

ARTICLE

Where reasons and reasoning come apart

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Abstract

Proponents of the reasoning view analyze normative reasons as premises of good reasoning and explain the normativity of reasons by appeal to their role as premises of good reasoning. The aim of this paper is to cast doubt on the reasoning view by providing counterexamples to the proposed analysis of reasons, counterexamples in which premises of good reasoning towards φ -ing are not reasons to φ .

KEYWORDS

favoring, guidance, normative reasons, reasoning, suspension of judgment

In reasoning, we consider our reasons. When reasoning terminates in an action or a belief, we act or believe for the reasons that our reasoning took into account. These claims seem near platitudinous. But does reasoning involve a sensitivity to reasons that exist quite independently of the deliberation of rational agents? Or is it rather that the facts we take into consideration in reasoning are reasons because they are the premises of good reasoning? Proponents of the 'reasoning view' endorse the platitudes and answer the second question in the affirmative. That is to say, they both analyze reasons as premises of good reasoning and explain the normativity of reasons by appeal to their role in good reasoning. The aim of this paper is to cast doubt on the reasoning view, not by addressing the latter, explanatory claim directly, but by providing counterexamples to the alleged platitudes and the corresponding analysis of reasons, counterexamples in which premises of good reasoning towards φ -ing are not reasons to φ .

After providing some background and clarifications, I describe the reasoning view in detail. I then introduce two counterexamples – (i) Wedding Anniversary, which involves reasoning to intention and action, and (ii) White Christmas, which involves reasoning to suspension of judgment. I present two responses on behalf of the reasoning view, one that adjusts how patterns of reasoning are delineated and another that adjusts the notion of a normative reason. I show that the responses are not successful. In the course of my discussion, I propose an alternative account of the relation between reasons and reasoning.

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1 | CLARIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND

Let me turn to the clarifications first. The reasoning view is an account of the nature of normative reasons – facts that count in favor of certain responses or that contribute to the justification of these responses. Facts can be taken as true propositions, or true considerations, for current purposes. To give a paradigmatic example, the fact that the child is drowning is a normative reason to jump in the lake and pull her out; it counts in favor of and justifies this action. ‘Counting in favor’ captures the core of the notion of a normative reason.

Normative reasons have been most discussed in metaethics, in terms of moral or pragmatic reasons to act or to intend. But there are also normative reasons to believe, disbelieve, or suspend, i.e. epistemic reasons which count in favor of or contribute to the justification of belief and the other doxastic attitudes. Moreover, there is not only practical deliberation, in which agents determine what to intend or how to act, but also theoretical reasoning, which concludes in belief, disbelief, or suspension. Plausibly, in practical reasoning, subjects attend to their practical reasons, whereas in theoretical reasoning, they consider their epistemic reasons.

Elucidations of normative reasons as favorers, as provided above, don’t go much beyond the initial characterization of certain facts as normative reasons. In consequence, reasons *primitivists* hold that the concept of a normative reason cannot be analyzed in any more enlightening terms. They argue that we should take the notion of a reason as a conceptual primitive (Parfit, 2011; Scanlon, 1998). A related, but distinct way in which one can take reasons to be primitive is by assuming that they are constitutive of the normativity of all other normative phenomena. Call such a view a *reasons-first* view. For instance, normative reasons can explain why a certain response is permitted or appropriate (there is sufficient all-things-considered reason for it), why one ought to respond this way (there is conclusive reason for it), or why a response is prohibited (there is conclusive reason against it). By contrast with primitivism, others have argued that we can further elucidate the notion of a reason. For instance, reasons have been identified with explanations of oughts (Broome, 2013) or of the goodness of an action (Raz, 1999, p. 22, fn. 4) or with evidence of ought propositions (Kearns & Star, 2009). And by contrast with the reasons-first view, it has been argued that reasons are not normative bedrock, but that e.g. fittingness (McHugh & Way, 2016a) or ought is (Broome, 2018).

The reasoning view is one of the competitors of both reasons primitivism and the reasons-first view. I will introduce it in detail in the next section, but here is a brief motivation and characterization. Subjects often do what their reasons favor by reasoning correctly from their reasons to their responses, by being guided by their reasons. Say that Haya believes that there will be no white Christmas this year. Her reason to believe this is that the weather forecast predicts that it will be warm and sunny on December 25. She correctly reasons from this, together with her background beliefs that the weather forecast is reliable and that Christmas is on December 25, to the conclusion that there will be no white Christmas this year. Her premise beliefs really do support the conclusion – this is a good reasoning pattern. The contents of Haya’s premise beliefs *are* just her epistemic reasons to form this belief, and similarly for cases in which subjects act for practical reasons. This chimes with the reasoning view, which analyzes the concept of a normative reason as that of the content of a true premise belief of a sound (practical or theoretical) reasoning pattern; the normativity of normative reasons is due to the soundness of the reasoning of which they are premises.¹ It also chimes with a picture of normative reasons as good guides – Haya’s initial beliefs properly guide her to the belief that there will be no white Christmas this year. This picture – that to be a normative reason just *is* to be a good guide – goes beyond the widely accepted claim that normative reasons necessarily have the capability to guide agents towards the responses they favor, to help them figure out what to do or believe (e.g. Paakkunainen, 2017;

Schroeder, 2007; Star, 2015; Way & Whiting, 2016). The reasoning view can be seen as one way to substantiate the picture.²

In addition to the fact that the reasoning view appears to be a natural conclusion from the platitudes with which I started, it has the attractive feature that – unlike primitivism – it provides an account of reasons and their normativity, instead of taking them (and it) for granted. Nonetheless, I am committed to a version of the reasons-first view. I believe that we can explain the normative standings of a subject's responses by appeal to her normative reasons. I argue elsewhere that, in the epistemic domain, reasons rather than knowledge come first (Schmidt, forthcoming); that epistemic reasons are neither generally constituted by nor identical with evidence (Schmidt, manuscript) and that reasons generally are not identical with evidence of ought propositions (Schmidt, 2017). My project here is, however, not to show directly that the normativity of normative reasons cannot be explained by appeal to their role in sound reasoning, though I will get back to this point at the end. Rather, it is to attack the reasoning view by arguing that there are some premises of good reasoning that are not normative reasons. In other words, I will argue that the reasoning view accords reason status to some considerations that really are no reasons, thereby overgenerating normative reasons.³

2 | THE REASONING VIEW

The reasoning view has been defended by several authors in recent years (Asarnow, 2017; Hieronymi, 2005; Hieronymi, 2011; Setiya, 2007; Setiya, 2014; Silverstein, 2016; Way, 2017).⁴ For the sake of simplicity, I will in the following work with Way's (2017, p. 254) formulation:

(R1) For the fact that p to be a reason for S to φ is for there to be a good pattern of reasoning from the belief that p , perhaps together with other correct attitudes which S has, to φ -ing.

As I understand Way, (R1) expresses both the biconditional claim that p is a reason for a subject to give a certain response iff there is a good pattern of reasoning from the belief that p (and maybe other correct attitudes of hers) to so responding, and the explanatory claim that p is a normative reason to give the response in which the pattern terminates because it is a premise of the pattern. The view is therefore, in principle, vulnerable on two fronts: It not only needs it to be true that facts are normative reasons in virtue of their role as premises in sound deliberation; it also presupposes that every normative reason to φ is a premise of good reasoning towards φ -ing, and that every such premise is a reason to φ .

