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Normative Conflicts and the Structure of Normativity¹

O. INTRODUCTION

When I began my graduate studies in 1997, what might be dubbed, 'the normativity revolution' was already well under way. In the wake of influential work by Jonathan Dancy, Thomas Nagel, Derek Parfit, Joseph Raz, and Bernard Williams, people studying practical philosophy had become increasingly focused the general phenomenon of normativity, deemphasising to some degree more traditional and narrower inquiries into specific normatic topics, such as morality and prudence.

The principal unit of currency in these debates was *a reason*. By the time I had dipped a toe in the water as a researcher, the assumption that the study of normativity was the study of reasons had rooted itself so deeply amongst practical philosophers that one might barely have thought to question it.

It is thus interesting, and from an historical point of view important, to note that many of the advances in present thinking about normativity arose from John Broome's striking suggestion that progress had been stifled by an excessive focus on reasons. At first by fixing our attention on the importance of normative relations best captured with *oughts*, and later through his discussion of requirements, Broome did much to reshape our fundamental understanding of the normative world.² One lesson to take away from Broome's work is that if one has an ought, one does not need a reason. To put it another way, oughts are stronger than reasons. If one knows what one ought to

¹ I am very grateful to John Broome and Michael Zimmerman for valuable feedback on this paper. I should also especially like to thank Bruno Guindon, whose acuity as an interlocutor and writer on closely related subjects has improved my understanding of many of the issues touched on in this paper.

² The initial suggestion that we focus on oughts was made in Broome (1999). His work on requirements can be traced through a number of papers, but it is most highly developed in Broome (2007 and 2013).

do,³ then one knows what normativity requires of oneself; merely knowing that one has a reason or reasons to do something leaves it open that normativity nonetheless requires one to do something else.

In this chapter, I shall be considering a new lesson that we might learn from Broome's insight into the centrality of ought: our views about certain features of ought constrain importantly what views are available to us concerning reasons.⁴ In particular, they constrain the possible relations between particular kinds of reasons – e.g. reasons to act, believe, or feel – and the sources of each of those kinds of reasons.⁵ The features of ought that are of special interest here are those that concern whether there are genuine conflicts amongst final oughts, or whether such conflicts are only apparent. I shall call conflicts amongst final oughts 'normative conflicts', and the standard for the occurrence thereof is the mutual non-satisfiability of two or more final oughts.⁶ I shall conclude that the most common view about the relation between types of reasons and their sources commits one to the existence of genuine normative conflicts. I shall also suggest, tentatively, that philosophers inclined towards rejecting the possibility of genuine normative conflicts may be pressed to consider universal pragmatism about reasons.

1. ASSUMPTIONS

There remain many unresolved questions about the nature of oughts and of reasons. This paper is not the place to resolve them. I am therefore adopting the expedient of working with the

³ As I do in other places in this paper, I am using 'do' somewhat incorrectly as a universal verb. Here it is to be understood to include under its scope the having of various attitudes, including beliefs and feelings, in addition to the performance of actions.

⁴ The constraint is symmetrical; views about the relevant features of reasons will also constrain possible views about oughts.

⁵ I draw the use of 'source' in this paper from Reisner (2004). Its use here is broadly similar to how it is used in Broome (2007 and 2013), with the difference that I am relating sources directly to reasons, whereas Broome relates them first to requirements and via requirements to reasons.

⁶ I leave it open as to the correct type of mutual non-satisfiability to be employed in the condition, but I am assuming that the analytic, metaphysical, or conceptual impossibility of satisfying two or more oughts will suffice.

views that I take to be correct. How much, and how many, of the arguments in this paper hinge on adopting these views about reasons is difficult to assess. My suspicion is that the details of the background views about reasons adopted here are of little consequence to the overall discussion. I shall assume an ordinary version of reasons externalism: that facts or considerations provide normative reasons to do, feel, and believe things. These facts and reasons are not, or are not for the most part, dependent on an individual's mental states or motivations.⁷

I have also worked under the assumption that there is what I shall call a 'rock bottom' or 'final' ought. The English word 'ought' no doubt has varied applications;⁸ I am only interested in one of them, and I can only gesture at it, since it is not analysable. It is the most basic normative use of the word 'ought', the one that applies to agents, and the one that figures in the rational requirement to intend to do what you believe you ought to do.⁹

I shall remain neutral about whether the relevant facts or considerations are themselves reasons, or whether they provide reasons. However, I am assuming that reasons, at least in most cases, determine what it is that one ought to do, believe, feel, etc.¹⁰ I am assuming cognitivism about sentences using normative language ('reason', 'ought') and also cognitivism about normative judgements. Concerning the metaphysics of reasons, I am assuming some form of non-naturalist realism. It is not clear how much hinges on either of these assumptions.

What is important is that these assumptions are all compatible with a wide variety of what may be called 'normative architectures'. Normative architectures are different ways reasons and their sources can relate to each other. The kind of constraints that different views about normative

⁷ See Parfit (2001) for the standard account of externalism about reasons.

⁸ Broome (2007) and Cariani (2013) discuss the uses of 'ought' in great depth. A standardly used, but problematic, semantics for 'ought' is given by standard deontic logic. See Forrester (1996): ch. 2.

