



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Is There a Reason to be Rational? Analysis of John Broome and Niko Kolodny

Al-khulaidi, Rawan

Citation

Al-khulaidi, R. (2022). *Is There a Reason to be Rational?: Analysis of John Broome and Niko Kolodny*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3307563>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Is There a Reason to be Rational?

Analysis of John Broome and Niko Kolodny

Thesis MA Moral and Political Philosophy

Leiden University

Rawan Al-Khulaidi

S2253909

May 2022

Word Count: 18100

Supervisor: Dr. Bruno Verbeek

Table of Contents

Introduction:	3
Chapter 1:	6
1.1 What is Wrong with Being Irrational	6
1.2 Rationality: Historical Perspectives	8
1.2 Rational Irrationality	11
1.4 The Reprehensive Claim of Irrationality	12
Chapter 2:	14
2.1 What is Rationality?	14
2.2 Normativity, Reasons, and Rationality	16
2.3 Reasons and Rationality	18
2.3 Rational Requirements	20
Chapter 3: Detachment (Bootstrapping) Problem	26
Chapter 4: John Broome/Niko Kolodny	33
4.1 John Broome: Wide-scope	33
4.1.1 Rationality as Reasons	33
4.1.2 Rationality as Responding Correctly to Reasons	34
4.1.3 Instrumental Reasons for Rationality	36
4.2 Niko Kolodny: Why Be Rational	38
4.2.1 Rational requirements as Process Requirements	39
4.2.2 What Other Reasons Could There Be	43
4.2.3 Solution?	45
4.3 Summary	48
Chapter 5: Analysis of the Broome/Kolodny Debate	50
5.1 The Structuralist view	50
5.2 The Mixed View	55
5.3 The anti-structuralist view	59
Chapter 6: Conclusions	61
Bibliography	64

Introduction:

Suppose there is a carefully designed device wherein you can enter your beliefs, desires, and goals, and based on an accurate algorithm, the device can theoretically produce the output of the most rational thing for you to do given your input. Are you required to do exactly as it tells you to do? The fact that it can produce the most rational decision may be a reason for you to follow it; however, the question is whether that reason is sufficient for you to always comply. That is the question of the normativity of rationality.

Most philosophers take it for granted that rationality imposes certain requirements of coherence on agents. Rationality requires certain things of us, for instance, not to be contradictory, or not to have a belief without believing its necessary consequents. These are what philosophers called rational requirements. These requirements of rationality seem plausible at face value as they explain what is wrong with incoherence.¹ Analyzing the rational requirements can give us an answer to whether they are indeed normative, in the sense that they serve as a guide that we *ought* to follow. But the follow-up question that arises is whether we have a reason to accept this guidance. The question here is whether rationality can be likened to etiquette or to the law, whereas with the law you have an external authority binding you to the rules, with etiquette you often have reason to follow its requirements, but often also not.²

My aim in this thesis is to answer the question: why should we be rational? Put simply, do we have reason to have attitudes (beliefs and intentions) that fit together in a particular

¹ Jonathan, Way. "Reasons and Rationality" *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity* Ed. by Daniel Star (2018) DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199657889.013.22

² Ibid.

manner? To answer that we must first answer these two main questions: What does rationality govern? And what are plausible reasons for one to be rational?

Meaning, to answer the ‘is there a reason to be rational’ question, we must first answer whether the rational requirements govern a conditional, “a combination of attitudes,”³ referred to as a wide-scope view of rationality, i.e., rationality requires you to either believe it is Monday or it is not Monday. Or whether they govern only a consequent of an attitude, referred to as a narrow-scope view; i.e., if you believe it is Monday, rationality requires you not to believe it is not Monday. Further, philosophers must answer the question posed by Niko Kolodny’s article ‘why be rational’ by providing possible reasons to comply with the requirements of rationality. Given that I am not able to cover all aspects of the debate on whether we have reasons to be rational, I will be focusing mainly on two influential papers by John Broome and Niko Kolodny. The debate between the two philosophers addresses many of the concerns that arise when exploring the question of the normativity of rationality hence providing valuable insights into investigating this question.

In the first chapter, I will be discussing my motivation for this research by looking at the skeptical views on rationality and its justifications as described by 20th-century philosophers and give an overview of the ways in which rationality can be, and often is, prone to error. Moreover, in this chapter, I will discuss the reprehensive dimension of irrationality, wherein the strong inclination to reprehend irrationality demonstrated by agents gives rise to the intuition that agents ought to be rational. In the second chapter, I will give a brief definition of rationality, and discuss its relation to reasons and normativity. In the third chapter, I will identify an issue that

³ Ibid.

philosophers must resolve to understand whether rationality can be normative; namely, the detaching problem.

In the fourth chapter, I will summarize John Broome and Niko Kolodny's views on the scope of rational requirements, and the reasons they offer for compliance with rationality. In the fifth chapter, I will defend Kolodny's conclusions on the basis of his Transparency Account and myth theory. However, I will also highlight some shortcomings in Kolodny's argument. I will conclude that rationality is not inherently normative and that there is no reason to always be rational, but that it can sometimes be instrumentally valuable.

Chapter 1:

1.1 What is Wrong with Being Irrational

Before delving into the technical part of this paper, it seemed prudent to first discuss the motivation for exploring this topic. On the face of it, the question of this section seems absurd. It may not be that there is something wrong with being irrational, but that being rational is what one ought to be. There are rarely any occurrences where one feels the need to explain why be rational, that is at least until a philosopher is involved. It is simply given as the best reason and explanation to settle any debate, with the sentence “you’re not thinking rationally” as the fallback to end many discussions. In that, merely invoking irrationality alone should warrant a complete change; and the onus is placed on the other party to explain why this is in fact rational, or to change their mind. ‘Rationality’ becomes the explanation, the excuse, and the reason for a thing to be done or undone.

Rationality does appear to be normative in the sense that it requires things of us. However, there are many other things that have requirements that we would not take to be normative, such as etiquette, grammar rules, or any of your favorite games. But it seems that the rational requirements and these other requirements are not equally normative. “In violating a local grammatical requirement, we are guilty of nothing more than a conventional breach. Rational requirements, by contrast, seem to be normative in a deeper sense. If we fail to comply with them, it seems that we’ve necessarily gone wrong in some deeper way.”⁴ The intuition about the wrongness of irrationality is what persuaded many philosophers to accept the existence of a standard of rationality.⁵

⁴ Nicholas Southwood. “Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality” *Ethics*. 119. 10.1086/592586. (2008) Pg. 11

⁵ Benjamin Kiesewetter “The Normativity of Rationality” *Oxford: Oxford University Press* (2017). Pgs. 24-28

Rationality is in many ways comparable to morality. The charge of an act being immoral should stop a person in their tracks to reconsider their moral defect and remedy it. While the normativity of morality has been endlessly discussed and debated, rationality was not always given that space; it is seen as an absolute. That could be a slippery slope, especially when politicized. Hence, perhaps counterintuitively, I would also ask: what is wrong with being rational? This question is important in that it highlights the problematic nature of accepting certain conclusions regarding rationality as universal truths without further query.

An attitude coming about “rationally” has in some ways also become a reflection of its being a morally good judgment. Rational became equivocal to moral in practice, in the same strain that religious requirements once were. Slavoj Zizek’s take on Lacan’s statement “if there is a God, then anything is permitted,”⁶ explains, simply, that one tends to feel free to do as they please under the banner of the sanctity of God, or another Absolute. I would make the argument that the same can be said for rationality once it is seen as an Absolute. An agent’s absurd ethical and political claims can be accepted if they pass the rationality test. But perhaps more alarmingly, another agent’s claims, although cause no discernable harm, will not be accepted since they do not pass that test.

Much like the computer can tell me whether attitude A is rational given the rest of my beliefs do I have reason to turn on the computer and follow the given outcome? This thesis will take a critical look at rationality to investigate whether this absolutist position of rationality holds ground. The rest of this chapter will look at the ways in which the consequences of rationality in practice do not support the conclusion that rationality is a valuable end in itself, nor is it always the best means to achieve valuable ends.

⁶ Slavoj, Zizek. “If There Is A God, Then Anything Is Permitted.” *Abc Religion and Ethics*. Accessed 28 March 2017. <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/04/17/3478816.htm>.

1.2 Rationality: Historical Perspectives

During the Age of Enlightenment, also known as ‘the Age of Reason’, a person’s ability to reason was glorified as the best means available to overcome many of the prevailing ailments of society. Proclaimed by Immanuel Kant as the motto of this movement, “have the courage to use your understanding”⁷ underpins the shift to reason during this period as means of emancipation and self-actualization. With the shift from religion and faith, rationality became a necessary guide that each individual can use to answer the most important socio-political and moral questions, such as “what is a good life,” “how to best form a society,” and “what is the best method for governance.” Through this period, rationality and reason were utilized to deconstruct every aspect of old values and traditions in an attempt to reach the core of what it is to lead the ideal human life. One dogma was replaced with another: rationality for religion.

Despite some pushback against rationalism⁸, encompassed perfectly in David Hume’s famous quote stating that it is “not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger,”⁹ rationality maintained its status as the primary impartial source to knowledge. It became the tool that separates the barbaric from the civilized, the wise from the ignorant, and the only way to reach the absolute truth, a notion still evident in our post-colonial world and periodically utilized as justification for colonialization among many other forms of subjugation and discrimination.¹⁰ Rationality became the cornerstone of civilization and progress, and ‘irrationality’ was viewed to be detrimental to every person and society. We have

⁷ Immanuel Kant, and Lewis White Beck. *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals, and What is enlightenment?* New York: Liberal Arts Press. (1959)

⁸ Zeev Sternhell, and David Maisel. *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*. Yale University Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm23x>.

⁹ David, Hume. “A Treatise of Human Nature” edited by L A Selby-Bigge & P H Nidditch. (Oxford University Press. 1978)

¹⁰ Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* discusses how rationality/irrationality was presented as one of the contrasting frames of depicting the relationship between West/East and which the West used as justification for imperialism

accepted the normativity of rationality. While all else was questioned, rationality was a given, its seeming universality lending to its authority.

However, in the early to mid-20th century, skepticism about the limits of the value of rationality, specifically in the socio-political sphere, started to grow, and the dangers of assuming its impartiality became clearer.¹¹ Nonetheless, the (metaphysical) normativity of rationality itself, the authority it evidently has on us, was seldom explored. One of the reasons could possibly be the fact that questioning rationality can sometimes seem to be a self-defeating venture since the only way to do so is by employing rationality itself, which could lead to total epistemological skepticism. For instance, James Dreier constructed an argument that led him to resolve that rationality must be primitively normative.¹² He concluded that since it is impossible to convince a person to be rational if they do not already possess that capacity, coupled with our intuition about rationality, rationality must be normative on a primitive level that requires no reason. He viewed rationality as responding correctly to reasons, and so whatever reasons one was given to be rational, one would only be able to respond to them if one was already rational; hence rationality is arguably a primitive ought. While it may be the case that one must possess the capacity to be rational to be persuaded to use it, it still proves to be difficult to demonstrate that all people must be rational at all times. Further, it is questionable whether rationality really is merely responding appropriately to reasons.

