

The Space of Reasons as Self-Consciousness

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(forthcoming in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*)

I. Introduction

In reasoning, we draw conclusions from multiple premises. But thinkers can be *fragmented*. And if there is no single fragment of the agent that thinks all of the premises, then the agent cannot draw any conclusions from them. It follows that reasoning from multiple premises depends on their being thought *together*. But what is it to think premises together? What is the condition that contrasts with fragmentation? This paper provides an answer to this question that is simple but compelling: to think premises together is to attribute those very thoughts to one and the same self. The ability to reason depends on the ability to attribute the thoughts from which one reasons to *oneself*. Reasoning—at least the sort of reasoning that *we* do—requires *de se* thought.

What is for beliefs to be *together in mind*, as opposed to fragmented? And what, more generally, is it for a pair of beliefs to belong to *a single mind*? According to the answer proposed by Tyler Burge, the difference between my beliefs and your beliefs is the presence of a disposition to respond with a certain immediacy to my own, but not to yours—a disposition that is masked when beliefs are fragmented. But I will argue that the unity of the rational mind is explanatorily prior to the dispositions that link our beliefs. The integration of my beliefs, I argue, is constituted by my consciousness of their being mine. After presenting a positive argument to this effect, I show how the resulting theory accomplishes what Burge's cannot.

Although my focus here is inference, the general upshot of the paper concerns rationality more generally. What puts us in the space of reasons—what makes it possible for us to respond to reasons *qua* reasons, as it is sometimes put—is the potential to bring thoughts together so that reason-responsiveness of whatever sort becomes possible. And what constitutes this potential is self-consciousness.

Crucially, what I offer is not a conception of everything that philosophers describe as reasoning. Border Collies are far better at figuring their way of out trouble than Basset Hounds, but this kind of smarts is not my topic. Artifacts that can uncannily mimic human conversation are not necessarily reasoners in the sense at issue here. My topic is creatures who see what else must be true given what they already believe and therein believe it.

I emphasize this point prophylactically, as many readers will see my various claims about requirements for reasoning as over-intellectualizing rationality. But part of what I aim to convey here is that recent treatments of *our* mind *under-intellectualize* it. Legitimate worries about the need to recognize (ontogenetic and phylogenetic) continuity have led to the widespread adoption of *additive* conceptions of rationality. The idea is that there is a common core that is the same among all of the things we might describe as rational: say, susceptibility to belief-desire explanation. What separates humans from animals is then added conceptual prowess: say, humans can take up attitudes towards a wider range of contents. But this paper advances a *transformational* theory of rationality.¹ There are distinctively human phenomena that

¹See McDowell (1994) and Boyle (2012).

arise in conjunction with the capacity to infer, itself a manifestation of a suite of distinctive cognitive powers. *Rational necessity* is one such phenomenon.

2. Rational Necessity

My argument appeals to what I call *rational necessity*, a kind of metaphysical necessity that is explained by our rational nature. Under certain conditions, it is (a) metaphysically necessary that a thinker who won't surrender certain premises draws a particular conclusion, and (b) metaphysically impossible for a thinker to adopt one belief without surrendering another. I will expand on this sketch in what follows and argue that this stronger-than-nomological impossibility is explained by our rationality. Importantly: by 'our rationality', I don't mean a nature untainted by *irrationality*. I mean our capacity to draw a conclusion in light of premises, a capacity that rational creatures exercise with varying degrees of success. Rational creatures (so understood) can be distinguished from *arational* creatures in part by the fact that only the rational can suffer from *irrationality*.

I'll begin my discussion of rational necessity in a phenomenological register. Recall a time when you became conscious that a certain conclusion *must* be drawn. One morning, say, I find that money is missing from my wallet. I realize with a sinking feeling that there is no credible alternative explanation than that my son has slid back into his old, larcenous ways. As much as I'd like to believe otherwise, there's just no way around it. He's stealing again. Perhaps you try to dissuade me, offering all sorts of patently implausible alternative explanations. And it's not that I don't recognize the possibility that, say, burglars broke in, stole money from the inside pocket of a blazer in closet, and left again without taking anything else. I just can't take any such alternative

seriously. So I say things like “he must have done it.” This ‘must’ articulates rational necessity. There is nothing else to believe. Given the facts (as I take them to be), the conclusion presents itself to me as incontestable. In this way, one’s consciousness of what must be true constitutes a bond between the corresponding beliefs. “I believe *this* because I believe *that*,” I might put it. Inference, which is my focus here, creates such a bond, but it characterizes reason-responsiveness more generally—at least the demanding sort of reason-responsiveness that characterizes humans, responding to reasons *qua* reasons. The paradigmatic form of *our* sort of rational responsiveness is the experience of necessity.

Moving away from phenomenology, let’s now consider the nature of inference itself. Consider the following progression:

- (1) Judgment that p
- (2) Judgment that p implies² q
- (3) Inference from p to q.

What is the relation between (1), (2), and (3)? This much seems incontrovertible: (1) does not suffice for (3) since we often fail to recognize what a proposition implies. (1) and (2) also plainly do not suffice (3), as someone can believe that p, know that p implies that q, and yet fail to respond by believing q (even if one doesn’t surrender one’s belief that p). This is the source of the Tortoise’s resistance in his dialogue with Achilles,

² I use ‘implies’ and ‘follows from’ here to designate a relationship between propositions (and so not a sentential connective).

as envisioned by Lewis Carroll.³ Responding to a reason seems to go beyond the judgment that serves as the reason, even in combination with the judgment that the reason supports responding in the relevant way. For it remains a possibility that the subject does not respond in the relevant way.⁴

The Tortoise's problem (or anyway the problem the Tortoise torments Achilles by pretending to suffer from) is that he doesn't put the various pieces of information provided by Achilles together. The tortoise pretends that there is some additional piece of information that might "force him, logically" to draw the conclusion. He requests ever more truths that can be written down in his notebook. But no quantity of judgments adds up to an inference. To infer, the Tortoise must be *moved* by his

³ Carroll (1895).

⁴ Kieran Setiya is among the few who think that (1) and (2) suffice for (3). See Setiya (2013). He holds that whereas it might be possible to both believe that p and believe that p implies q without believing that q , it is not possible to believe that p and p implies q without believing that q . But his position (some version of which I too would endorse) does not shed any light on the nature of doxastic integration. What does (or would) the fact that it is impossible to hold the conjunctive premise without drawing the conclusion tell us? It would tell us that when you put separate beliefs together into a single conjunctive belief, a certain sort of necessity can arise. But our topic is precisely the psychological reality behind the expression 'conjunctive belief'. To what does it refer? I pursue the other direction of explanation: If we understood the nature of the togetherness of our beliefs, we know what conjunctive belief is.

understanding of the significance of the truths. And the Tortoise's game is to pretend never to be so moved.

