

Rationality, Normativity and Transparency

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Although in everyday life and thought we take for granted that there are norms of rationality, their existence presents severe philosophical problems. Kolodny (2005) is thus moved to deny that rationality is normative. But this denial is not itself unproblematic, and I argue that Kolodny's defense of it—particularly his Transparency Account, which aims to explain why rationality appears to be normative even though it isn't—is unsuccessful.

1. Introduction

The central thesis of Niko Kolodny's essay 'Why Be Rational?' is that *subjective rationality*—that is, rationality conceived as a matter of internal coherence among one's propositional attitudes—is 'only apparently normative' (2005, p. 509).¹ Although we believe ourselves, as thinkers and agents, to be bound by norms of subjective rationality, we are mistaken. A satisfactory defense of this error theory will require an explanation of why we credit subjective rationality with a significance it does not in fact possess. For Kolodny, this explanatory burden is carried by the 'Transparency Account', which portrays the apparent normativity of subjective rationality as a kind of mirage induced by the authentic normativity of objective reasons. Kolodny's arguments against alternative treatments of rationality are illuminating and insightful. Nonetheless, I believe his Transparency Account fails to discharge the explanatory task that is its reason for being. The aim of this discussion is to show why this is so.

2. Rationality, coherence and normativity

¹ All citations of Kolodny will be to this article.

As Kolodny understands the term, a ‘normative’ principle (or ‘norm’, for short) is one that says something about what one ought, or has reason, to do (or to refrain from doing) in given circumstances. As he points out, a normative principle, so understood, contrasts with a rule or principle whose function is purely *evaluative*, purely a matter of ranking items in relation to some value or desirable quality. Norms do not merely take the measure of human conduct; they guide that conduct.²

Now, Kolodny’s treatment of rationality is conditioned by an assumption widely shared among contemporary philosophers writing on the subject: that principles of rationality are subjective, where that is to say that such principles are concerned only with the internal structure of one’s body of propositional attitudes and not with the ways in which one’s attitudes track or respond to the world outside. As the thought is sometimes put, rationality is a matter of coherence, not correspondence.³ Principles of rationality disfavour changes to one’s body of propositional attitudes that introduce incoherence, and favour changes that eliminate or reduce it.

Granting this assumption, getting a fix on the content of specific principles of rationality will require getting clearer on what it is for a body of attitudes to be coherent or incoherent. Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which a set of attitudes can count as incoherent: by containing inconsistent attitudes, and by lacking an attitude that is corollary to other attitudes in the set. An uncontroversial example of the former would be a set of logically contradictory beliefs; a relatively uncontroversial example of the latter would be a failure to intend a means necessary and sufficient for fulfilling another of one’s intentions. The philosophical (as well as psychological and economic)

² Although the distinction between the ‘normative’ and the evaluative is obviously real, Kolodny’s terminology is not wholly apt, in my opinion. I would prefer to construe the evaluative as a division of the normative, the latter category encompassing, but not exhausted by, what Kolodny calls the ‘normative’, which in turn is better labeled the ‘prescriptive’, the ‘deontic’ or (my preferred choice) the ‘reason-generating’. This more generous construal of the category of the normative is required if we are to make sense, for example, of the thesis, associated with Kripke, that linguistic meaning is normative. But in this paper I will adopt Kolodny’s terminology.

³ This formulation seems to me to obscure the existence of a third (and correct) alternative, but that is not my present concern.

literature catalogues many other ways in which bodies of attitudes can involve inconsistencies or gaps. Kolodny himself does not pursue this enumerative line. Taking a cue from Thomas Scanlon's idea that a person counts as rational insofar as her propositional attitudes reflect her judgements about the reasons for and against them, Kolodny suggests that the two 'core' requirements of rationality, from which all other rational requirements derive, are (where A is a propositional attitude):

C+: Rationality requires one to have A if one believes that one has conclusive reason to have A .

