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scope for rational autonomy[1]

Sometimes we act, intend, or believe irrationally. When we do, it is natural to describe us as having broken the rules of rationality. And violating the rules of rationality, it is widely believed, is some kind of particularly serious failing. But what are these 'rules of rationality' – where do they come from, and from whence do they derive their peculiar force? My aim in this paper is to explore a picture on which the 'rules' of rationality are rules that we lay down for ourselves. Each of us is the author of the rules of rationality that apply to us, and so when we are irrational, the rules that we are breaking are our own. This picture answers both where these rules come from and from whence they derive their force. And the specific version of the picture that I will develop also explains why even though the rules of rationality are up to us, we can't avoid breaking them, if we have inconsistent beliefs, fail to draw the obvious conclusions from our other beliefs, or fail to intend what we believe we ought to do.

My path to this picture, however, will be somewhat indirect. I will begin with an old dispute about the *structure* of the rules of rationality – the debate about whether such rules have 'wide' or 'narrow scope'. I'll explain and endorse some of they key elements of John Broome's account, in his paper 'Requirements', of what the interesting wide/narrow dispute has all along been about, and use that discussion to pose Broome's two central challenges, in that paper, for narrow scope theories. My diagnosis of the force of Broome's challenges will turn on the fact that he gives us no way to think about the *source* of what he calls 'source requirements'. These challenges look like good challenges because they fail to distinguish between two different kinds of narrow scope views – ones which differ on the *authorship* of the rules of rationality. After developing a simple model that allows for this important distinction, I'll close by showing how it addresses Broome's worries about narrow scope rules and provides an answer to the puzzle

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about why, if we are the authors of the rules of rationality that apply to ourselves, it nevertheless seems that we have so little control over what is or is not rational.

I   a structural question about the rules of rationality

Paradigm instances of irrationality include cases like believing outright contradictory propositions, failing to accept the obvious consequences of your beliefs, failing to intend to do what you believe you ought, having contradictory intentions, or failing to intend the means you believe to be necessary for your intended end.[2] In each of these cases, you seem to be flouting one or another of the rules of rationality. A familiar question concerns the structure of these rules: are they 'wide-scope' or 'narrow-scope'?[3]

According to the wide-scope answer, the rules of rationality are universal in their domain, applying to everyone equally, but ask only nonspecific things of us: to abstain from contradictory beliefs, for example, or to maintain a combination of intentions and beliefs which together exhibit means-end coherence. According to the narrow-scope answer, the rules of rationality are specific in their domain, applying only to people with certain beliefs, intentions, or combinations of beliefs and intentions. But of the people to whom those rules apply, they ask specific things: to have or lack a particular belief, for example, or to have or lack a particular intention.

These views are so-named because if we think of the rules of rationality as having a conditional structure, the views differ over the relationship between the rules and the conditional. According to wide-scope views, what is required by the rule has scope over the conditional, and so satisfying a (material) conditional is thought to be what is required by the rule, but the rule itself is thought to be unconditional – and hence to apply equally to everyone. Whereas according to narrow-scope views, what is required by the rule has narrow scope within the conditional's consequent, and so satisfying the rule requires a particular belief or intention, but the rule itself is conditional in structure, so that it does not apply to someone who does not satisfy its condition. The cases which are most easily thought of in this way include the phenomena of means-end coherence, closure, and non-akrasia, which are all often formulated in conditional terms. But consistency of belief and intention also fit this model. According to the wide-scoper, there is a rule mandating the property of being such that *if you believe p, then you don't believe ~p*, whereas

[2] Here I'll ignore a number of complications about whether each of these claims needs to be qualified in important ways.
[3] Compare Broome [1999] for a classic discussion, though one that omits important nuances to follow, and Schroeder [2004] for a contrary, similarly unnuanced, perspective.

according to the narrow-scoper, there is only a rule requiring believing ~*p*, but that rule only applies to people who believe *p*. Similar points go for consistency of intention.

