

# Reasoning Beyond Belief (Acquisition)\*

## Abstract

I argue that we can reason not only to new beliefs but to basically any change in attitude we can think of, including the abandonment of belief (contra John Broome), the acquisition of non-belief attitudes like relief and admiration, and the elimination of the same. To argue for this position, which I call generalism, I defend a sufficient condition on reasoning, roughly that we can reason to any change in attitude that is expressed by the conclusion of an argument we can be convinced by. I then produce examples of such arguments, and argue that they are indeed arguments. To produce such examples of the elimination of non-doxastic attitudes, I develop the idea of a state of attitudinal constraint acceptance, and show how it is useful for solving this problem, and useful in other parts of philosophy as well.

## 1 Introduction

Suppose someone thinks or says the following to themselves:

- (1) Whatever broke into the store left these footprints. Those footprints are a bear's. The only bear around for a very long time comes from the local zoo. So whatever broke into the store was the bear from the local zoo.

Following relatively established philosophical use, I will call the activity you're imagining this person engaged in *reasoning*.<sup>1</sup> When we reason to a new belief—here, that whatever broke into the store was the bear from the local zoo—we're at least often undertaking a deliberate activity aimed at arriving at a better view of some topic than the one we began with. I mean "better" in two senses, first a view more likely to be accurate, useful, or both; and second, a view that is better *grounded* in the rest of our psychology and in our available evidence. I assume there is such a thing as this activity, and that our

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., [Boghossian \(2003\)](#), [Wedgwood \(2006\)](#), [Broome \(2013\)](#), [Staffel \(2013\)](#), [Valaris \(2014, 2019\)](#), [McHugh and Way \(2018b\)](#), and [Dogramaci \(2018\)](#), among many others.

awareness of it is a proper place from which to begin systematic theorizing, even in advance of necessary and sufficient conditions fully and explicitly characterizing it. Still, I'll say more about it in the next section.

Can we reason only to new beliefs and intentions, or can we reason to other “changes” as well? One great debate in the history of philosophy, beginning with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and still very much ongoing, concerns whether we can reason to *actions* (not just intentions) like putting on your raincoat.<sup>2</sup> I'll answer a question in this vein, but about *attitudes* rather than actions. Specifically I'll argue for the following thesis:

GENERALISM. Ordinary speakers of English can reason to any of the following changes in attitude:

- new all-out beliefs and new degrees of belief,<sup>3</sup>
- new lacks of belief,<sup>4</sup>
- new non-doxastic attitudes like admiration and relief,
- new lacks of non-doxastic attitudes, and
- acceptances of *attitudinal constraints*, commitments about properties one's overall attitudinal state can have.

On this view, there's a lot more we can reason to than just new beliefs and intentions. For one, there are other attitudes we can reason to: degrees of belief, non-doxastic attitudes like admiration and relief, and “acceptances of attitudinal constraints”. For another, we can reason not just to new attitudes but also to new *lacks* of attitudes; in other words, we can by reasoning *remove* attitudes we once held.

Prominent philosophers have (*de re*) argued against GENERALISM, and their arguments help show the deep issues the view raises. For example, Broome (2013) argues that we cannot reason to lacks, i.e., abandon attitudes “directly” through reasoning. If I'm right, such philosophers are wrong. Reasoning, you might think, is the *primary*, perhaps even the only, method by which we can repair the defects and deficiencies in our overall attitudinal states. Given that, then, whether we can reason to something will constrain what we can do, *sans phrase*; and if what we can do constrains what requirements, e.g., of rationality are normative for us,<sup>5</sup> then GENERALISM allows for the widest possible range of normative requirements to be normative for us.

If, for example, Broome is right that we cannot abandon our attitudes by reasoning, then consistency requirements' status is threatened. A consistency requirement might say, e.g., that we are rationally

<sup>2</sup> For recent defenses of the Aristotelian answer (“yes”), see, among others, Clark (2001), Korsgaard (2008, page 124), Fernandez (2016), and Dancy (2018). See also, e.g., Anscombe (2000) and von Wright (1963) for important less recent discussion. And for the “no” answer, see (interestingly for my purposes) Broome (2013) and Paul (2013).

<sup>3</sup> The latter of these won't be my focus here, but the arguments I give will extend very easily. See Harman (1986) for opposition, and Staffel (2013) and Dogramaci (2018) for defense.

<sup>4</sup> And perhaps to new suspension of judgment, though that's not my focus here.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Wedgwood (2013).

required not both to believe that  $p$  and to believe that  $\neg p$ . Suppose I find myself believing both  $p$  and  $\neg p$ . (We can make it a more complicated case of inconsistency if you prefer; this is just illustrative.) The only way for *me* rationally and actively to comply with the requirement is to reason to the abandonment of one of these beliefs, but this Broome thinks I can't do. He does think automatic processes can rid me of one of them, but I can no more required to be the locus of automatic processes to rid myself of a contradictory belief than I can be to digest in a certain way. So my arguments here will rescue consistency requirements' genuine normative force for us, and that of more requirements besides.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately at issue is whether the way we arrive at new and better beliefs and intentions in the active way characteristic of reasoning differs in kind from the means by which we might possibly try actively to improve attitudes other than belief and intention. I claim that that activity, reasoning, has a much broader set of outputs than is typically recognized. (Inputs are a different and perhaps longer story.) Thus reasoning is a possible means for improving our other attitudes, too. That doesn't mean episodes of reasoning that end with new beliefs won't differ in important ways from those that end in new states of, say, admiration. In fact, seeing both as episodes of reasoning will allow for a better characterization of what those differences actually amount to.

So hopefully though this is a relatively new question in the literature,<sup>7</sup> you can see why it's important and interesting.

You'll notice, by the way, that GENERALISM is tagged to English; this is no accident, since all of my arguments will depend on producing discourses in English. I would be shocked if the essentials differed much between human languages, but the specific mechanisms might well vary. In particular, I'm going to defend a pretty minimal connection between reasoning and *argument*:

ARGUMENTALISM. We can reason to any change in attitude (or overall attitudinal state) that can be expressed by a speaker or thinker tokening in speech or thought the conclusion of a representation of an argument that they are *convinced* by after (or in) tokening the entire representation of the argument that convinces them.

The basic import of this principle should be clear, even if some of the terms in its formulation, especially 'expresses', stand in need of some clarification, which I'll give it in a little while.

Then I'll turn to examples that, combined with ARGUMENTALISM, deliver GENERALISM. Specifically, imagine the speaker in (1) then says or thinks:

- (2) Actually, there's a bear in the local circus, too. So whatever broke into the store didn't necessarily come from the local zoo.

Continuing this same line of thought, she goes on:

<sup>6</sup> Dietrich et al. (2019) noticed the way Broome's views interact in this way that's problematic for consistency requirements, too.

<sup>7</sup> McHugh and Way (2018b) suggest we can reason to non-doxastic attitudes, but don't pursue the thought much.

- (3) That bear must have been enormous; if there had been people in here at the time, we could have had a lot of causalities. So my goodness were we *lucky*.

Then the (possibly internal) soliloquy stops with this:

- (4) It's tempting to be angry with the circus leader or zoo keeper, depending on which bear it was. But I know them both and know that they're good people—whatever happened must have been an accident. So I don't hate them *at all*.

Of course, to use ARGUMENTALISM and these examples, I need to argue that they communicate arguments—that's a big part of what I'll do. That, in turn, will require getting a lot clearer on what an argument even is, in the intended sense(s). I'll do that in the next section, after clarifying a bit what activity I mean by 'reasoning'. Then I'll come back to each of the examples, using them to argue for a different piece of GENERALISM. Finally, I'll close by outlining a problem for *eliminating* attitudes, especially non-doxastic ones. That's where the last part of GENERALISM will come in: to solve it, I'll use states of attitudinal constraint acceptance.

## 2 Reasoning and Argument

In this section, I will defend the rather minimal connection between argument and reasoning embodied in ARGUMENTALISM. I say "minimal" because, one, it is only a sufficient condition rather than necessary and sufficient, and two, because it is pretty heavily modalized. I stress that this is not because I believe some strengthening of ARGUMENTALISM won't be true, but rather, for my dialectical purposes, this will be all that I need. All the subarguments for GENERALISM will appeal to nothing stronger than this version of ARGUMENTALISM. Given, then, that the necessary-and-sufficient version of ARGUMENTALISM will turn on quite difficult questions in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science, I won't try to defend that version, even though I suspect it is indeed true.<sup>8</sup> But much of this section will be devoted to getting clearer on some important terminology and distinctions.

