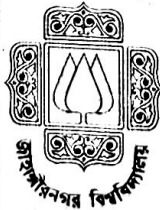


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## The Rejection of Dancy-Style Distinction between Favourers and Enablers

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[**Abstract:** Jonathan Dancy's particularist ethics, a.k.a. *Particularism*, denies any essential link between moral agency and moral principles. On the other hand, defenders of principled ethics, a.k.a. *Generalism*, claim that the very possibility of moral thought and judgment depends on the provision of suitable supply of moral principles. This debate between *Particularism* and *Generalism* involves the debate between *Holism* and *Atomism* which are connected to the theories of reasons and actions. Dancy thinks that *Holism* provides support to *Particularism* whereas *Atomism* provides support to *Generalism*. Understandably, Dancy defends *Holism*. To defend his *Holism* Dancy distinguishes between two relevant features of the contributory reason—*favourers* and *enablers*. Roughly speaking, favourers are those features that count for doing an action; and enablers, again roughly speaking, are those features of the context which have to be in place in order for the favourers to work. In the present paper I have analyzed Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers; and then I have argued that the distinction Dancy made is unnecessary and ungrounded.]

### 1.

It is a widely believed view that moral person is a person of principles. Opposing this widely believed view Jonathan Dancy proposes and defends a particularist conception of morality which denies any essential link between being fully moral agents and having principles.<sup>1</sup> Thus, according to him it is unnecessary to impose any sort of moral principle towards morality because morality can go well without the imposition of such principles. Moral principles, for Dancy, are at best crutches that morally sensitive people do not require.<sup>2</sup> A morally sensitive person can keep his life with full morality without appealing to any moral principle. Here, by morality Dancy means 'moral

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thought' and 'judgment.'<sup>3</sup> He defines his moral *particularism* and *generalism* (i.e. the view I initially called 'widely believed view') in terms of moral thoughts and judgments:

*Particularism*: the possibility of moral thought and judgment does not depend on the provision of a suitable supply of moral principles.

*Generalism*: the very possibility of moral thought and judgment depends on the provision of a suitable supply of moral principles.<sup>4</sup>

The debate between particularism and generalism involves another debate between two other views, namely *holism* and *atomism*, which are not directly related to morality, but are related to the nature of reasoning. Dancy defines holism and atomism in this way:

*Holism* in the theory of reason: a feature that is a reason in one case may be no reason at all, or an opposite reason, in another.

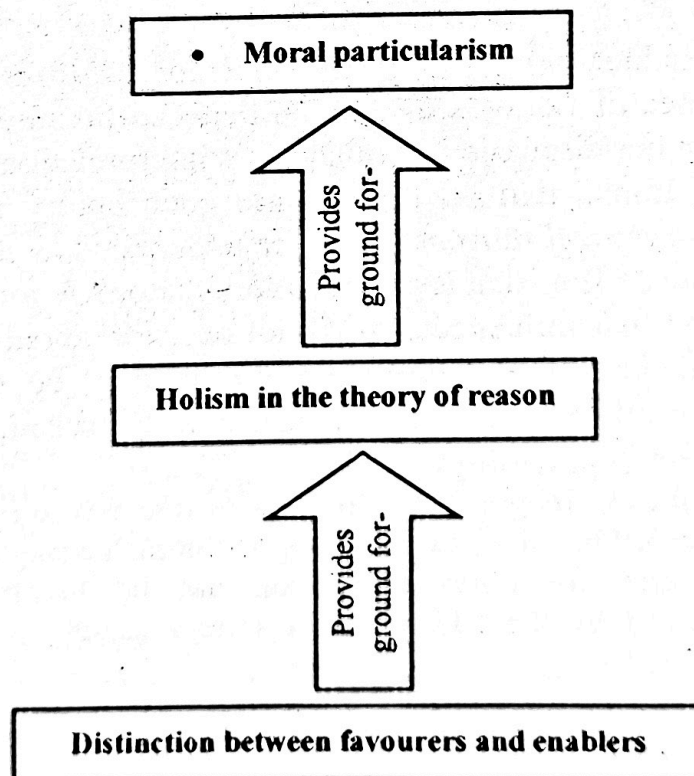
*Atomism* in the theory of reason: a feature that is a reason in one case must remain, and retain the same polarity, in any other.<sup>5</sup>

Holism and atomism, as we understand from their definitions, concern the behavior of reasons whereas Dancy's target of attack is the necessity of moral principles. If such is the case, then what is the relation between views about reasons and views about moral principles? Well, Dancy's observation is that holism provides support for particularism whereas atomism supports generalism.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Dancy takes holism as a theory that provides the *main argument* for particularism.<sup>7</sup> So, as a particularist, the view about reasons that Dancy himself wishes to defend is holism. Again, to establish his holism in the theory of reason Dancy distinguishes between two relevant features of the contributory reason—*favourer* and *enabler*. We will discuss favourers and enablers as relevant features of contributory reasons in detail in the next section of the present paper. For now, favourers are those features that count for doing an action, and enablers are those features of the context which have to be in place in order for the favourers to work. Dancy equates favourers with reasons.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between favourers and

