

Broome on Reasoning and Rule-Following

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John Broome's (2013) book, *Rationality Through Reasoning*, is a trail-blazing study of the nature of rationality, the nature of reasoning and the connection between the two. In this brief comment on the book I focus on two issues, one to do with reasoning and the other with the rule-following that Broome plausibly takes reasoning to presuppose.

The thrust of the first comment is that, contrary to what he says, the meta-propositional model of reasoning that I have defended elsewhere is convergent with his own, though certainly less complete. The thrust of the second comment is that, contrary to an impression the discussion may give, his remarks on rule-following should not be taken as a response to the classic problem associated with Wittgenstein and Kripke; he has different fish to fry.

1. Reasoning

In order to focus on the issue related to reasoning, it will be useful to concentrate on theoretical rather than practical reasoning, and in particular on theoretical reasoning that is designed to culminate in the formation of actual beliefs, not the beliefs that would be formed in the presence of one or another set of suppositions. Broome defends a number of scene-setting claims about such reasoning. While they may not be accepted on all sides, they are consistent with a wide family of approaches, including one that I have defended elsewhere; this is the meta-propositional approach discussed later (Pettit 1993, Ch 2).¹

- Reasoning is an activity, not an automatic process, contrary to what a large number of epistemologists and philosophers of mind have assumed (208-09); specifically, it is an act that you perform intentionally or knowingly, even an act that you may explicitly intend to perform (235).

¹ For other statements see (Pettit 1998; 2007a; b; List and Pettit 2011, Ch 1; Buchak and Pettit 2014).

- Understood in this way, reasoning requires you to attend consciously to certain propositions or premises that you believe — to believe them consciously in that minimal sense (222, 242) — where the exemplar involves using words to express the proposition to yourself (223-24).
- Reasoning typically leads you to believe another proposition as a causal result of this attention, thereby bringing a new ‘conclusion-belief’ into existence or confirming the prior existence of that belief; had it not existed, it would have been brought into existence anew (224).
- But the reasoning does not lead you to form or confirm this conclusion-belief by brutally jogging you into that state; it operates only as a causal result of a ‘linking-belief’: a belief that the premises (say, ‘p’, ‘q’ and ‘r’) imply the conclusion (say, ‘t’) (229).
- In the exemplar case of express or explicit reasoning, a word like ‘so’ will mark the appearance of this conclusion-belief in the manner characteristic of reasoning as distinct from any other belief-generating process (223; cf Pettit 2007b, 500).

But these comments do not constitute an adequate theory of reasoning in themselves, as Broome acknowledges (229). They raise the issue, for example, of why the linking belief does not count as a premise-belief, given that it is required equally with those beliefs to bring about the conclusion-belief causally (234). And a further problem is that for all that the listed observations imply, the linking belief might operate causally in a deviant way. It might lead you to form the conclusion-belief as a result of attending to the premises but do so in the ad hoc manner in which a belief might trigger an association with some past experience.

In order to resolve these difficulties Broome introduces a characterization of reasoning according to which to reason from certain premises to a conclusion is to ‘operate on the contents of your premise-attitudes’, under the guidance of a rule, and ‘to construct the content of your conclusion-attitude’ (231). You construct the conclusion in the sense in which ‘you construct a number by an algebraic operation,

in the course of a proof: you 'identify' and 'come to believe' the proposition (232). Otherwise put, 'you derive the conclusion by operating on the premises'.

Thus suppose you reason from the beliefs that it is raining, and that if it is raining the snow will melt, to the conclusion that the snow will melt. 'You operate on these two propositions following the modus ponens rule. This rule tells you to construct the proposition that is the consequent of the second premise. You end up believing this consequent' (231). He contrasts what happens here with the case where, consciously believing the premises, 'you find yourself believing you hear trumpets'. This, he stresses is not reasoning. 'You do nothing to derive this conclusion; the belief just comes upon you'.

