

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Practical Reason

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Over the last several decades, questions about practical reason have come to occupy center stage in ethics and metaethics. While such questions received considerable attention from some figures in the history of philosophy (most notably, Aristotle, Hume, and Kant, whose ideas continue to shape contemporary work), philosophical reflection on practical reason took on a life of its own in the second half of the 20th century. This development is owed in large part to now classic work on practical reason by Elizabeth Anscombe in the 1950s, Donald Davidson from the 1960s, Philippa Foot, Thomas Nagel, and Bernard Williams in the 1970s, Christine Korsgaard and John McDowell in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, and Derek Parfit, T. M. Scanlon, John Broome, Jonathan Dancy, Michael Bratman, Michael Smith, and Joseph Raz in the 1980s through to the present.¹ The work of these figures stimulated research on many new issues concerning reasons, reasoning, the faculty of Reason, and rationality, issues which the current generation of thinkers now explores systematically in their own right. Arguably some of the most exciting work being done in ethics and metaethics today concerns these issues. This rich, diverse, and penetrating work gives rise to a distinctive area of inquiry that we propose to call the *philosophy of practical reason*.

The aim of this handbook is to provide a survey of research in the philosophy of practical reason, with some attention to the history of philosophy, but with an overall focus on the contemporary analytic tradition. We conceived of it as a *teaching* volume, something that might be suitable for advanced undergraduates and graduate students in philosophy, and each contribution has been written with that audience in mind. The volume fills a surprising lacuna in the literature: there has so far been no dedicated handbook on the philosophical study of practical reason.² Besides providing overviews of many central topics in the field, however, it also collects cutting-edge research drawn from both senior figures and younger scholars. Our approach has been to give the contributors a significant degree of freedom in pursuing their topics; we allowed them to work out new ideas rather than just assigning them topics and asking for guides to the existing literature. As a result, much new territory has been staked out in the course of providing a comprehensive map of a large and varied field.

Because of the vast scale of the territory surveyed within these pages, in this Introduction we can give only a cursory overview of the field and describe the contributions of the authors within the context of that overview. An Appendix at the end of the book provides a guide to further reading with advice about where to look for specific topics not covered by this volume.

¹ See especially Anscombe (1957), Davidson (1963, 1970), Foot (1972a, 1972b), Nagel (1970, 1986), Williams (1979/1981), Korsgaard (1986, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2008, 2009a), McDowell (1978, 1979, 1995, 1998), Parfit (1997, 2001, 2011, 2017), Scanlon (1998, 2007), Broome (1999, 2005, 2007a, 2007b), Bratman (1987, 1999, 2018), Dancy (2000, 2004, 2018), Smith (1994, 1995, 2004), and Raz (2002, 2011)

² The closest volumes are Star (2018) and Mele and Rawling (2004). The first covers reasons and normativity in general (including epistemic and aesthetic normativity). The second covers rationality in general; its date of publication means that it does not cover significant recent work. We recommend both as companions to our volume.

I. What is the Philosophy of Practical Reason?

The philosophy of practical reason has its roots in decades of scattered work originally written within more established areas of philosophy, especially action theory, ethics, metaethics, philosophy of mind, moral psychology and the theory of rationality. The questions it asks – what is a reason? what is it to act for a reason? what is it to be rational? to give just a few examples – beg for investigation across a range of traditional areas of philosophy. We suggest that the philosophy of practical reason is hence best characterized as a *question-driven* domain of inquiry.

In particular, we suggest that the field can be roughly characterized by its concern with questions belonging to one of three related branches of inquiry: 1) the philosophy of practical reason as action theory, philosophy of mind, or moral psychology, 2) the philosophy of practical reason as meta-normative or normative/ethical inquiry, and 3) the philosophy of practical reason as a theory of rationality. Carving up the domain in this way is in some ways arbitrary, but it lends a useful structure by which we can provide an overview of the subject, highlight many central issues within it, and systematize our authors' rich and diverse contributions. Our expectation is that as this fast-evolving field continues to develop, so too will salutary ways of conceptualizing and organizing new work within it.

1. *The Philosophy of Practical Reason as the Philosophy of Action, Mind, or Moral Psychology*

Suppose your nemesis has recently won an accolade and you send him your congratulations. Your friend asks you why you are congratulating someone who has been the bane of your existence. You say: 'It was the decent thing to do.' Here you are seeking to describe the reason *for which* you acted. The reason for which you acted is, to a first approximation, the consideration you would cite in a cool moment when asked why you did something. It explains, by your lights, why you did what you did, along with what you would consider to be a justification for your action. Sometimes, however, the consideration that you believe motivated you to act may not be what in fact motivated your action. You might, for example, later go to your therapist and describe your mixed feelings about the situation, and your therapist might then tell you that although you believed you were motivated by decency, in fact you were motivated by your desire to be liked, even by someone who has treated you badly. Both types of reasons are often lumped together as 'motivating reasons', reasons that figure in rationalizing explanations of why you did what you did.

When practical reasons are understood as motivating reasons, the study of practical reason becomes the study of the objects and operations of a *mental faculty*; these include reasoning, intending, acting, and desiring for reasons. Hence this first branch of the philosophy of practical reason interacts heavily with the philosophy of mind, moral psychology and action theory, pondering questions such as:

- What is the nature of motivating reasons? Are they psychological states? If so, which ones are fundamental? If not, what else could motivating reasons be?
- What is practical reasoning, and how is it related to theoretical reasoning? Is it even possible for 'reason' to be practical?
- What happens when someone acts?

- What is the relationship between practical reasons, intentional action, and autonomy?

While the pre-20th century history of philosophy contained important answers to some of these questions, focused research into them took off in the mid-20th century, owing to the influence of Elizabeth Anscombe (especially her 1957 book *Intention*) and Donald Davidson (especially his 1963 paper ‘Actions, Reasons, and Causes’). These two figures had importantly different visions of the proper explanation of rational action. Anscombe argued that there is a distinctive sense in which we can ask ‘why’ someone did something, and that this ‘why’ question could be properly answered only by citing reasons, not causes. Davidson, in response, defended with vigor a causal approach to reasons-explanations of action. Two traditions emerged from their classic work which continue to enjoy adherents today, with figures like Sebastian Rödl (2007), Michael Thompson (2008), and Candace Vogler (2002) developing views that vindicate different themes from Anscombe, and a long list of researchers in philosophy of mind either defending Davidson’s ‘belief-desire’ action theory (see e.g. Dretske (1988), Mele (1992, 2003) and Sinhababu (2017)) or extending and reworking it in key ways (see e.g. Bratman (1987)).

Other controversies in this area have older roots. Another debate, related to the previous one but worth distinguishing, is the debate between Humeans and anti-Humeans about motivation.³ For Humeans, *desire* is the fundamental motivating state. Humeans accept the Davidsonian claim that desires need to be informed by beliefs in order to produce actions, but they think that only desires can be *intrinsically* motivating. Anti-Humeans reject these claims. At a minimum, they claim that beliefs can be motivating states in their own right, and that motivation may not require desire in a sense that can be identified independently of the agent’s beliefs about what ought to be done (Nagel 1970). Anti-Humeans need not side with Anscombe about reasons-explanations: they can allow that action remains grounded in a causal relation between the agent’s beliefs and her bodily movements. But Anti-Humeans can agree with Anscombe that reasons-explanations are different in kind from causal explanations. Kant, for instance, treated desires as parts of the natural order, but he thought that practical reason stood at a reflective distance from the natural order, operating autonomously to produce full-blooded action. This picture of motivation—as well as a further Kantian view about normativity—has become associated with Korsgaard, who influentially defended it in her (1986) and (1996b).

