How to Deal with the Asymmetry of Rational Requirements

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Abstract

This essay takes issue with the 'Asymmetry Objection' against wide-scope rational requirements. This objection claims that wide-scope requirements are defective in that they do not account for normative asymmetries. Normative asymmetries occur if some of the processes that satisfy a particular requirement are morally, prudentially or rationally inferior to alternative processes. This essay presents a conceptual account of rationality as one among various normative dimensions, which then elucidates how other normative dimensions like morality can provide the necessary resources to resolve problematic asymmetries. The essay concludes that there is no need to abandon wide-scope rational requirements.

Introduction

In this paper, I take issue with the 'Asymmetry Objection' (AO) against so-called 'wide-scope' rational requirements. In virtue of their logical form, wide-scope rational requirements always leave irrational agents with at least two processes through which a particular requirement can be satisfied. By contrast,

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narrow-scope requirements define one unique process which an irrational agent is rationally required to undergo. The AO claims that rational requirements that take wide rather than narrow scope are insufficient in accommodating serious normative asymmetries underlying the satisfaction of those requirements. By normative asymmetries, one typically refers to the observation that for many wide-scope requirements, at least one of the processes through which they can be satisfied is, for instance, morally, prudentially or even rationally inferior to its alternatives. To tackle this objection, my aim is to provide a conceptual account that understands rationality as one among various dimensions of normativity. This account will then elucidate how normative dimensions like morality or prudence can provide the necessary resources to resolve problematic asymmetries without creating the need to abandon wide-scope requirements.

The contents are organised as follows. **Section 1** briefly explains what rational requirements are. In **Section 2**, I introduce two possible views on the scope of these requirements, the wide-scope and the narrow-scope view, and reject the latter as a result of the 'bootstrapping objection' in line with the majority of writers involved in the debate on rational requirements. Subsequently, I provide a more precise formulation of the AO against the wide-scope view in **Section 3** and present what I shall call the 'Dimensional Account of Normativity' (DAON) as a possible solution to it in **Section 4**. Afterwards, I discuss possible objections to my proposal in **Section 5** and defend the possibly surprising result of my account that there is nothing irrational about rationalisation, i.e. the process of changing your mind about what you ought to do, because you are not going to do it anyway. Finally, I summarise and conclude the discussion.

I. What Rational Requirements Are

Suppose that you believe that *p* and *not-p*. That is, for example, you believe both that London is the capital of the United Kingdom and that it is not the case that London is the capital of the United Kingdom. Intuitively, something

seems wrong about you. Rational requirements seek to explain what it is that is wrong about you and what you ought to do to avoid that wrongness. To develop a clearer understanding of these requirements, let me try to spell out what precisely is wrong with an agent who holds the above beliefs. In this particular case, the wrongness is rather evident. The belief that *p* and the belief that *not-p* contradict each other. They are mutually exclusive and cannot both be true at the same time. Note, however, that without further information, there is nothing wrong about each single proposition. Rather, the problem is in the combination of the two. Consequently, there is at least a *prima facie* case against holding contradictory beliefs, as one of those beliefs is necessarily false. Further, in most scenarios much seems to count against believing propositions that are necessarily false. In other words, it is at least at face value plausible to assume that in many cases, one ought not to have contradictory beliefs.

This is not only true for combinations of contradictory beliefs, but also for combinations of contradictory intentions, such as simultaneously intending to open the window and not intending to open the window, and certain combinations of beliefs and intention. An example of the latter is this. Suppose you believe that you ought to donate to charity, but you do not intend to do so. This combination is commonly referred to as *akrasia*; you are akratic only if you believe that you ought to *p*, but do not intend to *p*.[1] While in that case there is no contradiction involved, at least not in the sense of propositional logic, something still appears to be wrong. The belief that one ought to *p* is in conflict with not having or not forming the intention to *p*.[2] We say that an akratic agent is *incoherent*. To generalise, there are some mental attitudes (such as beliefs, intentions, desires, preferences, expectations etc.) that conflict with each

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[1] I take it that this is not biconditional. Suppose you believe that you ought to *p*, but you do not intend to *p*. Further, suppose you are forming the intention to *p* right now, but you do not intend to *p* yet. It seems that this does not make you akratic, i.e. irrational.