As can be demonstrated through many of the post-enlightenment theories, there are several possibly dangerous outcomes to this absolutist view of rationality. The Frankfurt School for instance had pioneered in critiquing the dogmatic approach to rationality and reason during

¹¹ Claudio Corradetti "The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/critical-theory-frankfurt-school/>

¹² James Dreier "Humean Doubts about the Practical Justification of Morality" in *Varieties of Practical Reasoning*. ed. by Elijah Milgram. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press (2001) Pgs. 27-48

the Enlightenment. The view on rationality was then split in two: it is what allowed humans to emancipate, for each to rely on their own intellect as expressed by Kant's statement "enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage"¹³. On other hand, as perceived by other philosophers, it also became a premise for totalitarianism when viewed as a separate objective method of relating to realist and reaching eternal truths, isolated from historical relations.¹⁴

Max Horkheimer's *On the Critique of Instrumental Reason* highlights "how reason collapses into irrationality through its emphasis on instrumental concerns."¹⁵ Rationality requires coherence, which is instrumentally valuable for achieving certain ends. It, however, becomes problematic in allowing agents to never have to reason about those ends. Intuitively, if "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions"¹⁶ as Hume claimed, one can conceive of many problems that can arise from rationality being normative for its self-interested instrumental value, perhaps most visibly in moral claims. It is difficult to ascertain whether rationality is indeed only instrumentally valuable, but as I will come to show in later chapters, it does not seem to be the case that rationality is the only means to achieve the ends you ought to achieve.

¹³ Kant

¹⁴ Corradetti

¹⁵ J.C., Berendzen, "Max Horkheimer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/horkheimer/>>.

¹⁶ David, Hume. "A Treatise of Human Nature" edited by L A Selby-Bigge & P H Nidditch. Oxford University Press. (1978)

1.2 Rational Irrationality

In practice, it seems people will believe what is most convenient.¹⁷ They occasionally fall into the trap of cognitive biases that confirm a belief they wanted to hold or dispel evidence that would cause them to question it, the principles of consistency and non-contradiction serving their purpose at times forcefully rather than gracefully, despite how intuitive it feels.

While trying to understand people's irrational behavior in politics, Bryan Caplan constructed a theory on Rational Irrationality¹⁸ that explains the irrational patterns through common biases. A theory later developed further by Michael Huemer in *Why People are Irrational About Politics*. He argues that in some cases, such as politics and religion, a person making a quick cost-benefit analysis finds it cheaper to believe things they wish to believe at the cost of their rationality. In other words, it is at times preferable for a person to be 'epistemically irrational' in order to be 'instrumentally rational'. People unintentionally choose to forego some conclusions that the evidence should have led them to or reduce the stringency of the standard of truth at which they form some of their beliefs (epistemically irrational) for the sake of a perceived greater benefit for their initial motivations (instrumentally rational).

Using Caplan's example, believing irrationally that immigrants are bad at running convenience stores could come at the cost of my having to inconvenience myself to travel further to a non-immigrant owned store. However, believing irrationally that immigrants are harming the economy comes at little to no cost to me. Therefore, I am more likely to feel the pressure to rationalize the former and continue my irrational belief in the latter.¹⁹ The two main assumptions

¹⁷ Numerous psychological and sociological have demonstrated a person's tendency to filter out information that does not support already existing beliefs. See Cognitive biases; Cognitive dissonance; Rational Irrationality

¹⁸ Bryan Caplan. "Rational Irrationality: A Framework for the Neoclassical-Behavioral Debate." *Eastern Economic Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 191–211. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40325987>.

¹⁹ Michael, Huemer. "Why People are Irrational About Politics" In: *Anomaly*, J, Brennan, G, Munger, M, Sayre-McCord, G (eds) *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*. (New York: Oxford University, 2016) Pg.461

at work in the theory of Rational Irrationality are that “individuals have *non-epistemic belief preferences* (otherwise known as “biases”)”²⁰ and that “individuals can exercise some control over their beliefs.”²¹ This theory proves valuable in highlighting the possible instrumental value of ‘irrationality’ in certain cases, making it the case that sometimes it is rational to be irrational.

1.4 The Reprehensive Claim of Irrationality

An incoherence in beliefs is a defect in rationality, one that must be repaired. It is a sign that something integral is faulty. My belief that Shakespeare did exist and that he did not exist cannot be harmful in any significant sense, at most it could cause some internal disharmony. For beliefs such as these, there does not appear to necessarily be any reason holding me back from having both these beliefs except that it demonstrates that my ability to reason is impaired. Nonetheless, instances of incoherence seem to warrant criticism, and consequently, expect a response that aims to resolve it. Herein lies the ‘ought’ that we expect rational beings to uphold. While it may be argued that rationality is instrumentally valuable, I would like to first briefly argue that in certain cases, irrationality can also be instrumentally valuable, despite the failing it demonstrates. In certain topics where a desire for a belief outweighs the facts, allowing for certain contradictions to coexist can be the most practical solution.

For instance, assume Jane was born in a religious community where she was taught to believe in creationism as the story of origin. Jane grows up to become a paleontologist and is taught the validity of the theory of evolution. She believes in evolution since her professional life demands it, but also believes in creationism since her other values (social, familial,

²⁰ Ibid, Pg. 462

²¹ Ibid.

moral...etc.) demand it. Assuming these beliefs to be contradictory, she learns to keep these two beliefs separate and continues believing in them both so as not to diminish the quality of her work while also not risk ostracization by her community. There is no attempt at reconciling these beliefs. In a way, perhaps consciously or not, she is being irrational and is content with that. In this case, that could prove to be the most instrumental manner of handling this conflict as opposed to, for instance, attempting to rationalize a more desirable belief at the expense of another. I have met one such Jane. There might be other philosophical or psychological theories that explain this pattern of behavior, such as bounded rationality, akrasia, cognitive biases...etc., however, what it demonstrates is two things: we very often fail at being rational and that sometimes irrationality is not so bad. It is an important question to ask then: how can we explain this condemnatory reaction to an agent demonstrating irrational patterns of behavior? Are the rational requirements the best means of explaining what is wrong with irrationality? If so, does that make them compulsory? This paper will hopefully provide some reasons to explain this response.

As I hope I demonstrated through these examples, my motivation for this research stems from my belief that assuming a guise of perfect rational cognition can lead to socio-political ramifications that we can only address through examining rationality. Believing that a belief formed rationally -that a belief passed our rational faculty- is always better than one formed irrationally is sanctifying rationality when it need not be. Rationality is far too fallible and narrow to act as the leading method through which we can, not only understand the world and our place in it, but also utilize as justification. While it may serve its purpose in many ways, the minimal standards of what it takes to be rational, coupled with the frequency of error, make it an unlikely candidate through which to enforce universal rules.

Chapter 2:

2.1 What is Rationality?

In this chapter, I will introduce some distinctions and concepts within rationality that are relevant for my research. I will define rationality as an agent having attitudes that fit together in a particular way, that way expressed by the requirements of rationality outlined in section 2.3. This definition, accepted by both Broome and Kolodny, is broad enough to encompass the central elements that are needed for my question and will allow me to explore further the discussion on reasons for rationality. In this formulation of what it means to be rational (not in only having the capacity to be rational, but in appropriately utilizing it) there are certain rules that an agent must follow. The question then is whether we should comply with these rules. Further, considering the importance of the relation between reason and rationality in defining rationality and answering the ‘why should we be rational’ question, I will briefly summarize this relationship in section 2.2 and offer some alternative arguments, but will not go deeper into the debate.

The first distinction that is relevant at this point is one between subjective and objective rationality.²² Subjective rationality entails that rationality is forming attitudes based on an agent’s set of desires and beliefs. This kind of rationality is chiefly instrumental in helping one achieve their end goals and is only concerned with the coherence of relations amongst one’s own attitudes. So, given that you want to get a cold drink, it would be rational for you to intend to stand up, walk to the fridge, and grab a drink. Objective rationality, on the other hand, relates to responding to reasons one might have to do something independently from one’s belief of the validity of those reasons and is not only concerned with the relationship between one’s attitudes.

²² Niko Kolodny. "Why be rational?" *Mind*, Vol. 114 (2005) Pg.510

So, as Niko Kolodny suggests, for instance, the building you are in being on fire is a reason for you to leave it, even though you may lack the desire to or may not believe you should. They both in some certain sense refer to rationality as “what one has most reason to do”²³. However, while the subjective is concerned with the relationship between your attitudes, the objective is concerned with your attitudes and your reasons for them. Each view has its limitations and possible shortcomings. Taking for instance moral issues, those that argue for the ought of subjective rationality run the risk of potentially allowing any attitude, such as committing a genocide, so long as it appropriately coheres with the rest of your attitudes, such immoralities would then be ‘rational’.²⁴ Objective rationality on the other hand leaves fundamental questions unanswered about what kind of objective reasons ought an agent to respond to, and how do we find them, a problem highlighted in morally ambiguous cases.²⁵

My question is focused only on subjective rationality, i.e., whether there are reasons for one to have the attitudes that fit together in a structurally coherent manner given their attitudes, independently from the objective outside reasons. I will be referring to the coherence of relations amongst one’s own attitudes simply as rationality moving forwards, and the guide to doing so is the rational requirements (as prescriptive and evaluative measures) in achieving that coherence. Hence, when discussing claims of whether one ought to be rational, the question is not put in terms of the reasons we might believe there are for one to believe q, but rather as it

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Charles Taliaferro “Rationality” in *Encyclopedia of sciences and religions*, ed by Anne L. C. Runehov, and Lluís Oviedo. 2013. Dordrecht: SpringerReference. Pg. 1948

²⁵ Ibid.

seems to the agent, ought they, if they believe p, to believe q (given that if p then q, and it matters to the agent that q).²⁶

2.2 Normativity, Reasons, and Rationality

For the purpose of this paper, I will sidestep the debate on whether the concept of a reason is primitive and side with T.M. Scanlon in saying, “I will take the idea of a reason as primitive. Any attempt to explain what it is to be a reason for something seems to me to lead back to the same idea: a consideration that counts in favor of it. ‘Counts in favor how?’ one might ask. ‘By providing a reason for it’ seems to be the only answer.”²⁷ While there is skepticism about the normativity of reasons, and a plethora of arguments on how to accurately define reasons, I will take for granted that there are normative reasons (reasons that explain why one ought do something) and discuss their putative relation to rationality.

Reasons in general are divided into two types: motivating and normative. The former refers to reasons for which “someone does something, a reason that, in the agent’s eyes, counts in favour of her acting in a certain way.”²⁸ They motivate an agent and are sometimes explanatory, for example, the reason why I’m going to France is to see the Eiffel tower. Normative reasons on the other hand are reasons that count in favor of an attitude (intention or a belief)²⁹ and justify it; they are guiding. These two types of reasons may overlap, but motivating

²⁶ As Gilbert Harman (1986) points out, one should only be required to believe q if it matters to the agent whether q. The clause regarding the relevance of q to the agent highlights that one should not be required to clutter their mind with useless information.

