deliberative constraint, which he attributes to Williams (1981):

1. R is a reason for X to Φ only if R is capable of being a reason for which X Φ s.¹³
 2. R is a reason for which X Φ s only if it is possible for X to treat R as counting in favor of Φ ing in X's deliberation about whether to Φ .
 3. It is possible for X to treat R as counting in favor of Φ ing in X's deliberation about whether to Φ iff R is capable of disposing X to Φ through R's role as a premise in X's deliberation about whether to Φ – i.e. iff R can be used as a premise in X's deliberation about whether to Φ .
- ∴ **Shah's Deliberative Constraint:** R is a reason for X to Φ only if R is capable of disposing X to Φ through R's role as a premise in X's deliberation about whether to Φ .

Although Shah doesn't offer reason to accept any of these premises, he takes this argument to be “a way of spelling out the familiar thought that it is the function of reasons to guide agents” (p. 486).

In assessing this argument, I'll restrict my focus to premise 2. One view is that to count as Φ -ing for reason R, one has to *actually* treat R as counting in favor of Φ -ing in one's deliberation.¹⁴ While this entails the weaker premise (2)—which only say that it must be *possible* for one to treat R as counting

¹³ Notice that this premise posits a tie between normative and motivating reasons. So, Shah starts with a constraint framed in terms of motivating reasons and supplements it with further premises to derive a stronger, more specific deliberative constraint. Thus, constraining normative reasons in terms of motivating reasons and constraining them in terms of deliberation can go hand in hand.

¹⁴ Cf. Alvarez (2018), Singh (2019).

in favor of Φ in one's deliberation—Shah's choice to employ the weaker premise implicates (via the Gricean maxim of informativeness) that he does not want to commit to the stronger version. This might be because, arguably, there are cases where one can Φ on the basis of a reason without deliberating at all. But if this is so, then it's unclear why even the weaker premise would be true: if one *can* Φ for reason R without deliberating, then why must it be that, for R to be the reason for which one Φ s, it must nevertheless be *possible* for one to use R in one's deliberation about whether to Φ ? Shah doesn't say.

Shah's argument would be more powerful if he gave us (greater) independent reason to accept the premises. Without such independent support, it may be dialectically unconvincing to those not antecedently sympathetic to the deliberative constraint

§4.2 *The Participant Stance and the Realm of Reasons*

Let's move on to another argument for the deliberative constraint, adapted from Manne (2014). Manne argues for the reasoning-first view of reasons. Her argument can be reconstructed as follows:

1. We should understand reasons in terms of their job description – i.e. the role they play in our social practices.
2. The job description of reasons is for them to be used in reasoning with others.
3. If we should understand reasons in terms of their role in being used in reasoning with others, then a version of the reasoning-first view is true: reasons for an agent to Φ are “those considerations which would ideally be apt to be cited in favor of that action, when we are reasoning with her about what she ought to do” (2014, p. 97).
4. Therefore, the reasoning-first view is true.

Although this is an argument for the reasoning-first view, I will explain how premise 1 can be plausibly weakened so that it merely supports a deliberative constraint.

Premise 1 stems from Manne's *practice-based approach* to normativity, according to which we should understand normative concepts in terms of the role they play in our social practices – i.e. their “job description”. To identify the job description of reasons, Manne, following Strawson (1962), distinguishes between the participant stance and the objective stance. For Manne, reasons “belong” to the participant stance, for it is within the participant stance that we view each other as agents capable of recognizing and responding to reasons. When we are interacting with others in the participant stance, we often reason *with* them by offering them considerations to think about and use in their reasoning, in hopes that they will appreciate such reasons and, if persuaded, act on the basis of them. The job description of reasons, then, is to be used in reasoning with others. Therefore, from her practice-based approach, reasons are those things that are apt to cite when reasoning with others in the participant stance.

Manne is offering a *functional characterization* of reasons: reasons *are* what they *do*. This is why Manne's argument yields more than a deliberative constraint on reasons: it is not just that deliberation constrains what reasons *there are*, but that this deliberative role characterizes what reasons *are*; hence, the reasoning-first view of reasons. Thus, one way of weakening her argument is to relax its functional approach to normativity. We might claim that the functions of reasons constrain not what reasons *are* but simply what reasons *there are*. That is, instead of saying that we should *understand* normative concepts through the roles they play in social practices, we can say that any account of normative concepts must be *consistent with*, be *answerable to*, or *explain* the role they play in social practices. So, if reasoning-with is the function of reasons, then a deliberative constraint follows: for some fact to be a reason, it must be possible to use it in reasoning-with-others.