In addition to these two long-standing debates, new paradigms have emerged in the first branch of the philosophy of practical reason. For example, after Dancy’s (2000) opposition to the psychologism about motivating reasons assumed by the Davidsonian tradition, many philosophers of practical reason have been converted to the view that motivating reasons are non-psychological entities such as facts, propositions, or states of affairs. To take another example, there have recently been revivals of the topic of practical reasoning by Richardson (1994), Millgram (2001), Wallace (2001), and Broome (2013). Some related areas of recent activity concern (i) the relationship between practical and theoretical reasoning (see Wallace (2001), Setiya (2007), Bratman (2009a), and Dancy (2018)) and the question of whether acting for a reason is, in part or in whole, an *intellectual* achievement (see Fix (2018) for a pathbreaking discussion), and (ii) the nature and features of the faculty of practical reason (see Raz (2002, 2011) and Korsgaard (2008, 2009a, 2009b)). There is much else in this first branch that we do not try to cover in this volume, though the Appendix provides a guide to further literature, and we will return to these issues in describing the contributions to the volume in Part II.

³ This debate should be distinguished from a different Humeanism/anti-Humeanism debate about *normative* reasons that we will discuss in the next section.

2. *The Philosophy of Practical Reason as Metaethics and Ethics*

In contrast to the concept of a motivating practical reason, there is the concept of a *normative* practical reason. This concept enables us to investigate the reasons that *count in favor* of acts and motivational attitudes like desire and intention. Suppose your dentist tells you that the soft tissue inside your root canal is inflamed and that you will need to have a root canal procedure. The inflammation of your soft tissue is a normative reason for you to have the operation – it counts in favor of your having it.

Normative reasons justify our actions. They are also in play when we are open to criticism for failing to act in certain ways (e.g., for not getting a root canal operation). Although normative reasons should be distinguished from motivating reasons, it is sometimes true that we are motivated by normative reasons. If you are motivated by the normative reasons you possess and do what they favor doing, you are *substantively rational* – you have recognized and responded to your normative reasons.

Normative reasons are determinants of how we should live. The second branch of the philosophy of practical reason is dedicated to the study of practical reasons in this sense. This branch interacts heavily with ethics and metaethics, examining questions such as the following:

- *Metaphysical questions:*

- What is the nature of normative practical reasons? What *makes* something a normative reason? What, exactly, is normativity? What is the role of agency in understanding normative reasons? Can normative reasons be privately held?
- What is the relationship between normative practical reasons and other normative practical phenomena such as *value* and *obligation*? Do reasons explain values and obligations? Or are reasons explained in terms of more fundamental normative phenomena?
- How do normative reasons justify action? What are the features of choice contexts through which normative reasons determine what we should do?

- *High-level substantive questions:*

- Are normative practical reasons explained by *principles*? Or are reasons holistic in a way that undermines principles?
- Do reasons have different kinds of normative weight? For example, might normative reasons have both *requiring* weight and *recommending* weight? How can different kinds of reasons be ‘put together’ to yield all-things-considered conclusions about what one should do?
- Is choice *determined* by the balance of objective, value-based reasons, or is there underdetermination in what these reasons demand, creating space for the will or the self to make reasons of its own?

Although the first branch we discussed was also the first to be explored systematically in the 20th century, it is really the growth of this second branch beginning in the 1970s and exploding in the 1990s and 2000s that established the philosophy of practical reason as a central area of philosophical inquiry in its own right, and indeed among the most prominent of 21st century research areas.

There is an interesting story behind this rise, which involves ethics being virtually colonized by work belonging to this second branch, so that today research on practical reason assumes centrality in both of the traditional fields of ethics and metaethics. Beginning in the 1970s, ethics and metaethics came to be framed in the ideology of reasons by many philosophers. Initially, the relationship between ethics and practical reason was fraught: an appeal to a broadly Humean view of normative reasons was used to question the normativity of morality by Foot (1972a), Mackie (1977), and Williams (1979). While Korsgaard (1986, 1995) and Smith (1994, 1995) pushed back against Humean accounts of normativity and defended the categorical normativity of morality, both took practical reason to have explanatory priority over morality.⁴ But a key reversal took place beginning in the late 1990s with the work of Parfit (1997) and Scanlon (1998). Their common-sense methodology led back to the view that ethics is an evident source of practical reasons in its own right, a view which had not been so dominant since the intuitionist era of British moral philosophy from Sidgwick to Ewing. This methodology has been accepted even by philosophers who believe—*contra* Parfit and Scanlon—that normative reasons have as their source not only ethical facts but also volitional activities such as commitments. *Hybrid voluntarists* such as Chang (2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2017), for example, accept both the objective moral reasons of common sense and reasons grounded in commitments of the self.

As this little story suggests, a central controversy in the second branch concerns the relationship between normative reasons and motivation. One can usefully frame this debate as a debate about whether normative reasons can be explained (partially or fully) in terms of actual or counterfactual facts about agents' desires or other motivating states.⁵ Accordingly, some Humeans (e.g., Schroeder (2007)) claim that the fact that there is a normative reason for an agent A to ϕ is explained by the fact that ϕ -ing would help to fulfil some of A's desires; other Humeans (e.g., Brandt (1979)) claim that the fact that there is a normative reason for A to ϕ is explained by the fact that ϕ -ing would promote certain *idealized* desires that A *would* have under certain conditions. There is then a variety of ways of rejecting Humeanism. In starkest opposition are Parfit and Scanlon, who deny that *any* facts about normative reasons are explained by motivating states, and indeed think that there can be no metaphysical explanation of normative reasons in non-normative terms. But there are other non-Humeans who are less starkly opposed, or who at least have a related explanatory agenda. Hybrid voluntarists, for example, will allow that *some* normative reasons are explained by internal volitional states. Some Kantians (e.g., Korsgaard) will agree with Parfit and Scanlon that mere desires do not generate normative reasons, but will not follow that pair in holding that normative reasons lack further meta-normative explanation: instead, they will seek to explain normativity by appealing to the constitutive principles of the mental faculty of

⁴ There were two other prominent contributors between the 1970s and 1990s—Jonathan Dancy (1993) and John McDowell (1978, 1995, 1998)—who rejected the Humean approach without accepting anything like the Kantian internalism of Korsgaard and Smith, with Dancy favouring an intuitionist, non-naturalist realism (see Dancy (2006)) and McDowell favoring a virtue-based, Aristotelian approach (see 'Virtue and Reason' in McDowell 1998). Note also that Foot eventually abandoned the apparently Humean view in her earlier work with a turn to an Aristotelian approach in Foot (1978, 2001).

