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The normativity of instrumental reasoning and the scope problem

A normatividade do raciocínio instrumental e o problema do escopo

Matheus de Lima Rui

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia – Florianópolis, SC, Brasil. E-mail: matheus.lrui@gmail.com

RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo é explorar as possíveis respostas à seguinte questão: em que sentido podemos dizer que o raciocínio instrumental é normativo? O raciocínio instrumental é entendido aqui como um requisito racional que nos guia na formação de intenções dirigidas aos meios necessários para atingir os fins intencionados. A partir do desenvolvimento de John Broome (1999, 2013), sustento que requisitos racionais não implicam, por si só, razões, especialmente razões que poderiam supostamente ser derivadas de uma relação meio-fim, característica do raciocínio instrumental. O debate em torno da normatividade do raciocínio instrumental depende amplamente do tipo de escopo que atribuímos aos requisitos racionais. Argumento que requisitos racionais possuem escopo amplo e que tal concepção evita típicas confusões sobre a relação entre racionalidade e normatividade, enfraquecendo, assim, a tese de que o raciocínio instrumental depende de um fundamento normativo independente.

Palavras-chaves: crença; raciocínio; intenção; normatividade; racionalidade.

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to explore a possible answer to the following question: In what sense can we say that instrumental reasoning is normative? Instrumental reasoning is understood here as a rational requirement, one that guides us in forming intentions toward the necessary means to ends that are already intended. Following the insights of John Broome (1999, 2013), I assume that rational requirements do not themselves imply reasons, especially reasons that could supposedly be derived from the means–ends relation characteristic of instrumental reasoning. The debate over the normativity of instrumental reasoning depends largely on the kind of scope assigned to rational requirements. I argue that rational requirements have a wide-scope, and that this conception avoids common misunderstandings concerning the relation between rationality and normativity; thereby, weakening the thesis that instrumental practical reasoning depends upon an independent normative foundation.

Keywords: belief; reasoning; intention; normativity; rationality.

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this article is to offer an answer to the following question: In what sense (if any) can we say that instrumental reasoning is normative? The root of this debate rests on the discussion of modern theorists, specifically Hume and Kant. Both philosophers investigate the scope of rationality when the question on how we should act is made. However, the problem here was more specifically formulated by Christine Korsgaard (1997). As we'll see in section 2, Korsgaard argues that instrumental reasoning can't be sustained without a non-instrumental normative commitment – we could call it "categorical" commitment. Such a discussion has unfolded in several subtopics, and taken on great proportions when we seek to explain the relation between rationality, reasoning, reasons and intention. We will start with some fundamental points.

When we reasoning about what to do, we form an intention toward right action. "Intention" is the mental state generally understood as the state which is characteristic of practical reasoning, in contrast to theoretical reasoning. If in theoretical sphere our goal is to have justified beliefs, on the practical side we have the aim of forming a rational intention[1]. When we say that an intention, or belief, is rational, it means that the intention has complied with all the requirements that rationality imposes on us, as agents endowed with the capacity to be rational[2]. It is rationality that provides the rules of right reasoning. Thus, the distinction between practical and theoretical rationality will be drawn in the distinction between norms that apply to intention and norms that apply to belief, respectively.

As a starting point, we understand practical rationality as the reflective human capacity to solve questions about which attitude to take. The expression of this capacity is called practical reasoning. Reasoning is a mental activity, while rationality is a capacity; or we could say, the idealization of a capacity. We can be more or less rational, as we better satisfy and develop this capacity, as well as we better comply with the demands of rationality.

In this way, our question is this: to what extent can we consider such rules for right reasoning normative? If they are normative, they are able to provide, or transmit, reasons (and consequently, normativity) by their proper nature[3]. I intend to show, in agreement with John Broome's insights (1999, 2013), that rational requirements do not imply reasons, especially reasons that could be derived from the means-ends relation in the instrumental reasoning. This normativity of instrumental reasoning debate depends on the kind of scope ascribed to rational requirements – as we shall see in sections 3 and 4. My purpose, in section 5 and 6, will be to argue that the wide-scope version is the best explanation for rational requirements, once it avoids some misconceptions concern the relation between rationality and normativity. Therefore, weakening the thesis that instrumental practical reasoning is dependent on a kind of non-instrumental normativity.

[1] We found a development of this idea in Harman, 1986.

[2] Philosophers (see Scanlon, 2007; Wedgwood, 2017) have suggested a distinction between a "substantive" kind of rationality, which is to be adequately supported by the "reasons" of the respective agent, and a "structural" (or "procedural") kind of rationality, which consists in finding patterns of coherence between mental states. To the extent that the former requires that the agent be "justified" for the appropriate reasons, the latter requires that the agent's mental states be coherently related from formal principles (see Hooker & Streumer, 2004). Our problem is centered on a structural notion of rationality.

[3] Like Broome (2013), by "normativity" I assume what is involved in the process of giving and receiving reasons, where the preponderant reasons indicate that the subject ought, or not, to do something. A conclusion of a reasoning containing an "ought to" will be a normative conclusion.

2 The normativity of instrumental reasoning

What do philosophers mean by *instrumental* rationality? The root of this debate is found in the famous passage by the Scottish philosopher David Hume: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (*Treatise*, 2.3.3.4). Regardless the term "instrumental rationality" covers several uses, it is traditionally recognized in the following principle formulated by Kant: "who wills the end also wills (necessarily in conformity with reason) the sole means to it that is within his control" (*Groundwork*, AA, 4:418). So, that is the concept of instrumental practical reasoning assumed throughout this paper.