To give another example, say that Idelia donates money to Oxfam. She reasons her way towards doing so from her belief that people are starving in Eastern Africa and her belief that donating money to Oxfam will help the people who are starving in that region, together with her intention to help them. Her reasoning instantiates a good pattern of reasoning to donating money to Oxfam, as she correctly reasons from a perfectly acceptable end (to help the people who are starving in Eastern Africa) to an appropriate means (donating to Oxfam). Her beliefs – that people are starving in Eastern Africa and that donating to Oxfam will help the people who are starving in that region – are true. So (because of this), that people are starving in Eastern Africa is a normative reason for Idelia to donate money to Oxfam, as is the fact that donating to Oxfam will help the people in Eastern Africa.

Let me highlight some important features of the reasoning view. First, given that normative reasons are facts, only the contents of true beliefs come into the picture as premises of good reasoning.⁵ We get this result if we limit normative reasons to the premises of *sound* reasoning patterns, so that all

premises in such a transition have to be true (for beliefs) or otherwise fitting or correct (for intentions or desires) (McHugh & Way, 2016b).⁶

Second, proponents of the reasoning view have to provide an account of what sound reasoning is. One option is suggested by McHugh and Way (2016b) who, roughly, identify sound reasoning patterns as ones that reliably take subjects from fitting starting-points to fitting conclusions.⁷ Think of reasoning as a productive process, by which given mental states give rise to further responses, and which is governed by norms. Sound reasoning may then be thought of as reasoning that is guided by and thereby conforms to these norms (Asarnow, 2017, p. 616; Boghossian, 2014; Broome, 2009).

It's easy to come up with paradigmatic examples of sound reasoning. The *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* patterns, inductive and abductive inferences are all sound patterns of theoretical reasoning, given that they start from true premises. The transition from an intention to φ and the belief that ψ -ing is the only (or a good) way to φ , to ψ -ing, is a sound pattern of practical reasoning, as is moving from the belief that one ought to φ to φ -ing, assuming that one's starting-points are fitting. Patterns of good reasoning cannot be individuated by the relevant contents alone, but only by appeal to contents *and* the content-bearing mental states; for instance, it makes a difference whether one reasons from a belief that p or from an intention with the same content, so these are distinct reasoning patterns. One way to make this explicit is by individuating reasoning patterns in terms of "marked contents" (Broome, 2013, p. 251), where the attitude type is always noted along with its content. I will do so in the following by putting down a 'B' for belief, an 'I' for intention, and an 'S' for suspension of judgment before the content.

Third, talk of patterns of reasoning allows that there are normative reasons for subjects to do or believe certain things even where they don't actually reason in accordance with the pattern. This is important because subjects often do not respond to the normative reasons that there are, or that they have. That the child is drowning may be a reason for the agent to jump in the lake even though she is not motivated to do so and even if she doesn't have the belief that the child is drowning. Applying this to Idelia's case, even if she only had the intention to help people who are starving in Eastern Africa, and none of the beliefs mentioned above, their contents would still be reasons for her to donate money to Oxfam.⁸

Fourth, the reasoning view has to provide a way of individuating patterns of reasoning. On the one hand, it has to have some criterion of when a sound pattern of reasoning is practical, and of when it is theoretical. On the other hand, it has to tell us where a particular reasoning transition starts and where it ends. As to the latter point: Is the fact that people are starving in Eastern Africa a premise in Idelia's transition to donating money to Oxfam? Maybe the relevant reasoning pattern involves only the intention to help people who are starving in Eastern Africa and the belief that the best way to do so is to donate money to Oxfam. These two mental states are sufficient for moving her to donate to Oxfam, and the fact that people are starving in Eastern Africa looks instead like it is part of a different pattern of reasoning that resulted in Idelia's intention to help people who are starving in Eastern Africa. However, that people are starving in Eastern Africa is a very good reason to donate money to Oxfam. This cautions against restricting patterns of reasoning to transitions from given premises to the closest conclusion response; it recommends that we allow that reasoning patterns include sub-conclusions.⁹

As to the distinction between practical and theoretical patterns of reasoning, one might draw it by appeal to their conclusions – good practical reasoning terminates in action, intention, or belief about which of one's options are permitted (Paakkunainen, 2017, p. 65), whereas good theoretical reasoning terminates in belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment (Asarnow, 2017, p. 616). One might also distinguish the two kinds of transition on the grounds of different standards of reasoning, so that "practical reasoning incorporates any form of thought to which assessments of practical

rationality apply” (Setiya, 2014, p. 221), while theoretical reasoning is the kind of reasoning to which assessments of theoretical rationality apply. Relatedly, one can mark the distinction by appeal to reasons of the wrong kind (Hieronymi, 2005; Way, 2017): That a demon will pay me one million dollars if I start believing that Wednesday is the day after Monday is a reason of the wrong kind for this belief; correspondingly, a reasoning pattern to the belief from the premise that the demon will pay me one million dollars is not a good pattern of theoretical thought.

A final important feature of the reasoning view is that it has to account for the defeasibility and weight of reasons. For a sound pattern of reasoning towards φ -ing is a reasoning pattern that results in justified φ -ing, but normative reasons are typically *pro tanto* – that there is a reason doesn’t guarantee that φ -ing would be justified. Several solutions to the problem have been suggested (Asarnow, 2017; Pakkunainen, 2017; Setiya, 2014; Silverstein, 2016; Way, 2017). One solution appeals to the different strengths with which good transitions of thought move a subject to their conclusions. If one of two good patterns of reasoning towards incompatible conclusions, both of which are available to a subject, would move her to its conclusion more strongly than the other, then its premises are the weightier reasons. Another proposal relies on the defeasibility of reasoning patterns: While it is good reasoning to move from a certain set of mental states to a conclusion, it may be bad reasoning to move from the set *plus* an extra premise to the same conclusion. But if patterns of reasoning are defeasible in this way, then it is no surprise that their premises are merely *pro tanto* reasons. At any rate, accounting for the difference between rebutting and undermining with only the materials provided by patterns of reasoning is a major challenge. I assume in the following that the reasoning view can meet this challenge.

With this characterization of the view in place, let me now introduce my two counterexamples.

3 | COUNTEREXAMPLE (I): REASONING TO INTENTION AND ACTION

According to the reasoning view, if an agent reasons, via a sound pattern of reasoning, from true beliefs and fitting intentions to an appropriate intention or action, then the contents of her beliefs are normative reasons to act accordingly. My first case is a counterexample to this conditional.¹⁰

Wedding Anniversary

It’s Peter and his husband Bob’s wedding anniversary tomorrow. Every year, Peter gives Bob ten red roses as an anniversary gift. Otherwise, neither of them has any interest in flowers, but this is their wedding anniversary tradition. In the evening, Peter goes out and gets extremely drunk. When he wakes up hungover the next morning, he has forgotten about the anniversary, but suddenly it hits him: ‘I’m going to go to the florist’s today!’ I.e., he finds himself intending to go to the florist’s and so comes to believe that he intends to go to the florist’s. Via inference to the best explanation, he then correctly infers from the fact that he intends to go to the florist’s to the true proposition that today is his and Bob’s wedding anniversary.¹¹ His belief that today is their wedding anniversary, together with his standing intention to give Bob ten red roses for their wedding anniversary every year, moves him to form the intention to give Bob ten red roses today. He executes this intention by going to the florist’s, buying and then giving ten red roses to his husband – his reasoning terminates in this action.