[2] The implicit assumption here is that there are no further background beliefs about whether or not one ought to *p*.

other when an agent possesses them in simultaneous combination. Intuitively, as these combinations are incoherent and prevent each other from mutual truth (in case of belief), mutual fulfilment (in case of intention) or truth and fulfilment (in case of belief and intention), one has reason not have them.[3]

Rational requirements try to capture this reason in specifying what combinations of mental attitudes an agent is required not to have. In that sense, rational requirements express an evaluation. Agents who satisfy all the rational requirements that they are under are positively evaluated as fully rational; those who violate some requirements are evaluated as irrational or less than fully rational. Both in common language and philosophy, the latter expresses a form of criticism.

However, in trying to spell out what exactly these requirements are, a problem arises. This problem concerns the question of the logical scope of rational requirements.

II. Wide and Narrow Scope

As an illustration of this problem, consider the rational requirement against akrasia (henceforth *enkrasia*). There are at least two ways in which this requirement can be formulated. The one that seems at least linguistically more natural is as follows.

> Enkrasia$_{NS}$: If you believe that you ought to p, rationality requires of you to intend to p.

Formally,

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[3] Yet, the literature on rational requirements contains a rather voluminous debate on the question whether one has in fact reason to be rational, i.e. whether rationality is normative. I will not go into this debate here. Rather, I shall assume that rationality is normative and express confidence that the core of my account can be easily translated into a framework in which rationality is not normative. For two classics on the normativity of rationality, see Kolodny, 'Why be rational?' and Broome, 'Practical Reasoning'.

$$\mathrm{BO}(p) \to \mathrm{RR}(\mathrm{I}(p))$$

Call this the narrow-scope (NS) reading. Here, the consequent of the conditional is the rational requirement. In contrast, one can also formulate the same requirement differently.

> Enkrasia$_{WS}$: Rationality requires of you that if you believe you ought to p, you intend to p.

Formally,

$$\mathrm{RR}(\mathrm{BO}(p) \to \mathrm{I}(p))$$

Call this the wide-scope (WS) reading. In this case, not only the consequent, but the whole conditional is the rational requirement. The main difference between these two views is that there is only one way to satisfy the NS requirement, while there are at least two ways to satisfy the WS one. When enkrasia takes NS, the only process through which an agent can satisfy it is to intend to p. Contrarily, if the same requirement takes WS, an agent can satisfy it either by dropping the belief that she ought to p or by forming the intention to p. As both processes make the conditional true, both satisfy the requirement.

Most philosophers[4] reject the NS view. What motivates this rejection is the problem of 'bootstrapping'. Let me illustrate this problem with an example from practical reasoning. Suppose you believe that you ought to kill your neighbour. Suppose further that this is the only belief that you have about killing your neighbour, that your neighbour is entirely innocent and that killing her will be to no one's benefit. Then, according to the NS version of enkrasia, rationality requires of you to intend to kill your neighbour. The only way to satisfy this requirement is to intend to kill your neighbour. That, it is said, cannot be right. It cannot be right that rationality requires of you to intend to kill your neighbour.

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[4] See for instance Kolodny, 'Why Be Rational', Broome, 'Practical Reasoning', Way 'The symmetry of rational requirements', or Reisner 'Is there reason to be theoretically rational?'.

It seems strange that rationality requires you to have such an immoral intention. Moreover, the NS view would allow an agent to 'bootstrap' a reason to have a certain intention into existence merely by forming a (false) normative belief.[5] I shall agree here that these implications of the NS view do render it unintuitive.[6] It is in fact not a particularly desirable result of the NS view that there are cases in which agents can create reasons kill their innocent neighbour.