The idea of operating on propositions may come across as just a metaphor but it serves, as I read Broome, to encode three important claims and thereby to resolve the difficulties raised. First, according to the operation model, in the act of reasoning you not only consciously attend to certain premises that you believe — you not only hold them 'in your mind' (231) — you also treat them in a certain way, giving them a distinctive cognitive role. You treat them precisely as premises, attending to them in a way that is designed to elicit a conscious belief in the conclusion, assuming there is a conclusion that is suitably associated. Specifically, you treat them, not as syntactically organized, semantically un-interpreted strings of symbols, but as meaningful representations of how things are or might be. 'Reasoning is an operation on contents, which have meanings' (236-37).

Second, when the premises play the required role, eliciting a conscious belief in the conclusion, they do so in a 'rule-governed' fashion. It is the rule that determines that the conclusion is suitably associated with the premises, as a rule determines that this or that number is the product of an algebraic operation. 'In reasoning you follow — are guided by — a rule'. You may follow that rule, however, only 'in the way in which you follow rules of grammar'. 'You may compose grammatical sentences without knowing explicitly what grammatical rules you follow in doing so. Similarly, you may reason by modus ponens without knowing explicitly what the modus ponens rule is' (232). In reasoning according to a rule, of

course, you must endorse that rule. But this does not involve making the rule explicit for yourself and giving it your assent. When 'you apply a rule in reasoning, you automatically give it a sort of endorsement. No further endorsement is needed' (233).

Third, to operate on premises in this rule-governed way, letting them play the role of eliciting a conscious belief in the conclusion, is to come to believe that conclusion in accordance with a suitable linking belief, with that belief playing a causal role in the process. The fulfillment of this condition, which is necessary for reasoning, is built into the operation account. Thus it need not be separately mentioned, as Broome notes; it 'is entailed by the condition that you come to believe the conclusion by operating on the premises' (234). The linking belief, presumably, is a belief in the rule you follow in the reasoning, such as the modus ponens rule: a belief that the truth of premises like 'If p, then q' and 'p' imply the truth of the conclusion 'q'.

This account of reasoning raises a question about what it means to follow a rule and I will come to that in the second part of the discussion. Putting aside that issue for now, the important point to register is that the operation account is meant to resolve the two difficulties raised by the initial comments listed earlier.

First, the account enables us to distinguish the premise-beliefs from the linking-belief in a piece of reasoning. Whereas you operate on the contents of the premise-beliefs in reasoning — you let them play the role described — 'the content of the linking belief is not operated on' (234). The idea is that the contents of premise-beliefs figure as objects of attention that elicit the conclusion-belief but that the linking belief does not figure in any such role; it plays its part in the background, so to speak, not in the foreground (Pettit and Smith 1990). And this is true, whether or not you happen to be conscious in some sense of holding by the linking belief; 'the linking belief may be either conscious or unconscious'.

Second, the operation account not only serves us well in this way, according to Broome; it is also helpful insofar as it entails that there is 'no room left for the

causal process to be deviant' (234). The idea is that if you truly operate on the contents of the premise-beliefs according to a rule you follow, being led to form a belief in the conclusion, there is no basis for wondering if you were just jogged into believing that conclusion, as by an ad hoc, deviant factor. That you come to believe the conclusion as the rule-governed result of operating on the premises entails that you were not merely bumped or jogged into that belief. Coming to believe the proposition is one and the same event with drawing or deriving the conclusion in the non-jogging process described (243).

Reasoning in the sense characterized in this model may or may not amount to correct reasoning or to good reasoning, as Broome emphasizes. You would reason badly, for example, if you followed 'the fallacious rule of affirming the consequent' as in deriving 'p' from 'if p then q' and 'q'. But to reason badly in this way would still be to reason. The process constitutes 'reasoning, just because it is an operation on contents that follows a rule' (233). Whether a form of reasoning is correct or not depends on whether the rule you follow is a correct rule. 'The reasoning is correct if and only if you correctly follow a correct rule' (247).

