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### Self-Knowledge and the First-Person<sup>1</sup>

It is a familiar view in the philosophy of mind and action is that for a thought or attitude to constitute a reason for an action is for it to render intelligible, in the light of norms of rationality or reason, that action. However, I can make sense of your actions in this way by crediting you with attitudes that I myself do not hold. Equally, you can do this for my actions. So not all reasons for one's actions are one's *own* reasons. What more is involved in a reason's being one's own reason for acting?<sup>2</sup>

Two key elements seem to be crucial. First, the rational intelligibility of the action must be *from the agent's point of view*. The agent must herself be capable of viewing that thought or attitude *as* a reason for her to act. Second, and relatedly, the agent must be *motivated* by that reason to act in accordance with it.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, I want to explore the role that the first element plays in a thought's or attitude's being one's own reason for acting. Specifically, I want to get clearer on what it is for an agent to have her own point of view on her thoughts and other attitudes in such a way as to provide her with her own reasons for acting. In order to do this, I need to focus on another, closely related question: what is it for one to know one's thoughts and attitudes *as* one's own?

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was read at a conference in Utrecht on Reasons of One's Own, in May 2001. I am indebted to the participants of the conference and to the other contributors for very helpful discussion and comments, and in particular to Jonathan Dancy and Graham Macdonald. I am also indebted to Tyler Burge for extended comments on the paper, which, in many cases, but I am sure not all, I have addressed. I thank Maureen Sie, Marc Slors, and Bert van den Brink for their patience in allowing me time to complete the paper for publication.

<sup>2</sup> One obvious response to the question is: one's own reasons are those that causally influence one's actions. Why isn't this sufficient? Burge's view, with which I agree, is that one's own reasons play a special epistemic role in justifying, evaluating, criticizing and adjusting one's attitudes as well as the actions effected by them.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I am taking reasons to be internal reasons in the sense articulated by Bernard Williams (see "Internal and External Reasons", in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1981), where an internal reason is an element in her "subjective motivational set" (p. 102) which "can contain such things as dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects, as they may be abstractly called, embodying commitments of the agent." (p. 105).

I want to try to motivate the view that an adequate answer to this question requires some kind of ‘bottom-up’ internalist epistemology of self-knowledge; one that derives the epistemic warrant or justification for self-knowledge from considerations that are located in the mental states of subjects that lead them to form their second-order beliefs (namely, the contents of prior beliefs and experiences).<sup>4</sup> I will attempt this by considering one very powerful and highly influential argument for an answer to the question that assigns no role to such an epistemology, recently developed in a number of works by Tyler Burge.<sup>5</sup> I will

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<sup>4</sup> Second-order beliefs can be characterised as beliefs that [I X that  $p$ ], for some attitude  $X$  and some propositional content  $p$ , and where  $p$  is first-order ( $p$ 's being first-order can then be defined in terms of the absence of epistemic operators). I have explained in the text what I mean by a ‘bottom-up’ epistemology. It contrasts with the kind of epistemology that is the focus of Burge’s accounts of epistemic entitlement, which is ‘top-down’. A ‘top-down’ epistemology, at least as Burge envisages it, is one that locates the source of epistemic warrant for such knowledge in the role that it plays in constituting the rational agent. (Future references to these positions will drop the scare quotes.) Although my commitment here is to an internalist bottom-up epistemology of self-knowledge, the distinction between a top-down and a bottom-up epistemology of self-knowledge is not in general the same as that between an externalist and an internalist one. One might give an explanation of the source of the justification or warrant for self-knowledge in terms that are not generally available to subjects, say, for example, in terms that refer to the mechanisms that reliably causally generate their first-order beliefs, and the mechanisms responsible for reliably causally generating second-order beliefs from first-order ones. Such an explanation might be both bottom-up in locating the source of warrant for self-knowledge in the factors concerning the reliability of the mechanisms causally responsible for generating second-order states from first-order ones and epistemically externalist. Again, Burge’s account of the source of justification in particular cases of self-knowledge involving what he calls the *cogito*-type cases (ones in which one is thinking currently consciously thinking about a thought with a given propositional content while thinking that very thought and where the latter constitutes the subject matter of the former) is epistemically internalist but not bottom up (since the first-order thought literally forms part of the second-order thought about it. Burge (“Reason and the First-Person”, in C. Wright, B. Smith, and C. Macdonald (eds.), *Knowing Our Own Minds*. Oxford: Oxford University press, 1998, pp. 243-70) thinks that the reliability of psychological mechanisms is relevant to the question of our warrant to self-knowledge, but is not the source of that warrant. So, although his account of our epistemic warrant or entitlement to self-knowledge is in a certain sense externalist, it is ‘top-down’ rather than ‘bottom-up’. When a person forms a belief, through the exercise of one of her basic epistemic faculties (perception, memory, testimony), she is *prima facie* entitled to that belief. The reason is that, from an informed external point of view, she has acquired her belief by exercising a reliable faculty, one whose employment enables her to acquire true beliefs about facts that she would otherwise be unable to acquire. The difference between Burge and other epistemic externalists is that, for him, the epistemic faculties that we are inclined to trust from the first-person point of view are ones that we are entitled to trust *because* they constitute us as rational agents. It is this that is the source of our entitlement to self-knowledge, and makes his account a ‘top-down’ one, in contrast to a ‘bottom-up’ one such as Christopher Peacocke’s (see his “Entitlement, Self-Knowledge and Conceptual Redeployment”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96 (1996), pp. 117-58).

