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# The Normativity of Rationality

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**Abstract:** Rationality appears to have some intimate relation with normativity: exactly what relation is in dispute. John Broome devotes a chapter of his recent book to rebutting the view that rationality has 'true normativity', which he equates with the kind of normativity that I call directivity. In particular, he offers a number of arguments against derivative accounts of the normativity of rationality. In this paper I defend my instrumentalist account from those arguments. In so doing I bring into view the grounds of a live positive defence of rationality's servanthood to directivity.

The normativity of rationality is not the central topic of John Broome's recent book *Rationality through Reasoning*, which is mainly concerned with how through being rational we come to intend what we believe we ought. It is, however, the focus of an important and interesting chapter in which Broome rebuts the view that rationality has 'true normativity'. In particular, he offers a number of arguments against derivative accounts of the normativity of rationality. In this paper I defend my derivative account from those arguments and bring into view the grounds of a live positive argument for what I call the servanthood of rationality to directive normativity.

Rationality appears to have some intimate relation with normativity. Indeed, there is a view on which the normativity of rationality is a trivial matter since rationality just is part or all of normativity. Suppose that rationality is reasoned, by which I mean that being rational is a matter of acting and believing in accord with reasons. Adding to this the analysis of some or all normativity in terms of reasons, or vice versa, suffices for the triviality. Broome devotes chapter four of his book to analysing reasons in terms of normativity and rejects the triviality by devoting chapter five to rebutting the proposition that rationality is reasoned.

Granted that rationality is not reasoned the question of its exact relation to normativity arises. The question takes its interest at least in part from the normative conflicts that rationality can get into. Rationality is apparently normative and yet this appearance can be shown to be in tension with apparently evident normative truths, such as that believing you ought is not sufficient to make you right, to make it true that you ought. We have this rather swift argument to the conflict. Rationality is, in Broome's terms, a source of requirements, in particular, the source of the requirement of central interest to Broome in his book, the requirement to intend what you believe you ought.<sup>1</sup> Requirements are normative. Therefore rationality is normative. So you ought to do what is rationally required.<sup>2</sup> So you ought to intend whatever you believe you ought.

This is the well known danger of bootstrapping rightness out of mere rationality. Any account of the normativity of rationality must block this argument and there are, of course, a number ways it can be blocked. Many, including Broome, would say there is an illicit appeal to a narrow-scope modal principle when only the wide-scope principle is true.<sup>3</sup> Others have argued that even the wide-scope principle doesn't help.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Broome 2013:192 for his precise definition of the enkaptic requirement.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Dancy 2009:105, Way 2010:1058.

<sup>3</sup> See Dancy 1977; Bratman 1987; Broome 2001; Kolodny 2005; Rippon 2011

<sup>4</sup> See Greenspan 1975:265, Dancy 2009:103-5.

To get clear on Broome's position about the normativity of rationality we need to be clear about his position on normativity in general. Broome acknowledges a 'wide sense of 'normative' for which 'requirements of any sort are normative' but this is not the sense he is interested in. He is interested in the sense which 'helps determine what you ought to do... what I call... 'true normativity'' (2013:27). I distinguish these senses by the terms 'correctness' and 'directivity'<sup>5</sup> and Broome apparently concurs with the way I draw the distinction (2013:27 fn.31). In the face of the need to draw these distinctions Broome has settled on the same regimentation of terminology as myself (Shackel 2004:26-7) in reserving 'requirement' and cognates for correctness normativity, and 'ought' and 'reasons' for directive normativity. Consequently, Broome does not 'use "requires" as a normative term' (Broome 2013:192) in the directive sense when speaking of rational requirements. So when thinking about the normativity of rationality in the sense of interest we must go beyond the mere correctness had by requirements of any sort and consider its relation to true normativity, to directivity.<sup>6</sup>

Broome defines the *Normativity of Rationality* thus:

Necessarily, if rationality requires *N* to *F*, that fact is a reason for *N* to *F*.  
(Broome 2013:192)

Broome holds this to be true and thereby holds rationality to be directive. Nevertheless, having devoted chapter 11 to considering and rejecting arguments in its favour he confesses to having no argument for it. I, on the other hand, think it to be false and that whilst rationality is directive, it isn't necessarily directive. Furthermore, in general, I think its being directive is an extrinsic rather than intrinsic feature: to put it in Broome's terms, the fact of rationality requiring *N* to *F* can only be a reason derivatively.<sup>7</sup> This is so because the non-derivative determinants of what one ought are not themselves requirements or ends of rationality. Hence, that something is rationally required does not suffice to make the fact of it being rationally required a reason. It is only a reason if, through some possibly quite indirect route, being rational in this way is necessary or an aid to doing what one ought. This is part of what I call the servanthood of rationality to directive normativity. I shall discuss Broome's arguments against rationality being derivatively normative below.

Broome considers a view he calls

*Strong Normativity*. Necessarily, if rationality requires *N* to *F*, then *N* ought to *F* because rationality requires *N* to *F*. (Broome 2013:192)

We both reject this, yet for very different reasons. Broome rejects it because he thinks that the fact of rationality requiring *N* to *F* is *pro tanto*, not *pro toto*, and hence can be outweighed, for example, if believing a contradiction were to prevent a war. I reject it because I think in the end it must be understood as originating in a radically different view of rationality, a view in which rationality is not the servant but the master of directive normativity.<sup>8</sup> Consider, for example, Darwall's approach:

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<sup>5</sup> See Shackel 2004, 2014, MS-b. I intend a different distinction from that drawn by Thomson (2008) with similar terminology. Her distinction between correctness properties and directives lines up with the standard distinction between the evaluative and the deontic.