First, then, I'll say a bit more than I did about the conception of reasoning I'm working with. [Boghossian \(2018, page 59\)](#) gives some good, minimal jointly *sufficient* criteria for an activity to count as reasoning in the sense of what's done in (1) and of what's interest to the epistemologist. (Despite thinking of his criteria as necessary and sufficient, this characterization is still minimal because it doesn't directly encode many of the most contentious questions about reasoning, e.g., whether the reasoner needs to take their premises to support their new belief.) He puts things in terms of belief, and I'll follow him in that; it will usually be easy to generalize the criteria, but when it's not obvious, I'll be explicit. First, it is an activity that involves a *basing* component: when you reason from some premises to a

<sup>8</sup> For discussion, see, e.g., [Carruthers \(1998, 2015\)](#) for the *pro* view (essentially), and [Machéry \(2002\)](#) for some doubts.

conclusion, the premises are (at least part of) your basis for believing the conclusion. Of course, it is quite contentious what bases are and how exactly they work.<sup>9</sup> Yet that attitudinal changes, including the belief acquisitions, *have* a basis—a particular kind of *reason for which*<sup>10</sup>—is, I think, completely indispensable to our idea of the attitudes at all. I won't go in for any particular account; my hope is that our intuitions are robust enough about all the cases of interest here that I won't need to. Second, in virtue of the first feature, the resulting beliefs can be evaluated as being well-grounded (justified, etc.) or not. Third, in virtue of these features, the individual can be held *responsible* for having reasoned well or badly. This minimal conception of reasoning is neutral on many details about the nature of reasoning, and would, I think, be acceptable to most philosophers thinking about what they would call 'reasoning'.

Now let's come back to ARGUMENTALISM, the view that we can reason to any change in attitude that can be expressed by the conclusion of an argument representation whose corresponding argument we are convinced by. I'll start by making some distinctions in the way we can (and I think do) use the word 'argument'. There are three uses I have in mind; the distinctions I will make are reminiscent of similar distinctions with typologically similar expressions like 'question'.<sup>11</sup> First, 'argument' can refer to a complex speech act, as in 'the argument took five minutes to go through'. I'll call this sort of speech act a **reasoned discourse**. Often it's composed somehow of assertions, but also commands ('suppose...'), and perhaps others still. An argument in this sense is intimately linked to *convincing* the addressee of some *conclusion* or conclusions *via* some *premises*: we argue in order to convince. Aiming to convince is not the same thing as aiming to be believed; I'll say more about the difference soon. The important thing for now is just to get a fix on what reasoned discourses are.

Here's a simple example of what, when uttered, would normally constitute a reasoned discourse:

- (5) If it's raining, the streets are wet. It is raining. So, the streets are wet.

It helps to have a comparison with assertion in mind. Assertions, at least on the standard picture, communicate pieces of information called propositions, semantic objects. That is, an assertion that *p* communicates the proposition that *p*. The second way we can use 'argument' is to talk about an analogue of this semantic object, the things *reasoned discourses* communicate. I will reserve the term '**argument**', *simpliciter*, for this semantic object. What, then, do reasoned discourses communicate? Well, first, since they're composed of other speech acts like assertions, they will in part communicate propositions. But these propositions are only part of what they really communicate, in my opinion, namely dependency structures. Take (5): the contents <if it's raining, the streets are wet>, <it's raining>, and <the streets are wet> are communicated, along with the dependence of <the streets are wet> on the first two propositions and on some rule, which we can say is *modus ponens*. This is different from a mere *list* of

<sup>9</sup> Important works: Davidson (1963), Thomson (1967), Winters (1983), Korcz (2000), Sosa (2015), and Neta (2019).

<sup>10</sup> Maguire (2017) has argued that we have no reasons for "affective" attitudes. If he's right (which is controversial, of course), we'd need to be very careful about the vocabulary here, but I don't think any of my points would be affected.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Groenendijk and Stokhof (2011).

propositions, which would have been communicated by (without any “inference intonation”):

(5′) If it’s raining, the streets are wet. It is raining. The streets are wet.

(5) and (5′) are of course very different, though, in what they communicate. That is part of why I say (5), as a whole, communicates a dependency structure.<sup>12</sup>

This isn’t the only possible way of analyzing the difference between (5) and (5′). It might be that the discourse as a whole merely *presupposes* that that the streets are wet follows from the other premises. An utterance’s or discourse’s presuppositions, as I understand them, are the pieces of information that, in order to be felicitous, either must antecedently be publicly taken for granted by conversational participants or else must be taken for granted *after* the utterance or discourse.<sup>13</sup> The account of arguments as presupposing these facts about what follows accounts for a lot of the narrowly linguistic data. For example, it gets that there is an important difference between these two:

- (6) a. Mark is an Englishman and from that it follows that he is brave.  
 b. Mark is an Englishman, and he is, therefore, brave.

When we think bravery doesn’t follow from Englishness, we can respond with ‘that’s false!’ to (6a) but not to (6b).<sup>14</sup> That suggests, at least, that anything to do with bravery’s following from Englishness is at most backgrounded, rather than directly communicated in an at-issue way. Second, the information about following seems to pass various projection tests designed to test for presuppositions. (Roughly, when a presupposition-triggering expression is embedded in various environments like the antecedents of conditionals, the presuppositions are still felt to be there in the utterance as a whole.) To take one example:

(7) If Mark is an Englishman and, therefore, brave, he will never give up without a fight.

So there’s good reason to think reasoned discourses presuppose facts about what follows. Still, there’s something else communicated or conveyed by a reasoned discourse, something more structural, than just this kind of presupposition. When an assertion is credible to interlocutors, it is typically believed,<sup>15</sup> along with whatever presuppositions must be accommodated—taken for true—for the assertion to be felicitous. But when a reasoned discourse is credible, the resulting belief in the conclusion of that reasoned discourse will have a specific *basis*. So we need to associate something more than just a presupposition about what follows with reasoned discourses.

<sup>12</sup> This notion of ‘argument’ in in some ways a generalization of Pollock (1983)’s use, though he is concerned only with epistemic bases and his use is thus insufficiently general for my purposes. For another similar use, see Wedgwood (2012).

<sup>13</sup> I mean this to be as neutral as possible between different accounts of presupposition, including both semantic and pragmatic variants. See, e.g., Stalnaker (1973) for a popular pragmatic account, and Heim (1983) for a semantic version thereof.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Pavese (2017) for a dynamic implementation.

<sup>15</sup> I say “typically” because in cases of group pretense, the attitude isn’t belief.

Dependency structures that capture support relations between premises and conclusion can do the needed work. For my purposes, it's not necessary to be very specific about how to model these structures. The basic idea, at least when applied specifically to belief, is that people form beliefs that *depend* on other propositions, or beliefs in or suppositions of those propositions (or perhaps directly on experiences or other states). This is different from support, since our beliefs that  $p$  can depend on, say, beliefs that  $q$  even when  $q$  doesn't provide any actual support to  $p$ , say evidential support. One way, not the only way, to think of dependency structures is as directed graphs, perhaps tagged with the *kind* of dependency (e.g., rational, moral, whatever) at issue. These would be the analogues for reasoned discourses of propositions for assertions. But I don't want to overcommit here or mandate any specific way of thinking of them.<sup>16</sup> So, with (5), for example, we might have a directed edge from the proposition  $\langle \text{it's raining} \supset \text{the streets are wet} \rangle$  to  $\langle \text{the streets are wet} \rangle$  and from  $\langle \text{it's raining} \rangle$  to  $\langle \text{the streets are wet} \rangle$ , perhaps also specifying the rule *modus ponens*, perhaps even as a node of its own.<sup>17</sup> (I don't claim a rule like *modus ponens* is always involved in reasoning, nor do I deny it. I'll have a little more to say about that later on.)

There are various elements of this conception I'll have to generalize when I discuss other attitudes, but for now it's enough if you understand what I mean by 'argument' in this semantic sense, at least applied to beliefs.

The third way we use 'argument' is to mean the sentences we use making our reasoned discourses; I'll call these **argument representations**. They aren't syntactically marked, of course, like they are for assertions and declarative sentences on the one hand and questions and interrogative ones on the other. But it's still handy to have a way to refer to them.

So those are the relevant ways we use the term 'argument'. I said I'd also clarify what I mean by 'express' in the statement of ARGUMENTALISM, and that's what I'll do now. Before getting too deep into that, though, it's worth stressing that we really do have a pre-theoretic idea of roughly what I intend by the term. This is somewhat contentious,<sup>18</sup> but at the very least I'll try to *explicate* the everyday concept.

An explication of 'express' in the intended sense should make sense of the following data points. First, literal, purportedly sincere utterances of declarative sentences  $\sigma$  express the speaker's (purported) belief that  $\sigma$ .<sup>19</sup> Second, there are certain paradigm cases of non-doxastic attitude expression any account ought to get right. Thus, e.g., 'yuck!' said of or in response to some food expresses the speaker's disgust at the food, and 'that damn Kaplan' typically expresses the speaker's hostility to Kaplan. Third, and this is a bit more negotiable, where  $\ulcorner A \urcorner$  is an attitude verb and  $p$  and  $o$  a proposition and non-propositional

<sup>16</sup> For an excellent recent discussion of the directed-graphs approach to epistemic support, see Berker (2015).

<sup>17</sup> As Berker emphasizes, we might really need to think of these as directed *hypergraphs*, i.e., generalizations where, essentially, nodes collectively (but not individually) can directedly connect to other nodes. That's probably what's going on in the *modus ponens* case, but developing the model in detail is, again, not important for my purposes.

<sup>18</sup> Schroeder (2008a,b), whose account mine will resemble, expresses some skepticism on this score—too much skepticism, I think.