<sup>5</sup> See his “Content Preservation”, *Philosophical Review* 102 (1993) pp 457-88, “Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96 (1996) pp. 91-116, and “Reason and the First Person”, in *Knowing Our Own Minds*, *op. cit.*

argue that Burge's own answer is incomplete – and incomplete in a way that makes space for, and helps to motivate, a 'bottom-up' internalist epistemology.

Having done this, I will turn to the question of what it is for an agent to know her reasons as her own, a question that Burge does not explicitly consider, and argue that an account of what it is to know one's reasons as one's own requires, but is not exhausted, by an account of what it is to know one's thought contents and attitudes as one's own. What more is required is an account of what is involved in being sensitive to, or feeling the 'pull' of, reasons that is so important to their motivational status. Burge's own treatment of knowing one's thoughts and other attitudes as one's own appeals to a notion of 'intellectual experience' (by which he means: intellectual understanding of instantiations of intentional contents along with their 'I' components). But this appeal actually encourages a 'bottom-up' internalist epistemology of knowledge of one's own reasons. The issue up for discussion here is not whether an epistemology of self-knowledge is needed at all. It is whether a top-down internalist epistemology of the sort that Burge advances suffices for an account of rational motivation. I shall argue that it does not.

In section 1 below, I briefly outline the structure of Burge's arguments for (a) our entitlement to self-knowledge of thought contents and attitudes, and (b) our entitlement to knowledge of them as our own. I then identify some important features of these arguments that will figure in subsequent sections of the paper. Section 2 develops the argument for a 'bottom-up' internalist epistemology of self-knowledge of thought contents and attitudes as one's own, in which the first-person perspective plays a central role. Section 3 argues that an account of the motivational status of reasons essential to rational thought and action encourages an epistemology of this kind.

### Section 1.

We think that certain sorts of thoughts or judgements involved in self-knowledge are epistemically special. They are special at least in that they are epistemically immediate,

not based on inferences from anything else. When I think: it's raining outside, and head for my umbrella, I know that I am thinking that it's raining in this immediate kind of way.

This feature of epistemic immediacy characterises the so-called *cogito*-like cases; ones in which subjects are currently consciously thinking about a thought with a given propositional content while thinking that thought. However, most judgements involved in self-knowledge are non-inferential in the sense that we typically have no justifying argument or evidence backing them up. I typically know, and am in a position to judge, what I believe, and that I believe it, without appealing to argument or evidence. According to Burge, the immediate relation that holds between thinkers and certain of their own thoughts not only characterises cases in which one is currently consciously thinking a thought and reflecting on it (the so-called *cogito*-like cases), but characterises most thoughts or judgements involved in self-knowledge.

It is tempting to think that the source of this epistemic immediacy lies in some kind of special relation that thinkers bear to their own thoughts when they are reflecting on them, based on some sort of 'inner observation', which others do not and cannot share. Knowledge of others, it might be thought, is based on inferences from observations of their behaviour, and so is not immediate. But in one's own case, there is no need for inferences of this (or any other) kind. One can simply *perceive* one's own thoughts while thinking them, 'run through' them in one's head.