Here’s Peter’s reasoning pattern:

(1) B: I intend to go to the florist’s today.

- (2) B: The best explanation of (1) is that today is our wedding anniversary.
 (3) B: So, today is our wedding anniversary.
 (4) I: I will give Bob ten red roses for our wedding anniversary every year.
 (5) I: So, I will give Bob ten red roses today. (Peter executes the intention by giving Bob ten red roses today.)

According to the reasoning view, (1) is a normative reason for Peter to give Bob ten red roses today. For the reasoning pattern starting with (1) and terminating in (5), Peter giving Bob ten red roses today, is a good reasoning pattern. First off, the abductive transition from his belief (1), that he intends to go to the florist's today, to his belief (3), that it is their wedding anniversary, is a good one, which enables Peter to figure out today's significance. Second, the sub-pattern from (3) and Peter's standing intention (4) – to give Bob ten red roses for their anniversary every year – to intending (5) – to give Bob ten red roses today – is also a good pattern. It allows Peter to transform his general standing intention (4) into a concrete, directly action-guiding intention (5), which is conducive to his realizing his general intention. This sub-pattern is an instance of good *instrumental* or means-end reasoning: Peter's giving Bob red roses today is a necessary means to pursuing his end of giving Bob red roses for their wedding anniversary every year; by such instrumental reasoning, Peter can correctly move from his fitting intention (4) to his fitting intention (5). Thus, the sub-pattern is good practical reasoning.¹²

Peter's transition terminates in the formation of an intention and corresponding action. So it can indeed be practical reasoning in that it is productive, or leads to a change in mental states. The reasoning pattern takes Peter from fitting attitudes (1) – (4) to a fitting intention/action (5). He manifests his inferential abilities, and it is appropriate for him to take his reasons to support his concluding belief and intention/action (cf. Boghossian, 2014). In particular, Peter's believing (3) really justifies his intending (5): In light of Peter's belief that it is their wedding anniversary today, it is reasonable for him to form the intention to give Bob ten red roses today. So this is *good* and moreover *sound* reasoning.¹³

To sum up, the first and the second sub-pattern are both good patterns. Together, they manifest Peter's sensitivity to his situation, to his practical reasons and to what they favor, but also his practical-inferential capacities: They move him to act appropriately, to give Bob roses for their wedding anniversary. So, the overall pattern is plausibly a sound pattern of practical reasoning.¹⁴

However, (1) is no normative reason for Peter to give Bob ten red roses today; it does not count in favor of this action. For the favoring in this situation really happens the other way around: The fact that

- (6) receiving ten red roses as an anniversary gift will make Bob happy

is a reason, in the first instance, for Peter to give him the roses today; and since going to the florist's is a necessary means for Peter to give Bob the roses, (6) is also a reason for Peter to go to the florist's – his reason to give Bob the roses today is *passed on* to his action of going to the florist's. More controversially, one can maintain that the fact that Peter intends to give Bob roses is a normative reason that counts in favor of his going to the florist's. I will grant this here.

The general principle my claim relies on is that, where φ is an end action that an agent intends to perform for a good reason and ψ is a means action that she needs to perform so as to perform the end action, the fact that the agent intends to φ is a reason for her to ψ , or at least her reason to φ is passed on and becomes her reason to ψ . This is highly plausible: If an agent has a reason to pursue an end, she thereby also has a reason to perform the necessary means action (cf. Kolodny & Brunero, 2018). However, in the other direction, this isn't true. If an agent's only reason (to intend) to ψ comes from the fact that she pursues the end of φ -ing, to which ψ -ing is a necessary means, then the fact that the

agent intends to ψ cannot return the favor, so to speak. The intention of performing the means action cannot in its turn favor pursuing the end, given that its own favored status is entirely derived from what the end has going for it.

In the example, going to the florist's is a mere means to giving Bob roses, and there is nothing else to be said for it. Peter's only reason (to intend) to go to the florist's today comes from his intention to give Bob the roses today, either because his intending this is his reason to go to the florist's, or because Peter's original reason to give Bob the roses – (6) – is passed on as the reason for him (to intend) to go to the florist's. Given this, the fact that Peter intends to perform the means action cannot, so to speak, pass back normative 'oomph' to the end action from which it gets all of the favoring that is backing it, via the pertinent means-end relation. It cannot favor Peter's action of giving Bob roses today. So, that Peter intends to go to the florist's today is not a reason for him to give Bob ten red roses today.

One way to make this point very clear is to imagine further that Peter is aware that the only roses he could give to Bob are flown in from Kenia, where they are grown by underpaid workers under horrible conditions. Peter considers whether he has all-things-considered reason to give Bob roses today. In this situation, it doesn't make sense for him to think, 'Whatever else counts against giving Bob the roses, at least the fact that I intend to go to the florist's today is a reason for me to give him roses.'

Peter cannot *weigh* the fact (1), that he intends to go to the florist's today – as a reason to give Bob the roses – against reasons that speak against giving Bob the roses. It's not even that (1) has no weight compared to reasons against giving Bob the roses; rather, it is unclear what it would be to weigh it against them. I briefly touched upon this point above: The reasoning view has to account for the weight and the weighing of reasons; if it predicts that the subject has a certain reason to φ , and another reason not to φ , it has to be intelligible what would be involved in weighing them against each other. For instance, we can understand what it would be for Peter to weigh the fact that the roses were grown under horrible conditions against the fact (6), that receiving them would make Bob happy, in deciding whether to give them to Bob today. If (1) were a reason for him to give Bob the roses, we should be able to make sense of weighing this fact in the same way. Since this is not possible, (1) is not a normative reason to give Bob the roses today. (Here's a less ambitious way of putting this: The reasoning view implies that there are some reasons to φ which *apparently* cannot be weighed against other reasons to φ ; at a minimum, this settles its proponents with the burden to provide a plausible account of how they can be weighed.)

Overall then, in cases like Wedding Anniversary, agents use true, believed premises in good practical reasoning towards an intention or action, but these premises are not all normative reasons for them so to intend or act. So not all premises of good practical reasoning are normative reasons – by claiming that they are, the reasoning view overgenerates normative reasons. Note that the problem for the reasoning view is not limited to somewhat contrived cases like Peter's, in which the agent *actually* draws the relevant inference. What matters for the reasoning view is the availability of such a good pattern of reasoning. Whenever an agent believes that she intends to perform a certain means action, and this is best explained by a certain fact which, together with a standing intention, can appropriately move her to form an intention to perform a pertinent end action, such a good pattern of reasoning will be available. At least in cases in which performing the means action is favored only by her pursuing the end, it will nonetheless not be the case that all her premises are normative reasons for her to pursue the end.

4 | COUNTEREXAMPLE (II): REASONING TO SUSPENSION OF JUDGMENT

Let's turn to the second counterexample, *White Christmas*, which shows that the following conditional, to which the reasoning view is committed, is not true: If a proposition q is a premise of good theoretical reasoning towards suspending on p , then q is a normative reason to suspend on p .