With all of these points in place, we are in a position to consider whether Broome's account of reasoning is really distinct from the meta-propositional account that I myself defend. While the question has particular interest for me, it also has a more general significance, as it will force us to articulate various aspects of Broome's own account of reasoning. Broome himself distinguishes his account from the meta-propositional one, suggesting that while the meta-propositional account applies in some cases of particularly sophisticated reasoning — he calls these cases of 'critical reasoning' — it does not apply in all of the cases covered by the operation account (236). I think that the two accounts are equivalent in all important respects.

According to the meta-propositional account, the linking beliefs essential to reasoning take a particular form. They consist in beliefs about propositions as distinct from just beliefs in propositions. They are beliefs in meta-propositions, as

we may put it, where a meta-proposition takes one or a number of lower-order propositions as its subject (Pettit 1993, Ch 2; 2007 a, b).

Every belief, I assume, constitutes a belief in a proposition. Thus the belief that a is F constitutes a belief in the proposition ' a is F ', the belief that every instance of F is an instance of G a belief in the proposition 'For all x , if x is F , x is G ', and so on.² But some beliefs are about propositions, in the sense that they ascribe properties not just to objects like the particular object designated as a or to the different objects identified as values of the variable x , but to other propositions they embed. Take the belief expressed in the assertion 'The proposition " a is F " is true'. This is a belief about that proposition to the effect that it has the property of truth. Or take the belief expressed in the assertion 'The truth of the propositions " $\text{For all } x, \text{ if } x \text{ is } F, x \text{ is } G$ " and " a is F " entails the truth of the proposition " a is G ". This is a belief about the embedded propositions to the effect that a relationship of entailment holds between the first two and the third. In each case the belief is a belief in a proposition but the proposition in question is a meta-proposition: a proposition that is about other propositions in the sense in which the proposition ' a is F ' is about the particular object a .

That we human beings are capable of forming meta-propositional as well as ordinary propositional beliefs is certainly true. And, as I have suggested elsewhere, the capacity may even be distinctive of human beings (Pettit 1993). Plausibly, it presupposes access to natural language and to the semantic ascent — ascent to thinking about the propositions expressed in sentences — that it makes possible. Broome suggests that the capacity to reason may require language. 'I am inclined to believe that ... to reason consciously, you must express your attitudes to yourself in language' (224). I would make the same point about what I think of as the more general capacity to form meta-propositional beliefs.

The meta-propositional approach to reasoning emphasizes that the linking belief that is needed for reasoning — this, according both to Broome's account and

² I ignore beliefs in centered propositions for current purposes.

to mine — has a meta-propositional character. Specifically it is the sort of belief that posits a relationship of support between the premises and the conclusion. This approach appeals to me on a variety of grounds. First, it is quite clear what meta-propositional beliefs are; they do not constitute an obscure category. Second, we have grounds for acknowledging the existence of meta-propositional beliefs independently of an analysis of reasoning: they are involved in the belief that a proposition is true, for example, or that you or I believe it. And, third, the requirement of access to natural language means that the need for meta-propositional beliefs would explain why there is little evidence of reasoning among non-human animals. Outside of Gary Larsen's dog cartoons, it is hard to imagine any non-human animal adopting the pose of Rodin's statue, *Le Penseur*.

Broome sets himself against the meta-propositional proposal. 'Pettit argues that you cannot reason unless you have meta-propositional beliefs. I disagree' (236). This may seem surprising since he says, as I would, that in relevant sorts of reasoning the linking belief 'is specifically the belief that the premises imply the conclusion' (229). But while that may seem to involve a meta-propositional belief about a relationship between the premises and the conclusion, Broome argues that to assume it does is to require too intellectual an attitude; he cites as evidence the fact that 'a child can reason even before she has meta-propositional beliefs' (236). All the linking belief requires, he says, is that 'you believe a conditional proposition'. 'When the premises are p, q, r and so on, and the conclusion is t ', he explains, 'you believe that, if p, q, r and so on, then t '. And such 'a first-order linking belief is not meta-propositional', he insists, not requiring any sophisticated sense of propositions as objects of thought.

