Introduction

Teresa Marques
University of Barcelona
University of Lisbon

This is a special issue of *Disputatio* on normativity and rationality. The idea for this volume originated after the fifth European Congress of Analytic Philosophy, ECAP5, which took place in Lisbon in August of 2005. This volume collects the contributions of John Broome, Pascal Engel, Kevin Mulligan, Josep Prades and John Skoruspki, who were speakers on that occasion. The common thread in the diverse talks suggested that a volume on the topic would be of general interest. This common thread, which revealed itself naturally, testifies to issues hotly debated in recent years and also to the centrality of normativity in various philosophical areas.

Normativity is a central notion in distinct areas of philosophy, from ethics, legal philosophy or aesthetics, to philosophy of mind, language and action. It is of special importance in accounts of rationality, either theoretical or practical, since rationality can be characterized as a system of requirements or principles. For instance, it seems to be a requirement of rationality that one should not have contradictory beliefs, that one believes what follows by modus ponens from beliefs one holds, or that that one should intend to do what one believes one should do (cf. Broome, p. 162–163 this volume).

What we mean by 'normativity', though, can be thought to be ambiguous. And it can be thought to be so in several ways (Broome, Engel and Skorupski, in this volume, make different distinctions between possible senses of 'normativity'). I will restrict myself here to two ways of understanding what we might mean by 'normativity.' In one sense, normativity concerns any principles or rules governing a given practice, activity or conduct. As such, it concerns the evaluation of acts, attitudes or mental states as those which are correct, justified or which one ought to do, have or be in, because they conform to the rules or norms governing them. In other words, an act or state might be correct or justified because, and insofar as, it follows a given rule or norm. For instance, driving on

the right hand side of the road in continental Europe is correct insofar as it conforms to European traffic regulations. Here is a distinct type of example: it might be correct to infer *q* from *p*, and from if *p*, then *q*, because doing so conforms to modus ponens. Thus, a given rule or requirement sets a standard according to which an act or state is evaluated as correct or incorrect. It is correct if it follows the rule. Normativity, in this sense, is a standard for the evaluation of *acts* or of *states*.

Some rules or requirements might also be thought to be constitutive of the practices they regulate. A typical example is that of the rules that govern chess as constituting what the game is. An interesting question debated in the current literature on normativity is whether there are constitutive norms for certain activities, such as speech acts like assertion, or intentional states like belief or desire. The constitutive norms for specific acts or intentional states would both individuate those acts or states as distinct from other acts or states, and would also set the relevant standard according to which that act, or state, is correct.

There is another sense of normativity, though. That concerns whether one *ought* to follow, or has reasons to follow, given requirements or principles. To illustrate, consider the traffic regulations example. It is one thing to say that you will follow the traffic regulations in continental Europe only if you drive on the right; it is another thing to say that when you drive in continental Europe you ought, or have reason, to follow the traffic regulations enforced.

Insofar as one is bound to follow given rules, by engaging in a norm-governed activity (either driving in continental Europe, or reasoning), one is held accountable and responsible for complying, or failing to comply, with the rules enforced. Normativity, in this second sense, imposes a standard of evaluation *on agents* as committed to, and responsible for, following given rules or requirements.

The second sense of normativity is of special importance in accounts of rationality, where the two senses can be illustrated with specific examples. So, it is one thing to say that you do not violate the principle of non-contradiction if you do not have contradictory beliefs (first sense of normativity). It is quite another thing to say that it is *irrational* to have contradictory beliefs, that is, that *you ought*, because rationality so requires, not to have contradictory beliefs. The general question is whether these requirements or principles of rationality provide reasons, and whether they impose

obligations, to act in given ways. This relates to more basic issues of practical rationality. Namely, to what it is for *X* to be a reason for an agent to do *F*, where *X* can be a fact that is taken as a reason to *F*, or as an end desired or intended by an agent.

The papers in this volume take their position within the different areas of the current debate on normativity and rationality, although naturally they do not exhaust all the different aspects of the ongoing discussion. One of the issues approached by two of the authors in this volume is whether intentional states can be individuated in terms of their correctness conditions.

Kevin Mulligan's paper, 'Intentionality, Knowledge and Formal Objects,' concerns the broad issue of how to characterize the intentionality of factive mental states in contrast with the intentionality of non-factive mental states, or, as Mulligan puts it, the intentionality of states which can, and those which cannot, miss their mark. Mulligan argues for an intrinsic constitutive difference between the two kinds of states. He contrasts two accounts of the intentionality of states that can miss their mark: theories of correctness conditions and theories of satisfaction conditions. Mulligan favours normative accounts of non-factive mental states, i.e., those that appeal to correctness conditions to individuate the intentional states in question.