⁵ There are several different kinds of 'explanation' that might be given here, it is worth noting. Much recent literature focuses on metaphysical explanations: this literature takes it for granted that there are *facts* about reasons, and the question is to understand whether and how these facts might be *grounded* or *analysed* in terms of facts about motivation. But there are other explanations one could seek, and that some theorists do seek. One might, for example, seek a *normative* explanation of facts about normative reasons in terms of facts about desires. Alternatively, one might engage in conceptual or linguistic ascent, and examine whether the *concept* of a normative reason or the *word* 'reason' used normatively can be *conceptually* or *semantically* explained in terms of concepts or language picking out or expressing motivating states.

practical reason. Hence Kantians and Humeans exemplify a broader approach sometimes called *internalism* about normative reasons, which seeks to understand normative reasons in terms of mental phenomena or their constitutive normativity.⁶

It is worth remarking briefly on the arguments that structure the Humeanism/anti-Humeanism controversy in the second branch. Perhaps the central argument for Humeanism about normative reasons is an argument from *naturalism*: according to Schroeder (2007), for example, this view provides the best account of how the normative is grounded in the natural, and hence is essential for securing the view that nature is all that fundamentally exists. Opponents of Humeanism, by contrast, often suggest that it pays far too high a price for its naturalistic credentials. In particular, both non-naturalists like Parfit and Scanlon and Kantians like Korsgaard argue that Humeanism fails to explain the reason-giving power of morality, and even the reason-giving power of *prudence* (or *objective self-interest*). While some Humeans claim that they can vindicate our intuitions about the normativity of morality and prudence (see Schroeder (2007)), others are willing to pay the price: they *explain away* some intuitions (see, e.g., Street (2009)) or draw attention to opposing aspects of commonsense thought (see, e.g., Manne (2014)), thereby returning to a view held earlier by Foot (1972a-b). Harkening back to Mackie (1977), Humeans may also push back against the alleged intuitive credentials of non-naturalism, noting that any common-sense picture of reality will include no mysterious third realm populated by insubstantial normative truths. Kantians then seek to stand above this fray, arguing that we can vindicate both case-based intuitions and commonsense metaphysics without being Humeans: the constitutive principles of practical reason have categorical authority deriving from our distinctive nature as autonomous beings.

While the debate about the relationship between reasons and motivation is especially prominent in the literature, there are other angles from which the second branch studies normative reasons. Many theorists have been interested in the relationship between normative reasons and other normative categories, such as *value* and *obligation*. Here one important debate is between the *Reasons First* approach to normativity,⁷ which seeks to understand all normativity in terms of reasons, and alternatives that either prioritize some other normative category (e.g., value), or deny priority to any category. This debate crosscuts the controversies about normativity and motivation. Hence Reasons Firsters include both Humeans like Schroeder as well as anti-Humeans like Scanlon. Besides this debate, recent theorists have also been interested in other metaphysical

⁶ These approaches are also sometimes put under the umbrella of *constructivism* about normative reasons, since they can be viewed as seeking to build facts about reasons out of facts about either desires or the constitutive principles of the faculty of practical reason; see Street (2008) for this way of presenting the terrain. Not all Kantians, however, see their project as constructivist (or at least as *automatically* constructivist); see, for example, Skorupski (2010, 2017) and Markovits (2014), and Markovits's discussion of constructivism with Walden in this volume.

There are other schemes of classification worth knowing about. Sometimes the debate between Humeans and Parfit-style anti-Humeans is examined under the heading of *Subjectivism* vs. *Objectivism*. But this alternative scheme of classification is not always used to distinguish between different views about the *metaphysical priority* between reasons and motivation. It is sometimes used to identify different views about what kinds of things can *give* or *be* reasons. Hence some Subjectivists—e.g., Sobel in his contribution below—are primarily interested in arguing that reasons are all ultimately *given* by subjective states rather than objective features of the world. They may then leave open whether the reason-for relation can be metaphysically analysed.

⁷ 'Reasons First' is sometimes used to refer to a stronger view held by Parfit and Scanlon, according to which reasons (a) explain all normativity and (b) admit of no further explanation in naturalistic terms. But owing to the rise of views like Mark Schroeder's, 'Reasons First' has recently been used to refer only to the view that reasons are basic within the normative domain (where it is left open whether they admit of naturalistic grounding).

questions about normative reasons, investigating, for example, what kinds of things can stand in reason-relations (e.g., states of affairs, propositions, or mental states).

While the most striking divisions in the literature are along broadly metaphysical lines, there are other important divisions in the first branch that instead reflect different answers to more abstract first-order questions about practical reasons. Some of these divisions are connected to familiar ones in moral philosophy (most centrally, consequentialism vs. deontology vs. virtue ethics).⁸ But many crosscut familiar divisions in first-order ethical theory. There are enough issues under this heading to justify their own handbook. But a few important divisions reflect different answers to questions about:

- (i) the relationship between reasons and *principles*;
- (ii) how to understand the *weight* and *force* of normative practical reasons;
- (iii) the status of *pluralism* about normative practical reasons and practical ‘oughts’;
- (iv) the *determinacy* of practical reasons and their *comparability*;

Under heading (i) is the dispute between *particularists* about reasons like Dancy (2004) who deny that reasons are underwritten by principles, and *principled* theorists like Kant and Scanlon. A related issue under heading (ii) is whether reasons have ‘atomistic’ weights—i.e., each reason can be assigned a fixed weight, so that what there is overall reason to do is determined by balancing these weights against each other—or whether the weight of a reason is a *holistic* matter (*atomism vs. holism about reasons*).⁹

A different issue under heading (ii) concerns the kind(s) of *force* that normative reasons have. Scanlon (1998) had influentially suggested that reasons are considerations that *count in favor* of acts and attitudes. The notion of favoring seems to contrast with what Dancy (2004) called *peremptory* normative concepts like *obligation* and *requirement*. It is unclear how to explain one kind of normative force in terms of the other, raising the question of whether it might be better to think of reasons as having two kinds of normative force, as Gert (2007) has suggested. Whether we should follow Gert in treating this distinction as basic, and how more generally we should understand the distinction, are important questions in the background of several debates in the philosophy of practical reason.

In addition to examining whether there are fundamentally different kinds of normative *force*, we might also consider whether there are fundamentally different *flavors* of practical normativity. We might, for example, wonder whether the distinction between prudential and moral reasons is a fundamental joint in practical reality; we might also wonder about whether there other kinds of reasons for action connected with non-moral and non-prudential values (e.g., reasons for action grounded in aesthetic value). If we follow a commonsense approach and treat all the intuitively significant factors that weigh with us as good candidates for being genuine reasons, it may appear that pluralism is forced upon us. Yet it may also seem there must be an overarching standard of comparison if we are to reach verdicts about what we have *most reason* to do. These puzzles about the plurality and comparability of practical reasons generate further important fault lines in the literature. For a stark contrast on these issues, one can compare Copp’s contribution to this volume with Chang (2004a-b, 2015).

⁸ See Korsgaard (1996b) and Schapiro (2001) for rich, historically grounded discussions of the relationship between conceptions of agency and moral theories.

⁹ For some important discussions after Dancy (2004), see Schroeder (2011) and the Introduction and papers in Lord and Maguire (2016).