Nowadays, philosophers have referred to such principle as a means-ends coherence rational requirement[4]. Such requirement will be formulated as follows (being *e* an end, and *m* a necessary means):

Requirement of means-ends coherence: If you intend *e*, and believe that *m* is necessary for *e*, then you must intend *m*[5].

This is the paradigmatic kind of rational principle that governs practical reasoning. This is due to the fact that we do not need to postulate any kind of *sui generis* normative fact to explain how an agent ought to act. The normative role within this model (also called the *Humean* model) is played by the set of "desires" which determines the end to be achieved. And the agent's beliefs will drive reasoning to the best ways to attain that particular end. In this sense, an instrumental irrationality consists in having goals which are incoherent with beliefs related to that same goal.

Following Hume's postulates that it is not possible to derive an "ought" from an "is" – and that beliefs, by themselves, are incapable of motivating – instrumental rationality becomes the expression of an objective and ontologically simple normative commitment. One of the advantages of this notion of instrumental reasoning is that it can better explain how agents are motivated in decision making. However, it's not as simple as it looks. Theorists have pointed out some of the problems in the supposed "easiness" in the explanation of the normative requirement of decision making behind instrumental reasoning.

We find, in the contemporary literature, philosophers who claim that such a conception of instrumental rationality is a "myth". According to Joseph Raz (2005), the idea that our mental states need only be coherent – as expressed by the means–ends coherence requirement – is untenable. From this perspective, even if we are led into contradiction whenever we fail to reason from ends to means (which would be irrational), it does not follow that we thereby have reasons for anything. Thus, there would be nothing wrong with holding false beliefs, and the mere fact of having false beliefs would not constitute a reason to revise them. On this view, there is nothing inherently wrong with simple contradiction or with failing to comply with a rational requirement (Raz, 2005, p. 20).

[4] See Bratman (1987); Broome, (2013).

[5] In the course of the article we'll go deeper into the different possibilities of formulating this principle. For this momment, such formulation will suffice to understand our problem.

Another critique of the traditional understanding of instrumental reasoning can be found in Christine Korsgaard's (1997) argument for a possible intrinsic normativity of instrumental rationality. Her position is opposed to that of theorists who rely on the "simplicity" of the instrumental principle. It is to this argument that we now turn. Such a normative claim about the instrumental principle is developed primarily in Korsgaard's article *The Normativity of Instrumental Reason* (1997). In this paper, she argues that the principle of instrumental reasoning cannot stand on its own, exempt from any form of normativity, as an empiricist would have it. According to a strand of the empiricist view, to be rational in the practical domain is simply to be caused to act in a certain way – that is, to be causally motivated by preexisting inclinations[6]. For Korsgaard, however, unless there are normative principles that guide us in the adoption of certain ends, there can be no requirement to take the means to those ends. Thus, the familiar view that the instrumental principle is the sole requirement of practical reasoning is incoherent, since it presupposes a normative commitment that is not merely instrumental.

The motivation for adopting the instrumentalist position in practical reasoning rests largely on the empiricism of Hume and his successors. In this view, instrumental reasoning explains action in terms of relevant beliefs and desires, with motivation arising from some combination of the two. For example:

(i) I wish to leave home and not get wet;
(ii) Taking an umbrella is the only way for me to avoid getting wet;
(iii) Therefore, I ought to take an umbrella.

If the possibility of being motivated solely by a belief seems mysterious, then any alternative guiding norm of practical reasoning faces the challenge of explaining how agents can transmit motivations from ends to means, or from means to ends.

According to Korsgaard (1997, p. 252), the normativity of accepting the means can be derived from the normativity through which our approval of an action is attached to its end: the normative principle governing instrumental action cannot exist unless there are also normative principles guiding the adoption of ends. This point is directly connected to the capacity of the means-ends coherence requirement to provide us with reasons. As she explains: "For the instrumental principle to provide you with a reason, you must think that the fact that you will an end is a reason for the end" (Korsgarrd, 1997, p. 245).

In this way, intending an end and being able to reason about the best means to achieve it – forming an intention to adopt those means – would only be possible if there were reasons for adopting that end. This would make the validity of the means-end coherence requirement dependent on the non-instrumental normativity of the end. This is the central problem concerning the normativity of the instrumental principle in practical reasoning.

3 What are rational requirements?

When we speak of "rational requirements" in the current debate, we are referring to a technical notion: they specify conflicts within our attitudes that must be resolved (or avoided) if we are to count as rational. According to John Brunero (2010, p. 28), rational requirements concern conflicts between attitudes-states, where an attitude-state may consist in either the presence or the absence of an attitude. By contrast, Niko Kolodny (2005) argues that rational requirements are primarily concerned with processes rather than with governing conflicts between states. On this view, a person is rational or irrational not only because of the state they are in at a given moment, but also because of how they transition from one state to another over time.

[6] We can find this vision in Williams (1981).

Philosophers who accept some version of these characterizations of rational requirements, or something close to them, disagree about their logical structure. Much of the debate over rational requirements concerns precisely how they should be formulated. Some theorists hold that *all* rational requirements have wide-scope[7], while others argue for the existence of narrow-scope requirements[8]. This debate was largely initiated by publication of Broome's *Normative Requeriments* (1999)[9].

