

1. Reflective reasoning and deflationism

Transparent reasoning: adopting/revising beliefs based on the apparent facts

Reflective reasoning: adopting/revising beliefs to conform to **reflective judgments** (i.e., first-person judgments about what it is rational for one to believe)

Declan Smithies, *The Epistemic Role of Consciousness*: [T]he point of reflection is to bring your beliefs into line with higher-order reflections about which beliefs you have justification to hold. The reflective process has two stages: first, reflecting on which beliefs you have justification to hold; and second, revising your beliefs in light of these reflections.

Tyler Burge, John Locke Lectures: If, in critical reasoning, one correctly and with warrant judges that a lower-level state is (or is not) reasonable, then it rationally follows directly that one has reason to sustain (or change) the lower-level state.

Roger White, ‘What is My Evidence that Here Is a Hand?’: [If externalism is true and Vat-Roger believes it, then] while Vat-Roger should be 90 per cent confident that there’s a hand before him he should also be 90 per cent confident that he is *under-confident*: that in fact he ought to be quite certain that there’s a hand before him. This I suggest is an odd state to be in. He is to some degree *epistemically akratic*. He fails to fully endorse his own doxastic attitude. Can this be a rational state to be in? If he has reason to think that most likely he is less confident than he should be in thinking that here’s a hand, doesn’t this give him a reason to increase his confidence? ... Shouldn’t he think: ‘Most likely I’m not as confident as I should be that here’s a hand, so I’ll boost my confidence?’

Ralph Wedgwood, ‘The Aim of Belief’: [T]he concept “rational belief” is normative for the practice of theoretical reasoning. It is a constitutive feature of this concept that if one judges that a certain belief would not be a “rational” belief for one to hold, this judgment commits one to not holding that belief.

Possible reconstruction: If I judge that it is irrational for me to hold a belief, then I think I ought not hold it. It is irrationally *akratic* to retain a belief that I think I ought to give up.

Against this, I support **deflationism**, the view that reflective judgments have no special epistemic significance. I claim that reflective judgments give the *wrong kind of reason* for/against belief, except insofar as they give ordinary evidence.

2. First motivation for inflationism: considering examples

Is inflationism supported by examples?

Sherlock’s Suggestion: Watson is uncertain whether the butler did it, but Sherlock (falsely) says that Watson’s uncertainty is irrational, and that belief is rationally required. Watson accepts Sherlock’s claim.

Deflationists and inflationists can agree that Sherlock's testimony gives Watson a reason to believe that the butler did it.

- Possible inflationary explanation: Watson's belief that he is required to believe the butler did it rationally commits him to adopting the belief.
- Possible deflationary explanation: The (apparent) fact that Watson is rationally required to believe the butler did it is evidence that the butler did it.

In a **test case**, the (apparent) fact that one is rationally required to believe p is not sufficient evidence for p . Good heuristic: If another person were rationally required to believe p in corresponding circumstances, this would be no reason for you to believe p .

Sherlock's Preface: Watson writes a book in which he records all the conclusions he has drawn regarding a case, but notes at the end that he has been unable to determine whether the butler did it. Sherlock writes a preface, which (falsely) says: "Watson has every reason to believe each claim made in this book. But one of them is false. And Watson has failed to notice that this falsehood entails that the butler did it." Watson believes what Sherlock says, and concludes that he is, even now, rationally required to believe that the butler did it.

Deflationists correctly say Watson is given no reason to believe that the butler did it.

3. Second motivation for inflationism: the anti-akrasia argument

Is inflationism supported by argument?

(NORMATIVITY) You should know that if rationality requires you to ϕ , then you ought to ϕ .

(ANTI-AKRASIA) If you believe that you ought to ϕ , then this gives you an enkratic reason to ϕ .

Therefore,

(ENKRATIC REASONS) If you believe that rationality requires you to believe that p , this gives you an enkratic reason to believe p .

But does ENKRATIC REASONS support inflationism? Only if enkratic reasons are "the right kind of reason" for belief.

4. The wrong kind of reason problem for inflationism

Paradigmatic wrong kinds of reason for belief: a cash prize, an "epistemic prize"

Common Diagnosis:

- *right kind of reasons* for belief that p are object-given, bear on whether p
- *wrong kind of reasons* for belief are state-given, bear on the state of belief itself

Problem for inflationism: enkratic reasons, if non-evidential, are state-given

❖ Managerial defense: enkratic reasons are state-given reasons, and that's OK

Fetishism objection: The managerial defense would have you fetishistically pursue rationality at the expense of truth.

Misleading Evidence: Liz is informed that there is some falsehood or other that she is rationally required to believe, and that she can cause herself to believe by pushing a button. Liz presses, feeling obliged to conform to rationality's requirements.

❖ Transparency defense: enkratic reasons are object-given reasons, but not evidence

Is transparency intelligible? Yes, if we distinguish:

- **r shows** an agent that p iff r is a sufficient object-given reason for her to believe p.
- **r supports** p for an agent iff r is sufficient evidence for belief that p by ordinary standards of deductive, inductive, and abductive inference (given her other evidence)

(TRANSPARENCY) The apparent fact that one is rationally required to believe p can show one that p without supporting that p.

TRANSPARENCY just says showing without supporting is *possible*, so Sherlock's Preface is no counterexample. Still, it requires *some* test cases where:

- (i) 'I am rationally required to believe p' shows that p
- (ii) 'You are rationally required to believe p' doesn't support (thus doesn't show) that p
- (iii) I have no relevant difference in background knowledge about you and me.

Chauvinism objection: TRANSPARENCY forces you to chauvinistically consider yourself less likely than others to be **misled** (i.e., to be rationally required to believe a falsehood).

First sub-problem: hypothetical reasoning

(HYPOTHETICAL-CATEGORICAL COHERENCE) If r shows you that p, then rationality requires you to accept p under the hypothetical assumption that r.

(RAMSEY TEST) Rationality requires that if you accept p under the hypothetical assumption that r, then you categorically accept that if r, then p.

By these, it follows from TRANSPARENCY that for arbitrary p, I am required to accept that if I am rationally required to believe p, then p—which entails that I am not misled that p.

Second sub-problem: transmission failure

(CLOSURE) Rationality requires that if you believe that p, then you disbelieve that $\sim p$ and r.

(ELIMINATION) The apparent fact that r does not **eliminate** (i.e., show to be false) that $\sim p$ and r.

By ELIMINATION, the apparent fact that I am rationally required to believe p cannot be a sufficient object-given reason to disbelieve that I am misled that p. But by CLOSURE, I cannot rationally believe p without disbelieving that I am misled that p. So by TRANSPARENCY, it must be antecedently rational for me to reject that I am misled.