Even if reasons can always be compared, we are left with the question of whether reason can always reach action-guiding verdicts. Some have taken pluralism to expose the limits of practical reason and the indeterminacy of practical obligation. Perhaps standard forms of rational choice theory cannot make room for ‘transformative’ choices (Paul 2014) or any rational theory must make room for our responding to vaguely-formed, inchoate, ‘proleptic’ reasons (Callard 2018). Others have rejected pluralism precisely because of their optimism about reason’s power to determine action-guiding verdicts. Yet others believe that pluralism is no threat to the determinacy of practical reason. And still others—including one of us—have suggested that determinate verdicts can sometimes only be achieved by the intervention of the will: to resolve a hard choice, one must *create* new practical reasons. These disagreements have played out for several decades and continue to represent hotspots of research.¹⁰

3. *The Philosophy of Practical Reason as Theory of Rationality*

Practical reason can be approached from a third angle. Suppose you are engaged in a game of chess. Your opponent has just put you in check. It is natural to say here that you have a reason to move out of check. You are justified in moving out of check, but not in the same sense in which you are justified in having a root canal. Your ‘justification’ for moving your king is *relativized* to the practice of chess. Now consider instead the activity of thinking or deliberating about what to do. Like chess, this activity has certain associated rules and standards. When your practical deliberation is governed according to these rules of the game, we can call it ‘structurally rational’ (Scanlon 2007). If you want to kill your enemy and believe that poison will do the trick, then you are required by structural rationality to form an intention to get some poison (or give up one of your other attitudes). While you may be ‘rationally required’ to get the poison, one might think that you don’t have a normative reason to get some, since poisoning your enemy is not something that there is any good reason to do.

The third branch of the philosophy of practical reason is dedicated to questions about *practical rationality* in the structural, not substantive, sense. Recall that you are substantively rational if you recognize and respond to your normative reasons. By contrast, you are structurally rational if you follow the rules governing movements of your mind, from one attitude to another, and from certain attitudes, like intention, to action. This branch interacts heavily with philosophical work on the mental faculty of rationality (including its epistemic side), and some of the questions it investigates include:

- What are the requirements of structural rationality? Is there any normative reason to obey these requirements?
- Are the requirements of structural *practical* rationality derived from those of structural *epistemic* rationality? Which requirements are the most basic? Can all requirements be explained in terms of instrumental rationality?
- Is being moral a rational requirement?

Scanlon (1998: Ch.1) argued that challenges to the idea that morality as a source of normative reasons tend to rest on a confusion between what is a good reason and what is required by

¹⁰ For an early effort to take stock and collect work on these issues as well as the issues described in the previous paragraph, see Chang (1997).

rationality.¹¹ Morality may be a source of good reasons even if we are not rationally required to be moral, or irrational for being immoral. While this distinction between good reasons and rationality may initially sound surprising, it can be easily appreciated by reflecting on examples from other normative domains. Consider the epistemic domain. If there exists a proof of some theorem from some true axioms, there is a clear sense in which there is a *conclusive reason* to believe the theorem. But if the proof is sufficiently complex and the theorem is sufficiently unobvious, there may be nothing *irrational* in failing to believe the theorem even if one believes the axioms.

Around the same time Scanlon made this point, a related distinction was drawn by John Broome (1999), who separated rationality as a source of *coherence requirements* on sets of attitudes and responsiveness to reasons for particular attitudes. Coherence requirements include what Broome calls ‘Enkrasia’, which requires one to avoid the akratic combination of believing that one ought to ϕ while failing to intend to ϕ . He also applied this approach to explain the *instrumental* irrationality involved in failing to intend to take what one believes to be the necessary means to one’s ends, and was followed by Wallace (2001), Way (2010), and others.¹² While Kolodny (2005) challenged Broome’s claim that rationality only requires certain *combinations* of attitudes and argued that rationality requires one to resolve incoherence in specific ways, he maintained the Scanlonian distinction between questions of reasons and questions of rationality; indeed, he called the normative authority of rationality into question (see also Kolodny (2007)). The importance of the Broome-Scanlon distinction was also recognized by several other influential philosophers of practical reason (see Dancy (2000), Parfit (2001, 2011), Raz (2005, 2011), and Bratman (2009b, 2018)), which helped to hasten the separation of research on rational requirements and research on normative practical reasons. While some have recently argued that the intuitive distinction between reasons and rationality doesn’t motivate free-floating coherence requirements (see Kiesewetter (2017) and Lord (2018)), the independent study of rationality remains alive and well.

There are many other issues that we would include within the philosophy of practical reason that are exciting **

II. A Guide to the Volume

We have structured the volume in light of the foregoing divisions of the field. To help the reader, we will now walk through the volume and explain how to place the contributions in the map of the field just drawn.

1. *Foundational Matters*

The first part of the volume offers some big-picture reflections on what the philosophy of practical reason should be about, and on how best to answer its central questions. The main aim of T. M. Scanlon’s piece is to call attention to seven questions that he thinks any student of the philosophy of practical reason should think about and try to answer, and to call attention to some key

¹¹ He was echoing a thought that had appeared earlier in McDowell (1978, 1995)’s responses to Foot and Williams.

¹² While Broome is usually credited with the idea that rational requirements are at bottom coherence requirements on *sets* of attitudes rather than requirements to adopt particular attitudes, it can actually be traced back to Hill (1973), Greenspan (1975), and Dancy (1977) (who merely reaffirmed it in Dancy (2000)).

presuppositions of objectivist and subjectivist answers to these questions. Along the way, he also states and gives a brief defence of some of his own views. He begins with a brief defence of the cognitivist and realist approach he has long defended (see Scanlon (2013)). He then defends a distinction between reasons and rationality and uses this distinction to cast doubt on approaches that put rationality before reasons. Broome's contribution defends his version of the distinction between what reasons require and what rationality requires. He argues that normativity and rationality can only be brought together via a Kantian conception of rationality that he suggests is 'far from our ordinary concept of rationality'.

Peter Railton asks how it is possible for reason to be practical. He notes that there are two kinds of answers, guided by narrower and broader understandings of the phrase 'practical reason'. The narrow conception would seek to answer the question by showing how there is a distinctive form of *reasoning* which is practical; the broader conception would seek to answer it by showing how there is a *set of capacities* which work together to enable one to respond to normative reasons for action. Railton draws on the neglected areas of overlap between the Aristotelian, Kantian, and Humean traditions to defend a novel view about how reason (understood broadly) could be practical; he ends by suggesting that this view is confirmed by the empirical study of motivation and action.

The next three contributions, by Sally Haslanger, Elizabeth Anderson, and Ruth Chang offer alternative conceptions of the field. Scanlon, Broome, Railton and many others bracket the social role of practical reason and the context in which it occurs. Haslanger's piece pushes back against this kind of bracketing, noting that it represents a kind of ideal theory. She argues that creatures who can respond to reasons as dominant approaches assume already come to the table with certain social capacities, and suggests that '[t]hese more basic forms of sociality are where we might find the sources of our practical orientations; they are the social preconditions for much of our thinking and acting.' She then explores some ways in which practical reason can be understood to be socially and culturally conditioned, drawing on non-ideal theory in social and political philosophy. She ends with an alternative vision of the field. Anderson gives a more specific example of how to integrate philosophy of practical reason with non-ideal theory. She defends a *pragmatist* approach which conceives of normative judgments as tools for solving practical problems, tools which can be sharpened by experimentation and engagement with empirical data about the biases that shape our reasoning. Chang takes as her target the common idea, accepted by Scanlon, Broome, Railton and many others, that being practically (substantively) rational is largely a matter of recognizing and responding to reasons. She suggests that this understanding of rational agency is too passive and suggests a more 'activist' view of what it is to be a rational agent. According to such activist views, agents have the normative power to *create* reasons and thus to determine which reasons they have. Chang urges that such an activist picture is needed to explain how we can pay more than just lip service to the idea that we are the authors of our own lives.