²⁷ Thomas Scanlon. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. 1998 Pg. 17

²⁸ Maria, Alvarez "Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/>.

²⁹ Since rationality cannot go beyond mental states of yours, I will only be discussing the normative reasons in justifying an *intention* and/or beliefs. I assume intentions will cause you to act in the way intended, unless you were for instance, bound by physicality.

reasons are seldom reasons that apply universally, as opposed to normative reasons. What I am looking for here exactly by asking ‘is there a reason to be rational’ is the kind of reason that counts universally in favor of rationality; one that justifies and explains why rational agents ought to have a coherence of attitudes.

To expand, by normative here I am referring to what makes an attitude “authoritative or binding for a person”³⁰. Normativity entails that an agent ought to do or not do something based on either there being a reason for it; or that it is required. ‘Required’ in this sense goes beyond merely a standard of appraisal for whether an agent is behaving within the bounds of a particular doctrine, such as law, grammar, or etiquette. Normative here is used in a strict sense that requires deliberation and is always supported by the balance of reasons.

Following other philosophers,³¹ I take there to be broadly two types of normative reasons, sufficient and decisive. Both types of reasons justify a belief or intention, however, the point is that they arguably do so to different degrees. While sufficient reasons justify an attitude, in the sense that a sufficient reason counts in favor of an attitude in the overall balance, decisive reasons require an attitude. Meaning, decisive reasons always tip the scale toward having an attitude. “If you have overall sufficient reason to ϕ , then your ϕ -ing is justified or normatively permitted (you may ϕ). If you have overall decisive reason to ϕ , then your ϕ -ing is mandatory or normatively required (you ought to ϕ , or should ϕ).”³²

For instance, your belief that it is unbearably cold in Russia is a sufficient reason for you not to intend to go there in the winter. However, that can be outweighed by another reason, for instance, that it was your mother’s dying wish to visit St. Petersburg with you in wintertime

³⁰ Kiesewetter. Pg. 3

³¹ Both Kiesewetter (2017) and Broome (2007) take there to be different types of normative reasons.

³² Kiesewetter, Pg. 8

before she passes. Decisive reasons are reasons of a different kind, wherein that means they “require a response,”³³ and are not outweighed by other sufficient reasons. Examples of these kinds of reasons are found most commonly in moral theory. For instance, assume that you made a promise to your mother that you would visit St. Petersburg with her while it was snowing. This promise is then a decisive reason for you to ought to go to St. Petersburg with your mother in wintertime.

In questioning the normativity of rationality, I am investigating whether there is a decisive reason for one to be rational. To be more precise, as Kolodny explains, I will also question of the normativity of rationality through asking how “the sense in which we ‘ought’ to comply with requirements of rationality—is related to the normativity of reasons—the sense in which we ‘ought’ to have the attitudes what we have conclusive reason to have.”³⁴ I have already established that there is some normative force in reasons. Reiterated in this context, the question would be “why ought we have attitudes what we have conclusive reason for,” which requires another reason and “thus presupposes the very thing it is questioning: the normative authority of reasons.”³⁵

2.3 Reasons and Rationality

The questions that arise when looking into this connection are: is the normativity of rationality straightforwardly that of reasons? Does the ‘ought’ of rationality then simply mean the ought of reasons? And if we take the requirements of rationality as normative, do they lend their normative force from that of reasons? The relation between reasons and rationality is one

³³ Ibid. Pg. 9

³⁴ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 509

³⁵ Kiesewetter. Pg.4

that has been carefully studied, and with good reason, however, that goes beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I will only briefly highlight why this relationship is important here but will explore a part of it further through Broome's arguments in Chapter 4.

An important distinction that I should highlight at this point is regarding what it means to be rational, or what it means to ask the question of 'why ought I be rational'. Some philosophers view rationality as constitutive of what it means to be an agent with intentions and beliefs, therefore there is no question about why we ought to be rational, the reason to comply with rational requirements is that that is what constitutes our agency (our will, desires, beliefs, and intentions). Not complying with the rational requirements simply no longer makes us agents. "By willing in conformity with the principles of rationality, we confer the status of being a reason on features of the world."³⁶ Other philosophers view reasons as independent from rationality. Reasons are primitive building blocks of our understanding of the world, thus, given the apparent normativity of rationality, it is a very valid question to ask for a reason as to why we ought to be rational.

Rationality as a constitutive element of what it means to be a believer and intender circumvents the debate about reasons for rationality by appealing to an ideal rational being. However, the arguments for compliance with rationality in terms of its constitutive value of agency seem to offer an unappealing account as it puts incredible pressure on agents to consistently be rational. It appears to be a very demanding account. I find the stringency that it places on agents, to express their full agency, extreme and not feasible. Rational agents frequently fail at exercising their rationality, however, that in no way reduces their agency. Thus, I will not be looking at the constitutive account in-depth in this paper and will direct my

³⁶ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 511

attention to the second account that is focused on reasons for rationality to provide a better ground for exploring the question. I will however briefly return to the constitutive account in Chapter 5 as a possible instrumental reason for rationality.

Thus, I will take it that when exclaiming that “it would be rational for you to p”, we are evidently saying, there is a reason for you to ought to judge that you ought to p. Assuming the normativity of reasons to be a primitive, in the sense that your belief that having most reason to p is sufficient for you to ought to p, I will further explore this question through the ‘reasons’ claim, which aims to offer substantive reasons for complying with rationality. Within the scope of reasons for rationality however a distinction between state-given reasons and object-given reasons, as termed by Derek Parfit, has important implications. State-given reasons generally are reasons that count in favor of one being in a certain state itself, while object-given reasons are reasons that count in favor of the object of the thing which it is a reason for. State-given reasons are those that demonstrate how it would be good or beneficial in some way to have an attitude p, whereas object-given reasons are those that demonstrate evidence for p.³⁷ For example, a billionaire offering you a million dollars to *intend* to drink a toxin may be a state-given reason for you to ought to intend to, but it is not an object-given reason.³⁸ This distinction will become more relevant when looking at reasons for rationality in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.3 Rational Requirements

Given that I take the definition of rationality as having attitudes that fit together in a specific way, there are a few rules that guide us in regard to what patterns of attitudes are not allowed; we call these rules rational requirements. These rules regulate certain propositions of

³⁷Derek Parfit, and John Broome. “Reasons and Motivation.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 71 (1997): 99–146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106956>.

³⁸ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 550.

yours into a coherent thought pattern. For one to be considered rational, they cannot exhibit certain patterns of thought, for instance, they cannot believe both p and $\neg p$. In order to avoid and remedy such a rational failing, the rational requirements are used as a blueprint with which one can trace which are acceptable patterns. An agent does not sit and deliberate these requirements, they are for the most part appealed to by intuition and an agent tends to comply naturally. It is only when they are violated that some deliberation is required. Accordingly, when giving a charge of irrationality, we are effectively pointing out a requirement that an agent has violated. Rational requirements simply refer to the criteria that one needs to fulfill to be considered a rational agent, and what they require is “primarily states of your mind, not bodily functions.”³⁹ Thus, they relate to mental states (beliefs and intentions) and are a standard by which we can measure whether a rational agent is indeed forming attitudes rationally or not. Furthermore, they are local. They only relate to certain attitudes of yours in relation to one another, for instance, they require coherence between your beliefs and your intentions. If you believe you ought to x , you ought to intend to x . They are concerned with violations of this local kind and do not pose a constraint on all of your attitudes together. Having a global restriction on your attitudes requires an “all things considered” attitude, which I take to be the sum of all the different local requirements that govern particular conflicts. In a global requirement, the different local requirements may weigh differently into the all things considered view of rationality. However, the particular rational requirements, as I take them to be, are related to a conflict between specific attitudes, and thus are local.

A few plausible requirements that I will be focusing on throughout the paper are requirements of non-contradiction, means-ends coherence, belief coherence and enkrasia. The

³⁹ John Broome. “Does Rationality Give Us Reasons” *Philosophical Issues*, 15. (2005). Pg. 323

requirement of non-contradiction states that one cannot, for instance, believe that it is both Monday and not Monday. Means-end coherence requirement states that if you, for instance, intend to get to the train station, and you believe the bus is the only way to get there, you must intend to take the bus. Enkrasia entails that when you believe you ought to drink water, you ought to intend to drink water. The above-mentioned rational requirements take these different forms:

NC: “if you believe p, rationality requires you not to believe -p”

ME: “if you intend to x, and you believe y is a necessary means to x-ing, rationality requires you to intend to y”

BC: “if you believe that p, and you believe that (if p then q), and if it matters to you whether q, rationality requires you to believe q”

E: “if you believe you ought to x, rationality requires you to intend to x”

The question that this paper is trying to answer is whether the fact that there are requirements for rationality means that there is a reason for one to ought to follow those requirements. Thus, philosophers are divided between three main views:

The structuralist view: There are requirements of rationality, and these requirements are normative.

The mixed view: There are requirements of rationality, but these requirements are not normative.

The anti-structuralist view: There are no requirements of rationality.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kiesewetter, Pg. 20-21

My task in this paper will not be to analyze the plausibility of the rational requirements, as I will be taking those at face value based on my own intuition and that of other philosophers before me. My aim is to investigate whether the first or second view is plausible, given that I have found very little evidence to support the third view.

A theory of rationality, it is argued, should plausibly meet two conditions: to allow for evaluation of whether an agent's responses are rational; and it must be able to guide an agent over time.⁴¹ Rational requirements should in effect not only direct a person on what attitudes to avoid but also on how to avoid getting into the state of having conflicting attitudes. For a requirement to be guiding, it should not only ban a person from being in a state of contradiction (believing *p* and *-p*), since we would not for example consider it rational if one were to, by some external force, transition from a state of conflict to a state of coherence, say for instance by being struck on the head.⁴² The requirement should plausibly also guide an agent into resolving that state of contradiction by a process of reasoning so as to avoid falling into the same irrational pattern again (of believing both *p* and *-p*). This 'process' requires some deliberation and reasoning by the agent to reach a satisfying conclusion of why they ought to believe *p* or why they ought to believe *-p*, it is diachronic.

This distinction between the requirements as synchronic vs. diachronic is important in determining whether the rational requirements are normative. As Kolodny explains, rational requirements can either be 'state requirements,' i.e., synchronic, in that they govern a specific conflict in attitudes (rationality requires one not to believe *p* and *-p*), or 'process-requirements' i.e., diachronic, which tell a person how to resolve a conflict over time through a process of

⁴¹ Andrew Reisner. "Unifying the Requirements of Rationality" *Philosophical Explorations*, 12:3, (2009) Pgs. 243-260

⁴² Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 517

reasoning from the content of one's attitudes to arrive at a belief or intention⁴³. While it is arguable that some requirements can be state requirements, the question of whether there are process-requirements will be relevant in identifying the scope of the rational requirements, thus bringing us one step closer to answering whether rationality is normative.

I have tasked myself with investigating whether there is a reason that justifies and explains this authoritative pressure we feel to be rational. That entails asking which of these claims is likely to be true:

Contributory Normativity (CN): If A is rationally required to p, then A has a reason to p.

