# The Normativity of Rationality

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Note to Sheffield Audience: This is a rough draft and, I think, it needs a substantial rewrite. Nevertheless, I am confident that it manages to bring my thoughts on these issues across. As I will be working on this paper in not too long (I hope), I need your comments. Thanks in advance for reading and trying to make sense of what is by no means a polished piece.

Every drama needs a hero, a defender of what is good and right, and a villain, who, in one way or another, attempts to thwart the hero's efforts. We would be disturbed, if only villains were on stage, and bored if our heroes would not have to overcome some serious resistance. The simplest drama in moral philosophy is confronting the amoralist. He throws us this challenge: 'Your pain is yours and means nothing to me'. If he does not agree that pain just is bad, simply bad, impersonally bad, wherever it occurs, we have to drag him into the space of reasons more carefully. 'Certainly, you dislike being in pain yourself. You also dislike whatever might cause you pain, correct?' This is one opening move, which, if it secures us some principle of instrumental rationality, would at least give us some leverage. We could follow up like this, 'In your circumstances, behaving morally is, actually, an instrument to minimize your pain' or, philosophically more ambitious, 'If you accept the Hypothetical Imperative, you have to accept the Categorical Imperative as well'. Despite a weak plot, the strength of the dialogue might draw us to this drama. The classic epistemological plot is more sophisticated. Our hero has set himself very high standards. Now he is stuck with knowledge of some basic logical and conceptual truths and of the present state of his own mind, but the world he wanted to assure us of has moved out of sight. Can we bring back the world from such a limited basis or do we have to try to disguise the hero's own conscience as the true villain?

The plot I will be concerned with has a more ingenious villain. The hero meets no resistance at first. 'Oranges are good for you.' No grumbling, even when we say that the fact that oranges are good for you (or the facts that make it the case that oranges are good for you) is a reason to eat oranges. Health, pleasure, kindness, justice – we live in a world full of reasons. We think to have won already. Might this gift turn out to be a Trojan horse? Principles of consistency, in the theoretical case, and principle of instrumental reason in the practical case, were our safe base from which we could direct the struggle with the sceptic. With a world of reasons in our hands, the sceptic enters and, seemingly innocent, asks us to reconsider our old base. Some of our own, the followers of GE Moore, advise us now to abandon this base: rules of rationality are not normative, they say, only reasons are; and, they assure us, the normative force of reasons will keep the sceptic away. Not so, I think. If we abandon the base, we are in danger of loosing everything.

The main purpose of this paper is to defend our basic principles of consistency and of instrumental reason and, thereby, to defend a notion of rationality, according to which consistency and the right sensitivity towards means-end relations are central for being rational thus understood. Defending such a notion of rationality means to show that

principles like consistency and means-end sensitivity are normative principles. Thus, a notion of rationality constituted by following these principles will be normative as well. Furthermore, I will try to highlight the danger involved in abandoning these basic principles. The danger, I will argue, is the implosion of the normative domain, as we know it.

1. The Problem: The Possibility of Conflicts between Mind-Based and World-Based Oughts (or between Notions of Mind-Based and World-Based Normative Relevance)

Suppose there are normative facts. For example, I ought to brush my teeth. This fact, it is plausible to assume, will have some explanation. There is a reason why it obtains, i.e. there is a reason why I ought to brush my teeth. The following is a good candidate for such an explanation: Regular brushing keeps my teeth clean and, thereby, healthy. This might not be a complete explanation. Maybe it only looks satisfactory, because we rightly presuppose that I care about my health, including healthy teeth. Complete or not, what is important is that I ought to do something because some empirical fact obtains. The world, we might say, is such, that brushing keeps my teeth healthy and this fact is, at least partially, the source of my obligation to brush my teeth. So, let me speak of a world-based ought in this case.

Suppose I am convinced that p, for example, that today is Tuesday. On this basis, we may try to introduce another normative fact. Believing that it is Tuesday, I ought to believe that it is not Wednesday. To contrast this case with the previous one, we can speak of a mind-based ought in this case. I ought to believe that it is not Wednesday, because of what I already believe, namely that it is Tuesday. Had I not believed that it is Tuesday, believing that it is Wednesday might well have been all right. This is, at least, a good candidate for a mind-based ought. Means/end sensitivity provides another candidate: If one wants healthy teeth and believes that regular brushing keeps them healthy (and these are, in this context, the only relevant attitudes), then one ought to brush one's teeth. My mental attitudes make it the case that I ought to do something.

If, however, these are not the only relevant considerations, we do not yet know what one ought to do. If brushing is painful, for example, and there are other, similarly effective, cleaning methods, brushing might not be such a good idea after all. Nevertheless, wanting to have healthy teeth and believing that brushing keeps them healthy is, it seems to me, a reason for brushing, even if it does not determine what one ought to do all by itself. A notion weaker than 'ought', the notion of normative relevance or of being a reason, can, like the overall normative concept 'ought', be either mind-based or world-based. If we have a reason to take what we think are good means to (what we think are) our ends, then this reason comes from our being in certain psychological states and as such will be mind-based. Others will argue that facts about normative relevance are always world-based. Referring to the example above, they will say that it is the fact that brushing promotes something good, namely having healthy teeth, which is a reason to brush.[1]

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[1] See Dancy, Practical Reality and my 'Two Accounts of Objective Duties' in PPR 2003. There one finds some points about the difficulty of drawing this distinction precisely. (See also Everson on these matters.) Nevertheless, we can, I think, make good sense of the distinction between mind-based and world-based normative notions.

Accepting both kinds of explanations for the occurrence of normative facts, world-based and mind-based explanations, gives raise to a problem – a problem of potential conflict. What if the world demands that I fi whereas I am, psychologically, such that there is a mind-grounded ought that I not fi? From the perspective of a philosophical theory of normative facts, such conflict is unacceptable: some facts (facts about the world) make it the case that I ought to fi and others (facts about my psychological states) make it the case that I ought not it fi. Someone might think that being subject to two opposing demands, to fi and not to fi, is not the result of a philosophically unsatisfactory account of what one ought to do; it rather makes room for the possibility of human tragedy in the face of irresolvable normative conflict. Not so, I think. If the woman I intend to marry turns out to be my mother, there will be room for tragedy. Whether one ought to brush one's teeth, however, is not the right sort of issue for tragedy. Accepting both world-based and mind-based oughts, however, can lead to conflict wherever we encounter normativity. How can we avoid this threat of inconsistency to our normative outlook?

This question is by no means new. It was one of the central issues discussed by the British intuitionists. GE Moore opted for a thoroughly world-based account of ought and reasons. Prichard challenged him, defending a mind-based conception, and managed to convince Ross to switch sides. Ewing wanted to have it both ways: 'ought', he thought, was ambiguous; we can use either a world-based or a mind-based notion.[2]

Prichard introduces the issue, apologetically, as 'essentially dull and tiresome': 'If a man has an obligation, i.e., a duty, to do some action, does the obligation depend on certain characteristics of the situation, or on certain characteristics of his thought about the situation?' Suppose we agree, that conduciveness to health is a normatively relevant consideration. Prichard asks whether we should understand this consideration as a psychological fact – our taking something to be conducive to our health – or as a non-psychological fact, namely as conduciveness to health. Is normative relevance to be found in the world or in our perspective on the world?

The first option dominates recent discussions. One reason is that even those most sympathetic to mind-based normative notions find it hard to resist a world-based account of normative notions in cases like the following.[3] If Gin has, unbeknownst to an agent, been replaced by petrol, we should, these philosophers argue, insist that the

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[2] References to this debate. Much of it has been revived in the 80s and 90s: Mellor, Jackson, Railton, Broome, Oddie&Menzies, Thomson, and, most recently, and without much historical awareness, Sobel. Dancy's discussions, by contrast, are historically always well informed. See also Broome ms. and Zimmerman. See also my 'Ewing's Problem' (EP) for some more details.