C-: Rationality requires one not to have A if one believes that one lacks sufficient reason to have A .⁴ (p. 524)

This highly abstract proposal has the advantage of bringing to the fore problems that, although they attend any view that equates rationality with coherence, tend to be obscured in more piecemeal treatments. One is the problem of 'bootstrapping'. If C+ is a normative principle, the norm it embodies would presumably be the following: if you believe that you have conclusive reason to have A , then you ought (or more weakly, have at least a *pro tanto* reason) to have A . It follows that you have reason to have any belief or intention you take yourself to have conclusive reason to have, no matter how ill-founded or foolish your original belief that you have such reasons. But it seems absurd that simply in virtue of believing that you have conclusive reason to have A , you should

⁴ For Scanlon's suggestion, see 1998, pp. 22–30. It is worth noting that Kolodny's interpretation of these requirements has a special feature: he believes that rational requirements are best conceived as 'process' rather than 'state' requirements (p. 517). By this, he means that rational requirements do not, or do not merely, indicate which combinations of propositional attitudes count as irrational; rather, they tell you how to form and revise attitudes over time so as to avoid such combinations. As this caveat does not bear on the criticisms I will make of the Transparency Account, I will not place emphasis upon it in the text. (The 'process'–'state' distinction figures in 'Why Be Rational?' as part of an argument against John Broome's theory of 'normative requirements'. Although the idea that rational requirements are process requirements is, in my view, a step toward the right conception of rationality, it is problematic. I critique that distinction, as well as Broome's theory, in Bridges ms.)

‘bootstrap’ into existence a reason for you to have that attitude.⁵

Kolodny argues that existing attempts to resolve this problem (and related problems attendant to ascribing normativity to rationality) do not succeed. His own solution is appealingly straightforward: he denies that rational requirements are normative. This denial raises the question of why we find it so natural to suppose otherwise. The stage is set for the Transparency Account.

3. The Transparency Account

Kolodny doesn’t deny that there *are* requirements of rationality. On the contrary, he believes that C+ and C- are true. Nor does he deny that one might have reason to accord with these requirements. What he denies is that the requirements are inherently normative. That is, he denies that the fact that one’s φ -ing is required for rationality is in and of itself a reason for one to φ .⁶

This denial, Kolodny acknowledges, is at odds with ordinary thought about rationality. We take very seriously the injunction not to be irrational, as evinced by our practice of brandishing charges of irrationality in the effort to convince others (not to mention ourselves) to modify their behaviour.

Kolodny believes that we are labouring under a misapprehension, and the aim of the Transparency Account is to identify the etiology of this misapprehension. The point is to explain *away* the ‘seeming

⁵ There may be an inclination at this point to seek to distinguish between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ senses of ‘reason’ or ‘ought’, and to hope that relegating the normativity of rationality to the former will defuse concerns of this sort. Since Kolodny does not endorse this idea, I do not need to pursue it here. But as several readers of this paper have made this suggestion to me, it may be worth stating my view that the manoeuvre useless. The proper context for thinking about the role of normativity in our lives is that of *deliberation*. Deliberation aims at *settling* what to do or believe. It is no answer at all to the deliberative question, ‘Do I have sufficient reason to believe that p?’ to say that in one sense I do and that in another sense I do not. (Contrast the claim that there are reasons both in favour and against believing that p.) The aim of deliberation ensures a univocal sense to talk about what one has reason to do. And so while there is nothing to stop us from distinguishing ‘subjective’ from ‘objective’ normative principles, such labeling cannot prevent these principles from being in conflict if they make competing claims about what we have reason to do. (For an application of this general point to ‘contextualism’ about moral claims, see Williamson 2005.)

⁶ One might think that to allow that rationality ‘requires’ anything is already to grant that it is normative. But talk of what rationality requires can be taken in at least two ways that do not automatically bring in normativity: it can be taken as a way of stating rules of rationality, and it can be taken as a means of specifying constitutive conditions for possessing the property of rationality—that is, necessary conditions for being rational that are entailed by facts about what it is to be rational. Kolodny intends the former. I think it is a mistake to conceive rationality in terms of rules, but that it is a complex issue I cannot get into here.

normative force of rationality' (p. 513).

The explanation runs as follows. On the Kolodny-Scanlon conception of the content of rational requirements (henceforth 'the K-S conception of rationality'), rationality requires only that you bring your attitudes in line with your own view of the reasons for and against them. The K-S conception has the implication, for example, that rationality cannot require you to adopt attitude A unless you already believe that you have conclusive reason for adopting attitude A. It follows in turn that you cannot recognize that rationality requires you to adopt attitude A without recognizing that you independently believe yourself to have conclusive reasons for that attitude. And so the following possibility arises: that the 'normative pressure' you feel upon being confronted with the relevant rational requirement is entirely the product of this prior belief about the reasons for attitude A. In being put on notice that your adopting attitude A is required for rationality, you are compelled to attend to the reasons for A you already take there to be. The subsequent felt normative pressure is just the call of these reasons. As Kolodny puts the suggestion, 'The normative 'pressure' that we feel, when rational requirements apply to us, derives from these beliefs [about reasons]: from the reasons that, as it seems to us, we have' (p. 509).