It's important to see that it would not help to simply add a disposition, such that when the list in the Tortoise's notebook reaches a certain number of items or items meeting a certain condition, he suddenly finds himself believing the conclusion. If his being so moved is simply a matter of a mechanism that makes him believe something, then the change is something that happens *to* him; *he* has not inferred. This is a way of motivating Paul Boghossian's Taking Condition on inference.⁵ The reasoner draws the conclusion *because* she grasps the relevant inferential connection.

It might seem as if to solve Carroll's problem, we simply need to appeal not just to the propositions that the subject believes, but to rules that the subject follows. But, as Boghossian also recognizes, the problem of inference is just a specific instance of the problem of rule-following. Rule-following seems to have two elements: a judgment corresponding to the subject's understanding of the rule; and a causal element corresponding to applications of the rule. But adding the rule to what the thinker knows, all by itself, does not guarantee that the causal element is explained by his knowledge of the rule. The causation might be 'deviant'. And that's the rub. It's difficult to see how knowledge of the rule *could* enter into the causation of belief without in the end being a matter of a trigger that blindly causes the thinker to believe a conclusion. Ultimately, or so I have argued,⁶ an account of inference must explain how

⁵ Boghossian (2014)

⁶ Marcus (2021)

this movement transpires in virtue of the subject's understanding of the inferential force of the premises in relation to the conclusion.

I contend that the possibility of inference depends upon seeing that, contrary to conventional wisdom: (1) and (2) sometimes suffice for (3). Consider: Why *don't* I draw a conclusion from a known premise? I may simply have failed to recognize that q is implied by p, a failure which in turn might be explained by many different sorts of things. I might lack information. I might just not be sharp enough to deduce it. Or I might have failed to consider the question of q; it just didn't occur to me. Then again, it might not have *just* failed to occur to me. There could also be a less innocent explanation: self-deception, denial, repression, or the like. These conditions also might explain why, even if I *do* know that q follows from p, I have not put this together with my knowledge of p.

But from the possibility that one can both judge that p and that p entails q without inferring that q, it doesn't follow that inference to q requires more judgment. This has been a theme in Markos Valaris' work.⁷ It does not follow from the fact that we sometimes judge some p such that p implies q to be true without deriving q, that in every case of drawing an inference there is more that I must judge or believe beyond the premise. It doesn't follow from the fact that we sometimes judge p to be true, and even know that q follows, but still don't make the inference, that making the inference is in every case a separate mental act from judging a proposition true and believing that q follows. In fact, I would argue that the genus of rational sensitivity—sensitivity to reasons qua reasons— is characterized by the unity of reason-recognition (the

⁷ See Valaris (2014) and (2017).

recognition that p is a good reason for q) and reasons-responsiveness (inferring q from p). A study of our sensitivity to reasons should focus on how such a unity is possible.

Why think that recognizing a reason ever suffices for responding to it? Because if recognizing a reason did not suffice for responding to it, then there would be no way out of the difficulty posed by Carroll's dialogue.⁸ I will use the locution 'S believes that q *in believing* that p' to describe the circumstance in which recognizing that q follows from p suffices for S to believe that q. Now, suppose one could never believe q *in believing* p so long as someone *else* could rationally affirm p without affirming q. Were that true, then the transition from believing p to believing q could never be a matter of the judgment of the thinker. Rather, it would have to be that we are merely caused to believe q in virtue of something like the proper functioning of sub-personal machinery. Judgment serves as the input to the mechanism, but *we* only reach the conclusion insofar as this machinery is cooperative. The judgment that p launches us—accurately when all is well—at the judgment that q.⁹ To avoid this picture, we must allow that one can, under certain circumstances, believe q *in believing* p, even when these judgments are *possibly* distinct.

You are perhaps not convinced that we should want to avoid this picture. Worries about regress perhaps lead you to wonder whether it is really so obvious that we do reach the conclusion of inference under our own cognitive steam, i.e., purely as a

⁸ A complete defense of the 'no way out' claim would require detailed discussion of other routes of escape, as in Marcus (2021), ch. 4.

⁹ I've stolen this metaphor from Lavin (2013).

result of our own judgment of what's true.¹⁰ I think at least it can be made obvious. And, as we shall see below, no threat of regress arises when the point is properly stated. In the meantime, consider a case in which there are none of the failures just discussed. That is, suppose that I know both that *p* and that *p* implies *q*, and that I have put these two facts together in my mind. No confusion, no ignorance, no lack of integration, etc. I see clearly and distinctly that *p*, and that *p* implies *q*. I have as much confidence and justification as humanly possible. Under these circumstances, it is *impossible* for me *not* to believe *q*. In believing the premises, I believe the conclusion. From my point of view, given what I know (or at least take myself to know) there is no space between believing the premises and believing the conclusion. *q* *must* be true, as I might put it. I say the point can be made obvious because we are all familiar with the phenomenon of the ineluctable conclusion; it is a datum intuitively available to all of us as thinkers, i.e., from the first-person point of view.

It is also evident from the third. It is why we find utterances of the form 'p and p imply q, but maybe not q' unintelligible were we to interpret each element along ordinary lines. That is, if someone were to say when the topic of tomorrow's weather comes up "I believe it will rain tomorrow and that rain implies a wet ground, but I'm not sure whether the ground will be wet" and were to resist every attempt to interpret the appearance of incoherence away, I would be baffled—not because the expressed attitude is rationally deficient, but because I would have no idea what attitude towards the ground's wetness tomorrow to ascribe the speaker. Anyone who possesses the conceptual understanding required to understand statements of the relevant forms,

¹⁰ See, e.g., McHugh and Way (2016).

whose grasp on the very idea of implication and conjunction is sufficiently firm to even qualify as holding propositional attitudes towards the relevant statement-forms, knows that it must be false. Hence, we have no idea what to say about this speaker's attitude towards the conclusion. One cannot clearly and distinctly represent a proposition as true while failing to hold true what we clearly and distinctly know to be an implied proposition, and so one cannot be understood as doing so.

When I believe *q* *in* believing *p*, I hold two beliefs in the sense that there are distinct propositions that I affirm. Most would take it to follow that believing one couldn't necessitate believing the other. Given that it is possible for *someone* to believe *p* without believing *q*, there could at strongest be a metaphysically contingent connection between *my* being in the two states. But this argument misses the essential feature of the nature of the togetherness of beliefs in a single mind. Given that I believe *p* and that my understanding of *p* is such that I cannot separate its truth from the truth of *q* ("q must be true!"), it is currently impossible *for me* to believe *p* without believing *q*. This is the wisdom in Christine Korsgaard's remark that "[t]he necessity [of rational considerations] may lie in the fact that, when they do move us...they move us with the force of necessity [even though it] will still not be the case that they necessarily move us." ¹¹

The mark of inference—and I would argue for an analogous thesis about human reason-responsiveness more generally—is the phenomenon of rational necessity: the way in which beliefs in one or several propositions can make believing or disbelieving another necessary, in the sense that it is metaphysically impossible for the subject to

¹¹ Korsgaard (1986), 14

resist the conclusion or to believe the inconsistent proposition. I say *metaphysical* because what makes it impossible is not a contingent psychological law, but the nature of rationality.