White Christmas

Reliable weather forecast website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas, whereas reliable weather forecast website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas. In response to these conflicting forecasts, Haya believes, first, that website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas and she believes, second, that website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas. Reflecting on her beliefs leaves her unsettled on the issue – i.e. it terminates in her suspending on whether there will be a white Christmas.

I follow Friedman (2013; 2017) in assuming that suspension is a question-directed attitude – in my view, the attitude of being unsettled with respect to a question.

Here is Haya's reasoning pattern:

- (7) B: Website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas this year.
- (8) B: Website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas this year.
- (9) S: So, will there be a white Christmas this year?

Haya's reasoning is an instance of a sound pattern of reasoning towards suspension of judgment: There are two pieces of evidence of equal strength, the first indicates that p and the second indicates that not- p . A subject possesses these pieces of evidence by fittingly (i.e. truly) believing them, and no other evidence that bears on whether p . So, her evidence doesn't settle whether p , and correct reasoning takes her to suspending judgment on whether p . Haya's reasoning correctly takes her from premises (7) and (8) to suspension (9). The reasoning view is thus committed to claiming, first, that (7) is a reason for Haya to suspend on whether (9). Second, it is committed to claiming that (8) is a reason for Haya to suspend on whether (9).¹⁵

However, reliable testimony that p – such as the forecast of a reliable weather forecast website – is a reason to believe that p rather than suspending on whether p . Reliable testimony that p is evidence that p – it raises the probability that p for the subject. Generally, if a fact q is evidence that p , then q is a *pro tanto* reason to believe that p . So reliable testimony that p is also a reason to believe that p .¹⁶ Next, if q is a reason to believe that p , it is a reason to believe that p rather than suspending on p (cf. Snedegar, 2017), since belief and suspension are mutually exclusive attitudes. The fact that q (here: reliable testimony that p) is therefore not a reason to suspend on whether p .¹⁷

In the example, if we include (8) in Haya's body of evidence, adding (7) raises the probability of the target proposition, that there will be a white Christmas this year, to just about .5. Still, (7) is evidence that there will be a white Christmas. For by taking (7) out of Haya's body of evidence, the probability that there will be a white Christmas decreases even further – and vice versa, by adding (7), the probability is raised. Moreover, only if we count (7) as evidence can we make sense of the fact that Haya weighs evidence pro and contra the target proposition in coming to suspension. So, (7) is evidence that, and thus a reason to believe that, there will be a white Christmas this year; it is not a reason to suspend on whether there will be a white Christmas.

This, then, is my second counterexample to the reasoning view. In cases like White Christmas, which involve sound patterns of reasoning from balanced evidence concerning p to suspension on whether p , both the individual pieces of evidence supporting p and those supporting not- p show up as premises. But neither the individual pieces of evidence supporting p nor the individual pieces of evidence supporting not- p are normative reasons to suspend on whether p . Like Wedding Anniversary, White Christmas does not rely on the prevalence of actual processes of reasoning from individual pieces of evidence to suspension. It is sufficient that a subject has beliefs which provide all-things-considered balanced evidence concerning p , for then there will be a sound pattern of inference to suspension on whether p , and the reasoning view is committed to the – false – claim that the content of each individual premise belief is a normative reason to suspend on p . It will once again overgenerate normative reasons.

5 | FIRST RESPONSE: ADJUSTING PATTERNS OF REASONING

So much for the counterexamples. I now discuss two defensive strategies available to proponents of the reasoning view: They can on the one hand meddle with how exactly patterns of good reasoning are individuated; on the other hand, they can appeal to how the notion of a normative reason is carved out. I start with the first strategy, denying that the relevant tracts of reasoning are instances of good reasoning patterns to the relevant response.

Focus first on Wedding Anniversary. Peter's reasoning involves as a sub-conclusion the belief (3), that today is their wedding anniversary, from which (together with standing intention (4)) Peter moves to (5), intending and executing his intention of giving Bob roses today. In light of this, one might think of Peter's reasoning as falling into two separate patterns: A theoretical pattern from his belief (1), that he intends to go to the florist's today, to his belief (3), that today is their anniversary, and a practical pattern from belief (3) to – (5) – intending to/giving his husband roses today. But then the fact (1), that he intends to perform the means action (going to the florist's today), is merely an epistemic reason for Peter to *believe* (3), that it's their wedding anniversary today, not a practical reason for him to – (5) – *give* his husband roses today. On this proposal, Peter's only practical reason for giving Bob the roses as an anniversary gift is the fact (3), that it's their wedding anniversary today.

Similarly, in White Christmas, it might be argued that my representation of Haya's reasoning left out a crucial sub-conclusion: Really, we should think of her as reasoning from

(7) B: Website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas this year.

and

(8) B: Website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas this year.

to believing the sub-conclusion

(9*) B: So, website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas this year and website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas this year,

and from there to (9), i.e. to suspending on whether there will be a white Christmas this year. So, (7) and (8) are only unproblematic epistemic reasons to believe (9*). It is really (9*), which embodies the fact that Haya's evidence on the matter is balanced, that is her reason to suspend on whether there will be a white Christmas this year. The strategy, then, is to *cut tracts of reasoning more finely* than I have, viz. only ever *from premises to immediate conclusion*, so that the alleged counterexamples turn

out to involve reasons for earlier, unproblematic responses, thus avoiding the worry of overgenerating reasons.

The problem with this strategy is that it excludes facts from being normative reasons for a response which clearly *are* normative reasons for that response, i.e. it undergenerates normative reasons. Focusing on the practical side of things, means-end reasoning can illustrate this point:

Baking a Cake

Bob promised Peter he would bake a cake. Since they are out of flour, Bob needs to buy flour to do so (assume that this is the only way for Bob to acquire flour). Plausibly, in this scenario, that he promised Peter to bake a cake is a reason for him to buy flour – it favors his doing so.

That the fact that Bob promised Peter he would bake a cake is a reason for him to buy flour is supported by more than intuition. First, Baking a Cake involves a relative of instrumental reason transmission (Kolodny & Brunero, 2018), a widely accepted principle.¹⁸ Bob's end action – baking a cake – is favored by the fact that he promised Peter. Buying flour is a necessary means to the end of baking a cake. Bob's normative reason is then passed on from his end action to his necessary means action. So, Bob's necessary means action is also favored by the fact that Bob promised Peter he would bake a cake. Now instrumental reason transmission as it is standardly depicted merely states that if a subject has a reason to perform an end action, she has *a* reason to perform a corresponding necessary means action (cf. Kiesewetter (2017, p. 92) and the references cited there). This is weaker than the claim that the subject's reason to perform the necessary means action is the same as her reason to perform the end action. However, for the current argument to work, I merely need to assume that *sometimes*, an agent's reason to pursue an end is passed on to her necessary means action, and so becomes her reason for that action.