One reason why we might be tempted to think in this way is that we have a deep intuition that subjects are at least sometimes authoritative with regard to knowledge of certain of their own thoughts.<sup>6</sup> We think that this makes for an asymmetry between self-knowledge and knowledge of others, where there is no presumption of authority. Further, we think that the privileged position subjects occupy with regard to knowledge of their own

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, this is not the only one, since one needn't suppose agents are authoritative in order to appreciate the asymmetry. The asymmetry is apparent just from the mode of access: irrespective of whether I am right or wrong about what believe, for instance, I acquire my beliefs about my beliefs on some basis that is necessarily different from the basis on which you

thoughts is no mere courtesy of interpretation by others.<sup>7</sup> We think that there is a genuine epistemic difference between self-knowledge and knowledge of others, one that grounds the presumed asymmetry. Appealing to the idea that introspection provides subjects with privileged access to certain of their own thought contents and attitudes is a natural way of attempting to explain the special epistemic position subjects enjoy with regard to certain of their own thoughts. And introspection is naturally viewed as a kind of ‘inner observation’.

However, Burge maintains that this way of thinking is fundamentally mistaken. His claim is that the source of the special epistemic status of thoughts or judgements constituting self-knowledge lies in ordinary reason, and not in any mechanism relating a thinker to an observed or sensed object (and so not in any perceptual or quasi-perceptual relation). Perceptual experiences may, and probably do, figure in the *acquisition* of most contents, and so in the acquisition of thoughts containing them. But it doesn't follow that such experiences figure in the epistemic *warrant* subjects have for knowledge of their thought contents. This distinction between acquisition and warrant is crucial to Burge's position.

His key idea is that our warrant or entitlement to self-knowledge is broader than justification in that it does not consist in reasons or evidence that we need bring explicitly to bear on our beliefs and judgements. The entitlement consists simply in functioning in an appropriate way in accordance with norms of rationality or reason, and it has two sources. One is the special role that such knowledge plays in critical reason and reasoning. The other is the special (“constitutive”) relation between judgements involving self-knowledge

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<sup>7</sup> For interpretationist accounts, see, for example, Donald Davidson, "First Person Authority", *Dialectica* 38 (1984), pp. 101-111, and "Knowing One's Own Mind". *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 60 (1987), pp. 441-58; Daniel Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987); and Richard Moran, "Interpretation Theory and the First Person", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994), pp. 154-173, "Self-Knowledge: Discovery, Resolution, and Undoing", *European Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1997), pp. 141-61, and *Authority and Estrangement* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

and their subject matter, or truth, or between one's judgements about one's thoughts and those judgements' being true. Here, in brief outline, is the argument.<sup>8</sup>

Critical reasoning involves critically assessing, evaluating, adjusting and correcting one's putative reasons *as* reasons, rather than merely as thought contents. It involves the ability to employ reason and reasoning to assess and criticise the reasonableness of reasoning itself. So critical reasoning is reasoning that is under the rational *control* of the reasoner.<sup>9</sup>

One cannot bring under one's rational control something of which one is unaware. In order for reasons to be under the rational control of the reasoner, then, she must normally be knowledgeable about her thoughts. She must know the contents, but also the attitudes, since critical reasoning is not just concerned with evaluating propositional connections, but also concerned with confirming, adjusting, and correcting attitudes.

So control over one's reasoning requires knowledge of one's attitudes and contents. But it also requires that the relation between one's judgements or thoughts about one's thoughts and those judgements' /thoughts' being true be constitutive: it cannot be one that could fail to hold. If it could, then reflection could add nothing to the reasonableness of critical reasoning. But reflection *does* add something to this process. Crucially, it brings one's attitudes under the rational control of the thinker.<sup>10</sup> This constitutive, or non-contingent, relation between the subject matter and the truth of one's judgements /thoughts about one's thoughts is the second source of subjects' entitlement to self-knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See "Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge".

<sup>9</sup> Because exercises of rationality require voluntary control, it might be thought that, in general, rationality does not apply to beliefs or desires *per se*, but rather to such voluntary attitudes as accepting and rejecting. This point connects with remarks in section about the motivational force of reasons requiring not just knowledge, but also endorsement of, one's thought contents and attitudes.