<sup>6</sup> In these terms, the second premiss of the swift argument is equivocal and the inference to the directivity of rationality is either invalid or un-sound for Broome since he will only grant the second premiss to be true when 'normative' is understood in the correctness sense.

<sup>7</sup> 'a source is derivatively normative when it is made normative by some different normative source' (Broome 2013:197).

<sup>8</sup> There is a complication over Ross's apparent defence of *Strong Normativity* because he says he is only defending it as 'ought' in 'a normative sense' (Ross 2012:139). He seems to intend

It is part of the very idea of the Rational Normative System that its norms are *finally authoritative* in settling questions of what to do (1990:215)

The problem I find with this is that if such a Rational Normative System is convincing as finally authoritative it is unconvincing as a characterisation of rationality. Directive normativity is what is finally authoritative of what to do: that is simply part of what the term ‘directive normativity’ (or Broome’s ‘true normativity’) is there to refer to. So Darwall’s proposal amounts to defining directive normativity as the output of rationality. Intuitively, what is finally authoritative about what to do is the intricate dance of morality, virtue, prudence and aesthetics, which is to say, ethics broadly construed. To put the point against Darwall very swiftly, is something ethical because it is rational or is it rational because it is ethical? Taking the first horn, it seems plain to me that what I mean by rationality, the capacity to have and pursue goals in the light of information, and its constitutive and success norms, which correspond to the kinds of requirements Broome calls rational requirement, are insufficient to generate the requirements of ethics. (Here is not the place to examine the many attempts by rationalists to square this circle.) On the other horn, this is defining rationality in terms of the ethical. It is true that some people use the word ‘rational’ in this way, where it is just another way of talking of the ethical (and on this use, rationality is indeed reasoned). But that use has nothing to do with requirements such as taking means to ends, believing in accordance with the evidence, having consistent beliefs, and so on. Calling it ‘substantive rationality’ does not get round this problem. Indeed, I find it misleading because it seeks to help itself to the rationalist’s answer to why be moral (because it is rational and you are already committed to being rational because of what you are) whilst begging the question.

Broome also considers a view he calls

*Weak Normativity*. Necessarily, if rationality requires N to F, there is a reason for N to F. (Broome 2013:193)

This is a view he finds unsatisfactory because

it is not a version of the claim that rationality is normative. It associates rationality with normativity, but it does not say that rationality is a source of normative requirements. (Broome 2013:193)

Although I think it untrue, I do not find it unsatisfactory for this reason. In general I am interested in giving a true account of the relation of the correctness normativity of rationality to directive normativity. Specifically, I am interested in whether, when, and why you ought to be rational. If the answer to that is, in some particular cases, that there is a reason to do what rationality requires of you although that rationality requires it is not the reason, I am not greatly troubled. This is because the position I wish to defend about the normativity of rationality is the

*Servanthood of Rationality to Directivity*:

1. *availing rational guidance*: what is rational for you is validly first personally predicably as rationally required;
2. *directive harmony of rational guidance*: when you are as you ought to be then what is rational for you to do will be what you ought to do.

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directive normativity but if he would be satisfied to mean correctness normativity then he is discussing a different proposition from the one under consideration here. I agree with that different proposition but it is a triviality because using ‘ought’ in a correctness sense is just another way of registering a requirement.

For example, I can believe that I ought to help a friend and validly conclude intending to help him is rationally required of me; provided I value and desire as I ought to (care about the right things in the right way) and have true beliefs, then it will be true that I ought to intend to help him. In this way the correctness normativity of rationality is available to guide me and in being available to me it also guides me to what is directive normative provided I care rightly. Furthermore, all that is required here is local knowledge of what is rationally required, local right motivation, local true valuing and local true belief, where the extent of the locality will be determined by the actions at issue.

The way this position works is that rather than trying to show rationality itself to be directive or worrying that it needs to be intrinsically directive, it appeals to the possibility of the internal accessible rational order corresponding to and representing the (possibly external) ethical order. The internally available correctness normativity of rationality will line up with and thereby represent the external directive normativity in those localities where we care rightly. Where this harmony is in place doing what is rational, which we *can* know, will be doing what is right, which we may *not* know. We can know this last proposition about rationality by philosophical reflection and thereby know generally whether, when and why we ought to be rational. This may be as good as we can get for an account of the obligation to be rational.

We must not expect more precision than the subject-matter admits.... We must be content, then, ... to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true (Aristotle 1989:1094*b*)

The obligation is general, ‘for the most part’, but not universal. When it comes to particular cases, whether we will know it to be one in which we ought to be rational depends on whether we know that we care rightly and know what is rational to do for what we care about. Often we won’t know whether we care rightly, and so won’t know whether we ought to do what we know to be rationally required. We will only know that generally we are obliged to be rational and the explanation just given for that general obligation.