Let us consider a case of a common rational requirement on belief, such as the *Modus Ponens.* Suppose that a proposition q follows from a proposition p via a valid inference $p \rightarrow q$, and that you believe p. In that case, a correct reasoning process would lead you to believe q. This is how we typically understand this kind of logical inference. However, it does not follow that you ought to believe q, nor that you have a reason to believe it. For example, suppose that you ought not to believe p (perhaps because you lack sufficient evidence for p), yet you nevertheless do. In such case, it should not follow that you ought to believe q, or that you have a reason to do so.

Broome's main insight was to note that the relationship between believing a proposition and believing its consequence is of a different kind from normative relations expressed by "ought" and "reasons". In particular, we cannot infer from a requirement such as "believing p requires believing q" that we thereby have a reason to believe q. According to Broome (1999, p. 406), the relation governing rational requirements is "strict", whereas the relation involving reasons is "slack". If the rational requirements apply strictly, they are indifferent to reasons, since they are governed by wide-scope formulations. By contrast, reasons are "slack" because they are defeasible in the face of opposing reasons and are associated with narrow-scope considerations.

As we have already seen, a (theorectical) reasoning process begins with existing beliefs and results in a new belief. The contents of these beliefs are propositions, and the content of reasoning itself is a sequence of propositions. Rational requirements govern this process[10]. Broome characterizes reasoning as "correct" when its contents constitute a valid inference. When a piece a reasoning is correct, the proposition involved stands in a specific relation to one another – namely, the relation in which the conclusion is validly derivable from the premises (Broome, 1999, p. 406).

The same relation applies to practical reasoning involving intentions. Consider the paradigmatic case of means-ends reasoning: if you intend F, and believe that M is a necessary means to achieving F, then you are rationally required to intend M. Like all reasoning, this process moves from prior states to a new state. Specifically, it takes you from an intention and a belief to a further intention. However, it does not follow that you *ought to* intend M. It may be that F is an end for which you have no reason, and therefore ought not to intend it.

Because of this, Broome argues that rational requirements have wide-scope. That is, rational requirements apply to the conditional governing the relation between the contents of the relevant mental state, rather than to the mental states themselves. For this reason, the conclusion of an instrumental reasoning process – or, more generally, the consequent of a conditional – cannot be "detached" from the requirement as a whole. Broome (1999, p. 404) refers to the relation between mental states within a rational requirement as "non-detaching relations". This inability to detach normative conclusions from rational requirements is one of the main advantage of wide-scope accounts for rational requirements.

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[7] Broome (1999, 2013), Brunero (2010), Bratman (2009b).
[8] Kolodny (2005), Korsgaard (2009), and, in a certain way Schroeder (2004).
[9] In this article John Broome uses the term "normative requirements" as it appears in the title itself. In his paper, Broome (1999) considers that these requirements are normative in the sense that they establish a different kind of normative relation, different than the reasons relation. However, latter, Broome (2013, p.27) assumes that "normative requirement" is only a requirement that has its normative source, although he has used that term differently in his article of 1999. Therefore, to be a normative requirement is to have a reason to follow such a rational requirement, and there is no consensus on the thesis that we have reason to be rational (see Broome 2013, Kolodny 2005). To avoid confusion, I will continue to refer to "rational requirements" throughout this text, and a "normative requirement" will be only that requirement which we have reason to comply.
[10] Subsequently, Broome (2013) changes his mind and argue that correct reasoning is more about "permissions" than "requirements". I shall speak more about that at the end of this article.

We can now illustrate what this supposed advantage of wide-scope requirements amounts to. Suppose that rationality is normative and that one ought to comply with rational requirements[11]. In the case of *Modus Ponens* requirement – where O represents the deontic operator for "ought to", and B the epistemic operator for "belief" – a narrow-scope requirement would be syntactically formulated as:

(*Narrow-Scope Requirement*) p requires q : $Bp \rightarrow OBq$.

And a wide-scope requirement would be formulated as:

(*Wide-Scope Requirement*) p requires q : $OB(p \rightarrow q)$[12]

We can observe that, in the case of narrow-scope requirement, the deontic operator "ought" appears detached from the conditional. Brunero (2010, p.31) argues that the consequent detachment of narrow-scope requirements is clearly false if we understand "ought" in its ordinary sense – as specifying what is supported by the balance of reasons[13]. The same applies to practical reasoning when we consider requirements such as means-ends coherence. On this view, it is not the case that one ought to intend the means to an irrational end.

To make this clearer, consider the following hypothetical situation. Suppose you intend to count the blades of grass in your garden and believe that, in order to do so, you must form the intention to buy a calculator. If you wish to be instrumentally coherent – that is, means-ends consistent – it would seem to follows that you *ought* to form the intention to buy a calculator. But this conclusion is implausible. We cannot understand a rational requirement as implying that you ought to buy the calculator. Perhaps you ought not to count the blades of grass in your garden in the first place, and this is probably the case. Thus, complying with a narrow-scope rational requirement would require you to form a particular intention as the only way of satisfying the requirement. But this need not be the case.

When a wide-scope rational requirement is formulated, there are three possible ways of satisfying it: (i) revise one's intention to E, or (ii) revise the belief that one will achieve E only if one intends M, or (iii) forming the intention to M. If one ought to comply with a rational requirement, then what follows from a wide-scope requirement is that one ought either to: (i) revise one's intention to count the blades of grass, ii) revise one's belief that buying a calculator is a necessary means of counting the blades of grass, or (iii) forming the intention to buy the calculator. What does not follow is that one simply ought to form the intention to buy a calculator. Rather, the requirement applies to the conditional as a whole.

