

Attending: Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins, Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa, Crispin Wright, Giacomo Melis, Sonia Roca Royes, Xintong Wei, Alan Millar, Moritz Baron, Paul Conlan, Giovanni Merlo

Presenting: Carrie

Discussing: Broome *A Linking Belief is not Essential for Reasoning*

- **Jonathan** suggested that Broome's account rules out reasoning to remove an attitude one has, or reasoning to agnosticism. **Giacomo** pointed out that suspension is an attitude one can take when reasoning. **Carrie** suggested that it's not clear whether the result of the reasoning is suspension of a belief itself or an attitude toward a belief.
- **Crispin** suggested the point of allowing 'taking' to be less than fully explicit is that it can inform your reasoning even when that reasoning is not explicit. Broome does not appear to be sensitive to this. **Giacomo** suggested that Boghossian does not actually want to reduce support to implication, since it would rule out abductive inferences, and Boghossian wants to include those. **Carrie** suggested this depends on what you think the link between abductive inference and conditional propositions is. Broome does not include the conditional as part of the reasoning. **Jonathan** suggested that if these are weak conditionals then they may not give good reason for believing the consequent, as they are trivially satisfied.
- **Crispin** pointed out there is a distinction between following a bad rule and badly following a good rule which is getting lost in Broome's account. Further, we want a distinction between following a rule and acting in accordance with a rule, and 'seeming right' is too thin to provide this. **Jonathan** suggested that it does not seem plausible in general that entities not capable of self-reflection cannot follow rules, and 'seeming right' is inherently self-reflective. **Carrie** suggested that this puts pressure on the account's focus on 'active reasoning', when much rule following is passive. **Crispin** suggested that 'openness to correction' is more important than the seeming right – passive rule following is not in the same way open to correction. **Giovanni** wondered whether 'openness to correction' implied that the action was under the voluntary control of the agent. **Carrie** suggested this would be tricky for Broome, since he's dealing with belief, and doxastic voluntarism is generally taken to be false. **Crispin** suggested that reasoning itself is in some sense intentional, even if the upshot is not. **Xintong** wondered what Broome means by 'seeming right' as a disposition. Usually we understand a disposition as a mapping between input conditions and output conditions, and it is difficult to see what the input conditions are. Secondly, is there anything Broome says here that rules out the arachnophobia case. **Carrie** suggested that the way it seems to

work is that your behaviour happens, then you decide whether it is good or bad. Regarding the arachnophobia case, it is not clear how Broome rules it out at this stage. Perhaps it is related to voluntariness. **Crispin** suggested that for all we have been so far told, it could be passive rule following. **Carrie** wondered why the arachnophobia case is in tension with reasoning – you might reason to leave the room because of your arachnophobia.

- **Alan** wondered in what sense is modus ponens a rule, in the sense that a rule guides you to something specific.
- **Crispin** suggested it is very odd to describe something as reasoning when it ends with the forming of an intention. Rather the conclusion should be 'so x-ing is the thing to do' rather than 'I intend to x'. **Giovanni** wondered whether the move from the normative belief to the intention counts as reasoning.
- **Giacomo** pointed out that previous authors we have engaged with endorse this sort of reasoning to intention (e.g. Boghossian). Basically what differentiates practical and theoretical reasoning is that practical reasoning outputs something one should do, and theoretical points out something one should believe.
- **Giovanni** suggested that if some sort of taking belief is involved in the reasoning transition, the result of the transition cannot itself be a taking belief.
- **Crispin** suggested that it is very odd to talk about an intention guiding you. Bringing in the notion of intention does not seem to help understand the notion of guidance at all. **Carrie** suggested that the stepping on the cracks case is very similar to the arachnophobia case.

John Broome, 'A Linking Belief is not Essential for Reasoning'

Handout for KBNS seminar

May 7th 2019

1. Introduction

Reasoning: mental process through which one acquires a **new** attitude ('conclusion attitude') on the basis of attitudes one already has ('premise attitudes')

Linking belief: a belief that the conclusion attitude is linked to the premise attitude in some way that makes it **appropriate** to have the conclusion attitude on the basis of the premise attitudes

Active reasoning: something you do (like eating)

Passive reasoning: something that happens in/to you (like digesting)

- This paper only considers active reasoning
- In *Rationality Through Reasoning* JB assumed reasoning requires a linking belief, but he now withdraws that claim
- Allows it may be true where the conclusion is a belief
- But even if necessary, it is not an essential condition (not part of what *makes* a process reasoning)

2. A first-order linking belief: the taking condition

Rain: You hear rain, so you believe it is raining

You have a standing belief that, if it is raining, the snow will melt

You conclude that the snow will melt

What makes this reasoning?