<sup>10</sup> "Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge", p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> One might ask here: why, other than to purchase an easy victory over scepticism? Further, one might ask whether this talk of one's judgements being constitutive of their truth leads to a radical relativism and failure of objectivity. Won't the follower of counter-induction or the inveterate affirmer of the consequent be able to judge that those inferential processes are rational and so render it true that they are rational? After all, the irrational can reflect on their processes, judge them rational, indeed 'prove' them rational using those very methods, e.g., produce unsound soundness proofs for unsound systems (thanks to Alan Weir for discussion on this). Perhaps Burge's claim about the constitutive relation between judgements about one's

One might wonder how, if judgements/thoughts about one's thoughts are constitutively related to their subject matter, one could *ever* be mistaken about one's judgements about one's first-order attitudes and contents. Certainly, in the case of the *cogito*-type thoughts, where one is currently consciously thinking about one's thought while thinking that very thought, and where that thought forms the subject matter of one's current conscious thinking, one *cannot* be mistaken. Self-knowledge in these cases is infallible. However, in cases of standing beliefs, whose contents (along with their 'I' components) are not instantiated in current conscious thinking, one can be mistaken, and in these cases such knowledge as is constituted by one's thoughts about such beliefs is defeasible by evidence. In the former sort of case there is both knowledge and first-person authority, in the latter case, there may be self-knowledge, but there is no first-person authority. Moreover, in these latter sorts of cases, the supplementary entitlement needed will go beyond the entitlement that is grounded in critical reasoning. It will involve reference to some underlying mechanism responsible for generating second-order states from first-order ones, and there will be a question of how or whether that mechanism is reliable, and so will involve empirical elements.

It seems that, for Burge, critical reasoning involves *cogito*-type states. In critical reasoning, one subjects one's own thoughts and other attitudes to critical evaluation, assessment, and adjustment, and does so by currently consciously thinking those thoughts/attitudes while thinking about them. Thus, there is an intimate connection between being a critical reasoner, and thinking thoughts about one's own thoughts where the relation between those thoughts and their subject matter is constitutive - the two sources of our entitlement to self-knowledge. In order to be a critical reasoner, one must employ thoughts of this kind, and these thoughts necessarily constitute knowledge.

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thoughts and their subject matter or truth is only intended to apply to the *cogito*-type cases, and not to judgements about one's inferential processes. But this seems wrong, given his view that in particular cases one can know with absolute certainty that one is reasoning correctly. These issues are taken up in section 3 below.

However, *cogito*-type thoughts or judgements comprise only a small class of states that constitute self-knowledge. Many thoughts, such as thoughts about one's standing beliefs, are such that the relation between them and their subject matter is not constitutive. In these cases the entitlement that comes from being a critical reasoner will not suffice to guarantee self-knowledge.

Burge argues that, in critical reasoning, self-knowledge must take a distinctive, non-observational (non-empirical) form. The reason has to do with the constitutive connection between one's judgements about one's thoughts and those judgements' being true (i.e., the constitutive connection between such judgements and their subject matter). If all of one's self-knowledge were observational, the connection between reflection and thought reflected upon would rest on a 'brute (or 'unreasoning') contingency' (a merely causal connection). Systematic error would be possible. But this is incompatible with the role that critical reasoning plays in *guiding* one's evaluations, adjustments, and corrections of reasons. That role requires that a single point of view be involved in critical reasoning, so that such reasoning is capable of giving the reviewer reason, from the point of view of the review, to adjust or correct the thought reviewed. If all of self-knowledge were like observation, agents would have an estranged perspective on their first-order thoughts; they wouldn't take facts about their first-order states to be directly relevant to their self-control and governance in immediately moving them to act. And if this were to happen, the rational connection between self-ascriptions and first-order thoughts wouldn't hold – the former would not give the agent direct reasons to change the latter.<sup>12</sup> In short, our second-order or reflective beliefs and judgements about the nature and contents of attitudes in the first-person case are warranted simply because of our nature as critical reasoners. Because of this nature, we are a priori entitled to knowledge of the form, *that attitude is the thought (belief, desire, etc.) that p*, where *p* is some propositional content.

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<sup>12</sup> "The attitudes reviewed would be to the reviews as physical objects are to our observational judgements. They would be purely 'objects' of one's inquiry, not part of the perspective of the inquiry." "Our Entitlement to Self Knowledge", p. 110.