⁹ For a defense of this way of individuating the the final ought, see Broome (2005 and 2013) and Wedgwood (2007).

¹⁰ I am unsure whether this is consistent with efforts to analyse reasons in terms of oughts. See Broome (2005) and Kearns and Star (2005) for examples of such analyses. I am assuming no such analysis here.

conflicts put on a theory of reasons, and therefore on the overall theory of normativity, are at minimum architectural constraints. Not all architectures are compatible with all views about the possibility of normative conflicts.

2. CONFLICTS

One simple way of thinking about reasons is that they are the normative entities that aggregate or combine in various ways to yield oughts. The kind of ought I have in mind is that of the final normative operator: the all-things-considered or final ought. It is the ought that is at normative rock bottom: there is no further, more fundamental ought or other normative notion. This does not preclude the possibility that there is more than one type of final ought at rock bottom. There may be a single ‘just plain ought’,¹¹ or there may be a number of domain specific oughts – ought to believe, ought to do, ought to feel, etc. – that are jointly at rock bottom. Normative conflicts occur when there are two or more final oughts that are not mutually satisfiable.

Normative conflicts can be classified by whether they are intra-domain conflicts or inter-domain conflicts. By ‘domain’, I mean that of, for example, practical normativity (what one ought to do, intend, etc.), theoretical normativity (what one ought to believe), affective normativity (what one ought to feel), and any other category of this kind.

Intra-domain conflicts occur when competing reasons within a domain (putatively) generate mutually unsatisfiable oughts. One way to generate intra-domain conflicts is to consider (putative) conflicts between different kinds of reasons for a particular propositional attitude. For example, there might be mutually unsatisfiable differences between what an agent ought to desire, given her state-given reasons, and what she ought to desire, given her object-given reasons.¹² Object-given

¹¹ I take the phrase from McLeod (2001).

¹² The classic discussions of this distinction may be found in Parfit (2001) and Piller (2006).

reasons for desires are normally thought to be given by the goodness of the object of the desire.¹³ State-given reasons for desires are given by the goodness of having particular desires. For example, an evil demon will punish you unless you do not have a desire to help those in need. That gives you, suppose, an overwhelmingly strong state-given reason not to desire to help those in need. That helping those in need is, suppose, a very good thing to do gives you an overwhelmingly strong object-given reason to desire to help those in need. According to your state-given reasons, you ought not to desire to help those in need; according to your object-given reasons, you ought to desire to help those in need. Assuming that there are both state and object-given reasons, there is an (at least putative) intra-domain normative conflict in this case.¹⁴

Inter-domain normative conflicts occur when what you ought to do¹⁵ in one domain precludes you from doing what you ought to do in another domain. Here is an example. Suppose that the evidence strongly suggests that p is the case. On a number of common views about theoretical reasons, one ought to believe p . Suppose, however, that believing p will make you depressed and will interfere with your life. And, further, suppose that you foreseeably will not rely on whether p is the case for any consequential decisions. On a number of common views about practical reasons, you ought to cause yourself not to believe p (by reading lots of anti- p propaganda, by only hanging around with others who are agnostic about p or who disbelieve it, etc.).¹⁶ ‘Cause’ is a success verb, so if you do what you ought to do (cause yourself not to believe p), you will not believe p . However, you ought to believe p . So, you cannot do what practical normativity says that you ought to do and

¹³ It is this feature of object-given reasons for desire and other pro-attitudes that underpins fitting attitude analyses of value.

¹⁴ This example assumes that state-given reasons cannot be reduced to object-given reasons, but examples can be generated without this assumption. For a defense of the non-reducibility of state-given reasons, see Reisner (2009). Parfit (2001) and Skorupski (2011), defend the reducibility of state-given reasons to object-given reasons.

¹⁵ I use ‘do’ here as a universal verb, so it is meant to include beliefs and feelings. English lacks a universal verb, so one has to be stipulated for this purpose.

¹⁶ For examples, see Parfit (2001) and Skorupski (2011).

believe what theoretical normativity says that you ought to believe. This is an example of an inter-domain conflict.

Putative normative conflicts of both varieties are interesting for a number of reasons. It is tempting, at least, to formulate questions about these conflicts by employing a final ought, although of course one may do so under other descriptions. For example, one might ask, 'Ought I to do¹⁷ as practical rationality says that I ought, or as theoretical rationality says that I ought?' This suggests that we at least possess the concept of a final ought that is not pegged to a particular domain. At the same time, in asking whether there are genuine conflicts, we raise the possibility that there is more than one final ought, each pegged to a particular domain. The pluralistic view about final oughts is very common.¹⁸ People whom I shall call 'normative separatists' (or 'separatists') think that there are distinct final oughts for each domain of normativity, for example one of theoretical reason, one of practical reason, and one of affective reason. Within any single domain, it is open to the separatist to think either that there are intra-domain conflicts, or that there are not. Normative separatism is not the only possible response to putative inter-domain conflicts. One could be what I shall call a 'normative non-separatist' or 'non-separatist'. Non-separatists think there is one, single final ought that ranges over all the normative domains. There is more than one possible response for the non-separatist to putative normative conflicts at the inter-domain level. Non-separatists can accept that more than one of the single, final, inter-domain oughts can obtain and conflict, or that all putative normative conflicts are apparent.