It is important, I think, to be clear that there is an interesting debate here quite independently of whether it can be expressed using the word 'ought' or the word 'required'. It may be that in whatever sense you count as breaking one of the rules of rationality whenever you have inconsistent beliefs or fail to believe the obvious consequences of your other beliefs, we cannot express these rules of rationality using the words 'ought' or 'required' at all. The debate also cannot be about whether there are any true wide-scope principles. For everyone can agree that the concept, 'you do not obey all of the rules of rationality that apply to you unless' can be used to formulate true wide-scope principles. So the interesting wide/narrow dispute is not about how to interpret sentences of some kind, but about the underlying explanation of whatever is true, in this domain.

2   broome on source requirements

In 'Requirements', his contribution to the festschrift for Wlodek Rabinowicz, John Broome makes this same point by distinguishing between what he calls 'property' and 'source' requirements.[4] In the 'property' sense, according to Broome, we may say things like 'prudence requires you to save for your retirement', and all that we mean is that necessarily, you are not prudent unless you save for your retirement. It's a familiar fact, sometimes known as the Kanger-Anderson Reduction, that any operator with this structure obeys standard deontic logic. So on the property interpretation, 'rationality requires you to have consistent beliefs' only says that necessarily, you are not rational unless you have consistent beliefs.

This, however, just amounts to a description of the facts about when you are irrational. It doesn't tell us anything about what makes you irrational, when you are. So Broome thinks that 'requirement' also has a *source* sense. In the source sense, 'rationality requires you to have consistent beliefs' means not only that necessarily, you are irrational unless you have consistent beliefs, but it tells us why this is so: because one of the *source* requirements of rationality forbids having inconsistent beliefs. According to Broome, to have the property of rationality that figures in the *property* sense of what 'rationality requires' is just to comply with all of the *source* requirements of rationality. So knowing what the source requirements of rationality are is knowing *which* rules you are breaking, when you are irrational.

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[4] Broome [2007].

And to this question, Broome grants that there is more than one potential answer. The source requirements of rationality could be *conditional* requirements, requiring specific things of us but only conditionally. That is the narrow-scope view. Or they could be *unconditional* requirements, requiring only that we satisfy some conditional. And that is the wide-scope view. Broome is interested in which of these two views is the more promising view of the source requirements of rationality. That is, in my terminology of rules, he accepts that you count as (having the property of being) irrational in virtue of breaking one or more of the rules (source requirements) of rationality, and he is interested in which rules (source requirements) you are breaking, in interesting cases such as when you have inconsistent beliefs, are akratic or means-end incoherent, or fail to draw the obvious consequences from your other beliefs. So in all of this, we agree about the nature of the question being asked, and about what makes that question interesting.

Broome offers a model for how to think about the logical structure of source requirements. We can think of each source of requirements as yielding a function from world-individual pairs to the set of things that are required by that source of that individual at that world. And Broome assumes that the objects of source requirements – the things that are required – are propositions. So formally, for each source S, each person N, and each possible world w, $R_S(N,w)$ is the set of propositions whose truth is required of N at w. The way that this system allows us to think about conditional requirements, is by allowing the requirement function, R_S, to be non-constant in its world argument. When the members of $R_S(N,w_1)$ are different from the members of $R_S(N,w_2)$, that means that S requires different things of N at w_1 and at w_2. So whenever some proposition q belongs to $R_S(N,w)$ whenever the proposition p is true at w, we may say that S requires q of N, conditional on p. There is nothing fancy about this sort of conditional requirement; it is just to say that necessarily, if p is true, then S requires q of N.

Within Broome's model, the distinction between wide and narrow scope views about the structure of the rules of rationality that you are breaking when you have inconsistent beliefs is clear: on the wide-scope view, R_S is a constant function whose value includes the proposition that if N believes that p, then N does not believe that $\sim p$. Whereas on the narrow-scope view, R_S is a non-constant function with the property that $R_S(N,w)$ always includes the proposition that N does not believe that $\sim p$, for all values of N, p, and w such that N believes that p at w. Importantly, both views yield the same predictions about *when* you break the rules of rationality; they simply disagree about which rules you are breaking when you do so.[5]

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[5] See the appendix to Broome [2007] for further discussion.