Burge extends this argument to include our entitlement to what he calls the first-person concept - our entitlement to knowledge of our thoughts and judgements *as* our own. His argument has the consequence that we are apriori entitled to add to knowledge of the form, *that attitude is the thought that p* knowledge of the form *and that attitude is mine*.<sup>13</sup> As in the case of knowledge of one's contents and attitudes, the warrant or entitlement that one has for knowing one's thoughts *as* one's own is not based on a perceptual or quasi-perceptual acquaintance either with a self, or with one's own thoughts.

According to the argument, to fully understand the notion of a reason, to fully appreciate a reason *as* a reason, requires possession of the first-person concept. This concept has a very special function: it marks the fact that certain contents and attitudes are *directly* relevant to producing beliefs and actions; that they immediately move one to implement them. Without that concept, one cannot appreciate the distinction between reasons that are one's own and reasons that belong to others. And without that appreciation, one cannot be *moved* by reasons and reasoning, and understand (i.e., conceptualise) what it is to be moved in this kind of way.<sup>14</sup> But full understanding of the concept of a reason requires appreciation not just of its role in rational evaluation, but also of its motivational force. And, according to Burge, one cannot appreciate the latter without appreciating the force of reasons in one's own case, and conceptualising it. In order to do that, one must actually be moved by reasons, and one must have the first-person concept.

Just as being a competent critical reasoner implies knowing one's contents and attitudes, being competent with the 'I' concept implies knowing one's attitudes and contents as one's own. So the argument for our entitlement to knowledge of our reasons *as* our own goes like this:

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<sup>13</sup> See "Reason and the First-Person". I owe this way of putting the point to Laura Schroeter.

<sup>14</sup> It seems obvious that if I lack the first-person concept I can't appreciate the distinction between my reasons and those of others. But it is not obvious that without that concept I also could not be moved by reasons. Very young children, highly autistic children, higher animals can all be motivated by desires, for example, though they might lack the first person concept. But Burge can concede this: his idea is that they could not be *rationally* motivated, since they are not fully critical reasoners.

1. Reasoning is necessarily governed by evaluative norms that provide standards of good and bad reasoning.
2. In order to fully understand reasons and reasoning (or the concept of reason), it is not enough to understand in the abstract the concepts of good reason and bad reason. This is because reasons not only evaluate but also have force; they move one to act.
3. Also, in order to fully understand reasons and reasoning, it is not enough to understand that they have force. One must understand this *in one's own case*. And again, not simply in the abstract: one must actually employ reasons in affecting judgements and other actions, and to understand this.
4. One cannot apply reasons in one's own case and understand this application without the first-person concept. For, if one understands this fully, one recognises oneself as an agent.

A crucial move in the argument is made in premise 3, where it is claimed that full understanding of the notion of a reason and reasoning requires *actually* employing reasons and reasoning in thought and action. It seems right to say that without the first-person concept, one cannot appreciate the distinction between reasons that are one's own and reasons that belong to others. But why, in order to fully understand the notion of a reason and reasoning, must be 'immediately moved' to implement them - why isn't it sufficient that one understand in the abstract that reasons have force in one's own case?<sup>15</sup> And what is involved in being 'immediately moved' to implement one's reasons? It cannot be that one is immediately moved to *act* – it must be that one feels the force of such reasons' impact on one's attitudes and contents.

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<sup>15</sup> It is also unclear why one needs the first-person concept to be able to do this. Suppose that I exist in a solipsistic world. In that case I might have no need for a concept whose function is to mark out certain thought contents and attitudes as mine. But I might nevertheless be capable of implementing, and being immediately moved by, my thought contents and attitudes.

Evidently, it isn't sufficient to understand in the abstract that reasons have force in one's own case because one cannot fully understand the motivational force of reasons, and so the notion of a reason itself, unless one actually feels their force:

*Understanding* what a reason is, is partly understanding its motive force, as well as its evaluative norms. To understand reason and reasoning, this force must be operative in one's own case; and one must conceptualise its implementation.<sup>16</sup>

The point here is not merely one about what is required for a subject to be moved by reasons, since infants and higher animals might be moved by, e.g., desires. It is one about what is required for a subject to be *rationally* moved by reasons. One can't be rationally moved without understanding the motivating force of reasons. And one can't really appreciate this force without being able to distinguish one's own point of view from the point of view of others. There are two reasons for this. The first concerns the system-dependence of having reasons. A reason may motivate me, but not another, to act because my background beliefs and other knowledge differs from that other. So I can't really feel the motivational pull of reasons in my own case unless I can distinguish my background beliefs and knowledge from those of another. The second concerns the fact that I can only affect another's attitude by force or persuasion, indirectly, by means of other practical premises. But this is not so in my own case. So, in order to feel the motivational force of reasons, I need to be able to tell which ones are mine.