<sup>19</sup> I hear  $\ulcorner \sigma \urcorner$  expresses  $A \urcorner$  as entailing that  $A$  exists, i.e., that the speaker has  $A$ . Hence the 'purported's. If you don't have this same worry, you can ignore this.

object, respectively, ‘I *A* that *p* (or *o*)’ reports but does not, or anyway need not, express the speaker’s *A*-ing that *p* (or *o*); it expresses that belief that the speaker *As* that *p* (or *o*). Thus, ‘I believe that the streets are wet’ reports the speaker’s belief about the streets, but ‘the streets are wet’ doesn’t. This distinction is philosophically important in the metaethical tradition stemming from Ayer (1936), namely non-cognitivism. It will also be important for my work here, but in a different way, so I’ll spend a bit more time drawing the distinction.

Here’s my analysis of expression.<sup>20</sup> *S* expresses an attitude with a (possibly purely internal) utterance of a sentence just when the rules of the language entail that *S*’s utterance is or would be made insincere by *S*’s knowing their utterance isn’t caused non-deviantly by the occurrence of the attitude.<sup>21</sup>

That a language’s grammar can determine sincerity conditions is a substantive commitment, but I think broadly defensible. It really does seem to be that competence with English declarative sentences requires this implicit knowledge. (I’ll consider other constructions in a bit.) So the only relatively unfamiliar aspect of this explication is the “occurrent” condition. I add it to account for examples like this:

(8) That damn Kaplan got promoted!

An utterance of (8) typically expresses (but does not report) the speaker’s hostility to Kaplan.<sup>22</sup> It differs in its expressive properties, I think, from:

(9) I am hostile to Kaplan.

(9), I think, reports but need not, depending on the prosody of the utterance, express the hostility. The difference between (8) and (9) seems to me to be not that the one requires hostility to Kaplan but the other doesn’t in order to be sincere, but rather that the one requires that the hostility occur—normally by being felt—and cause utterance but the other doesn’t. If I know of myself that I’m broadly hostile to Kaplan but not “feeling it” at the moment, I am sincere when I utter (9) but not, it seems to me, when I utter (8). That’s why I add the occurrence condition.

I can be a bit quicker with reporting. *S*’s utterance that *p* reports a given attitudinal state *A* just when *p* entails that *S* has *A* and *p* is about *A*. The specifics of this account will depend, of course, on what it is for an utterance that *p* to be about something.<sup>23</sup> But what’s nicest about this way of understanding the reporting/expressing distinction this way is that it sorts the examples correctly—that

<sup>20</sup> See Schroeder (2008b) for a good run-through of alternatives that don’t work.

<sup>21</sup> The closest antecedents of this are, I think, Alston (1967) and Schroeder (2008a,b). But my account differs from theirs in some ways, most important being first, the “occurrence” condition, and second the “knowledge” condition. I’ll discuss why I have the first in a moment, but as to the second, it’s to avoid problems involving self-knowledge failures, as discussed in, e.g., Ridge (2006), Chan and Kahane (2011), and Stokke (2014). If you wish to remove the knowledge condition, that’s fine by me; nothing I say will be much affected by it. Finally, I assume a distinction between deviant and non-deviant causation, familiar from post-Davidsonian action theory. The details will be tricky to spell out, but I think nothing I say will turn on them.

<sup>22</sup> For this example, and the thought that it expresses hostility, see the charmingly self-deprecating Kaplan (2008).

<sup>23</sup> For what seems to be the orthodoxy now, see Yablo (2014).



is, intuitively—without entailing in a stipulative way that no instance of reporting  $A$  is an instance of expressing  $A$ . I'll address some difficult cases in a moment, though.

The last preliminary is this. In the statement of ARGUMENTALISM, I talk about being “convinced” by an argument. You may wonder what exactly that amounts to.<sup>24</sup> I don't mean anything very fancy. For one, it's a causal process; when  $S$  is convinced by an argument,  $S$ 's overall beliefs (or other attitudes, as I'll come to) are changed. That change doesn't have to be the acquisition or abandonment of the attitude; in fact, it needn't even be a strengthening or a weakening. After all, I can be convinced by multiple distinct arguments that my credence in  $p$  (say, that a given politician will be reelected) should be  $x$  and thereby *base* my credence  $x$  in  $p$  in (or on) those two arguments. That, then, is what I mean by convincing:  $S$  is **convinced** by an argument when, as a result of considering the argument,  $S$  bases or rebases their (possibly newly-acquired) attitude, so that the basis has the same structure as the argument (dependency structure) itself. (In practice, similarity of dependency structure probably suffices; perhaps this is a kind of loose speech.) Apart from this characterization, being convinced is, like reasoning, an everyday phenomenon we can recognize when we see it.

Still, these more-explicit characterizations will help in actually arguing for ARGUMENTALISM, which I'll do now. The main idea is that being convinced by an argument, including the arguments of others, just is a way to reason. I think this is true even when another person convinces us, but some may find it intuitive that we must be in some sense the authors of the arguments we reason with. So I will largely focus on cases where a person talks to themselves and thereby convinces themselves. To see that this *is* reasoning, though, return to my minimal characterization. It involves, as I said, a basing component; focusing on belief, when one is convinced by an argument, one (then) has a belief with a corresponding basis. And when one is convinced by themselves, we can evaluate their belief by whether they were epistemically *right* to be convinced. We do indeed do that. If someone was convinced by merely inflammatory rhetoric, we evaluate the resulting belief as irrational or unreasonable—or unjustified. And finally, we hold people *responsible* for being convinced by things they shouldn't have been convinced by, e.g., by convincing themselves with shoddy arguments with conclusions they want to believe to protect their egos. So by the minimal characterization from Boghossian I presented, when we're convinced by an argument, we are thereby reasoning.

That being convinced by an argument just is a kind of reasoning is why ARGUMENTALISM is true. Because when we're convinced, we *ipso facto* have the new state expressed by the conclusion of the argument's representation together with the relevant basis structure, we have thereby reasoned to the new state. All of these phenomena are tightly linked. So when it's possible for us to be convinced in some way, it's possible for us to reason in that way. From this perspective, we can think of the paradigm cases

<sup>24</sup> Thanks to a reviewer for pushing me to be clearer about this.

of reasoning solitarily as a kind of convincing *oneself*.<sup>25</sup> Still, though the phenomena—reasoning and being convinced—are tightly linked, ARGUMENTALISM is helpful because we are very good at recognizing when we’re convinced by an argument; it’s an everyday phenomena we can see, for example in ordinary conversation, even if we might not be otherwise inclined to see some episode as “reasoning”. It gives us a usable test, in other words, for seeing the what the scope of reasoning might be.

This will be clearer from seeing the test in action, I hope. In the next section, I’ll begin to apply it in order to argue that we can indeed reason to lacks of belief.

But just to recap for now. I first gave a minimal characterization of reasoning due to Boghossian, and then distinguished three senses of ‘argument’: reasoned discourses, complex speech acts aimed at convincing; arguments, the semantic objects conveyed by such speech acts, structured by dependency relations; and argument representations, the sentences that express the relevant contents. Then I explicated the ordinary distinction between expressing and reporting, and finally I argued for ARGUMENTALISM using the different characterizations I gave in this section, especially of reasoning and being convinced by an argument.

### 3 Broome’s Challenge and Reasoning to a Lack

So, first to Broome’s challenge, and then to answering it.

Broome’s challenge is this. Broome asks us to consider what explicit reasoning to a lack would look like; he produces the following:

(10) The climate is warming. So, I don’t believe the climate is not warming.

The problem, according to Broome, is that this is *bad* reasoning, and thus not the sort of reasoning that could underlie reasonable belief elimination. But if it’s not episodes like (10) that could underlie reasonable belief elimination, no other possibilities come to mind, and thus (he tentatively concludes) there *aren’t* other possibilities. Thus we cannot reason to a lack of belief.

We have the resources to explain in more detail what Broome’s problem might be, or anyway what I take to be the best version of it. To convince ourselves that there is reasoning to a lack of belief, especially explicit reasoning, we should be able to produce examples of such reasoning. One way to do that, given ARGUMENTALISM, would be to find an argument a person can be convinced by where the conclusion expresses the newly-acquired (or possibly based) lack of belief. That is, we would need to find an argument representation  $R$  such that for the given individual  $S$ :

- i.  $S$ ’s tokening of the conclusion of  $R$  in thought or speech expresses a lack of belief that  $p$ .
- ii.  $S$ ’s tokening  $R$  can be the *cause* of  $S$ ’s newly-acquired lack of belief that  $p$ .

<sup>25</sup> This perspective is increasingly popular in evolutionary psychology and cognitive science; see, e.g., [Mercier and Sperber \(2011\)](#), and for a progenitor concerned with specifically moral reasoning, see, e.g., [Haidt \(2001\)](#).

iii.  $R$  doesn't communicate a bad argument.

Conditions i and ii are consequences of using ARGUMENTALISM to establish that we can reason to lacks of belief. Condition iii is just the thought that seemingly good—rational and reasonable—reasoning to a lack of belief ought to be explicable by appeal to good rather than bad arguments.

If agents' using such  $R$ s to reason to new lacks of belief are the *only* ways that they might reason to new lacks of belief, then the converse of ARGUMENTALISM would also be true. By contrast, it might only be that doing that is the only *explicit* way of reasoning to a new lack of belief rather than the only way, period. Still, our inability to produce such an  $R$  would be pretty strong reason to think we can't reason to a new lack of belief, and it would defeat any reason I'm aware of for thinking that we actually can do it.<sup>26</sup>

So, why should we think it's difficult to find an  $R$  meeting conditions i–iii? The candidate  $R$  Broome points to as unsatisfactory, (10), expresses the belief that the agent *doesn't believe* that the climate isn't warming, and reports the lack of belief itself.<sup>27</sup> But reporting like this will generate bad arguments in these contexts. Using  $\lceil Bp \rceil$ , etc. to mean  $\lceil \text{I believe that } p \rceil$ , etc.:

P1.  $p$ .