Second, this falls out of several views which are close relatives of the reasoning view. For instance, given that they are out of flour, that Bob promised Peter he would bake a cake reliably indicates and so is *evidence* that he ought to buy flour (Kearns & Star, 2009). And the consideration that he promised Peter can certainly help *guide* Bob correctly towards buying flour. Third, in the current scenario, if we were to ask Bob why he is buying flour, it would be appropriate for him to answer, 'I promised Peter I would bake a cake' – this fact is a motivating reason. But his promise to Peter is surely also something that his buying flour has going for it: If he hadn't promised Peter he would bake a cake, nothing (or not as much) would speak in favor of his buying flour. Fourth, the fact that he promised can be weighed against reasons not to buy flour. Assume that it's the end of the month and Bob is broke. This fact speaks against his buying flour. In making up his mind whether to buy flour, Bob will have to weigh it against the fact that he promised Peter he would bake a cake.

However, this fact is not an immediate premise of a pattern of reasoning towards Bob's buying flour; he cannot get directly from the fact that he promised Peter he would bake a cake to buying flour. Rather, Bob's relevant reasoning pattern goes like this:

(10) B: I promised Peter I would bake a cake.

(11) B: I ought to keep my promises.

This renders the first conclusion, which we can think of as an expression of Bob's intention to bake a cake:

(12) I: So, I ought to bake a cake.

Bob can make the next transition only with this intention in the picture, adding

(13) B: I can bake a cake only if I buy flour.

This results in the second conclusion,

(14) I: So, I am going to buy flour. (Bob executes the intention by buying flour).

If we cut reasoning patterns as finely as the current response suggests, then the fact (10) that Bob promised Peter to bake a cake comes out only as a reason for him (to intend) to bake a cake, but not as a reason for him to buy flour. That, however, would be to undergenerate normative reasons; and so cutting reasoning patterns more finely is not a plausible response on behalf of the reasoning view.

My opponent might now insist that there is a relevant difference between the means-end reasoning in *Baking a Cake* and the kind of reasoning exploited by *Wedding Anniversary*. The means-end reasoning in *Baking a Cake* is practical reasoning from beginning to end, whereas *Wedding Anniversary* starts with theoretical reasoning – viz. abductive reasoning from (1) to (3) – and transitions into practical reasoning (means-end reasoning) from (3) to (5). Abductive reasoning is theoretical reasoning governed by theoretical norms; means-end reasoning is practical reasoning governed by practical norms. So, we merely have to keep separate theoretical and practical tracts of reasoning; we then get for free that the corresponding epistemic reasons bear on epistemic responses such as (3), and that the corresponding practical reasons bear on practical responses such as (5). My worry about this response is that it presupposes a clear understanding of what distinguishes practical from theoretical reasoning (and practical from theoretical norms), but that matters are not so clear in this case.

First, practical reasoning may be pinned down as a kind of reasoning that leads to intention or action, whereas theoretical reasoning issues in belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment, and the corresponding norms are norms that govern such reasoning. But this does not help, since the reasoning in *Wedding Anniversary* (just as in *Baking a Cake*) issues in intention and action. Second, the distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning (and norms) may be drawn on the basis of their constitutive aims (Silverstein, 2016, p. 6–8), e.g. by identifying practical reasoning as reasoning that aims at the most pleasurable, or otherwise best, course of action and theoretical reasoning as reasoning that aims at the truth. Or third, it might be drawn by appeal to paradigmatic instances of both kinds of reasoning. *Wedding Anniversary* involves abductive reasoning, which is paradigmatically theoretical, not practical reasoning, and thus gives rise to epistemic reasons for epistemic responses. As an anonymous reviewer suggests, one may, fourth, bring in a relative of Harman's (1976, p. 455) "minimality requirement", viz. the demand that in a mixed process of practical and theoretical reasoning, we should count as little as possible as an instantiation of a practical pattern, and as much as possible as an instantiation of a theoretical pattern. The motivation for this demand would be that "we normally want first to figure out what the world is like, and then, in light of that knowledge, decide what to do" (Bratman, 2009, p. 44).

The fourth suggestion faces the obstacle that it equally applies to *Baking a Cake*. If we are forced to start with theoretical reasoning wherever we can, we need to read the transition from (10) to (12) as a theoretical transition (and (12) as a belief about what Bob ought to do, not an intention). Then we are forced, again, to deny that the fact (10), that Bob promised Peter he would bake a cake, is a practical reason for him to buy flour – it is then only an epistemic reason for him to believe that he ought to bake a cake.

Regarding the second and third suggestions, while it is hard to deny that Peter's reasoning from (1) to (3) instantiates a theoretical pattern and that it aims at true belief, and that correspondingly (1) is an epistemic reason to believe that (3), this does nothing to show that the larger pattern – from (1) to (5) – isn't simultaneously a practical pattern. As cases of reasoning about intentions and unintended side-effects show, practical and theoretical reasoning can be inextricably intertwined. To borrow an

example from Bratman (2009, p. 42), imagine that a combat pilot keen on helping to win the war correctly reasons towards the conclusion that she is going to bomb the munitions factory and that she will thereby promote the war effort, but also destroy the nearby school. Taking seriously the distinction between the intended goal of an action and its unintended side-effects, the combat pilot's conclusion involves both an intention (to bomb the munitions factory and thereby to promote the war effort) and a belief about the unintended consequences of her action (that she will thereby destroy the nearby school). Correspondingly, this reasoning has both a practical and a theoretical aim, both hitting upon the best course of action and figuring out the truth about its side-effects. But then the reasoning is both practical and theoretical. By analogy, I submit, the reasoning from (1) to (3) serves both a theoretical and a larger practical aim, and instantiates both a theoretical and (part of) a practical pattern.

Broadening our focus, my opponent's argument is weakened by the fact that it is limited to the practical case. Even if she *can* motivate the needed delineation of practical versus theoretical reasoning, this doesn't begin to address White Christmas, which involves entirely theoretical reasoning. As part of a more general strategy, then, proponents of the reasoning view might try to accommodate Baking a Cake by insisting that one can construe a good pattern of reasoning *directly* from Bob's beliefs about keeping promises, his promise to Peter, and their lack of flour, to buying flour. If so, (10) is a reason for Bob to buy flour after all. True, but this is grist to my mill. For the strategy can then also be applied to my counterexamples: There is a good pattern of reasoning towards suspension of judgment that simply takes in different pieces of evidence individually and then comes to a noncommittal result, suspension. And we can surely construe a good pattern of reasoning directly from Peter's realization (1) that he intends to go to the florist's to giving Bob roses today. But then the reasoning view overgenerates reasons. On the other hand, as argued in the current section, if proponents of the reasoning view cut reasoning patterns more finely, they have to deny reason status to some clear instances of normative reasons (e.g. in Baking a Cake), and so they undergenerate normative reasons.

6 | SECOND RESPONSE: NORMATIVE REASONS AS FAVORERS AND AS GUIDES

In light of this, rather than adjusting their account of good reasoning, my opponents should instead focus on the notion of a normative reason and delineate it in such a way that the relevant premises of good reasoning come out as normative reasons to give the conclusion response after all. They can insist that the notion of a normative reason, rightly understood, is that of a consideration that guides, or might guide, a subject in good reasoning. Let me elaborate.