How can the nature of rationality yield metaphysical necessity? Just as the nature of water can yield nomological necessity. The volume of water in a certain container will necessarily increase if frozen. What makes this necessity *nomological*? Simple, it is explained by a natural law. And since there is a conceivable world in which the laws are different, we can imagine water contracting when frozen. But it is *inconceivable* that someone whose belief that *p* is *in mind*—not obscured by the factors mentioned above—can at the same time hold a patently contradictory belief. There is no law of nature whose imagined suspension would enable us to conceive of a believer who can clearly and distinctly believe the patently false. And the source of the impossibility is the nature of rationality itself. Because of what it is to be one of *us*, it is inconceivable that one of us believes the patently false. Our own understanding of the significance of the truth of the premises makes it *metaphysically* impossible to resist (or imagine resisting) the conclusion: there is no conceivable world in which this belief remains in mind but is joined by its contradictory. Much of the rest of the essay is an attempt to understand this phenomenon.

3. Togetherness, Fragmentation, and Understanding

How is it possible that I could believe that my son is stealing again simply *in* appreciating the evidence? To answer this question, I now examine the structure of attributions of inferential reasoning. Such attributions take the form of explanations

that postulate an asymmetric dependence of conclusion-belief on premise-belief. In the case of inference, such an explanation postulates a state of mind that the thinker might express by saying “p, therefore q”. This sort of statement expresses an attitude towards p such that, for the thinker, the truth of p guarantees the truth of q, where the language of guarantee is meant to capture the *must* in a statement such as “q must be true, given p” or the *no way* in “in light of p, there’s no way that q could be false”, etc. From the thinker’s perspective, there is no separating the truth p from that of q. My son must be stealing again, alas. I suggest that to understand the rational mind in its theoretical orientation—the nature of our sensitivity to theoretical reasons—is to understand how allegiance to one or several truths makes it impossible for a subject to refrain from believing certain *other* truths. For this sort of necessity exclusively characterizes the relationship between the beliefs of a single individual. To speak of the singleness of a mind, its unity, is just another way of speaking of the nature of the togetherness of our mental states. What to say, then, of this togetherness?

Since every proposition has an infinite number of consequences, it would be ludicrous to suggest that we are irrational whenever we fail to believe what follows from what we already believe. Still, where someone believes some p such that q follows, but fails to draw the conclusion that q, we often ask why. The answers fall into two categories: (a) lack of understanding or knowledge and (b) fragmentation.¹² The first category includes cases in which the subject fails to fully understand a concept or is ignorant of an identity. The second category includes cases in which the subject has not

¹² See Borgoni, Kindermann, and Onofri (2021) for recent work on mental fragmentation.

connected the premise (or premises) and the conclusion on account of self-deception, repression, distraction, or simply the failure to ‘put them together’.

Unaware of the fact that my neighbor is the killer, I fail to take various precautions that would be sensible, given that he is a killer. Here, I failed to draw a consequence because I was ignorant of an identity. Or: I might be in too much of a hurry to dwell on the significance of the fact that my door is unlocked and thus am utterly shocked to discover an intruder in the house. Here, I just didn’t think the matter through fully. I may believe several propositions without having thought through the implications of their conjunction sufficiently well to see a certain consequence. If only I had thought to connect the mysterious midnight phone call with the man lurking in the shadows, I might have avoided trouble. I might apply a concept to an object without understanding the concept sufficiently well to recognize what it implies. Unaware that arthritis is a disease of the joints, I answer ‘no’ to the question of whether I have any joint pain. It becomes impossible *not* to believe a certain consequence only insofar as I understand the significance of the propositions I believe (and won’t surrender) well enough to know that it follows. The togetherness in mind of my belief that I have arthritis and the belief that I have a disease of the joints is constituted in part by my understanding of the necessary connection between the two.

But I also might know and be unwilling to surrender my beliefs that p and that p implies q without believing q . In such a case, the failure to infer is not down to any kind of ignorance, but to a lack of doxastic integration. Imagine Bob, who is preparing a frittata for a potluck that evening. He is attempting vainly to retrieve an elusive fleck of eggshell from a bowl full of yolks when he receives a call from his boss. His boss informs him that he must fly to Duluth right away for what promises to be a long, cold

week of meetings. “Unbelievable”, he thinks. *Again*, his boss has called him away from home at a moment’s notice. *Again*, he will miss the monthly neighborhood supper club, the chance to meet the new neighbors, and so forth. His fury is intensified by his inability to scoop, squeeze, or otherwise extricate the eggshell fragment, which keeps sliding back into the yolky goop. It takes a full angry minute for him to realize that since he’s leaving for Duluth this afternoon, there is no point in continuing with the omelet. For the length of the minute leading up to the realization, he lacks nothing in the way of information and knowledge of inferential ties necessary to draw the conclusion but nonetheless fails to do so.

In Bob’s case, a psychological obstacle stands in the way of his putting things together; he is so consumed with rage that the pointlessness of the eggshell extraction does not occur to him. At other times, what explains fragmentation is less the presence of a hindrance than the absence of a help. Someone asks whether I have ever been to a landlocked country. I say “no” after considering the question for a few moments. Yet I also believe that I have been to Switzerland and that Switzerland is landlocked. There is nothing in particular stopping me from bringing my knowledge of the second and third of these beliefs to mind. Rather, I simply didn’t think of it, didn’t put it together. If someone were to prompt me by saying “But you’ve been to Switzerland,” I would straightaway infer that I’ve been to a landlocked country.