In contrast with the states that can miss their mark are factive states, like knowing or seeing. Mulligan proposes that the intentionality of factive states is more basic than that of non-factive intentional states, and suggests that the most basic mind-world relations are not normative. He further claims that the type of intentionality of the most basic, factive, intentional states, weighs in favour of normative accounts of non-factive intentional states.

Pascal Engel's paper, 'Belief and Normativity,' also focuses on the possibility of elucidating intentional states, in particular belief, in normative terms, and offers a defence of the claim that the norm of belief is truth. Rather than contrast the norm of truth for belief with other possible constitutive norms, Engel examines versions of the claim that the truth norm is individuative of beliefs and defends this from several criticisms. It is a significant feature of the debate on the normativity of intentional states (i.e., of the debate concerning which norm, if any, governs an intentional state), revealed in Engel's discussion, that objections against a certain norm governing an act or state should appeal to issues pertaining to normativity in the second sense described earlier. That is, criticisms against some-

thing being a constitutive norm often draw on what subjects ought to do, or have reasons to do, and on agents' motivations to act, arguing that the putative norm is impossible to follow, or is not motivating, etc.

In the particular case of belief, which Engel considers, the criticisms against the truth norm claim that it lacks normative force, that it violates the principle that 'ought' implies 'can', and that it is viciously circular. The first objection makes sense once the two ways to understand 'normativity' are distinguished. If there were a norm constitutive of belief, that would not explain in what sense, if any, one *ought* to believe what is true. The second objection elaborates on the normative force of the putative truth norm of belief, and insists that the truth norm for belief is impossible to satisfy, imposing on believers constraints which they cannot meet — people cannot be expected to believe *all* truths, for instance. The concern then becomes how to formulate a constitutive norm for belief which imposes on believers a requirement which they can satisfy. The final objection concerns why speakers care for believing the truth, i.e., how the truth-norm is supposed to be motivating, without being necessarily so. The objection is that if the truth norm is constitutive of belief, then it necessitates motivation. If so, the sense in which it is supposed to be normative is unclear. Engel proposes, in reply, a formulation of the truth norm which, he argues, avoids the objections — for any p, a subject S ought to believe that p only if p, and proposes that one should distinguish between a norm and its regulation.

As mentioned, it is a revealing fact about debates on normativity that concerns with what agents have reasons or ought to do, and with what they are motivated to do — i.e., concerns that depend on normativity in the second sense introduced earlier — weigh in favour, or against, given particular norms, rules or principles as providing the standards of correctness for specific actions or intentional states.

Josep Prades's paper in this volume, 'Acting without Reasons,' offers a sceptical and critical perspective on the role of reasons in practical rationality in general. The concern is with the patterns of practical reasoning, and with how to explain that an agent can take X as a reason to do F. Prades offers a general argument form, which is independent of what provides reasons to act, whether desires or other pro-attitudes. In his paper, he illustrates the argument with examples. The general form of the argument is the following. If a

set *G* of pro-attitudes is sufficient to motivate a subject *S* to act, then it is also sufficient to motivate a subject *R* to act (on the assumption that *S* and *R* have the same pro-attitudes regarding *F*). However, *G* is not sufficient to motivate *R* to do *F*, because *R* does not do *F*. Since *R* has the same pro-attitudes as *S*, but is not motivated to act by them, it follows that those pro-attitudes are not motivating, and therefore, not motivating *even* for *S*.

Prades's explanation of this is that when an agent answers a why-question, s/he does not give his/her reasons to form a given intention. Rather s/he identifies the *content* of the intention to do *F*. In reply to why-questions, the agent explores conversational commitments to provide relevant information about the intention with which s/he acts. Among the many causal antecedents for an action, the agent chooses to mention those that conversationally implicate information about the relevant kind of reason one is being asked about. These Prades calls *Content Determining Reasons* (CD). The conversational implicature can be cancelled, indicating that the original rationalization was not the correct one. Prades concludes by offering general remarks on the structure of practical reason. There is nothing, he believes, like a logical form of pure instrumental practical reasoning, because there is nothing like pure instrumental practical reasoning. No rational agent chooses a means just in virtue of its instrumental relation with a given goal. Rather, agents make up their minds forming specific intentions, a process that can be ideally rationalized.