2. *Practical Reason in the History of Philosophy*

The second part of the volume examines some figures and traditions that have contributed importantly to the study of practical reason. As the first contribution by David Wong illustrates, philosophical reflection on practical reason did not begin in the West. Wong surveys some relevant work in Chinese philosophy that was produced as early as the 6th century BCE from the Confucian and Daoist traditions. Both illustrate in different ways an overall approach that is *particularist*,

intuitionist, and *virtue-theoretic*; this fact undermines a narrative that would trace such ideas to Aristotle (4th century BCE).

The volume then travels forward in time and westward in space to ancient Greece, with a contribution by Agnes Callard on some of Aristotle's contributions to the study of practical reason. Callard focuses on Aristotle's account of practical deliberation. She argues that Aristotle had a *geometrical* model of practical deliberation: the agent begins deliberation with a fixed end and then works backwards to derive an action appropriate to this end in a way inspired by geometrical analysis. Along the way, she contrasts this model with *evaluative* models of deliberation from elsewhere in historical and contemporary philosophy.

Tamar Schapiro's contribution considers an evaluative approach from Kant which contrasts with the non-evaluative one Callard finds in Aristotle (though Schapiro's main foil for the Kantian approach is a *mechanistic* approach she locates in figures as otherwise different as Leibniz, Davidson, and Bratman). She argues that the difference between Kant's approach and mechanistic approaches owes to deeper difference in method, reflecting two conceptions of the purpose of the philosophy of practical reason. As Schapiro puts it, the point of a philosophy of practical reason according to the mechanistic tradition is to 'explain what happens when someone acts', whereas, according to the Kantian tradition, 'its aim is to show us what we are doing insofar as we are acting'.

Geoffrey Sayre-McCord then gives a striking reading of Hume on practical reason. While Hume is universally acknowledged as one of the most important philosophers to write about practical reason, he is often interpreted as placing severe limits on reason's capacity to guide action, either as denying outright that reason can be practical, or as advocating an instrumentalist picture on which reason's sole practical role is the coordination of means and ends. Against these interpretations, Sayre-McCord argues that Hume had a *robust* theory of practical reason: he allowed that reason can be practical in its own right and took its exercise to go beyond ensuring means-end coherence. Indeed, according to Sayre-McCord, Hume 'makes important room for our deliberating about what to do specifically in terms of what is right, permissible, valuable, or virtuous, and then acting accordingly as a result'.

The section closes in the mid-20th century, with a piece by Keshav Singh on insights into practical reason from a book that Davidson described as the most important work in the theory of action since Aristotle, Anscombe's *Intention*. Singh begins by observing that Anscombe's book has been much better appreciated in action theory than in the philosophy of practical reason. But he suggests that its lessons for the philosophy of practical reason are equally significant. Besides showing that Anscombe anticipated the *non-psychological* ontology of reasons associated with Jonathan Dancy, Singh argues that Anscombe's non-causalist account of acting for a reason remains a worthy solution to the problem of deviant causal chains, and merits reconsideration in the general theory of reasons and rationality, especially given the non-causalist turn that has been independently taken in recent literature on the epistemic basing relation.

3. *Practical Reason, Action Theory, and Moral Psychology*

The third section covers the first branch of the philosophy of practical reason. It focuses on:

- (1) the relationship between intentional action, acting for reasons, and deliberation, and intersecting issues about the relationship between autonomy and reasons-responsiveness (Arpaly and Buss);

- (2) the nature of practical reasoning and its differences and similarities to theoretical reasoning (Dancy);
- (3) the role of normative beliefs/appearances in intentional action, and the relationship between beliefs about reasons and motivation (Tenenbaum and Rosati);
- (4) the role of emotions in practical reasoning (Greenspan);
- (5) the intersection of the first branch and relevant empirical work (Wonderly and Tiberius and Washington).

The section opens with a piece by Nomy Arpaly which seeks to disabuse the reader of some doctrines about the relationship between agency and reflective or deliberative reasons-responsiveness.¹³ In particular, she seeks to debunk views which treat a person's behavior as *more agential* in virtue of being *guided by deliberation* or in virtue of being *reflectively endorsed*. She argues that the basic case of acting for reasons is *unreflective*. Arpaly's contribution is followed by an essay by Sarah Buss, which considers the possibility of what she calls "passive agency." Against the view widely shared by philosophers and nonphilosophers alike, Buss argues that we cannot wittingly defy our own normative verdicts. Nonetheless, she argues, our reasoning selves can be dissociated from our acting selves; and this means that we can be passive bystanders to our own actions. Having reviewed the different forms that such dissociation can take, Buss concludes that, because 'the capacity to reason is not the capacity to eliminate every element of arbitrariness from one's actions,' 'some measure of passivity is...a necessary condition of everything that we do.'

We then shift to a multifaceted work by Jonathan Dancy. Dancy suggests that two views that he has long defended—holism about normative reasons and non-psychologism about motivating reasons—can be used to clear space for a view about practical reasoning that he has recently adopted (see Dancy (2018)). The new view that Dancy connects to his earlier views is the Aristotelian view that action is the proper conclusion of practical reasoning. Dancy argues that once we have the right views about normative and motivating reasons, nothing stands in the way of this Aristotelian view. Once this space is cleared, we can adopt a simple picture of the difference between practical and theoretical reasoning: practical reasoning is reasoning which properly concludes in action, while theoretical reasoning is reasoning which properly concludes in belief. In addition to providing a concise defense of this picture, Dancy's piece also serves to acquaint the reader with his earlier influential work on normative and motivating reasons.

The next two pieces concern the relationship between normative beliefs/appearances, action, and motivation. Sergio Tenenbaum's entry discusses the ancient doctrine that intentional action takes place 'under the guise of the good'—i.e., the view that if an agent X is to do some act A intentionally, it must appear to X that there is something in favor of A-ing. The piece introduces the reader to the main arguments for and against this view, which Tenenbaum has defended at great length elsewhere (see especially Tenenbaum (2007)). Connie Rosati's piece takes on a debate about a different alleged connection between normative beliefs and agency: the *judgment internalist* or *motivational internalist* view that if an agent X believes that there is good reason to do some act A, then X must be motivated to do A.¹⁴ Her piece surveys the arguments for and

¹³ For earlier influential works in this vein, see especially Arpaly (2000, 2003) and Arpaly and Schroeder (2012).

¹⁴ This view must not be confused with a different view about *normative* reasons called 'internalism' (i.e., the view that if one has a normative reason to A, one must be motivated to A). Darwall (1983) called this view *existence*

against this view (which she has previously evaluated alongside some related doctrines in Rosati (2016)).