If propositions are understood and there is no fragmentation, doxastic incoherence is impossible. Under these conditions, I *recognize* (another ordinary term I put to technical use) that the conclusion follows and cannot help but draw the inference. To recognize that something, q, follows from what I already believe (and will not surrender), is therein to believe q. Analogously, to recognize that something q is

incompatible with what I already believe is therein to deny it. The essence of rationality lies in this *therein*. So far I have waved my hand in the direction of two elements of this nexus. ‘Recognizing’, in the relevant sense, is in part a matter of understanding what one believes well enough to know what else, in the light of what’s true, must, or can’t be true. And it is in part of matter of their integration, which is so far mostly a label for an intuitively recognizable phenomenon.¹³

We will turn to further characterize the togetherness in the next section, but we must first iron out a wrinkle. Insofar as we affirm (or deny) in light of what else we believe, we employ the concepts of implication (or incompatibility). My affirmation of the conclusion of inference reflects knowledge that what is implied by a truth must itself be true; my denial of what is incompatible with a truth reflects my knowledge that what is inconsistent with a truth must be false. As such, knowledge of *these* truths, which I

¹³ Is clear-headed doxastic incoherence impossible? It might be argued that the preface paradox shows otherwise: It would be rational to admit that there is at least one error in my book, as I’m not infallible. Thus, I clear-headedly believe (a) each of the things written in my book and (b) that my book contains a falsehood. A patent inconsistency. But is it? There is no single proposition that I both affirm and deny. I don’t deny any particular claim in the book. Nor do I affirm the truth of the conjunction of all the claims. My position is that it is impossible to hold in my mind all of the propositions in my book together such that their collective truth is salient to me *and at the same time* reject them. (a) and (b) together thus do not amount to the embrace of a patent contradiction.

will call the *implication principle* and the *exclusion principle*, must have a special status. One of these principles play a role in every instance of inference. Even apart from any consideration of inference, it is a highly plausible minimal requirement on representing any proposition as true (in the characteristic manner of humans) that one knows that nothing implied by it can be false and nothing inconsistent with it can be true. This is why no one fails to understand what an interlocuter is up to when they say “oh so since you believe p, you must also [or must not] believe q.”

The implication and incompatibility principles are active in *every* belief. It's true, of course, that these principles are truth-functionally distinct from any contingent proposition. But no rational agent believes anything who doesn't therein appreciate that in so believing one must accept what follows and reject what's incompatible. If I appear simply dumbfounded when you try to draw out the implications of my professed belief via implications and incompatibilities, if every attempt to explain is met with utter confusion, your confidence that I held the relevant beliefs would be destroyed—so long, at least, as you take my performance seriously. (And if you are brighter than Achilles, you won't.). Indifference to these fundamental logical principles ultimately makes understanding someone impossible—not because we view it as an obstruction in the expression of their beliefs—but because we have lost any reason for thinking that the relevant noises *are* serious and sincere expressions of belief. In affirming anything, I know that I am thereby committed to affirming whatever else must therefore be true and denying whatever must therefore be false. And this knowledge is not even possibly separable from any belief.

My knowledge of the implication and exclusion principles is inseparable from any of my other beliefs and the same goes for you. But often what's inseparable from my

belief that p may not be inseparable from your belief that p. In knowing that I have arthritis, I know that I have a disease of the joints. You know you have arthritis but you do not understand what arthritis is well enough to infer that you have a disease of the joints. You do not believe the former in believing the latter, whereas I do. This sheds some light on the paradigmatic togetherness of beliefs in a single mind. It is marked by the bonds of rational necessity constituted, at least in the simple cases I have considered, by the thinker's understanding (or putative understanding) of what implies what and what is incompatible with what.¹⁴

4. Beliefs Out of Mind

We are inquiring into the nature of the togetherness of states in the rational mind, which is a condition for the possibility of inference. This togetherness is a matter in part of the rationally necessary connection between beliefs whose contents are understood by the thinker to be necessarily connected. And it is in part of a matter of integration. But what is it for two beliefs to be integrated?

¹⁴ I do not address the question here of what to make of the intelligence of, say, a border collie. Insofar as reasoning in my sense depends on the possession of the concepts of implication and incompatibility, it strikes me as implausible that border collies reason. But if this estimate of their cognitive capacities turns out to be mistaken, it would not undermine my thesis. My aim is to shed light on the nature of reasoning in rational creatures, whoever they might be.

I propose, in this section, to answer this question by reflecting further on the circumstances in which beliefs are *not* together in mind. Suppose I believe that my childhood was traumatically miserable, but I find it painful to think of it and have gradually repressed this belief. As such, when asked whether I have had a happy life, I insist that I have.¹⁵ Because this belief is repressed, I fail to draw certain consequences, e.g., that I might benefit from counseling. Although I believe that people who have suffered childhood trauma should seek counseling, I do not put this together with my knowledge that *I* have suffered childhood trauma. I hold both of these beliefs, but they are disconnected. What must happen in order for them to be integrated?

One sort of answer would be to point to yet another state, connection to which would somehow constitute the beliefs' togetherness in mind. This strikes me as unpromising. Why couldn't I be alienated from it? And how, in any case, would the postulation of such an additional state shed light on the nature of alienation? For the remainder of this paper, I will leave these questions rhetorical and pursue what strikes me as a more intuitively plausible approach. What needs to change for beliefs to become integrated is not the states themselves, which do not as such preclude the relevant sort of connection, but our relationship to them.

Here's (what I find to be) a useful way of conceptualizing the phenomenon of alienated belief.¹⁶ Insofar as I hold a belief, I have the ability to avow it—to say

¹⁵ This a truncated version of an argument from Marcus and Schwenkler (2019)

¹⁶ An anonymous referee objects to this line of explanation on the grounds that there are no repressed beliefs, that a belief that I repress or am in denial about or am deceiving myself about is not actually a belief at all. I cannot defend the reality of repressed beliefs

knowledgeably but not on the basis of self-observation, that I believe it. But to have the ability to x does not entail that one can currently x, as the ability might be masked. And to say that a belief is alienated due to e.g., repression is to say precisely that. Insofar as I have repressed my belief that my childhood was miserable, I cannot at the moment exercise my ability to avow it. The goal of therapy might then be to remove the mask.

Even while alienated from a belief, however, I might ascribe it to myself. But if I do, it would have to be on an empirical basis, on the basis, say, of my observations about my own patterns of behavior. This is knowledge of myself *as other*.¹⁷ Believing is sufficient for knowledge of what we believe, but sometimes we cannot bring what we know to mind. My self-attribution “I believe that p” and my assertion “p” typically have

in this paper. To do so would require refuting *deflationary* accounts of self-deception. I have made the case against them elsewhere. (Marcus (2019)). My argument here thus rests on the assumption that there are such things as repressed beliefs. But my interest in less-than-ideal instances of belief lies chiefly in the light they shed on paradigmatic (i.e., non-repressed) beliefs. If there are no repressed beliefs, it would do nothing to undermine the thesis that beliefs that are in mind are subject to rational necessity. It is also worth emphasizing that the phenomenon of belief-alienation is the focus of a robust tradition of thought about the mind, the subject of countless literary works, and, in my experience, an indispensable tool for understanding myself and the people around me. Furthermore, the contrary intuition—that a repressed belief is not a belief at all—is, I contend, explained away by the datum discussed presently: the ability to express one’s belief can be *masked*.