One is left, then, with the possibility of having rational requirements take WS. There is, however, a particular problem connected to the WS view. In line with common terminology, I shall refer to this problem as the Asymmetry Objection (AO).

III. The Asymmetry Objection

Recall that under the WS view, there are always at least two ways for an agent to satisfy a particular requirement. In case of Enkrasia$_{WS}$, one can either drop the belief that one ought to p or form the intention to p.[7] What is important is that, logically, the two are on par. From a logical point of view, there is no better or worse way to make a conditional true. In the absence of substantive premises, logic alone does not provide anything more than purely formal guidance. However, consider the concrete example in which someone believes that she ought to kill her neighbour, but does not intend to do so. Intuitively, the two ways to escape this irrational state of mind are clearly not on par. Assuming that

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[5] As indicated in footnote 3, I am assuming here that agents generally do have a reason to satisfy rational requirements. In fact, the 'bootstrapping' result has lead some authors, most eminently Niko Kolodny in his 'Why Be Rational?', to believe that they can show, in combination with arguments against the WS view, that rationality is not normative. But this is only true if the arguments against the WS view succeed, and I shall argue here that at least the AO does not.

[6] See, however, Christian Piller's 'The Bootstrapping Objection' for a recent argument against the convincingness of the 'bootstrapping objection'.

[7] Technically, one could also drop the belief *and* form the intention, as this also makes the conditional true. For simplification, I shall neglect this option in the further discussion, though.

there is indeed a strong moral reason not to kill one's innocent neighbour, forming the intention to do so is a worse way to be become rational than dropping the belief that one ought to. More technically, there seems to be a normative asymmetry between the two processes of satisfying the requirement which is not captured by a WS requirement. Put loosely, by normativity I mean the sum of all concepts, such as morality, rationality, prudence, etc., that provide agents with reasons (see, however, Section 5 for a more thorough conceptualisation of normativity). Further, the normative asymmetry consists in the fact that one of the processes that satisfy the rational requirement seems to violate a moral requirement. Versions of the claim that this asymmetry is a crucial objection to the WS view have been formulated by Mark Schroeder[8] and Niko Kolodny.[9] As Schroeder[10] puts it, the WS view

> 'doesn't distinguish between acting in accordance with your moral beliefs and adopting moral beliefs in accordance with your actions, and as a result it fails to distinguish between following your conscience and the distinctive vice of rationalisation. Rationalisation is the vice of changing your beliefs about what you ought to do, because you are not going to do it, anyway.'

The objection holds that the two ways in which an agent can satisfy Enkrasia$_{WS}$ are not on par. In the case that Schroeder mentions, dropping one's moral belief that one ought to p because one lacks the intention to p is not a particularly laudable way to make oneself rational. Maybe it is even an irrational way to make oneself rational. (I shall argue later that this is not so.) But the objection is not only confined to rationalisation. There are also cases in which dropping the initial belief is precisely what one ought to do, for example if that belief is false. If one falsely beliefs that one ought to destroy the whole universe, but

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[8] Schroeder, 'Means-end coherence, stringency, and subjective reasons'.

[9] Kolodny, 'Why Be Rational?'.

[10] Schroeder, 'Means-end coherence, stringency, and subjective reasons' 227.

one does not intend to, under any plausible moral theory dropping the initial belief is what one has more reason to do. In those cases, it would be an equally bad way to make oneself rational if one formed the intention that corresponds to the false belief. To generalise, let me formulate the AO as put forward by Schroeder as follows.

P1: WS rational requirements are logically symmetric.

P2: If a formulation of rational requirements is logically symmetric, there are at least two processes through which the requirements can be satisfied.

P3: There are cases in which these processes are normatively asymmetric. That is, there are cases in which one of the processes is intuitively superior to the other(s) on grounds of morality, prudence, rationality itself, etc.

P4: If there are cases in which a formulation of rational requirements is normatively asymmetric, that formalisation is normatively insufficient.

C: Hence, WS rational requirements are normatively insufficient.