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1. From Dancy's interpretation it seems that reasons are favourers and favourers are reasons; whatever is not a reason is not a favourer, and whatever is not a favourer is not a reason either. For detail about this interpretation, see Dancy, Jonathan (2004), *Ethics Without Principles*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 29, 39-41.

enablers is very important for Dancy.<sup>2</sup> The presence or absence of enablers makes favourers/ reasons multivalent, i.e. the same favourer/reason may act in favor of doing an action (when suitable enablers are present) in one case and may not act in favor of doing that action, or may act against of doing that action (when suitable enablers are not present) in other cases. Thus, the distinction between favourers and enablers provides good grounds for Dancy-style strong holism. If it can be shown that an enabling feature is needed to activate the favoring feature, and consequently, to activate the reason for an action, then it can be claimed that all reasons are context-dependent. This claim will ultimately establish that whatever is a reason in one case may be no reason at all, or opposite in other cases. That is, a strong holism will be established. So, we find three interconnected steps in Dancy's moral thoughts: the distinction between favourers and enablers, holism in the theory of reason and the moral particularism. They are interconnected in the sense that the distinction between favourers and enablers is the base of Dancy's holism and his holism provides ground for his particularism. So, we can schematize Dancy's way of establishing moral particularism in the following manner:



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2. Dancy recognizes the importance of this distinction by saying: "... the favouring/enabling distinction is in fact central to the particularist's approach to these issues ..." See, Dancy (2004), p. 73.

My paper focuses on the distinction between favourers and enablers, the very basic ground for Dancy's holism which, again, is the ground of his particularism. In this paper I will try to show that Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers is ungrounded and if we grant this distinction as true, we will face several difficulties in defining, identifying and explaining *disablers*, *intensifiers* and *attenuators*. Moreover, this distinction involves a dilemma which ultimately forces us to move toward a form of atomism. Considering this difficulties and dilemma I will reject the alleged distinction between favourers and enablers. This rejection of the distinction between favourers and enablers has far-reaching importance because, as we have seen earlier, this distinction is the basis of Dancy's holism and this holism provides the ground for his particularism. That is, if this rejection of the distinction is sound, then it will undermine Dancy's holism, and consequently, it will severely subvert his moral particularism. In this paper, however, I won't go that far. Rather, I will be concentrated on the rejection of the said distinction. Although this paper is a critical paper and I am not proposing any alternative view here, some indications will be made in this paper that may go in favor of principled ethics.

## 2.

Favourers and enablers are features of *contributory reasons*. So, in order to have a proper idea of Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers we need to begin our discussion from Dancy's interpretation of contributory reasons. Dancy thinks that all reasons are contributory reasons indeed. According to him *overall reasons* should be understood as some function of contributory reasons.<sup>8</sup> But what is a contributory reason? A contributory reason is a consideration that influences an overall decision about how to act. Of course, the influence of a contributory reason may be strengthened or weakened by the influence of another contributory reason. Dancy defines contributory reason in the following way:

A contributory reason for action is a feature whose presence makes something of a case for acting, but in such a way that the overall case for doing the action can be improved or strengthened by the addition of a second feature playing a similar role.<sup>9</sup>

It is natural to think that a contributory reason when combined with another contributory reason will provide stronger reason for doing the relevant action. But things do not always go in this straight way. Dancy says that sometimes it can also be happened that the addition of the second contributory reason weakens the reason for doing the action in question.

Dancy explains this feature of contributory reasons with the analogy of rat-fights:

Reasons are like rats, at least to the extent that two rats that are supposedly on the same side may in fact turn and fight among themselves; similarly, the addition of the second reason may make things worse rather than better.<sup>10</sup>

However, there are some attempts, such as Jean Hampton's, of explaining the role of contributory in terms of what happens at the overall level. Some other philosophers, on the other hand, abandon the very possibility of contributory reasons. T. M Scanlon and Richard Holton stand in this side. Dancy argues against both sides.<sup>3</sup> He thinks that any attempt of explaining the 'contributory reasons' in terms of 'overall ought' is mistaken; and similarly, any attempt of abandoning contributory reasons is clearly wrong. So, we have to look for a third option, and this third option is to accept the role of contributory reasons and to try to understand them *in their own terms* instead of trying to understand them in terms of overall.<sup>11</sup> But how can we understand the role of contributory reasons in their own terms rather than understanding them in terms of overall? Dancy responds:

The only way that I know of doing this is to say that to be a reason for action is to stand in a certain relation to action, and the relation at issue is that of favouring.<sup>12</sup>

And, thus, the question of favourers and enablers as relevant features of contributory reasons comes in.