These last remarks make clear the instrumentalism in the position: where we are in harmony, being rational is a means to acting rightly. This and the extent to which, when caring rightly, being rational may be *necessary* to doing what you ought, also means the position may have some dependence on what I call transmissivism (roughly, that the correctness normativity of rationality is compatible with the transmission of directivity from, for example, ends to means).<sup>9</sup>

There is a variety of *Servanthood* I call *Weak Servanthood*, that is just as satisfiable by a reason for whatever is rationally required as by the fact of it being rationally required being itself a reason.<sup>10</sup> There is also a position I call *Strong Servanthood* that claims we can build on *Servanthood* by arguing that the general obligation to be rational is itself usually a reason to conform to rational requirements, thereby making the fact of each such requirement a reason as well.

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<sup>9</sup> More technically, transmissivism is that the normative relations of rationality to directivity are unfocused transmitting relations (Shackel MS-a).

<sup>10</sup> There are complications I am skating over due to the slackness (as Broome 1999 puts it) of reasons and the strictness of the ‘ought’s in *directive harmony of rational guidance*. They are not germane to the point here although they are important for vindicating the position as a whole.

It is not my purpose here to offer a general defence of the *Servanthood*. Rather, I shall locate the position in contrast to Broome's and then consider arguments offered by Broome that may be problematic for this kind of position.

Broome's *Normativity of Rationality* means that rationality is globally normative, that for each rational requirements there is always a reason for doing whatever is rationally required. I think rationality is only locally normative, that for some rational requirements on some occasions there is a reason. Broome thinks the fact of being a rational requirement is itself a reason (*Normativity of Rationality*). I think the fact of being a rational requirement may itself be a reason but most difficulties for *Servanthood* do not turn on the kind of distinction that Broome is drawing between the *Normativity of Rationality* and *Weak Normativity*. Broome is skeptical of transmission principles (see Broome 2013:126) so probably thinks that transmissivism is false whereas I think it true. Broome thinks that rationality is non-derivatively normative (Broome 2013:204), I think that it is derivatively normative.

The last contrast may be somewhat misleading since by this point the earlier contrasts play into what we mean by rationality being or not being derivatively normative. Furthermore, our different interests here may mean we are looking for quite different things in attempting to address the general issue of the normativity of rationality. Broome may think that *Servanthood* doesn't go far enough because it doesn't entail that rationality as a whole is directly normative; whereas I think *Normativity of Rationality* is not needed to explain the nature of obligations to be rational. *Servanthood*, especially *Weak Servanthood*, is constructed to concede and steer round rather than solve many of the conflicts of normativity that undermine positions like the *Normativity of Rationality*, and to do so whilst continuing to offer an account of the obligation to be rational. Nevertheless, if Broome's arguments against derivative normativity and transmission of normativity from means to ends are right, *prima facie* they rule out *Servanthood* by ruling out all positions of that kind. For that reason we shall now turn to considering those arguments.

For the sake of a target in my position that is more clearly in Broome's sights, we will take it that *Servanthood* commits me to this position:

*(Rationality) Sometimes Normative*: sometimes, if rationality requires *N* to *F*, that fact is a reason for *N* to *F*.

This is harder to refute than *Normativity of Rationality* just because the latter is universally quantified and the former is existentially quantified.

I will concede now, but not attempt to address here, that there are problems for me if I am so committed. For example, I do not think that such reasons should be weighed in the balance with the non-derivative determinants of what one ought and perhaps that means they can't be reasons at all. I think it can be got round by derivative reasons being self-effacing in the face of the non-derivative, and thereby avoid double-counting (and in any case, double-counting is a problem for everyone). But maybe it can't and I have to retreat to *Weak Servanthood*. Much depends here on the normative status of general (as opposed to universal) obligations and their relation to their instances, an issue we will touch on below.

#### *Arguments against derivative normativity for rationality*

The way Broome considers rationality being derivatively normative is as a means:

Rationality seems plausibly a good means of... achieving much of what you ought to achieve. (Broome 2013:197)

He distinguishes two strategies for arguing for *Normativity of Rationality*. The direct strategy is a bottom up strategy: to argue that each rational requirement individually is derivatively normative. The indirect strategy is a top down strategy, to argue that rationality as a whole is derivatively normative and this entails *Normativity of Rationality*.

*The direct strategy*

Broome offers two objections to the direct strategy. The first is that

often when rationality requires you to F, Fing achieves nothing you have any reason to achieve, stemming from any source apart from rationality (Broome 2013:197-8)

I agree with this, but the reason it is true is that the cases in which it is true are cases of false belief or caring wrongly and so they do not trouble *Servanthood*. Nor does it trouble *Weak Servanthood* since that would require showing that doing what rationality requires never achieves something you have a reason to achieve and this is obviously false. Nor does it trouble *Sometimes Normative* since that requires showing that any reasons to do what rationality requires are not rational requirements.

The second objection is that

even when satisfying a requirement of rationality does achieve something you have a reason to achieve... we still cannot conclude that the requirement is normative (Broome 2013:198)

The example Broome uses to illustrate this is the well known Dutch book argument for conforming degrees of belief to axioms of probability. A Bayesian requirement of degrees of belief for a set of exhaustive and mutually exclusive propositions is that they should add up to 1. We take this to be a rational requirement. An argument for conforming to it is that if you don't then you will be rationally committed to accepting a set of bets which guarantee you will lose money whatever happens (which set is called a Dutch book).