In response to this line of thought, I argue that what Broome himself admits in his account of the linking belief relevant in a case like this is tantamount to treating the linking belief as meta-propositional. Let us write 'p, q, r and so on', for simplicity, as 'A'. The linking belief, according to Broome, is the belief in the proposition 'If A, then t'. The idea is that this proposition does not itself figure as a

premise — if it did, then the argument would be an instance of modus ponens — and that the argument takes the simple form: A, therefore t.

According to Broome, believing a conditional proposition like this does not involve a sophisticated belief about a relationship between the propositions 'A' and 't' but something simpler of the kind that might be available to a child. The belief in the conditional would be maximally simple, if it consisted just in the disposition on believing the antecedent, to form in addition the belief that t. If that is all that the belief involved, then it would be the sort of belief that non-human animals display and that any well-designed robot can mimic. It would be like the belief displayed by the dog, for example, when on forming the belief that the gate has just opened — this, because of what it has heard — it comes to believe that the family is home.

But Broome does not think that the belief involved is as simple as this, for he says that in order to reason, forming the required linking belief, you also 'need the concept of *if, then*' (236). Presumably what he has in mind is, first, that you need to be able to register the pattern among propositions generally revealed in the linguistic use of the if-then operator; and, second, that you need to be able in the case on hand to register the license provided for the reasoning by the if-then proposition: to be able to see that the fact that A gives you a license to infer that t— it provides you with a suitable inference ticket, as Gilbert Ryle (1949) called it.

Consistently with requiring reasoning agents to have the concept of *if-then*, Broome acknowledges that in order to use the linking belief 'If A, then t' in reasoning to the conclusion that t, you have to consciously believe that A and you have to come to believe consciously that t; in each case you have to be 'conscious of its content' in the manner associated with assent (242). Moreover, in responding to the premise-belief in the antecedent by forming a conclusion-belief in the consequent: 'you must think of your conclusion as arising somehow from your premise<s>' (229). He thinks that the word 'so' or a cognate will often mark the fact that that is how you are indeed thinking of the conclusion (223).

On Broome's picture, then, holding a linking belief in the conditional, 'if A, then t', is something distinct, on the one side, from the simple state of being disposed on coming to believe the antecedent to believe also the conclusion and, on the other side, from the allegedly sophisticated meta-propositional belief that the truth of the antecedent entails the truth of the conclusion: that the truth of 'A' entails the truth of 't'. But it is not clear that the belief can be more complex than the simple disposition without being complex enough to count as meta-propositional in character. Or at least this ceases to be clear once we recognize that the meta-propositional belief about 'A' and 't' may not be very sophisticated or intellectual. In medieval terminology, revised in the work of David Lewis (1969) and Jonathan Bennett (1976), it may be a belief *in sensu diviso*, not *in sensu composito*.³

Consider a generalization according to which every belladonna plant is poisonous: if a plant is an instance of belladonna, to express the generalization as a conditional, it is poisonous. Many of us with a little knowledge of European history, or a familiarity with historical thrillers, will believe this in the sense of taking that universal claim to be true; and this, for us urban dwellers, without even being able to recognize belladonna plants. But many of our rural predecessors in other centuries are likely to have believed the generalization in a different sense; they may have learned to recognize belladonna plants — to believe consciously that this or that plant is an instance — and, without ever registering or assenting to the generalization as such, to treat each instance they recognize as poisonous: to form the conscious belief that it is poisonous. Rather than becoming disposed to assent to the universal claim that all belladonna plants are poisonous — this is all that we urban types do — they may have been universally disposed with every belladonna plant they recognized to assent to the particular proposition that it is poisonous. Where we believe the generalization in a unified, once-for-all-cases sense — *in sensu*

³ The line I develop here may also help to answer Paul Boghossian's (2012) claim that my account of reasoning presupposes excessive conceptual sophistication.

composito — they may have believed it only *in sensu diviso*: that is, in a divided, case-by-case way.⁴