C1.  $\neg\neg p$ .

C2.  $\therefore \neg B\neg p$ .

(C1 helps makes the structure of the intended inference clearer.) For this to be a good argument schema, it better be enthymematic. After all, it's not in general true that when something is false, a given individual doesn't believe it's true. In other words, P1 to C1 to C2 is pretty obviously bad, so it violates iii. So we should see if treating it as enthymematic helps. If it is enthymematic, the simplest thing to do is to add the following premise:

P3. For all  $p$  such that  $\phi$ ,  $\neg\neg p \supset \neg B\neg p$ ,

where  $\lceil \phi \rceil$  stands for some appropriate restriction on the quantifier, along with an additional premise that  $p$  satisfies the restriction  $\phi$ . Again, we *need* such a restriction on the quantifier, because it is not true in general that people don't believe the negation of any truths.

The problem is that depending on what we say  $\lceil \phi \rceil$  is, it seems we can only satisfy some of i–iii at the expense of violating others. When  $\lceil \phi \rceil$  is  $\lceil p \vee \neg p \rceil$ , e.g.—the vacuous restriction—we get a bad argument, violating iii, as we saw. (I take no stand here on whether C2-type utterances express or merely report a lack of belief.) So we need a non-vacuous one. Maybe  $\lceil Bp \rceil$ , i.e., that the agent believes that  $p$ ?

<sup>26</sup> Thanks to a reviewer for pushing me to clarify Broome's challenge. As an exegetical matter, Broome suggests but does not defend that all reasoning is explicit reasoning. The response to Broome in this section shows we can even *explicitly* reason to lacks, even if not all reasoning is explicit.

<sup>27</sup> Broome (2013, page 279) emphasizes this point.

Now, this may or may not be a bad argument; it depends on, e.g., whether we can believe two parts of a contradiction. Suppose (what I think is pretty unlikely) that we can't, so the argument isn't definitely a bad one. (This would make the antecedent of the material conditional vacuous; ignore that, though.) The problem is that ii is violated; if P3 is true interpreted with that restriction, then it applies to agents *regardless* of whether they've gone through the relevant reasoning. The only other restriction I could think of that might do the job is something like the one expressed by  $\lceil$ I have reasoned from my belief that  $p$  to the abandonment of my belief that  $\neg p$  $\rceil$ . But this, again, violates ii: this presupposes that the belief has *already* been abandoned by reasoning from  $p$ , and so going through it cannot *itself* be the reasoning itself that leads to that abandonment.

Another possibility is that we reason with an argument representation not from P1 to C2, but rather from P1 to something like  $\lceil$ I ought to be such that  $\neg B\neg p$  $\rceil$ . The problem there, though, is that condition i is now violated. After all, reasoning to  $\lceil$ I ought to believe that  $p$  $\rceil$  (which definitely doesn't express the belief that  $p$ ) doesn't seem like reasoning to the belief that  $p$  itself.

Perhaps there is a way to get more clever with the restriction on  $p$  in the original argument, perhaps by introducing some kind of self-referentiality. But there's clearly a challenge (I'll call it **Broome's challenge**) here: can we find a clear kind of argument representation that can do the job (10) was meant to do, one that satisfies i–iii? I will argue that we can, and to do it we don't need to find a good, perhaps very complex non-enthymematic version of (10). To do it, we have to look outside the usual “descriptive” vocabulary. In fact I've already given one example, (2) (repeated here):

- (2) Actually, there's a bear in the local circus, too. So whatever broke into the store didn't necessarily come from the local zoo.

The second sentence, I claim, expresses but likely does not report that the speaker doesn't believe that whatever broke into the store came from the local zoo. To see this, suppose that the agent knows that they believe that whatever broke into the store *did* come from the local zoo; then they would *ipso facto* be insincere, and moreover I think this is true as a matter of conventional fact about ‘not necessarily’.<sup>28</sup>

More generally, items of “epistemic vocabulary” express, I think as a matter of convention, more complex doxastic states than mere belief and disbelief.<sup>29</sup>  $\lceil$ It's more than 75% likely that  $p$  $\rceil$ , for example, seems to express a greater than 75% degree of confidence that  $p$ . Other examples will be expressions like ‘probably’, ‘might’, ‘must’, and ‘possible’. I said that I thought ‘not necessarily’ “likely” doesn't report the speaker's non-belief. On my explication of reporting, this depends on one assumption about how epistemic vocabulary works. Take the following:

- (11) Trump probably won't win reelection.

<sup>28</sup> It's tougher to come up with cases where the agent merely knows “intellectually” that they don't believe that whatever the bear comes from the local zoo, but that that's not a relatively proximate cause of their utterance. It's easier to come up with these for the other attitudes, and so I focus on them more there. Still, it's important to mark.

<sup>29</sup> For lines congenial to this, see, e.g., Swanson (2011), Yalcin (2007), Rothschild (2012), and Moss (2015).

My assumption is just that, whatever the truth conditions are, the sentence is not *about* some relevant information state (e.g., the speaker’s beliefs, or the common ground, or whatever) in the way ‘Russell is smart’ is about Russell. I make this assumption simply because it seems that (11) doesn’t report any mental states (even collective ones), and the definition of ‘reporting’ I gave requires aboutness. Many will find this plausible, especially expressivists.<sup>30</sup> But I think even contextualists, those who think, roughly, that (e.g.,) ‘might  $p$ ’ is true iff  $p$  is compatible with the relevant body of information,<sup>31</sup> should want that result if they can get it; it’s to my mind an interesting open question whether they can get it.

Anyway, it wouldn’t be so bad for me if someone saying the second sentence of (2) would both express and report their lack of belief. That’s because, first, by ARGUMENTALISM, they would still be reasoning to a lack. And second, the argument it communicates is *clearly* good, in contrast with Broome’s clearly bad (10). It would be a task for any full understanding of epistemic modality to capture exactly how it is a good argument, but not my task here—I will just rest on its expressing a clearly good argument.

Or that’s what I want to say. In responding to Broome in this way, I have been assuming that (2) expresses an argument. But does it?

Well, how can we *tell* whether something expresses an argument? This is an important general question, and one that I think it would do philosophers (and semanticists and formal pragmaticists) well to work out more. One indication is that the final sentence of the representation will have ‘so’, and this can be replaced with other discourse particles like ‘hence’, ‘therefore’, and even ‘ergo’.<sup>32</sup> (2) obviously has ‘so’ in the appropriate position, and we can also make the relevant substitutions:

- (12) a. ... Therefore, whatever broke into the store didn’t necessarily come from the local zoo.  
 b. ... Hence, whatever broke into the store didn’t necessarily come from the local zoo.  
 c. ... Ergo, whatever broke into the store didn’t necessarily come from the local zoo.

That’s one strong piece of evidence.

The other, perhaps more important piece of evidence is that someone who was *convinced* by what the speaker says would thereby have a lack of belief that whatever broke into the store came from the local zoo *with the relevant basis*. Typically we talk much more about bases when it comes to beliefs themselves, rather than the lack of them. But the lack here will have a basis, and that basis is, roughly, that a different bear, one that didn’t come from the local zoo, might have broken into the store instead

<sup>30</sup> Yalcin (2011) cites this as a motivation and desideratum for expressivism.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Kratzer (2008), DeRose (1991), Dowell (2011), von Fintel and Gillies (2008), and Mandelkern (2019) for versions of different levels of sophistication.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Pavese (2019).

of the bear from the local zoo.<sup>33</sup> We may also have an entailment roughly like:

(†). {<it might be that the  $F =$  the  $G$ >, <it might be that the  $H =$  the  $G$ >, <the  $F \neq$  the  $H$ >}  $\models$  <the  $F$  isn't necessarily the  $G$ >.<sup>34</sup>

I'll return to this (possible) entailment in the next section, but for now it's enough that there does seem to be one, or something similar.

So, given these two further facts, I think we have strong reason to call (2) an argument. Thus by ARGUMENTALISM, we can reason to a lack of belief. We were able to answer Broome's challenge by looking at a wider variety of English-language expression than he had done, and by being more explicit about when we can reason to a given change in attitude. And, as a consequence, we've saved consistency requirements of the kind I mentioned in the introduction.

That, then, is the first part of GENERALISM. And I suspect it will be the least controversial part of it, since it seems so clear that we *do* reason to lacks of belief. In the next section, though, I'll turn to a much more controversial claim, namely that we can reason to new non-doxastic attitudes like relief. The form of the argument will be very similar to the form of the argument in this section, but it will take us to very different expressions than the ones I considered here.

## 4 Reasoning to Non-Doxastic Attitudes

In the first subsection, I'll present the argument that we can reason to relief. In the second, I'll respond to some important objections to that argument. In response to the last of those objections, I'll say very briefly why we should be optimistic that the argument from the first subsection will pretty easily extend to many other non-doxastic attitudes.