The problem with this argument, as Broome sees it, is that

even if rationality did not require you to have degrees of belief that add up to one, you would still have just the same prudential reason to do so. (Broome 2013:199)

He draws a contrast with law, where

If the law did not require you to pay taxes, you would have no prudential reason to do so. (Broome 2013:199)

So here, the fact of the law is a reason (derivative from prudence) because its absence would entail no reason whereas the absence of the rational requirement would not entail no reason. He concludes from this that the fact of it being rationally required is not itself a reason and hence, whilst this may support *Weak Normativity* it does not support *Strong Normativity*.

There are some difficulties that can be raised for this objection.

First: the rationality counterfactual is one with a necessarily false antecedent. Such counterpossibles are philosophically contentious. For example, on Lewis's semantics Broome's counterpossible is true: but so is 'if rationality did not require you to have degrees of belief that add up to one, you would not still have just the same prudential reason to do so'. So this will mean we have an antimony: Broome's argument from his counterpossible to concluding that the fact of the rational requirement is not a reason and an argument from my counterpossible by reasoning parallel to the law case, that it is a reason.

Second: consider the view Bayesians have of degrees of belief and why they make the antecedent necessarily false. For example, in Ramsey's way of thinking of them (Ramsey 1926) degrees of belief are theoretical items in a scientific theory of mind that are calculable from a sufficient extent of knowledge of dispositions for conditional bets. The utilities that constitute the prudential reasons in this view are similarly theoretical items in that theory, and are similarly and simultaneously calculable from the same knowledge. Broome's objection has some plausibility provided the prudential reasons are distinct existences from the degrees of belief and the rational requirements that apply to them. On Ramsey's view, however, they are not distinct existences. Consequently it is not clear that you can separate the prudential considerations being a reason from the rational requirement on degrees of belief. It is not merely that the antecedent is necessarily false. The reason it is necessarily false is because degrees of belief and utilities are correlated law cluster concepts and so the rational requirement and the prudential reason are metaphysically conjoined. So this constitutes an argument for my counterpossible, from which we can argue that the rational requirement *is* a reason.

Third: why exactly does the prudential reason remaining intact given the (impossible) absence of the rational requirement mean that the rational requirement can't be derivatively a reason given its necessary presence. I take it the contrast with the legal example is supposed to illuminate this. It may be true that the absence of the prudential reason in the absence of the legal requirement shows the requirement itself to be derivatively a reason. Yet that is not sufficient to show that if the prudential reason to do something remains intact in the absence of a requirement to do that thing, the requirement to do that something *cannot* be derivatively a reason when it *is* present. That would require that, for the requirement to be a derivative reason, necessarily, the *only* reason the prudential reason is in place is because of the requirement. But it seems perfectly possible for the prudential reason to be in place in some cases for *other* reasons and to be in place in the presence of the requirement for those other reasons *and* because of the requirement.

Finally: is the law counterfactual true and does it really make the law the reason? For example, suppose the law did not require you to pay taxes but the government and legal system behaved as if it did. Then you would still have the prudential reason despite the absence of the law. Conversely, if the law did require you to pay taxes but the government and legal system behaved as if you didn't you wouldn't have the prudential reason. So perhaps it is not the law that is the reason but how the government and legal system behave. But that means we don't have a requirement that is derivatively a reason to contrast with the Bayesian rational requirement to prove that Broome's counterpossible entails that it is the prudential reason alone that is a reason.

Of these points, I think the second is the most important because it turns on the extent to which the substance of rationality matters in defending derivative normativity for rationality. Broome is considering examples in which the defence depends on formal features and we shall see this possibility of replying to his objections by appeal to the substance of rationality recurring below. That being said, this specific example is a problem neither for *Servanthood* nor for *Weak Servanthood*.

### *Indirect strategy*

The indirect strategy is the top down strategy of showing that rationality as a whole being derivatively normative entails *Normativity of Rationality*. Broome's considers the indirect strategy in two versions, one in which rationality as a whole is interpreted as 'a rational disposition... a disposition that causes you to satisfy many rational requirements' and the other in which it is interpreted as 'the property of rationality... the property you have when you satisfy all the requirements of rationality' (Broome 2013:199-200).



### *Rational disposition argument*

Broome assumes that ‘a rational disposition is part of the best means of achieving much of what you ought to achieve’ (Broome 2013: 200). He also assumes that a transmission principle applies in this case<sup>11</sup> so that this entails that you ought to have a rational disposition. What is needed for *Normativity of Rationality* is that from this we can derive that each rational requirement is a reason. The only argument he considers to be available here is that, since you ought to have a rational disposition and a rational disposition will cause you to satisfy individual rational requirements, so you have a reason to satisfy such requirements. The quantification over rational requirement satisfactions caused would need to be universal here which is empirically doubtful but not the problem that worries Broome. Broome thinks that, granted the derivation, we thereby show ‘the reason must...be that it is a requirement of rationality’ (Broome 2013: 201) and hence have got what we need for *Normativity of Rationality* rather than *Weak Normativity*.