[3] See Williams. Another reason for the dominance of the world-based account is that the pressure towards a psychological account is absorbed and excluded from the normative domain, properly speaking, via conceptual fiat. Thus, many philosophers want to distinguish between what they call 'motivating reasons', which typically are psychological states, from 'normative reasons' or reasons proper. I argue in my 1999 that this distinction does not have any philosophical payoff. It rather leads to different conceptual frameworks regarding the connection between reasons and rationality. Having dealt with this distinction elsewhere, I can leave aside here. Everyone attracted to the distinction, can add 'normative' when I speak about reasons, although the term 'reason' should not be seen as settling Prichard's question, whether reasons are world-based or mind-based. I will say a bit more about the Gin/Tonic case later on.

agent who wants to have a Gin&Tonic has a strong reason not to drink what is on offer for him. The fact that a drink is poisonous, they say, is a reason not to drink it. Once we grant this point, and thereby accept world-based oughts (and a world-based notion of normative relevance), mind-based oughts become doubtful, because of the consistency worries outlined above.

Like others, I will focus on three candidates of mind-based oughts (or three mind-based cases of normative relevance): The first is consistency in our beliefs and, closely related, the idea that we should believe what logically follow, in an obvious way, from what we believe already (and, we might want to add, is relevant). I will focus on this latter principle, which I call Obvious Implication, OI for short. The second candidate is appropriate sensitivity to means/end relations. According to principles of instrumental rationality – once thought to encompass all of practical rationality – wanting an end and believing that something makes the occurrence of the end more likely is a reason for wanting that something to occur and, if possible, to bring it about. We do not need a more precise formulation for our purposes and I call it Instrumental Principle, IP for short. A third item is coherence between our normative beliefs and those things these beliefs are about. Depending on the normative belief involved, be it the belief that one has reason to do something or most reason, or conclusive reason or that one simply ought or must do it, we will find different formulations of these coherence requirements. The principal idea is that our attitudes and actions should be in line with how we think they ought to be. I will call such principles 'normative belief requirements'. They are requirements arising from our holding normative beliefs and are as such mind-based. I concentrate on the practical case, i.e. on requirements on intentions and actions, and here, for reasons of simplicity I will focus on the following principle which, as representative for the whole family, I call NBR: If I believe I ought to fi, then I ought to fi.

The potential conflict between mind-based and world-based oughts leaves us with the following four options: (1) We try to separate the domain to which these principles apply. This does not look very promising. In any case, I will not pursue this strategy here. (2) We can argue for a distinction between different senses of 'ought', defined by the distinct constraints that on the one hand the world and on the other hand, our mind imposes on us. There are defenders of this strategy. I do not endorse it, but here is not the place to raise my objections to this strategy.[4]

This leaves us with the idea to show that the conflict between world-based and mind-based oughts is only apparent, because what looks like an ought of one sort turns out, on reflection, to be an ought of the other sort. At least, it can be replaced with some ought of the other sort which manages to capture a good part of the intuition which made us accept it in the first place. (3) We deny world-based oughts and our intuitions about what made them look plausible will have to be explained in terms of mind-based oughts. (4) We deny mind-based oughts and our intuitions about what made them look plausible will have to be explained in terms of world-based oughts.

I think (3) is correct, but here I will confine myself to a discussion of views which try to defend (4) in one form or another. GE Moore and, more recently, Niko Kolodny, have defended this view. They simply deny that principles of consistency, means-end

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[4] Ewing and Parfit. See my EP for details.

sensitivity and accordance between normative beliefs and what they are about are correct principles of what one ought to believe or ought to do. They are, in my view, extremists.

John Broome offers us a different variant of (4). Our candidates of mind-based normative principles are, strictly speaking, wrong. However, something closely related is put in their place. Whereas I started from the idea that, being in certain mental states, one ought to be in others – a clearly mind-based ought -- Broome thinks of such principles as having wide-scope. According to Broome, it is wrong to claim that being in one state makes the case that one ought to be in another. Something closely related, however, is true, namely, that one ought to be such that either one is not in the first state or one indeed is in the second. These wide-scope ought principles, in virtue of being wide-scope, have no clear basis anymore. They point us towards, so to speak, free-floating normative facts.[5] Broome finds the question why these principles hold, difficult to answer. Officially, he remains agnostic about their normative status. (We can imagine, however, the discomfort a decision theorist must feel when means/end sensitivity is put into doubt.)

In section 2, I pursue two objectives. First, I provide a defence of two of our candidates for mind-based oughts. If we understand the principles of consistency and means/end sensitivity as narrow-scope principles, they would give us mind-based oughts (or mind-based normative relevance). I show that Broome's arguments against their narrow-scope reading are unpersuasive, or rather, in light of Broome's arguments, I defend restricted versions of these principles in a narrow-scope (i.e. mind-based) form. I draw on reflections about the structure of reasons to motivate these restrictions. Broome's wide-scope reading of these principles was meant to solve the problem of potential conflict between mind-based and world-based oughts by replacing the narrow-scope (and, thereby, mind-based) principles by wide-scope (and, thereby, free-floating) principles. I argue, secondly, that this solution does not work: even Broome's wide-scope principles would commit us, in some relevant cases, to mind-based oughts.

In section 3, I show that my defence of consistency and means-end sensitivity as narrow scope requirements does not extend to NBR. Having closed off a Broome-like defence of NBRs (by understanding them as wide-scope principles), this apparently simplifies the debate. We seem to be stuck with a choice between options (3) and (4): either we accept that all normative relevant notions are mind-based or we accept that all are world-based. I describe the Moorean way of thinking about normativity. I find this position disturbing, because, in the end, it strikes me as being a denial of normativity, as we commonly understand it.

In section 4, I look at Kolodny's attempt to make good on the second part of the Moorean position (4), which not only claims that all normativity is world-based, but also sets out to explain why many thought otherwise. Kolodny concentrates on normative belief requirements and, in this section, I will criticise what he calls the 'transparency account' of the apparent normative force of normative beliefs.

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[5] In my 2003, I discuss this aspect of Broome's view when talking about Dancy, who shares the view that the normative facts in question are appropriately captured by wide-scope ought sentences with Broome.

I said that it looks as if we have to choose between the positions (3) and (4), the denial of either world-based or mind-based oughts because of consistency worries. Section 5 deals with the relation between means-end sensitivity and normative belief requirements. Contrary to Kolodny, I argue that the former is the basic principle. NBR turns out to be an application of the means-end principle IP. The argument of this section sets up the idea of section 6, where I show how one could avoid the problem of conflict between mind-based and world-based normative facts by weakening NBR. I argue that this weakening is independently plausible, and I draw on Aristotle's account of voluntary action in support of this claim. Thus, we can indeed have it both ways and accept mind-based as well as world-based oughts. In the context of this paper, this concludes my defence of mind-based oughts.

Finally, I turn, in section 7, to Broome's agnosticism about the normative force of his wide-scope replacements for mind-based normative principles. I try to show that he is perplexed by what might well turn out to be a pseudo-question. This very fact has wider significance. It points to a general dissatisfaction with a realist picture of normativity. My defence of mind-based oughts, by weakening NBRs, is a defence within a realist framework. Once we leave this framework behind and look at things from a constructivist perspective, I suggest at the end, the whole issue I have been dealing with will appear in a different light.


2. Why Mind-Based Oughts (or Mind-Based Reasons) are Supposed to Have Wide Scope and Why I Do not Find these Arguments Persuasive

Something is certainly right about the idea that we ought no to have inconsistent beliefs. The very possibility of rational argument depends on it. I will argue that consistency is a mind-based requirement, i.e. if you believe that p, then you ought not to believe that not-p. I will focus on the related principle Obvious Implication, OP: whenever p obviously entails q and you believe that p, then you ought to believe q. Alternatively, we can say that believing p is, when p obviously entails q, a conclusive (or perfect) reason to believe q. My defence of a mind-based understanding of OP extends straightforwardly to the instrumental principle IP. Believing that doing something increases the likelihood of achieving something I want is a reason, not necessarily a conclusive one, to do what promises to get me what I want.

The first objection to a mind-based reading of consistency I call the 'implausibility objection'. Take a belief that q, which, in the prevailing circumstances, it would be outright silly to hold. Now what if you already believe some p, which obviously entails q? On the view under consideration, you ought to believe q. This result, however, is implausible: no one ought to believe something that it would be outright silly to believe. John Broome illustrates this objection as follows, 'I do not say that, if you believe p, you ought to believe q. That may well be false, even when q follows obviously from p. No one ought to believe the world was made in less than a week; the evidence is strongly against it. Even if you believe the world was made in six days, still it is not the case that you ought to believe it was made in less than a week.' (45)

I agree with Broome's example -- it is silly to believe that the world was made in less than a week – but I do not draw the same lesson from it. Instead of abandoning mind-

based oughts, I suggest we restrict principles like consistency and obvious entailment. This is by no means an *ad hoc* move; it rather results from reflections on the structure of reasons. The notion of a reason, be it that of a conclusive or of a *pro tanto* reason is, I want to suggest, not a simple notion. It rests on a more basic relation, which, though I have given it different names before, I here call the relation of support.[6] We can distinguish the support relation from what it might accomplish, namely that one thing effectively supports another. Effective support requires more than things standing in the support relation to each other. Further conditions have to be met. If one thing manages to effectively support another, I will say the former is a reason for the latter. What are these other conditions?

