

## Instrumental Rationality

In our assessment of instrumental rationality we seem ambivalent: On the one hand, we tend to think that an agent is only required to take the means if the ends are worthwhile or valuable; on the other hand we consider it a specific failure in rationality if an agent does not take the means to his or her ends. So we seem to face the following paradox: In the context of worthless or bad ends an agent has no reason to take the necessary means to her end; though, once she is truly committed to an end, the agent does have a reason to pursue her ends, regardless of the value of the end.

In my paper I try to show that the outlined paradox is due to a lack of separation between requirements of rationality and reasons. I will argue that the principle of instrumental rationality amounts to a value-neutral practical normative requirement that is a necessary condition of rational agency. The normative force of the requirement of instrumental rationality does not (as e.g. Christine Korsgaard suggests) depend on the value of the ends.

In the first part of my paper I take up the proposal made by John Broome to distinguish between requirements of rationality and reasons by interpreting the 'ought' of rationality alongside a 'wide-scope reading' and the 'ought' in case of reasons as a narrow-scope 'ought' (a distinction which offers an elegant solution of the apparent paradox of instrumental rationality). Broome argues that the normativity of instrumental rationality expresses a 'wide scope ought' (the ought-operator governing the whole conditional of instrumental deliberation): You ought (If you intend to E and believe that your M-ing is a necessary means to E, form the intention to M).

One problem of Broome's account of instrumental rationality is that the relationship between requirements of rationality and reasons remains obscure. I will therefore suggest a modification of Broome's account. The principle of instrumental rationality can be fulfilled in two ways: either to give up the end or form the intention to take the means. Therefore, I argue, the normative requirement at stake is exactly that a rational agent should make that decision (which intention to form) from a rational point of view. Hence the principle of instrumental rationality should be reformulated as:

You ought (either to give up to intend to E or form the intention to take the means in case you are in a situation in which you intend to E and believe that your M-ing is a necessary means to E).

Several things follow: First, the principle of instrumental rationality is clearly a principle of practical rationality; it demands to make a decision whether to form the intention to give up the end or to form the intention to take the means. Second, the principle of instrumental rationality as such does not help us to make that decision. So, the suggested reformulation of the principle of instrumental rationality indicates clearly that a further condition of rationality is necessary: we have, in order to count as rational agents, to assess the reasons we have for either dropping E or form the intention to M. This way the relationship between requirements of rationality and reasons is established. In the remaining part of my paper I try to defend my account against various objections, for example the objections by Kolodny and Setiya against the distinction between wide-scope requirements of rationality and reasons.