Broome’s objection to this argument is that it is not generally valid that if you ought to do something and doing it will cause something else then you have a reason for that other thing. For example

Suppose you ought to take some drug to cure your serious disease. Suppose the drug has the side effect of causing you to feel unsteady. It does not follow that you have a reason to feel unsteady. (Broome 2013: 201)

Now this is quite right so far as it goes. Furthermore, it plainly applies to each argument for each rational requirement and hence poses a problem for *Sometimes Normative* as well as for *Normativity of Rationality*. Nevertheless, something more can be said in defence of the argument. We can appeal to the specificities of the relation of a rational disposition and rational requirements and point out the disanalogy between that case and the drug case.

A closer analogy would be one in which the drug causes specific curative effects and in such a case it does follow that you have a reason to undergo each of those specific curative effects. Likewise, defending *Sometimes Normative* from the normativity of a rational disposition is not wanting to claim that just anything that is caused by a rational disposition is something you have a reason to do but only things essentially related to that disposition, namely, satisfying rational requirements. So the inference from the normativity of a rational disposition to having a reason to satisfy at least some rational requirement depends not only on the satisfaction *being* caused but also on the *nature* of what is caused. What is caused must belong to a set of satisfactions of requirements which, because of the essential relation, were you not to instantiate enough of (given the stimulus conditions) you would not have the disposition that you ought to have.

At this point, if this argument is to work we need to make an inference from the general to the particular. Since you must satisfy enough rational requirements in the face of the relevant stimulus conditions if you are to have the rational disposition you ought, for at least some specific rational requirements there is a reason to satisfy them. This would get us *Sometimes Normative*. We may also make a similar move to the one mentioned above that takes us from *Servanthood* to *Strong Servanthood*. That you ought to satisfy the rational disposition is itself, for each rational requirement, and because of the essential dependence and causal relation, a reason to satisfy that rational requirement. This gets us *Normativity of Rationality*.

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<sup>11</sup> Setting aside his reservation that ‘I know no principle that correctly specifies how normativity is transmitted from ends to means’ (Broome 2013: 200)

This argument has two important components: first, an appeal to what is constitutively necessary due to an essential relation and transmission of normativity on that basis; second, a *non-deductive* inference from the general to the particular of a contentious kind that I nevertheless hold can be a good inference when applied like this to normativity. In objecting to the second indirect strategy Broome objects to moves very similar to these components so I shall discuss them further below rather than here. In the meantime I finish here by noting that the defence of some variety of derivative normativity for rationality from a rational disposition being a best means remains, contrary to Broome's conclusion, a live argument—although subject, certainly, to further discussion of these controllable components.

### *Property of rationality argument*

In the second indirect strategy we assume that you ought to be rational in the sense of having the property of rationality (the property of satisfying all rational requirements) and then seek to derive that each rational requirement is a reason. Having the property of rationality means you satisfy each rational requirement. In this case the relation between rationality as a whole and the rational requirements is a logical rather than causal relation (as it was in the last case). The argument for *Normativity of Rationality* would run thus: since you ought to have the property of rationality and logically necessarily if you have that property you satisfy each rational requirement, so you have a reason to satisfy each rational requirement. This argument uses a principle of necessary inheritance,  $O(B) \wedge \Box(B \rightarrow A) \rightarrow O(A)$ , combined with a principle that oughts imply reasons.

Broome objects

the new pattern of deduction is questionable, for the same reason as End to Means Transmission on page 126 is questionable. Suppose you ought to buy a can of paint and decorate your kitchen. It follows by this pattern of deduction that you ought to buy a can of paint. But suppose you are not going to decorate your kitchen; you have no intention of doing so, and you will not do it. Then it seems obvious that there may be no reason for you to buy a can of paint. If you are not going to decorate your kitchen, it may be entirely pointless to buy one. This example suggests the pattern of deduction is invalid. (Broome 2013: 202)

This is closely related to Castañeda's paradox of the second best plan (Castañeda 1989) and the cases offered by Carlson (1999) and others. Cases of this kind pose a problem for principles such as the distributive principle,  $O(A \wedge B) \rightarrow O(A) \wedge O(B)$ , by making it appear that  $O(A \wedge B)$  can be true whilst  $O(A)$  is false. Grant for the sake of argument a teleological principle, that best is what ought to be, and the best outcome is got if  $A \wedge B$ , the second best if  $\neg A \wedge \neg B$ , and the worst if  $A \wedge \neg B$ . We are to suppose that the relevant agent could  $B$ , but will not, and given this, even if  $O(A \wedge B)$  is true, it looks like  $O(\neg A)$  is true and therefore  $O(A)$  is false.<sup>12</sup> Since necessarily  $A \wedge B \rightarrow A$  the cases can thereby be shown to pose problems for necessary inheritance,  $O(B) \wedge \Box(B \rightarrow A) \rightarrow O(A)$ , the pattern of deduction Broome is objecting to. I have a solution to this kind of problem and I shall sketch it briefly.