Some essential features:

1. A mental process
2. Starts and ends with propositional attitudes (relations one stands in to the propositions which are their contents)
3. Starts from premise attitudes you already have
4. Ends with a conclusion attitude 'that you acquire in the process'
5. 'In some way causal': premise attitudes 'cause or give rise to' conclusion attitude

1-5 are not sufficient conditions for reasoning (arachnophobia counterexample)

Belief reasoning: reasoning where premise and conclusion attitudes are beliefs

First-order linking belief: a [linking] belief that 'links together the contents of your attitudes'

For belief reasoning, this is the belief that the premises imply the conclusion

- 'By that I mean simply that you believe a conditional proposition'
- Not just logical implication

In *RTR*, JB said belief reasoning requires a first-order linking belief

- And that this must 'play a causal role in the reasoning'
- No longer asserts this but does not deny it either (p. 2)

Second-order linking belief: a [linking] belief 'whose content links together the attitudes themselves' (e.g. belief that you ought to believe the conclusion if you believe the premises)

Boghossian's taking condition: Inferring necessarily involves the thinker taking his premises to support his conclusion and drawing his conclusion because of that fact

Differences are 'only apparent'

- Belief reasoning can be called inferring
- JB Assumes B has in mind support 'as strong as implication'
- 'Taking' might be less than explicit belief, but JB will allow the linking belief to be implicit 'so there is no difference'

3 *What reasoning is*

- Never claimed a first-order linking belief is *essential* to reasoning
- If necessary, that's because it follows from another necessary condition: 'that you operate on the contents of your attitudes, following a rule' (e.g. the modus ponens rule in rain)
- Odd and/or incorrect rules count for this purpose – if you follow an incorrect rule, you reason, just incorrectly)

Core of JB's account of reasoning: in reasoning you follow a rule

- That's why reasoning is active

What is RF?

- The rule explains your behavior

- 'The rule sets up a standard of correctness, and your recognition of this correctness is part of the explanation'
- 'When you are **guided by** a rule, your behaviour seems to you correct relative to the rule or, if it does not, you are disposed to correct your behavior'

To follow a rule is **to manifest a disposition** to (i) behave (broad sense) in a particular way and (ii) have the behavior 'seem right' to you

Seeming right is an attitude towards your behavior

Also essential: being open to the possibility of correcting your behavior through checking

Reasoning involves manifesting a 'reasoning disposition'

- In rain, it's the disposition to
 - [believe the snow will melt on the basis of believing it is raining and believing that if it is raining the snow will melt] and
 - have this seem right to you

4 An implicit linking belief

RTR: reasoning disposition constitutes an implicit [conditional] belief, a first-order linking belief

- A belief is a bundle of dispositions
- Following this particular rule manifests a disposition that is implicitly a linking belief

Explicit belief: one s.t. you are disposed to assert its content

A reasoning disposition is (at most) an implicit belief

- Maybe it does not include enough of the dispositions that constitute a typical belief
- Doesn't matter to me

A reasoning disposition is essential for reasoning, whereas a linking belief is not (even if it's necessary)

- Weight and human rights analogy

A reasoning disposition is **not a premise attitude** (even if it's a belief)

- Avoiding Achilles regress

5 Intention reasoning

Intention reasoning: reasoning that concludes in an intention

- Species of practical reasoning

Marathon: You intend to raise money for famine relief
You believe that running a sponsored marathon is the best means of doing so
You conclude with the intention to run a sponsored marathon

Meets most of the conditions for active reasoning: causal mental process that starts with some premise attitudes and arrives at a conclusion attitude

Does **not** meet the condition that you operate on the contents of your attitudes following a rule

- That condition needs to be generalized

The *marked* content of an attitude: the pair of (i) the attitude's content (ii) the kind of attitude it is

To reason, you must operate on the marked contents of your attitudes, following a rule

- In marathon, rule might be:
derive $\langle q; \text{intention} \rangle$ from $\langle p; \text{intention} \rangle$ and $\langle q \text{ is the best means for } p; \text{belief} \rangle$

6. An implicit first-order linking belief?

To follow a rule in intention reasoning is (still) to manifest a reasoning disposition to (i) behave in a particular way and (ii) have that behaviour to seem right to you

But this reasoning disposition *cannot* be an implicit first-order linking belief

- Nothing could be its content
- Using bare (unmarked) contents?
 - Linking belief: if you raise money for famine relief, and if running a sponsored marathon is the best means of raising money for famine relief, then you run a sponsored marathon
- Using marked contents?
 - Linking belief: if $\langle \text{You will raise money for famine relief; intention} \rangle$ and if $\langle \text{Running a sponsored marathon is the best means of raising money for famine relief; belief} \rangle$, then $\langle \text{You will run a sponsored marathon; intention} \rangle$
 - Dead end (Frege-Geach problem)

Belief reasoning plausibly requires a first-order linking belief but intention reasoning does not

- So (contra *RTR*) reasoning in general does not

7. *An implicit second-order linking belief?*

Could a *second-order* linking belief be necessary?

- Belief that the premise attitudes support the conclusion attitude in some way
- **Must be normative or rational** support

A second-order linking belief involves sophisticated concepts

- (Cf. first-order linking beliefs with 'consequence concept', *if ... then ...* without which 'we could not understand you as reasoning', p. 8)
- But kids can do instrumental reasoning

In reasoning one thinks about the contents of one's attitudes, not about the attitudes themselves

You must be *aware* of the nature of the attitudes you reason with, but not necessarily in this way

You can follow a rule without believing that doing so has any normative merit

- Cf. not treading on the lines

How can one be guided by a rule unless I see some reason to comply with it?

- The **guidance is intentional rather than normative**

8. *Conclusion*

A first-order linking belief may be necessary for belief reasoning (B's taking condition may be true for this case)

- But no first-order linking belief is necessary (or even possible) for intention reasoning
- And implausible that a second-order linking belief is necessary for intention reasoning
- Such arguments generalize to other sorts of reasoning

An essential condition for reasoning is that you operate on the marked contents of your attitudes following a rule

- But a linking belief is not essential: does not contribute to *making* a process reasoning