In what follows, I shall present a strategy against the AO that enables one to accommodate normative asymmetries concerning the satisfaction of WS rational requirements. To do so, let me now introduce what I shall call a 'dimensional account of normativity' (DAON).

IV. The Dimensional Account of Normativity

The following account models what I take to be a natural way to think about normativity. First, let me clarify what I mean by normativity.

To the concept of normativity belongs everything that is a reason.[11] That is, the concept normativity can be seen as the sum of the reasons that individuals

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[11] In line with Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other* 17, I use 'reason' here as a primitive. 'A is a reason for B' roughly means 'A counts in favour of B'.

have. This statement is in some way ambiguous and contains two important concepts. The first basic concept is that of X *being normative*. When we say that X is normative, we typically mean that X is or provides a reason for something. Hence, normativity as the 'sum of reasons' can be interpreted as something like an *enumeration*. Enumerating all existing reasons will provide an exhaustive list of what is normative.

Yet, speaking of the 'sum of reasons' also points to a second basic concept, viz. the *net balance* of reasons. Reasons often conflict. When making a decision, people usually weigh different reasons against each other, and reasons may support or countervail one another. Decisions, however, are only indirectly based on every single reason that a decision-maker considered. More accurately, a decision is based directly on the net balance of all the reasons an agent is aware of. What is important is that this net balance can be formulated as an *ought*. When someone ought to X, X is what one has most reason to do.[12] Importantly, an ought is an all-things-considered concept. In my terminology, if something is defeasible, it is by definition not an ought.

Further, what is important is that normativity consists of various dimensions. These dimensions are distinct sources that issue substantively different requirements. These requirements are substantively different because they are based on substantively different reasons, such as moral, rational, prudential, legal or religious ones. Suppose you live in a dictatorial state whose government commands you to do something unjust. Legally, you have a reason to act unjustly, but morally, you most probably have a reason not to.[13] Yet, prudence

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[12] John Broome (personal conversation, 06 June 2014) objects to this practice of defining oughts in terms of reasons. He thinks that reasons should be defined in terms of ought, as not every ought can be explained as the result of weighing reasons. I think that one can successfully use reasons as primitive and define oughts in terms of them, but I cannot argue for this here. Luckily, it will not affect my further argument anyway.

[13] I am not taking a position here concerning the thesis that reasons to comply or not comply with the law are always moral ones. Maybe the law is not a genuine source of reasons, but that does not concern the general idea of the account I am proposing.

may provide a reason to better abide by the command that was given to you. On the account I am proposing here, all these sources carry normative force, as they provide genuine reasons, but they do not all issue oughts *per se*. Only after considering all the reasons that the different sources provide, one is able to determine what one ought to do. That is, for all requirements R and subjects S, S ought to satisfy R if and only if R is required of S as the result of weighing all the reasons that S has.[14]

The relevant point here is that the different dimensions of normativity are conceptually on par. The reasons they provide might be unequally strong in different contexts, but it is not the case that reasons from one source will *in principle* override reasons from another source. In some situations, moral considerations might outweigh prudential ones, but it is equally possible that there are cases in which prudential reasons are decisive.

Having drawn a rough sketch of the DAON, let me now turn to the AO again. Recall that, for instance, the WS view assumes that rationality requires of you that [if you believe that you ought to kill your neighbour, you intend to kill your neighbour]. You satisfy the requirement either by dropping the initial belief or by forming the corresponding intention. Yet, the two ways are normatively asymmetric, because under any plausible moral theory and certain assumptions regarding the innocence of your neighbour etc., dropping the belief that you ought to kill your neighbour is clearly superior to forming the corresponding intention.