Strict Normativity (SN): If A is rationally required to p, then A has decisive reason (or ought) to p. ⁴⁴

Non-Normative (NN) : A has no reason to P, even if A is rationally required to p.

Where p here means to form or drop a belief or intention. Many have preferred the contributory claim of the normativity of rationality to avoid a number of issues that arise when asking the normative question.⁴⁵ Further, some philosophers prefer this view since they believe that sometimes you ought to be irrational, for instance, if being irrational can help save your life in an Orwellian double-think fashion. However, I find this weaker claim of normativity firstly not sufficient to fully capture the intuition that there is demonstrably something wrong when one exhibits incoherence in attitudes. Rational requirements merely being *a* reason for one to p is not reflected in our reprehension of someone's irrational attitude. We do not tend to perceive

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Kiesewetter, Pg 20

⁴⁵John Broome. "Wide or Narrow Scope". *Mind*, Vol. 116 (2007)

accusations of irrationality as reasons that can be weighed against many others to decide whether one should remedy the rational failing. We provide it as a decisive reason, that generally cannot be outweighed by other considerations, that one ought to resolve that incoherence rationally. Hence, while I will be exploring some arguments against CN, I am mainly looking for a reason to support SN. While CN suggests that you may at times have reason to play by the rules when you enter the football field, other times you may not and can start dribbling the ball. I focus on whether you have to play precisely by the rules every time you go into the football field. To find out, I first must discuss the scope of the rational requirements to elucidate some possible problems that can arise from different formulations.

Chapter 3: Detachment (Bootstrapping) Problem

In this chapter, I will first explain what the detachment problem is and why it is significant for the question of the normativity of rationality. I will then explain how it can be resolved by assuming a wide scope for rational requirements.

As you will recall, a strictly normative claim of rationality would be:

SN: If rationality requires one to A, then one has decisive reason (or ought) to A.

If one were to believe in two directly contradictory beliefs, we would assume them to be irrational. A requirement of rationality, NC, is being violated. Assume A here to be the simple ban on contradictions, one cannot believe both p and not p (-p), one cannot believe it is both Monday and not Monday. A narrow-scope rational requirement to settle this contradiction would then take the form of:

NC-NS: If one believes p, rationality requires one to not believe it is -p.

This is a narrow-scope view of rational requirements, meaning that the normative requirement is placed solely on the consequent of a given attitude: if you believe p then you ought to (not believe not -p.) According to SN, you ought to follow the rational requirements. So if you believe it is Monday, you ought not to believe it is not Monday. Once an antecedent p is satisfied (you believe it is Monday), the consequence of that belief p can be detached from the antecedent and be the basis for your belief, i.e., rationality requires you to not believe -p (it is not

Monday) regardless of whether $\neg p$ was what you should believe given some other evidence, for instance, the calendar says that it is Tuesday. Given this normative formulation of rational requirements, such as the ban on contradictions, you would have decisive reason to believe that it is Monday; namely, your belief that it is. This leads to unacceptable bootstrapping since an agent is able to self-affirm their reasons for an attitude.

If SN were true, given the formulation of A-NS, rational requirements then seem to be able to become self-justifying by seemingly generating decisive reasons for an agent's already existing attitudes, yielding unacceptable conclusions. You would be required to believe your already existing beliefs. For instance, in the example mentioned above, if one believes it is Monday, it seems rationality would require one to believe it is Monday. Since rationality requires coherence, a rational requirement taking the narrow-scope form could allow for this further conclusion to be drawn: if one believes p , rationality requires one to believe what p entails (that it is not the case that $\neg p$). Since the requirement is only placed on the consequent of a belief, rationality requires me to believe what p entails, and since p entails p , rationality requires me to believe p .⁴⁶ If I believe it is Monday, rationality requires me to not believe it is Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. in other words, I ought to only believe it is Monday. Taken as a modus ponens, the problem can be illustrated as follows, where p is to believe it is Monday, and q is to not believe it is not Monday:

If $p \supset I \text{ ought to } q$

p

⁴⁶ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 514

∴ I ought to q

Since I ought to q, and since q entails p, the following also follows:

If q>p

q

∴ p

Leaving us with a conclusion of: if you believe p then you ought to believe p. Being permitted to detach attitude 'q' from its antecedent 'p' allows for conclusions to be drawn from q independently and not in relation to the truthfulness or falsity of p, thus requiring an agent to have attitudes that do not necessarily need to follow. This poses a problem as it entails that an agent ought to adopt an attitude by virtue of an antecedent attitude for which they may or may not have a reason to adopt. Therefore, the bootstrapping problem makes the normativity of rationality implausible.

To further illustrate, I will focus on two other plausible requirements of rationality that may further clarify the significance of this problem: namely that of Means-Ends Coherence, and Enkrasia.

ME – NS: if you intend to x, and you believe y is a necessary means to x-ing, rationality requires you to intend to y.

E – NS: if you believe you ought to x, rationality requires you to intend to x.

In the case of Means-Ends coherence, a lack of intention to ‘y’ violates the requirement, thus an accusation of irrationality is appropriate⁴⁷. To resolve this incoherence, a narrow-scope view of rationality would then require you to intend to ‘y’. This can at times lead to unreasonable conclusions. Take for example my intention to rob a bank. I believe that killing the security guard is necessary for my end goal, I however do not intend to kill the guard. I am thus violating a rational requirement and can only satisfy it by intending to kill the guard. Or, for instance, Tonya intends to win a match, she believes injuring her opponent is necessary for her to win, therefore rationality requires her to intend to injure her opponent. If rationality is normative then one ought to do things that intuitively appear as things that in fact one ought not to do. I should not intend to kill, nor should Tonya injure her opponent. These intentions, however, if Means-Ends were normative, are the only options in the narrow-scope formulation of rational requirements. Instead, one should perhaps have the option to revise the intention regarding the ends, or the belief of the necessary means. The detachment of the consequent is thus problematic as it allows for these absurd conclusions to pass as normative requirements. The same argument follows for the enkratic requirement. If you believe you ought to commit genocide, rationality requires you to intend to do so. If N were true, rationality would require some perverse attitudes from agents, such as committing a genocide. Hence, we cannot reasonably accept that rationality is strictly normative.

This detaching problem highlights how if the rational requirements were normative, they would license absurd conclusions. One would be able to bootstrap a reason for any attitude into existence simply by adopting it. A narrow-scope formulation of rational requirements, then,

⁴⁷ There is some controversy regarding the ‘rational’ component in means-ends transmission, as well as enkrasia, as some have suggested that it does not necessarily fall under the rational faculty or can be explained away by weakness of will. I, along with Broome and Kolodny will take these to be a failure of rationality, therefore a violation of rational requirements, as opposed to requirements of some other kind.

cannot be normative. This formulation of rational requirements leads you to abandoning or forming attitudes that you indeed should not have abandoned or formed given the evidence available to you.

To avoid this problem, a wide-scope view of the rational requirements may be more plausible, wherein detachment is not possible and the two beliefs are joined in a conditional. A wide-scope view of the rational requirements stipulates that “rational requirements are not conditionals whose consequent says that a certain attitude is required. Rather, they are requirements to conform to a conditional.”⁴⁸ Thus rational requirements govern patterns of attitudes or beliefs, which only require consistency between your attitudes. So for example, in a state of contradiction (one believing p and $\neg p$) which we are trying to resolve, wide-scopers argue that rationality does not require one to merely drop the belief in $\neg p$, but the requirement is a condition on the attitudes one can have which can be resolved in one of two ways. The requirement is not, if p (then $\neg p$), rather it is, either $(p, \neg p)$. The wide-scope rational requirement is:

A-WS: rationality requires one to (if they believe p , to not believe $\neg p$)

In this formulation, the bootstrapping problem is resolved by requirements governing a conditional wherein the detachment of the consequent is not permissible and so the agent is not required to only have one particular attitude (required to not believe $\neg p$). Rather the conditional allows the agent to resolve the conflict by either revising their belief that p , or revising their belief that $\neg p$, and can resolve the conflict by either dropping p or $\neg p$. So, in other words, A-WS

⁴⁸ Jonathan Way “The Normativity of Rationality” *Philosophy Compass* 5/12 (2010): 1057–1068, 10.1111/j.1747-9991.2010.00357. Pg. 1059

requires the agent to either (believe it is Monday, or believe it is not Monday). Given conclusive evidence that it is not Monday, you are permitted to drop the belief that it is Monday. This avoids the detaching problem a narrow-scope version would face since the requirement is merely a pattern of thought and not a single attitude.

Taking a wide-scope view of means-end coherence, the following formulation of the requirement would be:

Means-Ends-WS: rationality requires me to (if I intend to x, and believe that y is necessary for x-ing, to intend to y).

In the case that an agent is lacking the intention to y, and so is violating a rational requirement, the wide-scope view offers a plausible solution as it gives the rational agent more than one way to resolve it. They can do so either by revising their intention to x, revising their belief that y is necessary, or revising their lack of intention to y. In the bank robbery case, I am not required to intend to kill the guard. I can satisfy the requirements by either dropping the intention to rob the bank, or dropping the belief that killing the guard is a necessary means to that end, or in a worst-case scenario, intending to kill the guard.

As for enkrasia the requirement would take the following form:

E- WS: Rationality requires one to (if they believe they ought to x, then they ought to intend to x)

Allowing an agent to remedy their rational failing by revising their attitudes based on the evidence available to them, and thereafter either drop the belief that they ought to x, or form an intention to x.

While the wide-scope view of rationality does solve the detachment problem, thus allowing us to reintroduce the question of whether there is decisive reason to be rational and further explore the truthfulness of SN, this view does not come without objections.⁴⁹ I will not be exploring these objections and challenges against the wide-scope view in full here. I will mention one prominent challenge to this solution in my analysis. My focus in the next chapters will be exploring whether all rational requirements do indeed have a wide-scope. If it can be shown that some rational requirements necessarily have narrow-scope that would reintroduce the detachment problem, thus invalidating the normativity of rationality. Moreover, I will be discussing the validity of the putative reasons we have to accept the normativity of rationality.

⁴⁹ Kiesewetter, Pgs. 86-102

Chapter 4: John Broome/Niko Kolodny

4.1 John Broome: Wide-scope

John Broome is a proponent of the wide-scope view. He argues that considering the consequences of a narrow-scope view in invalidating rational requirements, it is preferable to assume that rational requirements have a wide rather than narrow scope.⁵⁰ Given that Broome takes rational requirements to be wide scope, he has circumvented the bootstrapping problem and moves on to identify the plausible reasons we have to vindicate the normativity of rationality in his article *Does Rationality Give Us Reason*⁵¹. Broome attempts to find these reasons through two means: first by exploring the relationship between reasons and rational requirements; second, by deriving normativity from other normative requirements in relation to rational requirements. He takes the normativity of rationality to mean that necessarily, rational requirements constitute either sufficient or decisive reasons.⁵² Hence, to vindicate the normativity of rationality, he has to prove either that when rationality requires one to p, that is a decisive reason for one to ought to p; or in a weaker contributory claim of normativity, when rationality requires one to p, that fact is a reason for one to p, however, it is one that could be outweighed by other moral or prudential reasons for instance.

