

There is a deontic restriction against some type of action Φ if, and only if, there are situations for which it holds that (i) it is morally wrong to Φ , (ii) Φ -ing would reduce the overall number of actions of the Φ -type, and (iii) there are no other morally relevant factors. For instance, it is often held that there is a deontic restriction against killing the innocent such that it will not be permissible to kill the innocent in circumstances where doing so would reduce the overall number of innocents killed. Many authors find such restrictions puzzling or even paradoxical. However, little has been said on the properties in virtue of which deontic restrictions are supposed to be puzzling – and it is surprisingly difficult to come up with an adequate account. In my talk, I will delineate five potential answers to the question as to what exactly might be puzzling about deontic restrictions. I will reject four of them and argue that it is most plausible to assume that deontic restrictions are puzzling because the time- and agent-relativity of the normatively significant features singled out by them contrasts with a victim-focussed account of wrongness that appears most adequate for many types of action for which there are deontic restrictions.