I think deontic reasoning is essentially practical, and that any deontic logic must reflect this fact. For brevity, I here consider deontic logic only in terms of moral 'oughts'. On

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<sup>12</sup> The final inference can be argued about, but  $\neg O(A)$  can perhaps be supported directly from  $A \wedge \neg B$  being worst, and in any case, the semantics I shall shortly outline make both  $O(\neg A)$  and  $\neg O(A)$  false so I shall not trouble with the status of the final inference.

pain of abandoning moral reasoning because utopia is inaccessible to us, seeking to choose morally proper futures from futures available to us is a task relative to a world at a time (and to an agent, but we do not need to worry about that relativity here). This truth means that our semantics for the ought operator, in using an accessibility relation over possible worlds, makes morally proper worlds those that are as they ought to be given where you are starting from, not as they ought to be in some absolute sense. If we don't do that, deontic logic won't reflect the fact that moral reasoning is often reasoning about how to make the best of a bad job when making the best of a bad job is what we must often do.

Morally proper worlds relative to a world at a time,  $W(t)$ , are worlds accessible from  $W(t)$  which are as they ought to be, given  $W(t)$ . All other worlds accessible from  $W(t)$  are fallen worlds relative to  $W(t)$ . We can also have a notion of conditionally morally proper worlds relative to  $W(t)$ . Consider worlds accessible from  $W(t)$  given that  $P$  is true. Conditionally morally proper worlds relative to  $W(t)$  and conditional on  $P$ , are morally proper worlds relative to  $W(t)|P$ .<sup>13</sup>

When we are considering what is true at  $W(t)$ ,  $Q$  true in all morally proper worlds accessible from  $W(t)$  means  $O(Q)$ <sup>14</sup> is true at  $W(t)$ .  $R$  true in all morally proper worlds accessible from  $W(t)|P$  means  $O(R)|P$  is true at  $W(t)$  and also that  $O(R)$  is true at  $W(t)|P$ .

If  $O(A \wedge B)$  is true at a world at a time,  $W(t)$ , then in every morally proper world accessible from  $W(t)$ ,  $A \wedge B$  is true, so  $A$  is true in each such world, so  $O(A)$ . What is now significant is that in every morally proper world accessible from  $W(t)$ ,  $B$  is true. So any world in which  $\neg B$  is true is not a morally proper world accessible from  $W(t)$ . Therefore  $W(t)|\neg B$  and its descendants are all fallen worlds. Since in all the descendants of the fallen worlds  $W(t)|\neg B$ , those in which  $\neg A$  is true are better than those in which  $A$  is true, in all the conditionally morally proper worlds accessible from  $W(t)|\neg B$ ,  $\neg A$  is true, therefore  $O(\neg A)|\neg B$  is true at  $W(t)$ , and  $O(\neg A)$  is at  $W(t)|\neg B$ .

So true at  $W(t)$  are  $O(A \wedge B)$ ,  $O(A)$ ,  $O(B)$ , and  $O(\neg A)|\neg B$ .  $O(\neg A)$  is not true, neither is  $\neg O(A)$ , although  $O(\neg A)|\neg B$  and  $\neg O(A)|\neg B$  are true. However, *neither* of the latter conflict with  $O(A)$  and so this does not undermine the principle  $O(A \wedge B) \rightarrow O(A) \wedge O(B)$ .

$O(\neg A)$  is made to seem true by conflating two distinct bases for action. In deciding what to do you must base it on everything that you know. If all you know is  $W(t)$ , then the only unconditional obligations that face you are  $O(A \wedge B)$ ,  $O(A)$ ,  $O(B)$ . When whether  $B$  is not under your control, and you happen to know that although regrettable,  $\neg B$  will be the case, then it is perfectly proper to base your action on  $W(t)|\neg B$  rather than  $W(t)$ . If you know  $\neg B$ , then you know that the morally proper worlds are unreachable, and so you must base your action on the conditionally or second best morally proper worlds. So you cease to be concerned with what is true at  $W(t)$ , and instead are concerned with what is true at

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<sup>13</sup> I think the general idea is clear, but this may need some clarification. To get  $W(t)|P$  we may need to consider the  $W(t)+P$  where  $+$  is an updating operator, usually conjunction except when some incompatibility holds between  $W(t)$  and  $P$ . The properties of a belief revision operator, such as the Alchourrón et al 1985 belief revision operator, might do the required job. When  $+$  is not conjunction it may be beneficial to remove the 'accessible from  $W(t)$ ' condition. There may be worlds in or accessible from  $W(t)+P$  which are in a distinct branch and inaccessible from  $W(t)$  itself, which get to be included in what is thought about when thinking of conditionalizing on  $P$  in order to embarrass the Distributive Principle. Extending  $W(t)|P$  in these ways would only be to my advantage, I think, but introduces complicating issues about  $+$  which need not be addressed for the success of my defence. There are also some technical issues in defining the distinction between  $W(t)$  and  $W(t)|P$  when  $P$  is true at the actual world.

<sup>14</sup> I omit from the notation the conditioning on  $W(t)$  because it is uniform throughout so just adds notational clutter.

$W(t)|\neg B$ . Not everything true at  $W(t)$  is true at  $W(t)|\neg B$ . Since in all worlds accessible from  $W(t)|\neg B$ ,  $\neg B$  is true, then  $A \wedge B$  is false in all such worlds, and so  $\neg O(A \wedge B)$  is true for  $W(t)|\neg B$ . Likewise, both  $A$  and  $B$  are false in all the conditionally morally proper worlds so  $\neg O(A)$  and  $\neg O(B)$  are true at  $W(t)|\neg B$ , as are  $O(\neg A)$ ,  $O(\neg B)$  and  $O(\neg A \wedge \neg B)$ . So the unconditional obligations for  $W(t)|\neg B$  mean you ought not to  $A$ .