A favourer, in Dancy's terminology, is a feature that plays a certain role in favor of doing an action.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, an enabler is a feature whose presence or absence is required for the favourer to play its role, but which does not play the favoring role itself.<sup>14</sup> Dancy thinks that examples are the best way of understanding the distinction between favourers and enablers.<sup>15</sup> So, following Dancy's strategy, I will try to understand these features by referring various examples offered by Dancy. The first example to

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3. In his book, *Ethics Without Principles*, Jonathan Dancy has offered a number of arguments to nullify these sorts of attempt of understanding the contributory in terms of overall (See, Dancy's arguments against Jean Hampton's attempts of understanding contributory in Dancy's above mentioned book, pp. 17-23). He has also offered many arguments to invalidate those attempts which ultimately deny the role of contributory (see, Dancy's arguments against T.M Scanlon and Richard Holton attempts in the same book, pp. 25-29). For brevity, I am not discussing these arguments in this paper. These debates are not my main focus indeed.

be considered is an example that clarifies Dancy's view about the distinctive roles of favourers and various types of enablers:<sup>16</sup>

1. I promised to do it.
2. My promise was not given under duress.
3. I am able to do it.
4. There is no greater reason not to do it.
5. So: I do it.
5. So: I ought to do it.

Here, Dancy mentions, if we end at (5), then we are dealing with favoring relation. And, if we end at (5\*), then we are dealing with right-making relation. For our purpose, we end at (5) indeed. Now, Premise<sup>4</sup> (1), according to Dancy, is a favourer that provides reason in favor of (5). Dancy does not give any explanation about why he considers it as a favourer. He thinks (1) clearly presents a favourer and he does not need to argue for it. He says:

I am not going to argue for this [that the premise (1) presents a favourer]; it is an assumption of the example. What I am going to argue for is that none of the other premises is a favourer. They play other roles; they are relevant, but not in the favouring way.<sup>17</sup>

However, Premise (2) is not a favourer because it, on its own, does not provide any reason for (5). Dancy holds that one's promise is not given under duress should not be treated as a further reason for performing the action. Rather, what is important about the fact that one's promise is not given under duress is that in the absence of this feature the original favoring feature would not be able to favor the action.<sup>18</sup> That is, what (2) does is that it enables (1) to play its favoring role; in the absence of (2), (1) wouldn't be enabled.<sup>19</sup> That is why Dancy calls it enabler. More precisely, it is a *specific enabler* because it is specifically relevant to (1). (3) is not a favourer either—'I am able to do it' does not provide me any reason for doing it. But in the absence of (3), (1) cannot be a reason for (5) because, as Dancy mentions, one cannot have a reason to do an action that one is incapable of doing. Dancy gives an example: "I have, perhaps, a reason to run as fast as I

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4. Dancy uses the terms 'premises' and 'conclusion' just for convenience. It does not mean that he considers the reasons for an action as 'premises' and the action as conclusion driven from these premises. Dancy clears his position saying: "... it is perhaps awkward to think of an action as the conclusion of anything (except a series of other actions, I suppose). ... For ease of reference, I will call (1)-(4) the 'premises' of the reasoning, for the while at least. Later I will suggest that they are not premises at all ..." See, Dancy (2004), p. 38.

can but no reason to run faster than that.”<sup>20</sup> That is, like (2), the absence of (3) will disable (1) to perform the action whereas its presence will enable (1) to play its favoring role. So, by definition, (3) is an enabler, not a favourer. But, unlike (2) it is not a specific enabler because agents’ ability to do an action is required for every action, not for a specific action. Dancy, thus, calls it *general enabler*.<sup>21</sup> According to Dancy, (4) is a different type of enabler which does not directly enable (1) to favor (5) but enables the move from (1) to (5). “In the absence of (4) that move should not be made.”<sup>22</sup> Dancy does not give it any special name like (3).<sup>5</sup>

Dancy believes that the distinction between favourers and enablers, shown above, is generalizable. He writes:

The distinction between favourers and enablers can be generalized: there is a general distinction between a feature that plays a certain role and a feature whose presence or absence is required for the first feature to play its role, but which does not play that role itself.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, Dancy admits that it is hard to find a clear epistemic criterion in favor of this sort of distinction between favourers and enablers. But he thinks that such an absence of a clear criterion about the distinction does not make the distinction a useless theoretical tool. He says:

I don’t take it to be a general rule that every distinction needs an independent criterion. ... distinctions do not *as such* require criteria for their application, and I maintain that the many cases where it is not clear how to apply this one do not constitute a reason why it should need a supporting criterion when others don’t. One thing I do want to insist on is that the many unclear instances do not constitute a reason for thinking that there is no real distinction at issue here at all.<sup>24</sup>

That is, according to Dancy, since there are many clear cases where the distinction between favourers and enablers does not create any controversy and since every distinction does not need to have independent criteria, there is no reason to disagree with this distinction just because we do not have a ready criterion for this distinction.