First, things might interfere in the transmission of support via the support relation. If this is the case, the items in question will stand in the relation of support without the one item effectively supporting the other.[7] Here is an example. Something looking red supports thinking that it is red. Such support, however, need not be effective. Knowing that I wear glasses that make everything, even bananas, look red renders the support-relation between looking red and taking it to be red ineffective. Even though, in such circumstances, looking red does not effectively support taking it to be red, there is, I claim, a difference between how looking red relates to taking it to be red and how looking blue relates to taking it to be red. A defeated reason still differs from something that is no reason at all. It does not differ in terms of normative significance -- a completely defeated reason lacks any normative force – it differs as it, in contrast to something that simply is no reason at all, needs to be defeated in order to lack normative significance. In the absence of a defeating consideration, it would effectively support whatever it stands in the support relation to. Being undefeated is the first thing I add to the support relation on our way to construct the notion of being a reason.

Secondly, there are things, which stand in the support relation to something else, which can only provide effective support, if they are effectively supported themselves. Some things need to be effectively supported in order to provide effective support. Other things, namely certain foundational beliefs, if foundationalism is true, and certain desires, if a simple Humean account of practical reasons is true, need no support in order to provide effective support. Epistemologically speaking, the idea here is that although some beliefs might stand in the support relation to others, they can only provide effective support, if they are themselves justified, i.e. effectively supported.

We can compare the normative force of reasons to the illuminating effect of a light bulb on some surface. First of all the light bulb has to be in the right place to illuminate the surface. (Being in the right place corresponds to standing in the support relation.) Being in the right place, however, is not enough. The light bulb will not illuminate the surface, if something interferes, for example if it is covered by black tape. Even if, in terms of light on the surface, it is as if no light bulb would be there, we should distinguish between interfered with light bulbs and an altogether absence of

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[6] In my 2001, I speak of standing in the being-a-reason-for relation to something else. In my 2006, I speak of normative connectedness. The first term is cumbersome; the second wrongly invites thoughts of a symmetric relation.

[7] Such interference can come in degrees. For simplicity however, I will only consider cases of complete or total interference.

light bulbs. External interference is one case in which we have no light; internal flaws provide another such case. Furthermore, and this is a further condition on something being a reason, a light bulb will not illuminate, if its light does not make the surface brighter than it already is. The illumination analogy teaches us something else, which will become relevant later on. We can distinguish between sources of light and things that reflect light without themselves being sources of light. Sometimes illumination takes place via reflection and then, it seems to me, we should distinguish between genuine and what we could call borrowed illuminating force. It makes good sense to speak of effective support and 'real' reasons only if the support they provide is genuine and not borrowed.

Drawing these things together, the notion of a reason turns out to be complex. A is a reason for B if and only if (1) A stands in the support relation to B, (2) nothing interferes with the transmission of support, (3) A, if in need of support, is itself effectively supported, (4) A increases the support that B already has, and (5) the support A provides for B is genuine rather than borrowed. If all these conditions are met, then A effectively supports B, i.e. A is a reason for B. Such reasons might well be mind-based reasons.[8]

Let me come back to the Implausibility Objection. On the grounds of the relation between their contents, the belief that the world was made in six days stands in a perfect support relation to the belief that the world was made in less than a week. Nevertheless, the first belief is not a reason for the second, silly belief, because it is, despite needing support, unsupported.

Broome offers another objection, the Bootstrapping Objection (p. 63): 'The proposition that the world was made in six days is itself an obvious inference from the proposition that the world was made in 6 days. Therefore, the view that beliefs are (pro tanto) reasons implies that believing the world was made in six days is a (pro tanto) reason to believe the world was made in six days. That would be truly incredible bootstrapping.' It looks as if, on the mind-based reason view, my believing something is a conclusive reason for believing it. I could not fail to believe anything without having a perfect justification for it.

Let me answer this objection. If my belief that p is not effectively supported (but needs support), i.e. if it is a silly belief, then it is not a reason to believe that p. Although believing that p supports believing that p it does not support it effectively. Suppose that the belief that p is itself effectively supported. Then all the support it has travels along the strongest possible support relation to itself. Nothing changes; it remains as well supported as it was and this is, intuitively, quite correct. We will however deny that believing that p is all by itself a reason for believing that p, because it violates condition (4), namely that a reason has to increase the support of whatever it supports. (Believing that p can be part of a reason for itself when combined with a belief in one's general reliability regarding the kind of beliefs p is an example of. Then believing that p would actually be (part of) a reason to believe that p)

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[8] I develop this account in more detail in my 'Particularism and the Structure of Reasons' where I also discuss some objections.

The distinction between the notions of being a reason (or being such as to effectively support) on the one hand and the notion of support on the other hand transfers easily to the practical domain. The fact that an end might be silly does not show that ends together with means-ends beliefs cannot be reasons for taking or intending to take the means. Ends and means-end beliefs always support taking the means but they need not support it effectively.

Broome advances a different reading of how consistency and obvious entailment are normatively relevant. Instead of (mind-based) reasons, he introduces what he calls 'rational (or normative) requirements', expressed by wide-scope ought-sentences. Simplifying quite a bit, he says rationality requires one to be such that that, if one believes that p, one also believes q, if p obviously entails q. Such a requirement can be satisfied in two ways: either by not believing p or by believing its obvious consequences. Putting the same thought another way, we cannot infer that one ought to believe q from the fact that one believes whatever entails q. Being in a relevant psychological state, does not, via some principle of consistency, ground any normative fact. My reaction is different. We have to restrict the principle in question. In case such a principle applies, i.e. in those cases in which a consideration satisfies the five conditions outlined above, we deal with mind-based normative facts and we can legitimately derive a normative conclusion about what one ought or has reason to believe from the relevant principle and the fact that one is in certain psychological states.

All I have done so far is to provide an alternative to Broome's wide-scope account. A narrow scope reading of principles like consistency and obvious entailment is, I have argued, defensible. A substantial question remains. Should we understand these principles as narrow scope principles, restricted to rational beliefs, or should we regard them as unrestricted wide-scope principles?

There are two differences between these views. First, if we deal with an unjustified or otherwise irrational starting belief, the restricted principle does not apply. Broome objects to this feature of my view. Secondly, if the restricted principle does apply, the wide-scope version is either too weak or it fails to solve the problem of conflict between mind-based and world-based oughts. I start with the second point.

Take a case in which one reasonably believes that p, i.e. in believing p one is as one ought to be. Furthermore, suppose that p obviously entails q. According to a wide-scope reading of Obvious Implication, one ought to be such that, if one believes p, one believes q. In other words, either one gives up believing p or one believes q. By assumption, one ought to believe p, thus, we can exclude the first options – giving up one's belief that p. This leaves us with the claim that one ought to believe q. Thus, even a wide-scope reading of Obvious Implication provides us with a mind-based ought. If one tried to deny this argument, Obvious Implication would look very weak: it would create no pressure to believe obvious consequences of what one reasonably (or even reasonably and truly) believes.[9]

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[9] I endorse a restricted form of what Broome calls Rational Detachment (see his PR), the inference from O(If A then B) and O(A) to O(B). Broome says that 'Rational Detachment is intuitively unattractive' (Broome 85). The main motivation for doubting this form of detachment comes from Chisholm's 'Contrary to Duty Imperatives and Deontic Logic' (1963). Rational detachment seems implausible in cases like the following. Suppose one ought, if one visits one's neighbours, to call

As I said, Broome has another argument for the wide scope reading. When my principle does not apply, for example in cases in which the belief that p is a silly belief, Broome claims that there is still something wrong with someone who despite having a silly starting belief fails to believe what is entailed by the starting belief. (63). According to my view, however, a silly starting belief is not a reason. Thus, someone who fails to draw conclusions from silly starting points has not violated any norms governing what one ought to believe.