### 4.1 The Argument

In displaying an episode of reasoning to relief, it's natural to come up with something like:

<sup>33</sup> A reviewer notes that I may court controversy in saying these things. If, for example, basing is somehow a *causal relation*, and if there are no events like someone's *not* believing a certain proposition (a view held by Lewis (2004) and Beebe (2004)), e.g., then what I may have to change what I say here a bit. But, first, other philosophers may think there are events like that. (Schaffer (2016, section 1.1) describes such a position.) Second, even for those who don't believe in the relevant events, they can still think that they can be causal relata because they are *abstract*. (See, e.g., Mellor (1995, page 132).) Third, even among people who reject these first two views and thus think absences or lacks cannot be causal relata, some (e.g., Lewis) still believe in *causation* by and of absences even without any causal relata (e.g., because they accept a counterfactual analysis). So, though something needs to be said here, I'm optimistic there won't be a big problem for me here.

<sup>34</sup> We have to be careful about the semantics of 'not necessarily' and related expressions in order both to maintain this entailment and to be able still to properly claim that it really expresses a person's lack of belief. If 'not necessarily  $p$ ' tracks, truth-conditionally or otherwise, mere *compatibility* with some information-state—meaning there's at least one possibility in which  $\neg p$ —then one can, perhaps, believe  $p$  and not necessarily  $p$ . But this seems intuitively an irrational state to be in. So likely we need a more discriminating semantics, one where 'not necessarily  $p$ ' requires a *significant* number of relevant possibilities (or that kind of thing) in which  $\neg p$  is true. To do that while getting (†) right, we need to be sure to add a corresponding condition to the semantics for 'might'.

(13) That bear must have been enormous; if there had been people in here at the time, we could have had a lot of causalities. So I'm really relieved [that no one was hurt].

But (13) reports—perhaps also expresses, but definitely reports—the speaker's relief. So perhaps (13) would be a *bad* argument, and not what would really underwrite the rational or reasonable acquisition of belief. In that way, it would be like Broome's (10) was.

But of course (13) was not the example I began with; the one I gave was:

(3) That bear must have been enormous; if there had been people in here at the time, we could have had a lot of causalities. So my goodness were we *lucky*.

This doesn't have that same problem. It expresses but definitely doesn't report the speaker's relief.

To see why it expresses the relief, I want to stress that the stress is important. (The 'my goodness' does help, too.) That is, intonation contours, I think, are—as a matter of the rules of language—associated with certain attitudes, relief among them.<sup>35</sup> To see this, imagine someone who says (3) with the relevant intonation contours, but then adds:

(14) But I am in no way relieved about it.

They'd be hard to understand, just like someone who said the following Moore-paradoxical utterance would be:

(15) The streets are wet, but I don't believe that.

It's controversial what the right explanation of that unintelligibility is. But a failure of sincerity does seem a likely part of the explanation.<sup>36</sup> The point for now is just that someone who speaks as the person in (3) does but knows they don't feel relieved abuses the language, since English really does seem to associate with that kind of utterance the attitude of relief.

And here, there is no worry at all that it also reports the relief. (3) is in no way *about* the relevant agent's relief, neither in an intuitive sense nor in any of the philosophically-developed senses.

If that's right, then to apply ARGUMENTALISM, I only need to argue that (3) is a reasoned discourse that communicates an argument someone can be convinced by. So we should once again check whether the criteria from the previous section are satisfied.

(3) does use 'so' in the right spot. And the following can work:

(16) ...Hence [/Therefore], my goodness were we *lucky*.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Not everyone will agree with me; famously Bolinger (1989) thought the connection between emotion and intonation was natural, not grammatical. But see Ladd (1990), among many others, for a compelling response that languages vary along this dimension.

<sup>36</sup> For one influential account that centers sincerity, see Heal (1994).

<sup>37</sup> Some people find 'so' more natural than 'hence' and 'therefore' here. I'm not sure what the best explanation of that difference, if it's a real one, is. Perhaps 'so' means something different than the others, or is anyway used differently? I consider that possibility in footnote 39 below, but no alternative is satisfying. So, first, I'm not sure this difference is a real difference, and second, we have reason to think it wouldn't hurt my argument.

That said, there's a different response to this kind of data. "Expressives" tend to scope out of embedded environments:

(17) If that damn Kaplan gets promoted, this place will go to the dogs.

Though the expressive 'damn' is embedded in the antecedent of a conditional, the hostility expressed is unconditional, the same as with (8).<sup>38</sup> And so you may think that the argument marked by 'so', etc., doesn't include the expressive component at all, however that's to be understood (on which more in a moment), but just essentially that "we" [the speaker and her companions] were lucky. But that wouldn't be the right kind of argument for what I need.

The response to this worry is that, sometimes, we *only* have an expressive, without any "descriptive" material for the 'so' to license or target. So consider, e.g.:

(18) It'd be terrible if she's not going to come. But if she were going to come, she'd be here by now.

So, shit.

Here there's no descriptive material for the 'so' (etc.) to license or target. So the response under consideration here won't work in general.<sup>39</sup> (I'll consider different examples in the next section that make a similar point, bolstering this response here.)

So, there's no general way of resisting (3)-like arguments. (Notice, by the way, that with relief, we would use 'phew' rather than 'shit!'.) The more important test, though, was whether a person can be *convinced* by (3) and thereby come to have relief with the appropriate basis. And it seems to me that this very much *can* happen in the ordinary cases in which (3) might be uttered. Let's be very clear about the cases to imagine, so as to isolate out some potential noise. Imagine our interlocutor, B, says "yes, that's right" after our protagonist, A, utters the first sentence of (3). Then in response to A's uttering the final sentence of (3), B replies:

(19) Yeah, that's completely right, actually.

We would expect the speaker to have the same sort of relief the speaker expressed, and on the same basis. And we'd expect that because they seem convinced by the argument. ('Actually' seems to have that effect in situations like these). That is, there doesn't seem to be any important difference between someone who says (19) in response to (3) and thereby comes to have the relevant appropriately-based relief, and someone who says (19) in response to (1) and thereby comes to have the relevant appropriately-based *belief*.<sup>40</sup> The only difference is in the attitude-type itself that's involved; everything else seems relevantly

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Potts (2007) for more.

<sup>39</sup> Perhaps some other account of the use of 'so' will work here, a non-argumentative one. For example, it might be a metalinguistic explanation: 'so, I am saying 'shit''. But of course this can be an internal utterance. Perhaps there are still other possibilities, but hopefully this will be enough to have considered for now.

<sup>40</sup> It's possible to doubt this, perhaps because you think (19) can target just the factual content of (3). But then imagine the same setup but now with (18) rather than (3), and imagine B saying "yes, agreed, actually" to "so, shit". Then I think the expectation that the speaker have the relevant attitude, the one expressed by their "shit", is really strong. Of course, this attitude is different from relief, most likely frustration or disappointment; but for relief, again imagine a 'so, phew' example. I thank a reviewer for raising the objection that prompted this footnote.



identical. This, I think, is a powerful reason to count (3) as an argument.

If that’s right, then by ARGUMENTALISM, we can reason to new states of relief. There is, then, parity between belief and relief in this regard: we can reason to both. But I think many will be dissatisfied by what I say here. So in the next subsection I’ll respond to some of the most important objections.

## 4.2 Objections

Here I’ll present those objections. Especially the first will be important for more fully fleshing out the view I’m defending here, but for the others, mostly the ones that don’t grip you can be skimmed without loss.

*OBJECTION 1.* In defending reasoning to a lack, I gave an *entailment* that backed the reasoning, ( $\dagger$ ). Entailments are backed by relations between *propositional contents*; but there won’t be any such relations at work in warranting the new relief. So whatever is going on, it’s not argument, which requires relations between propositional contents.<sup>41</sup>

*RESPONSE.* The basic response is that this objection takes propositional reasoning too seriously as its paradigm. True, I think you can think of ( $\dagger$ ) as an entailment, underwritten by, perhaps, an inclusion relation among the contents expressed by the relevant sentences.<sup>42</sup> But we know that this isn’t the only way an argument can be good, and thus not the only way to get the right sort of convincing.

First, consider, e.g., imperative inference:

P6. Go to your room and wait for me.

C5.  $\therefore$  (So,) Go to your room.

This seems like a good argument, indeed roughly as good as one using *modus ponens*, insofar as we have a good grasp on what the good arguments are. Perhaps it’s backed by an “entailment”  $\{!p \wedge !q\} \models !p$  (where  $\lceil !p \rceil$  means  $\lceil$ make it the case that  $p!$  $\rceil$ ). Next consider:

P7. If you know this stuff, help me!

P8. You do know this stuff.

C6.  $\therefore$  (So,) Help me!

<sup>41</sup> See again Broome (2013) for this sort of thought, though not put this way. And thanks to Joel Velasco for the objection.

<sup>42</sup> As I said in footnote 34, the details might get fussy. But see Bledin (2014) for one especially natural way of thinking of this entailment as logically valid; specifically,  $\langle$ the  $F$  isn’t necessarily the  $G$  $\rangle$  will be an *informational consequence* of the premises, i.e., roughly, an information state can’t have the structure required by the premises without thereby having the structure required by the conclusion. But for this to work for me, the information state likely needs to be something like “states not ruled out by the agent’s beliefs”. I’ll return to the “entailment” in the main text just below.