[11] Broome supports such a position in his "Normative Requirements" (1999), however, change his position later in "Rationality Throught Reasoning" (2013). Kolodny (2005, 2008) is one of the main opponents of the normativity of rationality thesis. On the other hand, Korsgaard (1997, 220) hold the normative theory of rationality: that we always have reason to comply with a rational requirement. According to Korsgaard, the normativity of the instrumental principle, as well as of morality, is derived from the autonomy and self-government of rational agents. My central point doesn't depend directly on any of these positions.

[12] For more details on this formulation, see Broome (1999).

[13] Kolodny (2005) believe that the fact of rationality is not normative is a good reason to reject wide-scope requirements in defense of narrow-scope requirements. So this would avoid the problem of detaching normative conclusions.

4 The problem of confusing rational requirements with reasons

This dispute over the scope of rational requirements brings to light several confusions that have long appeared in philosophical literature on the subject. Broome (1999, p.410) argues that the problems associated with narrow-scope requirements show that we must understand rational relations as relations that do not allow conclusions to be detached, unlike relations involving reasons. According to him, this point is elementary and widely recognized, yet frequently ignored. The relation expressed by rational requirements is often confused with the relation of "being a reason for". Correct reasoning may lead one to beliefs and intentions that are rationally required by other beliefs and intentions. However, this does not necessarily lead one to the beliefs and intentions that one have reasons to hold.

We can find a similar mistake in Korsgaard's argument concerning the normativity of practical rationality. According to Broome (1999, p. 418), Korsgaard is certainly correct in claiming that, *if* instrumental reasoning provides one with reasons to take the means, than one ought to regard oneself as having a reason for the end as well. If instrumental reasoning functioned in this way, her conclusion would indeed follow. However, instrumental reasoning does not provide reasons to take the means. For Broome, the means-end coherence requirement work as follows: intending an end rationally requires one to intend what one believes to be necessary as a means to that end. But intending an end does not provide reasons to take the means, and there is no need for it to do so. If the wide-scope account of instrumental reasoning is correct, Korsgaard's conclusion does not follow. The capacity to intend a means does not require that the end itself posses a normative status derived from the means-ends coherence requirement.

For Broome (1999, p. 419), Korsgaard's mistake illustrates an important feature of the relation between reasoning and rational requirements. Reasoning is possible even under particularly unfavorable conditions. In reasoning, one may take as premises beliefs and intentions for which one has no reason, or even beliefs and intentions that one ought not to have. The nature of reasoning itself is not affected by whether one ought or ought not to hold those beliefs and intentions. Instrumental reasoning simply leads one to adopt the means one believes necessary for achieving and end, and this process does not break down merely because the end is one that ought not to be pursued. Thus, Korsgaard's claim that instrumental reasoning is normative appears to rest on a mistaken assumption: that means-ends coherence requirement is capable of transferring reasons from ends to means.

In a more recent article, Korsgaard (2009) offers several responses to Broome's objections. According to Korsgaard (2009, p. 29), the claim that rational requirements are merely requirements on our attitudes overlooks the context in which such requirements are actually employed. In her view, rational requirements do not govern mere combinations of attitudes; rather, they govern the activity of "thinking" itself. This means that they apply to someone who is actively trying to determine what they have reason to believe or do. Moreover, thinking has a temporal direction: being rational is not simply a matter of possessing a set of attitudes that happen to conform to rational requirements. Rather, to be rational is to follow rational requirements – to take them as guide or instructions to thought.

One problem with Broome's view of wide-scope rational requirements is that such requirements seem unable to genuinely guide us toward the correct decision. Faced with a conflicting situation, wide-scope requirements merely instruct the subject to satisfy the conditional as a whole. But satisfying the conditional in this way does not determine what the subject actually ought to do, since there are three different ways of complying with the requirement. For this reason, Korsgaard argues that if the role of rational requirements is to govern the activity of thought in deliberation, and if purpose of deliberation is to guide belief and action, then rational requirements cannot have a wide-scope, since wide-scope requirements are incapable of performing this function (Korsgaard, 2009, 29). We will now examine some objections to the thesis that rational requirements have wide-scope, as defended by Broome.

5 Problems for wide-scope rational requirements

Some objections to the thesis that wide-scope rational requirements provide the best explanation of the logic of rational requirements are presented by Mark Schroeder in his article *The Scope of Instrumental Reason* (2004). Schroeder argues that wide-scope rational requirements face two fundamental problems. The first concerns the agent's "neutrality" with respect to what is required by a rational requirement. The second concerns the problem of symmetry among the possible responses that would satisfy such requirements.

Let us begin with the problem of agent neutrality. Schroeder (2004, p 340) argues that a fundamental difference between wide-scope requirements and narrow-scope requirements is that the wide-scope requirement appear to be committed to an eternal, agent-neutral, kind of obligation, whereas narrow-scope requirements are not. A wide-scope requirement tells us that there is something that everyone ought to do; while narrow-scope requirements make no such claim. If we accept narrow-scope requirements, then there are only things that particular individuals ought to do – namely, those individuals that satisfy the relevant conditions.

For Schroeder, this difference between requirements scope lies at the heart of a major controversy concerning the priority of "agent-relative" and "agent-neutral" obligations[14]. Some philosophers maintain that whenever an individual ought to do something, this must be because there is something that everyone ought to do. This position presuppose agent-neutral requirements. Others, however, reject this view. They argue that when there is something that everyone ought to do, this is simply because each particular individual ought to do it. Indeed, the standard understanding of agent-neutral requirement operates in this way: there is an agent-neutral reason to do something only if there is a reason for everyone to do the same thing (Schroeder, 2004, p. 340).