Note an appealing feature of this explanation: it does not portray the 'seeming normative force' of rationality as a wholesale illusion, as a phantasm manufactured out of thin air. Your feeling normative pressure when confronted with the rational requirement is the result of your attending to a belief whose content is genuinely normative. Your error lies rather in a failure to see that it is this belief, and not the awareness that you violate the rational requirement, that is the source of the felt normative pressure. The mistake is to move from the observation that confrontation with the rational requirement *occasioned* your belief that you ought to adopt attitude A to the erroneous conclusion that it is the fact that rationality requires you to adopt attitude A that you are *responding to* when you feel yourself pressured to adopt that attitude.

4. Three kinds of case in which the Transparency Account fails

As the above summary makes clear, the Transparency Account presupposes the K-S conception of rationality. If the conception is faulty, then so is the account. I will briefly return to this point in the conclusion. For purposes of the main arguments of this paper, I assume the validity of the conception.

The objection that I will develop is simple to state in the abstract. According to the story just summarized, when a person is inclined to ascribe normative force to the fact that something is rationally required, the perception of normative force is the result of the person's belief that there are independent conclusive reasons for that which is rationally required.⁷ The problem is that there are a variety of situations in which a person might intelligibly feel a rational requirement to have normative force *without* having the requisite belief about reasons, and there seems no way to extend the basic story so as to apply to such cases.

4.1 Irrationality in others

Suppose you have a friend (call her Haley) to whom you have occasion to say the following: 'I get the impression from things you've said recently that you take there to be conclusive reason to believe that your husband is cheating on you. Yet you appear not quite to believe that he is. Given your view of the reasons, you ought to believe it. Rationality requires you to do so.' Suppose, as a result of your remark, Haley comes to 'feel normative pressure' to believe that her husband is cheating on her. We have seen that the Transparency Account has a diagnosis of your remark's

⁷ When I speak of 'independent conclusive reasons for that which is rationally required', I mean reasons for φ -ing that are independent of the fact that φ -ing is rationally required. It is certainly possible to believe that the fact that φ -ing is rationally required is itself a reason, even a conclusive reason, to φ . But of course it is precisely this sort of belief that the Transparency Account means to explain away, and it means to do so by appealing to beliefs about *independent* reasons for φ -ing.

impact on Haley.

But let us take up your perspective rather than Haley's. Suppose the requirement you articulate seems to *you* to have normative force. Is the Transparency Account in a position to diagnose *your* perception? Certainly, there seems no bar to its doing so if you share Haley's judgement that there's independent conclusive reason to believe that her husband is cheating on her. For then the Account can explain your sense of the normative force of the requirement in exactly the way that it would explain Haley's: as a matter of your confusedly ascribing the normative force of the reasons you independently believe there to be to the rational requirement itself. But suppose you do not share Haley's judgement about reasons. Suppose, for example, that you are privy to information that, in your view, undermines the evidence for spousal infidelity Haley takes there to be. If so, the aforementioned explanation is obviously unavailable. We cannot explain your sense of the normative force of the rational requirement by crediting it to a belief about reasons that you do not in fact possess. The question is what the Transparency Account can say about such a case.

Before answering this question, we need to take up a preliminary matter. One might wonder whether it really does make sense to suppose that you, who are not the target of the criticism at issue, might feel the requirement to have normative force. After all, it would certainly be implausible to suppose that you will have an experience aptly characterizable, in Kolodny's favoured phrase, as a feeling of 'normative pressure'. Haley feels such pressure, when presented with the rational requirement, only because she is in violation of it. You, presumably, are not. And so, one might say, you will not have any experience of the 'normative force' of the requirement.