Once again, this seems like a good argument. And it seems to me that once we accept the goodness of P6–C5, we should also recognize the goodness of P7–C6. But those arguments can't be good for the same reason that, e.g., *modus ponens* arguments are good, for example because the premise-propositions entail the conclusion-propositions. After all, it's at best highly dubious that imperatival utterances have propositional contents at all.<sup>43</sup> If that's right, then the objector would be committed to thinking that not even being as seemingly good as these apparent arguments are can guarantee that some apparent reasoned discourse really does communicate an argument (in my intended sense), and thus that some seemingly very good apparent argument representations can't really underlie reasoning. That's a bad thing to commit to.

Perhaps there is a broader notion of "content" according to which the goodness of arguments like from P7 and P8 to C6 derives from the relations between the contents of P7, P8, and C6. But we also know that *ampliative* arguments, notably inductive ones, can be good without relating contents in the way that *modus ponens* does, even in the extended way in which P7's, P8's, and C6's contents might be related by *modus ponens*. We might try forcing these arguments into that mold, saying that there's still *some* general relation between premise-contents and conclusion-contents (not entailment) that all and only good deductive and ampliative arguments' premises and conclusions bear to one another. But it would be simpler, I think, and both less theoretically committal and more accurate to what we were actually doing if we talked about good arguments as preserving or generating fittingness rather than in terms of having the right relations between contents.

To a first approximation, and using the (perhaps optional) ideology of rules, we can think of a good argument in the following way. Suppose we have a type of reasoned discourse, the premise-utterances of which express some attitudes  $A_1, \dots, A_n$  it is fitting in the given circumstances to have, and the conclusion of which expresses attitudes  $A_{n+1}, \dots, A_{n+m}$  that, *ceteris paribus*,<sup>44</sup> it is fitting to have in the given circumstances in light of some good rule or rules taking one from the first set of fitting attitudes to the second. (Recall that conclusion-utterances can express more than one attitude, e.g., belief and relief, as with (3).) Then I will say that that reasoned discourse communicates a good argument, and that reasoning based on it, e.g., by being convinced by it is *ipso facto* good reasoning.<sup>45</sup>

This allows us to make sense of all the seemingly good arguments we've seen so far. When P6 expresses a fitting attitude—perhaps a preference that the addressee go to their room and wait for the speaker—then C5 expresses a fitting attitude as well, perhaps the preference that the addressee go to

<sup>43</sup> In fairness, there are those who say that imperatives do have propositional semantic values, e.g., Schwager (2012), who interprets imperatives as having essentially modal semantic values. But I think this analysis is not the orthodoxy now, and suffers problems exactly in virtue of this commitment (why, e.g., can imperatives not be true?) See, e.g., Charlow (2014) for discussion.

<sup>44</sup> This clause is to accommodate the defeasibility of ampliative and analogous arguments; see McHugh and Way (2018a, page 156) for discussion and defense of this kind of maneuver here.

<sup>45</sup> For a view on what makes reasoning good that fits very well with this picture of what makes arguments good, see McHugh and Way (2018a), though note that the views are strictly different, mine having to do with good *arguments* and theirs having to do with good *reasoning*.

their room. The analogue of conjunction elimination that applies in this case is likely why such an argument is a good one. (2) communicates a good argument on this view, too, because it is fitting to lack the given belief when one believes the premises. P7, P8, and C6 is a little more complicated, but the same principle applies: if the conditional preference expressed by P7 is fitting, and the belief expressed by P8 is as well, the unconditional preference expressed by C6 would be, too. But ampliative arguments are no problem for this understanding. And neither, as it happens, is the argument communicated by (3): when believing the premises is fitting, and perhaps also when believing the conclusion is, also having the relief expressed by the conclusion will be fitting, too.

Even given this general concept of an argument, there will be remaining controversies about just how to understand imperatival arguments like from P6 to C5. Do accepted imperatives update preferences,<sup>46</sup> for example, or do they update plans?<sup>47</sup> It's not for me to say here. My point here is minimal. First, P6–C5 and P7–C6 seem like good arguments. So we need a generalized notion of a good argument, since it seems that we cannot understand those arguments as just the usual entailment relations between propositional contents. And second, such arguments seem to underwrite good reasoning, including, I've argued, reasoning captured by (3). Objection 1 fails.

*OBJECTION 2.* But what, then, is the rule? In other cases, it's pretty easy to say: *modus ponens* (or some epistemic permission built on top of the inference rule). What is it with (3), though?

*RESPONSE.* In (3), it seems like a rule permitting one to transition from 'such-and-such horrible thing nearly happened but didn't' to relief would be the relevant rule. That's nothing like a deductive rule, but of course that's not how we should ultimately expect fittingness-transmitting rules to work. It's because of too narrow a focus on deductive, non-enthymematic propositional argument that we expect that of our rules. Of course, it will be a highly substantive task to say what the good fittingness-transmitting rules are for all the various attitudes, just as it's a highly substantive task to do so in epistemology. But I can't see a reason for more in-principle pessimism about it for attitudes like relief, admiration, or resentment than for belief.<sup>48</sup>

Second, though rules and rule-following have played a large role in many discussions of reasoning, they need not.<sup>49</sup> So even if we couldn't find the relevant rule behind (3), that might not be a problem for me at all.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., [Condoravdi and Lauer \(2011\)](#) and [Starr \(forthcoming\)](#).

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., [Charlow \(2014\)](#), inspired by [Gibbard \(2003\)](#).

<sup>48</sup> One possibility is that you accept a kind of Humeanism about the attitudes, that they can't, themselves be rational or reasonable, nor can their formation. I am assuming the negation of that view in this paper, since arguing against it directly would be a really large task, so big that it deserves a different paper. So, again, you may interpret much of what I say as conditional on that kind of Humeanism's falsity. That said, I take the apparent reasoned discourses like (3) to be in pretty direct tension with that kind of Humeanism.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., [Dancy \(2018\)](#) for a theory that does not give rules an essential role, and [Valaris \(2017\)](#) for a distinction between theories of reasoning that involve rules as *summaries* of good transitions involved in reasoning, which he has no problem with, and *rule-following* as essential to reasoning, which he does.

*OBJECTION 3.* Someone might accept (3), it seems, and still not feel relief. But that seems impossible for (1) and (5) and belief.<sup>50</sup>

*RESPONSE.* I'll be quicker with this objection. It is of course true that we can recognize that some emotion, say relief, would be reasonable and yet we not feel it. That, I think, is the situation the objector has in mind. But this also happens with belief. After being given a statistical argument about the relative safety of cars and planes, I might say the reasoning is good but not really believe it. We can think an argument is a good one without thereby changing our mind. But this is as true of belief as of any other attitude.

The important point is this: if one accepts the argument communicated by (3) but does not feel relief with the appropriate basis, one is, perhaps, akratic: one's non-relief is "recalcitrant", as it's sometimes put.<sup>51</sup> But that's exactly true also of someone who accepts the argument in (1) or (5) but does not form the relevant beliefs; in that situation, one is epistemically or doxastically akratic.<sup>52</sup> Thus there is still no significant difference here between belief and non-doxastic attitudes like relief.

*OBJECTION 4.* Perhaps the conclusion of the reasoning is just a belief, namely that the agent themselves ought or at least may feel relief in the circumstances; then we'd also say that automatic processes then somehow transform into relief. Then we would not have reasoning to relief.<sup>53</sup>

*RESPONSE.* I understand the temptation to say that here, but my response is very simple. We don't say that in the belief case; indeed, if we did, we'd have an infinite regress on our hands, unless  $\lceil$ we ought to believe that  $p$ -type beliefs are the only ones we could form without this intermediary. So we know that changes in attitude can happen without them. So then positing them here looks incredibly *ad hoc*; why do we need them here, where didn't in other places, besides to resist the conclusion I've been arguing for in this section? Perhaps there's some answer an advocate of this objection could think of, but I couldn't think of anything plausible myself.

Note, by the way, that everything I say here is compatible with the claim that changes in belief always drive changes in the other attitudes. Whether that claim is actually right is another matter, turning, for example, on how exactly imperatival reasoning can work and the dynamics of preferences more generally.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Thanks to Julia Driver and Ian Proops for this objection.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., Greenspan (1988) and D'Arms and Jacobson (2003).

<sup>52</sup> See Scanlon (1998) for an early discussion of this phenomenon.

<sup>53</sup> Thanks to Josh Dever here.

<sup>54</sup> For a framework that tries to make sense of non-informational preference change, see, e.g., Dietrich and List (2011).

*OBJECTION 5.* I've only really gone through an argument that we can reason to new *relief*; what reason do we have to think that this argument would generalize readily to other non-doxastic attitudes, as I claim it does?

First, it isn't *quite* true that I've focused exclusively on relief. I've also implicitly argued that we can reason to the attitude expressed by "so, shit" in (18), probably frustration or disappointment. Still, that would leave the general question open about why we should believe the arguments here will generalize.