Thus, a seemingly common form of agent-relative view would be clearly committed to the falsity of wide-scope requirements. According to Schroeder (2004, p. 342), this is the view commonly associated with the "Humean" theory of reasons. On this view, all "oughts", or reasons, are instrumental. Hence, if someone has a reason to do something, it is because doing so promotes one of their desires. This position is not committed to denying the existence of agent-neutral obligations. Rather, it maintains that if such obligations do exist, they arise only because they are obligations that apply to each of the particular agent individually.

Following Schroeder's argument, wide-scope rational requirements are committed to explaining deliberative cases in terms of agent-neutral requirement. According to the so-called "Humean theory", all obligations or reasons are ultimately explained by desires and intentions. However, on the wide-scope conception of rational requirements, the reasons for an agent to do *E* must instead be explained by the existence of agent-neutral requirements. Schroeder therefore concludes that if the "Humean theory" is indeed the favored – or at least, the most widely accepted – view, than the conception that explains rational requirements in terms of wide-scope requirements cannot be regarded as uncontroversial (Schroeder, 2004, 342).

The second problem identified by Schroeder – and, in my view, the most difficult one – is the apparent symmetry among possible ways of resolving a rational conflict once we accept wide-scope rational requirements. For him (2004, p. 338), an obvious difference between the narrow-scope and the wide-scope requirements is that the latter exhibit a kind of symmetry that the former do not. A narrow-scope means-ends coherence requirement states that: if you intend *E*, and doing *M* is necessary for achieving *E*, then you ought to do *M*. However, it does not say that if you fail to do *M*, while still intending *E*, then you ought to ensure that "*M* is no longer necessary to achieving *E*". Nor does it say that if you fail to do *M*, and *M* remains necessary to achieving *E*, then you ought to give up you intention to *E*.

[14] See an excellent exposition of this problem in Ridge (2008).

By contrast, the wide-scope requirements introduce a symmetry among these different ways of satisfying the requirement. Consider, for example, a case in which our agent Peter intends to go out for dinner and knows that the only restaurant currently open is the pizzeria. Peter can satisfy the wide-scope requirement by forming intention to go to the pizzeria. But he could also satisfy the requirement by abandoning his intention to dine out altogether. More bizarrely, Peter could satisfy the requirement by convincing the owners of the pizzeria to close their doors, since, once the pizzeria is closed, going there would no longer be a necessary means to dine out – that is, a necessary means of fulfilling his intention.

Let us set aside, for the moment, the question whether it is rational for Peter to respond to this situation by abandoning his intention to dine out. At least this can be regarded as a recognizably rational response to the situation. However, convincing the owners of the pizzeria not to open that evening, unfortunately, does not seem to be a rational response at all. Whatever else may be said about it, it would be highly peculiar for Peter – who sincerely intends to dine out – to begin trying to persuade the owners of the pizzeria to close for the evening on the grounds that otherwise he would be unable to fulfill his intention. According to Schroeder (2004, p. 339), this is not the sort of consequence that an adequate conception of rationality should endorse. The symmetry generated by wide-scope requirements is simply implausible. Since wide-scope rational requirements give rise to this consequence, the view appears to face a serious problem.

Another philosopher who rejects the thesis that rational requirements have a wide-scope is Kolodny, in his article *Why Be Rational* (2005). According to him, once we understand rational requirements as process-requirement rather than merely state-requirements, some conclusions generated by wide-scope requirements become unacceptable. For Kolodny, the appropriate test for evaluating the scope of rational requirements involving cases of reasoning in which more than one option is available for resolving a conflict between attitudes. The wide-scope conception assumes that there is more than one rational way of resolving conflicts governed by rational requirements. This assumption, according to the author, provides the bases for testing the scope of processes-requirements (Kolodny, 2005, p. 519).

The first problem that Kolodny raises for wide-scope requirements concerns the impossibility of reasoning from the absence of content. Consider a rational requirement with the following formulation:

> (*Enkratic*) Rationality requires that, if you believe that your reasons require you to do *E*, then you intend *E*[15].

According to Kolodny (2005, p. 527), a wide scope formulation of *Enkratic* is correct only if: (i) one can reason from the content of one's belief that one has conclusive reason to do *E* to the intention to do *E;* and ii) one can reason from the absence of an intention to do *E* to a revision of one's belief that one has conclusive reason to do *E*. Now, it is certainly possible to reason from the content of one's belief that one has conclusive reason to do *E* to the intention to do *E*. In this way, one can rationally resolve the conflict. However, no one can reason from the absence of an intention to do *E* to the revision of the belief that one has conclusive reasons to do *E*. One cannot reason from the absence of an intention to do *E* because there is no content from which to reason. Not intending *E* is simply the absence of an attitude. And the absence of an attitude has no content, and therefore cannot serve as a premise in reasoning.

For Kolodny, this shows that the *Enkratic* requirement has a narrow-scope:

> (*Narrow-Scope Enkratic)* If you believe that your reasons require you to do *E*, then rationality requires that you intend to do *E*.

[15] In this article, I assume only that *Enkratic* can be regarded as a common type of rational requirement. Broome (2013) argues that this is a genuine form of rational requirement, since denying places us in a classic case of practical irrationality – a case of *akrasia*. Given the notion of normativity adopted here, according to which "if your reasons require you to do *E*, then you ought to do *E*", that same requirement can be more briefly formulated as follows: Rationality requires that, if you believe you ought to do *E*, then you intended to do *E*.