For all that the meta-propositional account of reasoning supposes, as I have argued elsewhere (Pettit 1998), we who hold a linking belief in a conditional like ‘If A, then t’ — we who rely on that sort of belief in reasoning — may believe it only *in sensu diviso*. We may believe it just insofar as we are disposed on consciously assenting to any instance of the antecedent to assent in the same way to the consequent of the conditional. Specifically, we are disposed on assenting to ‘A’ to think ‘so t’, where ‘the word “so” or some cognate’ (Pettit 2007b, 500) serves to mark the connection with the premise, ‘A’. And surely most of us who are untrained in the theory of reasoning do hold our linking beliefs in that case-by-case way; we do not have the skill or the inclination to spell things out further.⁵

Broome’s own observations about what believing that conditional amounts to fit nicely with its being a case-by-case meta-propositional belief of this kind. According to his account, as we have seen, to believe the conditional is to have a concept of *if, then*, and to be disposed on consciously believing the antecedent — in effect, on assenting to it — to believe the conclusion in the same manner, seeing it as arising somehow from the premises. By our account this is just to hold the corresponding meta-representational belief, albeit in a case-by-case way, i.e. *in sensu diviso*.

If this line of thought is correct, then the position set out by Broome can be seen as an admirably elaborated presentation of essentially the approach I have described as meta-propositional. Operating on contents in the formation of new beliefs, to use his favored model, is certainly no more complex than acting under the control of corresponding meta-propositional beliefs. But given that those beliefs

⁴ The ideal, of course, would be to believe it in both ways at once.

⁵ The lesson taught by Lewis Carroll (1895) is that even as we add what was previously a matter of linking-belief to the premises of an argument, we depend on a further linking belief. As we pursue that regress stage by stage, it surely becomes less and less likely that we hold the required linking-belief *in sensu composito*.

may only be held in the case-by-case manner, it may not be any less complex either. The two accounts are essentially equivalent.

In emphasizing the deeply unsophisticated character of ordinary reasoning, Broome analogizes it to the manner in which you follow rules of etiquette, applying them unthinkingly or uncritically without any 'meta-etiquettish attitudes' (236). If this sort of analogy seems to raise a problem for the equivalence claim, then it is worth noting in addition that not only may the meta-propositional belief involved in reasoning have a case-by-case character; it may also exercise only a virtual or standby form of control over the conclusions you draw (Pettit 1995).

The cowboy in the classic western controls the direction his cattle take even when he lets them follow their head, being there on standby, ready to intervene should the red lights go on, say because one of the cattle wanders off track. In the same way, your meta-propositional beliefs may control the direction of your thoughts even when you form conclusions out of uncritical habit or instinct; they may be there on standby, ready to play a directive role should the red lights go on: should you form a thought that jars with standing assumptions or current observations. To operate under the control of meta-propositional commitments may still be to operate under most conditions in a decidedly uncritical fashion. The fact that they control your reasoning, and that your conclusions don't just happen to materialize, is quite consistent with your generally operating on automatic pilot.

In discussing the meta-propositional approach to reasoning I have generally been interested in the sophisticated role reasoning may play in increasing your chance of satisfying the constraints and desiderata of rationality. Thus I have often focused on how you may seek to put a check on your belief-formation by looking out for meta-propositional rules of inference, seeing how far the beliefs you form fall in line with those rules and determining in a given case what rule you ought to follow: for example, whether to argue from p and if p , then q to q , as in modus ponens, or from not- q to not- p or not-if- p -then- q , as in modus tollens. Broome describes this sort of exercise as meta-reasoning and agrees that the meta-propositional model is certainly relevant there (245-46). I agree about this relevance, of course, but think

that the model also applies in the cases closer to the focus of his concern. That it does so should become clear once we recognize that meta-propositional beliefs may have only a case-by-case character and may exercise control only in a virtual or standby manner.

2. Rule-following

The account of reasoning on which Broome and I agree, by the foregoing argument, involves the notion of following a rule such as the rule of *modus ponens*. The rule you follow may not be a correct rule, as we saw; it may be the rule involved in affirming the consequent. But even in the case of such an incorrect rule you will be reasoning only insofar as there is a rule there to follow and that is precisely what you do: you follow that incorrect rule correctly. The correctness you display in how you follow a rule, as Broome says, ‘is different from the correctness of the rule itself’ (237).

