Précis of *Rationality Through Reasoning*

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Rationality Through Reasoning [Broome (2013)] investigates normativity, rationality and reasoning, and the relations among them.

Its original stimulus was an idea of mine about the so-called 'motivation problem' in moral philosophy: the problem of how a normative belief motivates you to act. You believe you ought to do something and you end up doing it. How come? I deal with a special version of the motivation problem: when you believe you ought to do something, how does that belief bring you to intend to do it? My answer is that it can do so through a process of reasoning: you can reason your way from the premise-attitude of believing you ought to do something to the conclusion-attitude of intending to do it. I call this 'enkratic reasoning'. I take reasoning to be an act – something you do – at least sometimes. So an attractive feature of my answer to the motivation problem is that you can motivate *yourself* to do what you believe you ought to do, by means of an act of reasoning. My answer is also consistent with the view that a normative belief is a belief like any other; it need not be an attitude of some other sort that somehow incorporates motivation.

The book aims to justify this idea about the motivation problem. To do so I need to give an account of reasoning and explain how reasoning can be an act. Reasoning occupies the last part of the book. I also need to distinguish correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning, because I take enkratic reasoning to be correct. When reasoning is correct, I argue it is made correct by a particular sort of rational permission. I also argue that correct reasoning is a means we have of improving our rationality through our own action. To make these claims precise and justify them, I need to present an account of rationality. That task occupies the middle part of the book.

My account of rationality differs from many in sharply distinguishing rationality from normativity. Many philosophers accept some version of the view that a person's rationality consists in responding correctly to normative reasons, or perhaps responding correctly to her beliefs about her normative reasons. I think this is mistaken. To show it is mistaken, I need to investigate the structure of normativity. That task occupies the first part of the book. So the book covers normativity, then rationality, then reasoning.

In this book, I try to answer or contribute to answering quite a number of 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 only a small part of the book: the first and last short chapters. So even if you doubt my answer to the motivation question, I hope you may nevertheless be persuaded by my answers to other questions.

After the motivation question is set out in the introductory chapter, the substantive work of the book begins with three chapters on normativity: on ought and reasons. I identify a sense of 'ought' that is central to the philosophy of normativity. It is given by a particular requirement of rationality that I call 'Enkrasia'. Enkrasia says, roughly, that rationality requires you to intend to do what you believe you ought to do. The central sense of 'ought' is the one that satisfies Enkrasia; 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. I argue on this basis that the central ought 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'. There may be other sorts of reasons too.

The next two chapters of the book argue against various versions of the common 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 that analyse requirements in general. They iden-
tify a confusing ambiguity in the meaning of 'require' and specify the
particular sense that I use in the phrase 'rationality requires'. They
provide a logic and semantics for 'requires' in this sense. They also
provide elements of a deontic logic by extending the same logic to
'ought'. Finally, they consider the vexed issue of the logical scope of
requirements.

The following two chapters describe some requirements of ra-
tionality with as much precision as I can muster. One describes syn-
chronic requirements, which require particular relations to hold among
the beliefs and intentions that a person has at a particular time. It ar-
gues that 'practical' requirements, which involve intentions, are inde-
pendent of 'theoretical' requirements, which are requirements on
beliefs only. The book investigates two particular practical require-
ments in detail, because they play an important role in my argument.
One is Enkrasia and the other the 'Instrumental Requirement', which
requires you to intend what you believe are means implied by an end
that you intend.

A second chapter on requirements describes diachronic require-
ments. These include a persistence requirement on intentions: rational-
ity requires you not to drop an intention without reconsidering it. This
chapter also describes basing permissions of rationality. A basing
permission specifies when it is permissible to have some particular at-
titude on the basis of other particular attitudes. For example, rationali-
ty permits you to believe a proposition q on the basis of believing p
and believing that if p then q. Basing permissions are crucial, since,
when a piece of reasoning is correct, it is made correct by a basing
permission.

The last of the chapters on rationality rounds out my investigation
of the relation between rationality and normativity. It asks whether ra-
tionality is normative. That is, when rationality requires something of
you, does that fact constitutes a reason for you to do what it requires?
The chapter explains that, although I believe this is so, I cannot demon-
strate it. For this reason, my argument in the book does not depend 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 condi-
tions must a mental process of this sort satisfy if it is to be reasoning.

One commonly accepted view is that reasoning necessarily involves a higher-order normative belief about your attitudes. More specifically, the view is that, if you are to arrive at an attitude by reasoning, you must at some stage believe you ought to have this attitude, and the content of this beliefs must serve at some stage 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 beliefs.

My account is set out in the following chapter. There I use 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 that 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 do not operate 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. In reasoning we have to keep a grip on the syntactic structure of the propositions we reason with. Language is a good means of doing so, and we may need it for that purpose. If so, the reasoning we can do is constrained by the power of our language to express distinctively the attitudes we reason with. This adds some difficulties to the account of reasoning. For example, our ordinary way of expressing an intention is to use the indicative mood; you might say 'I shall be there in the morning', for example. 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, and the theory needs to be

careful to keep them apart. One chapter of the book is devoted to the complexities of explicit reasoning.

The book's last chapter finally returns to enkratic reasoning. It explains that enkratic reasoning fits my account of reasoning in general. If my account is right, therefore, enkratic reasoning is indeed something we can do to motivate ourselves: to bring ourselves to intend to do what we believe we ought to do. That is my answer to the motivation question.

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