The failure to draw an obvious conclusion from what one believes in case of a silly starting belief is, I want to claim, some evidence that the person is not disposed to draw obvious conclusion when he indeed ought to do so. Evidence for a person's disposition to violate norms governing beliefs might itself be sufficient for some criticism of the person. Thus, it looks as if not everything is in order with such a person. Nevertheless, I would insist that the criticism is not that the person has violated a belief norm, as none applied when the starting belief was silly. Mimicking Frankfurt, we can doubt whether one does become saner by spinning out all the details of the fantasy world one takes oneself to inhabit.[10]

I have argued that principles like Consistency, Obvious Implication, and Means-End Sensitivity can be defended by restricting them. I see them as principles, along which support can travel. If the starting points are normatively okay, these staring points are reasons for the various attitudes specified in these principles. If p obviously entails q, then believing that p, if normatively okay itself, may well be a reason, for believing q. If believing p is a reason to adopt some other attitude, then we deal with a mind-based notion of ought and normative relevance in general. Neither the Implausibility Objection nor the Bootstrapping Objection could convince us otherwise.[11]

3 How the Problem Comes Back and why the Moorean Solution is Dangerous

Narrow-scope readings of Obvious Implication and the Instrumental Principle, I have argued, are defensible. What about NBR, which says that one ought to fi, if one believes that one ought to fi?

Normally the belief that one ought to fi is not itself a reason for fi-ing. It rather bundles and reflects the normative light of those considerations one takes to be reasons for fi-ing and does not itself increase the strength of the case for fi-ing. Thus,

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beforehand. Suppose, furthermore, that one ought to visit one's neighbours. However, if one violates this latter obligation, and does not visit one's neighbours, it seems indeed odd to demand that one call to announce a visit, which will not take place. This sort of example has no bite against the restricted version of the principle suggested here. I am interested in what one ought to do, if one is, in all other respects, as one ought to be. Given this assumption it does not seem to matter whether we understand the conditional obligation as having narrow or wide scope, one ought to call beforehand in any case. For a more detailed reply see my EP.

[10] See Frankfurt, 'Rationality and the Unthinkable'.

[11] In the case of means-end sensitivity, there are independent reasons why we should understand such a principle as having narrow scope. Imagine two people A and B. Whenever A becomes aware of a necessary means, she takes it. B, however, is different. Whenever he becomes aware of a necessary means, there for the taking, he gives up his end. A, it seems to me, satisfies whereas B violates a plausible principle of rationality.

the normative significance of the belief that one ought to fi is normally not made in terms of reasons. Nevertheless, there is a strong case for accepting NBR, which, if we do accept it, have to accept as a mind-based normative principle, which determines what one ought to do. NBR seems to spell out a condition of minimal consistency. If one violates NBR, and acts against one's own judgment about what one ought to do, one has failed to act, as one should have, according to one's own standards. Failing one's own standards is irrational, and, thus, presumably, not acting as one ought to act.[12]

Furthermore, accepting NBR turns out to be a condition without which practical reasoning is impossible. Thinking about what one ought to do, when will one stop one's deliberation? One will stop, when one has convinced oneself that this or that is what one ought to do. Such a judgment settles the matter. If the agent, however, denied NBR, a belief that one ought to fi, could not settle what one ought to do. If the belief that one ought to fi cannot settle the question what one ought to do, nothing can settle it. Thus, accepting NBR is a condition for the possibility of practical reasoning.

This argument notwithstanding, NBR wears its problem on its sleeve. When I defended the other mind-based principles, I insisted that only normatively unobjectionable mental states could function as reasons. An analogous move will be insufficient in the case of NBR. Even if the belief that one ought to fi is reasonable and, given the available evidence, well justified it might still be false. NBR, however, treats the belief that one ought to fi as sufficient condition for the fact that one ought to fi and, thus, exclude the possibility of wrongly believing that one ought to fi. If we accept our fallibility in normative matters, we have, it seems, to reject NBR.

We are already familiar with Broome's suggested solution, namely to understand NBR, like all other candidates for mind-based normative facts, as wide-scope principles. Let me repeat my objection that a wide-scope approach cannot solve the problem of conflict. Take a case in which an agent wrongly but reasonably believes that he ought to fi. Then, by assumption, the agent ought not to fi, as his belief is wrong. According to the wide-scope understanding of NBR, the agent ought to be such that either he stops believing that he ought to fi or he does fi. If we now add that the agent ought to believe that he ought to fi (which is what I mean when I speak of the belief being reasonable or justified), then, as I have suggested, the wide-scope norm commits us to the idea that he ought to fi, whereas, by assumption, he ought not to fi. Thus, I doubt whether Broome's solution works.

The other reaction comes from Niko Kolodny. He argues that the only plausible reading of NBR is to give it narrow-scope. Thus, it would give us a mind-based ought. The bootstrapping objection, however, shows that NBR is unacceptable. 'Suppose I believe that I have conclusive reason to have some attitude. In some sense, I ought to have that attitude; it would be irrational of me not to have it. Now suppose that 'ought' here means 'have reasons'. Then we get the bootstrapping result that if I believe that I have conclusive reason to have some attitude, then I in fact have reason to have it. This is absurd' (Kolodny 512). What is Kolodny's objection to Broome's wide-scope reading of NBR? If it had wide-scope then, in the terms of NBR, one

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[12] See Scanlon. I discuss what for me is only an apparently dissenting voice (Arpaly 2000) in EP. Scanlon's main point in his 'Structural Irrationality' is that overall judgments, like judging that one ought to fi, are not themselves reasons. (More careful consideration of Scanlon's paper.)

ought to be such that one either stops believing that one ought to fi or one does fi. Kolodny points out that, though, one can reason from the fact that one believes that one ought to fi to one's intention to fi, one cannot reason from a lack of such an intention to one's abandoning the belief that one ought to fi. The principle has a direction. A process that would start from an intention or action (or from their absences) and move to abandoning or gaining a belief about what one ought to do is, and I agree with Kolodny, not a rational process.[13]

On the strength of the bootstrapping objection, Kolodny rejects NBR. In the previous section, I have tried to defend some mind-based normative principle, like Obvious Implication and Means-End Sensitivity, but I have admitted that this defence will not do when it comes to NBR. Can we separate the issues arising from different mind-based principles? Kolodny thinks that all other candidates for mind-based principles are expressions of or can be derived from NBR. 'Despite appearances these rational requirements [consistency and means/end sensitivity] can either be derived from the core requirements (namely the normative belief requirements), or be shown to be defeasible approximations to them.' (K 560). Consequently, all our candidates of mind-based principles will have to be rejected. The world alone is normative; there are no normative relations between mental states.

To me this is a shocking view. The corner stones of any traditional conception of rationality -- consistency in the theoretical case and means/end sensitivity in the practical case -- are not really principles of rationality. Kolodny, for reasons I will comment on later, expresses his view differently. These principles, he would say, are principles of rationality, but, he would insist, principles of rationality are not normative. The question of his paper 'Why Be Rational?' receives the answer: there is no reason to be rational. There is no reason to be governed by mind-based principles. If consistency and means-end sensitivity have to go, the house of reason, as many have seen it, has fallen down. Goodbye reason!

GE Moore, when it comes to practical rationality, had similar views. 'The only possible reason that can justify any action is that by it the greatest possible amount of what is good absolutely should be realized' (PE). What we ought to do is not determined by how we see the world; it is determined only by the comparative goodness of an action's actual consequences. Expectations of goodness and well-justified beliefs about what we will bring about do not matter.[14] The successful pursuit of the good and what one ought to do is the same thing. Even this is not quite right. What we pursue does not matter either. Success, by whatever means, encapsulates the whole of normativity. If we transfer this thought to the theoretical realm, we find that only successful belief can be justified, if, that is, justification is normative. Presumably, however, the notion of justification has suffered the same fate as the notion of practical rationality: neither is normatively significant. 'Why be interested in

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[13] In his response to Kolodny, Broome insists on distinguishing process from state requirements. His wide-scope reading of NBR is meant to capture a requirement on mental states, not a process of reasoning. I need not engage in this debate, as my argument that even wide-scope principles give us mind-based normative facts is not affected by this debate.

[14] Although our beliefs about what will happen do not matter for what we ought to do, they matter, according to Moore for how we see and evaluate agents. Blame and praiseworthiness, depends on agents' perspectives, but obligation does not. Duty and expedience, Moore says, are two words for the same thing. (Ethics)

justification?', 'Why support your beliefs by evidence?', 'Why be rational?' – All these question receive the same answer: there is no reason for any of these things. We were allowed to put reasons into the world. What we have achieved is little, indeed: Act successfully! Believe what is true!