This reaction is a byproduct of the quasi-metaphorical talk of 'normative force' and of 'feeling normative pressure' for which Kolodny has a penchant.⁸ To bring the issue into focus, we need to translate that talk into more literal terms. To speak of a principle as having 'normative force' is just

⁸ The phrase 'normative force' appears six times in the paper; variations of the predicate 'feels normative pressure' appear ten times.

to say that it is a normative principle. That is, it is a principle that tells us something about what one ought, or has reason, to do in certain circumstances. And so to say that a principle has ‘seeming normative force’ to one is to say that one believes, or at least is tempted to believe, that the principle tells us something of this sort. To ‘feel pressure’, meanwhile, at least as the phrase is used in ordinary idiomatic English, is to believe that one is being urged or compelled to do something. To feel specifically *normative* pressure would then be to credit the pressure one feels to a normative principle, to a claim about what one ought or has reason to do (rather than to, say, a threat). ‘Feeling normative pressure’ is thus at least in part a cognitive state; it involves believing, or at least being inclined or tempted to believe, that there is something one ought or has reason to do. Feeling normatively pressured *by a rational requirement* introduces another cognitive state: the belief that it is a rational requirement that makes it the case that there is, or at least appears to be, something one ought or has reason to do.

Presuming, then, that you are in compliance with the requirement you articulate, you will not feel normatively pressured by it—i.e., you will not believe that, in virtue of the dictates of that requirement, there is something you have reason to do. At the same time, you may perfectly well believe that, in virtue of her failure to comply with the requirement, there is something that *Haley* has reason to do. And if you do form such a belief with respect to Haley, then, given the definitions just registered, this belief is as much an experience of the ‘seeming normative force’ of rationality as are the beliefs of Haley that constitute her first-personal feeling of normative pressure.

The answer to our question, then, is that it certainly is possible to have a second- or third-personal perception of the normative force of a rational requirement. Nor would Kolodny disagree. As he puts the point, the ‘normative dimension’ of rational requirements is ‘manifest’ no less ‘from the outside’ (from the second- or third-personal perspective) as ‘from the inside’ (the perspective of the person to whom the requirement applies) (p. 554).

Furthermore, he explicitly acknowledges the possibility of cases like the one now on the table, in which from the second- or third-person perspective the normative force of rationality is felt to pull in a different direction from the normative force of reasons. As he puts the point, ‘from the second- or third-person standpoint ... the ‘ought’ of rationality and the ‘ought’ of reasons come apart’ (p. 558). Indeed, I take it that it is not an uncommon experience to feel that a given person ought to cease being irrational in a certain respect while recognizing that if she were to cease being irrational in that respect, she would adopt attitudes that one believes there to be no independent reason to hold.⁹

So how is the Transparency Account to handle such cases? Kolodny’s explanation of second- and third-personal perceptions of the seeming normative force of rationality is constituted by the following:

[Granting the truth of the K-S conception,] a possibility emerges for explaining the normative dimension of rationality. Let us begin by considering it ‘from the outside’. When we tell someone, in the register of advice, rather than that of appraisal, that he ought rationally to have attitude *A*, or that it would be irrational for him not to have it ... [w]e are making the descriptive, psychological claim that he believes that he has conclusive reason for the attitude. We are telling him, as we might put it, that *from his point of view, or as it seems to him*, he has conclusive reason to have the attitude ... How, then, are we advising him to have *A*? By drawing his attention to a reason for *A* that *he believes* he has. Thus, a second-person charge of irrationality, ‘But you ought to believe it! It would be irrational of you not to!’ says, in effect: ‘Look: from *your* point of view, you have reason to believe it!’ (p. 557)

The gist of this passage seems to be that a remark can intelligibly be classified as ‘advice’ if it was performed with the intention of putting the audience in mind of reasons she takes herself to

⁹ It is true that in such a circumstance one is liable to end up feeling dissonance or even confusion. In the case now on the table, you might find yourself going back and forth on the question, ‘Ought Haley to believe that her husband is cheating on her or oughtn’t she?’ That norms of rationality, if genuine, appear to be open to direct conflicts with other norms of attitude formation is one of the problems attendant to the normativity of rationality that Kolodny aims to solve. It would hardly be in the spirit of his approach to deny even the appearance of the problem.

have for doing something. Apparently, appreciation of this point is supposed to yield an explanation of why the ‘advice’-giver, in the kind of case Kolodny describes, might feel the rational requirement she articulates to have normative force, and in so doing, account for the ‘normative dimension of rationality’ as viewed ‘from the outside’. But how does it do so? To regard yourself as giving advice, in Kolodny’s sense, you needn’t have the remotest inclination to believe that there actually is reason to pursue the course of action your remark is encouraging—it suffices that you believe that the ‘advisee’ will take there to be conclusive reason for doing so. But if you have no inclination to believe that your remark identifies any reasons for doing anything, then the remark has, for you, no ‘seeming normative force’. It follows that this notion of advice-giving is useless for explaining what is involved when you *do* ascribe normative force, from the second- or third-personal perspective, to a rational requirement.