Although Dancy expects that the distinction between favourers and enablers won’t create any controversy, the fact is that it invites a lot of controversies. One can argue that (1) does not and cannot favor (5) unless it is combined with (2). That is, ‘I promised to do it’ will favor ‘I do it’ only if ‘my promise was not given under duress.’ In that case, what favors the

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5. I would prefer to name it *mediating-enabler* because it mediates between other favourers-enablers (premises) and the action (conclusion).



conclusion is that 'I freely promised to do it,' not merely that 'I promised to do it.' Regarding this issue Andrea Houchard, an American philosopher, writes:

Dancy argues that enablers cannot be reasons because if promising is a reason in favor, then freely promising cannot be another reason. But we do not need to consider such acts as two separate reasons. Usually, when we say we have a reason to keep a promise, the absence of duress is implicit, as are any number of putative enablers.<sup>25</sup>

The justification for this suggestion might be that, in contrast to freely given promise, a promise which is coerced or deceitfully extracted does not give any reason to act upon it. Roger Crisp also indicates something similar by his idea of 'finessing of favourers.'<sup>6</sup> The main lesson here is that it is not the (1) *alone* but a combination of (1) and (2) (and other relevant features, if there are any) that provides reason for (or favors) the action in question. Dancy, however, does not agree with this lesson. He calls it *agglomerative principle* and argues against it. He admits that there are some cases where a favourer is a complex no part of which is itself a favourer, but this, according to him, should not be conceded on the basis of agglomerative principle. He, rather, suggests that the enabler no more becomes (part of) a larger favourer than the favourer becomes (part of) a larger enabler.<sup>26</sup> In order to show that they play a distinctive role and a favourer does not need to be combined with an enabler to have the status of being a favourer<sup>7</sup> Dancy tries to demonstrate that (2) does not necessarily need (3) to provide at least 'some reason' for (5). He says:

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6. Crisp says: "... the method of expansion he [Dancy] describes is better understood in terms of finessing a favourer. To use the example of promising again, what happens is that, once we learn that a promise has to be freely given, we amend the claim that having promised to  $\phi$  counts in favor of  $\phi$ -ing to the claim that having freely promised to  $\phi$  counts in favor of  $\phi$ -ing. So I have little doubt that premise 2 should be incorporated into the justification of my action."; Crisp, Roger (2007): "Ethics Without Reasons?" *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. 4(1), p. 46.
  7. Dancy seems to be a bit inconsistent here. In the above example he shows that a favourer alone is identical with reason. See, Dancy (2004), p. 39. But, just two pages later he gives another example: "... that someone is asking you time is a reason to tell them, a reason that *would not exist* if their purpose were to distract you so that their accomplice can steal your bag." See Dancy (2004), p. 40 (my italic). From this second example it seems that to have the status of being reason a favourer needs to be combined with a suitable enabler. Otherwise, that feature is not a reason.

I stick to the view that what favours my doing the action is that I engaged myself to do so. But it is hard to know how to tell whether this is correct or not. One clue is that those who recognize that their promise was deceitfully extracted from them often feel some compunction in not doing what they promised, even though they themselves recognize that in such circumstances their promise does not play its normal reason-giving role.<sup>27</sup>

That is, Dancy defends his position on the ground of this 'feeling of compunction.' This seems to me unconvincing. I think a deceitfully extracted promise does not give any rational constraint on my action. In choosing what to do I can simply ignore such promise because it has been extracted from me in a manner (deceitfully) which annuls its validity. Still, if I feel some sort of compunction for breaking such deceitful promise, it is because I am misled by my feelings. Roger Crisp maintains a similar view. He thinks that if there exist such a feeling of compunction, then this feeling of compunction is nothing but a remnant of our moral upbringing. Crisp writes about this feeling of compunction in the following way:

I confess that this is a phenomenon [the said feeling of compunction] I fail to recognize. But even if it exists, it is best explained as a remnant of our moral upbringing, in which we are taught the simple principle that it is wrong to break promises.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, Brad Hooker admits that those who recognize that their promise was deceitfully extracted often feel some compunction in not doing what they promised to do. But, unlike Dancy, he thinks that this feeling of compunction does not provide any ground for the claim that a promise by itself favors an action even if the promise was extracted deceitfully or was given under duress. People, Hooker says, may feel obligated when they are not really obligated, but their feeling should not be counted as a reliable guide to moral reality.<sup>29</sup> But if there is no rational constraint to keep such promises that are deceitfully extracted, then why do people feel the compunction? Hooker says that there are, in fact, scopes of *dispute* and *uncertainty* in cases of breaking such promises. This sort of dispute and uncertainty are the sources of the said feeling of compunction.<sup>30</sup> These dispute and uncertainty are about whether the alleged misinterpretation, or duress, or threat, or deception is sufficient to break the promise. And once the promisor is confirmed that he has sufficient reason to break the promise, all the scopes of dispute and uncertainty disappear. In such cases the promisor should not have any feeling of compunction. Hooker gives an example:

Another good test case is one where it is absolutely clear to the promisor that her promise was made as a result of the other party's threatening to infringe someone's moral rights. In such cases, the promise is not morally binding and imposes on the promisor no good reason for action. If some people would nevertheless feel compunction about breaking such a promise, I think they are naïve.<sup>31</sup>

I do agree with Crisp and Hooker that even if there exists some sort of feeling of compunction in breaking deceitful promises, this feeling of compunction does not provide any rational ground for the promisor to act in accordance of such promise.<sup>8</sup> Here I would like to add that it is also reasonable that one who recognizes that one's promise was extracted deceitfully might be happy to break such a promise without feeling any sort of compunction. And, in such a case one's behavior (breaking the promise) is neither irrational nor immoral. To support my position here I offer a Dancy-style example but with a different conclusion:

1. I promised to do it.
2. I am able to do it.
3. My promise was given under duress.
4. Thus, I have greater (or some) reason not to do it.
5. So: I do not do it.