¹⁷ Here 'do' is being used as a universal verb.

¹⁸ For examples, see Buchak and Pettiet's paper in this volume; Hieronymi 2005; Parfit, 2001; and Skorupski, 2011.

3. CONFLICTS AND THE STRUCTURE OF NORMATIVITY

There are at least two distinct ways of thinking about putative normative conflicts, at a meta-normative level and at a first-order level. At the meta-normative level, one might adopt normative architectures that do, or alternatively do not, allow for normative conflicts. If a normative architecture does not allow for normative conflicts, then one must provide first-order solutions to the conflicts.¹⁹ If it does allow for normative conflicts, then no first-order solution is required.

A complete theory of the architecture or logical structure of normativity would have to tell us what sorts of things there are reasons for, such as beliefs, desires, actions, intentions, emotions, etc. It would also have to tell us something about where those reasons came from: the sources of normativity – evidence, benefit, and so on.²⁰ We can ask whether each different type of thing for which there are reasons or oughts has a different source of normativity. And, we can ask whether the sources of normativity for one domain of normativity may also serve as sources for other domains of normativity. We would need to know whether or not (and if so, how) the reasons and oughts that arise in each domain of normativity (the practical, the theoretical, and so on) could be weighed against or otherwise compared with the reasons and oughts from other domains of normativity.

Looking at different possible architectures helps us to think about whether to accept normative separatism or normative non-separatism. Normative separatists believe that, when the ought of theoretical normativity and the ought of practical normativity conflict, there is no further question as to whether one ought to comply with the theoretical or the practical ought. The practical ought and the theoretical ought are both final oughts; there is no more basic ought that subsumes them.

¹⁹ For example, one must say something about how to weigh the reasons that contributed to the apparently conflicting oughts, or one must come up with a theory about which apparent ought actually comes up trumps. For a worked out version of the former approach in the epistemic sphere, see Reisner (2008).

²⁰ For more on the sources of normativity, see Broome (2013), Guindon (MS), and Reisner (2004).

Normative separatists need not deny that practical and theoretical normativity have various internal structural affinities with one another, but they must maintain that they are not logically related in a way such that the demands of different domains of normativity are comparable with respect to a more basic ought. Non-separatists are in a position to ask first-order questions about the possible resolvability of inter-domain conflicts.

Before continuing with the analysis of possible normative architectures, it is useful to say something very briefly about sources of normativity. While a partial analysis of a source of normativity is given in §3.1, it is worth noting in advance that the notion is not wholly unproblematic.

A source of normativity may be intuitively understood as that in virtue of which a reason relation holds, or a particular kind of explanation of why a fact is a reason of a particular type. For example, the fact that there is a seminar today is a reason for me to believe that it is not the weekend. That fact is a reason for that belief, because that fact is evidence for the contents of the belief. The source of normativity for the reason is evidence, or perhaps truth.

Sometimes it might be difficult to say why something is a reason for something else, even in cases in which intuition tells us that it is. Suppose Loretta's windowsill is unadorned and has no plant on it. The fact that Loretta's windowsill does not have a plant on it is a reason for you to give her a plant. What is the source of normativity? It might be beneficence, as Loretta will be happier, if she has a plant on her windowsill. It could be beauty, as the windowsill will not look very nice without a plant on it. Or, perhaps, there is nothing much more to say about why the fact that Loretta's windowsill does not have a plant on it is a reason for you to give her a plant. At least, I am not certain what the correct thing is to say in this case. One possibility is that the fact that Loretta's windowsill is unadorned is (or provides) three distinct reasons for me to give her a plant. These reasons will be distinguished not by their *relata* – they are in each case the fact that Loretta's

windowsill is unadorned, me, and giving her a plant – but the source that grounds this relation.

Despite difficulties with individuation, I see little reason to doubt that there are sources of normativity. Two examples may help. Strict evidentialists think that reasons for belief only issue from evidence or perhaps truth.²¹ Thus truth or evidence is the source of reasons for belief. Strict consequentialists about reasons for action believe that reasons for action issue only from features of the goodness of states of affairs that will (or are expected to) result from the action in question.²² They believe that goodness is the source of reasons for action. What the notion of a source of normativity lacks in clarity, I hope is made up for by its intuitiveness.

3.1 Possible normative architectures 1: basic and derivative normativity

In order to begin exploring normative conflicts, two notions may be introduced. They are the notions of basic normativity and derivative normativity. Value theorists distinguish between final and derived value: some things are valuable in-and-of-themselves²³ and others are valuable in virtue of their – often instrumental – relationship to something that is itself finally valuable. I shall offer a similar distinction for normativity, one between basic and derivative normativity.

It will also be helpful at this juncture to say something about the logical structure of ought. Ought is an operator that operates on propositions. We can analyse any ought sentence, at least when ought is serving its role as the basic normative operator, as saying ‘Ought *p*’, where *p* is some proposition.