4.1.1 Rationality as Reasons

Broome first argues that one of the reasons the question regarding the normativity of rationality has been sidestepped by many philosophers is due to an etymological reason that

⁵⁰ Broome, 2007. Pg. 364

⁵¹ Broome, 2005. Pg. 323

⁵² Ibid., Pg. 325

draws a conceptual link between rationality and reasons. 'Reason' and 'rationality' were commonly used interchangeably to mean the same thing. The confusion between reason as a faculty and reasons as facts or propositions counting in favor of something implies a sense of normativity that is not there. Given that we accept that reasons are primitively normative, this ambiguity of rationality being synonymous with reasons thereby implies a false notion of normativity. Rationality is concerned with the relations between your attitudes, the normativity that is in question is whether you ought to form your attitudes in a coherent manner as prescribed by the rational requirements. He demonstrates that it is not the case that these closely linked terms are connected since rationality is only but one component of the mass-noun 'reason', and as for the count-noun 'a reason' or 'reasons' the connection to rationality is more obscure and is in fact what is in question. Whether there is indeed a reason to be rational or what the connection may be. What this demonstrates is that the normativity of rationality is not straightforwardly that of reasons.

4.1.2 Rationality as Responding Correctly to Reasons

Broome then explores whether there is another way to establish a connection between rationality and reasons. It is also commonly thought that rationality is the faculty of responding correctly to reasons. If rationality is just responding correctly to reasons, then perhaps one does have decisive reason to be rational because of the normativity of reasons. However, Broome's analysis of the subject matter leads him to the argument that that is not the case either. In that way, rational requirements are then themselves not normative, thus rationality is not normative in Broome's sense.

His objection to the argument that rationality is responding correctly to reasons is based on understanding those reasons as mental states of yours. The reasons you respond to would evidently have to be mental states of yours since we would not consider you to be irrational in cases where you do not respond correctly to reasons that you are unaware of. So if we assume these reasons to be mental states, then you either cannot fail to know about them and then consequently respond to them correctly, or you could respond correctly to them without knowing.⁵³ For example in the case of your belief that p , and your belief that if $p > q$, you have a reason to believe q . If it matters to you whether q , you would respond correctly to those reasons by believing that q . Therefore, your mental states, i.e., your beliefs and intentions, constitute your reason to believe that q . However, the reason you ought to believe q is because it is required by rationality, and not because of the reasons that support the belief that q .

The question of why you ought to believe q in (if p then q) is not explained by your belief (p , and if $p > q$). Rather, you ought to believe q because that is what rationality requires of you. An assumption of the normativity of rational requirements is already made, leaving the question begged. In other words, the normativity of rationality cannot be grounded in responding correctly to reasons since one only ought to respond in that particular way (to form the belief that q) based on an assumption that the rational requirement of coherence of modus ponens gives you a sufficient or decisive reason to form this attitude. Hence this response to the combination of attitudes is only correct because of rational requirements.⁵⁴

In sum, rationality cannot be the faculty of responding correctly to reasons since those reasons would have to be internal to you, given that you are not irrational for not responding correctly to external reasons you are unaware of. If they are internal, then responding correctly

⁵³ Broome, 2005. Pg. 329

⁵⁴ Ibid., Pg. 330

to those reasons amounts to responding in a coherent manner that is required by the rational requirements. This does not help us in answering whether the requirements are normative, it presupposes that they are. For rationality to be normative according to Broome, rational requirements should necessarily be providing reasons themselves; decisive or sufficient as they may be, which they seemingly so far do not.

4.1.3 Instrumental Reasons for Rationality

After exhausting the possible connections between reasons and rationality, Broome attempts to find derivative reasons to explain the normativity of rationality. He does that by exploring the value of rationality in an instrumental sense. Broome first explores whether rationality is directly instrumental in helping you achieve other normative requirements (moral, prudential, epistemic...etc.). If rationality is the best means of achieving those ends, then it plausibly derives its normativity from the normativity of these other oughts. For instance, taking for granted that prudence is normative, you ought to be prudent. Assuming rationality is the best means available to you at any given moment to fulfill a requirement of prudence, then, it is plausible that you ought to be rational. He objects to this explanation on the grounds that sometimes rationality requires things of you based on false beliefs of yours that perhaps you ought not to do or have. For instance, you falsely believe that your exam is next week when it was in fact today. Given your false belief, you do not intend to go to the exam, and consequently do not go to the exam. Hence, rationality may not always be the best means to fulfill other normative requirements. One can conceive of many such examples where rationality requires you to do things that you ought not to do.

Broome then goes on to attempt to find an indirect instrumental explanation by assuming that maybe one ought to have the rational faculty since it is instrumental. He defines this faculty as “a bundle of dispositions and abilities that causes you to satisfy many of the requirements of rationality.”⁵⁵ If the rational faculty is the best means to achieving much of what you ought to do, then perhaps you ought to have the rational faculty. However, he then reaches the conclusion that this still does not support the normativity of rational requirements. Suppose it can be shown that you ought to have the rational faculty. Then this faculty will only *sometimes* cause you to satisfy rational requirements, but it does not entail that you ought to satisfy the individual requirements. He compares it to taking a drug that has side effects. You ought to take the drug to cure the illness, however, there is no reason that you ought to have the side effect of unsteadiness that the drug causes. The reason why you feel unsteady is because of the drug, but here we use reason in terms of an explanation rather than as a normative reason. The rational faculty disposing you to satisfy the rational requirements is only an explanation of why you did, and not a reason why you ought to.⁵⁶ The rational faculty can only transmit the normativity to the rational requirements if one were to be “fully rational.”⁵⁷ If one were fully rational, then they would comply with the individual requirements at all times, in every instance. However, that is psychologically not feasible. Hence, it seems that you have neither sufficient nor decisive reasons to satisfy the particular rational requirements even if you ought to have the rational faculty.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Pg. 333

⁵⁶ John Broome, “Is Rationality Normative” *Disputatio* 2 (23):161-178. (2017) DOI [10.2478/disp-2007-0008](https://doi.org/10.2478/disp-2007-0008) Pg. 175

⁵⁷ Ibid., Pg. 176

In sum, it seems that even if rational requirements have wide-scope, it still proves very difficult to find a reason that makes it necessary for one to comply with rational requirements. Therefore, it seems that rational requirements are not in fact normative, neither in a contributory nor in a strict manner.

4.2 Niko Kolodny: *Why Be Rational*

In his paper *Why Be Rational?*⁵⁸ Niko Kolodny argues against the main premise that Broome took for granted, which is that rational requirements must have wide-scope since otherwise, we face the detachment problem. While Broome's argument is mainly centered around answering the question of what reasons there are to be rational, Kolodny tackles the question of whether we have a reason to be rational by first, taking on the question of the scope of the rational requirements; and second, by questioning the reasons we would have to be rational. Kolodny's first argument is that some rational requirements must have a narrow-scope, and thus cannot be normative. It is based on two main points: that at least some rational requirements are process requirements; and secondly, that an agent should only form the attitudes for which they believe they have decisive reasons. He offers a sophisticated argument that displays through four examples how some rational requirements have a narrow-scope, which is sufficient to demonstrate that rationality is not normative as there would be bootstrapping as explained in Chapter 3. Moreover, Kolodny offers two further arguments independent of scope to support the conclusion that there is no reason to be rational. First, the reasons we may provide to substantiate the claim that rationality is normative are obscure, and second that these reasons

⁵⁸ Kolodny, 2005.

are state-given and not object-given, i.e., they would not be reasons that demonstrate the normativity of rational requirements themselves, but rather the value of complying with them.

4.2.1 Rational requirements as Process Requirements

Before arguing for the narrow-scope view Kolodny first revisits a few common arguments that may support the claim that rational requirements have wide-scope. First, a *reductio* based on the fact that we evidently feel the normative pressure to comply with rational requirements, therefore they cannot be narrow-scope given the detachment problem. The second argument he discusses is based on the relational nature of attitudes in subjective rationality, which a narrow-scope view of rationality would not cover. However, both arguments are either based on false assumptions or have false conclusions. The presumed decisive reasons we have to comply with rational requirements is indeed the purpose of this research. As for the second argument, narrow-scope requirements can indeed still be relational since they govern the consequent of a satisfied antecedent, therefore the relation between them is nonetheless governed by rationality, although perhaps more implicit. One ought only to believe q in (if $p > q$) if they believe p , thus narrow-scope rational requirements also allow for a relationship to hold between the attitudes.

The third argument in favor of the wide-scope view is that rational requirements “ban patterns of attitudes,”⁵⁹ in the sense that they ban a conflict state wherein dropping either belief is sufficient to resolve the conflict. So, in the case of a conflict of believing p and $\neg p$, rational requirements only require you to either (believe p or believe $\neg p$), thus it has a wide-scope. While

⁵⁹ Ibid., Pg. 519

this may be true for state requirements, Kolodny then attempts to show whether this can be the case for process requirements as well.

Kolodny's main argument hinges on the fact that some rational requirements are process requirements. As I have explained in Chapter 2, for us to capture the kind of normativity we expect from a theory of rationality, that theory must be able to guide us over time. Process-requirements direct an agent in what should be done in cases of a violation of a rational requirement. They do not simply ban a pattern of attitudes but require one to resolve the conflict through a process of reasoning to achieve the right attitude. If some requirements are process-requirements, then Kolodny shows that they must have narrow-scope in order to guide an agent as to what to do, as sometimes, being able to abandon one of the attitudes to satisfy a requirement, as the wide-scope view suggests, is not possible.

To show how some requirements are process-requirements, Kolodny analyses these four requirements:

B+: Rationality requires one to believe that p , if one believes that there is conclusive evidence that p .

I+: Rationality requires one to intend to X , if one believes that there is conclusive reason to X .

B-: Rationality requires one not to believe that p , if one believes that there is not sufficient evidence that p .

I-: Rationality requires one not to intend to *X*, *if* one believes that one lacks sufficient reason to *X*.⁶⁰

Given that one counterexample to the wide-scope view is sufficient to discredit the normativity of rational requirements as it demonstrates the bootstrapping problem that the requirements would allow, I will direct my attention in the rest of this chapter mainly to I+ and I.