The final sentence of the passage seems to suggest that when we say, ‘You ought to have attitude A, as it would be irrational not to,’ what our remark *means* (or perhaps what *we* mean in uttering it) is that the person we are addressing takes herself to have conclusive reason for A. Perhaps Kolodny wants to make a correlative claim about belief: that to believe *that so-and-so ought to have attitude A because it is required for rationality* is to believe *that so-and-so believes there to be conclusive reason to have attitude A*. Since, as we have seen, having the first belief constitutes having a perception, from the third-personal perspective, that a rational requirement has normative force, it might appear that Kolodny has succeeded after all in equating a third-personal impression of the seeming normative force of rationality with the awareness that one is giving ‘advice’ in his proprietary sense.

But there is an equivocation in the line of thought just traced. Believing that so-and-so ought to have attitude A counts as a perception of normative force only if the ‘ought’ used to express the content of that belief has a normative connotation, such that to say that one ought to φ is to say that φ -ing is advisable, obligatory, supported by reasons, or something of the sort—that it is, in some way

or another, *the thing to do*.¹⁰ Kolodny's proposed interpretation of 'You ought to have attitude A, as it would be irrational not to' strips it of those implications; in so doing, it renders 'ought' a non-normative term. One way to see this point is to note that if feeling a rational requirement to have normative force involved nothing more than believing that that the person 'ought to have attitude A, as it would be irrational not to' in the sense that Kolodny proposes, then Kolodny's master thesis—that 'rationality is only apparently normative' (pp. 509, 513)—would be obviously incorrect. For in *that* sense, there is no question that there are attitudes that people ought to have as it would be irrational for them not to.

A proponent of the Account might respond at this juncture that, while Kolodny may not have succeeded in explaining why rational requirements seem normative from the second- or third-personal perspective, he has at least explained a related phenomenon: namely, why a second-personal claim about rationality can count as advice. There are two problems with this response. First, it is unclear why this point, even if true, should matter for Kolodny's purposes. What Kolodny needs explained is why rational requirements seem *normative*, and, as I have already argued, explaining why claims about rational requirements might count as advice in Kolodny's sense is no contribution at all toward this project.¹¹ Second, Kolodny's notion of advice-giving is itself quite implausible, and it is so precisely because of the break it effects from normative judgement. In ordinary discourse, to 'give advice' to someone is to offer your thoughts on what she ought to do. Certainly, that is what someone who seeks out your advice wants you to provide. On Kolodny's view, by contrast, when you tell someone that rationality requires him to have *A*, you are 'advising him to have *A* ... [b]y drawing his attention to a reason for *A* that *he believes* he has'. So construed, it is perfectly consistent with your 'advising' someone to adopt *A* that you do not yourself believe he has any reason to adopt

¹⁰ Alan Gibbard (2003, pp. 36ff) proposes 'the concept of 'the thing to do'' as the catch-all normative concept.

¹¹ At one point, Kolodny seems to suggest that to 'function as advice' is in itself to be 'normative' in one 'sense' of the latter term (p. 555). But multiplying senses of 'normative' does not help solve the problem raised by his denial that we have reason to be rational; it merely obscures it.

A. Granted, you will believe that *he* thinks he has reason to have *A*. So presumably you believe that in making your remark, there is a decent chance you'll induce him to adopt *A*—something you do not think he has any reason to do. This is not advice-giving. It is manipulation.

4.2 Past irrationality

There is a first-personal analogue to the kind of case just discussed. It turns upon the platitude that people can change their minds about the reasons they have to believe or intend things.

Call the time you make your remark to Haley t_1 . Suppose that by a later time t_2 , Haley has become convinced that she was wrong that there was conclusive reason to believe that her husband was unfaithful. She reflects, nonetheless, that her failure at t_1 to believe that her husband was cheating on her was irrational. And she is inclined to believe that she ought not to have been thus irrational. The problem for the Transparency Account is that we cannot source Haley's perception, at t_2 , of the normative force of rationality to the belief that she had, at t_1 , conclusive reason to believe that her husband was cheating on her. She does not, at t_2 , believe this.