Think about a situation in which it is obvious what to do, e.g. step out of the way of the oncoming truck. If the truck, however, would have become by magic a wonderful princess just before it hit you, then it is not true that you ought to have moved out of its way. Sure, you were justified in believing that you ought to move out of its way. Things, however, took a surprising turn. Thus, your belief was false; you ought to have stayed put. Moore sees this consequence clearly, '… we may be justified in saying many things, which we do not know to be true, and which in fact are not so. And so in this case I do not see why we should not hold, that though we would be justified in saying that he ought to choose one course, yet it may not be really true that he ought.'

This is the danger of investing the world with normativity. The normative domain shrinks. Success is all that remains. Nothing, which falls short of success -- beliefs, expectations, likelihood -- can match success itself. Actual goodness, in Moore's words, is the only reason. In trying to secure normativity by binding it to worldly facts, we seem to have lost it.[15]

How come that many people thought of consistency and means/end sensitivity as normative principles? Kolodny does not answer this challenge directly. He thinks that NBR is the source of all alleged mind-based normative facts. I disagree, but before I come to this matter, I want to take his explanation of why people were attracted to NBR. Remember, Kolodny defends what in my list above I called position (4), which is to deny all mind-based oughts and to explain our intuitions about what made such principles look plausible in the first place. To this second, explanatory part, I turn next.

4. Why I do not think that Kolodny's Transparency Account can explain the Normative Belief Requirement's Apparent Normative Force

Why do you, when you believe you ought to fi, experience normative pressure towards fi-ing, if, possibly, there is no normative pressure, as, despite your so believing, it need not be the case that you really ought to fi?

Kolodny offers his 'Transparency Account' as explanation of the apparent normative force of NBR.[16] Your belief that you ought to fi is, in terms of normative force,

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[15] I do not claim that Kolodny's view collapses immediately into Moore's view. I am simply portraying the danger of this happening. Dancy (2000) is a good example of how someone who thinks that the world is normative (or that reality is practical, as Dancy puts it) tries to safeguard his view against the collapse into Moore's view. See my (2003a) for some doubts concerning the success of Dancy's project to find some middle ground between Moore's view and a view that allows only mind-based normative facts. The depth of his struggle, in my view, becomes most apparent when Dancy endorses what he calls non-factual explanations: things can explain that do not exist.

[16] It is odd that section 5 of Kolodny's paper is called 'Explaining the Normativity of Rationality: The Transparency Account' when Kolodny's main point is to deny the normativity of rationality. What he

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transparent, i.e. it has no normative force on its own. It participates, however, in the normative force of its basis. You believe you ought to fi because of the features you take fi-ing to have. For example, you believe that to fi would be to do a kind thing, whereas it would be rude not to fi. If, in your view, fi-ing does not involve any substantial costs, you will come to think that you ought to fi because of its feature. So far, Kolodny advances a buck-passing view of the normative role of the belief that you ought to fi.[17]

Remember that, according to Kolodny, NBR does not have any real normative force. Thus, he seems to think, if there is no real normative connection between your believing that you ought o fi and your fi-ing, why does this belief nevertheless push you towards fi-ing. It does so, he claims, because it is based on what you take to be reasons to fi. If your thought that you ought to fi is based on your view that fi-ing is kind, then it is the latter thought that pushed you towards fi-ing. 'Thus, while the fact that a rational requirement [like NBR] applies to one is not in fact a reason for one to comply with it, it will always seem to one, when one is subject to a rational requirement, that one has a reason of another kind to comply with it: namely, the reason to form (or drop) that attitude that, in so far as one satisfies the antecedent of the requirement, one already believes one has (or lacks). This is what gives the 'ought' of rationality its normative force – or, rather, its seeming normative force.' (513)

I asked, why do we think there are mind-based oughts, like NBR? Kolodny answers: although believing that you ought to fi does not itself create any normative pressure towards fi-ing, it always seems to you that you ought to fi, because of the features you take fi-ing to have. The apparent normative pressure of mind-based oughts comes from the normative pressure of what one takes to be world-based normatively relevant features.[18]

This is, on several levels, an odd story. First, the normative force of a belief that one ought to do something, cannot always be explained by reference to the reason giving features of the thing one thinks one ought to do. Kolodny, like other buck-passers, underestimate the normative force of the belief that one ought to fi. (The same story

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tries to do is to explain why NBR looks normative (from the first-person perspective) without being normative.

[17] A buck-passer about what ought to be done says that the fact that one ought to do something is not itself a reason for doing it. The reasons for doing it are rather the features that make it the case that one ought to do it.

[18] Because of his philosophical commitments, Kolodny collapses two issues, which I separate. One is at the forefront and this is the question whether normativity is world-based or mind-based. The other issue is whether we understand rationality in terms of reasons or whether rationality itself is the basic notion. Kolodny treats these two issues as one and the same as he thinks that reasons are world-based normative facts, whereas rationality, if normative at all, would be mind-based. Leaving his philosophical commitments behind, we can speak of mind-based reasons, like the belief that an action is kind, and world-based oughts, like that an action brings about the comparatively best consequences. A third issue is intertwined with the first two. We can distinguish between realism and constructivism about normativity. Kolodny thinks that the acceptance of mind-based oughts goes together with the priority of rationality and, in general, with constructivism, whereas, on his view, a realist thinks world-based reasons are prior. I think the connections between these stances on very different issues, are much looser than Kolodny takes them be. I will take up constructivism as a general view about the nature of normativity in the last section of this paper. See Wallace (ms) for how an interesting connection between the priority of rationality and constructivism might be established.

can be told if we focus on the normative role, not of beliefs in ought, but of beliefs in reasons.) Philosophers think that we have to deny that this belief has any independent normative force because of the 'double-counting problem'. If the reasons for fi-ing are, first, that fi-ing is kind, and, secondly, that fi-ing is fun, and these two facts show, by comparison with features of available alternatives, that one ought to fi, then this overall normative fact should not count as a further reason. We have two reasons for fi-ing, its being kind and its being fun, but not three, namely, the two mentioned and the additional reason that fi-ing is what one ought to do. So far, so good. I said above that sometimes the light that illuminates a surface is reflected and comes from another source. The overall belief that one ought to fi is normally of this kind. Circumstances, however, can be different. Imagine a case were a friend tells you to go home. He says, 'Believe me, you really ought o go home. I'm sorry I'm not allowed to tell you why, just trust me and go home'. Suppose the agent believes the friend and follows his advice. When at home and asked, trying to explain himself, he will say, 'My friend told me to go home and I trusted him. That is why I am here now'. Usually when the surface is illuminated via reflection, we can look deeper and see the source. In this case, however, the source is hidden. Nevertheless, the agent's action looks perfectly reasonable to us. So what is the reason? We will refer to the friend's advice or, rather, to the agent's trust in what his friend has told him. Trust might well be a complex phenomenon. All that matters here, however, is that the agent believed what his friend told him, i.e. he came to believe that he ought to go home. Beliefs about what one ought to do are often normatively transparent. Sometimes, however, they are not, and then Kolodny's transparency account cannot get any grip.[19]

My first observation was that the Transparency account is not generally applicable. My second point is that it has been misnamed. We should rather call it the Illusion Account. Consider the following analogy: Why does someone experience normative pressure to think that the object in front of him is red, if, possibly, the object is not red? A good answer is that it looks red to him. This answer, however, is incomplete. In order to explain the normative pressure created by looking red on thinking it to be red, we have to assume, in addition, that the agent takes his colour experiences to be indicative of an object's real colour. The agent thinks that circumstances are such that he can exercise his capacity of being a good colour detector unhindered. We have a two-part explanation of the normative pressure to think the object to be red: It looks red and its looking red is, in the prevailing circumstances, taken to be a good reason for thinking it to be red.

Let me come back to Kolodny's question. Why does someone who believes that he ought to fi experience normative pressure to fi, if, possibly, there is no such normative pressure. A complete explanation of the felt normative pressure would also have to come in two-parts. The agent judges that he ought to fi and he takes himself to be a reliable detector of normative facts. If he would not take what seems to him to be the case seriously, he would not feel any normative pressure. Thus, Kolodny's attempt of an explanation demands the assumption that everyone accepts NBR as a normative principle. Because, according to his view, NBR is not a normative principle, we should call his account the Illusion Account. His explanation of why people experience normative pressure to fi, when they believe they ought to fi, works only if they live under the illusion that NBR is a normative principle.