The answer is that it is difficult to think of attitudes we humans definitely have that aren't conventionally associated with bits of language, even of English, and thereby expressed with utterances of sentences that might be the conclusion of some reasoned discourses. We thus have admiration ("so, what a good person!"), sadness ("so, darn..."), happiness ("so, yay!"), hatred ("so, I better never see that bastard again..."), and on and on. Sometimes we need to imagine the examples with specific intonation contours, but often enough these are the most natural ones anyway. Once we've found these sentences to be our conclusions, we need only argue from there that a person can be convinced in the relevant circumstances, that is, end up having an attitude with the relevant basing structure as the right kind of result of hearing and considering the reasoned discourse. So, though I haven't gone through the specifics of many examples not involving relief, hopefully I've made it clear how these specifics would look and given good reason for optimism about the very wide range of non-doxastic attitudes the argument would reach.

But just for the sake of completeness, imagine our protagonist says the following:

(20) Still, if it had done this to the store next door, their insurance would've paid to repair damages.

Unfortunately, our insurance won't pay. So, how much better it would've been had it broken into their store rather than into our store!

This seems to communicate an argument, and indeed a person who says they agree to the conclusion would normally be expected to have the preference expressed by that conclusion: that the bear had broken into the other store rather than our protagonist's. So we can reason to preferences, by ARGUMENTALISM: (20) communicates an argument we can be convinced by, the conclusion of which expresses a preference for the bear's having broken into some other store rather than the original store.

Perhaps there are some attitudes that *don't* find conventional expression in language, but, first, that would be a surprising and interesting fact, and second, even then, it seems like we could simply adopt a convention *whereby* that attitude is associated in the right way with a bit of the language.

Those are the objections to the conclusion of this section that I'll consider. Given that none of them have worked, going forward I'll assume that my argument is right, and thus that we can indeed reason to relief and to other attitudes beyond belief and its lack as well.

## 5 A Broomean Challenge for Eliminating Non-Doxastic Attitudes

So far I've argued for the following parts of GENERALISM: new all-out beliefs, new lacks of belief, and new non-doxastic attitudes like relief. That leaves two bullet points left: new lacks of non-doxastic attitudes, and acceptances of attitudinal constraints. In this last substantive section, I'll say more about why I think these parts of GENERALISM are true, too, and why I think they go together.<sup>55</sup>

### 5.1 The Challenge

Broome's challenge for lack of belief and new non-doxastic attitudes didn't work because there are parts of language that we can use to express the lack of belief and the new non-doxastic attitudes. But when we come to *lacks* of non-doxastic attitudes, the challenge seems to me tougher: unlike with belief, there don't really seem to be parts of language conventionally associated with the *lack* of a given attitude, at least not in the cleanly separable way from reporting that we found with 'not necessarily' for lack of belief. I don't know how to express a *lack* of relief without also reporting it, unless perhaps I were to express another attitude incompatible with it, say fear. In general there seems to be a positive-negative asymmetry in attitude expression through language. Thus there isn't much hope of answering Broome's challenge for a *lack* of non-doxastic attitudes by appealing to ARGUMENTALISM and natural-language argument representations of the right form.

But I don't think this means we can't reason to a lack of non-doxastic attitudes. We just have to be a bit clever and indirect to see it. I'll first turn to the last part of GENERALISM, about states of attitudinal constraint acceptance. Then I'll come back to how they can help.

### 5.2 States of Constraint Acceptance

In this subsection, I'll introduce a "new" kind of attitude.<sup>56</sup> To see that it's already part of our tacit folk psychology, consider utterances like the following:

- (21) Since it's pretty warm outside, however likely it is that it'll snow today, it's likelier than that that it'll rain today. But I have no idea how likely it is to rain or snow today.
- (22) Since it's pretty warm outside, I'm more confident that it'll rain today than that it'll snow, but I have no idea how confident to be in either rain or snow today.

<sup>55</sup> Thanks to a reviewer for pushing me to change this section in a pretty large number of ways, substantively and structurally.

<sup>56</sup> In saying this, I also want to say straightaway that it may very well reduce to other attitudes; I won't focus much on the metaphysics here, but rather just its functional role and how we express it in language.

- (23) Billie is much more of an iconoclast than Barry is, in an industry that only just barely tolerates iconoclasm. So, man, Billie is so much cooler than Barry, but I'm not totally sure exactly how cool Billie is or how uncool Barry is.
- (24) ...So, I admire Billie much more than I admire Barry, though I haven't decided yet how much I admire Billie or Barry.

I will call these all **ungrounded attitudinal comparisons**, because they express or report having more of an attitude toward  $o$  than toward  $o'$ , despite there being no specific "amount" of that attitude that they have toward  $o$  or to  $o'$ . The question, then, is what exactly they express or report.

Here's an answer that seems to me to be right. (21) expresses, roughly, a commitment of the following sort: if the agent were to just totally decide how to fill in their confidences fully and completely, the amount of confidence they have in the proposition that it'll rain that day would be greater than the amount of confidence they would have in the proposition that it'll snow that day.<sup>57</sup> Then (21) would really be expressing such credences. (22) reports that commitment: it is *made true* by the existence of that commitment; to be true, apart from the commitment itself, there need be no amount of confidence that the speaker has in either rain or snow.

The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of (23) and (24). The first expresses a commitment to admiring Billie more than Barry, however the speaker's admiration is to be completely filled in; and the latter reports that same state.<sup>58</sup> (By the way, when I say "admiration", I mean a kind of *aesthetic* admiration, not to be confused with moral admiration.)

Let's generalize all this and be a bit more precise. I will say that an **A-type attitudinal constraint** is a requirement for an overall  $A$ -state to have. To be gappy—there being propositions  $p$  such that  $S$ 's overall belief state doesn't include the belief that  $p$  or the belief that  $\neg p$ —is one belief-type (i.e., doxastic) constraint, for example. I won't be fussy about what *kind* of requirement this is, by the way. As far as this definition is concerned, a requirement of any of the usual types will do. Another would be the requirement to admire Billie more than Barry.

Given that,  $S$  **accepts an A-type attitudinal constraint** for their overall  $A$ -type state to be  $F$  just when, were  $S$  to progressively further and further fill out their overall  $A$ -type state without incurring

<sup>57</sup> Perhaps this is best accomplished with imprecise credences of some kind. But if we go this route, we have to be careful. If we think of imprecise credence functions as interval-valued, then we won't have enough structure to capture what (21) expresses, since the intervals can overlap even when the agent really does have the mental state they seem to express with (21). But we can also think of imprecise credence functions as *sets* of precise credence functions, called *representors*; these would have the right structure, e.g., with precise credence functions  $cr_1, cr_2$  in the agent's representor such that, e.g.,  $cr_1(\text{rain}) = .3, cr_1(\text{snow}) = .2, cr_2(\text{rain}) = .5, cr_2(\text{snow}) = .4$ . Ultimately I'm disinclined to think that (21) really does express such imprecise credences, because I think even that state is too decided to be what the speaker in (21) intends to express. But, like I said before, the metaphysics of such states will not concern me too much; in practice what a person with such imprecise credences really has just is the kind of commitment I describe.

<sup>58</sup> Ungrounded attitudinal comparisons are a problem for theories of attitudinal comparisons, i.e.,  $\lceil S A\text{-s } o \text{ more than } S A\text{-s } o' \rceil$ , that require there to be some amount (intensity, etc.) of  $A$ -ing that  $S$  has toward  $o$  that is greater than the amount of  $A$ -ing that  $S$  has toward  $o'$ . The best-developed semantic work on these, Pasternak (2019), does make that assumption, and thus is not correct in general.

any other changes through, e.g., empirical investigation,<sup>59</sup> *S* would be—from their own perspective—irrational unless their resulting *A*-type state was *F*. I don't think I'm the first person to discuss such states, for what it's worth; I think, e.g., some philosophers have appealed to them in explicating metaethical expressivism; they correspond to *being for* the having of certain (attitudinal) properties.<sup>60</sup>

These definitions, when put together, get us what (21)–(24) are intuitively expressing or reporting. Given that, we should think we have such states or attitudes as states of attitudinal constraint acceptance, given that we seem to need them to account for unexceptional things we say, ungrounded attitudinal comparisons.

Ungrounded attitudinal comparisons make use of states of attitudinal constraint acceptance to be *F*, where *F* is a *comparative* property. But *F* could be any property of an overall *A*-type state. In particular it could be a *negative* property, *not* being *G*. Consider, e.g.:

(25) It's at the very least *possible* that there will be a good *Star Wars* sequel one day, though I have no idea how likely it is there will be one.

(26) I *won't* resent my mother, no matter what she does or has done.

(27) I *won't* work for them no matter what the benefits of doing so would be.

In each of these, we need the states of attitudinal constraint acceptance because they are different from, e.g., simply not being certain that there won't be a good *Star Wars* sequel one day (for (25)), or simply believing they won't resent their mother (for (26)), or simply believing they won't work for someone (for (27)). After all, to be in those latter states, it could suffice that the speaker hadn't considered the relevant things as possible objects of certainty, or they believe their mother will never do anything all that bad or the opportunity to work for the given company will never arise.<sup>61</sup> States of negative attitudinal constraint acceptance are different, and we need them to understand these three sorts of utterances. 'I *won't*' expresses a negative commitment, just as 'I *will*' expresses a positive one (e.g., 'I *will* always trust you'), and just as normal 'will'-utterances express other sorts of commitments, often promises ('I *will* pick you up from the airport tomorrow'). Ultimately, it shouldn't be very surprising that negative attitudinal constraints like these are available, since the comparative ones were available, too.