I+ as a wide-scope requirement would take the following format:

“I+WS: rationality requires one (either not to believe that one has conclusive reason to *X*, or to intend to *X*)”⁶¹

So, Kolodny argues, if I+WS were correct, there are two ways of resolving a conflict if one believes that one has conclusive reason to *X*, but does not intend to *X*. One can either revise not intending to *X* from the *content* of their belief that one has conclusive reason to *X*. Or one can revise one’s belief that one has conclusive reason to *X* from the content of their not intending to *X*. However, ‘not intending to *X*’ lacks any content from which one can revise their belief in having conclusive reason to *X*. “One cannot reason from the content of one’s not intending to *X* to anything at all, *because there is no such content*. Not intending to *X* is simply lacking an attitude.”⁶² Intending not to *X* on the other hand is different from not intending to *X*, in which the former does have content, namely the reasons for why forms an intention not to *x*. Therefore, one can only resolve the conflict in one way, from the content of the conclusive reason to *X*, to intending to *X*. Therefore, this requirement has narrow-scope,

⁶⁰ Ibid., Pg. 521

⁶¹ Ibid., Pg. 527

⁶² Ibid., Pg 528

“I+NS: If one believes that one has conclusive reason to X, then rationality requires one to intend to X.”⁶³

As for I-, a wide-scope requirement would require one to either (intend to X, or not believe that one lacks sufficient reason to X). A resolution would require one to reason from the content of their lack of evidence to dropping the intention to X, or from their intention to X to the belief that one does not, after all, lack sufficient reason to X. The question is whether an agent’s intention to X can serve as a conclusive reason to X. Perhaps, as Kolodny argues, one might feel that one has reason to trust their intuition in determining intentions if previously for instance, their intention to X turns out was the correct response for some belief they were not aware of. However, Kolodny rejects this since “one can’t reason ‘upstream’—from one’s attitudes to a reassessment of one’s reasons for them—only ‘downstream’—from one’s assessment of one’s reasons for one’s attitudes to the formation, retention, or revision of those attitudes.”⁶⁴

Reasoning from the content of an intention aligns more with wishful thinking or weakness of will than with proper reasoning. For instance, I cannot reason from my intention to stay up late tonight to the belief that I have sufficient evidence to stay up late. Suppose that I have an important meeting in the morning and so should sleep early. Reasoning from my intention to stay up to that belief that I have reason to stay up leads to imprudent results and indicates weakness of will rather than proper reasoning.

The above arguments can be extended for B+ and B- respectively, with a little more ambiguity in B+ since having conclusive reason to believe can be arguably understood just as believing and a requirement for that seems superfluous. In any case, these examples indicate

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Pg. 529

that some rational requirements have narrow-scope, in the sense that there is actually only one way of resolving the incoherence. If some of the requirements have narrow-scope, the detachment problem is possible again, which puts incredible doubt on the normativity of rationality.

4.2.2 What Other Reasons Could There Be

Kolodny further argues that just as rationality is not in itself normative, we cannot lend its normativity from other reasons we may have to be rational, such as rationality being instrumentally valuable. First, the reasons we might find are contingent, they do not constitute reasons to be rational for each and every particular situation. Second, these reasons to be rational are state-given reasons.⁶⁵ I will briefly explain Kolodny's arguments.

The independent reasons we would have to be rational are direct or indirect instrumental reasons. Either that being rational helps us achieve what we ought to achieve, or that rationality is constitutive of what it means to be an agent with beliefs and intentions. Kolodny rejects both views. As for the first, he agrees with Broome's argument, that rationality is not always directly instrumental. At times, rationality may require you to adopt attitudes that you ought not to do. Given a strict normative claim of rationality, the rational requirements should be applicable in each and every situation. However, evidently, that cannot be in cases where reasons and rationality issue different oughts. Further, Kolodny argues, the rational requirements are redundant. One ought to do what their reasons require of them, having the rational requirements as another reason only amounts to fetishizing rationality. An example might help make this point clearer. Take the case of an agent who believes she ought to cycle more often to work

⁶⁵ Ibid., Pg. 524

since it is healthier and better for the environment. She will thus form the intention to cycle because of her belief in the reasons mentioned. For her to form that intention because it would be rational to do so, as opposed to because of her reasons for that belief, only fetishizes rationality. The fact that adopting an attitude displays rationality is not in itself a reason to do it.⁶⁶

Secondly, it is at times not feasible to form an attitude simply because subjective rationality requires it; namely, in the case of beliefs. It is implausible to assume that an agent *is able to* form a belief based on the requirement being a reason for that belief. Beliefs are mainly formed based on the evidential considerations one has and through a process of reasoning.⁶⁷ The rational requirement itself offers no evidence to support the epistemological truthfulness of my belief. So, if rational requirements were themselves reasons to comply, we often cannot give the appropriate response to the requirement, such as with beliefs. And since ought implies can, this suggests that the requirements of rationality are not normative.

As for the second, the constitutive argument states that the reason we ought to comply with the requirements is because doing so is constitutive of “preserv[ing] oneself as a believer and agent.”⁶⁸ This argument also falls short in credibly accounting for our general perception of rationality. A failure of rationality then is a failure of having the status as a rational being. This line of argument seems promising as it offers an intrinsic reason for the rational requirements. However, this link also does not seem to be as significant as it first appears in giving a reason to conform to the rational requirements. Kolodny describes this commitment to being an agent and expressing it by upholding the rational requirements as “precious and unreal.”⁶⁹ First, it occurs

⁶⁶ Ibid., Pg. 546

⁶⁷ Kiesewetter, Pg 107

⁶⁸ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 544

⁶⁹ Ibid., Pg. 545

often that we indeed fail at being rational. Second, there does not seem to be a reason for one to *need* to consistently enforce their status as an agent. Hence, that cannot be a valid reason either.

Lastly, Kolodny argues that the reasons we might conceive of for one to comply with the rational requirement are state-given reasons because avoiding irrationality is beneficial in some way. It would be the case that one develops the belief that *p* for reasons that are not evidence that *p*, which is already problematic. It would seem then that “a subject [ought to] form an intention to *X* not because *X*-ing seemed to him a worthwhile thing to do, but instead because having that intention was necessary to avoid irrationality.”⁷⁰ But further, one cannot reason from state-given reasons into forming beliefs. Even if we accept the value of state-given reasons, it might seem plausible to accept that one can reason to forming an intention from some state-given reason, but it proves psychologically difficult to form a belief simply because it would be good to do so, as opposed to doing so based on the content and evidence for that belief. Thus, they are reasons of the wrong kind.

4.2.3 Solution?

Given that we are faced with the bootstrapping problem, the normativity of rationality is once again rendered unacceptable. Further, it appears there are no reasons to be rational. So how are we to explain why it seems that rationality is normative? Kolodny offers what he calls the Transparency Account as an explanation for that apparent normativity in rationality. This account supposes that “all rational requirements require one either to have the attitudes that one believes that one has [decisive] reason to have, or to lack the attitudes that one believes one lacks

⁷⁰ Kolodny, 2005. Pg. 550

sufficient reason to have,”⁷¹ an account which he argues appeals only to reasons and avoids the bootstrapping that a normative narrow-scope view of rationality would allow.⁷² From this account, Kolodny extrapolates two ‘core requirements’ that we can arguably also derive all other rational requirements from. These core requirements take the following form:

“C+: If one believes that one has conclusive reason to have *A*, then one is rationally required to have *A*.

C-: If one believes that one lacks sufficient reason to have *A*, then one is rationally required not to have *A*.”⁷³

Kolodny argues that when we tell a person that they ought rationally to believe *q* (for example because *p* and if $p > q$) in the form of advice, it is not to indicate that the rational requirement of Belief Consistency constitutes a different reason to believe *q*. But rather, it is to draw their attention to C+ which outlines that they should have formed the belief that *q* given their evidence. What we are saying is, as it seems to you, given the reason you have to believe *p*, and to believe if $p > q$, then you ought to believe *q*. Therefore, when an accusation of irrationality is given, it is based on the local relation between a person’s attitudes, and their reasons for the attitudes. The main argument from the Transparency Account is the distinction between rationality from the first-person perspective and rationality from the second and third-person perspectives. For an agent who satisfies the antecedent of C+, the normative pressure to comply with the consequent is simply that of reason, and not because the rational requirement constitutes a reason of another kind to do so. Agents act rationally simply by responding appropriately to

⁷¹ Ibid., Pg. 513

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., Pg. 524

reasons. One does not form a belief q to avoid irrationality. Rather one forms the belief that q because of the reasons they believe they have for q . If Kolodny's Transparency Account is correct, then if an agent is facing a rational conflict or incoherence, it is only because their balance of reasons is off. If you believe both p and $\neg p$, then it is perhaps because neither your reasons for believing p nor your reasons for believing $\neg p$ seem convincing enough to you. In which case, you would be advised to suspend judgment altogether.

So, it seems that from the first-person perspective, the ought of reasons and the ought of rationality are the same. However, it is only from the second-person perspective where "the 'ought' of rationality and the 'ought' of reasons come apart."⁷⁴ For the rational agent themselves, the 'ought' of reasons is sufficient to satisfy the rational requirements. You ought to intend to x because you believe you have a decisive reason for you to x . The rational requirement being an added reason is unnecessary, argues Kolodny. Thus, for Kolodny, rationality is not inherently normative, however, its apparent normativity is a reflection of your subjective reasons.

From the second-person perspective, a charge of irrationality amounts to pointing out to the agent that their belief in their own reasons is lacking. The reason such a charge is taken as advice is not due to a violation of some rational requirements. Rather, it is to direct their attention to the evidence they have for an attitude. Kolodny argues that this account does not "raise the mystery of what reasons we have to be rational. The apparent reasons to which we draw the addressee's attention are not reasons to be rational. They are just the garden-variety reasons— prudential, moral, epistemic, and so on—that he believes he has to do X or to believe that p ." Thus, to have a reason to be rational is redundant in the sense that an agent's belief in

⁷⁴ Kolodny, Pg. 558

the reasons they have is enough motivation for one to act on it, and not simply to avoid the pain of irrationality. However, the rational requirements are also not simply only evaluative from the second and third perspectives since a response is expected from an agent when accused of irrationality. That is, once again, due to an appeal to the normativity of reasons as demonstrated by C+ and C-.

4.3 Summary

We have seen that Broome argues that rational requirements have wide-scope, therefore can be normative. However, after exploring what reasons we have to be rational, he concludes that there is no reason to accept this normativity, whether directly or indirectly. The idea of the normativity of the rational faculty also is an unconvincing account ultimately. Broome then accepts that he was not able to find a reason for rationality but assumes there is one since rationality intuitively is normative.

Kolodny argues that some rational requirements have narrow-scope, therefore there is bootstrapping in some rational requirements which invalidates their normativity. However, he explains the apparent normative force of rationality as a need for transparency on the part of an outsider of the rational agent, since for the agent himself the rational requirements just are passively complied with by an agent's belief in their reasons. Objective and subjective rationality for Kolodny are then, in essence, the same, as evidenced by C+ and C-. The different requirements of subjective rationality (of coherence as such) are not necessary, nor normative. So it seems, based on both readings, rationality is not normative by the requirements of rationality being reasons themselves. Nor can the normativity be vindicated by deriving it from some other normative claim since it can still be shown that there are cases where you ought not

to do what rationality tells you to do. Or that the reasons to comply with the rational requirements would be reasons of the wrong kind, namely, state-given reasons. As a result, Kolodny rejects that rationality is normative.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Broome/Kolodny Debate

My task in this paper is to investigate whether rationality is normative. To do that, I had to answer the following questions: 1) What is the scope of rational requirements? 2) Do the rational requirements themselves provide decisive or sufficient reasons to comply with them? 3) If they do not provide such reasons, are there derivative decisive or sufficient reasons that make rational requirements normative?