¹⁷ Cf. Moran (2001).

their source in the very same state. In other words, part of what it is to believe that *p* is to know you believe it, and to know simply *in* believing it. But that's consistent with sometimes being unable to bring it to mind.

Ordinary doxastic self-knowledge is tied up (in a manner to be discussed below) with the salience (to me) of *p*'s truth. Repression is a response to the painfulness of a truth, but the price of a truth's being obscured is the availability of the corresponding belief to serve in reasoning and, not unrelatedly, the masking of our ability to knowledgeably self-ascribe it in a distinctively first-personal way. So long as my belief is alienated, the painful truth is out of mind. This means that I am not conscious of the truth of that belief, and therefore I can't enjoy a consciousness of this truth that makes me conscious of the other truths that follow from it. Nor can its truth be salient to me in the manner required for avowal. As such, I can at best say what I believe precisely on the same sort of basis as someone else.

But this is confounding. I cannot bring to consciousness the point of view of a belief whose very existence depends on it being *my* point of view. Alienation from my belief is, in fact, a form of alienation from myself. Thus whereas there is room for the misidentification of the subject of an alienated belief, there is no possibility of such misidentification of the subject of an integrated belief. I might find out, e.g., that the pattern of behavior supplied by the detective following me, on which I based the self-ascription of the belief that *p*, was in fact a pattern exhibited by someone else's behavior. It has turned out that it is not I who believe that *p* but someone else. This is error through misidentification.¹⁸ As many have pointed out, no error through

¹⁸ Cf., Shoemaker (1968), Evans (1982).

misidentification is possible in the case of a non-alienated belief. Suppose that, after weighing the evidence, I take myself to come to the conclusion that *p* and so believe that I believe that *p*. I might be wrong about many things: perhaps I didn't actually come to the conclusion that *p*; perhaps *p* is false. But I can't be wrong that it is *I* who came (or didn't come) to that conclusion. This suggests that the recipe for doxastic integration is the ordinary, non-empirical identification with the subject of the alienated beliefs.

So long as my belief that *p* is alienated, it cannot serve as my reason for anything. And whereas I can ordinarily *just say*, i.e., authoritatively but not on the basis of evidence, that I believe that *p*, that ability is now masked. I can act on *empirical knowledge* of my belief that *p*; I can, for example, tell my friend that I'm worried about what I (apparently) believe. But it doesn't at that moment *seem true to me*. And so I cannot at that moment act in light of *p*.

To be clear: the point is not that I can only act on non-empirical knowledge. That would be absurd. But to act on my belief that *p* (based, let's say, on empirical evidence), the belief must be *in mind*, which is to say I must have unmasked non-empirical knowledge of the *fact that I believe*, i.e., knowledge that I have simply in virtue of holding that belief. My empirical knowledge that *p* is of no use to me insofar as I am alienated from it.

Consider the difference between someone who says "I think my brother is a loser" after judicious consideration of the circumstances that led to his brother's incarceration and someone who says the same after a pattern of his own mistreatment of his brother has been pointed out to him. Only the former is an *expression* of the belief that his brother is a loser; the latter is only an expression of the second-order belief that he holds

the first-order belief. He is *speaking his mind* (about his brother) in the first case,¹⁹ but not in the second. What is ready-to-speak is precisely what's in mind. We speak from the point of view of those beliefs that are in mind together. These are beliefs in their paradigmatic form: ready to be asserted or avowed. And all of those things that are ready-to-speak are what's in mind together.

To be a thinker is to see that what is inconsistent with a truth cannot be a truth. This is the exclusion principle. It follows that one cannot *knowingly* embrace a contradiction, that self-contradiction is something that befalls us. When it does, it's often not obvious in what direction to turn. The man who looks at the evidence concerning his brother and says "I think he's a winner" but who then looks at the evidence concerning himself and says "I think he's a loser" understands that both statements cannot be true.

If we, the audience, know what's behind each of these statements, then although we can't render our interlocutor consistent, we do understand his situation. This is not a case of someone who considers the question of p and who then (supposedly) arrives at the judgment: true *and* false. Holding contradictory beliefs is possible (and so intelligible) only insofar as I am not occupying a standpoint that includes both beliefs, i.e., only insofar as I am fragmented.²⁰ Perhaps I understand myself to affirm that p

¹⁹ The redolence of the phrase accounts for its independent use in the titles of two important works on the nature of expression, Bar-On (2004) and Finkelstein (1994).

²⁰ Here I echo Davidson: "I spoke of the mind as being partitioned, meaning no more than that a metaphorical wall separated the beliefs which, allowed into consciousness together, would destroy at least one". Davidson (1985), 220.

simply *in* affirming that *p*, but I do not understand myself to deny *p* simply in denying *p*. I can take up the point of view of one of my beliefs, but not the other. Similarly, implication blindness is possible insofar as I who understand myself to affirm *p* simply in affirming it do not understand myself to affirm that *p* implies *q* simply in affirming it. (Or the other way around.) This is what makes it intelligible that I both believe that *p* and that *p* implies *q* without believing that *q*. They are not in mind together.

Sensitivity to reasons (*qua* reasons) includes the togetherness in mind of ground and grounded; it is thus that one can believe the conclusion *in* believing the premises. This reflects, in the ideal case, my understanding that given the truth of the premises, the conclusion must itself be true, an understanding that makes use of the aforementioned implication and exclusion principles. The togetherness itself has an epistemic dimension: we are ready to self-ascribe them knowledgeably simply *in* affirming them. But how is this possible? I will argue in the next section that the capacity to self-ascribe a belief on the basis of the consideration of its truth depends upon the identification by the subject of truth with correct belief, and of falsehood with incorrect belief. Our normative sensitivity to reasons arises insofar as we are conscious that in believing we aim at the true. Such a capacity must, therefore, be self-consciously exercised. It is part of being a believer—at least the sort of believer that we are—that we know we go right in believing the true and wrong in believing the false.

5. Rational Capacities and Normative Assessment

We often go wrong in reasoning: mistakenly inferring what doesn't follow or failing to infer what does. Because the implication and exclusion principles are active in

every belief, every belief is, in a sense, an attempt to know. But the language of ‘attempt’ suggests volition. A belief is a potential for knowledge, but not a potential in the manner of an intention since what it is a potential *for* is not action. To understand the sense in which belief is a potential, we must understand individual beliefs in relation to the capacity of which they are an exercise. Crucially, this capacity is not a merely mechanical disposition, nor is it a merely functional disposition. It is a rational capacity.