I do not see any flaw in above reasoning. I believe that (1)-(4) support (5) without involving any feeling of compunction.<sup>9</sup> And, I do not find any reason to say that such a behavior of breaking a promise is irrational or immoral or stupid. Now, if my position is correct—and I believe it is—then it proves that the premise (1), in Dancy's original example, does not favor the action, i.e. conclusion (5), if it is not combined with (2). In other words, premise (1) favors (5) if it is combined with premise (2).

Now I will focus on Dancy's premises (3) and (4), i.e. general enabler and what I call mediating-enabler. It is true that one has a reason to do

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8. Joseph Raz has a similar view regarding the matter. He thinks that people who feel compunction for breaking deceitfully extracted promise are simply mistaken about moral reality. Raz says: "If there are such people (I am not one) then the obvious explanation is that they are mistaken to feel such compunction." (Raz, Joseph (2006): "The Trouble with Particularism (Dancy's version)", *Mind*, Vol 115. 457, p. 105)

9. Even if it involved a feeling of compunction, it would not be a big issue as we have seen earlier that such feelings should not be considered as a guide of moral reality.

something only if one has the ability to do that.<sup>10</sup> And, if one does not have the ability to do something, one does not have a reason to do that, does not matter whether he promised to do that or not. Dancy does not disagree in this point. He says that one cannot have a reason to do an action that one is incapable of doing.<sup>32</sup> The point of disagreement is that Dancy thinks that (1) is a favourer in respect of (5) even if it is unable to play its favoring role without being combined with (2) and (3) (and (4) too), whereas I hold the view that if what really favors (5) is the combination of (1), (2) and (3) (and (4) too), then it is the combination of the relevant features, not the (1) alone, which is the favourer in respect to (5). I will discuss it in detail in the next paragraph. Now I consider the premise (4) of Dancy's example. Dancy rightly mentions that (4) is required to deduce (5) from (1)-(4). The presence of a greater reason might defeat (1)-(3), and hence, (1)-(3) might fail to favor (5). That is, the absence of a greater reason against the promised action is required for (1)-(3) to play their favoring role. So, again, it is clear that (4) needs to be combined with (1)-(3) to provide reason for (5), i.e. to favor (5).

Thus, we see, what favors the action, i.e. the conclusion (5), is the combination of favourer and what Dancy calls enablers, i.e. the premises (1)-(4). Now my point is that if it is the combination of (1)-(4) that favors (5), then this combination, not a distinct part of this combination, should be counted as the favourer. But Dancy counts the premise (1) *alone* as favourer and premises (2)-(4) as enablers. But from the above discussion it appears that the premise (1) in no way favors (5) without being combined with (2) to (4). So, if we grant Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers and accept that a favourer is in its own right a favourer, then we will face a severe difficulty. The difficulty is that there might be situations where a favourer like (1) would be counted as a favourer when it is not favoring at all due to the absence of what Dancy calls enablers. That is, in that case, we need to accept the view that some favourers are favourers when they actually do not favor the relevant action. And, it is the same to say, a reason for an action is a reason for that action even when it is not a reason for that action (again, due to the absence of Dancy's enablers). Such a view is something very weird and roundly unconvincing. Joseph Raz observes this difficulty and comments that this sort of distinction between favourers and enablers is not a view at all. He remarks:

This would require that just as favourers can be favourers even when they do not favour, so reason can be reason even when they

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10. Dancy, and me as well, agree that 'has a reason' implies 'can' in the sort of sense that 'ought' implies 'can.' See, Dancy (2004), p. 40.

are not reason for anything. ... But clearly this is not a tenable view, not a view at all.<sup>33</sup>

So, it seems that what Dancy alleges to be mere enablers is best understood as parts of favourer, and the so-called distinction between favourers and enablers is an untenable view. Hence, I reject Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers.

There is another thing that forces us to reject Dancy's distinction. This distinction between favourers and enablers involves a dilemma: either a favourer *alone* is a reason or it is not. Now, if it alone is a reason for an action, then the reason becomes context-independent. That is, whatever is a reason in one case must remain a reason in any other case, does not matter whether various enablers enable it or not. So, it goes in favor of the existence of invariant reasons, and consequently, in favor of a *principled ethics* opposing Dancy's holism as well as his particularism. Again, if it alone is not a reason, then it must be a reason when combined with relevant enablers. If such is the case, then enablers are parts of the reason. Now, if an enabler (combined with reason, of course) is a part of a reason, then a reason for an action is always a reason for that action since the relevant enabler is already included (i.e. the enabler enables the favourer) in it as its part. Thus it, like the first case, supports the existence of invariant reasons, and consequently, provides grounds for principled ethics resisting Dancy's holism and particularism as well. This dilemma can be expressed in the following argumentative way:<sup>11</sup>

1. If  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$ , then either it favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  without requiring enabling conditions, or  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only with enabling conditions.
2. If  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  without requiring enabling conditions, then  $x$  is an invariant reason.
3. Hence, if  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  without requiring enabling conditions, then there are some invariant reasons. (i.e. things go in favor of atomism instead of Dancy's holism and particularism as well).
4. If  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only when combined with all of its enabling conditions  $e$ , then  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only when combined with these enabling conditions  $e$ .