Here, to be precise, is the weakened version of Manne's argument:

1. What reasons there are is constrained by the job description of reasons - i.e. the role they play in our social practices.
2. The job description of reasons is for them to be used in reasoning with others.
3. If what reasons there are is constrained by the way they are used in reasoning with others, then a version of the deliberative constraint is true: for some fact to be a reason, it must be able to feature in our deliberation.
4. Therefore, a deliberative constraint is true.

This weakened argument takes on somewhat less contentious commitments than Manne's original argument. Yet some questions remain. Is there a non-question-begging argument even for this relaxed version of the practice-based approach to normativity? And is it true that the job description of reasons is for them to be used in reasoning with others? Our normative practices are diverse, and we don't *only* use reasons to reason with others. We also use reasons to determine what we ought to do and what's right and wrong and, accordingly, to assign praise and blame to others' (and even our own) actions and attitudes. And some of these other practices might not require reasons to be deliberatively constrained.

§4.3 *Inference to the Best Explanation*

Let's move on to what I take to be the most promising argument for a deliberative constraint. This argument originates from Kolodny (2005), but versions of it have also been advanced by Snedegar (2018), Way (2017), and Schultz (forthcoming).

The basic idea is that a deliberative constraint *explains* what reasons there are. There are reasons for some states, such as beliefs and intentions, but not others, such as headaches, indigestion, and having flat feet. Even though having (or not having) a headache can be good or bad, considerations of the goodness/badness of (not) having a headache don't seem to constitute *reasons* for or against having a headache. A headache seems to be the wrong kind of thing for there to be reasons for. But we need an explanation of why this is so.

Here is one: the things that there are reasons for are things that are “up to me” in some sense, whereas the things that there aren't reasons for aren't. But this explanation is as yet incomplete: “[not] up to me” in what sense? On the one hand, the point cannot just be that these things are (not) up to me in the sense of (not) having voluntary control over them. For I cannot decide (in the sense of voluntary control) to believe P or desire to Φ any more than I can decide to have flat feet – and yet there are reasons for the former but not the latter. But on the other hand, it cannot be that the crucial point is that my beliefs are up to me merely in the sense that my recognition of reasons for believing P can *cause* me, more or less immediately, to believe P. For it seems at least *conceptually* possible that (in some bizarro world) my recognition of the value of having flat feet could cause, more or less immediately, the appropriate changes in my feet. Even in this bizarro world, this causal connection would be insufficient for the shape of my feet being “up to me” in the relevant sense for having reasons for flat feet.

Instead, “the [relevant] sense in which acting, believing, and desiring are ‘up to me’ (but having flat feet is not) is that I can come to act, believe, and desire on the basis of recognizing reasons for acting, believing, and desiring, in such a way that I thereby count as reasoning” (Kolodny 2005, p. 549). So here we have the makings of an explanation of why there are reasons for some states but not others, in terms of reasoning or deliberation. More precisely, this explanation – call it “DC-Explanation” – is provided by two claims in conjunction:

- (i) **Deliberative Datum:** Beliefs and headaches can be deliberated to on the basis of certain considerations, but headaches, indigestion, and having flat feet cannot.
- (ii) **Minimal Deliberative Constraint:** A consideration F is a reason for Φ ing only if Φ ing can be deliberated to on the basis of F.¹⁵

(i)-(ii) together explain why there are reasons for some states but not others.

For this to be an inference to the best explanation, it needs to outcompete alternative explanations. But Kolodny offers little discussion of alternatives. I will consider some and tentatively argue that DC-Explanation comes out on top.

Kolodny considers, on one side, the hypothesis that the relevant states/events are *caused* by recognizing one's reasons, and, on the other side, the hypothesis that the relevant states/events are *responsive* to the recognition of reasons *in a way that counts as deliberating* from these reasons to the relevant states/events. But there seems to be a middle option that he doesn't consider: that some states/events can simply be done for reasons – i.e. that some states/events are *reasons-responsive*. This alternative explanation – call it “Motivating-Explanation” – directly mirrors DC-Explanation:

- (i*) **Motivational Datum:** There can be motivating reasons for beliefs and intentions (i.e. they are reasons-responsive), but not headaches, indigestion, and having flat feet.
- (ii*) **Reasons-Responsive Constraint:** There are reasons for a state only if there can be motivating reasons for that state.

¹⁵ Kolodny (2005) uses an agent-specific, more intellectualized deliberative constraint. I've opted for a more minimal deliberative constraint, for this is all that's required for the present argument.

