

What unifies requirements of rationality?

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Paradigmatic Requirements

INTENTION CONSISTENCY	You are required not to intend an action A and intend an action B if you believe that you cannot both do A and B.
BELIEF CONSISTENCY	You are required not to believe a proposition p and believe a proposition q if you believe the proposition $\sim p \& q$
INSTRUMENTAL CLOSURE	You are required to intend an action M if you believe that M is a necessary means for another action E and intend to do E.
ENKRASIA	You are required to intend an action A if you believe that you ought to do A.

Normative Unity?

A: Rationality as responding correctly to reasons

Idea: Rational requirements simply state necessary conditions for responding correctly to reasons

Problem: Fails to distinguish between *being irrational* and *violating one's obligations*.

B: Reasons of Rationality: rational requirements as a subspecies of normative requirements

Idea: Rational requirements are normative reasons of a certain *kind* – reasons of *rationality*.

Question: What distinguishes and unifies reasons of rationality?

- i. Distinctive source reason?
Problem: Presupposes robust descriptive unity
- ii. Distinctive domain or subject matter?
Problem: No distinctive domain to be found.

[Compare: *If you believe that the person in front of you is in dire need of help, and believe that you can help her without much cost to you or others, morality requires that you intend to help her*]

Descriptive Unity I: Appealing To Coherence

Coherence as Primitive Unifier

Idea: The various violations of rational requirements are various forms of *mental incoherence*; what unifies these forms simply is that they are forms of the same thing – mental incoherence.

Objection: This view is unstable. *Being a form of incoherence* is not an intrinsic property of mental states. If mental states *do* possess that property, they possess it in virtue of possessing some other, intrinsic property. But then the question again arises whether the intrinsic properties in virtue of which mental states count as forms of mental incoherence have anything in common or not.

Incoherence as Unintelligibility

Idea: An agent's being rational is a necessary condition for *understanding* or *making sense* of the agent's actions and thoughts.

Problem #1: Only the strongest, most direct forms of irrationality seem to create a genuine barrier to understanding; often, we can understand an agent's behavior *by* understanding that it was produced by an irrational process such as wishful thinking.

Problem #2: Unintelligibility seems to be explained by severe irrationality, not the other way around.

Incoherence as internal dysfunctionality

Idea: Mental states have *functions*:

- The function of an intention is to lead to the performance of the intended action
- The function of a belief is for its content to be true.
- Rational requirements have in common that any combinations of mental states that violate them are *guaranteed* to be dysfunctional.

Objection (1) Some mental states that include a necessarily false belief are not irrational.
(2) But all such states guarantee dysfunction
(3) Therefore, guaranteeing dysfunction is not sufficient for irrationality

Descriptive Unity II: Asymmetrical Reductions

Idea Show that one of the requirements of rationality is fundamental to all others.

Options 1) Enkrasia as fundamental
2) Instrumental Rationality as fundamental
3) Representational Consistency/Closure as fundamental

Instrumental Rationality as fundamental

Idea Being irrational is failing to take the best means to one's own ends.

- If one believes, one's end is representing truly; but inconsistent beliefs cannot be true.
- If one intends, one's end is carrying out one's intentions; but one cannot carry out incompatible actions.

Challenge Justify & generalize the claims about necessarily having certain ends.

Problem (1) Either what makes one irrational is not taking the best means *according to one's own means-end beliefs*, or it is not taking what *actually is* the best means.
(2) *Actually best means* yields the wrong result for standard instrumental irrationality.
(3) *Believed best means* yields the wrong result for belief inconsistency. (For, if the believer is not aware of the inconsistency among her beliefs, she does not fail to take what is the best means to true belief according to her own beliefs.)
=> *No unification via instrumental rationality*

Enkrasia as fundamental

Idea Whenever an agent is irrational, she is or behaves in a way in which, according to normative claims she herself accepts, she ought not to behave.

Problems The only normative claim that is necessarily violated when an agent violates a rational requirement is the normative claim that one ought not to violate that requirement. If an agent does not accept that she ought not to have inconsistent beliefs, it is unclear why having inconsistent beliefs would violate a normative claim she herself accepts. But:

- It does not seem to be possible to avoid irrationality simply by refusing to accept rational requirements.
- Insofar as we accept rational requirements, we seem to do so *because* they are requirements of rationality

Representational Consistency/Closure as fundamental

Idea Whenever an agent is irrational, she violates the requirement not to represent the world in logically inconsistent ways.

Core claim: Intending to A involves a belief-like representation of A as an action that is both permissible and possible; preferring an outcome O₁ over an outcome O₂ involves a belief-like representation of O₁ as all things considered better than O₂

Problem #1: Seems to involve an error theory about what *makes* us irrational.

Problem #2: Seems to be unable, for structural reasons, to account for irrationality in virtue of the *absence* of an intention