Further, the AO holds that WS requirements cannot accommodate this asymmetry. Under the WS view, rationality on its own cannot tell you what you have more reason to do. Against the background of the DAON, one can see quite intuitively why this is the case. What you have more reason to do cannot be defined strictly in terms of rational requirements. Rationality is but one dimension of normativity, and one cannot expect rationality on its own to do all the

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[14]Note that S does not need to be aware of these reasons. One ought not destroy the universe whether or not one is aware of the reasons for this.

work. As Shpall[15] puts it, the fact that a WS requirement cannot explain a crucial asymmetry 'does not render it false; it just indicates that it can't explain everything about the topic worth explaining.'

This is precisely the view I shall advocate here. In the example given, it is true that rationality requires of you to either p or q, without any preference for one of the two. But morality requires of you to p and only p. Ceteris paribus, this is enough to explain why you ought to p and only p.

The same sort of reasoning is also implicit in formulating the AO in the first place. WS requirements alone are normatively insufficient precisely *because* they only account for one source of reasons, viz. those that rationality issue. For some reason, though, this has led some people to reject WS requirements rather than the picture of normativity that is responsible for a conceptually overdemanding view on rationality. One is hence left with the following answer. In order to determine what an agent ought to do in a certain situation, one needs to take the different dimensions of normativity into account. Only after considering what morality, rationality, prudence, the law and so forth require, a unique response as to how an agent can escape a state of conflict can be given.

However, the question remains whether it is not possible to identify a solution to the AO *within* the concept of rationality, i.e. without being committed to consider all the other dimensions of normativity. More precisely, one may question the applicability of my account to real-world cases, for instance to cases in which agents lack the morally required beliefs, because they have no evidence for these beliefs. It seems that in these cases, the attempt of an all-things-considered judgement will not help. To these worries, I answer two things. First, in cases in which agents do have appropriate moral beliefs, many important asymmetries can already by accounted for within rationality. This is due to the rational requirement that commits an agent to believe what one believes one has evidence to believe. Assuming that many fundamental moral beliefs, such as the belief that one ought not to kill innocent neighbours without

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[15] Shpall, 'Wide and narrow scope' 6.

any reason, seem sufficiently corroborated by evidence, rationality itself will resolve the fundamental asymmetries connected to these beliefs. Second, in cases in which agents lack the right moral beliefs, I take it to be important to abandon the presumption that all rational agents ought to be capable of resolving asymmetries *on their own*. Rational agents are rational, but not necessarily moral or prudential. Conceptually, I cannot think of any non-substantive, purely formal process through which an agent can be made to adopt morally required beliefs without raising further complications such as bootstrapping. On the other hand, the DAON leaves room for the possibility of normative guidance through other people. On the most natural view, the idea behind rational (or any other) requirements is not to formulate them once and subsequently leave it to the agents under those requirements to apply them. Rather, requirements can be seen as the framework within which normative discourse ideally takes place. This discourse, however, inevitably involves other people, who can in turn point to the conjunction of rational *and* moral requirements in expressing normative guidance. The DAON explains *why* normative advice to satisfy a rational requirement in one way rather than another carries normative force. This is because it explains how other people can point to a different normative dimension that an irrational agent under a WS requirement has so far been unaware of.

To achieve a firmer grasp of how the DAON would cope with an asymmetry, consider the case of akrasia. That is, consider a situation in which you believe that you ought to kill your neighbour, but you do not intend to. As was pointed out earlier, the WS requirement against akrasia will leave you with two options. Either you drop your normative belief or you form the corresponding intention. By rationality's lights, these two processes are on par, because both of them will bring you from an irrational state into one of coherence. But, as I said, this is not the whole story. You are also, or so we assume here, under a moral requirement not to believe that you ought to kill your neighbour. Killing your neighbour is something that you ought not to do, and so you ought not to believe that you

ought to do it. In consequence, this moral requirement will work as a tie-breaker in deciding what you are normatively required to do, i.e. all things considered. This result, however, can only be obtained under WS requirements if one takes all the relevant dimensions of normativity into account. For the sake of simplicity, I have been implicitly assuming that no requirements other than moral and rational ones are relevant here. Clearly, the moral requirement not to kill your innocent neighbour is decisive here, but one might also think of prudential and legal[16] requirements as contributing to normative requirements. I take it that the way in which we think about these kinds of reasons as *contributing* to all-things-considered normative decisions supports the adequacy of the account I am proposing here.