However, as we've seen, a crucial datapoint an explanation must capture is that beliefs and intentions are “up to me” or under my control in a way that headaches and indigestion are not. *Deliberative* control is a good candidate for being the relevant kind of control to fill this out: it is a kind of rational, non-voluntary control that we can exhibit over our attitudes but not our headaches.¹⁶ But reasons-responsiveness doesn't seem like the right kind of control (if it's a kind of control at all). A person who follows the pull of their reasons without ever using them in deliberation doesn't seem to be exercising a kind of control of their actions or attitudes – instead, such a person resembles a kind of automaton working on autopilot. By contrast, deliberation constitutes a kind of a rational power we have over certain parts of our mental lives. Thus, DC-Explanation captures the control datapoint, but Motivating-Explanation doesn't.

Let's move on to two more competing explanations of why there are reasons for some states but not others. One, entertained but rejected by Snedegar (2018), uses an ought-implies-can principle. There's a sense in which I *can't* just become less indigested; hence an ought-implies-can principle, plus an appropriate connection between oughts and reasons, seems to explain why there aren't reasons against indigestion. However, one might worry that this explanation either under-restricts or over-restricts what reasons there are. If we interpret the ought-implies-can principle loosely, such that it suffices for it being true that one “can” Φ that one can Φ through an indirect process, the explanation will under-restrict what reasons there are. For there do seem to be cases where we can extinguish a headache, and thus lack it, by indirect means (for instance, by taking medicine). If we instead interpret the ought-implies-can principle more strictly, such that for it to be true that one “can” Φ one must be

¹⁶ Cf. Wedgwood (2017, ch. 3) for the distinction between voluntary and deliberative control. Different philosophers have invoked deliberative control, but sometimes under different terms. Portmore (2019) uses the term ‘rational’ control; Hieronymi (2006) uses ‘evaluative’ control; McHugh (2017) uses ‘attitudinal’ control.

able to Φ directly, then the explanation *over*-restricts what reasons there are. For this explanation would rule out reasons for anything that requires multiple steps.¹⁷ Thus, I'm inclined to reject this explanation.

Second, Neta (2018) offers an explanation according to which there are reasons for a state just if, and because, the state is *commitment-constituted*. For instance, a belief that P is constituted by a commitment to the truth of P, and an intention to Φ is constituted by a commitment to Φ ing. That these states involve commitments, for Neta, explains why there are reasons for these states. By contrast, headaches and indigestion are not constituted by commitments. Hence, there are no reasons for headaches. However, first, one might worry that the notion of commitment is obscure – at least no less obscure than beliefs or intentions – whereas we have a fairly familiar, robust idea of deliberation that can serve in our explanation of which states there are reasons for. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Neta's commitment-explanation must capture the relevant kind of control we can exhibit over our states so as to capture the control datum. If we have deliberative control over our commitments, then his explanation becomes effectively the same as DC-Explanation with a few extra steps. But if we don't, and if our explanation should capture the sense of control we have over our mental states, then unless we can find some other relevant form of control that we have over our commitments, we should prefer DC-Explanation.

§5 Actions or Intentions? A Possible Dilemma for the Deliberative Constraint

In this section and the next, I will consider two possible worries about deliberative constraints.

¹⁷ Cf. Rinard (2017).

There's some disagreement over whether the conclusion of practical deliberation is an action or an intention.¹⁸ This disagreement cannot be resolved here. However, if a proponent of a deliberative constraint thinks that practical deliberation concludes in an intention, and hence that we cannot deliberate to actions as such, then they must say something about whether there are reasons for action. Does the deliberative constraint range over reasons for all responses, and hence rule out reasons for action much as it rules out reasons for headaches and indigestions? Or does it range only over reasons for mental states or attitudes, and hence permit there to be reasons for action that don't meet any analogous constraint? The former view seems highly revisionary, but the latter might appear unprincipled: if deliberation is so central to reasons for attitudes and states, then shouldn't it also be central to reasons for action? Thus, the proponent of the deliberative constraint may seem to face a dilemma.

I'll note two possible responses to this dilemma. The first is to say that reasons for action are *systematically connected* to reasons for intention, such that one has a reason to Φ only if one has a reason to intend to Φ . McHugh & Way (2022) defend a view along these lines. For them, reasons for action are *fundamentally* reasons for intentions, such that reasons for actions *reduce* to reasons for intentions. Alternatively, one might say that there are reasons for *intentional action* in a way that is parasitic on reasons for intention. On these views, the deliberative constraint applies to reasons for intentions (and other attitudes) in the first instance, but nevertheless constrains reasons for action thereby.