The last point I'll argue for in this subsection is that we can reason to these commitments. (23) is already exactly the sort of example I need to make this point: a person (including the speaker themselves) may be convinced by this argument, and thereby come to take on the commitment expressed by its

<sup>59</sup> All the relevant changes I mean to rule out might be very difficult to spell out. Granted, but I don't think the difficulties there hurt the definition in principle.

<sup>60</sup> See especially Schroeder (2008a), who is inspired here by Gibbard (1990). His concern there is with properties involving blaming and preferring, but of course it would generalize.

<sup>61</sup> Compare Friedman (2013) on why suspension of judgment ought to be conceived of as its own attitude rather than a lack of a given doxastic attitude.



conclusion to have more admiration for Billie than Barry, whatever the specific levels of admiration they arrive at would be. We would take someone who didn't have that commitment to be insincere (again understanding the relevant admiration as broadly aesthetic). So reasoning toward states of comparative attitudinal constraint acceptance is possible.

More of interest here are the negative ones. Consider, e.g., (26). Certainly it *reports* a (future) lack of resentment. But it also expresses a commitment to not resent their mother, no matter how one fills out the speaker's doxastic state regarding what their mother did. We can imagine a reasoned discourse that concludes this way:

- (28) It's wrong to resent someone to whom I should be extremely grateful. My mother has done so much for me that I should be extremely grateful to her. So, I *won't* resent her, no matter what she does or has done.

This is an argument a person could convince themselves with.<sup>62</sup> (Presumably, the quantifier 'no matter what' has to be restricted in some ways, at least for ordinary people. I'll return to a related point in a little.) We would expect them to have the relevant commitment, i.e., the relevant state of constraint acceptance, if they are convinced by it.

As I said, the concluding sentence of (28) reports the speaker's future lack of resentment for their mother. Don't we, then, run into the same problem that we did back in section 3, with the argument in (10)? The problem there, recall, was that a conclusion that reported a lack of belief seemed like it could not communicate a *good* argument, one that could be the source of a reasonable change in attitude. So, do we have that problem here, too? No, we don't. That's because here there are plausible reasoning processes that deliver both the commitment and the belief, and neither process makes use of a bad argument. First, there's the reasoning to the commitment: when it's wrong to feel some way toward someone, it's reasonable in light of that to commit to not feeling that way toward them. Second, there's the reasoning to the belief *that* they won't resent their mother. In ordinary cases, when someone reasons by thinking through arguments like (28), then they'll come to believe they have the beliefs expressed by the premises. Then the fully non-enthymematic argument they use can be something like (suppressing some irrelevant detail):

- (29) ...So, I believe that it'd be wrong to resent my mother. When I believe it's wrong to do something like that, then I won't do it. So, I won't resent my mother.

This could be a perfectly good argument, so long as the premises are true. So there need be no bad arguments involved. And the reasoning can clearly be the source of both of the changes in attitudes, the newly-acquired negative attitudinal constraint on the one hand and the newly-acquired belief that they

<sup>62</sup> The first-personal nature makes it hard to imagine it convincing *others*, but we can imagine the speaker being convinced by someone's making communicating the argument with a second-personal analogue.

won't resent their mother on the other. (28) doesn't have the problem (10) had, since it can result in both the change in belief and in commitment simultaneously.

Next, I'll use the fact that we can use argument representations to reason to these commitments to argue that we can *also* use them to reason to lacks of non-doxastic attitudes.

### 5.3 Using Attitudinal Constraints to Reason to Lacks of Non-Doxastic Attitudes

I'll complete the argument for GENERALISM here, using the work I did in the previous subsection.

To begin, I want to call your attention to a certain way that we can have some non-doxastic attitudes. Here's one example; imagine our protagonist says:

(30) Our mayor is unbelievably corrupt, and we could've seen that beforehand. I resent whoever voted for him!

To bring out what I mean, ask yourself: what does 'whoever' mean? Well, the consequence I need is very easy to see in some cases. Consider the following:

(31) Whoever is behind me kicking my seat is a jerk.

(31) entails that if it's my mother behind me kicking my seat, my mother is a jerk. Similarly, if I say:

(32) I'm angry with whoever is behind me kicking my seat.

Once again, I think we should say the same thing: if it's my mother behind me kicking my seat, I'm angry with my mother. This is pretty unexceptional, I think. So I claim (30) entails:

(33) [every  $x$ : VOTED-FOR( $x$ , mayor)][RESENT(me,  $x$ )]

How exactly that happens depends on what we say free relative 'wh'-'ever' phrases mean. I think it's most likely they're plural definite descriptions, perhaps with derivable ignorance presuppositions, but maybe they're universal quantifiers (with the same presuppositions). Either way the entailment seems to follow.<sup>63</sup> In other words, we can resent *generally*, resenting whoever has a certain property  $F$ -ness. And in doing so, we resent that thing (which is  $F$ ), and that other thing (which is also  $F$ ), etc. So the entailments suggest, anyway.

The same is true for lots of other non-doxastic attitudes. We can want whoever the better person is to win the election, hate whoever stole our prized possession, regret whatever bad decisions we made that put us in a present jam, etc. I won't exhaustively specify just which attitudes we can have this way:

<sup>63</sup> For important work on free relatives that would verify this entailment, see, e.g., [Jacobson \(1995\)](#), [Dayal \(1997\)](#), and [von Stechow \(2000\)](#).

doing that would be difficult typological work, and rather than undertake that here, I will only deal with attitudes that clearly work this way.

Now I have all the tools I need to argue that we can reason to lacks of non-doxastic attitudes. For just as we can resent whoever is  $F$ , we can resent whoever is  $F$  that we're not committed to *not* resenting. After all, that's just a (somewhat more complex) property itself, so it introduces no new in-principle difficulties. Moreover, it's *reasonable* to form our general attitudes this way: it'd be odd if we had commitments not to resent certain kinds of people, say whoever is  $G$ , but we still resent without qualification whoever is  $F$ , even though some  $F$  people might also be  $G$ . So suppose it's true of a person that they resent whoever is  $F$ , unless they're committed to not resenting them, that is, unless they've accepted an attitudinal constraint not to resent them. And now suppose at  $t_1$ , they have no relevant commitments about whom not to resent. But then suppose at  $t_2$ , they reason to a new such commitment, namely not to resent  $G$  people. (It may be their mother, e.g.) Then they will have *ipso facto* reasoned to a new lack of resentment for those people who are both  $F$  and  $G$ , for example their mother. That is, in forming their new commitment by reasoning to it, they thereby abandon their resentment for their mother.

Let me be just a bit more explicit, since the point is important. Here is the character I'm imagining; call him 'Stewart':

- At  $t_1$ , Stewart comes to resent whoever has both of the following two properties: (a), the property of having voted for the mayor; and (b), the property of being someone that Stewart has no commitment *not* to resent. At  $t_1$ , that is, he comes to resent whoever has these two properties.
- At  $t_2$ , Stewart comes to accept a new negative resentment constraint (i.e., he comes to have a new commitment), namely not to resent his mother for anything, since he's very grateful for all she's done for him.

Stewart starts out resenting *whoever's* such that they voted for the mayor *and* such that he's not committed to not resenting. Then he gains new commitments not to resent. So then some people he once resented—here, his mother—come not to be resented. For this all to happen, I do not require that we, or Stewart, always live up to our commitments, or that we always form our resentments, etc., in this way. What matters is that we *can*. And notice this is not by way of some “automatic” process like digestion; it is just one thing that happens, the newly-acquired commitment and the lack of resentment.

So, reasoning to a new lack of non-doxastic attitudes is possible. It is possible when we can have those attitudes  $A$  in the general way we report with the second sentence of (30) and with (32) and we restrict the ‘wh’-‘ever’ phrase with the predicate ‘that we haven’t committed ourselves not to bear  $A$  to’. This will, in general, be possible for a wide range of attitudes, and though I’ve indicated some of the others—desire, hatred, and regret—as I said, I don’t have the space to say exactly which ones they

are here.

Still, it's worth emphasizing that this strategy is specific and indirect. I am not claiming that this is in fact exclusively how we reason to lacks of non-doxastic attitudes when we do; I am only claiming that it is one demonstrably possible way to pull it off. It would be interesting to see whether there is a more direct way to do it, a way more in line with the methods in sections 3 and 4. It'd also be interesting to investigate whether we do in fact do things this way very often at all, or whether it is only possible and rarely actual. But for my purposes in this paper, namely to argue for GENERALISM, all I need to do is establish the possibility claim; the other projects are better left for other work.

## 6 Conclusion

As I said, the main point of the paper was to formulate and defend GENERALISM. If I'm right, we can reason to a much larger number of kinds of changes in attitude than it might have seemed, to new lacks of belief, to new non-doxastic attitudes, and to new lacks of non-doxastic attitudes. In doing so, I've argued that the strongest versions of Broome's challenge can be met head-on. I've also defended a way of establishing claims about what we can reason to, ARGUMENTALISM.

In the introduction, I mentioned that what's ultimately at issue here is whether reasoned attitudinal changes differ substantially from one another, or whether they are all of some unified kind. I have argued for the latter view. I think it is philosophically fitting to look at all the attitudes together, doxastic and non-doxastic, rather than to build walls between them. I also think there will be profit in investigating all the attitudes together, rather than just belief itself or desire itself, etc. Hopefully this paper itself is some small demonstration of that.

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