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11. I acknowledge my debt to Prof. Leonard Kahn (Loyola University New Orleans, LA, USA) for constructing the argumentative form of FRD for me. Of course, Kahn does not agree with me about FRD objection against Dancy. I will address Kahn's criticism against my FRD objection in the next couple of paragraphs.

5. If  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only when combined with all of its enabling conditions  $e$ , then  $e$  is a part of reason.
6. But a favourer to  $F$  in  $C$  with all of its enabling conditions  $e$  is an invariant reason to  $F$  in  $C$ .
7. Hence, if  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only with enabling conditions  $e$ , then there are some invariant reasons. (i.e. things go in favor of atomism instead of Dancy's holism and particularism as well.)

Therefore, (from sub-conclusions 3 and 7) if  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$ , then regardless of whether or not it does so only with enabling conditions  $e$ , there are invariant reasons. (i.e. things go in favor of atomism instead of Dancy's holism and particularism as well.)

I give the above-mentioned dilemma the name *Favourer-Reason-Dilemma* or FRD, in short. The both horns of FRD go against Dancy's holism and particularism what he intends to establish. That is, FRD shows that Dancy achieves nothing but loses a lot by introducing the distinction between favourers and enablers. So, again, we are forced to reject the distinction between favourers and enablers.

Of course, the FRD objection is not uncontestable. Leonard Kahn thinks that premises (4) and (5) of the above mentioned argumentative form of the dilemma are problematic.<sup>12</sup> For him, it is possible that  $x$  only favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  with an enabling condition  $e$  even though  $x$  is not combined to  $e$ . He holds that one's ability to make good on a promise is not combined to anything, much less one's having made the promise. He says that if one promises to  $F$  even though (unknown to one) one cannot  $F$ , one's having a promise of  $F$ -ing favors one's 'trying' to  $F$ .<sup>13</sup> So the promise alone does act as a favourer to some extent. That is, according to Kahn 'one promised to  $F$ ' and 'one can  $F$ ' are just conceptually distinct facts about the one in question. Similarly, the feature that one was sane while promising to  $F$  does not need to be combined with the promise for it to favor the relevant action. So, according to Kahn premise (4) of the dilemma is false, and if (4) is false, then (5) does not follow from it. In this way Kahn tries to break down the dilemma.

Kahn's observation is interesting and thoughtful. However, I think the dilemma can still be defended. My line of defense is that if  $x$  favors  $F$ -ing in  $C$  only with enabling condition  $e$  and if  $x$  fails to favor  $F$ -ing in  $C$  when

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12. Prof. Leonard Kahn remarks these problems via email communications with me.

13. By adding the term 'trying' Leonard Kahn tries to be consistent with the idea that 'has a reason' implies 'can' in the sort of sense that 'ought' implies 'can.'

*e* is absent, then *x* must be combined with *e* if *x* really is a favourer for *F*-ing in *C*. That is, *e* must be counted as an essential part of the favourer since without *e* nothing favors *F*-ing. In other words, if *e* is not combined with *x*, then *x* is not a favourer at all. Here, my intuition goes contrary to Kahn's. Unlike Kahn, I hold the view that 'I promised to *F*' favors my *F*-ing only if 'I can *F*.' And, if I cannot *F*, then any promise to *F*-ing does not favor my *F*-ing.<sup>14</sup> My promise to fly in the sky like a bird does not give any reason for me to fly in the sky simply because I am unable to do so. It is not a promise at all. So, again, my promise is a favourer if and only if it is combined with relevant features (Dancy's enablers; my 'other parts of favourer'). Thus, premise (4) survives and consequently (5) follows from it. So the dilemma bites. Moreover, if it could be convincingly proved that *x* is a favourer without being combined with *e*, then things would not be much different because then it would be a subject to the first horn of the dilemma which has its own bite. Hence, Dancy cannot avoid this dilemma if he maintains his strong fidelity to the distinction between favourers and enablers. Actually, the root of the dilemma lies in Dancy's two mutually exclusive endeavors. He tries to show that it is the favourer which *alone* favors an action, and at the same time, he wants to make favourers context-dependent by introducing his idea of enablers in order to support his holism. The first attempt isolates favourers from enablers whereas the second attempt combines favourers with enablers. The obvious outcome of such mutually exclusive attempts is the emergence of the dilemma which cannot be avoided unless we reject the distinction between favourers and enablers.

So, I reconfirm my view that Dancy's idea of enablers is best understood as parts of favourers, and the so-called distinction between favourers and enablers is an untenable view which does not strengthen Dancy's position but unnecessarily involves a dilemma, namely FRD. Hence, again, I reject Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers.<sup>15</sup>

After rejecting Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers I focus on his ideas of *intensifiers* and *attenuators* because I think that they can provide us good grounds for explaining the favourers-actions (or,

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14. Dancy admits that 'has a reason' implies 'can.' So, he cannot easily deny (4). See, Dancy (2004), p. 40.