But what is it to follow a rule: that is, by assumption, to follow it correctly? The natural response, on the story told so far, is to say that it is to have a belief that identifies what the rule is — a belief like the meta-propositional belief in the *modus ponens* rule — and to act on a desire to conform to the rule identified. According to this response, to follow a rule is just to conform to the rule intentionally: that is, to conform to it on the basis of relevant beliefs and desires. But while the response may explain what is involved in following something, it does nothing to explain how there can be a rule for you to follow, whether that be a correct or incorrect rule; it leaves us in the dark as to how you can find a rule to consult that would tell you what response is required, now in this case, now in that.

Broadly cast, this is the rule-following problem that figures in the classic discussions of Wittgenstein (1958; 1978) and Kripke (1982). Broome apparently sets out to address the problem when he asks about ‘the distinction between following a rule correctly and not doing so’ (237) and refers in the course of the discussion to both of those authors. What does he say, then, in response? And how should we assess it?

The rule identified by the belief in modus ponens, as we reconstructed it, says that under the conditions identified via the antecedent, which require you to assent to 'if p then q' and 'p', you are required also to assent to the conclusion, 'q'. The requirement of assent to the premises is presupposed and the associated requirement to assent to the conclusion answers to the 'so' or cognate term in the content of the belief.⁶ Such a rule is complex in the sense that following it presupposes following more primitive rules governing when you ought to assent to 'if p then q' and 'p'; and ultimately, since the rules have to bottom out somewhere, it must presuppose following rules that are primitive in the sense of not being definable by other rules.

The rule-following problem arises sharply with these primitive, indefinable rules that you are required to follow in the course of following a more complex rule like modus ponens. Suppose that 'p' is a conjunctive proposition and that one of the conjuncts is that a particular object is regular in shape, where regularity is not defined for you in other terms. Suppose, in effect, that your access to the primitive rule for determining whether you ought to assent to the claim that something is regular can depend only on what you have learned from prior, perceptual exposure to instances and counter-instances of the property. The rule-following problem is to explain how anything could have become available to you in such learning might constitute a guiding rule: a rule to identify whether any new object you confront is or is not regular.

A rule will play the role required of it just insofar as it does three things.⁷ First, it determines in principle the right way to go on in new instances; second, it indicates in practice what the right way to go on is; and, third, it does both of these things over an indefinite range of cases. How could exposure to finite examples make any such entity available to you? It may give you a disposition to extrapolate

⁶ For simplicity I am ignoring Broome's plausible claim that you can only be required to believe the conclusion if you care about having a belief one way or the other on the matter involved.

⁷ See the essays in (Pettit 2002, Pt 1). I seek to develop a line on the rule-following problem in those essays as well as in (Pettit 1993, Ch 2) and in (Pettit 2007a).

to other examples in a certain pattern. But acting on such an extrapolative disposition would not involve following a rule that fixes when it is right and when it is wrong to predicate regularity. First, it would not provide a determinant of rightness; second, it would not provide an indicator of rightness; and, third, whatever it provided would not reliably prevail over a suitably indefinite extension.

Broome acknowledges the first two elements in the rule-following problem — these constitute the normative aspect of the problem — but more or less ignores the other, extensional aspect.⁸ He acknowledges the first normative element in asserting that in any relevant case the ‘rule determines the right thing to do’ (237). He acknowledges the second explicitly in his comment that the modus ponens ‘rule tells you to construct the proposition that is the consequent of the second premise’ (231). And he acknowledges it implicitly in his repeated emphasis on the guidance function of a rule. ‘The rule does not merely cause you to behave in a particular way, as a program does to a computer. The rule guides you and you actively follow it’ (237).

Broome thinks that a sure sign of following a rule is that you continue with the process involved only if doing so ‘seems right to you’ (237). Thus, should it no longer seem right to you — perhaps as a result of checking — you would correct your response; in that sense you are permanently ‘open to the possibility of correction’ (238). You must ‘have the counterfactual disposition to change your attitude if you were to check, and if the checking produced a different result’.