Then we have a contribution from Patricia Greenspan on the role of emotion in practical reasoning. Greenspan has long opposed the view that emotion's influence on action is entirely non-rational (1988). Her main ambition in this paper is to review, update, and correct some misunderstandings of her work. Throughout, Greenspan argues that emotions play a normative role in practical reasoning, by supplementing and sometimes substituting for evaluative judgments.

The final two entries address some interactions between empirical research and the first branch of the philosophy of practical reason. The first entry by Monique Wonderly examines the lessons that research on the nature of psychopathy provides for the philosophy of practical reason. A central lesson she draws from the study of psychopathy is that 'practical reason is not a unary capacity but involves a suite of abilities that engage different aspects of our psychology and work together to help constitute us as unified agents'. For, as Wonderly explains, psychopaths exhibit a surprising combination of excellence in some forms of practical reasoning and incapacity in others. Valerie Tiberius and Natalia Washington follow up Wonderly's case study by turning a wide-angle lens on the implications of social scientific research for the philosophy of practical reason. As they note, while there has been a wave of work by figures like Greene, Prinz, Nichols, Doris, and others on how moral psychology could be informed by social science, considerably less work has been done on practical reason. They pave the way for further research by considering possible lessons from social science for three topics: the moral rationalism vs. sentimentalism debate, the status of the link between intentional action and reasons, and an ameliorative approach to practical reasoning. They offer a balanced assessment of the bearing of social scientific research, noting that while approaches to practical reason often make empirical assumptions that demand scientific scrutiny, one must more careful about spotting these assumptions than some have been in the literature on moral psychology.

4. *Practical Reason and Normativity*

The fourth section turns to practical normativity. It is divided into two parts, one on the nature of normative practical reasons, and another on high-level first-order questions about such reasons. The first section contains pieces on objectivism vs. subjectivism about normative reasons (Parfit and Sobel), Kantian constructivism and constitutivism (Markovits and Walden and Enoch), and non-naturalism (Parfit). The second section contains work on the different types of force that normative reasons can exhibit (Little and MacNamara, and Wallace), the status of pluralism about normative reasons and the question of whether there is a bare practical 'ought' or only moral and prudential 'ought's (Copp and Harman), and the nature of distinctively moral reasons for action and intention (Darwall).

This section could have naturally housed some other contributions in the volume. For example, we might have naturally enough placed Railton's, Scanlon's, and Chang's contributions in the first subsection; Railton's paper is a new instalment in the series of naturalistic realist works he has produced over the decades (see Railton (1986) for the *locus classicus*), Scanlon's paper stands up for the non-naturalist cognitivism associated with him and Parfit, and Chang proposes a nonstandard, 'will-based' view of the grounds of practical reasons. We might also have placed

internalism and the view at issue in Rosati's piece *judgment internalism*; the latter view is also commonly called *motivational internalism* (hence Rosati's title). Rosati has elsewhere discussed a relative of the former view about what is *good for a person* in Rosati (1996).

Dancy's paper here, since it is intended to be a new extension of his approach to the metaphysics of reasons. Hence the reader should consider reading these pieces along with this section.

a. *The Nature of Normative Practical Reasons*

The first part opens with a selection from Derek Parfit, to whom the volume is dedicated. He had generously agreed to write a new paper for the volume on non-naturalist cognitivism, but he sadly died unexpectedly before he could generate something to print. We were therefore given unusual permissions from Routledge and Oxford University Press to keep a part of him in the volume through a reprint of some selections from *On What Matters* that we think all students of ethics and practical reason should read. These selections bookend the subsection and feature accompanying text by the one of us who knew him best.

When investigating the nature of normative reasons, we should distinguish the question of *which* sorts of considerations can *be* normative reasons from the question of what *makes* such considerations normative reasons. To keep these questions apart, we recommend that 'objectivism' be used to denote the view that the kinds of considerations that can be reasons are *objects* of our desires and aims, and 'subjectivism' be used to denote the view that the only kinds of considerations that can be reasons are facts about what would fulfil those desires. 'Objectivism' and 'subjectivism', then, are contrasting views about what things could play the role of being normative reasons. Other 'isms', such as 'nonnaturalism', 'constitutivism', and 'naturalism' are views about the meta-normative grounds of our reasons, not about which kinds of considerations can *be* reasons.

These two questions are often combined as parts of broader accounts of the nature of normative reasons. The first two papers of this section are no exception. Parfit's paper defends *objectivism* about normative practical reasons, which he characterizes as the view that all normative practical reasons are given by features of the *objects* of our desires and aims. According to objectivism, these features also justify the desires and aims themselves and thus are reasons to have them. Objectivism is contrasted with subjectivism, which he characterizes as the view that 'our reasons for acting are all provided by, or depend upon, certain facts about what would fulfil or achieve our present desires or aims'. Parfit defends objectivism by opposing subjectivism, and in particular by attacking it in the cases in which it might have appeared strongest. It would seem that subjectivists would have an easy time of explaining *prudential* as opposed to *moral* reasons, but Parfit offers a simple and now well-known argument to the contrary – the 'Agony Argument'.

One of the most important critics of that argument – and one of the most important defenders of subjectivism – is David Sobel.¹⁵ Sobel outlines a strategy of argument for subjectivism has three stages: offense, non-moral defence, and moral defence. The first stage draws attention to cases where subjectivism seems most intuitive, which tend to be cases of matters of mere taste in which what the agent, for no good reason, happens to go for intuitively determines what she has reason to do. The second stage, which involves a response to Parfit, provides a subjectivist account of non-moral cases in which subjectivism might be thought to be counterintuitive. The third stage gives an explanation of how even a subjectivist can account for moral reasons.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Sobel (2011, 2017) for two of his most important other works.

¹⁶ 'Subjectivism' can also well be used to refer to the meta-normative doctrine that seeks to *analyze* the normative reason-relation in terms of subjective states like desire (see e.g. Schroeder 2007). For Sobel, however, it is a view about which considerations can be reasons. It is worth noting that both 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism' as we use it

The section then shifts more clearly to focus on the metanormative grounds of normative reasons. There is an important tradition that seeks to find space between the view that considerations are reasons as a matter of irreducibly normative fact, on the one hand, and the view that they are reasons because of some relation between the consideration and the fulfilment of our desires, on the other. According to ‘constructivism’, our reasons are constructed from more basic parts of reality, including our desires or features of our rational agency. A well-known example is the Kantian approach to practical reason. In other work, Julia Markovits (2014) has defended a Kantian account that is explicitly intended to be an alternative to both Parfit’s view and views like Sobel’s. She had avoided calling this view ‘constructivist’, however. Her joint paper with Kenny Walden considers the prospects for a Kantian approach that is worthy of this label and develops a novel version that is informed by reflection on the problems for some existing views that go under the label.