3   broome's two worries

Broome raises two concerns about the narrow-scope view. The first is that "some sources of requirements should not impose inconsistent requirements on you".[6] His idea appears to be this: while it may be plausible that you are under conflicting legal requirements, it is not plausible that you are under conflicting requirements of rationality. The rules of rationality are simply not the sort of thing to require inconsistent things of you.

This is a problem, because the narrow scope view straightforwardly predicts that the rules of rationality which apply to you in a given situation may be inconsistent. Simply suppose that N both believes that p, believes that if p, then q, and also believes that $\sim q$, and is clearly considering all three of these beliefs at once. Because N believes that p and believes that if p, then q, a narrow-scope closure rule would require N to believe that q. But because N believes that $\sim q$, a narrow-scope consistency rule would require N to not believe that q. But N cannot both believe that q and also not believe that q; these requirements are inconsistent. So if rationality requires each of these things of you, then rationality requires inconsistent things. And that, Broome claims, is implausible.

The example that I've just given is only one of a number of ways in which we can combine otherwise plausible narrow-scope rules of rationality in order to generate inconsistent requirements.[7] The key element in all such cases is to start with an agent who is already irrational – plausible narrow-scope views are not going to generate inconsistent requirements of rationality for agents who are fully rational. So the implausible feature of the narrow-scope view is not that because it generates inconsistent requirements, that makes it sometimes impossible to be fully rational. What is supposed to be implausible, Broome claims, is that rationality would require inconsistent things of *anyone* – even someone irrational.

Broome also raises a second worry, though it is less clear. He claims that the source requirements of rationality must obey what he calls the *necessity principle*. According to the necessity principle, if rationality requires you to F, then necessarily, you F if you are rational. In his introduction of the necessity principle, Broome mistakenly suggests that this is a general feature of source requirements. He writes:

> I take it that, if rationality requires you to *F*, then, necessarily, you *F* if you are rational. If morality requires you to *F*, then, necessarily, you *F* if you are moral. And so on. In general,

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[6] Broome [2007, 28].
[7] Broome [2007] illustrates this point with the norm of non-akrasia and the consistency norm on intention.

if a source *S* requires of *N* that *p*, then, necessarily, *p* if *N* has the *S*-property. Call this the 'necessity principle'.[8]

But it is easy to see that this is wrong.[9] One of Broome's own leading examples of source requirements is the case of the law. It is well-known that many laws are contingent, and could have been otherwise. Indeed, in different jurisdictions, they often are. So if the law requires you to F, it is still perfectly possible for you to be law-abiding and still not F – all that needs to happen, is for the law to be different. Any contingent source of requirements will therefore lack the necessity property.

But Broome doesn't need to assume that the necessity principle applies to all source requirements, in order to have an objection to narrow-scope source requirements of rationality. As with his first argument, all that Broome needs for his argument is that there is something special about *rationality* from which it follows that if there is a source requirement of *rationality*, then necessarily, if you don't comply with it, then you are irrational. In order to support this principle, Broome only needs the view that the source requirements of rationality are themselves necessary.

4 the diagnosis

A single thought can help us to see what makes both of Broome's assumptions seem compelling. In talking of what 'rationality requires of' us, and of what requirements rationality 'imposes on' us, Broome is talking as if rationality – whatever that is – is itself the source of the rules of rationality. And calling the rules of rationality "source requirements" facilitates that way of thinking. This makes it sound like rationality is itself a kind of legislator who creates the rules of rationality and imposes them on us. But in addition to being puzzling exactly what rationality is, so conceived, it is even more puzzling what it does to legislate rules. And if rationality is the legislator, but rationality can't do anything differently, then naturally we should expect its rules to be necessary. Thus we get the idea that the rules of rationality are necessary.