According to him, this reflects the fact that there is only one way to solve this conflict rationally, that is, by forming the intention to do *E* (Kolodny, 2005, p.528).

Kolodny's second argument against the thesis of wide-scope rational requirements is based on the idea that reasoning is always *downstream* and never *upstream*. To clarify this point, we may understand the wide-scope *Enkratic* requirement as implying the following negative wide-scope requirement:

> (*Negative wide-scope Enkratic*) Rationality requires that, if you believe that your reasons do not require you to do *E*, then you do not intend to do *E*[16].

The *Negative wide-scope Enkratic* requirement holds that when someone is in this kind of conflict – that is, when they believe that their reasons do not require them to intend *E*, yet still intend *E* – there are two rational ways of resolving the conflict. One may abandon the intention on the basis of the content of one's belief about one's reasons, or one may revise one's assessment of one's reasons on the basis of the content of one's intention. According to Kolodny, *Negative wide-scope Enkratic* is correct only if: (i) one can reason from the content of one's belief that one's reasons do not require intending *E* to abandon the intention to *E*; and (ii) one may reason from the content of intending *E* to revising one's belief about the absence of reasons for *E* (Kolodny, 2005, p.528).

Note that case (i) is a clear example of correct reasoning. However, a person cannot reason from the content of an intention to E to revising the belief that they lack reasons for E. To adopt what one takes to be an unfounded intention and then preserve it by revising one's belief about one's reasons for it is not an instance of reasoning; rather, it is a form of wishful thinking (Kolodny, 2005, p. 529). For Kolodny, since the wide-scope requirement leads to such an implausible conclusion, we should instead conclude that the rational requirement governing this kind of a conflict has a narrow-scope:

> (*Negative narrow-scope Enkratic*) If you believe that your reasons do not require you to do *E*, then rationality requires that you do not intend to do *E*.

According to Kolodny (2005, p. 529), this reflects the fact that there is only one rational way of resolving this conflict. A person cannot reason upstream – that is, from an attitude to a reassessment of the reasons for holding it – but only downstream, namely, from an evaluation of the reasons for an attitude to the formation, retention, or revision of that attitude.

Kolodny believes that part of the reason Broome's argument has been so influential is that Broome treats rational requirements as state-requirements, and state-requirements naturally lend themselves to a wide-scope interpretation (Kolodny, 2005, p. 540). For example, both the state of believing that one's reasons require intending *E* while intending *E*, and the state of believing that one's reasons do not require intending *E* while not intending *E*, count as well as resolving an initially conflicting state – the state in which one believe that one's reasons do not require intending *E* while still intending *E*. In this sense, a conflict between states can indeed be resolved in multiple ways. However, criticism only arises when one arrives at such resolution by revising one's assessment of one's reasons on the base on one's intention. For Kolodny, what we learn in this case is that the person has violated the process-requirement governing the resolution of the conflicting state: the state of believing that one's reasons do not require intending *E*, while nevertheless intending *E*. Thus, it is only when we move from state-requirements to process-requirements that we can see that some rational requirements have a narrow-scope.

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[16] This formulation has been modified in relation to Kolodny's original presentation in order to better suit our purposes, but this does not alter the central content of the argument. For example, Kolodny (2005, p. 521) argues that wide-scope requirements are more clearly expressed in a disjunctive form rather than in the conditional form proposed by Broome. In the case of the negative *Enkratic* requirement, Kolodny would formulate it as follows: Rationality requires that, either you believe that your reasons require you to do *E*, or you to not intend to do *E*. This formulation is logically implied by the conditional requirement as it is presented here.

6 In defense of wide-scope rational requirements

Faced with the objection that wide-scope model of rational requirements cannot be sustained, one possible response is to expand the theory so as to accommodate these cases and avoid the problems discussed above, thereby preserving the defense of wide-scope rational requirements. This strategy appears in Broome's book, *Rationality Through Reasoning* (2013), in which he presented a more developed version of the ideas originally formulated in *Normative Requirements* (1999).

The first – and perhaps the most significant – objection that defenders of wide-scope rational requirements must address is the problem of symmetry. As we saw earlier, Schroeder (2004) develops an argument against the wide-scope formulation for rational requirements. When a wide-scope requirement holds, what is required is a conditional proposition of the form "if *p* then *q*". If this condition is interpreted as a material conditional, then it is logically equivalent to the proposition "if *not-q* then *not-p*". Consequently, by the substitution of logical equivalents, it follows that "if *not-q* then *not-p*" is also required. Wide-scope requirements therefore display a kind of symmetry: they can be read both forwards and backwards. But, in many cases the relevant situation is not genuinely symmetrical.

Let us consider an example of the wide-scope *Enkratic* requirement:

> (*Enkratic Requirement*) Rationality requires that, if you believe that your reasons require you to do *E*, then you intend to do *E*.

By logical equivalence, we should also obtain:

> (*Equivalent Enkratic Requirement*) Rationality requires that if you do not intend to do *E*, you do not believe that your reasons require you to do *E*.

Thus, the *Enkratic* requirement appears symmetrical between believing that one ought to do *E* (or that one's reasons require doing *E*) and not intending *E*. But, if rationality is genuinely concerned with this relation, the connection between "believing that one ought to do *E*" and "not intending *E*" is actually asymmetric. That is, it is rational to someone intend to do *E* because they believe their reasons require them to do *E*, but it would be irrational for someone to cease believing that their reasons require them to do *E* merely because they do not intend to do *E*.