Initially it might look unlikely that ought governs a proposition, as the normal English usage of ‘ought’ has it taking an infinitive. ‘Ought that’ is not a normal locution in English, and we normally

²¹ See Adler (2002); Kelly (2002) Shah (2006), and Shah and Velleman (2005) for examples of strict evidentialism.

²² A version of this view can be generated by combining Broome's *teleology* and *consequentialism*. See Broome (2004a).

²³ It may be misleading to say ‘in-and-of-themselves’, as there may be final, but extrinsic, value.

expect operators that take propositions to be followed by a 'that' rather than an infinitive.

Nonetheless there are locutions in English, which in many contexts mean the same thing as ought sentences do, that take 'that'. Here are two examples. One may say, 'It is fitting that he goes the store', or one may say, 'It is meet that Achilles honours his friends.' More importantly, the claim that infinitives do not express propositions is sometimes a mistake, as in some uses infinitives contain tacit subjects. There need be nothing conceptually different between the locutions: 'He ought that he goes to the shop' and 'He ought to go to the shop', since 'to go to the shop' in fact has a tacit subject, which is 'he'. However, there is an advantage to using the non-grammatical 'ought that' over the grammatical 'ought to', and that is the ease with which one can make the tacit subject of the sentence that ought governs explicit. There are other good reasons for using 'ought that' in this context, the primary one being that it allows for a convenient way of expressing an ought governing a conditional sentence, such as 'He ought that if he goes to the store, then he buys some eggs'.²⁴ In normal English usage, an ought governing a conditional is attached to the consequent of the sentence, 'If he goes to the store, then he ought to buy some eggs'. Unfortunately, this is the identical locution used in English to express the case in which the ought is attached to the consequent. Ordinary English has no grammatical means for distinguishing between oughts that govern only the consequent and those that govern whole conditionals. Further, it may seem at first that we can understand the sentence 'I ought to go to the shop' as logically expressing: 'Ought that I go to the shop'. That expression is incomplete, because the ought operator needs a subject. To provide a more accurate ought sentence, we can use what I shall call an 'O-form sentence'. This an example of one: 'I ought that I go to the shop'.

In the O-form sentence 'I ought that I go to the shop', the subject of the ought and the subject

²⁴ For further discussion of this form of ought sentence, see Broome (2013) and Reisner (2004).

of the proposition that it governs are the same. Nevertheless, the subjects are logically distinct, and the O-form sentence allows one to make the distinction explicit. It is in principle possible in the grammar of an O-form sentence for the subject of the ought to be different from the subject of the proposition that it governs, although the plausibility of such cases will not be discussed here.²⁵

Although oughts and reasons have different logical structures, they are similar in three respects that are relevant here. First, they both index to an agent: *A* ought that *A* do *x*, and *f* is a reason for *A* that *A* do *x*. Second, we can type both oughts and reasons by what they are oughts or reasons for. A reason is a reason for belief (a theoretical reason), just if the relation is of the form: fact *f* is a reason for agent *A* that *A* believe *b*. And an ought is a 'belief ought' just if the O-form sentence is of the form: *A* ought that *A* believes *b*. When the expression 'type of ought' is used in this paper, it refers to whether the O-form sentence is an action sentence, a belief sentence, a feeling sentence, etc.²⁶ 'Type of reason' is used in the same manner. Although both oughts and reasons govern propositions, in the remainder of the paper I shall sometimes discuss reasons for action or for belief rather than reasons for propositions concerning actions or propositions concerning beliefs. I do this because the sentences that emply the full propositional form quickly become cumbersome.

It will be useful to say a bit more about what a source of normativity is.²⁷ It is perhaps misleading to suggest that normativity has a source. The use of the word 'source' might wrongly be interpreted to imply that normativity flows from some interesting metaphysical construction in

²⁵ I am sceptical that the concept of ought admits of a divergence between its subject and the subject of the proposition that it governs, but this is not a matter of logical or grammatical form.

²⁶ Note that I am using O-form sentences to make explicit the structure of the correlating proposition. The 'just if' used here is not meant to exclude belief-ought sentences that are superficially different in form.

²⁷ My notion of a source of normativity is close to what Broome has in mind in Broome (2013). I do not think that it is quite the same, however. I am not committed to there being a general relation between requirements and sources, nor to the picture that Broome provides concerning the relationship amongst reasons, requirements, and sources. For an interesting alternative picture to Broome's, see Guindon (MS). See also Michael Zimmerman's chapter in this volume (Chapter 11).

the way light does from the sun. A better analysis will appeal instead to a ground in virtue of which an ought fact or reason relation obtains.

Assume that the fact that Mary is drowning is a reason for James that he save her. One can ask what sort of reason this is. It is a reason for an action, that James saves Mary. One can also ask why the fact that Mary is drowning is a reason for James that he saves her. One might answer by saying that in these circumstances, Mary would benefit from being saved by James. That it benefits Mary in these circumstances is the explanation of why the fact that Mary is drowning is a reason for James to save her.