4.3 Irrationality in the abstract

Suppose there were a proposition p and person x —which proposition and which person, we will not specify (for all we know, the person is you or me)—such that x both believes there is conclusive reason that p and does not believe that p . Such a person would violate an instance of C+; intuitively, she ought not to be thus irrational. But of course, we cannot credit our intuition to a belief, of that person and proposition, that the former ought to believe the latter. For all we know, we have no such belief.

The more general point here is that rational requirements seem normative—seem like requirements we ought to satisfy—when we are reflecting on them in the abstract no less than in

connection to concrete cases of particular attitudes and people. Philosophers and decision theorists, for example, have been struck by the apparent normative authority of rational requirements; many, indeed, are convinced that such requirements constitute the only norms of attitude formation that there are. Surely this sense of the normative force of rational requirements retains its grip upon these thinkers even when they do not have in mind particular cases of irrationality, but rather are contemplating, as philosophers and decision theorists are wont to do, such requirements at the degree of abstraction enabled by the use of variables. The Transparency Account has no application to intuitions of the normativity of rational requirements considered in the abstract, when no particular, fully specified instance of C+ or C- is in view.

5. Can the Transparency Account survive in a circumscribed or modified form?

I have argued that, Kolodny's claims to the contrary, the Transparency Account cannot explain a perception of the normative force of rational requirements if there is no particular rational requirement in view, and cannot explain a perception of the normative force of a particular rational requirement if the person having the requirement does not satisfy, or is unaware that she satisfies, the antecedent of that requirement. And I have tried to show, via example, that such perceptions are not infrequent, indeed, that they appear in a range of familiar contexts. As I will now suggest, this result casts serious doubt even on the Transparency Account's handling of the class of cases that remain: those in which the person having the perception of normative force recognizes that she satisfies the antecedent of the relevant requirement. (Just to have a label, I will henceforth call these *type-1 cases*, and the others, of which I have mentioned three varieties, *type-2 cases*.)

There seems no prospect of decisively establishing that the Transparency Account gives an incorrect reckoning of type-1 cases. Unlike type-2 cases, there is no structural or conceptual reason why the Account should fail for these cases. And although the Account is a piece of empirical

psychology, it is empirical psychology of such a highly speculative cast that it is difficult to imagine what sort of empirical evidence might speak against it.

This consideration, however, cuts both ways: it is equally difficult to imagine what sort of empirical evidence might speak in favour of it. Kolodny's own motivation for embracing the Account is not any special evidence to which he is privy, but rather the skeptical solution the Account provides to the philosophical problems attendant to the apparent normativity of rationality. But the Account can achieve Kolodny's theoretical purpose—namely, serving as an explanation of error that enables a blanket denial of the normativity of rationality—only if it can explain *all* ordinary perceptions of the normativity of rationality. We have seen that it cannot possibly explain a wide range of such perceptions. It thus cannot serve its theoretical purpose. Absent further elaboration or modification, we are left with no reason to believe it to be true even for the range of perceptions that remain.

As burden-of-proof claims can be slippery, it is worth emphasizing the limited force of the point I am making here. The motivation that Kolodny offers for the Account is that, as the existence of norms of rationality would generate philosophical difficulties, we would do better to find a way of making sense of our impressions of the normativity of rationality without ceding rationality genuine normative force. If the criticisms made in this paper are correct, however, then the Transparency Account, as presented by Kolodny, can at best explain only a highly circumscribed range of our perceptions of the normative force of rationality. And construed as applying only to cases in the circumscribed range, the Account would not achieve the goal whose achievement was supposed to be the reason for endorsing the Account. That is to say, we are left with no reason for endorsing the Account, so construed.

But this point does not rule out the possibility of folding the circumscribed version of the Account into a larger theory that *does* satisfactorily explain away the full range of our impressions of

the normativity of rationality. There are two ways in which one might try to do so. First, one might opt for a piecemeal treatment, in which type-2 cases are explained by a mechanism unrelated to the one posited by the Account. Second, one might try to extend the core idea of the Account to cover type-2 cases, but to do so in a different, and hopefully more successful, manner than does Kolodny.