But this does not explain either how a rule determines or how it indicates what it is right to do. The problem is that ‘seeming right is not being right’ (238) and, in particular, that the fact that something seems right to you presupposes an independent understanding of what it is for it to be right. So what does Broome say

⁸ He mentions the extensional problem in acknowledging, with Kripke, that your ‘steady dispositions may not be determinate’ (241). But he takes Kripke’s problem to be ‘whether or not you are following a correct rule’, not whether you are following a rule at all, correct or incorrect. I think he is mistaken in this interpretation and that as a result his comments in response to Kripke do not address the extensional problem proper.

in response? His answer is summed up in the following passage. For ‘a process to be right is for you to have a steady disposition for it to seem right. By this I mean that, were you to check several times, the process would generally seem right. A process that seems right to you may not actually be right, because you may not have a steady disposition for it to seem right’ (239).

This response would not serve any purpose if the proposal were that for a response to be right is for it to be such that it would steadily seem right: that is, seem right over many variations on the actual situation. It would be circular, after all, to characterize being right in terms of seeming right, even seeming right in a steady fashion. It would leave us with the question: How does a response seem when it seems right? And the answer cannot be: it seems that it would seem right in a steady fashion. That answer would leave us in the dark as to what property it is that a response seems to have when it seems right to you — when you see it as right.

Assuming that Broome thinks that rightness is defined or conceptualized other than in terms of seeming rightness, then, how are we to interpret his view? He says that what it is for a response to be right is not given by an external standard: ‘being right is given by your own dispositions rather than by an external criterion’ (239). It is given, as we have seen, by your steady disposition to see the response as right and, as he also claims, by your disposition to actually deliver that response: when ‘you have a steady disposition to D, D is a rule of yours’ (241). But what can it be, then, for something to be right? What can it be for a response to a particular issue to be determinately right, and determinately right in a way that is fixed by your dispositions alone?

The only answer I can envisage to this question is that according to Broome, the response will be right just in case it accords with a rule that you intend to follow. Suppose you intend to follow a rule, R — say, a rule fixing what is regular in shape and what is not — where the intention is like an inter-temporal, stabilizing plan (Bratman 1987). In that case responses that accord with R, and only responses that accord with R, will presumably seem right to you in a steady fashion. In that case, then, you will presumably have a steady disposition to conform to R, and only to R.

And in that case it will be true to say that being right is given by your own disposition — your guiding intention — rather than by an external criterion. Indeed it is hard to see how these different claims could be true under any other scenario.

If this reading of Broome is correct, then contrary to the impression created by his references to Wittgenstein and Kripke, he does not address the rule-following problem, as traditionally understood. This is precisely the problem of explaining how anything available to you in a relevant case, say on exposure to instances and counter-instances of regularity, could present a relatively determinate, readable rule and thereby enable you to form the intention to follow it. On my interpretation of what he says, he presupposes a solution to that problem rather than trying to provide one.

What is Broome's discussion designed to achieve on this reading? He assumes that you can have an intention to conform to a particular rule but his concern is not to explain how this is possible: that is, to resolve the rule-following problem. Rather he wants to insist on a claim that follows from the assumption: that you can act on a relevant intention, and count as following a rule — and in relevant cases as reasoning — even when the rule in question is not a recognizable, correct rule. The take-home message is that for 'you to be following some rule, an internal criterion suffices' (240).

This is a deflationary conclusion but not one that reflects badly on Broome's project or achievement. In most of our philosophical theories we carry on as if it may be taken for granted that there is some sense in which we can each follow rules of thought and reasoning, and indeed follow rules that are identifiable by others in a more or less uncontroversial way. If we did not take this for granted, then there would be little point in reasoning with ourselves or with one another. Broome's aim is to enlighten us on the nature of active reasoning, setting it up in contrast to more autonomic transitions of thought, relating it to the requirements of rationality, and distinguishing clearly between reasoning of a theoretical and a practical sort. He

achieves salient progress in pursuit of that aim and it is no criticism of his achievement that he does not also address or resolve the problem of rule-following.⁹

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