A mechanical disposition, such as the fragility of a glass, grounds the following explanatory asymmetry: given the trigger (forceful collision with another object), the manifestation (breakage) requires no explanation. Of course it broke: it’s fragile. But failure to manifest the disposition does require an explanation. How did *that* not break!? A functional disposition, such as a flower’s blooming in spring or an alarm clock’s ringing at 7 am, grounds an analogous explanatory asymmetry. Given the trigger (the season or time), the manifestation (blooming or ringing) requires no explanation, whereas the failure to manifest does. I would argue (and have) that it is these asymmetries that define the genus of disposition.²¹

The central difference between mechanical and functional dispositions is that the latter is evaluable, whereas the former is not. There is something amiss if the flower fails to bloom in spring or the alarm clock (having been set) fails to ring. But it is a fluke, not a defect when a dropped glass fails to break. This is a difference in the sort of explanatory demand raised by the failure of different sorts of dispositions to manifest when triggered. If it is a mechanical disposition, we simply need an explanation for why

²¹ Marcus (2012), ch.1.

what *ordinarily* happens failed to happen. If it is a functional disposition, we need an explanation for why what was *supposed* to happen failed to happen. To be a flower or an alarm clock is essentially to possess natural or artifactual *telo*i from which it follows that to say what a flower is is to describe something that blooms, and to say what an alarm clock is is to describe something that alarms when set. And these generics entail facts about how things *should be*: flowers should bloom, alarm clocks should ring.²²

The human capacity for knowledge has a normative dimension, one that gives rise to the characteristic dispositional asymmetry. Holding everything equal, true beliefs require less explanation than false ones. Every belief, whether true or false, can be the subject of the question: why do you believe that? And typically the thinker will be able to say or at least gesture in the direction of what makes the belief seem true. So far, we have symmetry. But if you believe falsely, then more needs to be explained. A satisfying answer to the question ‘why does he believe that?’ must include not only what justified the belief in his eyes (required for the explanation of a true belief), but *also* how he was misled. The failure of our epistemic powers demands more explanation than their success, much as the *failure* of a sunflower to track the sun requires more explanation than the sunflower’s *successfully* tracking the sun. The explanation of the former requires everything the explanation of the latter does, and *more*.

Unlike flowers and alarm clocks, which are oblivious to the standards that define them, the source of the standard associated with our capacity to acquire knowledge—what makes it the case that it is *truth* that measures belief—is explained by its being a self-conscious capacity. *In* exercising the capacity, we know what success would be—

²² Cf., Thompson (2008).

truth—and we are alive to the danger of error: falsehood. Whereas nature and the artisan confer on the flowers and the alarm clock the standard by which we judge their success or failure, it is the human's own understanding of the capacity to acquire knowledge that gives it its standard. An individual exercise of this capacity in the form of a belief is nothing other than holding oneself to a standard; to believe what's true. The capacity is nothing besides the conscious commitment to the truth that characterizes the rational mind.

It is because our capacity for knowledge is self-conscious that there is normally no transition from thinking of *p* as true to thinking of it as *to be believed* or from thinking of *p* as false to thinking of it as *to be disbelieved*. We take it as criticism if someone says our beliefs are false, and we conceive of ourselves as finding fault with others when we point out their false beliefs. A thinker as such knows that truths are to be believed and falsehoods are to be disbelieved. And so I cannot intelligibly insist that although a certain proposition is true (or false), that fact has no bearing on whether or not it would be correct (or incorrect) to believe it. This cannot be something that I simply have failed to learn about the nature of belief, as I might simply have failed to learn that in believing, I make use of my brain.

Along the same lines, I know that someone else who believes *p* and that *p* implies *q* without believing *q* has missed something, and that someone who believes both that *p* and that not-*p* has thereby gone wrong. This normative knowledge is not something extra: to understand someone as not concluding that *q* in such a case is *therein* to understand them as missing something. To understand someone as holding contradictory beliefs is *therein* to understand them as being wrong. Missing something typically does not rise to the level of a criticizable offense, since we are, as we all know,

finite creatures. But criticizable or not, it is missing something. And ignorance, while it may be bliss, is closer to epistemic vice than epistemic virtue. It is, at best, an excusable departure from the ideal.

The inseparability (from the subject's point of view) of truth from correctness, on the one hand, and falsehood from error on the other, has the following consequence. A representation of a proposition as true or false is at the same time a representation of it as binding one, as imposing a certain sort of obligation on thinkers. This is just another way of conceptualizing falsehood as error. To believe a proposition is to represent it as correct to believe, correct for *one* to believe. And this 'one' is universal. Perhaps there are decisive reasons not linked to the relevant sense of 'correct' (say pragmatic reasons) for believing what is, in the relevant sense, to be disbelieved, or for disbelieving what is to be believed. But they do not undermine the correctness (in the relevant sense) of so believing or disbelieving. It is only because 'one' has this universal sense that there is no space between thinking of a proposition as to be believed and thinking of it as to be believed by *me*. It is already included, so speak, in the relevant *one*, that in thinking that *one* should believe (or disbelieve) a proposition that *I* should.

The self-conscious character of our rational capacities bears, of course, on the nature of doxastic self-knowledge. When my belief is in mind, my knowledgeable self-attribution is simply the articulation of that very exercise of my capacity to believe the truth. When a belief is alienated, and so the painful truth is no longer salient to me, I can no longer actualize the potential to bring this doxastic self-knowledge to mind. So long as it remains alienated, it is normatively inert and therefore inexpressible. Alienation makes belief inexpressible precisely because I am no longer conscious of its truth and so also no longer conscious of any obligation to believe it. My self-attribution

cannot be an expression of the consciousness of the correctness of so believing but must rather spring from another source: evidence that I am that sort of person. Beliefs are *avowed* in light of their truth.

I have been arguing that the role that ‘true’ and ‘false’ play in thought must be understood in terms of this essentially known-to-the-subject connection to what would be correct or incorrect for the thinker to believe. To think that a statement of the form p and $\sim p$ cannot be true is to think that *anyone* would go wrong, doxastically speaking, by believing both. And furthermore, since I am such a one, I would also go wrong. Similarly, to think that the truth of statements of the form p and p implies q as guaranteeing the truth of q is to think that anyone would be missing something, doxastically speaking, by believing the first two and failing to believe the third. Since I am such a one, I know *in* representing the first two as true, that I would be missing something in failing to represent q as true.

Our capacity to acquire inferential knowledge is characterized by sensitivity to reasons (qua reasons). This is normative sensitivity in virtue of the equivalence, from the thinker’s perspective, of falsehood and error. And this equivalence is an artifact of the self-consciousness of the underlying capacity. We now turn to examine self-consciousness itself.