Similarly, if rationality is like a legislator, it is natural to expect it to be a kind of *ideal* legislator. But ideal legislators wouldn't create inconsistent rules – even for people who are already breaking other rules. So the idea that rationality is like an ideal legislator is also just the right kind of idea to motivate Broome's thought that it is implausible to think that rationality ever requires inconsistent things of anyone – even of people who are already irrational.

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[8] Broome [2007, 33].
[9] Broome now agrees [personal communication] that this was an error.

In contrast, I suggest that a more promising way to think about the narrow-scope picture of the rules of rationality, is as rooted in the idea that *we* – rather than *rationality* – are the authors of the rules of rationality which apply to ourselves. On this picture, it is no wonder that these rules are contingent, because we create them by something that we do. And it is no wonder that they can require inconsistent things of agents who are already irrational, because irrational agents should not be expected to be ideal legislators – on the contrary, it is only to be expected that they would screw up.

Indeed, only on this picture can a narrow-scope account of the rules of rationality serve one of the main purposes on the basis of which I have long advocated narrow-scope principles – namely, to offer an explanation not only of what those rules are, but of where they come from. Part of what is puzzling about wide-scope rules of rationality, with their unconditional application to every rational agent no matter what she is like, is that it is hard to see what explains how these rules get a grip on each and every agent. That was one of the two main considerations I offered in Schroeder [2004] against wide-scope principles, and the *very same* consideration applies against Broome's picture of narrow-scope rules, on which they are simply conditional rules whose source derives from some external source.

In contrast, if we are the authors of our own rules of rationality, then we can use the conditionality of those laws in order to explain their *source*. This, of course, is exactly what Kant claimed made it easier to explain hypothetical imperatives than to explain the categorical imperative:

> By contrast, 'How is the imperative of morality possible?' is beyond all doubt the one question in need of a solution. For the moral imperative is in no way hypothetical, and consequently the objective necessity, which it affirms, cannot be supported by any presupposition, as was the case with hypothetical imperatives.[10]

The reason that the possibility of hypothetical imperatives does not require any special solution, Kant explains, is that we can appeal to their condition in order to explain them. But since categorical imperatives are unconditional, in their case we can do no such thing. If the condition of narrow-scope rules of rationality is just the condition of their authorship, then we can take advantage of Kant's insight and use that conditionality in order to explain where the rules come from.[11]

It is striking, however, that on this diagnosis, the thought driving both of Broome's arguments against narrow-scope interpretations of the rules of rationality is based on a thought – about who or what

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[10] Kant [2002], 220 (4:419).
[11] Compare Schroeder [2005].

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is the *source* or *author* of the rules of rationality – that is not captured in his model. In Broome's simple model, the source requirements of rationality simply *are*. The functions in his model make no distinction between worlds in which there are no rules, and worlds in which the rules exist but they are conditional on something false. What I'll now suggest, in what follows, is that if we enrich our model to be able to reflect not just what requirements there are, but the way in which those requirements, laws, or rules can be *enacted*, and *by whom*, then we will have the resources to distinguish between two very different narrow-scope views, one of which is implausible for all of the reasons that Broome mentions, and one of which offers an attractive picture about not only *what* the rules of rationality are, but of where they *come from*.

5   a model for legislation

So our goal is to construct a simple way of representing both what the laws are, and how they are enacted. I will take A *legal model* to be a 6-tuple, ⟨*Author,Agent,Enact,Prop,→,Legislate*⟩, where *Author* is a set of potential authors of laws, *Agent* is a set of potential agents subject to laws, *Enact* is a set of properties of authors closed under Boolean operations, *Prop* is a set of properties of agents closed under Boolean operations, and → and *Legislate* are defined as below.