However, when whether  $B$  is under your control, the situation is quite different. Just because you are not going to bring  $B$  about doesn't mean that now you unconditionally ought not to  $A$ , because your basis for action and therefore decision is  $W(t)$ , not  $W(t)|\neg B$ , and the difference is within your control. You can't excuse yourself from unconditional obligations by substituting merely conditional obligations for unconditional ones if discharging the condition is under your power. For that would amount to a permanent get out of jail free card: 'yes, but *given* that I don't do what I ought today, I ought to do whatever I like today, and since as a matter of fact I'm not going to do what I ought, then I ought to do what I like today'.

So just because you know you won't  $B$  doesn't mean it ceases to be the fact that you ought to  $A$ . That remains true. But since you know you won't  $B$ , then your decision to act is conditionalised on that fact. That doesn't get you off the hook. You are still at the world  $W(t)$  and what is true there remains that you ought to  $A$  and you ought to  $B$ . Since you are choosing not to  $B$  you are choosing not to do what you ought, and instead have chosen to substitute the decision situation  $W(t)|\neg B$  for the actual situation  $W(t)$ . For that situation, there remain things that you ought or ought not to do, but making substitution, or mistaking such a situation for your actual situation, does not negate the truths of what you ought to do. Rather, this possibility of deciding on the basis of  $W(t)|\neg B$  rather than  $W(t)$  is just a consequence of the more general problem of starting out from morally imperfect worlds and from uncertainty. Our decisions are conditionalised on who, when and where we are, and on what we know or believe, and likewise are blame and responsibility. What ought to be done is similarly conditionalised relative to the particular time of action in the morally imperfect world we inhabit. In recognising these facts it may seem that a consequence is that choosing the better option given we won't do what we ought implies we ought not do what we ought. I think I have shown that to be a mere seeming driven by conflating the two distinct bases for action,  $W(t)$  and  $W(t)|\neg B$ .

Now if we apply this to Broome's objection it fails for the reasons just given (taking 'A' to stand for buying paint and 'B' to stand for decorating the kitchen). You ought to buy the paint given the actual situation at the time and so have a reason to. It is also true that at the conditionally morally proper worlds accessible from one in which you don't decorate the kitchen you don't buy the paint. So you ought not to buy it. But this last is in fact a conditional ought ( $O(\text{not buy paint})|\text{not decorate}$ ) and so does not conflict with the first ought, which is not conditional. Any lack of reason this entails is similarly conditional. Hence the example is not a counter-example to the principle of necessary inheritance used by the argument for Normativity of Rationality and it does not show the argument invalid either.

I have gone over this very quickly. I think it is clear that the counter-examples Broome offers to *Logical Inheritance* (Broome 2013:121), *Necessary Inheritance* and *Ends to Means Transmission* (Broome 2013:126) share in the pattern of the decoration example and so can be answered in the same way. I concede that more work would be necessary to establish how exactly those principles pan out in this kind of conditional deontic logic. Nevertheless, it is in part because of this resource that I am much more sanguine than Broome about the possibility of establishing true principles of the transmission of normativity. Such principles constitute part of the first of the two important components

of the argument given at the end of the last section, where arguably I made use of a principle of necessary inheritance.

The main objection Broome has to the property of rationality argument is that he can see no satisfactory way of arguing for the premise that you ought to be rational....on derivative grounds (Broome 2013:202).

We need to show that being rational 'is effective at satisfying requirements that stem from other sources' (Broome 2013:202). The dialectic is a little obscure at this point since he raises the contrast of a rational disposition being a best means and conjoins the point that it is impossible for us to have the property of rationality with the point (deployed also against the direct strategy) that sometimes satisfying a rational requirement is ineffective because you are, for example, ill-informed. I take it there are three separate objections here, the first directly against the premiss that we ought to be rational and the second and third against being able to get that premiss on derivative grounds. The first is that ought implies can but we cannot be rational. The second is that something impossible cannot be a means at all. The third is that because sometimes satisfying a rational requirement is ineffective but satisfying all rational requirements is entailed by being rational, being rational cannot be the best means.

The first two objections seem cogent to me but third does not because the best means need not be a perfect means. It may be that I'm missing something of Broome's dialectic here, but in any case I agree with the conclusion that it is not true that we ought to be rational in this sense of rational.

We shall now turn to the final property of rationality argument that Broome considers in aid of Normativity of Rationality. This is of particular interest to me because the final argument is similar to my outline argument for *Strong Servanthood* and shows how my argument may be embarrassed.

The argument Broome considers is this:

being rational entails satisfying a number of individual requirements of rationality that you have derivative reasons to satisfy. Surely you have some reason to have a property that entails your satisfying some requirements that you have a reason to satisfy. So ... we ... conclude that you have a reason to be rational (Broome 2013:203)

We then go on to infer that since you have a reason to be rational, and since logically necessarily if you are rational you satisfy each rational requirement, so you have a reason to satisfy each rational requirement. This last inference is an application of a principle of logical inheritance which here Broome seems to allow, presumably for the sake of argument given his earlier rejections of Logical Inheritance (Broome 2013:121) and a similar principle of transmission earlier in the same section (Broome 2013:202).