The second response is to reject the claim that reasons for actions are systematically connected to reasons for intention but insist that this disconnection is non-arbitrary. One way to flesh this out builds on Kolodny's argument. Recall that what explains why there are reasons for beliefs and intentions is that these are up to us in the sense of having deliberative control over them. But our

¹⁸ The view that practical deliberation concludes in action dates back to Aristotle, and is also developed by Anscombe (1957). The view that practical deliberation concludes in an intention dates (at least) back to Kant, and is also developed by Bratman (1987).

actions are up to us in the sense of having *voluntary* control over them. And perhaps there is not *one unique* kind of control that explains what there are and are not reasons for. So, we might say, *voluntary* control – the ability to act at will – explains why there are reasons for action, whereas *deliberative* control explains why there are reasons for attitudes. Reasons for action are thus excluded from the scope of the deliberative constraint in a principled way: it’s because we have a *different* form of control over actions that is *not* (directly) deliberative control.

§6 The Too Few Reasons Objection

Since deliberative constraints *constrain* what reasons there are, one might worry that they *over-constrain*, ruling out paradigm cases of reasons from being genuine reasons. This is a version of what Schroeder (2007) dubs the “too few reasons” objection: if a theory of reasons rules out the existence of reasons in many cases in which we take there to be such reasons, then all else equal, we should reject the theory.

The too few reasons objection did not originate as an objection to a deliberative constraint, but to reasons internalism. Recall that, according to reasons internalism, for some consideration to be a reason for you to Φ , this consideration must be capable of moving you to Φ via a sound deliberative route from your desires to an intention to Φ . But, so goes the too few reasons objection, there is a massive number of cases where, intuitively, what reasons you have doesn’t depend on what desires you have. Consider the abusive husband. Intuitively, the abusive husband has a (decisive) reason not to hit his wife. But now suppose the husband has no desire that would be satisfied by refraining from hitting his wife. According to reasons internalism, then, he doesn’t have a reason to refrain from hitting his wife.

As indicated in §3, however, a deliberative constraint is logically weaker than reasons internalism. A deliberative constraint, on its own, doesn't rule out the same (would-be) reasons that reasons internalism does. Indeed, it doesn't rule out the abusive husband's having reasons to refrain from hitting his wife, for the deliberative constraint doesn't, on its own, posit any necessary connection between reasons and desires.¹⁹

I'll leave aside the question of whether the too few reasons objection is a good objection to reasons internalism. More importantly (for our purposes), does the too few reasons objection even *apply* to a deliberative constraint? It's not clear that it does. Deliberative constraints seem to rule out the kinds of considerations in the cases in §2 (MONETARY INCENTIVE, INDIGESTION, BIRTHDAY PARTY), but none of those considerations are *paradigmatic* cases of reasons we take there to be, in the same way that the abusive husband having a reason not to hit his wife is a paradigmatic case of a reason. Indeed, nor is it obvious that such considerations are even *intuitively* reasons.²⁰ Proponents of a deliberative constraint might even think that the claim that these are reasons is *counterintuitive*, and hence the fact that a deliberative constraint rules them out is a point in its favor. Such cases are at best borderline cases of reasons, and hence ruling them out as reasons is not a significant mark against a theory.

Thus, I suggest, for the too few reasons objection to hold weight against a deliberative constraint, we must be able to identify cases where we intuitively, or even better paradigmatically, take there to be reasons that a deliberative constraint would rule out. However, whether a deliberative

¹⁹ This claim merits qualification. Perhaps an *agent-specific* deliberative constraint, together with the view that not having the relevant desiderative profile constitutes not being able to use the reason in one's deliberation, rules out the abusive husband's having reasons to refrain from hitting his wife. In other words, perhaps a certain version of a deliberative constraint, conjoined with some auxiliary premises, will rule out the same (would-be) reasons as reasons internalism.

²⁰ This claim isn't uncontroversial. Rinard (2019) and Markovitz (2014, ch. 2), for instance, seem to think that the considerations in MONETARY INCENTIVE are intuitively reasons.

constraint rules out reasons we intuitively take there to be is not yet clear. We need to apply a deliberative constraint to further cases to see its results.

§7 Final Remark

I'd like to conclude by noting a lacuna in the literature on deliberative constraints: if a deliberative constraint is true, then what explains it? If the reasoning-first view is true, this is straightforward: it's just the essence of reasons that they're premises in good reasoning. But deliberative constraints can be married to alternative views of what reasons are (e.g. reasons primitivism, fittingness-first).²¹ If one of these alternative views is true, then what explains why reasons must still be able to be used in deliberation? I bring up this explanatory gap not as an objection to deliberative constraints, but instead as an avenue for future investigation.

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²¹ One exception seems to be the value-first theory of reasons (Maguire, 2016): many of the very considerations deliberative constraints rule out are precisely those considerations that the value-first view wants to include.

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