As my focus in this discussion is on the theory actually proposed in Kolodny 2005, the question of whether an account of either of the sorts just mentioned can succeed is somewhat beyond its ambit. But I will very briefly describe challenges facing both alternatives—with the caveat that these remarks do not purport to offer decisive objections.

First, a piecemeal approach would perhaps seem feasible if the two classes of perceptions composed discrete, disconnected compartments of our thinking about rationality. But that is not so. Recall that what distinguishes type-1 and type-2 perceptions of the normative force of rationality is not features of their content, but the presence or absence of awareness on the part of the subject that she takes there to be independent conclusive reason for that what is rationally required (or, in the case of C-requirements, that she takes there to be insufficient independent reason for that which is rationally prohibited). As judgements about reasons change, or more specific information about the requirement at issue becomes available, a type-2 perception might shade into a type-1 perception (or vice versa). Given the standing possibility of such transitions, and the fact that type-1 and type-2 perceptions do not differ in content, it seems bizarre that their explanations should be unrelated. On the face of it, it is rather like an error theorist of color offering different explanations of why objects look coloured depending upon whether the observed object is indoors or outdoors.

The second alternative might seem more promising. Here is one possibility along these lines. One begins with the Transparency Account's explanation of type-1 cases. One then attempts to bootstrap the explanation the Account provides of these cases to an explanation of perceptions of the normative force of rationality across the board. The idea would be this: a person first has

mistaken perceptions about the normativity of rational requirements in cases where she herself possesses, and knows she possesses, the beliefs about reasons in virtue of which the requirements apply. This then disposes her to form such perceptions in other sorts of cases. To put it picturesquely, when we encounter rational requirements whose antecedents we know we satisfy, rational requirements acquire a normative aura. They then retain this aura in all of our subsequent dealings with them.¹²

As it stands, this proposal contains a decisive lacuna. Sometimes we will have occasion to reflect on rational requirements whose antecedents we satisfy. Sometimes, as when you recognize Haley as irrational despite not sharing her view that there is conclusive reason to believe her husband is cheating on her, we will have occasion to reflect on rational requirements whose antecedents we do not satisfy. The current proposal claims that occasions of the first sort will encourage us to ascribe normativity to rationality even on occasions of the second sort. But why shouldn't the reverse obtain? Why shouldn't occasions of the second sort encourage us to refrain from ascribing normativity to rationality on occasions of the first sort? *Prima facie*, the first result seems no more likely than the second. Indeed, the second result seems to have fair claim to being the expected outcome, given that, unlike the first, it doesn't depend upon our being subject to a series of conceptual confusions. Is there some principle of human psychology that guarantees the first result? It is hard to see what it might be. But absent a positive answer to this question, the revised proposal does not after all provide a satisfactory explanation of why we falsely take rational requirements to be normative.

This illustrates a general challenge facing attempts to pursue the second alternative: the more psychological mechanisms one has to posit in order to facilitate the transition from beliefs about independent reasons for attitudes to perceptions of the normativity of rational requirements—

¹² I am grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting this modification of the Transparency Account.

mechanisms whose existence we are given no independent reason to believe, and might seem to have independent reason to doubt—the greater the danger it will appear that the tail is wagging the dog. And if so, the claim that one is offering an *explanation* of why we falsely take rationality to be normative will start to appear a mere pretense. Rather, what one is saying, it might seem, is simply that things must work out such that we mistake the normativity of independent reasons for the normativity of rationality—because that is what must be so if philosophers are to safely deny the normativity of rationality.

6. Conclusion

If the Transparency Account is unsuccessful, we are left with the problems raised by the apparent normativity of rationality. My own view is that the first step toward a solution lies in recognizing that when we tell Haley, ‘You ought to believe your husband is cheating on you, as it would be irrational for you not to,’ the error we perceive and are attempting to articulate does not consist simply in the lack of coherence between Haley’s attitudes and her beliefs about the reasons for and against those attitudes, but in the lack of explanatory dependence of the former upon the latter. We can make room for the normativity of rationality once we allow that rationality is not fundamentally a matter of *coherence* but of *control*—control of one’s attitudes by one’s views of the reasons for and against them. But this discussion is not the place to develop this proposal.¹³

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¹³ See Bridges ms. I would like to thank David Finkelstein, Mario Grimm, Niko Kolodny, Will Small, Wai-hung Wong and an anonymous referee for helpful comments on the present paper.

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