I chose Broome and Kolodny's articles as means of exploring these questions. In the previous chapter, I have summarized both philosophers' take on the aforementioned questions and the conclusions they reached. In this chapter, I will take a closer look at their arguments and analyze them in conjunction with one another to determine which of the views discussed in chapter 2 is most plausible. I also outline some possible flaws in their theories.

In chapter 2, I discussed three different views on rationality:

“The structuralist view: There are structural requirements of rationality, and these requirements are normative.

The mixed view: There are structural requirements of rationality, but these requirements are not normative.

The anti-structuralist view: There are no structural requirements of rationality.”

5.1 The Structuralist view

Broome is a defender of this view; he believes that the rational requirements are normative. However, based on the arguments presented by both Broome and Kolodny, this view is the least plausible. For the structuralist view to be correct, we would have to show that either

the rational requirements are normative in themselves; or that there are instrumental reasons that make the rational requirements normative. It appears neither one of these conditions are true.

Broome's position on the question of normativity is that he has not found a reason but believes there is one, given that he believes intuitively that the requirements must be normative. This intuition also leads him to accept the wide-scope view without further investigation. However, there has been a commonly accepted argument against the wide-scope view in terms of the symmetry it offers.⁷⁵ The symmetry that allows for the wide-scope view to avoid the detachment problem allows for a problem of a different kind. A wide-scope rational requirement seems to be not significantly guiding as we would expect a rational theory to be. This view of the rational requirements offers an agent two ways of solving an incoherence, without guiding the agent to what they ought to believe or intend. For instance, in cases of akrasia, you believe you ought to x, but you do not intend to x. A wide-scope view then allows you to either drop the belief that you ought to x, or intend to x but it does not tell you which of these is preferable.

Kolodny's argument compellingly demonstrates the symmetry problem in more detail. As explained in Chapter 4, he argues that some requirements, particularly process-requirements, cannot have wide-scope. Again, if they are normative, rational requirements must be able to guide an agent in resolving a conflict. They should allow for revision and guidance based on the content of your beliefs and your evidence for them. Given Kolodny's arguments for I+ and I-, he concludes that necessarily, some requirements have to have narrow-scope. Due to the bootstrapping a narrow-scope view allows, we can no longer assume that if rationality requires one to p, then one has sufficient or decisive reason to p. This is an argument against both contributory and strict normativity of rationality as described in chapter 2. Further, a wide-scope

⁷⁵ Sam, Shpall. "Wide and Narrow Scope" *Philos Stud* (2011) DOI 10.1007/s11098-011-9841-z

view of rationality also remains problematic for other rational requirements. The symmetry it allows between attitudes allows an agent to drop attitudes that they ought to have, or form attitudes they should not, rendering the rational requirements not sufficiently guiding. Thus, a wide-scope view of rational requirements is also insufficient to encompass the normative element of rational requirements.

Going beyond the question of scope and assuming the rational requirements can be normative, we look at what reasons there are for compliance. Do the rational requirements in themselves provide sufficient or decisive reasons for us to ought to comply? If not, are there other derivative reasons? Given the arguments by Broome and Kolodny, it appears the answer is no to both these questions.

Broome and Kolodny agree on many of the conclusions of the ‘why be rational’ question, but differ on one main issue, that of scope, and end with different conclusions to explain what is wrong with incoherence. Kolodny concludes that what is wrong are your reasons for your attitudes, while Broome simply suggests that the requirements must be normative. Broome’s argument however does not in any way provide an answer to ‘why be rational’, but it paves the way to allow for further investigation. Broome takes normativity to mean that the requirements would constitute sufficient or decisive reasons.⁷⁶ He views the ‘ought’ of reasons to be different from the ‘ought’ of rationality, so if your reasons require you to x, that does not necessarily imply that rationality requires you to x. He fails at finding a tenable conceptual link between reasons and rationality and cannot find any putative reason for rationality. Thus, he concludes that understanding the rational requirements as necessary in responding correctly to reasons cannot explain the normativity of rational requirements. While I agree with this conclusion,

⁷⁶ Broome, 2005. Pg. 328-9

Broome sidesteps the question of why the rational requirements do not constitute themselves normative reasons. For a more convincing argument, I look to Kolodny.

Kolodny offers a persuasive argument against the rational requirements constituting reasons for us to comply. His argument is threefold: treating the requirements as independent reasons to adopt attitudes amounts to fetishizing rationality; second, it is at times not feasible to adopt attitudes simply because that is what rationality requires; third, they would be reasons of the wrong kind, i.e., state-given reasons as opposed to object-given.

The rational requirements evidently are also not always instrumentally valuable in helping us achieve much of what we ought to achieve as argued by both Broome and Kolodny. In the case of there being direct instrumental reasons to comply with the rational requirements, i.e. reasons that would help an agent achieve other oughts (moral, prudential, epistemic...etc.) both philosophers argue that there cannot be a valid reason that supports all cases. Often, an agent will have false beliefs that cause them to form or abandon attitudes they ought to have. Such as false belief about the date of an exam causing an agent not to form the intention to go to the exam. Having the *disposition* to comply with the requirements does not guarantee that it will lead you to what you ought to either and does not entail the normativity of the individual requirements. Hence, rationality cannot be normative for that reason. The constitutive account, as argued by Kolodny, appears to also be a very unlikely reason to vindicate the normativity of rationality.⁷⁷

An alternative instrumental reason for rationality that Carl David Mildenberger suggests both philosophers overlooked is that it allows people around the agent and the agent themselves to be “able to explain and predict his beliefs and intentions,”⁷⁸ given the agent’s other attitudes. I

⁷⁷ See also Kieswetter 2017 for a more elaborate argument against the constitutive account

⁷⁸ Carl David Mildenberger, “A Reason to Be Rational” *Inquiry*, (2018) Pg. 2. DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2018.1470570

briefly go over this account to test for its viability and determine whether it was indeed an overlooked reason.

While Mildenberger argues that this traceability, as he calls it, is an instrumental reason for rationality, I disagree that it makes it normative. Firstly, I am looking for a strictly normative claim on rationality, making it universally applicable in always providing decisive reasons that cannot be outweighed by other reasons. But take for instance a case where Sally is known to always believe it is Sunday on Mondays. Given the evidence available to her, she is being irrational in forming that belief. However, this incoherence does not take away from her predictability, since if I know Sally always has that belief then I can accurately predict that next Monday, Sally will believe it is Sunday. Or, for example, an agent that always believes if p , and $p \rightarrow q$, but then believes $\neg q$, is clearly being irrational. Given their other attitudes, they ought to believe q . However, the consistency in their irrationality can allow for traceability even though it still may be irrational.

Mildenberger's reason for rational requirements is that they are able to serve as a general law in tracing and explaining an agent's behavior.⁷⁹ As a bystander, I should be able to explain an agent's attitudes and trace how they reached their conclusion. In cases of means-end coherence, an agent A ought to y if they believe it is a necessary means to x -ing, and believe that they ought to x . To Mildenberger, compliance with rational requirements is helpful to us in tracing and explaining why A intended to y . But perhaps, A did not intend to y due to the fact that she believed it is a necessary means to x -ing. It is not farfetched to argue that perhaps A did not form that intention at all, and may have accidentally y -d. Rational requirements themselves

⁷⁹ Mildenberger. Pg. 6

do not offer traceability. The account may be intuitively appealing; however, it is not sufficient to vindicate the normativity of rationality.

Rationality then is not a necessary means for predictability, or explainability, although it can be. Rational requirements can often prove to be an evaluative tool that helps us trace thought patterns in an agent and in ourselves, which is instrumentally valuable at times. The main issue I take with this account is that it seems to infer that rational requirements provide consistency or regularity, which is a valuable property. However, first, this is demonstrably not always the case. Secondly, this would still not make rational requirements normative in my strict sense.

As it stands, the structuralist view appears to hold no ground. It appears there still is no decisive reason for one to adhere to the requirements of rationality. Therefore, there seems to be no reason to conclude that rationality is normative in the strict sense. This brings me to accept the mixed view; there are requirements, however, we do not have reason to always comply with them.

5.2 The Mixed View

This view suggests that the rational requirements are not normative i.e., not authoritative. While Broome's conclusions should bring him to accept this view, he rejects it and assumes there is a reason yet to be discovered. Kolodny on the other hand accepts a modified form of this view, where he seems to be somewhere between the mixed and anti-structuralist views as he maintains that rational requirements of coherence are a myth and are just reflections of the normativity of reasons, as demonstrated by his Transparency Account. Further, that the rational requirements are not, and cannot be, normative.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See Kolodny, *Why Be Disposed to Be Coherent*. 2008 and, Kolodny 2005.

This view has come to be known as the Myth view named after Joseph Raz's influential article *The Myth of Instrumental Rationality*⁸¹, where he defends the thesis that instrumental requirements are a myth and not normative. This theory was further developed by Kolodny to include more rational requirements; particularly those of formal coherence as such, meaning the rational requirements that "demand just that our beliefs and intentions be formally coherent."⁸²

So, while Kolodny rejects requirements of coherence as such, he suggests that it is arguable that there are only two narrow-scope core requirements that specify how an agent must respond to their beliefs about reasons, namely, C+ and C-. The different conceptions of the rational requirements become more of a problem than a solution. "The basic idea is that rational requirements inherit their content from the structure of normativity—that there is no independent standard of formal coherence, but only the structure of reasons and the 'shadow' it casts when we rationally respond to our beliefs about reasons."⁸³

Kolodny's Transparency Account offers a better argument for why we feel compelled to accuse a person of irrationality, and why that warrants a response. For Kolodny, an incoherence only "ensures that you go wrong in some specific way—for example, that you have some belief or intention that you should not have—but [the incoherence] is not itself a problem."⁸⁴ As Kolodny argues, the coherence that we get when complying with the rational requirements is not due to the requirements themselves, but rather due to complying with other norms, the coherence is a by-product. Rationality, if normative, is simply objective rationality entailing that you ought to respond appropriately to the reasons available to you. Subjective rationality, which requires

⁸¹ Joseph Raz "The Myth of Instrumental Rationality." *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy* 1(1): 1–19. (2005)

⁸² Kolodny, "Why Be Disposed to Be Coherent" *Ethics, Vol. 118 Ethics, Vol. 118, No. 3, Symposium on Agency* (April 2008), Pg. 437

⁸³ Kiesewetter, Pg. 21

⁸⁴ Way, 2018

coherence between your attitudes, cannot be normative. Thus, Kolodny argues for the Transparency Account to explain our intuition about the normativity of rationality since it demonstrates how an agent is guided by the content of their reasons to favor p over $\neg p$. Kolodny's account comes closer to the truth, it offers a valid explanation for the authority that rationality seems to have. As indicated, there is no need to vindicate the rational requirements since irrationality is not in the combination of attitudes, but your reasons for your attitudes.

The Transparency account however appears to be lacking in two respects. First, it is not helpful in understanding and explaining irrationality in all cases, particularly in cases where one is permitted to form multiple attitudes. Second, it does not sufficiently account for the criticism of irrationality in the form of 'advice'⁸⁵.