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[19] See also Parfit, Climbing the Mountain, chapter 2, where Parfit makes the same point.

Thirdly, not even the Illusion Account works as Kolodny looks for an explanation where none, it seems to me, is needed. We can explain why someone feels pressure towards thinking something to be red by introducing appearances. In the normative case, however, the belief that one ought to fi, is more than an appearance of a normative fact. If I suffer from induced colour confusion, I can distance myself from the indicative nature of appearances. If I believe I ought to fi, however, there is no such distancing. From my perspective, I have established a normative fact. The experienced normative pressure to fi is nothing but the belief that I ought to fi. Believing that I ought to fi, I tell myself to fi. There is no distance between believing that I ought to fi and the felt pressure to fi, in order for an explanatory question to arise.

Kolodny will complaint. He tries to explain the apparent normativity of NBR via reference to reasons. The normative pressure of reasons is transferred to the belief that one ought to fi, but this belief itself creates no normative pressure on its own. I have already pointed out that the buck-passing account will not always be available; even if it were, the problem would arise again at the level of reasons.

We try to explain the apparent normative force of our belief that we ought to do something via what we take to be reasons. Note, however, the following: the belief that one ought to fi need not be based on any reasons, it is based on beliefs regarding reasons and these beliefs might well be false. Thus, having moved from ought to reasons we confront the same question again. Why does something, namely beliefs in reasons, give rise to the experience of some normative pressure, if, possibly, they do not exert any normative pressure (as they might be false)? Kolodny answers as follows, 'Because a reason that someone believes he has is, from his point of view, a reason *simpliciter*.' (558)

This is a revealing answer. From an agent's perspective, who thinks that fi-ing would have some feature F, which the agent takes to be a reason for fi-ing, having F looks like and feels like a reason. Taking fi-ing to be F exerts normative pressure on the agent to fi. We do not need to uncover any normative fact to explain the occurrence of normative pressure. Beliefs in reasons are the things that create normative pressure. Obviously, the same thought applies on the overall level of ought as well. Thinking that one ought to fi is, from the agent's point of view, being under the obligation to fi. This was Kolodny's question, 'Why does someone who believes that he ought to fi experience normative pressure to fi, if possibly, there is no such normative pressure?' The right answer is, 'In coming to believe that one ought to fi, one creates and experiences normative pressure to fi'. A buck-passing account, not generally valid anyway, plays no role in this explanation.

Putting the question in terms of normative pressure reveals something else. It shows that realism about normativity can only provide an impoverished account of normative pressure. Why do you feel like being under an obligation if you are convinced that you ought to fi? Being convinced that I ought to fi, is accepting an obligation. It is itself a commitment, a real commitment to fi-ing. As such it exerts normative pressure, real normative pressure, towards fi-ing. What else could normative pressure mean if not what is exemplified by one's commitment to fi? Compare this account of normative pressure to the realist's account. All you can

create by believing that you ought to fi is the appearance of normative pressure. However, as you can be wrong about what you ought to do, believing that you ought has nothing to do with real normative pressure. Real normative pressure depends solely on the facts. There is normative pressure to fi if and only if you indeed ought to fi. Your perspective has nothing to do with it. The notion of normative pressure has lost its phenomenological aspect. Even if you believe truly that you ought to fi, a realist account of normative pressure will not take your perspective into account. Whereas normative pressure, on the constructivist account, will always be an aspect of your perspective of the situation. On the constructivist model, we are able to experience real normative pressure. We set ourselves laws and, to repeat Korsgaard, this is how normativity comes about.

The transparency account, it seems to me, is an answer to an ill-conceived question. The question 'Why does someone who believes he ought to fi experience normative pressure to fi?' can only receive a trivial answer. Our awareness of our beliefs that one ought to do this or that simply is the experience of normative pressure. No explanation in terms of perceived underlying reasons, which could transmit their (apparent) normative force on to the overall level, is necessary.

Do we now have a better understanding of position (4)? Has Kolodny explained how we can understand the apparent normative force of a mind-based principle in terms of world-based normative facts? Why do we think we ought to do that of which we think we ought to do? No interesting answer is available. Kolodny is right that often we think we ought to do something because of the features we ascribe to that of which we think we ought to do it. Then we think we ought to do it because of the kind of action we take it to be. This move, however, does not bring in any world-based normative facts. Beliefs about relevant features still fall short of normative facts. This move is all that Kolodny has offered us. It is, I have argued, not generally available, but more importantly, it does not advance our understanding of mind-based oughts in terms of world-based normative facts. Our beliefs about what we ought to do normally rest on our beliefs about what features we ascribe to our options. In these cases, mind-based oughts, like NBR, take beliefs about where the force of reasons lies as their starting premise.[20] The ought of rationality, in Kolodny's terminological framework, will often rests on beliefs in reasons. If these beliefs are false, the ought of rationality has only apparent normative force. If they are true, it has no independent normative force. World-based reasons, according to him, exhaust the normative domain. This is certainly a consistent view. It is Moore's view and the danger is that it leaves us an unrecognizably impoverished normative domain.


5. How the Mind-Based Principles Are Related

The way this paper has been preceding, I could save some essential parts of a traditional theory of rationality. The bootstrapping objection applies only to NBR. Consistency and Means/end sensitivity seem safe for the moment. Unfortunately, however, I do not think that this would be a promising line of defence. In contrast to Kolodny, who believes that the normative belief requirement is basic and explains the

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[20] Parfit writes, 'While reasons are provided by the facts, the rationality of our desires and acts depends instead on what we believe, or – given the evidence, ought rationally to believe' (Parfit 1999, PAS 99). Kolodny agrees. I will say more about this position in the last section of this paper.

others, I think that the means/end requirement is basic in the practical domain and explains the normative belief requirement.

Why do I think that an instrumental principle like IP underlies the normative belief requirement? Others have pointed out that instrumental rationality works beyond a causal relation between means and ends. The relation can also be evidential, or a part-whole relation or a constitutive relation. It is the last that is important for my purposes. If I want an entertaining evening and I think that talking to him makes for an entertaining evening, then, according to a narrow scope mean/end principle, I ought to talk to him.[21] In general, whenever I think I ought to fi and I think this is a way or rather the only way to fi, then I ought to do this. Korsgaard says, 'In this way the instrumental principle may be extended to cover any case of action that is self-conscious, in the sense that the agent is guided by a conception of what she is doing.'

Following John Broome, I understand the instrumental principle as leading us from some end or from some intention via some belief (and not via some fact) to some more immediate end or intention. The basic, roughly expressed, idea is the following: you ought to take what you think are necessary means to your ends. Let us apply this principle in the following case. Suppose you accept that you ought to fi and thereby make fi-ing your end. You tell yourself 'I ought to fi'. Now let me apply the instrumental principle along the constitutive relation. If you ought to fi, then you ought to do that of which you think it constitutes or simply is a fi-ing. Therefore, you ought to do that which is such that you think it is (the only) fi-ing.

Now let us apply the same idea under the assumption that 'to fi' means 'to do what one ought to do'. The starting point, it seems, is now trivial: You ought to do what is such that you ought to do. If you ought to do that which is such that you ought to do it, then (by applying the instrumental principle in the same way as above) you ought to do that which is such that you think it is that which you ought to do. Therefore, you ought to do that which is such that you think you ought to do it. This just is NBR: If you think you ought to fi, then you ought you fi. Being guided by the aim of fi-ing, you ought to do what you take to be a fi-ing (or the only fi-ing). Being guided by the aim of doing what you ought to do, you ought to do that which you think is such that you ought to do it. Thus, if we follow the instrumental principle, and if there is something that we ought to do, then we ought to do what we believe we ought to do.

This seems to strengthen Kolodny's case. If the instrumental principle commits us to NBR, but NBR is, because of the bootstrapping objection, unacceptable, then the instrumental principle will have to be rejected as well.


