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Précis

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Rationality Through Reasoning investigates normativity, rationality and reasoning, and the relations among them. It was originally motivated by an idea of mine about the so-called 'motivation question' in moral philosophy. How does a normative belief motivate a person to act? When you believe you ought to do something you often end up intending to do it. How come? My answer is that sometimes you achieve this yourself through reasoning, which is something you do. To make good this idea, I needed to give an account of reasoning and explain how reasoning can be an act—something you do. Since reasoning is obviously connected with rationality, this account required in turn an account of rationality. And since rationality has some complicated connections with normativity, I also needed an account of normativity.

The book engages with many fundamental questions within the philosophy of normativity. What are reasons? What is their relation to ought, and to rationality? Is there a logic of ought? What is rationality? Is rationality normative? How is it connected to our process of reasoning? What is the process of reasoning? What is practical reasoning in particular? When is reasoning correct? And so on. With all these other questions to deal with on the way, answering the motivation question takes up just a few pages in the first and last chapters. Though the motivation question was the book's original stimulus, I intend the accounts of normativity, rationality and reasoning to be independently significant. The book falls into three parts that deal with each in turn.

After an introductory chapter that presents the motivation question, the substantive work of the book begins with three chapters on normativity. I identify a sense of "ought" that is central to the philosophy of normativity by means of a particular requirement of rationality that I call 'Enkrasia'. Enkrasia says, roughly,

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that rationality requires you to intend to do what you believe you ought to do. The central sense of 'ought' is the one to which Enkrasia applies; it is the sense such that rationality requires of you that, when you believe you ought in this sense to do something, you intend to do it. On this basis I identify several important properties of the central ought. It is 'personal' or 'owned', it is 'final' or 'all-things-considered', and it is 'prospective' rather than objective.

I go on to define reasons in terms of ought. Indeed, I define reasons of two sorts, which I call 'pro toto reasons' and 'pro tanto reasons'.

After the chapters on normativity, the book goes on to rationality. This part of the book starts with two chapters arguing against various versions of the popular opinion that rationality consists in responding correctly to reasons or to beliefs about reasons.

My own account of rationality depends on the notion of a *requirement* of rationality. As a preliminary to introducing it, the book contains two chapters analysing requirements in general. These chapters identify a confusing ambiguity in the meaning of 'require' and specify the particular sense that I adopt in the phrase 'rationality requires'. They provide a logic and semantics for 'requires' in this sense. Finally, they consider the vexed issue of the logical scope of rational requirements.

The following two chapters describe some requirements of rationality as precisely as I can. One chapter sets out some synchronic requirements, which require particular relations to hold among the beliefs and intentions that a person has at a particular time. It argues that 'practical' requirements, which involve intentions, are independent of 'theoretical' requirements, which are requirements on beliefs only. The chapter investigates two particular practical requirements in detail, because they play an important role in my argument. One is Enkrasia, and the other is the 'Instrumental Requirement', which requires you to intend what you believe is a means implied by an end that you intend.

The second chapter on rational requirements describes diachronic requirements. These include a persistence requirement on intentions and some 'basing permissions of rationality'. A basing permission specifies when it is permissible to have some particular attitude on the basis of other particular attitudes that you have. For example, rationality permits you to believe that q on the basis of believing that p and believing that if p then q. Basing permissions are crucial to the account of reasoning that comes later in the book. When a piece of reasoning is correct, it is made correct by a basing permission.

The last of the chapters on rationality completes my investigation of the relation between rationality and normativity. It asks whether rationality itself is normative. When rationality requires something of you, does that fact constitute a reason for you to do what it requires? The chapter explains that, although I believe this is so, I cannot demonstrate it. For this reason, none of my arguments in the book—including particularly my account of reasoning—depends on assuming that rationality is normative.

Next come five chapters about reasoning. I take reasoning to be a mental process, which sets out from some attitudes of yours and ends with your acquiring a new attitude. The question is what further conditions a mental process of this sort must

satisfy if it is to be reasoning. One popular view is that reasoning necessarily involves a higher-order normative belief about your attitudes, which at some stage serves as a premise in the reasoning. One chapter of the book is devoted to rejecting this 'higher-order' account of reasoning. Mine is a first-order account, which does not involve any higher-order normative belief.

My account is set out in the following chapter, using theoretical reasoning with beliefs as my example. Stated briefly, my account is that reasoning is a mental process in which you operate on the contents of your attitudes, following a rule. The rule guides you by setting up a standard of correctness. I argue that this is enough to ensure that reasoning is an act—something you do. The chapter also specifies what makes reasoning correct, when it is. It is correct when the rule you follow corresponds to a basing permission of rationality. It is important to understand that correct reasoning is reasoning you are permitted to do, not reasoning you are required to do.

The next chapter extends the first-order account to practical reasoning with intentions, using instrumental reasoning as its main example. When you reason with other attitudes besides beliefs, your reasoning needs to keep track of the nature of the attitudes you reason with. This fact calls for an amendment to my account of reasoning. You operate, not on the contents of attitudes, but on their 'marked contents'. The contents are marked with the type of attitude they are the content of.

Often in practice we reason explicitly in language, saying sentences to ourselves. I do not assume that our reasoning must be explicit, but there is a case for thinking it must be. If that is so, the reasoning we can do is constrained by the power of our language to express distinctly the attitudes we reason with. This adds some difficulties to the account of reasoning. For example, we ordinarily express an intention using the indicative mood; to express an intention of going to Venice, you might say 'I shall go to Venice'. But the indicative mood is also our normal way of expressing a belief. So explicit reasoning with intentions can become confused with explicit reasoning with beliefs. They need to be carefully separated. One chapter of the book is devoted to the complexities of explicit reasoning.

The book's final chapter returns to the motivation question. It explains that enkratic reasoning fits my account of reasoning in general. Therefore, if my account is right, enkratic reasoning is indeed something we can do to motivate ourselves. It is a way of bringing ourselves to intend to do what we believe we ought to do.