15. The same is true of the distinction between disfavourers and disablers. Dancy does not discuss about this distinction. It is not needed either because this distinction is nothing but the other side of the same coin. So, we can explain and reject the distinction between disfavourers and disablers in the same way we explain and reject the distinction between favourers and enablers.

reasons—actions) relation without any appeal to the so-called distinction between favourers and enablers.

First, I consider Dancy's idea of intensifiers. An intensifier is a form of relevant consideration that relates to reason, but is not itself a reason. So, it is not a favourer. It is not an enabler<sup>16</sup> either because it does not enable the favourer for the action. What it does is that it makes the favoring relation stronger. In other words, it intensifies the reasons for the action.<sup>34</sup> Following Dancy's strategy again we take the advantage of understanding the role of intensifiers by example. Dancy's example of intensifier is:<sup>35</sup>

1. She is in trouble and needs help.
2. I am the only one person around.
3. So: I help her.

In this example, premise (2) is not a favourer because my being the only person around her does not entail that I have reasons to help her even if she is not in trouble or needs no help (the absence of (1)). According to Dancy it is not an enabler either because without it (1) is still enabled and provides reason in favor of (3)—if I am not the only person around her still I have reasons to help her.<sup>36</sup> What (2) does is that it makes the favoring relation stronger—if I am the only person around her, then I have a strong reason to help her than that if I were not the only person around her. So, (2) is neither a favourer nor an enabler but an intensifier.

I think Dancy's interpretation of intensifiers is fine. I do not have any criticism against it. What I want here is to avoid the term enabler since I have already rejected the distinction between favourers and enablers. So, I re-define 'intensifier' avoiding the term enabler, but without modifying Dancy's intuition about intensifiers:

Def: an intensifier is a relevant feature which is not a reason or favourer but makes the favourers-action relation (or, reasons-action relation) stronger.

Like favourers (and Dancy's enablers) intensifiers have their counterpart—attenuators. Dancy's example of attenuator is:<sup>37</sup>

1. She is in trouble and needs help.
2. It is all her own fault, and she got in this situation through trying to spite someone else.
3. But still: I help her.

Here (2) is an attenuator because it attenuates instead of strengthening the reason for helping her. Dancy indicates that one might think that one has a reason to help her even though it is the help-seeker herself who is

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16. Though I have rejected the distinction between favourers and enablers, in order to understand Dancy's position I use the term, *enabler*, for a while.



responsible for the trouble she faces. But this time one has less reason to help her than one would have if she were not the inviter of her trouble.<sup>38</sup>

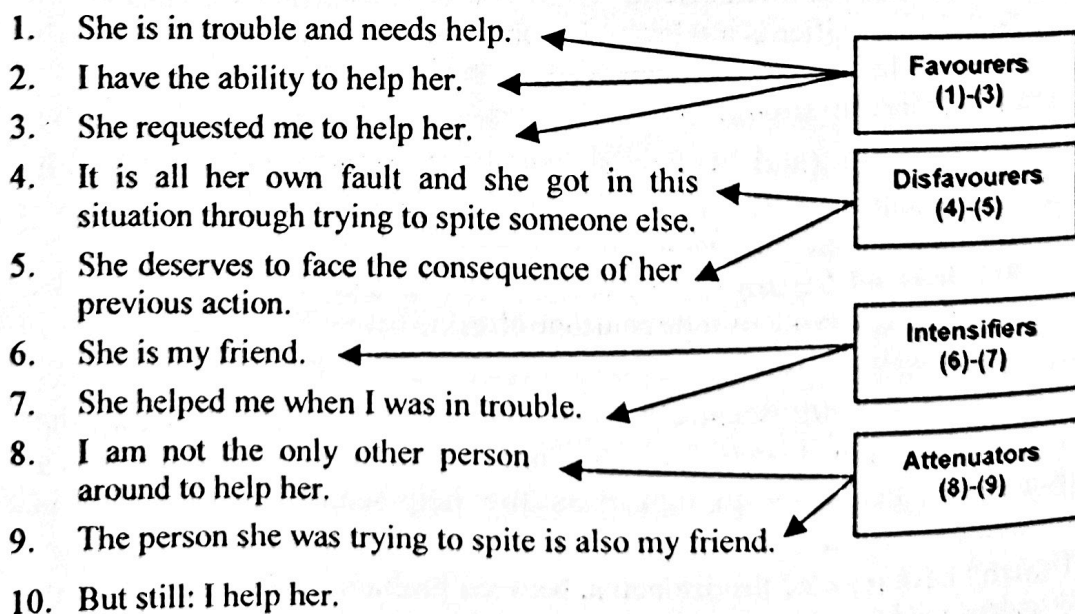
Dancy's example of attenuators leaves a scope of confusion. As the counterpart of intensifier an attenuator should be a feature that is not itself a reason but weakens the favoring relation. But, here (2) seems to be a reason. In fact, (2) provides some reason for 'not helping her.' So, this is not a good example of attenuator since it by itself is a reason for not to help her. I, thus, take it as a disfavourer instead of considering it an attenuator.