A radically different attitude towards the role of reasons in our rational lives is put forward by John Skorupski, in his paper 'What is Normativity?' Skorupski offers a positive attempt to elucidate and formulate what he calls *Reasons Thesis*, the thesis that the fundamental normative concept is that of a reason. Skorupski motivates the Reasons Thesis in different ways; one central motivation for it is that it illuminates, he believes, the 'fact/value' or 'is/ought' distinction. Another motivation for the thesis is, he thinks, that normativity must come down to an agent's reasons for belief, feeling or action, i.e., to the relation between facts, on the one hand, and reason-responsive acts and states, on the other hand.

Skorupski considers two ways to formulate the Reasons Thesis. The first one takes any normative predicate to be definable in terms of a reason predicate. This is the semantic thesis. The conceptual thesis, in contrast, takes the normative component in any normative

concept to be a concept of a reason. Skorupski does not defend the semantic thesis, reducing normative predicates to reason predicates, since it may turn out, as it seems to happen in particular cases, that if a normative predicate is defined in terms of a reason to act, or feel, we may then only be able to define the act or sentiment by appealing to the normative term itself. The project would be jeopardized by the risk of circularity. Thus, Skorupski proposes that any normative concept be elucidated in terms of what is required for its possession. Skorupski dedicates most of the paper to trying to explore how far the semantic thesis can be taken, since this might nonetheless be illuminating for the understanding the Reasons Thesis.

A problem that a proponent of the semantic thesis might have is to identify which terms are normative. Skorupski's strategy is to focus on prominent types of *prima facie* normative terms that are definable in terms of reason predicates. He distinguishes between three types of relational reason predicates: specific reasons of degree, overall reasons of degree and sufficient reasons. Skorupski then defines what are the explicit normative sentences — atomic normative sentences, built from the relational reason predicates, and sentences built from atomic normative sentences by means of the connectives of propositional logic, the quantifiers and the truth operator. It follows, on his account, that the negation of a normative sentence or a conditional sentence with a normative consequent will be normative sentences too. The point of this strategy is to establish that one cannot derive *normative* conclusions from true non-normative premises alone, which, Skorupski believes, captures the 'is/ought' or 'fact/value' distinction. In the remaining of his paper, Skorupski undertakes the task of showing how predicates that we are disposed to classify as normative will also be normative in *his* sense, advancing arguments to so classify both thin and thick normative predicates. (Among the thin predicates he considers 'ought,' 'should,' 'right,' 'good,' or 'bad.' In the case of 'good' and 'bad,' in particular, Skorupski defends a buck-passing account as a plausible reduction to reasons, and replies to possible objections.)

John Broome's paper, 'Is Rationality Normative?' takes a much more sceptical outlook on normative issues, addressing the central question of whether rationality gives us reasons to follow its requirements. Another way to raise the same question is to ask whether one ought to be rational. Broome draws on a distinction between two senses of normativity, along the lines of the one de-

scribed in the beginning of this introduction. In one sense, what is normative is what sets a standard of correctness conditions, correctness according to specific rules or requirements. Another sense, that with which his paper is concerned, is whether those requirements give one reasons to follow them. Broome takes a sceptical perspective about possible answers to the question. Broome thinks that rationality is normative, but he argues that there are no good arguments in support of the claim that it is. Among the different requirements of rationality are, for instance, that you should believe what follows by modus ponens from things you believe, or that you should comply with the requirement of krasia: to intend to do what you believe you ought to do. Broome finds no satisfactory argument to show that rationality is normative, that is, that it gives us reasons to follow its requirements.

Broome construes the thesis of the normativity of rationality in three different degrees of strength. Strong: Necessarily, if rationality requires *S* to *F*, then *S* ought to *F* because rationality requires it. (Rationality provides a sufficient reason to *F*). Medium: necessarily, if rationality requires *S* to *F*, there's a reason for *S* to *F* (either a sufficient or pro tanto reason). Weak: necessarily, if rationality requires *S* to *F*, there's a reason for *S* to *F* (which is either sufficient or pro tanto, but the rational requirement might not be the reason). Weak normativity is entailed by medium normativity, which in turn is entailed by strong. Broome holds that it is difficult to explain why any form of normativity (weak or otherwise) is true, if it is true. In the remaining of the paper, he argues that there are no good arguments to support even weak normativity. He considers the idea that rationality is normative for instrumental reasons, because it helps one to achieve some of the things one ought to achieve, as well as the idea that rationality consists in responding correctly to reasons, and rejects both.

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Teresa Marques
LOGOS research group
Departament de Lògica, Història i Filosofia de la Ciència
Facultat de Filosofia, Montalegre, 6-8, 4ª planta
08001 Barcelona, Spain

LanCog research group
Centro de Filosofia, Universidade de Lisboa
Faculdade de Letras, Alameda da Universidade
1600-214 Lisboa, Portugal
teresamarques@fl.ul.pt

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