Furthermore, the means-ends coherence requirement provides another example of an asymmetrical relationship between attitudes. Roughly speaking, rationality requires that someone intend what they believe to be a necessary means to an end that they already intend. Suppose you intend an end *E*. In that case, it would be rational to intend *M* because you believe that *M* is a necessary means to achieving *E*. However, it would not be rational to stop believing that *M* is a necessary means to *E* merely because you lack the intention to *M*. This is an unacceptable consequence for anyone who seeks to explain rationality in terms of requirements, and any a wide-scope account of rational requirements must provide an adequate answer to such cases.

How should this asymmetry be treated? For Broome (2013, p. 139), the first point to note is that the asymmetry need not to be explained by a single rational requirement. Consider the case of the *Enkratic* requirement. A person is clearly irrational if they believe they ought to do *E* but fail to intend to do *E*. In this respect, the relation between believing that one ought to do *E* and not intending *E* is symmetrical. This can be captured by both wide and narrow scope formulations of the *Enkratic* requirement. At the same time, however, the relation between belief and non-intention also displays asymmetrical features. Yet nothing requires that these asymmetrical be explained solely by *Enkratic* requirement itself, whether formulated in wide or narrow scope. According to Broome, many rational requirements apply simultaneously, and other requirements may serve to block or constrain this apparent symmetry.

For example, some requirements demand that certain relations be maintained among our cognitive states, including our beliefs. The *Modus Ponens* requirement is an example of this. Suppose you hold certain beliefs (which Broome calls "grounding beliefs") whose contents imply, via *Modus Ponens*, that you ought to do *E*, and suppose you are considering whether or not you ought to do *E*. In that case, the *Modus Ponens* requirement tells us that you are irrational if you fail to believe that you ought to do *E*. The *Enkratic* requirement, in turn, states that you are irrational if you believe that you ought to do *E* but do not intend to do *E*. For Broome (2013, p. 140), these two requirements together imply that, given your grounding beliefs, you can be rational only if you both believe that you ought to do *E* and intend to do *E*. In this way, the combined application of different rational requirements would solve the apparent problem of symmetry.

However, this does not explain every case of asymmetry. The situation remains asymmetrical even when we are not in any grounding state. One may come to satisfy *Enkratic* either by beginning to intend *E* or by ceasing to believe that one's reasons require doing *E*. According to Broome (2013, p.140), the asymmetry operates as follows: one can rationally form an intention to do *E* on the bases of the belief that one ought to do *E*, but one cannot rationally ceasing believing that one ought to do E merely on the basis of not intending to do *E*.

Broome's solution to the problem of symmetry involves expanding the account of rational requirements through the addition of he calls "rational prohibitions" (Broome, 2013, p.141). Such prohibitions can function as "rational basing prohibitions", as illustrated by the following formulation:

> (*Basing Prohibitions Enkratic*) Rationality requires that you not to disbelieve (do not cease to believe) that you ought to do *E* on the basis of not intending to do *E*.

There is no corresponding symmetrical requirement in the opposite direction. This prohibition is distinct from *Enkratic*, and its role is to exclude a particular way of satisfying it.

According to Broome (2013, p. 141), there are rational basing prohibitions, but there are no corresponding positive basing requirements. For example, if you believe that you ought to do *E*, there is no requirement that your intention to do *E* be based on that belief. In order to count as rational, it is sufficient simply to have the relevant intention. Suppose that you have always intended to do *E*, but only recently formed the belief that you ought to do *E*. In that case, your intention is not based on your belief, yet you may still be perfectly rational. For this reason, Broome concludes that the asymmetry cannot be explained merely by modifying positive requirements such as the *Enkratic* requirement. Instead, the explanation depends on a distinct kind of prohibition. Thus, according to Broome, there are both wide-scope rational requirements and rational basing prohibitions.

One objection that must be raised against Broome's response is that it appears *ad hoc*. On this view, expanding the framework of what count as the "rules" of rationality would serve only the purpose of avoiding the objections discussed above. If "basing prohibitions" play no further role in explaining the nature of rationality or the logic of rational requirements, then Broome's reply might indeed seem merely *ad hoc*. However, according to the conception Broome develops in his book, the role of basing prohibitions extends far beyond simply addressing the symmetry problems with wide-scope requirements. Rather, they play an essential role in explain what a correct reasoning is and in clarifying the relation between reasoning and rationality.

Consider what makes a piece of reasoning correct. In much of Broome's earlier work on rational requirements, we find the claim that what makes a piece of reasoning correct is its conformity to rational requirements. This claim appears explicitly in *Normative Requeriments* (1999), and in *Practical Reasoning* (2002). However, in *Rationality Through Reasoning* (2013), Broome revises this view and argues that reasoning is not correct because it complies with rational requirements, but rather because it conforms to "rational permissions". That is, reasoning is correct insofar as it avoids what rationality prohibits.

On this view, rationality does not require one to reasoning correctly, since a person may be rational without engaging in reasoning at all (Broome, 2013, p. 246). For example, an ideally rational being might be completely rational as a result of an automatic process and therefore have no need to reason. What rationality requires, rather, is conditional on whether one engaging in reasoning: if one does reason, one must reason correctly. Put differently, rationality requires one not to reason incorrectly.