V. Objections and Rationalisation

The cases discussed so far, however, point to a putative problem of the DAON. In particular, what happens if a WS rational requirement requires either of two processes of an agent while the other dimensions remain silent? Does this mean that one is back with the initial asymmetry problem? This is not so. The only cases I can think of in which an agent is only under one requirement, and this requirement is one of rationality, are cases of irrelevant attitudes. Suppose that you are akratic. You believe that you ought to brush your teeth at 7:00 rather than 7:05 without intending to do so. I assume that, morally, legally or prudentially, there is no reason that counts in favour of brushing your teeth at 7:00 rather than 7:05 or vice versa. It just does not matter. So apparently, only the dimension of rationality provides you with any reason, which in turn implies that the corresponding WS requirement allows you to either drop your belief or

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[16]The view that the law provides another reason against doing something immoral is controversial, though. See e.g. Joseph Raz's 'The Obligation to Obey: Revision and Tradition' in *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics*, 1995, Oxford: Clarendon Press, for such a skepticism.

to form the relevant intention, both processes being on par. But in the case of irrelevant attitudes, this is just the result that one ought to expect. Given that there is absolutely no reason to prefer the one over the other, there is also no reason why, in this example, forming an irrelevant intention is in any sense better than dropping an irrelevant belief. I cannot see any reason that generally counts against rationalising irrelevant intentions. Shpall[17] objects to this. He claims that 'plausibly, it is never rational to respond in such a way.' I do not think that this is plausible. In explaining why, I shall make some conceptual clarifications that I deem important for drawing an adequate picture of rationality.

First of all, one could argue that the *process* of rationalisation is itself irrational. I do not claim that Shpall would subscribe to this claim, but at any rate it is important to explain why it is implausible. Put simply, it is hard to see how a *process* can be something that is rational or irrational. Clearly, human beings can be rational, maybe even computers, robots or animals, albeit in a restricted sense. But a process is nothing to which the concept of rationality applies. No process can satisfy or violate rational requirements, for a process lacks the necessary rational capacity to do so.[18] Surely, an agent can be rational or irrational in *engaging* in a certain process, but then it is the agent who satisfies or violates a rational requirement rather than the process itself. Therefore, we should not say that the process of rationalisation is in itself irrational.

However, those who object to my claim that rationalisation is not in itself irrational will grant that. Yet, they could appeal to something that is referred to in the literature as *basing principles*.

Put loosely, the idea of basing is that 'rationality also requires of you to form and sustain your attitudes in the right sort of way, where this is specified by independent basing principles.'[19] Similarly, Shpall[20] notes that under a similar

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[17] Shpall, 'Wide and narrow scope' 9.

[18] See Fink, 'A constitutive account of rationality requires', for a more thorough discussion of rational capacities.

[19] Way, 'The symmetry of rational requirements' 232.

[20] Shpall, 'Wide and narrow scope' 8.

account of John Broome, there are certain ways 'in which we may permissibly hold attitudes on the basis of other attitudes.' Without going into details here, such a basing principle may incorporate the claim that there is always something irrational about rationalisation. The advantage of this approach is that one no longer needs to hold that the *process* of rationalisation is irrational. Contrarily, one simply claims that an agent who rationalises an intention violates some basing principle of rationality and is irrational via this violation.