He rejects this argument as 'simple trickery' (Broome 2013:203).

The first step of the argument is to derive this conclusion [you have a reason to have the property of rationality] from the premise that you have a reason to satisfy some, but not all, of the individual requirements.... The next stage is to derive from this the conclusion that you have a reason to satisfy each of the individual requirements. ...

So [for example] in two steps we derive the conclusion that you have a reason to satisfy [a certain requirement] from the premise that you have a reason to satisfy some other requirements that do not include it. Obviously that cannot be done. So the argument must be invalid.

I agree this is not valid. Let us now turn to consider how this may embarrass me.

The strongest variety of *Strong Servanthood* that I think I can argue for is one in which we ought to be rational in a different sense from Broome's, namely, that for each instance of a rational requirement as it actually arises, unless we know that this is one of the special cases in which we ought to be irrational (e.g. Parfit 1987, Broome 2013:192), that rational requirement is a reason. This variety is very close to Broome's *Normativity of Rationality*. The difference is mainly that by being rational I mean something local and psychologically possible, conforming to each rational requirement as it actually arises, rather than the global but psychologically impossible property considered by Broome.

My argument for the strongest variety of Servanthood starts from the explanation I gave above of why harmony makes being rational conditionally instrumental in doing what we ought and infers from this that generally we ought to be rational. I now make essentially the same kind of non-deductive inference that was the second important component of the argument at the end of the last section. From this generality I infer a reason to conform to each particular case of a rational requirement as it arises (except for special cases where you know you ought to be irrational).

So my argument starts bottom up by going from derivative reasons for specific rational requirements (when they are instrumental in doing what we ought when we are as we ought to be) to a conclusion of a general obligation to conform to rationality (via harmony) and then back down again to saying this general obligation is itself a reason to conform to *each* rational requirement (except for aforementioned special cases), making each rational requirement a reason. This means that some rational requirements which had no derivative reasons now have indirect reasons via the general obligation. If this is really right then it doesn't establish only *Sometimes Normative* but also derivatively establishes *Strongest Servanthood*. But of course, this argument has, in outline, the same two step form that Broome is faulting as being simple trickery.

I am not going to try to defend my argument at length here: rather, I shall discuss the dialectical situation. A great deal depends upon exactly how that outline is filled in. It certainly depends on the detail of the substance such as the nature of harmony and whether and how the merely conditional fact of harmony can go beyond explaining the relation of rationality to directive normativity (the weaker version of *Servanthood*) and underpin a general obligation to be rational. This also involves some kind of appeal to transmission of normativity from ends to means and presently, although we may be confident of it in specific cases, we lack a general theoretical understanding.

It also depends on controversial principles of normative inference. In the first step it depends in part on a common problem in normativity, whether when certain instances of a type are obliged the type in general is obliged. For example, we are certainly obliged to stop at stop signs when not stopping would cause an accident. Does this mean in general we should stop at them? If we say yes, for example, because of the risk, we are appealing to the kind of non-deductive inference I wish to apply. The second step is the same kind of inference that I called the second important component in the argument at the end of the last section. Again, this depends on another common problem in normativity of whether and why, when there is a general obligation, it applies to instances in which the reasons for the general obligation seem not to apply. For example, in rule utilitarianism we have the problem of explaining why the obligation to follow the rule because in general it leads to best results obliges us to follow it in specific instances where it doesn't.

Finally, I concede that it might be simple trickery. It is admittedly fishy since I seem to have bootstrapped reasons out of almost nowhere. Can a derivative general obligation to be rational really be, itself, a reason to conform to a rational requirement which, apart

from this, there is no reason to conform to? Nevertheless, if I must concede this it is not a disaster for me, since I can retreat to *Weak Servanthood* which achieves most of what I wish to achieve.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Broome's and my ambitions here may be very different. I can certainly see why he might regard *Weak Servanthood* as a scepticism about the normativity of rationality (Broome 2013:204). I do not think Broome could regard *Strong Servanthood* as a scepticism and its strongest variety would achieve a great deal of what Broome wants for *Normativity of Rationality*. Nevertheless, and as we have seen, absent a good defence of some controversial and potentially problematic principles of normative inference, the argument for *Strong Servanthood* is incomplete.

More generally, in his arguments against rationality being derivatively normative, Broome illuminates important kinds of problems for my type of position about the normativity of rationality, which is essentially instrumentalist. Broome considers attempts to defend such instrumentalism that appeal mainly to formal principles. He shows that such defences face serious difficulties. To my mind, in so doing he shows why any successful instrumentalism cannot rely only or mainly on these formal principles. We have seen that to rebut several of his objections I have had to appeal to the substance of rationality. Rebuttal alone is, of course, not a positive argument for instrumentalism. We have also seen in the Bayesian case something of a positive argument emerge in my second point. And then, at the end of the section on the argument from a rational disposition, I showed a positive argument that is, I think, live. So I think I have shown something of the potential for instrumentalism to ground a positive defence in the substance of rationality. I cannot show it here but I also hope I have given something of a flavour of the ways in which *Servanthood* does ground itself in that substance.

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