It is widely accepted that a normative reason to φ is a consideration that favors φ -ing. This goes not just for reasons primitivists such as Parfit (2011) or Scanlon (1998), but also for their opponents. Star (2018) thinks of normative reasons as reasons that provide justification or count in favor of relevant responses. Wedgwood (2015) concurs, as does Setiya (2007). Way (2017) and Pakkunen (2017) say that reasons (normatively) support the relevant responses. By contrast, Hieronymi (2005, 2011) explicitly replaces this understanding of reasons with one that takes reasons as considerations that bear on a question, such as the question whether to φ , or the question whether p . But even Hieronymi's view implies that some considerations bear positively on a question and others don't; and surely, the considerations that bear positively on a question will, in a sense, count in favor of giving a positive response to it. For example, that the child is drowning positively bears on the question of whether to jump in the lake. It supports the agent's giving the answer, 'jump!', and hence counts in favor of her responding to her situation by jumping in the lake.

This indicates that competing accounts of normative reasons share a common ground in terms of reasons as favorers, justifiers, or supporters of relevant responses. Proponents of different views about the nature of reasons do not presuppose completely disconnected notions of a reason and so do not talk past each other, but genuinely disagree. So, there is reason to assume that the debate starts from a shared, more or less pre-theoretical, notion of normative reasons as favorers. Against this backdrop, there are then competing ways to spell out in more detail what this favoring amounts to. As mentioned above, some philosophers focus on the role of reasons of *guiding* subjects in action and belief, while others emphasize the role of reasons of explaining the rightness or wrongness of action and belief.¹⁹ The first role of reasons has loomed large in this paper: It is the role of helping reasoners figure out what to do or to believe, of guiding them in deliberation, of being a premise of good reasoning. The second role of reasons has been emphasized by Broome (2013), for example, who holds that reasons are explanations of oughts. On this picture, certain facts fix what is the right thing to do for a subject, or what she ought to believe; these facts are reasons so to act or to believe. For instance, that the child is drowning explains why the agent ought to jump in the lake, and so is a reason for her to jump in the lake.

To turn this role distinction into a response to my counterexamples, proponents of the reasoning view can point out that the subjects in both examples are guided to appropriate responses by the considerations that I claim are not normative reasons for these responses. But if the subject is guided by them, and normative reasons are at bottom considerations that guide subjects towards appropriate responses, then the reasoning view doesn't overgenerate normative reasons in the alleged counterexamples; rather, these turn out to be unproblematic cases of genuine normative reasons. In Wedding Anniversary, the fact (1), that Peter intends to go to the florist's today, properly guides him to giving the roses to Bob today. So, (1) *is* a reason that favors his giving Bob the roses today. In White Christmas, Haya is guided correctly to suspending on (9) both by (7) and by (8). So, given that normative reasons are what guide us to giving appropriate responses, each of (7) and (8) *are* normative reasons to suspend on whether there will be a white Christmas this year.

The response amounts to biting the bullet. Wedding Anniversary relies on a plausible principle about the favoring relations between means and end, and on the capability of pertinent reasons to be weighed against each other. White Christmas relies on an equally plausible principle that evidence that *p* is a reason to believe that *p* rather than to suspend on whether *p*. The current response forces proponents of the reasoning view to deny these principles. They can try to mitigate the problem, especially with respect to White Christmas, by individuating normative reasons differently. *First proposal*: Asarnow's (2017, p. 617) phrasing of the reasoning view allows that it is not the individual premises of a tract of reasoning, but rather its premises all together that are the normative reason. Even though (7) and (8) are individual premises in Haya's reasoning towards suspension, then, we should think of her reason to suspend as all premises taken together: That website 1 predicts that there will be a white Christmas this year and that website 2 predicts that there will be no white Christmas this year. *Second proposal*: Neither (7) nor (8) taken in isolation is a normative reason to suspend on whether there will be a white Christmas this year. But (7) is a reason for Haya to suspend on this matter, *given that she believes* (8), and (8) is a reason for her to suspend, *given that she believes* (7).²⁰ These proposals seem intuitive and they fit well with the fact that, similarly, whether something is evidence for a certain proposition is a holistic matter, hinging on the subject's whole body of evidence.

I now respond to this attempt to minimize the worry about biting the bullet, starting with the first proposal. It commits my opponent to the claim that, if we're being exact, only the conjunction of all premises in a pattern of reasoning towards φ -ing is a reason to φ , and that calling individual premises reasons may be pragmatically fine, but that literally no individual premise is a reason to φ . This strategy comes with heavy costs, however. To begin with, it is an essential feature of reasons that they can

combine their weights. For instance, the fact that Bob will not speak to Peter all day if Peter doesn't give him the traditional roses for their anniversary additionally favors his going to the florist's. It adds up with fact (6), that receiving the roses will make Bob happy, and together they more strongly favor going to the florist's than either of them do individually. Now given that all these individual premises are part of the same chain of reasoning towards the action, and thus all elements of the same reason, which just has one weight, it seems that they cannot combine their individual weights in the described way.

Further, this proposal has problems accommodating enablers, disablers, intensifiers, and attenuators (Dancy, 2004). Say that due to his hangover, Peter has such a bad headache that he won't want to interact or talk much with Bob anyway. This attenuates, or weakens, one of his reasons to go to the florist's – the fact that Bob will not speak to him all day if he doesn't give him roses – and is not itself a reason to go to the florist's. We can picture Peter considering his reasons as he is trying to motivate himself to get up and go to the florist's: 'If I don't go there, I can't give Bob roses for our anniversary, and then Bob won't speak to me all day. Well, I have such a bad headache that I won't want to talk much anyway. But at any rate, giving him the roses will make Bob happy, so I really ought to get up ...' Both the attenuator and the attenuated reason are part of Peter's overall chain of reasoning, and so according to the current proposal, part of his reason to go to the florist's, but not literally distinct individual attenuator and individual reason. This is problematic: If a fact is an attenuator with respect to a reason to φ in a context, it is not thereby a reason to φ , or even part of a reason to φ (if anything, it might be a reason *against* φ -ing) – it simply does nothing to favor φ -ing.²¹

These may not be knockdown objections to the reasoning view. Its proponents may be able to somehow solve the problems and thus get the current proposal – identifying the normative reason for a response with a conjunction of all the premises of the relevant reasoning tract – to work. For the time being, however, these problems render the first proposal sufficiently unattractive to investigate whether the second proposal – any premise in a reasoning pattern is a reason only given the other premises in the pattern – is more promising. However, this proposal is not successful either, for it cannot address all counterexamples.

Modify White Christmas so that it involves an *insufficient* reason to believe: Two weeks before Christmas, Haya finds out, and believes, that

(7') Website 1 predicts that there is a 60 % chance that there will be a white Christmas this year.

This is her only evidence on the matter. It slightly raises the probability, and is thus weak evidence, that there will be a white Christmas. Though insufficient to justify the corresponding belief all-things-considered, (7') is an epistemic reason to believe that there will be a white Christmas this year, rather than a reason to suspend (cf. section 4). Yet given the insufficiency of her reason, it is all-things-considered justified for Haya to suspend on (9). Assume that she correctly reasons from (7') to suspension on (9). As this is a transition from one fitting attitude to another, in which Haya correctly responds to her reason, it is an instance of a good pattern of reasoning. (7') is then a premise of a good pattern of reasoning towards suspension that is not a reason to suspend.