Consider a case involving a reason for belief. The fact that today is Tuesday is a reason for me to believe that yesterday was Monday. Here, what makes this fact is a reason for me to believe that yesterday was Monday is that its being Tuesday metaphysically necessitates that (provided there was a yesterday) yesterday was Monday. In both of these examples, there is a ground in virtue of which some fact is a reason for something. In the case of the action above, it is that it is beneficial to Mary (or just generally) for James to save her when Mary is drowning. In the belief example, it is that the fact that is the reason is evidence for the contents of the belief.

Not all sources of reasons will be quite as simple to identify as benefit or evidence. There may be an unlimited number of normative sources or very few. Radical pragmatists, for example, might think that benefit is the only source of normativity for any type of reason.²⁸ A radical pluralist might think that each reason has a slightly different source. The possible relations of sources to reasons will be discussed below.

We can now move on to discuss basic and derivative normativity. Basic normativity is normativity that does not derive from its object's role as a means to, in promoting, or as a

²⁸ This seems to be Stephen Stich's view. See Stich (1993).

component of some other normative end. Derivative normativity is any normativity that is not basic.

As an example, consider a simple theory of normativity that tells you that you have reason to do whatever will make you happy. Looking at a case involving reasons, the fact that eating sweets will make you happy is a reason for you to eat sweets. The normativity of that reason is basic. Eating sweets is one of the things that makes you happy. Saving money, on the other hand, does not make you happy. However, in order to buy sweets, you must have saved some money. So, there is a derivative reason to save your money. The fact that saving money will allow you to buy sweets, which in turn will make you happy, is a reason for you to save your money.

3.2 Possible normative architectures: combinations of views about basic normativity and types of reasons

This section discusses the ways in which sources of basic normativity can combine with different types of reasons and oughts. Normative architectures are defined along two axes. The first axis divides between normative monism and normative pluralism. Normative monism and pluralism each reflect a claim about the number of sources of basic normativity. Normative monism is the view that there is only one source of basic normativity. So, a radical pragmatist, who thought only goodness provided reasons of any type, would be a normative monist. Normative pluralism is the view that there is more than one source of basic normativity.

The other conceptual axis contains reasons specialism and reasons generalism. This distinction requires some care in specifying, as there are some species of reasons generalism that look like reasons specialism.

Reasons specialism is a view about the conceptual connection between sources of normativity and types of reason. Reasons specialism holds that for each type of reason – e.g. for action

propositions, belief propositions, and so on – the source or sources of normativity from which it issues have an appropriate and in some way distinctive conceptual link with that type of reason. For example, evidentialists may think that it is a conceptual truth that reasons for belief are always evidential reasons and never reasons deriving from the goodness of believing something.²⁹ The reasons specialist holds that this is a conceptual truth about reasons for belief. By way of contrast, a generalist might still hold that there are no goodness-derived reasons for belief, but that this is not a conceptual truth. Reasons generalism is the negation of reasons specialism. It holds that it is conceptually possible for any source of normativity to issue any type of reason, even if it is the case that there are no actual instances of a particular type of reasoning issuing from a particular source of normativity. This distinction is more easily discussed in context and is elaborated on more fully in §3.2.2 below.

One preliminary difficulty with the distinction is that there are some reasons generalist views that will not have certain basic sources of normativity applying to all types of reasons, and there could be a reasons specialist view in which all sources of normativity are bases for all types of reasons. As an instance of the former, it seems possible that while there could be goodness-based reasons for belief, it is less clear whether there are any evidence-based basic reasons for action, other than perhaps for speech acts.³⁰ Whether such a position is genuinely a reasons generalist one depends on why there is not a match between a particular basic source of normativity and a type of reasons. This matter requires more explanation, which will be provided in §3.2.2.

²⁹ See Adler (2002); Kelly (2002) and Shah (2006).

³⁰ Michael Zimmerman suggests in correspondence that there may well be evidential reasons for action. Speech acts may well be governed by evidential reasons. Actions which are not technically speech acts, but which serve communicative functions may also be governed, or partially governed, by evidential reasons.

3.2.1 Architecture 1: normative monism and reasons generalism

Having presented these two axes, it is now possible to discuss the various possible architectures of normativity. The first architecture is normative monism and reasons generalism (NMRG). The normative monism part says that there is only one source of normativity. The reasons generalism part says that all sources of normativity in principle can apply to all types of reasons. An example of a theory that conforms to NMRG is radical pragmatism. A radical pragmatist thinks that the only reason for anything, be it a belief, an action, or a feeling, is that the thing in question will lead to an increase in overall goodness.

NMRG has powerful resources for resolving putative inter-domain conflicts, e.g. putative conflicts between the requirements of theoretical reason and those of practical reason. To see why, consider what the normative world would be like if the only source of normativity were goodness. A fact would be a reason to do or believe something for an agent only when that fact made it so that the performance of the action or the holding of the belief would increase total goodness. Furthermore, we could assign to each reason a weight based on how much better the world would be if the action proposition or belief proposition for which there was a reason obtained.

In this circumstance, figuring out what we ought to do or what there is most reason to do would be a matter of weighing reasons deriving from the same source. On this very simple theory, how much reason there is depends entirely on how good the outcome is of doing or believing what there is a reason to do or believe. One ought to believe what there is most reason to believe if that produces a better result than doing what there is most reason to do, and vice-versa.