The problem, then, is to determine which rules count as correct. For Broome (Broome, 2013, p. 247), even if the correctness of reasoning is not determined by the fact that it satisfies a rational requirement, one might still think that the correctness of the rules of reasoning should ultimately be determined by rational requirements. Intuitively, however, the correctness of reasoning is a matter of which ways of reasoning are permissible. Even if one does not in fact reason in a particular way, if that way of reasoning is permitted, then it is a correct way. This intuitive conception of correctness does not rule out the possibility of there may be more than one correct way of reasoning from a given initial attitude. In this sense, correctness is a matter of permission rather than requirement.

Another question now arises: since correctness is determined by permission rather than by requirements, we still need to explain how correct reasoning promotes rationality. According to Broome (2013, p. 248), the answer must be that rational permissions are closely connected to rational requirements. For example, the *Modus Ponens* permission is closely related to the *Modus Ponens* requirement. If you reason correctly about some issue following a rule corresponding to the *Modus Ponens* permission, you will thereby satisfy a particular instance of *Modus Ponens* requirement. The same applies to the means-ends coherence requirement.

If the correctness reasoning (practical or theoretical) is explained in terms of permissions rather than requirements, then Broome's response to the symmetry challenge facing wide-scope requirements no longer appears *ad hoc*. And if this conception is correct, it also seems relatively straightforward to to provide an objective response to the problems previously raised by Kolodny.

Let us recall Kolodny's first challenge: the impossibility of reasoning from the absence of content. This becomes a problem only if we treat rational requirements as the rules governing right reasoning. However, as already noted, one may comply with rational requirements even in the absence of reasoning. Ideally rational beings, for example, could posses complete consistency among their mental states without engaging in reasoning at all. Although Kolodny is correct in claiming that we cannot reason from the absence of an attitude, the possibility of having a fully consistent mental states is independent of this fact.

The second problem raised by Kolodny was that reasoning is always downstream and never upstream. The response to this objection can be formulated in a similar way to the Broome's response to the problem of symmetry. If there are rational prohibitions, it is not possible to move from the absence of an intention to *E* to the revision of the reasons for *E*. The existence of a requirement such as *Basing Prohibitions Enkratic* would therefore be sufficient to solve this problem.

Finally, we come to Schroeder's objection that wide-scope requirements are agent-neutral, and that would therefore commit their defenders to rejecting influential views about the nature of obligations, such as the "Humean theory". Indeed, wide-scope rational requirements do appear to apply in an agent-neutral manner, since they apply necessarily. As Broome points out, many rational requirements are not conditional in their application. Rather, they apply to anyone who falls within the jurisdiction of rationality. For such requirements, the expression "rationality requires of *N* that ..." can be prefixed by "Necessarily, if *N* is within the jurisdiction of rationality..." (Broome, 2013, p. 135).

According to the wide-scope view on rational requirements, nearly all such requirements are conditional in their content. The requirement of no contradictory intentions, for example, can be rewritten so as to make it conditional structure explicit:

> (*Non-contradiction*) Necessarily, if you are within the jurisdiction of rationality, rationality requires that, if you intend to do *E*, you do not intend to do non-*E* (Broome, 2013, p. 136).

The consequence is that Broome's position is committed to rejecting the "Humean theory of obligations" only if rationality itself is normative. To claim that rationality is normative is to maintain that rational requirements are obligations with which one ought to comply – that is, that we have *reasons* to follow rational requirements. However, this is far from an uncontroversial claim[17].

Contrary to Schroeder's criticism, Broome himself endorses a theory of reasons that is compatible with the "Humean theory". As Broome states, "I take an agent-neutral reason to be [...] a reason that is owned by everyone, whereas an agent-relative reason is one that is owned by someone but not everyone" (Broome, 2013, p. 66). However, as we have seen, wide-scope rational requirements are not necessarily connected with reasons for action. Reasons for action are characterized, in the passage just quoted, in much the same way as in what Schroeder's describes as the "less controversial view": there is no action that everyone ought to perform independently of the agent's particular standpoint. Wide-scope requirements would commit one to an agent-neutral conception of obligations only if rationality itself is normative.

7 Conclusion

I believe that some conclusions can be drawn from the arguments presented here. If we accept Broome's view (1999, 2013) that rational requirements do not necessarily transmit reasons, and that normative conclusions cannot be detached from a conditional requirement, then Korsgaard's (1997) argument that the instrumental principle depends on the existence of non-instrumental (categorical) principles no longer appears convincing.

Regarding the relation between normativity and rationality, we have seen that rationality can operate even under unfavorable conditions: we may continue to be fully rational even in situations in which, for independent reasons, we ought not to act as we do. One of the key features of rational requirements that help explain this relationship is their wide-scope. If rational requirements do indeed have a wide-scope, then we can in a better position to clarify the relation between being rational and responding correctly to reasons.

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[17] To say that rationality is normative is to affirm the following principle: Necessarily, if rationality requires *S* to do Φ, this fact is a reason for *S* to do Φ (Broome, 2013, p.192). In general, two main approaches to explaining the normativity of rationality are recognized. The first holds that rationality is derivatively normative; the second mantains that rationality is *intrinsically normative*. According to the first view, a source of requirements is derivatively normative when its normativity can be explained by appeal to some other normative sources. In his work, Broome (2013, p. 197-201) presents a series of arguments against this thesis. The second option is to maintain that rationality is intrinsically normative, as Korsgaard suggests (1997, p. 220). On this view, rational requirements provide reasons for compliance in virtue of rationality itself, rather than deriving their authority from some other source of requirements. Broome (2013, p. 204) express sympathy for this thesis, although he admits that he does not yet posses an argument in its favor. However, Kolodny (2005, p. 544-47) develop an extensive critique of the thesis that rationality is intrinsically normative.

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