We define *Authority*={<J,S,D>:J∈ *Prop*&S⊆*Prop*&D⊆*Prop*}, and take → to be a relation on *Author*×*Authority*. Intuitively, → tells us which authors have which *authorities*. An *authority* A∈ *Authority* combines a *jurisdiction* J which tells us the property an agent needs to have in order to fall under that authority with a *scope* S which is the set of things the author is authorized to require of that agent (the set of possible *mandates*), under that authority, and a *discretion* D, which tells us the possible *conditions* of those requirements, under that authority. So intuitively, Y→<J,S,D> means that Y has the authority to require anyone with property J to do anything in S, conditional on any property in D.

→ is a relation, rather than a function, because the same author might have different authorities over different jurisdictions. For example, the president of the United States might have one authority over her children, another authority over the White House staff, and a third authority as commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces. Each of these authorities includes not only a different jurisdiction, but a different scope, and a different discretion. For example, her parental authority may allow her to condition the rules for her children on their gender, but her authority over the White House staff does not. And there are many things her parental authority allows her to require of her children that her authority as commander-in-chief does not allow her to require of the United States armed forces.

Where L=<C,M>∈ *Law*=*Prop*×*Prop*, we say that L is a (possible) *law*, and call C the *condition* of the law and M its *mandate*. If C∈D is consistent with J and M∈S, then we say that <C,M> *falls under* authority A=<J,S,D>. Intuitively, this just captures the idea that if you have an authority, then you are authorized to require anything in M of anyone who satisfies J, on any condition in D.

Finally, we take *Legislate* to be a function from *Law*×*Authority* to *Enact*, so that *Legislate* is defined for <<C,M>,<J,S,D>> whenever <C,M> falls under <J,S,D>, and undefined otherwise. Intuitively, the *Legislate* function tells us what the author must do in order to *enact* the law, or in other words, to put it *into force*. So if for some author Y such that Y→<J,S,D>, *Legislate*(<<C,M>,<J,S,D>>)Y, then we say that <C,M> is *enacted* by Y *under* <J,S,D>. If for some Y and some <J,S,D>, <C,M> is enacted by Y under <J,S,D>, we say that <C,M> is *in force*. Obviously, the question of exactly what a given legislator needs to do in order to effect a certain law and why can be an extremely complex question in realistic cases, but for our purposes we may simply treat this as a black box.

All of this sounds like a mouthful, but all that we've done is to introduce the minimal conceptual resources in order to make sense of the idea that laws are created by someone who has the authority to do so, and that there is always something that this legislator must do, in order to create those laws. Just a little bit more terminology will be helpful as we go on. I will say that:

If <C,M> is enacted by Y under <J,S,D>, Jx, Cx, and Mx, then we say that x *complies* with <C,M>.
If <C,M> is enacted by Y under <J,S,D>, Jx, Cx, and ~Mx, then we say that x *violates* <C,M>.
If <C,M> is enacted by Y under <J,S,D> and Jx but ~Cx, then we say that x *escapes* <C,M>.
If <C,M> is enacted by Y under <J,S,D> and ~Jx, then we say that x *evades* <J,S,D>.

The distinction between *escaping* a *law* and *evading* an *authority* is not supposed to be a natural-language one between 'escape' and 'evade'; it's a conceptual distinction for which we need a pair of terms, so I choose these.

In order to see how this model works, it will be helpful to walk through a simple example. Consider the following highly simplified case:

Example
Y$_1$=New Jersey state legislature   J$_1$=λx(x is in New Jersey)
Y$_2$=Oregon state legislature   J$_2$=λx(x is in Oregon)
Y$_3$=Wisconsin state legislature   J$_3$=λx(x is in Wisconsin)
S={P:P is compatible with the United States constitution}

D={P:P is not a protected category under the "equal protection" clause}
10th Amendment: $\forall n(Y_n \rightarrow <J_n,S,D>)$
C=λx(x is a driver)   M=λx(x does not pump her own gas)
Legislate($<<C,M>,<J_n,S,D>>$)Y_n for n=1,2 but not 3

The tenth amendment to the United States Constitution authorizes the states to require things of their own residents. Subtleties aside about the exact scope and discretion of this authority, it clearly includes the authority to require drivers to pump their own gas. And some states have exercised their authority in precisely that way. In particular, the Oregon and New Jersey state legislatures have done whatever it is that they needed to do, in order to enact precisely this conditional law: one that requires you, if you are a driver, not to pump your own gas.