This is not to say that NMRG does not admit any troubling cases. Presumably, as there is sometimes thought to be incommensurability, or more importantly, incomparability, in value, there might also be incomparability amongst reasons deriving from a single source of normativity. This incomparability might occur, if the source of normativity were value, and the reasons that

issued from it kept the same relational structure as the underlying value source. Instances, if there are any, of genuinely incomparable values would issue in incomparable reasons. Despite this difficulty, there would at least be no mystery about which feature to compare when evaluating different types of reasons; all types of reasons would have the same source of normativity. To find out what one finally ought to do, one would weigh up all reasons with respect to their single source of normativity. If all reasons came from goodness, then we just have to look at how to weigh up goodness-based reasons.

3.2.2 Architecture 2: normative monism and reasons specialism

The second possible normative architecture is normative monism and reasons specialism (NMRS). The normative monism part says that there is only one source of normativity and the reasons specialism part says that each type of reason is distinctively conceptually connected to its sources of normativity.

NMRS may be a less plausible normative architecture, because it may rule out the possibility of there being certain types of reasons. Consider a form of NMRS in which the sole source of normativity is evidence. While the link between evidence and belief has much plausibility, it is less clear what the conceptual relationship would be between there being evidence for something and one's having reason to do it.⁵¹ Of course, this problem applies to NMRG, too, but not all sources of normativity will prove equally problematic for NMRG as they do for NMRS. Looking at why some cases are more difficult for NMRS than they are for NMRG provides an opportunity to elucidate the distinction between reasons generalism and reasons specialism.

Reasons generalism and reasons specialism distinguish two different conceptual connections between sources of normativity and types of reasons. Reasons specialism says that each type of

⁵¹ The strength of this worry depends on one's scepticism about there being evidential reasons for action.

reason has a source or sources of normativity that have an appropriate conceptual connection to it. The constraints on these connections could vary from theory to theory, but the important contrast is with reasons generalism, which in principle allows any source of normativity to be a basis for any type of reasons. It may be discovered *a posteriori* that some sources of normativity in fact generate no reasons of a certain type, but this is not because reasons generalism excludes a priori that source of normativity from being a basis for a particular type of reason.

As has already been discussed, one view that NMRG can accommodate easily is radical pragmatism. While one might need to make the case for pragmatism, one does not need to show that there is some particular type of connection between belief and goodness that underwrites goodness's being a reason for belief. In an NMRS architecture, however, it is not sufficient just to show that goodness is the source of normativity. It also must be shown that goodness connects in a conceptually appropriate way with belief, so that there can be goodness-derived reasons for belief. If this connection does not hold, then in an NMRS architecture, there will be no reasons for belief that derive from goodness.³²

What is also interesting to note is that NMRS and NMRG can, with the same source of normativity and the same reason types, both yield the result that there are no reasons of certain types. This point is made clearer by an example.

A normative monist could claim that the only source of normativity is evidence. If that normative monist were a reasons specialist, then by definition evidence could only be a basis for a type of reason that connected with it in the conceptually correct way. Most plausibly, reasons for belief connect appropriately to evidence. At the same time, there is no such clear relationship

³² It is worth being a bit more precise about locutions like 'what one would need to show'. In the context of discussion here, it is a stipulation of a generalist view that all sources of normativity can apply to all types of reasons. So, from a theory-internal perspective, there is no need for a further explanation as to why goodness can be a source for reasons for belief. One might need, independently, to show that generalism is true.

between truth and action. In this NMRS theory, there would be no reasons for action, because evidence lacks the kind of conceptual connection with action that it has with belief.

One might get the result that there was only one type of reason, too, in an NMRG theory that takes the only source of normativity to be evidence and which holds that there are only two types of reasons: reasons for belief and reasons for action. Evidence can serve as a basis for reasons for belief in an NMRG theory, as in an NMRG theory the source of normativity can in principle be a basis for any type of reason. However, an NMRG theorist might discover *a posteriori* that there are no evidential reasons for action. So, although there is nothing in the structure of the NMRG theory to rule out the possibility that evidence could serve as a reason for an action, there are in fact no evidential reasons for action. While the NMRG theory and the NMRS theory yield the same result with these inputs – that the only source of normativity is evidence and that there are only reasons for belief – they yield that result for very different reasons.

3.2.3 Architecture 3: normative pluralism and reasons generalism

Normative pluralism is the view that there is more than one source of normativity. Normative pluralism and reasons generalism (NPRG) is the view that there is more than one source of normativity and that all sources of normativity can in principle serve as bases for all types of reasons. Consider the normative universe in which there are two sources of normativity, goodness and evidence, and also two types of reasons, those for action and those for belief. If this normative universe has an NPRG structure, then it is open conceptually for there to be evidential reasons to act and also to believe, as well as goodness-based reasons to act or believe.