6. Self-Consciousness as the form of Mental Togetherness

We want to understand rationality: what it is to be in the space of reasons, i.e., to be responsive to reasons qua reasons. This led us to examine what it is for beliefs to be in mind together, for rational sensitivity is in part a matter of putting together would-be

truths. We then established a connection between this togetherness in mind and our capacity to avow the relevant beliefs. We have now seen that our capacity to acquire knowledge is itself constituted by our consciousness that, in exercising this capacity, our goal is truth, and that false beliefs are therefore erroneous. I will now argue that the togetherness of my beliefs is nothing beyond my capacity to become conscious of them all as mine.

The implication and exclusion principles concern propositions, truth, and falsehood, but insofar as an active understanding of these rules governs reasoning, they equally concern beliefs, correctness, and error. To know that if p is a truth, then $\sim p$ is a falsehood is at the same time to know that if one is correct in believing p , one makes an error in believing $\sim p$. To know that if p and p implies q are truths, then q must also be a truth is at the same time to know that insofar as p and p implies q are to be believed, q is also to be believed. But these latter principles include a concept of a subject of the rational attitudes, of a rational being. It is because S believes p and also believes that p implies q that S should believe q . The implication rule justifies and explains this belief extension.

Crucially, to understand the rule is already to understand the difference between one subject and another. For the rule does not justify anyone who is *not* S in drawing the conclusion. It is the very one who believes the premises who is also obliged to believe the conclusion. When I employ the implication rule, my thought thus includes the idea of a subject. I might criticize someone else for failing to draw an obvious conclusion. In so doing, I conceive of the subject of the belief that p as identical to the subject of the belief that p implies q . It is only insofar as I identify the subject of those beliefs that it makes sense for me to make the criticism.

Even more crucially, when I infer I understand this S to be *me*. And not in a way that leaves open the possibility of the misidentification of the subject of *any* of the beliefs that are in play. I understand myself, qua subject of the belief that p and the belief that p implies q, as also bound to affirm q. This is what we saw in §4. It is a condition of the possibility of inference that the relevant beliefs are together in mind, and this togetherness corresponds to an unmasked ability to speak from the point of view of the relevant beliefs, to speak in a manner such that there can be no possibility of misidentifying the subject of either belief. When I make an inference, I relate to the relevant beliefs—the beliefs whose togetherness in mind makes it impossible to fail to believe the conclusion—from the inside. “I believe q because I believe p” only expresses a paradigmatic rational explanation insofar as it is an attribution to *myself qua myself*, and not to some S who may turn out not to be me. I know that it is because p that I affirm q and I know this simply *in* affirming q on the grounds that p. It is only insofar as my belief that p and that p implies q are *not* out of mind that I reason in a way that might be expressed by saying something like “Since p and p implies q, q.” An inference depends upon the togetherness in mind of the relevant beliefs, which is at the same time the readiness to speak from the point of view of the relevant inference. My consciousness of the normative significance of the premise-beliefs makes it impossible for me not to believe the conclusion and at the same time constitutes my unblocked ability to knowledgeably self-ascribe the corresponding belief. “I believe that p on the grounds that q” paradigmatically expresses normative knowledge—q is what *one should* believe given p—and self-knowledge: q is what I *do* believe because I believe p.

What makes a belief mine is that I am able (perhaps only with time and help) to bring it together with other beliefs in a manner such that I become conscious of what

else must or can't be true. In so doing, I recognize myself as a subject who is committed to believing what follows from p and to disbelieving what's inconsistent with it, i.e., as a rational creature. Paradigmatically, when we say "p, so q" or "I believe q because I believe p" we articulate the consciousness of being so committed. The capacity to speak from the point of view of belief (or inference), to self-ascribe but not on the basis of observation or evidence, is just the verbalization of my representing q as what ought to be believed (or as what ought to be believed in light of p), an obligation I conform to simply *in recognizing*. The unity of the rational mind is thus constituted by self-consciousness: Consciousness of my being the single subject of my beliefs is what makes it the case that I am a single subject—that there is a one who cannot clear-headedly both believe that p and that p implies q and yet fail to believe that q, and that one is me. I grasp the unity of the subject from the 'inside' and this is what explains the existence of the 'inside'. Self-consciousness is what puts us in the space of reasons.

7. Burge's Alternative

Self-consciousness, I have argued, is what makes the mind *one*. It is what distinguishes my beliefs from your beliefs, inconsistency from disagreement. Consciousness of the elements of reasoning as *mine* is precisely what makes them elements of my reasoning. Tyler Burge proceeds in the opposite direction, explaining the mind's unity in terms of the process of reasoning. His focus is on the immediacy with which I respond to appraisals of my own attitudes, in contrast to my appraisals of the attitudes of others:

Reasons must sometimes provide immediate reason to—must sometimes be rationally applicable to affect an attitude or action—*immediately*. On pain of regress, in actual reasoning one cannot require a premiss or further reason for applying reasons, for implementing rational evaluations. In reasoning, reasons must have force in a way that is obvious and straightway...²³

But an evaluation of the reasonableness of an attitude or action will not have any immediate cognitive effect unless the attitude or action is *mine*.

One can evaluate a system of attitudes (in another person or in the abstract) as unreasonable without its being immediately rational for one to change those particular attitudes, or even immediately rational that those attitudes be changed from the perspective in which implementation has to occur. To understand reason one must distinguish conceptually from such cases those cases where particular evaluations immediately rationally require being moved to affect the attitudes or activities being evaluated in accord with the evaluations.²⁴

When I evaluate my own attitudes, I am typically immediately disposed to revise accordingly, but not when I critically evaluate the attitude of another.

Burge here speaks of what is required to *understand* reason, but this is importantly different than what's required to *have* reason:

²³ Burge (1998), 252.

²⁴ Burge (1998), 252

Many thinkers with reasons—many animals, I think—cannot mark the distinction. They lack full understanding of reason. They have not conceptualized what is fundamentally involved in reasoning. Full understanding of reasoning requires a form of thought that marks conceptually those particular attitudes where implementation on those attitudes of rational evaluation of those attitudes is rendered immediately rationally incumbent by the evaluation.

Possession of the concept ‘I’ makes it possible to say what the difference between my mind and your mind is:

The first-person concept fills this function. Its association with a thought (‘I think . . .’, ‘I judge . . .’, ‘I infer . . .’) marks, makes explicit, the immediate rational relevance of invocation of reasons to rational application, or implementation, and motivation. It both designates the agent of thought and marks the acts and attitudes where a rational evaluation of the act or attitude immediately rationally requires using that evaluation to change or maintain the attitude.... Acknowledging, with the I concept, that an attitude or act is one's own is acknowledging that rational evaluations of it which one also acknowledges provide immediate (possibly defeasible) reason and rationally immediate motivation to shape the attitude or act in accordance with the evaluation.²⁵

²⁵ Burge (1987), 252-253.