As Markovits and Walden note, a key part of some versions of Kantian constructivism is the *constitutivist* idea that reasons derive from the *constitutive features* of agency or valuing. This constitutivist view has long been critiqued by David Enoch, who famously raised the ‘Shmagency’ objection to the view.¹⁷ His contribution to the volume reviews and updates this critique, with a special focus on a version of constitutivism from Michael Smith. He argues at length that the Shmagency objection remains unanswered by Smith’s view and indeed any other equally ambitious constitutivist view. At the end, he offers a small glimmer of hope for a less ambitious project: perhaps constitutivism could be scaled back, so that it is combined with either a further metaphysical claim or a further normative claim to yield a package deal suited to answer the objection.

Pamela Hieronymi’s contribution shows a related but different way in which a package of views about reasons and agential mental capacities might clear up some mysteries about normative metaphysics. In a series of important papers,¹⁸ Hieronymi suggests that we can get a better understanding of the metaphysical unity of normative, motivating, and explanatory reasons by reflecting on the role that reasons play in reasoning. This paper brings these ideas together under a unified heading—the ‘Reasoning First’ approach—and shows how they together avoid problems for some of the leading metaphysical accounts of reasons that the previous entries in this subsection considers. It is for this reason that we place in this subsection, near the end. But it is another example of a piece that could be usefully read alongside pieces in other sections of the volume. It interacts in interesting ways with several of the papers on motivating reasons in the first half of our third section, for example. It also exemplifies a large research program that promises to unify all three branches of the discipline. Hence it would also be worth reading alongside the first section’s contributions.

The section is rounded off by another selection from Parfit, giving the last word to non-naturalism. This selection draws from later parts of *On What Matters*, in which Parfit landed upon a new way of framing his view. The first two volumes of *On What Matters* could give one the impression that Parfit is what Enoch (2011) calls a *robust realist* about normativity, taking it to be

here can be both meta-normative views about which considerations can be reasons and ‘high level’ first order normative views about what reasons we have – ‘high level’ because they would be compatible with specific substantive first-order theories like consequentialism or virtue ethics that one would more naturally discuss in normative ethics. As Berker (2018) suggests, first-order theory itself can be understood as metaphysics. Parfit’s own formulation of subjectivism is ambiguous, containing the phrase ‘provided by, or depend upon’.

¹⁷ See Enoch (2006, 2010) and also Railton (1997, 2004).

¹⁸ See especially Hieronymi (2005, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2013).

a fundamental feature of the world. Yet Parfit had in the earlier volumes insisted that he took normative facts to exist in a ‘different sense’ from non-normative facts. Many were puzzled and wondered how to distinguish this view from sophisticated expressivist views that can allow it to be ‘true’ in an ontologically lightweight sense that there are normative facts. Parfit makes his position about the metaphysics of normativity much clearer in this selection, carving out a position he ended up calling ‘Non-Realist Cognitivism’, and clarifying its relationship to expressivist views he had earlier opposed.

b. *High-Level Substantive Matters*

Some questions about normative reasons are sufficiently abstract to seem unlike straightforwardly first-order questions, but are also not clearly meta-normative. The second subsection collects some pieces on some of these less easily classified questions.

The first two entries consider how to understand the *force* of normative reasons. As Margaret O. Little and Coleen Macnamara observe at the beginning of their piece, a surprising number of theorists assume that normative reasons are *pushy* in the following way: if a normative reason is not outweighed, one *ought* to comply with it. Some have pushed back against this pushy view over the years, arguing that some or even most normative reasons are not presumptively obliging. But there are different ways of rejecting the pushy conception that haven’t been sufficiently distinguished. Little and Macnamara usefully distinguish between opponents of the pushy view who suggest that undefeated reasons generate permissions by neutralizing requirements, and opponents who instead suggest that undefeated reasons are not *deontic* (i.e., suitably related to permission and obligation) but rather *commendatory*. After prying these ideas apart, they devote the piece to explaining the different arguments for the two forms of non-requiring reason.

R. Jay Wallace’s contribution comes at the topic of force from the opposite angle. In contrast to Little and Macnamara, he suggests that the recent turn toward reasons-first approaches to normativity has obscured the existence and distinctiveness of what he calls *requirements of reason*. Like reasons generally, requirements of reasons can conflict and be overridden in certain conditions. But their normative profile and function in deliberation is very different from the non-pushy reasons Little and MacNamara discuss—different enough to cast doubt on Scanlon’s claim that the concept of a normative reason is just the concept of a consideration that *counts in favor* of some act or attitude. Wallace explores these points with a focus on the case of moral requirements (which he assumes to be requirements of reason), though there is some consideration of rational requirements.¹⁹

The next two entries examine pluralism about practical normativity and the idea of an overall practical ‘ought’. David Copp starts his piece with a defense of a strong form of pluralism about reasons and ‘oughts’ according to which they are all standpoint-relative (where the notion of a ‘standpoint’ here doesn’t mean any *person’s* standpoint, but rather the kind we have in mind in speaking of ‘the standpoint of morality’). This view may seem consistent with the thought that there is some overarching standpoint that balances the others, as has been defended by Chang (2004), but Copp then proceeds to argue that it isn’t, and hence that there is no overall practical ‘ought’ or overall notion of a normative practical reason: for no standpoint is neutral in the required sense.

¹⁹ For a fuller discussion by Wallace of rational requirements, see his (2001).

Elizabeth Harman’s paper pairs in an interesting way with Copp’s. Harman’s official thesis is that there is no moral ‘ought’ and no prudential ‘ought’. This might appear to be a straightforward denial of a claim that pluralists like Copp would want to accept. But Harman allows that there are distinctively moral *considerations*, and even that there are ‘distinctively moral ought facts’. She just thinks it doesn’t follow that there is a distinctively moral ‘ought’. Instead, the all-things-considered practical ought is the same ought in both the moral and the prudential cases, and merely has a different kind of salient consideration as its normative ground in the two cases. As she puts it, her view ‘does not hold that there are three distinct *oughts*, one moral *ought*, one prudential *ought*, and one all-things-considered *ought*’, instead ‘it is the all-things-considered *ought* that is at play throughout the phenomena we have discussed’, though ‘[s]ome *ought* facts are *moral* facts in that they are centrally explained by moral considerations.’

After this pair of papers, the section shifts course to a contribution by Stephen Darwall that seeks to understand what makes a practical reason have peremptory force of the distinctively moral kind. Darwall’s answer is informed by the *second-personal approach* he has long advocated.²⁰ He begins by recounting how the philosophy of practical reason after Nagel 1970 moved from a conception of practical reasons as fundamentally *first-personal* (i.e., ones addressed to *me*) to a conception that took account of *third-personal reasons* (i.e., ones addressed *impersonally* to agents). He then argues that once these two perspectives are acknowledged as normatively grounding distinctive kinds of practical reason, we should expect there to be *second-personal* reasons, which are addressed from you to me or me to you. For Darwall, distinctively moral reasons are second-personal. After developing this idea, Darwall uses it to explain the authority of morality.

5. *Practical Rationality*

The final section collects some work on rationality. It is worth noting that although we placed Broome’s paper at the beginning rather than in this section, the reader would do well to reread that contribution alongside this section: Broome’s work has been very influential on the branch covered by this section, and some key Broomean themes concerning this branch appear in his piece.