It is not entirely clear how strong NPRG's logical resources are for dealing with competing normative claims amongst different types of reasons. Initially it may look as though NPRG has powerful resources for resolving putative normative conflicts, as it shares the main advantage of

NMRG, namely that all types of normativity apply to all reasons. This may be an optimistic assessment of NPRG. We can look first at an example of a theory compatible with NMRG, radical pragmatism, as a contrast case, in which possible inter-normative conflicts are just possible conflicts between goodness-based reasons. Such conflicts are addressable by whatever means are available for weighing only goodness-based reasons, even when weighing up reasons to believe against those to act.³³

In our toy version of NPRG, on the other hand, one faces the more daunting prospect of explaining how to weigh up evidential reasons for belief against goodness-based reasons for action. We may think that all reasons that come from goodness have enough in common to find ways of coping with putative conflicts between goodness-based reasons for action and goodness-based reasons for belief. However, it is not at all clear what to do with putative normative conflicts, whether they be within belief, within action, or between the two, that involve reasons with different sources of normativity. We might expect a theory of goodness or a theory of evidence to be structured in such a way that they can manage its own problems, so to speak, but it is not clear why a theory of either would have much to say about how its own object relates in a non-derivative way to the object of the other.

Our toy NPRG theory requires a method for weighing or comparing goodness-based reasons and evidence-based reasons, if it is to provide a solution for putative normative conflicts involving reasons generated from both normative sources. There are at least two roads that NPRG might go in attempting to deal with possible conflicts where the reasons involved have different normative sources. The first looks the more promising one.

That road is to insist against worries about comparability that instead there is nothing

³³ Consider a situation in which one has reasons to cause oneself to believe p , but one only has reasons to believe not p . Because 'cause' is a success verb, one's reasons to act and one's reasons to believe cannot both be satisfied.

unexpected about the idea that a theory of normativity tells us how to relate the plurality of normative sources. One expectation of a theory of value is that it tell us how a plurality of goods are related to each other, even if it only says that they are incommensurable. Likewise, a theory of evidence might be expected to tell us how a plurality of different sorts of considerations affect the likelihood of a proposition's being true.⁵⁴ Analogously, the theory of normativity tells us how all the sorts of normative sources relate to each other, and in that way is like any other theory that has a plurality of ontologically basic properties that are apt for comparison or some form of aggregation.

The second road takes us in the opposite direction and arrives at the view that there is something wrong with expecting a theory of normativity to do as well at resolving the problem of comparing reasons with different respective normative sources as does a theory of value at addressing how to compare different values. On this view, it seems that for different sources of normativity to be comparable, there has to be something in virtue of which they can be compared. I do not mean this as the start of a third man argument. Rather the worry is that the very idea that we could compare two different sources of normativity suggests that either one is derivative of the other, and hence not basic, or that they are both derivative of a third source of normativity. Because both of these options are ruled out by stipulation from NPRG, this road threatens to lead to the conclusion that there are genuine normative conflicts.

The compatibility of an NPRG theory with the view that there are no genuine normative conflicts depends largely on the plausibility of making brute comparisons amongst reasons arising from different sources.

⁵⁴ For an interesting discussion of the complexities of assessing evidence, see Achenstein (2003).

3.2.4 Architecture 4: normative pluralism and reasons specialism

The final normative framework discussed here is the one that commonly is taken for granted in the literature, although not specifically under this description. This is normative pluralism and reasons specialism (NPRS).³⁵ Normative pluralism says that there are a plurality of sources of normativity, and reasons specialism tells us that the sources of normativity must have the right sort of conceptual link with a type of reason, in order to serve as a source for that type of reason. The position I have earlier identified as 'normative separatism' is a variety of NPRS, as it says that in principle only a certain source of normativity, e.g. evidence, has the right kind of conceptual link with a particular type of reason, e.g. a reasons for belief, for each type of reason.

A caveat is required in saying that normative separatism is a species of NPRS. It is possible to have a mixed normative architecture, one in which some types of reasons must bear the appropriate special conceptual connection with their sources of normativity, while other types of reasons do not require this special connection. A normative architecture might say that as far as reasons for belief go, reasons specialism is true. On the other hand, as far as other types of reasons are concerned, there need not be any special conceptual connection between the reasons and the source of normativity from which they issue. For the sake of simplicity, only pure NPRS will be discussed.

On NPRS views, the domains of normativity are distinct. Theoretical normativity and practical normativity are two in some respects analogous, but non-interacting, domains. This claim may sound strong, given that it is possible in principle to have the same source of normativity be a basis for different types of reasons. The unrelatability comes from the requirement that a source of

³⁵ A particularly detailed version of NPRS is set out in Skorupski (2011). It is the view that seems to be implicitly adopted in Parfit (2001), and indeed by philosophers who adopt strict evidentialism about normative reasons for belief or who argue that the solution to the so-called 'wrong kind of reason problem' is to deny that there are reasons of the wrong kind at all.

normativity have a distinctive conceptual connection with the type of reason it serves as a basis for. Benefit, for example, might be a source of normativity for both action and feeling. That doing x is beneficial is a reason to do it. It may also be a reason to feel good about yourself for doing it. However, the conceptual connections between acting and benefit and between feeling good about oneself and benefit are understood to be quite different, as acting concerns promoting benefit and feeling good about oneself involves responding to the fact that someone or something has been benefited by your actions.