Burge holds that what makes it the case that a pair of beliefs belong to the same mind is the presence of a disposition to respond with a certain sort of immediacy. Because I believe both p and q , I am disposed immediately to respond to the news that p and q entails r by inferring that r . For a pair of beliefs to belong to the same mind is for them to be connected by such dispositions to immediately respond. The unity of the mind is thus explained, in the first instance, in terms of acts of reasoning, their immediacy, underlying dispositions, and so forth. Self-consciousness comes in later, when we must account for the special abilities of creatures like us.

But Burge's approach fails to properly locate the engine of rational change—in our own understanding—and thus cannot give the right account of the necessity that links our mental states. The mind's unity cannot be explained by reasoning, because reasoning itself, with its associated dispositions, cannot itself be explained except in terms of the mind's unity.

Imagine a creature, S , to have a disposition of the sort Burge describes—the disposition to respond to an evaluation by immediately forming the fitting attitude. Suppose that S believes that p and learns that p entails q . S 's disposition kicks in, resulting in S believing that q . Nothing in this description corresponds to an understanding—even an inchoate, semi-articulate grasp—that what is implied by a truth must be a truth. The mere idea of a disposition to respond to an evaluation by immediately forming the appropriate belief does not by itself entail anything about what the subject must understand. (Perhaps a demon implanted blind dispositions in me to mirror rational relations perfectly.) And, indeed, this is not an accidental feature of the account. Burge is attempting to give an account of reasoning that fits both rational and non-rational animals alike. His thought is that reasoning itself has a core common to

human and non-human animals and that our possession of more sophisticated concepts merely adds sophisticated contents to reasoning—as well as making it possible for us to make explicit the nature of reason. Self-consciousness is a late-developing characteristic, both in individual humans and in our species.

But however sympathetic one might be to his underlying motivation, the approach fails to do justice to human rationality. My new belief is not just immediately caused by the evaluation. It is caused by the evaluation in virtue of my understanding of the connection between what I already believe and the evaluation itself. It's not that no matter how hard I try I cannot refrain from believing r given that I believe that p , q , and that r is entailed by the conjunction of p and q , an achievement the impossibility of which is due to a disposition that prevents me from going astray. Rather, in understanding what must be true, I therein believe it. Burge envisions a disposition that operates behind the scenes of my rational consideration, restraining me from thinking logically forbidden thoughts and prompting me to think logically necessary thoughts. But the rational limits of my thinking are imposed by my own understanding. I can't believe what I know must be false because, qua self-conscious believer, there is no space between thinking of a proposition as false and thinking of it as to be disbelieved.

What propels me to the conclusion of an inference is my own understanding of what (else) must be true. This fact determines the modal profile of the bonds that link the beliefs of a single mind. Try as hard as you please, you *cannot* believe (what you recognize to be) a contradiction or fail to believe (what you recognize to be) entailed by what you already believe (and won't surrender). Burge's resources for underwriting this 'cannot' are limited—according to the naturalistic ambition alluded to above—to processes common to the rational and non-rational alike. Thus, it will remain

metaphysically possible for S to respond to the evaluation by accepting the to-be-disbelieved proposition and maintaining the original belief. Ordinary causal relations, after all, hold with only natural necessity: they manifest causal regularities that might have been otherwise. And the biological mechanisms that implement a functional disposition can break down. There's nothing on Burge's account to explain why it is *metaphysically impossible* for a human to clear-headedly adopt the belief that it is not raining even though they already believe that it is raining.

Will the standard-fare metaphysical necessities help? It's not clear how. Such necessities are mathematical, logical, or conceptual. These are truths a clear-headed rejection of which is the sort of impossibility that we are trying to understand. But they do not by themselves provide a basis for understanding why flesh-and-blood creatures cannot clear-headedly believe in violation of them. It is metaphysically impossible to believe a patent contradiction. But no such impossibility can be explained by biological mechanisms, which can guarantee unlikelihood or, at best, nomological impossibility.

Burge's central claim is right: the difference between one of your beliefs and one of my beliefs is that I'm disposed to respond immediately to the latter but not the former. The question is whether this helps us to understand the difference between one and two minds, between inconsistency and disagreement. If it did, it would provide a clue as to why it is metaphysically impossible to clear-headedly bring together each of a pair of contradictory beliefs. But what it points to instead is that our ability to reason and the unity of the rational mind are explained at the same time or not at all. In reasoning, I bring at least two thoughts together: the premise(s) and the conclusion. If I believe that p and learn that p entails q, then I am disposed immediately to also believe that q. That is because I can't clear-headedly bring together the belief that p and the

belief that p entails q without concluding that q . When I recognize what must be true, I therein believe it. This is how reasoning happens. The being-together-in-mind of beliefs, which has its source in self-consciousness, is the condition for the possibility of reasoning. Thus, the nature of the disposition to which Burge appeals is explained in terms of the very phenomenon—the unity of mind—that we are attempting to understand.²⁶

8. Conclusion

This essay concerns only theoretical reasoning, but there is much that transfers over to rational sensitivity in other domains. There is also, of course, much that doesn't. And it might seem that one difference in particular makes the framework a poor fit for practical rationality. Practical reasons, it will be argued, rarely “strike us with the force of necessity,” since there are generally many equally good ways of achieving a particular end. I must cross the bridge to get to town. But *which* of the paths across the bridge I take is of complete indifference to me. Where, then, is the recognition of necessity in which my responsiveness to the relevant practical reasons would, according to my account, consist?

In fact, the framework does apply: considerations strike us with the force of necessity when we recognize that a certain course of action is required to achieve an aim that we won't surrender. By ‘certain course of action’, I don't mean fully imagined down to molecular detail; I mean whatever phrases such as “to cross the bridge” refer to. And

²⁶ Cf. See Neta (2019) for a distinct but congenial analysis of inference with same upshot: reasoning is a function of self-consciousness.

just as it is impossible to hold the beliefs p and $\sim p$ insofar as they in mind together, it is impossible to intend an end while failing to intend a necessary means insofar as the means and its necessary connection to the end are in mind together. It is impossible to intend to get to town, know that crossing the bridge is required, and yet fail to intend to cross the bridge—unless the necessity of so intending is not fully grasped on account of distraction, misunderstanding, etc.

It is true, of course, that practical reason is permissive in a way that theoretical reason is not. I can conclude that I must cross the bridge, and precisely in so concluding intend to cross the bridge, without intending any particular route across the bridge. How I will cross remains undecided even as I already know that I *must* pick one particular route. The important point is, however, that when I do pick one, I am doing so (picking one) because I must. My action can thus be at once both a recognition of what I must do and my doing of it. Or so I would argue (on another occasion).²⁷

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²⁷ Thanks to audiences at three workshops in the summer of 2022: at the University of Leipzig, the Free University in Berlin, and the University of Fribourg. Thanks also to the helpful referees and editors at the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.

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