There is, however, a problem connected to the view that there are basing principles against rationalisation. More precisely, those who claim that it is irrational to violate these basing principles are also committed to the view that someone can be less than fully rational, even though this agent is fully coherent. That is, an agent can have all the rationally required mental attitudes, believe no contradictions, be means-end-coherent, be enkratic, etc., and still be less than fully rational, just in virtue of violating a basing principle against rationalisation. On a more plausible view, it may be that someone who rationalises her lacking intentions violates moral or prudential requirements by dropping beliefs that she ought morally or prudentially to have. However, I do not think that, merely in terms of rationality, dropping beliefs to achieve coherence is worse than forming the corresponding intentions. Moreover, an agent who is particularly skilled at rationalisation seems to be precisely someone who is particularly skilled at spotting incoherencies and achieving as easily as possible the mental relief corresponding to the necessary mental adjustments. Hence, in analogy to a phrase by Robert Cummins,[21] if someone successfully rationalises her moral beliefs, we should suspect her morals, not her rationality.

Neither am I convinced by a possible counterexample involving an apparently irrational case of belief-dropping. Consider an agent who is less than fully rational in virtue of being sometimes inconsistent, some times means-end incoherent, sometimes akratic, etc. That agent may now drop all but one of

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[21]Cummins, R., 'Reflections on Reflective Equilibrium', in: *The Role of Intuition in Philosophy*, Ramsey, W. and M. DePaul (eds.), New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999, 113-127.

her beliefs and hence make herself fully rational by eradicating even the possibility to be irrational, because rationality is a concept of *relations* between mental attitudes. One may be inclined to call this behaviour irrational. However, the example is in two ways deficient. First, it is implausible that an agent could (non-instrumentally) drop all her beliefs except for one without violating the rational requirement to believe what one believes one has evidence to believe. And it will certainly be difficult for an agent to stop believing in *all* the evidence she has. However, this argument is premised on (empirical) assumptions about what agents may or may not do with their evidence, and these may turn out to be false. Second, though, dropping almost all of one's beliefs will most probably violate many prudential and moral requirements that one is under. Taking the various normative dimensions into account, it is for instance highly imprudent to drop all one's beliefs except for one, as this will prevent one from achieving many things that are good for oneself. In doing so, one will also violate many moral requirements by dropping beliefs that one is morally required to have. Therefore, what is wrong about excessive belief-dropping can easily be explained be moral or prudential considerations. However, I can see nothing necessarily *irrational* in this practice. It seems precisely to be a conflation of prudence, morality and rationality that is responsible for intuitions to the contrary.

This brings me to complete the picture of rationality I wished to draw here. On my account, we should treat rationalisation as a failure of morality, prudence etc., i.e. a failure to respect the substantive precepts issued by these sources. I then assume that a clear understanding of rationality will embed it as one among various dimensions into the overarching concept of normativity, while keeping those dimensions conceptually distinct. If one takes the dimensions of morality, prudence, etc. into account when expressing all-things-considered guidance, I see no reason to conflate rationality with these notions, given that the DAON is sufficiently strong to explain the asymmetries discussed in this essay. In other words, I advocate a rather *thin* concept of rationality, i.e. a concept

that incorporates only those aspects of rationality that are commonly thought inevitable to any understanding of it. At the same time I am confident that the account I am proposing can explain the critical asymmetries that a *thicker* concept, i.e. one that is filled with more substantive claims about rationality, could avoid more directly, albeit with less conceptual clarity.

Conclusion

In this paper I attempted to present an answer to the AO against WS requirements of rationality. This objection claimed that WS requirements fail to accommodate serious normative asymmetries, because they always leave the agent with at least two processes that satisfy the requirement. What was called for, then, was a process of guidance through which an irrational agent would be directed to a normatively desirable state of mind. My claim was, however, that such a process cannot be found *within* the concept of rationality. Rather, I put forward the DAON as a candidate account of rationality as merely one among various dimensions of normativity. According to this account, a decision between two logically symmetric processes to satisfy a rational requirement can only be made by simultaneously taking the other relevant normative dimensions, such as morality, prudence, the law, etc., into account. Furthermore, I argued that we should treat rationalisation not as a failure of rationality, but as a process of achieving coherence through violating substantive requirements issued by sources other than rationality. This is consistent with an account of normativity that keeps its various dimensions conceptually distinct, while still being sufficiently strong to accommodate the important asymmetries that were raised by the AO.

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