Now the second proposal cannot get a grip on this counterexample. The suggested strategy relied on the idea that, given that Haya also believes (8), the claim that (7) is a reason to suspend sounds intuitive and unproblematic. However, in the current scenario there *is* no other belief that the proponent of the reasoning view can appeal to, given which the claim that (7') is a reason to suspend is intuitive and unproblematic. So this move cannot mitigate the problem.²² The take-home message is that it's not so easy to dispel the worry that appealing to reasons as good guides involves biting some major bullets.

Moving on, what are, more generally, the prospects of defending the reasoning view by appeal to the guiding conception of normative reasons? I concede that any consideration that favors a certain response is well-suited to guide an agent so to respond.²³ However, it is not clear that a consideration, just because it can correctly guide an agent in thought or action, thereby automatically favors the corresponding responses. Take the ‘guidance’ talk literally. Assume that I have business in Larissa. A signpost shows me the way to Larissa; but that doesn’t mean that it speaks in favor of my going to Larissa. What my trip to Larissa has going for it is the business I have there. This illustrates that there is a conceptual gap between (a) something helping a subject find direction on a certain matter and (b) this something favoring going in that direction.

Moreover, there is a natural picture of reasons and reasoning on which, in addition to normative reasons, non-favoring considerations are allowed to be guides: Some facts about a subject’s situation favor her responding in a certain way; they are fit to contribute to the justification of her response. But typically there are *further* facts that the subject can use to figure out what to do or believe. In her deliberation, she can make use of the favoring facts themselves in figuring out how to respond, but she can equally legitimately use these further facts. In some situations, she may be unable to directly access the favoring facts, but still get a handle on how to respond by relying on *clues*. This is the case in Wedding Anniversary – Peter is initially unable to grasp what to do in his situation, but mere clues, such as (1), that he intends to go to the florist’s, enable him to find out which action is favored for him.²⁴ In other situations, facts about the subject’s situation can be used as premises of good reasoning even though they are not themselves the subject’s normative reasons, but *partly constitute* her reason. Here, all the premises in a pattern together may be constitutive of the subject’s reason to give the pertinent response; nonetheless, none of the premises individually is to be identified as a reason for the response. This is the case in White Christmas – Haya’s reason to suspend on (9) is that her evidence is balanced, a fact which is constituted by the individual premises of her reasoning, (7) and (8). Similarly, in the modified White Christmas, her reason to suspend on (9) is that her evidence is insufficient, and this fact is partly constituted by (7’). This picture is weaker than the view of normative reasons as good guides, in that it does not commit to the claim that good guidance suffices for being a reason.

In light of this alternative picture, the burden is on the proponent of the reasoning view to provide an argument that closes the gap between guiding and favoring. Star (2015, ch. 2) tries to get from guidance to favoring as follows.²⁵ He allows that some facts are right-makers, and calls these “fundamental reasons”. Additionally, any guiding consideration is a reason in that it has *authority* to which the reasoner is justified to subject herself; and a guiding consideration has such authority just in case, if the reasoner’s response accords with it in a way that is not irrational, she will best conform with fundamental normative reasons. That is to say, reasonably taking the guiding consideration as a proxy for more fundamental reasons that apply to her, the reasoner will be more successful at doing what these reasons favor than if she were to try to respond to them directly. And so the guiding consideration is genuinely authoritative, i.e., a normative reason in its own right.

Star’s proposal is not convincing. There is no good fit between the normativity of authority and that of normative reasons. When a person, e.g. a judge or an expert, has authority in a certain domain, her authority is per default *decisive*. That she tells me that I have to φ (or that p) settles for me whether I ought to φ (or whether p). This is consistent with the possibility that such an authority can be overridden, for instance by a higher court or by disagreement of the majority of experts. Let’s grant for the sake of argument that good guides are normative reasons. Even granting this, good guides don’t have authority, but rather have *pro tanto* normative force. When a normative reason favors φ -ing, this is one contributing factor regarding the issue of whether I ought to φ . This is a feature of normative reasons generally (Dancy, 2004, ch. 2), but is especially plausible for good guides: E.g., that the newspaper

reports that people are starving in Eastern Africa may be one point in favor of donating to Oxfam, but it typically won't by itself settle the matter. Further, authorities issue directives, statements that function as a kind of commands and that have imperative content which tells me directly how I ought to respond. Good guides, by contrast, do not have imperative content, nor do they issue (in) directive or imperative statements. Rather, in a given context, good guides are non-normative or descriptive facts that (I am granting) shine a positive light on the relevant action, on the basis of which agents can then infer what they ought to do. The normative features of authority neither capture how good guides guide us, nor do they provide a good template for the normativity of reasons.

There are two lessons from this discussion: First, good guides as such do not have authority. Second, and as a consequence of this, Star's account cannot explain how good guides acquire normative reason-hood. The account therefore does not discharge the burden of closing the gap between guiding and favoring. As long as the reasoning view doesn't deliver on this, the weaker alternative picture is preferable. That there is good reason to let oneself be guided by premises of good reasoning doesn't show that these premises themselves are normative reasons.

What I hope that my discussion has brought out is that the concepts of guidance and of favoring are not as tightly connected as the current strategy requires. If you wish, you can take counterexamples (i) and (ii) exactly as illustrations of this fundamental point. More directly, this result puts pressure on the biconditional incorporated by the reasoning view. For if there is a conceptual gap between favoring and guiding, and if the reasoning view tries to analyze normative reasons as good guides, then the reasoning view is false.

My opponents can respond to this allegation by insisting that *their* notion of favoring just is one of good guidance. But if so, then – contrary to what I have claimed above – there is no unitary concept of a normative reason, and the debate about the nature of normative reasons turns out to be a merely verbal dispute. Wedgwood (2015) makes exactly this claim; and I think he is right that this result would be detrimental to all parties involved. Taking a different tack, one might defend the reasoning view by conceding that the analysis of favoring in terms of guidance by premises of good reasoning fails, but that this is not the core of the view anyway. The distinct explanatory claim is of philosophical interest in its own right, and it is independent of whether we can analyze reasons as premises of good reasoning. Against this move, note that the counterexamples cause trouble for the explanatory claim as well. For if it is really the good guidance provided by a fact (its role as a premise of good reasoning) that fully explains why it is a normative reason, then we should expect that this explanation works for any guiding fact (for any premise of good reasoning) – any premise of good reasoning towards φ -ing should be a normative reason to φ . But as the counterexamples show, there are some premises of good reasoning that are not normative reasons.²⁶

In the end, then, the strategy of adjusting the notion of a normative reason to match the premises of good reasoning can only be upheld if one is willing to allow that normative reasons are not essentially favorers, but instead good guides. As this is an unattractive result, proponents of the reasoning view should not employ this strategy. So, my counterexamples show that normative reasons cannot be analyzed as premises of good reasoning, and moreover that we cannot fully explain why certain facts are normative reasons by appeal to the role as premises of good reasoning.

7 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

I started with the platitudes that in reasoning, we consider our reasons; and that where deliberation results in an action or belief, we act or believe for the reasons that we took into account in reasoning. The reasoning view takes these platitudes seriously and turns them into an analysis of normative reasons

as premises of good reasoning, and into an explanatory claim, according to which the normativity of reasons is due to their role as premises of good reasoning.