6. How the Conflict between Mind-Based and World- Based Normative Facts Can Be Solved by Weakening the Normative Belief Requirement

Starting from a principle of instrumental rationality (IR), we have argued for NBR from an apparently trivial starting point. You ought to do, whatever it is that you ought to do. This starting point is not entirely trivial. It commits us to there being

[21] Williams talks about the constitutive relation as falling under the instrumental principle in Williams 1981, 1904.

something that you ought to do (whatever it is). So let us reason without this assumption. If there is something that you ought to do, then (via IP) you ought to do that which is such that you believe you ought to do it. Thus, you ought to do that which is such that you believe you ought to do it or there is nothing that you ought to do.

Let me call this principle the Weak Normative Belief Requirement: You ought to do what you believe you ought to do or there is nothing you ought to do. A formulation closer to the original NBR is the following: If you believe you ought to fi, then you ought to fi or there is nothing that you ought to do.

This principle avoids the bootstrapping objection. NBR tells us to do what we believe we ought to do. In other words, believing that one ought to fi is sufficient for its being the case that one ought to fi. According to NBR, we are infallible in the normative domain. The Weak NBR avoids this consequence and makes room for normative fallibility. The fact that you wrongly believe that you ought to fi entails that it is not the case that you ought to fi – your belief that you ought to fi is, per assumption, false. According to Weak NBR, there is, in such a case, nothing that you ought to do. Weak NBR allows for normative fallibility. However, it gives raise to a limited bootstrapping objection. If you believe that you ought to fi, then there is no psi, which is such that you ought to do it.

Before I come to the question whether limited bootstrapping is enough of a reason to reject the weak NBP, I want to highlight the difference between the strong and the weak NBR. Take a case in which someone does not do what he believes he ought to do: B(Ofi) and not-fi. Someone who rejects any NBR would distinguish three different versions of failing to do what one believes one ought to do.
(a) B(Ofi) and not-fi and Ofi
(b) B(Ofi) and not-fi and not-Ofi
(c) B(Ofi) and not-fi and Onot-fi.
If we accept the strong NBR, cases (b) and (c) are not possible and case (a) is a violation of the strong NBR. If we accept the weak NBR, then case (c) is not possible, but case (b) is. One can be wrong about what one ought to do. According to Weak NBR, in case (b), a case in which one wrongly believes one ought to fi and does not fi, one did not violate the weak NBP, as there was nothing one ought to have done.

For a defender of position (4), the denial of all mind-based oughts, the only cases of normative failings are cases in which one did not fi, although one ought to have fi-ed. For such a philosopher, it cannot matter whether in cases of normative failings one believed that one ought not to fi, and that is why one did not fi, or whether one believed that one ought to fi and, nevertheless, did not do it. Normatively speaking, the following two cases are the same from such a perspective. First, one did not do what one correctly believed one ought to have done. Secondly, one did what one incorrectly believed that one ought to have done. Intuitively, however, the difference between the first case of the akratic agent and the second case in which someone inculpably and due to what might well have been some completely unforeseeable occurrence fails to do what he ought to have done, should be preserved.[22]

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[22] The restriction of these principles to reasonable beliefs about what one ought to do, which I argued for in section 2, applies throughout, even if I do not always mention it.

My proposal to weaken NBR is not simply an ad hoc response to the problem of conflict between mind-based and world-based oughts. Its defenders introduce NBR on the back of the intuition that it would be a normative failure to act against one's own judgement about how one ought to act. Not knowing that someone could deny the normative status of judgements of rationality and irrationality, they say that it would be irrational to act contrary to one's own judgement.[23] This is not the same, however, as the claim that one always ought to act in accordance with one's own judgment. (The latter claim is NBR in its strong form.) The intuition I mentioned above spells out a certain limit for what one ought to do, which is set by one's beliefs about what one ought to do. If one believes one ought to fi, then one cannot act as one ought to have acted by doing something else than fi-ing. The Weak NBR captures this very point. [24]

Further motivation for Weak NBR, which may well amount to a defence against the limited bootstrapping objection, comes from Aristotle's account of voluntary action. For Aristotle force and some forms of ignorance make actions involuntary. He exempts ignorance of the universal (the normative principles) from making actions involuntary (in fact such ignorance is the cause of vice), but ignorance of the particulars makes action involuntary. 'They are: (1) who is doing it; (2) what he is doing; (3) about what or to what he is doing it; (4) sometimes also what he is doing it with; (5) for what result; (6) in what way, e.g. gently or hard. Since, then, what is involuntary is what is forced or is caused by ignorance, what is voluntary seems to be what has its origin in the agent himself when he knows the particulars the action consists in. [NE 3rd book chapter 1, 1111a22-24]. Let us, in what follows, talk about a case in which a false normative belief is held inculpably due to ignorance of some of these particulars.

Assume the falsity of Weak NBP. Then there will be cases, characterized as follows: B(Ofi), not-fi, O(not-fi), i.e. an agent has acted against his incorrect belief about what he ought to have done and has thereby done what he ought to have done. I assume that any agent accepts the aim of normative perfection, i.e. his aim is to do whatever it is that he ought to do. (This is unproblematic, as there is no commitment to any specific set of rules, which lays down what one ought to do.) If we accept that what one ought to do has to be such that it can be done voluntarily (under a description relevant to the aim of normative perfection), then Aristotle's account of voluntariness rules out the case in which Weak NPR is false. If one believes one ought to fi, whereas one ought to psi, which one does, due to weakness of will, has one fulfilled one's obligation voluntarily? The answer, it seems to me, is obviously no. If I think I would do most good by getting up but, being too lazy, I remain seated, then, even if it turns out that remaining seated brought about more good, I have not remained seated under a description that would relate it to my aim of normative perfection. I did what brought about most good, but I did so luckily and not voluntarily.

[23] Tim Scanlon writes, 'Irrationality in the clearest sense occurs when a person's attitudes fail to conform to his or her own judgement: when, for example, …a person fails to form and act on an intention to do something even though he or she judges there to be overwhelmingly good reason to do it' (Scanlon 1998, 25).
[24] I develop this motivation for weakening NBR in more detail in my EP.

Consider the idea I have put forward in defence of Weak NBR. What one ought to do must be such that one is able to do it whilst being guided by the aim of doing what one ought to do. According to this view, only what is pursuable under the guise of obligation can be an obligation. An agent's epistemic condition thus becomes relevant for what is pursuable as something one ought to do. Believing that one ought to fi makes it impossible to psi as a way of fulfilling one's obligation. What speaks in favour of accepting this constraint -- persuability under the guise of ought -- on what can be such that one ought to do it? It would for example explain why 'Grow by 10 cm' strikes us as an odd norm, i.e. we doubt whether it could actually be true that we ought to grow by 10cm. A first and, I think superficial account of why we could not be under such an obligation would be to say that we simply cannot grow by 10cm. Suppose, however, that, by a fluke of nature, it might actually happen that humans, if they did this or that, grew by 10 cm. The problem, I think, is not really that norm satisfaction is impossible, but that we cannot use such a norm, i.e. it is an inappropriate norm because, as far as we know, there is nothing of which we believe that it would satisfy the norm (or would contribute to its satisfaction). Even if norm satisfaction is possible in principle, this gives us no handle on what we could do in order to satisfy it. Nothing counts as a way of growing by 10cm (or contributing towards such growth). Compare this to the case of ending up with a false normative belief. An opponent of Weak NBR would insist that such an agent might still be under an obligation to do the opposite of what he thinks he ought to do. In his epistemic situation, however, nothing can count for him as a way of pursuing the satisfaction of the right norm. It might happen that by a fluke of nature (or by weakness of will) he does satisfy it. Nevertheless, the fact that the agent is incapable of seeing anything as a way of satisfying this norm disqualifies it, on the view presented here, as something that can have normative force.[25]

In this section, I tried to show how, within a realist framework, the conflict between mind-based and world-based oughts could be avoided. Weak NBR allows for such realism. The world, we might want to say, determines whether it is the case that one ought to fi or whether it is not so. The role of one's normative beliefs, according to the view suggested, leaves these world-based normative facts unaffected. Its only influence is on other matters. It says that it will not be the case that one ought to do something, different from what one believes one ought to do. Sometimes there is nothing one ought to do. Furthermore, I have tried to show that weakening NBR in this way is no arbitrary move, simply endorsed to solve the problem of conflict between world-based and mind-based oughts. Weak NBR captures the intuition by which NBR has been introduced, and it finds further support if we assume that obligations have to be pursuable as obligations. This is an assumption, I have tried to show, that looks plausible in other circumstances.