As for the first point, the Transparency Account cannot explain the problem in all cases of incoherence. For example, Buridan's ass has a choice between two equal piles of hay on his left and right side, he has sufficient reason to choose either. If he intends to go for both piles at the same time, this would be incoherent without there being anything wrong with his reasons for choosing either. The ass then has three options:

- a) He can intend to go to the right pile of hay
- b) He can intend to go to the left pile of hay
- c) He can suspend judgment and die of hunger

If the ass intends to both a and b, he is irrational even though he has sufficient reasons to intend to go to both the right and left piles. The third option is also against reason, the ass cannot

⁸⁵ Kiesewetter, Pg. 117

ignore the reasons to either a or b. This case of incoherence cannot be explained away with Kolodny's account of Transparency since it is not the ass' belief or lack of belief in his reasons for going for the right pile nor for going for the left pile that can explain the incoherence of intending to do opposite things, each position is in itself unproblematic, but it is the combination of attitudes that causes the incoherence. The ass then cannot resolve this incoherence by appealing to the reasons for either intention. Hence, the Transparency Account seems to lack an explanation for these kinds of situations. So, it seems, while the Transparency Account does explain many cases of irrationality, cases of incoherence in permissible attitudes rely on the relationship between your attitudes and not just your reasons for them.⁸⁶

Second, Kolodny argues that the rational requirements are also not evaluative, considering that when a violation is pointed out to an agent, it seems to require some kind of response. Kolodny explains this second-person perspective of apparent normativity not as evaluative, but as giving advice. Hence when one charges somebody with irrationality, one is pointing out to the agent the reasons they themselves have for that belief. Again, circumventing the normativity of rational requirements. However, this account is also lacking in explaining the normative force that appears to be there from the second-person view. Perhaps it is the case that an agent is sometimes unaware of the reasons they have and pointing them out does bring the agent to comply with their conclusive evidence. However, as Kieswetter points out, this account fails in capturing why rationality is normative from other points of view. The advice given by a second or third-person involves some "kind of normative endorsement"⁸⁷ of the given advice. If it is merely drawing the agent's attention to their reasons, while lacking any normative endorsement "then it cannot help to explain why it will seem to the adviser that there is anything

⁸⁶ Way, 2018.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

wrong with forming irrational attitudes.’⁸⁸ This is all to say, while the mixed view is the most plausible, it does not come without some shortcomings. Kolodny’s view, while still lacking in some ways, manages to nonetheless capture many of our intuitions about rationality by explaining the apparent normative force through that of reason.

Given both Kolodny’s and Broome’s arguments against there being a reason for one to be rational, there does not seem to be any compelling evidence to suggest that we ought to do what the rational requirements tell us we ought to do. Nor, as Kolodny argues that the ‘ought’ of rational requirements should add a different normative quality than the ‘ought’ of reasons as Broome argues. At most, it appears that these requirements are indeed evaluative of a person’s content for their attitudes. Kolodny is correct in suggesting that at the internal level, to the agent themselves, the rational requirements seem to only be superfluous in guiding them to reaching certain attitudes that they ought to. However, it is to the outside of the agent that the requirements of rationality and the requirements of reason come apart and can be helpful in a schematic way of giving advice to the agent by pointing out reasons that they may have overlooked. Or at the very least, helpful in pointing out a connection between an agent’s reasons that they may have overlooked. This does not entail that they are normative, the agent is not obligated to accept that advice, but they are required to form the right attitudes in accordance with the reasons for them.

5.3 The anti-structuralist view

While I am not investigating the anti-structuralist view in-depth, it is worth mentioning that the anti-structuralist view can be implied if it indeed appears to be that there is no reason to

⁸⁸ Ibid.

be rational. Following Mackie's work on metaethics, we can construct a parallel argument for rationality. His argument, simplified here, states that if there are moral requirements, then we have a reason to ought always follow them. However, given that we cannot find a reason to comply with the moral requirements, he concludes then that there are none.⁸⁹ The requirements were formulated as such in order to explain what is wrong with being irrational, however, if there is no reason to follow the requirements then there is nothing wrong with being irrational and the rational requirements are no longer useful, thus there are no requirements.⁹⁰

However, this view is radical in certain aspects as it assumes that if the requirements are not normative, then the putative requirements do not exist. That does not necessarily need to follow. It does not have to be the case that if there are requirements then they are conceptual truths, rather they can be a guide. As I have explained, rationality could instead be likened to grammar. You often have reasons to follow the rules of grammar, but sometimes also not. They are in some sense a "code of conduct" and the breaking of which entails that you are no longer "playing the game" appropriately but it evidently does not mean that you ought to comply with the rules if breaking them, at this moment, might be in some way more beneficial. Nor does it mean that these rules no longer exist simply because we cannot find a reason to enforce them in each situation.

⁸⁹ J.L Mackie "Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong." *Harmondsworth: Penguin.* (1977)

⁹⁰ Way, 2018

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Rationality seems at face value to be the most valuable faculty at our disposal to help us achieve what we indeed ought to achieve, but as it stands, it appears that is not always the case. It is not a wonder that Kant and many after him attempted to explain the normativity of morality by appealing to the normativity of rationality. It seems that when one displays an irrational attitude, something is wrong. However, what that something is, is ambiguous. My attempt to answer the question of why one ought to be rational has led me to accept the conclusion that there is no general reason to be rational, only that being rational at certain times is situationally instrumental. Perhaps what is wrong with irrationality is an unsettling incoherence, but not one that is necessarily solved by appealing to the rational requirements.

To summarize, rationality requires certain relations of consistency to hold between your attitudes. It regulates those relationships with the various requirements. Either these requirements have wide-scope or they have narrow-scope. If they have narrow-scope, they are not normative. If they are wide-scope, the task is then to find a reason for why they are normative. That can be done in one of two ways: either the rational requirements are in and of themselves reasons to comply with them, or there are direct or indirect instrumental reasons for one to ought to comply.

It seems that aside from a difference in scope, both philosophers reach similar conclusions about the reasons for rationality. While Kolodny explains the apparent normative force by appealing to the content of reasons as providing normativity; Broome grants that he has found no normative reasons but maintains that there are. Kolodny's argument provides compelling evidence against the normativity of rationality in terms of the scope of rational

requirements. Some rational requirements simply cannot have wide-scope if they are to be guiding at all. If they are narrow-scope, they cannot be normative.

Further, Broome and Kolodny put forth convincing arguments against there being instrumental reasons to be rational. While Broome offers no other reasons that vindicate the normativity of rationality, he maintains that there are reasons to be discovered. Kolodny on the other hand offers an explanation through his Transparency Account for the reason we often do and continue to do as rational requirements require of us. That being that it is merely responding to the reasons available to us. However, Kolodny's myth account, suggesting that the requirements of coherence are a myth, as developed through the Transparency Account, still leaves room for questions in permissive cases wherein our reasons favor multiple things equally. This further complicates his account in highlighting that not all requirements of coherence are based on evidence for reasons. Moreover, this account fails to sufficiently capture the apparent normativity from a second-person accusation of irrationality.

Thus, I suggest that the rational requirements are useful as a tool for evaluation from the perspective of an outsider to the agent and that the apparent normative force from the second-person perspective can be explained by a reason for traceability. However, this (instrumental) reason for traceability is still not normative since a consistent irrational pattern of belief can also be traceable and explainable. Also, the instrumentality of traceability is not always clear, rationality cannot be normative for that reason alone. Hence, it seems that consistency is often instrumentally valuable, but not always.

We may have to then accept that there is no independent reason for the kind of rationality I have been discussing. Subjective rationality does not provide additional valuable insights into helping us achieve what we indeed ought to achieve; neither is it intrinsically valuable. In that

case, to explain the intuition of why irrationality seems inherently wrong, it is worthwhile investigating some broadened and revised form of Kolodny's myth account of requirements of coherence that could plausibly encompass a full picture of the different irrationality claims under the concept of reason alone.

Bibliography

- Alvarez, Maria. "Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/>>.
- Berendzen, J.C. "Max Horkheimer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/horkheimer/>>.
- Broome, John. "Does Rationality Give Us Reasons" *Philosophical Issues*, 15. (2005).
- Broome, John. "Wide or Narrow Scope". *Mind*, Vol. 116 (2007)
- Broome, John. "Is rationality normative?" *Disputatio* 2 (23):161-178. [10.2478/disp-2007-0008](https://doi.org/10.2478/disp-2007-0008) (2007)
- Caplan, Bryan. "Rational Irrationality: A Framework for the Neoclassical-Behavioral Debate." *Eastern Economic Journal* 26, no. 2:191–211. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40325987>. (2000)
- James Dreier "Humean Doubts about the Practical Justification of Morality" in *Varieties of Practical Reasoning*. ed. by Elijah Milgram. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press (2001) Pgs. 27-48
- Huemer, Michael. "Why People are Irrational About Politics" In: *Anomaly*, J, Brennan, G, Munger, M, Sayre-McCord, G (eds) *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Anthology*. New York: Oxford University (2016)
- Hume, David. "A Treatise of Human Nature" edited by L A Selby-Bigge & P H Nidditch. Oxford University Press. (1978)

- Kant, Immanuel, and Lewis White Beck. *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals, and What is enlightenment?* New York: Liberal Arts Press.(1959)
- Kiesewetter, Benjamin “The Normativity of Rationality” *Oxford: Oxford University Press* (2017)
- Kolodny, Niko. "Why Be Rational?" *Mind, Vol. 114* 509-563. (2005)
- Kolodny, Niko. “Why Be Disposed to Be Coherent” *Ethics, Vol. 118 Ethics, Vol. 118, No. 3, Symposium on Agency* (April 2008),
- Mackie, J. L. “Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong.” *Harmondsworth: Penguin.* (1977)
- Mildenberger, Carl David. “A Reason to Be Rational” *Inquiry*. DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2018.1470570 (2018)
- Parfit, Derek, and John Broome. “Reasons and Motivation.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes 71* (1997): 99–146.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106956>.
- Raz, Joseph. “The Myth of Instrumental Rationality.” *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy* 1(1): 1–19. (2005)
- Shpall, Sam. “Wide and Narrow Scope” *Philos Stud* DOI 10.1007/s11098-011-9841-z (2011)
- Southwood, Nicholas. “Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality” *Ethics. 119*. Pgs. 9-30. (2008) 10.1086/592586.
- Sternhell, Zeev and David Maisel. *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*. Yale University Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm23x>.
- Taliaferro, Charles. “Rationality” in *Encyclopedia of sciences and religions*. ed by Anne L. C. Runehov, and Lluís Oviedo. 2013. Dordrecht: SpringerReference.

Way, Jonathan. "Reasons and Rationality" *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*
Ed. by Daniel Star (2018) DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199657889.013.22

Way, Jonathan. "The Normativity of Rationality" *Philosophy Compass* 5/12 (2010): 1057–1068,
10.1111/j.1747-9991.2010.00357.

Zizek, Slavoj. "If There Is A God, Then Anything Is Permitted." *Abc Religion and Ethics*.
Accessed 28 March 2017.