And now we can see our distinctions at work. If you are a driver in New Jersey who does not pump your own gas, then you comply with the law. If you pump your own gas as a driver in New Jersey, then you violate the law. If you are in New Jersey but are not a driver, you escape the law, because it no longer applies to you. And if you leave New Jersey and go somewhere else, then you evade the authority of the New Jersey state legislature, because you no longer fall under the jurisdiction of their authority. But even when you evade this authority, you may not yet escape the law, because if the place you go is Oregon, the same law will apply to you in a different jurisdiction.

6   three pictures of the rules of rationality

Within our model, it is easy to distinguish three distinct pictures of what the rules of rationality say, and where they come from. According to the first, wide-scope, picture, the rules of rationality are universal and unconditional. This is the familiar picture visible in Broome. It looks like this:

Wide
Y=*Rationality*   J=λx(x is a rational agent)
S={P: P supervenes on mental states}
D=S
Y$\rightarrow$<J,S,D>
C=*vacuous*   M=λx(x does not both believe *p* and believe ~*p*)
Legislate(<C,M>,<J,S,D>)=*vacuous*

On this picture, the source of rational rules is *Rationality*, but rationality does not have to do anything to create those rules, which explains why they are all necessary. Rationality's authority has jurisdiction is over

all rational agents, and because its requirements are unconditional, every rational agent is bound by every rule of rationality. Among those rules are the requirement not to believe both a proposition and its negation.

A second picture of how the rules of rationality work has much in common with this first picture, but allows that the rules of rationality are narrow-scope. It looks like this:

Narrow, Pass 1
$Y=$*Rationality* $J=\lambda x(x \text{ is a rational agent})$
$S=\{P: P \text{ supervenes on mental states}\}$
$D=S$
$Y\rightarrow<J,S,D>$
$C_1=\lambda x(x \text{ believes } p)$ $M_1=\lambda x(x \text{ does not believe } \sim p)$
$C_2=\lambda x(x \text{ believes } \sim p)$ $M_2=\lambda x(x \text{ does not believe } p)$
Legislate$(<C_n,M_n>,<J,S,D>)=$*vacuous*

On this picture, the author of the rules of rationality is again *Rationality*, but again, Rationality doesn't need to do anything in order to enact its rules, which has the consequence that they are all necessary. However, on this picture, some of them have non-vacuous conditions. In particular, conditional on your having any belief, there is a rule forbidding you to have its contradictory belief. This picture is clearly a narrow-scope picture of what the rules of rationality are like, but because it shares Broome's intuitive thought that the source of the rules of rationality is Rationality itself, it is a consequence of this picture that Rationality may indeed require inconsistent things of us.

However, once we can make distinctions not only about what the laws are and on what condition they apply, but about who enacts the laws and how, we can see that a very different sort of narrow-scope view is intelligible. According to this alternative picture, the rules of rationality are not narrow-scope because rationality imposes conditional requirements on us, but rather because their conditions are the conditions on which we impose requirements on ourselves. This third picture looks like this:

Narrow, Pass 2
$Y_i\in$ *Agent* $J_i=\lambda x(x=Y_i)$
$S=\{P: P \text{ supervenes on mental states}\}$
$D=S$
$Y_i\rightarrow<J_i,S,D>$
$C_1=$*vacuous* $M_1=\lambda x(x \text{ does not believe } \sim p)$
$C_2=$*vacuous* $M_2=\lambda x(x \text{ does not believe } p)$

Legislate($<C_1,M_1>,<J_i,S,D>$)$=\lambda x$(x believes p)
Legislate($<C_2,M_2>,<J_i,S>$)$=\lambda x$(x believes $\sim p$)

On the third picture, there is no need for *Rationality* to be the author of the rules of rationality, because each person is the author of rational rules that apply to herself. Each agent has the authority to require things of herself, and she does so by being in one or another mental state (in this case, at least, by holding a particular belief). The fact that no agent can be rational while believing a contradiction is a fact, not about which rules of rationality there are, but about how an agent legislates a rule of rationality for herself.