I have tried to show that, to the contrary, some of the considerations we take into account in reasoning towards a certain response are not normative reasons so to respond, and so that the reasoning view overgenerates reasons. As I have argued, some premises of good reasoning are clues to the agent's practical situation, which she can use to figure out what to do. Others are partial constituents of her normative reasons. In my discussion of possible responses on behalf of the reasoning view, I brought into the limelight a possible rift in the philosophical conception of normative reasons. As against the initial appearance of a common ground supplied by the notion of favoring, there is cause to worry that those who defend a conception of favoring that comes down to good guidance understand favoring in a way that is completely disconnected from the understanding of those who take favoring as a primitive (and I haven't even touched on views that analyze favoring as right-making).

This possible rift has not often been explicitly discussed in the debate over normative reasons,²⁷ even though it underlies some disagreements that have been a focal point of recent discussion, such as the argument between those who understand reasons as explanations of oughts, on the one hand, and those who define reasons as evidence of ought propositions, on the other. I have only been able to touch upon this briefly in the current paper, but I hope that my discussion here may help to move the focus of the debate towards this important issue.

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ENDNOTES

¹ I assume here that the reasoning view is a theory of both practical and epistemic reasons.

² The picture of normative reasons as good guides will become central in section 6.

³ Or to be precise, I will argue that for some considerations that are no reasons *for a certain response*, the reasoning view is committed to claiming that they are reasons for that response.

I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting the 'overgenerating'/'undergenerating' terminology.

⁴ Views in the neighborhood of the reasoning view are held by Williams (1981), Gibbons (2010), and Gregory (2016). I list Setiya as a proponent of the reasoning view although he does not endorse the claim that reasoning is fundamental to reasons. Seeing as my argument addresses the attempt to analyze normative reasons as premises of good reasoning, Setiya's view is rebutted by it as well. Paakkunainen (2017) endorses only the conditional from being a reason to being a premise of good reasoning.

⁵ By contrast, Asarnow (2016, p. 157, p. 174) claims that, in addition, e.g. the fact that the agent desires to φ may be a reason to φ , even if this is not believed by her. For the sake of simplicity, I do not discuss this complication here.

⁶ I assume here that sound practical reasoning may involve intentions or desires as its starting points, and that it may conclude in an action or intention. Silverstein (2016, p. 9) diverges from this – he takes practical reasoning to be reasoning that concludes in *beliefs* about which action best achieves the substantive aim of practical reasoning. My counterexamples cause trouble whatever the details.

⁷ A response is fitting when it meets the standard of correctness for this kind of response. For example, a belief is fitting when true, an intention is fitting when permissible (McHugh & Way, 2016a, p. 13).

⁸ Some proponents of the reasoning view emphasize that a reason for a subject presupposes her actual practical situation – while she does not need to have the beliefs involved in a reasoning pattern, she has to at least have the non-doxastic

mental states that are the starting points of the pattern. This is to ensure that we are not dealing with an account of normative reasons that appeals to idealizations of the subject (Setiya, 2014).

- ⁹ But isn't there a *different* good reasoning pattern from the fact that people are starving in Eastern Africa directly to donating to Oxfam? On the picture that practical reasoning takes the agent from an intention or desire and a means-end belief to acting, the fact doesn't directly connect to action – it is neither itself an intention or desire, nor a means-end belief. A similar case – and the issue of how to individuate patterns of reasoning – will be central to section 5.
- ¹⁰ I have deployed a similar counterexample against Kearns and Star's (2009) 'reasons as evidence' view. Cf. my (2017).
- ¹¹ Assume that Peter would go to the florist's under no other circumstances.
- ¹² The sub-pattern takes Peter from a universal intention (on every F occasion, I will φ) and a belief about a particular occasion (today is an F occasion) to a particular intention (I will φ today). And we can think about the sub-pattern as activating, or making occurrent, a dispositional intention. I don't have the space to discuss these facets of the sub-pattern here.
- ¹³ I thank an anonymous reviewer for insisting I present a clear case of good reasoning, and Thorsten Helfer for discussion.
- ¹⁴ Here's a similar scenario that may be closer to the everyday experience of some of my readers. Imagine you are an absent-minded philosophy professor. Towards the end of the semester one of your students enters your office. When he sees the confused look on your face, he tells you that you had told him to come to your office today. Based on his testimony, you infer that you intended to meet him today. Given that he is a student from one of your seminars, and that the semester is drawing to a close, the best explanation of your intention to meet him is that you intended to give him advice on his final paper. In consequence, you intend to do so, and you actually give him advice on his final paper. This is a sound pattern of practical reasoning, which enables you to respond appropriately despite your poor epistemic access to your practical situation. For the reasoning view, the fact that you intended to meet the student today comes out as a normative reason for you to give him advice on his final paper. I thank Wolfgang Spohn for suggesting this case.
- ¹⁵ Interestingly, Titelbaum (2019) uses cases with a similar structure against the reasons-first view.
- ¹⁶ Note that this is not the strong claim that all reasons bearing on doxastic attitudes are corresponding evidence, which I do not endorse (Schmidt, manuscript) and which has recently been criticized (e.g. Littlejohn, 2013; Skorupski, 2011). In particular, the conditional connecting evidence and reasons is compatible with non-evidential reasons to believe or to suspend.
- ¹⁷ Analogous claims are true for reliable testimony that not- p and belief that not- p . I leave it to the reader to fill in the details.
- ¹⁸ Several counterexamples have been raised against transmission principles (e.g. Kolodny, 2018); however, they are typically treated as puzzles for a phenomenon that is difficult to deny, not as attempts to refute transmission principles generally.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Wedgwood (2015), Star (2018). Thanks to Susanne Mantel for pressing me on this issue.
- ²⁰ Titelbaum (2019) suggests that proponents of the reasons-first view could adopt such a strategy in response to the counterexamples put forth by him.
- ²¹ Similar problem cases can be constructed for enablers, disablers, and intensifiers.
- ²² The counterexample causes further problems for the first proposal. Since this is a one-premise inference, there is no conjunction of premises that is intuitively a reason to suspend.
- ²³ See e.g. Paakkunainen's (2017) arguments for this claim.
- ²⁴ Similarly in surprise party cases, an agent can pick up on indirect clues and do what her reasons favor (go to the surprise party) without having access to these reasons themselves, particularly without awareness of the fact that there is a surprise party.
- ²⁵ Wedgwood's (2015, p. 127) appeal to the fact that an ideal agent would be persuaded by a good pattern of reasoning is not available to the reasoning view, which does not appeal to an idealized agent. Silverstein's (2016, p. 16) proposal that the normativity/authority of reasons is inherited from the *soundness* of good reasoning is not fully convincing

either: The mere fact that a response is the result of sound reasoning seems to be too thin to account for the substantive favoring going on especially in the case of morally required responses.

²⁶ Here is how this would play out in terms of grounding: That p is a normative reason to φ is entirely grounded in the fact that p is a premise of good reasoning towards φ -ing (assumption). Grounding carries metaphysical necessity (Bliss & Trogdon, 2016). So, necessarily, for any p , if p is a premise of good reasoning towards φ -ing, then p is a normative reason to φ . But in counterexamples (i) and (ii), a fact is a premise of good reasoning, but not a normative reason for the relevant response. So, the assumption is false. The normative reason-hood of reasons is not entirely grounded in their being premises of good reasoning.

²⁷ But see Wedgwood (2015).

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