

## Synchronic Plan Rationality

Michael E. Bratman – handout UNAM February, 2015

1. Rational dynamics of planning agency: consistency of plan; means-end coherence of plan; stability of plan over time  
How connected to normative reasons? Why see these as norms of practical rationality?  
In reply to myth theorists like Raz and Kolodny, we need a dual-tracked defense of the normative significance of these norms.
2. Two-tier pragmatic theory, fecundity of planning agency, and Smart on rule worship
3. The self-governance strategy:
  - (a) Identify a related type of agency, T, such that T-type agency is associated with characteristic reasons and norms of rationality, and such that when a planning agent is as well a T-type agent those T-related reasons and rationality norms support norms of plan consistency and coherence.
  - (b) T is self-governed agency.
4. Self-governance and planning agency
  - (a) Self-governance and the agent's practical standpoint.
  - (b) Given the inter-related settling and cross-referring roles of plan states, the practical standpoints of a planning agent will be plan-infused.
5. Reasons of self-governance
  - (a) A constitutive condition of self-governance: the agent's relevant practical standpoint are sufficiently coherent ... Given that the standpoints are plan-infused, this will only be true if her relevant plans are consistent and coherent.
  - (b) A reason of self-governance for conformity to the norms of plan consistency and coherence.
  - (c) What if agent does not have the cited end of self-governance?
6. Standpoint-choice rationality
  - (a) A web of norms within which the norms of plan consistency and coherence are embedded. Why are these norms of practical rationality? Indirect pursuit of strategy of self-governance.
  - (b) Synchronic standpoint-choice rationality – general (SSR-G): If S is capable of self-governance, it is defeasibly irrational of S at t to choose A but not have a relevant practical standpoint at t that supports that choice in a unified way.
  - (c) Synchronic standpoint-choice rationality for a planning agent (SSR-PA): If S is a planning agent who is capable of self-governance, it is defeasibly irrational of S at t to reach a choice in favor of A but not have a relevant plan-infused practical standpoint at t that supports that choice in a unified way.
  - (d) Basic source of the rational pressure for the plan-infused-standpoint-choice coherence highlighted in SSR-PA does not come from specific features of planning agency. ... The role in SSR-PA of specific features of planning agency is rather to shape the nature of the standpoints that are central to SSR-G.
  - (e) Defense of norms of plan consistency and coherence: relevant plan inconsistency or incoherence blocks unity of standpoint.
  - (f) Defeasible peremptoriness of norms of plan consistency and coherence is traceable to the structure of basic rationality norms.
  - (g) But why is SSR-G a norm of practical rationality?
7. Self-governance and practical rationality (second aspect of the self-governance strategy):

(a) Conjecture: SSR-G defeasibly enjoins standpoint-choice coherence because such coherence is a necessary constitutive feature of self-governance.

(b) Practical Rationality-Self-Governance (PRSG) Principle: If S is capable at t of self-governance, and C is a necessary constitutive feature of self-governance, then it is defeasibly irrational of S to violate C at t.

(c) David Copp (2005):

“The concept of rationality is closely related to the concept of autonomy. To be autonomous is to be self-governing, and to be rational is to do well in governing oneself. ...

The point of assessing the rationality of a person’s actions is to appraise her success in manifesting or securing her self-government. ...

We are rational to manifest and secure our autonomy, even if we do not value autonomy, because manifesting and securing one’s autonomy is what rationality consists in.”

(d) PRSG is a fundamental, substantive claim about practical rationality, albeit only a claim about sufficient conditions for a norm of practical rationality. We support PRSG in part by appeal to its intuitive plausibility both of the significance of self-governance and of its connection to rationality, in part by appeal to its power to systematize and thereby make more intelligible a range of apparent norms of rationality (where this includes their defeasible peremptoriness), and in part by appeal to its connection to normative reasons of self-governance.

## 8. Bringing the two tracks together

(a) An end-based reason in favor of necessary constitutive features of self-governance will be a reason to conform to norms in which PRSG issues.

(b) de-fanged myth theory

## 9. How to be a pluralistic rationalist

(a) Kieran Setiya (2014) defines “ethical rationalism” as “the project of deriving standards of practical reason from the nature of agency or practical thought.”

(b) PRSG does not appeal to a connection between practical rationality and “agency or practical thought” quite generally. Instead, it appeals to a special kind of agency: self-governance.

(c) Setiya’s challenge to “pluralistic rationalism”: “What distinguishes the dispositions of agents that sort them into kinds and thereby fix the standards of practical reason from dispositions that do not?”

(d) Defense of PRSG: inference to the best explanation.

(e) While I am trying to support rationality norms for, in particular, planning agents, the agency kind that plays a central role in fixing aspects of standards of practical rationality is not planning agency itself but rather self-governed agency.

## 10. Conclusion and coming attractions

(a) Defense of the rational dynamics of planning agency insofar as it involves the cited synchronic norms.

(b) Those aspects of the defense of a rational plan dynamics that draw from the self-governance strategy are limited to planning agents who are capable of self-governance. The rational dynamics of planning agency, while it depends on distinctive structures of planning, is to a significant extent grounded in the related but different capacity for self-governance.