The section opens with a contribution by Errol Lord that rehearses a view about practical rationality that emerged through the work of Broome, Kolodny, and Scanlon, according to which rationality is to be understood in terms of *coherence requirements*. Lord then explains why this conception of rationality seems to lead to a problem about the normativity of rationality—i.e., about why it should *matter* whether we are rational or irrational. As Lord argues (see also Kolodny (2005)), the best view about the form of coherence requirements (the ‘narrow scope’ view) suggests that coherence can sometimes require one to do things that one shouldn’t do, in the sense of ‘shouldn’t’ that interests us when we are deliberating. In line with his earlier work (Lord (2014, 2018)), Lord suggests that we can avoid this problem and understand the normativity of rationality if we reject the view that rationality fundamentally consists in complying with requirements of coherence. We should, he argues, instead accept the view that rationality consists in responding to the balance of *possessed* normative reasons, which for him are facts that one possesses as reasons in virtue of one’s being in a position to know them and to know how to respond to them. We can then see coherence as having derivative significance, as an upshot of responding to such reasons.

²⁰ The *locus classicus* is Darwall (2006).

Lord's piece is followed by a piece by one of us which is on a narrower issue about the normativity of rationality. As Sylvan begins by noting, one of the first papers to raise a problem about the normativity of rationality was Raz's (2005) 'The Myth of Instrumental Rationality'. While this paper officially had a much narrower focus than the influential piece by Kolodny published in the same year, Raz's challenges turned out to be special cases of the broader ones that Lord discusses. Sylvan reopens Raz's question by asking whether there might after all be a *special* problem about instrumental rationality. Sylvan thinks there is. He gives five new arguments for skepticism about instrumental rationality, some of which are inspired by Continental figures who offered critiques of instrumental reason (e.g., Arendt, Horkheimer, Weber, and André Gorz). After concluding that these arguments support skepticism about the normativity of instrumental rationality, Sylvan suggests that we can capture the phenomena that instrumental principles were meant to capture with certain non-instrumental coherence requirements, and thereby avoid the special problems. His way of avoiding the problems is compatible with Lord's thought that rationality is not *just* coherence. But it is also compatible with a mixed view which sees rationality as essentially including some coherence requirements, including the non-instrumental ones he defends. This story fits nicely, as he notes at the end, with a story that he has given about the non-coherentist sides of practical and epistemic rationality in Sylvan (forthcoming) and (2020).

The pieces by Lord and Sylvan are followed by three pieces on a different side of rationality in the narrow sense. In the literature on rationality that emerged from Broome's work, it has been common to focus on *synchronic* rational requirements. But rational requirements can be construed as *process requirements*, compliance with which unfolds over time. Kolodny (2005) emphasized this point in defending the 'narrow scope' account of rational requirements. But well before that, two rich literatures emerging from decision theory, on the one hand, and the work of Michael Bratman (e.g., Bratman (1987)), on the other, were independently guided by the idea that practical coherence is partly a diachronic matter. The pieces by Chrisoula Andreou, Bratman, and Wlodek Rabinowicz come at practical rationality from these angles. Bratman examines diachronic rationality in light of his planning theory of agency, Rabinowicz looks at how to account for diachronic requirements from a decision-theoretic perspective, and Andreou explores diachronic requirements while drawing on knowledge of both the decision-theoretic and the Bratman-inspired literatures.

Building on her earlier work on the topic,²¹ Andreou looks at three kinds of cases which seem to involve diachronic irrationality: cases of preference reversal due to temptation, cases in which vague goals lead to procrastination, and cases in which deliberation is delayed by cycling between incommensurable (or incomparable) objects of choice. She is careful throughout to distinguish structural criticisms of such agents (e.g., their preferences violate an alleged transitivity requirement) and more substantive criticisms (e.g., they don't sufficiently value their well-being over time, or have poor managerial skills). She considers several structural diagnoses of what is going wrong in these cases, aiming more to introduce the reader to the terrain than to defend a particular diagnosis. The piece does an outstanding job providing a balanced, unified view of the decision-theoretic and philosophical literatures.

Bratman's piece begins by rehearsing the challenge to the normativity of synchronic coherence requirements, and his earlier effort (see Bratman (2009b)) to address this challenge by appealing to a reason for *self-governance*. He then explains how to extend his self-governance approach to synchronic coherence requirements on planning at a time to explain diachronic practical coherence, including some of cases that interested Andreou (e.g., being led off course

²¹ See, e.g., Andreou (2014, 2015, 2016).

by temptation, and cycling through options). The result is a unified self-governance-based account of the normativity of both synchronic and diachronic instrumental rationality. His appeal to self-governance is part of a larger package of views that includes a broadly pragmatic ‘two-tier’ defence of the rationality of norms, a defense that is sensitive to human limitations.

Rabinowicz’s piece addresses diachronic rationality from a decision-theoretic perspective. He focuses on how decision theory should advise agents who fail to stick to their plans owing to a failure to be expected utility-maximizers, and in particular who violate the Independence Axiom of expected utility theory. He rehearses two standard approaches to this question, which recommend policies of ‘sophisticated choice’ and ‘resolute choice’ (in some specific technical senses of those phrases), and then discusses and further develops a ‘wise choice’ policy which synthesizes these approaches, which he defended earlier in Rabinowicz (1995). Like sophisticated choice, wise choice makes use of backward induction in reasoning about sequential decision problems, but like resolute choice, it rejects pure future-directedness of sophisticated choice and makes room for commitments to previously adopted plans. The paper also considers whether wise choice can be reduced to sophisticated choice as an appropriate re-description of the decision problem. Although this contribution is the most formal of all, it is written to be accessible to outsiders; close study of it alongside a big-picture work like Buchak (2013) will introduce the reader to formal philosophy of practical reason and showcase a novel view in it.

The book then ends with a piece by Jennifer Morton and Sarah Paul which provides an important and fresh contrast to the Broomean approach to this branch, and which also ties together all three branches of the philosophy of practical reason. Like Broome (2013), Morton and Paul see an important connection between rationality and *norms of reasoning*. But they argue that this connection favors a very different account of rationality than Broome’s. For Broome, the rational requirements which underpin good reasoning are *a priori* and categorical. Morton and Paul reject these ideas and defend what they call an *ecological* approach, which draws on insights from the tradition of bounded rationality.²² On this approach, the norms that underwrite good reasoning for a given agent should be sensitive to the distinctive features of that agent’s circumstances and psychology, and hence are not *a priori* or purely structural. Their approach provides a distinctive vindication of the normativity of rationality. While we placed it in this section, it would also be worth reading alongside the papers in the first and third sections, and illustrates the empirically informed approach also displayed by Anderson, Haslanger, Tiberius and Washington, and Wonderly.

* * *

The literature on practical reason is a quicksand with unclear boundaries. It would take a series of handbooks to survey it as completely as we would like. But our job was to make one book. Inevitably, then, there are unexamined angles on topics that are covered, topics that are not covered, and adjacent literatures that some might classify as part of the philosophy of practical reason, but which we have mostly bracketed. We hope, however, that the articles in this volume

²² This tradition is rooted in the work of economist and cognitive psychologist Herbert Simon (e.g. Simon (1955)).

provide readers with an overview of the main issues in this fast-evolving field, along with a sense of its richness and depth. We invite readers to peruse the Guide to Further Reading, given as an appendix to this volume, should they wish to continue their investigations.

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