7. Locating Normativity and Broome's Agnosticism

Following GE Moore, Kolodny rejects mind-based normative facts. John Broome has changed his view on these matters. He has become agnostic about the normative force of what he calls requirements of rationality, by which he means principles like

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[25] (Explain how the weakening affects M/E and Consistency. Remember that the restricted versions allow for world-based oughts.)

Consistency, Obvious Implication, Means/End Sensitivity and NBR.[26] In relation to these principles, Broome pushes what he calls the normative question. Do we have any reasons to satisfy these requirements? The position he ends up with is agnostic: 'I can find no grounds for thinking that rationality is normative. If there are grounds, I do not know them.' (Broome, PR 108)

In this section, I want to voice some doubts about whether Broome's project of trying to find some deeper justification for his requirements of rationality is feasible. There is, if I am right, not one normative question to be asked. Where the point lies, at which we could press for further justification is, I will argue, partially a result of pure stipulation. To me it is doubtful whether we indeed should press for further justification at any point. Some questions might turn out to be pseudo-questions. I remain hesitant about this matter. There is, however, another lesson to be drawn about which I am more certain. I said that where the point lies at which further justificatory pressure might arise, is a result of stipulation. This fact makes the whole issue of normativity slippery, as long as we remain in a realist framework. In order to get some grip on 'the normative question' we need, I suggest, an account of what normativity is. Constructivism, I suggest at the end, is the only account of normativity on offer.

The normative question, according to John Broome, is the following: Does one have a reason, any reason, to satisfy the requirements of rationality? The fact that we can call principles like Obvious Implication 'requirements' does not answer this question. There are all sorts of standards and requirements: requirements of fashion, of military strategy and so on. For each of them, including the requirements of rationality we can ask, why satisfy them.

There is no doubt that the following notions are, in one way or another, normative notions: Being a reason, having a reason, being rationally required, being the rational thing to do, being such that one ought to do it, having most reason to do something. They are normative notion 'in one way or another' because we can relate these notions to each other in different ways. Broome's normative question is whether we have reason to satisfy the requirements of rationality. Thereby, the normativity of rationality can only be established by showing how it participates in the normativity of reasons. For Broome the basic normative term is 'ought', which he then uses to explain the notion of being a reason. Having fixed normativity to ought and, consequently, to reason, the concept of a rational requirement needs to be bound to the previously established normative concepts. Broome illustrates the divergence between the notions of ought and the notion of being required in the following passage, 'If I said that archery requires you to use a bow, I would not be suggesting you ought to use a bow; perhaps you ought not to engage in archery.' The same thought, I think, can be expressed with reverse normative roles as follows, 'If I said that in order to engage in archery you ought to (or have to) use a bow, I would not be suggesting that you are required to use a bow; perhaps you are required not to engage in archery.'

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[26] Broome has a wide-scope view of these principles. This issue about scope, however, is not relevant in this section.

In one way, this is a superficial point, nothing changes if we replace 'ought'-talk by 'being rationally required'-talk. On the other hand, it shows us that we have to start somewhere. We introduce the topic of normativity by attaching normative force, by stipulation, to one of our normative notions. Then substantive questions come in. The main issue is to negotiate world-based and mind-based normative facts. Whether something is rational for a person to do, everyone agrees, will depend on the attitudes that characterize the agent. Rationality is, as we can put it, perspectival. Many philosophers, including Broome, think that the notion of 'being a reason' is not perspectival. This is a substantial philosophical thesis. Combined with the stipulation that being a reason is (or participates in) the basic normative notion, the normativity of rationality can be challenged. If world-based reasons are normative, then rationality, which as a perspectival notion will depend on beliefs in reasons, becomes normatively problematic. Beliefs in reasons can be false. False beliefs in reasons do not participate in the normativity of reasons. We are faced with Broome's normative question, why be rational.

Starting with a different stipulation, things look different. Suppose we stipulate rationality as the prime normative term. What is rational for an agent is, I agree, perspectival; it depends on the agent's attitudes, especially on her beliefs concerning reasons. Thus, beliefs in reasons participate in the normativity of rationality. However, there need not be any match between beliefs in reasons and reasons. Reasons that remain hidden, even for someone who has spent appropriate thought and resources on finding them, will then lack normative force. Our stipulation that rationality is normative, makes it plausible to put the notions of rationality and of ought on a par; i.e. trivially, one ought to do what is rational for one to do. Challenging the normative status of reasons, then, takes the following form: 'Why ought I do what there is reason to do?' or, alternatively 'Why is it rational to act on reasons?' There is the same underlying issue. We are fallible. Thus, even if had all the right beliefs about which features count as reasons, we can still make mistakes in ascribing these features to options open to us. Fixing normativity to world-based reasons, the normativity of rationality becomes a problem. Fixing normativity to rationality, the normativity of world-based reasons becomes a problem. Which problem we face, it seems to me, is the result of stipulation. Thus, there is not one normative question to be asked.[27]

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[27] I said that it is a substantial thesis that reasons are world-based. If we say that reasons are mind-based, e.g. the belief that an action is kind is a reason to do it, the problem arising from the fact that we can be wrong about what reasons there are would lose much of its force. We are, obviously, much more confident about what we believe than about what is the case. Let me add here one thought why the Gin/Tonic case does not convince me of world-based reasons. There is a sense in which I ought not to drink what is poisonous. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which I ought to drink it, as only drinking it is rational. Suppose I do not drink it. You would not say, 'Well done, you acted well', you would say, 'You were really lucky', and ask why I did not drink it. I answer, 'I thought I ought to drink it but I was too lazy to pick it up, so I just sat in my chair'. 'Well done' could only be said with irony. So how can we explain that you would say, you ought to drink it? Advice is reasoning for another person. You put yourself (and what you know) in my shoes. Anyone who knows that it is petrol knows you ought not to drink it. This, however, is a perspectival ought as well, just that the perspective has changed due to information increase. Williams lets you ask yourself 'What would you advise the agent to do?' What else does it mean than 'What would you, who knows, advise him to do?' which, given the nature of advice, is the same as 'What should he do if he knew that it was petrol'. But why should this last question be answered in the very same way as, 'What should he do if he does not know that it is petrol?' It strikes me as very plausible to assume that these two questions should not receive the same answer. We see that, strictly speaking, there are not two senses of ought but two ought judgements

We want to understand the normative domain. We want to ask for each item on our list of normative concepts whether it is indeed normative or not. However, as we have to start somewhere, we realize that we are dealing with the same issue, regardless of which, rationality or reasons, strikes us as problematic. How should we formulate our concern then? The domain of normativity as a whole has become slippery.

In his paper on whether there is reason to be rational, Broome explores the idea that being rational is useful and good for us. I think even if that turned out to be true (and Broome is sceptical), it would not be of much use, because seeing such a usefulness-fact as normatively relevant presupposes an instrumental principle. There are points when even philosophical questioning comes to a halt. What reason is there to take a reason into account? Such a question, I think, does not have an answer, except, that is what we mean by reason. The question 'Why ought we to take the means to our ends?' might also lack any interesting answer. Some normative facts will simply be basic.

I think we need an account of what normativity is before we can locate anything like the normative question. Nowadays many philosophers endorse realism, more in particular realism about reasons. Who can deny, they ask, that the fact that this drink is poisonous is a reason not to drink it? Who can deny, I counter, that it is rational to move out of the way of the oncoming truck, and that one, therefore, ought to do it? I have said one can be a realist about rationality with the same right as one can be a realist about reasons. If I am right, we lose grip on what we ask when we ask whether something is normative. Compare the simply positing of normativity, which characterizes realism, to Korsgaard's constructivism. Our being self-conscious gives rise to the need for reasons. This need is satisfied, if, from the first-person perspective, we find an inescapable commitment. Its inescapability solves our problem of what to do. (Nothing would change, if we replaced a constructivist account of what one ought to do by a constructivist account of what is a reason for doing something.) Whereas the realist asks us to access information from the normative side of the world, the constructivist tells us that 'normativity is encountered in confronting the inescapable solution to [what given our self-conscious nature is] an inescapable problem' (Korsgaard, On Parfit, 9).

Should we, given a constructivist understanding of normativity, always do what we believe we ought to do? It depends. If the belief that I ought to do something is the result of following the constructivist procedure of solving practical problems, the realists worry – your belief might be wrong -- is simply an expression of his own prejudices.

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made from different perspectives. To say that ought is perspectival amounts to the same as saying that ought is mind-based. The Gin/Tonic case does not dislodge this view.