But the above-mentioned confusion does not annul the very idea of attenuators. This confusion can be avoided by re-defining the attenuator. So, my definition of attenuator is:

Def: an attenuator is a feature which is not a reason against an action or not a disfavourer for that action, but which weakens the favoring relation or strengthens the disfavoring relation.

This definition indicates two correlated aspects of attenuators: (1) they weaken the favoring relation; and/or (2) they strengthen the disfavoring relation.

Now, keeping the re-defined ideas of intensifiers and attenuators we can explain the favourers-action relation (or, reasons-action relation, if you like to say) without appealing to Dancy-style distinction between favourers and enablers. In order to explain the favourers-action relation without appealing to the said distinction I, like Dancy, take the strategy of explaining the matter by example. I believe that things appear to us in a complex way. That is, before making an overall decision in favor or disfavor of an action we encounter with different sorts of features at the same time. So, my example contains different relevant features, namely favourers, disfavourers, intensifiers and attenuators:



Here, (1)-(3) are clearly favourers since they provide reasons for helping her. On the other hand, (4)-(5) are clearly disfavourers since they provide reasons for not helping her. (6) and (7) are not favourers because one is my friend and/or one helped me when I was in trouble do not imply that I help her even if she is not in trouble and needs no help and/or I do not have the ability to help her and/or she does not request me for help. That is, in the absence of (1)-(3) neither (6) nor (7) can play their role. In other words, (6) and (7) can play their role only if at least one feature of (1) to (3) is present (in this example, at least (1) and (2) need to be present). But what is the role they play? Well, they strengthen the favoring relation between (1)-(3) and (10). So, they are intensifiers. It is worth mentioning that the question of combining favourers with intensifiers<sup>17</sup> does not arise here because favourers are completely independent of intensifiers. A favourer plays its role without the presence of any intensifier.<sup>18</sup> But intensifiers are favourer-dependent; an intensifier cannot play its role without the presence of at least one favourer. (8) is an attenuator that weakens the favourers-action relation. My reason to help her is weaker if I am not the only person around to help her than that if I were the only person around her. (9) is also an attenuator that strengthens the disfavourers. The person who tried to spite my friend deserves less assistance from me when she is in trouble. Like intensifiers, attenuators are favourers/disfavourers dependent. But favourers and disfavourers do not depend on attenuators to play their favoring/disfavoring roles. So, the question of combination between favourers-disfavourers and attenuators does not arise here.

Now, whether or not the relevant features favor an action that depends on the comparative strengths between favourers-intensifiers and disfavourers-attenuators. If the strength of favourers-intensifiers is greater than that of disfavourers-attenuators, then the features favor the action, and *vice-versa*. Of course, we do not have a ready criterion at hand to weigh their comparative strengths, but it is not impossible to find such a criterion. After all, it is a fact that in our everyday life we make such decisions using some sort of *implicit criteria*. Finding these criteria is another—though important—issue. But for now it is enough to claim that we can explain the favourers-action relation without appealing to the so-called distinction between favourers and enablers. So, my rejection of the

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17. The question of combining favourers and enablers was an appropriate question because none of them (favourers and enablers) could play its role without the presence of the other.

18. This feature might go in favor of atomism. But that is a different story. In this paper I am not focusing on that story.

distinction is not ungrounded and cannot be knocked out by appealing to the explanation of reasons-action relation.

3.

In the first section of my paper I have mentioned that Dancy's (i) distinction between favourers and enablers provides ground for his (ii) holism, and his holism provides ground for his (iii) moral particularism.<sup>19</sup> In the second section I have proved that (i) is wrong. If (i) is wrong, then (ii) is ungrounded because it is (i) which provides ground for (ii). Hence, (ii) is problematic. Again, if (ii) is problematic, then (iii) is ungrounded since (iii) is established on the ground of (ii). Hence (iii) is not well-grounded either.<sup>20</sup> In other words, since Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers is wrong, his holism and consequently his particularism both are ungrounded. In this way, by rejecting Dancy's distinction between favourers and enablers I, indeed, call the very foundation of his moral particularism into question.

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  3. Dancy (2004), p.3.
  4. Ibid, p. 7.
  5. Ibid, p. 7.
  6. Ibid, p. 7.
  7. Ibid, p. 73.
  8. Ibid, p. 34.
  9. Ibid, p. 15.
  10. Ibid, p. 15.
  11. Ibid, p. 29.
  12. Ibid, p. 29.
  13. Ibid, pp. 29, 45

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19. See my schematization of Dancy's way of establishing particularism in the first section of this paper.

20. Of course, here I do not claim that I have provided a knock-down argument that convincingly refutes the truth of Dancy's Particularism. That is not my business here. What I intended to show, and I believe I have shown, in here is that the distinction between favourers and enablers made by Dancy is baseless; and hence, his moral Particularism appears to be grounded on a feeble foundation.

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14. Ibid, p. 45.
  15. Ibid, p. 38.
  16. Ibid, p. 38.
  17. Ibid, p. 39
  18. Ibid, p. 39.
  19. Ibid, p. 39.
  20. Ibid, p. 40.
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  35. Ibid, p. 41.
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  37. Ibid, p. 42.
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