7   commitments

In the abstract, it sounds a bit strange to say that we are the authors of the 'rules' of rationality. And so it is worth exploring just a little bit more what this means. The first thing to note is that on this final picture of the nature of the rules of rationality, the authority under which the rules of rationality are enacted is always of a very special sort: it is an authority whose jurisdiction only includes the author. Such an authority may be helpfully labeled an *autonomous* authority, in the very literal sense that it is a capacity to make laws for oneself. And a helpful name for a law enacted under an autonomous authority is a *commitment*. When, for example, a self-governing legislative body adopts rules of order, it is *committing* to following those rules, even though it has the power to revise them at any point.[12]

Indeed, Sam Shpall ([2013], [forthcoming]) has independently argued that what I am calling the 'rules' of rationality are more properly called 'commitments'. According to Shpall, commitments are *normative*, *escapable*, and *agent-dependent*, which fits with the idea that they are autonomous laws – laws whose existence depends on the agent but which may be escaped if the agent does what it takes to no longer legislate that law. They are also *pro tanto*, which Shpall takes to mean that they allow for conflicts, but *strict* in the sense that failing to abide by them makes one criticizable in a way that is not generally true of failing to act on one's reasons. All of this sounds right about the rules of rationality on our second narrow-scope picture – on which they may conflict (at least for irrational agents) but on which violating any of the rules makes one criticizable as irrational.

With Shpall's terminology in hand, we can re-describe the view in a way that makes it sound much more natural. Rather than saying that the legislative condition for a law that requires one not to believe

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[12] Compare Schroeder [forthcoming].

that q is that one believes that $\sim q$, we simply say that believing that $\sim q$ is a way of committing yourself not to believing q. Similarly, rather than saying that believing that p and believing that if q then p are what it takes to legislate to oneself a rule requiring belief in q, we simply say that if you believe that p and also believe that if p then q, then you are committed to believing that q. And finally, we can say that when an agent who believes that p, believes that if p then q, and also believes that $\sim q$ is under conflicting rules of rationality, all that this means is that she has inconsistent commitments: she is committed both to believing that q and to not believing that q.

But all of these claims are independently plausible. All of the time in philosophical conversation we make claims about what one another are committed to believing on the basis of what one another believe, and in full understanding that we have the power to give up those commitments, simply by changing our minds. And we readily recognize — indeed, we often exploit for our argumentative purposes — the fact that people can have conflicting commitments. So if the rules of rationality are autonomous laws, and autonomous laws are just commitments, there is nothing more to the rules of rationality than there is to commitments. And so irrationality is a matter of violating the rules of rationality, it turns out that avoiding irrationality is simply a matter of living up to your own commitments.

8   conclusion

On the picture that I've been exploring in this paper, there is no mysterious heteronymous source of the rules of rationality; rather, they are rules that we impose on ourselves. This picture answers both of the puzzling features that John Broome found in the idea that the rules of rationality could be narrow-scope, and it exploits the narrow scope of these rules to answer a question that is even closer to my heart: how could any heteronymous source of rules gain the kind of authority over every rational agent which we so readily take rationality to have? On the picture that I've described, not only is it much less puzzling how we could have a kind of authority over ourselves, this authority is actually of a very familiar kind: it is simply our ability to *commit* ourselves. And finally, this picture makes clear why it nevertheless seems that the rules of rationality are *not* up to us. That is simply because it is not up to us what it takes to adopt a commitment — only which commitments we adopt.

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