Given this, NPRS lacks the logical resources to say anything at all about putative conflicts between our reasons for actions and our reasons for belief, because they are wholly different sorts of things *ex hypothesi*. Asking what it is that one ought to do (in the universal sense of 'do' stipulated earlier), when one cannot act as one ought to act while also believing what one ought to believe is, on NPRS, a meaningless question. The upshot of NPRS is that there are no possible resolutions to inter-normative conflicts, because there is no unified domain of normativity that subsumes both theoretical and practical normativity. This is normative separatism.

There is an important issue that has not yet been discussed, one which relates to reasons specialism. This is a discussion of what constitutes an appropriate conceptual connection. Reasons specialism requires there to be an appropriate conceptual connection between a type of reason and the source or sources of normativity from which it derives. There are many possible conceptual connections, and merely identifying that reasons specialism requires the appropriate one is not very illuminating.

It is not clear how informative the account of an appropriate conceptual connection can be.³⁶ I have used 'distinctive' to denote whatever that connection is. Consider reasons for thick pro-

³⁶ Difficulties with specifying the conceptual connection can be seen from the discussion of 'correctness' in Danielsson and Olson (2007).

attitudes. Admiring is a good example. The source of normativity that most obviously has a close conceptual connection to admiring is admirability. We might be able to pick out some common features of things that are admirable, but admirable itself is a normative concept: it applies to the sort of thing that one ought to admire and does not obviously reduce to a cluster of other concepts.³⁷ It may very well be a case by case question as to whether or not a particular thing is admirable. There may be no possibility of giving general principles, except as rough guides.

As an example of a thin normative concept, it might generally be thought that the fact that an action will produce some benefit is a reason to do it. Here there is some degree of mystery as to why benefit has the right kind of conceptual connection with actions *per se*, as opposed to with anything for which there can be a reason. In general, that something would produce beneficial results seems to count in favour of it. Yet, this claim is not supposed to be fully general. On the one hand, when beneficial outcomes are the result of an action, there is an appropriate conceptual connection between benefit and one's reason to act. On the other hand, when the beneficial outcomes are the result of having a belief, there is supposedly not the correct conceptual connection between one's reason to believe something and its being beneficial to do so. An important task for the separatist or any reasons specialist is to explain two things. First, what these appropriate conceptual connections are, and, second, why they are significant.

4. CONCLUSION

In working on the theory of normativity, there is a methodological balance between trying to work on the structure of the theory as an abstraction, seeing what follows for substantive claims about oughts and reasons, and trying to decide what is true about oughts and reasons in order to

³⁷ I am nonetheless sympathetic to Hurka's account of thick value concepts, in which the -able concepts are analysable. See Hurka (2003),

determine the structure of the theory. Working from either direction, or indeed both, it is of central importance to see how substantive claims about oughts and reasons limit (or are limited by) the general structure of a normative theory.

I have tried to show that one important limiting factor in thinking about the structure, or as I have called it, 'architecture' of a theory of normativity is what view one takes on normative conflicts. There is a longstanding debate about whether there are normative conflicts, although it has traditionally been played out only with respect to conflicts between prudence and morality, or with respect to the question of whether there are tragic moral dilemmas. Authors have been willing to entertain a variety of positions to avoid normative conflicts, but it is often unclear whether they are only concerned to avoid intra-domain conflicts or both intra-domain and inter-domain conflicts.

Intra-domain conflicts make the most sense on reasons pluralist views. There is less reason to expect there to be genuine intra-domain conflicts on reasons specialist views, since it is a question of comparing on kind of reason from a single source with another reason of the same kind from a single source. If one holds that there are intractable intra-domain conflicts, then it looks likely that one is committed to a pluralist architecture. The converse does not hold, however, as one may think that there are no genuine intra-domain conflicts on either specialist or generalist architectures.

If one holds the view that there are no genuine inter-domain normative conflicts, then NPRS views (and the separatism they entail) are ruled out. Normative conflicts occur, when there multiple final oughts cannot be mutually satisfied. As the examples above show, this can happen quite easily with NPRS. A worry is that any ranking amongst the types of oughts (practical, theoretical, affective, etc.) would be hard to come by unless there was an appeal to another more basic ought that subsumed the others. To make this appeal would be to deny normative pluralism. Normative pluralism, and the normative separatism that follows from it, are incompatible with a

view of normativity that denies the existence of genuine inter-domain conflicts. Conversely, putative inter-domain conflicts are most easily resolved in principle if there is a single source of normativity that applies to all reasons. If there are strong independent arguments in favour of the view that there are no genuine inter-domain normative conflicts, then they may give us some reason to take a view like radical pragmatism about normative reasons seriously. The answers to the important questions of whether there are genuine normative conflicts and, if so what kind, rise and fall together with what turns out to be the true architecture of normativity. Amongst other insights, this shows us that one of the more widely held views concerning reasons, normative separatism, is not compatible with the common intuition that there are no genuine conflicts amongst final oughts, whereas the latter view fits well with one of the least widely held views about reasons: radical pragmatism.

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