These two features mark the immediacy of reasons in one's own case, and so mark the distinction between one's own point of view and the point of view of another. Why must reasons at least sometimes move one immediately (i.e., without inference) to implement them in thought or action? They must on pain of *regress*. In actual reasoning, one cannot always require a further premise or reason for implementing a reason, or one could never implement a reason. But the implementational aspect of a reason is essential to its being a reason.

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<sup>16</sup> "Reason and the First-Person", p. 251.

Burge claims that the distinction between cases where in reasoning and evaluating attitudes or acts under rational norms one is immediately motivated to implement them and cases where this is not so is knowable a priori:

We can also know apriori how to conceptualise and recognise instances where implementation is immediately incumbent, and understand wherein these instances are relevantly different from cases where an evaluation of attitudes does not rationally demand immediate implementation of the evaluation on the attitudes being evaluated.

Such knowledge is apriori in that its warrant or justification is apriori: it derives from understanding or some other cognitive process, rather than from sense experiences or perceptual beliefs.<sup>17</sup>

What is the relation between the motivational aspect crucial to knowing one's reasons as one's own, and the first-person perspective crucial to knowing one's reasons as one's own? It seems that, for Burge, the motivational aspect depends on and derives from the first-person perspective. Being immediately moved by reasons requires knowing how to distinguish cases where reasons are one's own and cases where they are not. Recognising and marking ownership of ones thought contents and attitudes as one's own constitutes the basis of such motivation.

## Section 2

Burge's arguments for our entitlement to knowledge of our thought contents and attitudes and our entitlement to knowledge of our thoughts and attitudes *as* our own have

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<sup>17</sup> Thus, he says, "A justification or entitlement is *apriori* if its justificational force is in no way constituted or enhanced by reference to or reliance on the specifics of some range of sense experiences or perceptual beliefs." ("Content Preservation", p. 458) The difference between justification and warrant or entitlement is that, in the former case, the force consists in reasons that a subject can explicitly bring to bear on the practice or belief. In the latter case, the warrant may not even be accessible to the subject. Burge claims that one can in this way know apriori of the existence of certain particulars, specifically mental ones: "This conception of apriority allows that one can know apriori of the existence of particulars – for example, particular mental events – if one's justification or entitlement is intellectual, not sense-perceptual. For

the same form. Both depend on the claim that it is in our nature to be critical reasoners. The claim is that we could not reason critically if we did not normally know our thought contents and attitudes and if we did not fully understand the notion of reason and reasoning in our own case. Burge takes these arguments to show that we have an apriori, but *defeasible*, warrant to self-knowledge and to the first-person concept.<sup>18</sup> And its epistemic status as a warrant consists in the fact that it plays an essential role in critical reasoning, and being a rational agent.

There might seem to be something missing in this account of how one knows one's thought contents and attitudes, and knows them as one's own. If what one is looking for is an explanation of the sub-personal mechanism or causal process by which we acquire or arrive at justified self-attributions of the form: I think *p*, Burge hasn't provided one. But then he makes it quite clear that this is not the issue he is interested in:

Let me emphasise that the issues here have to do with the nature of the epistemic warrant, not the mechanism that makes the knowledge possible. Of course, we need perception to hear or see words. So we need perception to understand speech emanating from another mind. That is *how* we do it. This *is* a difference between knowledge of other minds and knowledge of one's own. For one normally does not need perception to know one's own thoughts. But these points concern the mechanism of knowledge acquisition, not in my view, the nature of our epistemic warrant – justification or entitlement.<sup>19</sup>

The claim here is that the psychological causal mechanism responsible for generating knowledge of one's own attitudes is not part of what warrants self-attributions.<sup>20</sup> Warrant is

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example, I think that one knows apriori, in this sense, *cogito*-like thoughts." ("Reason and the First-Person", p. 264)

<sup>18</sup> See "Reason and the First-Person", p. 264, n.14, and "Content Preservation". Also, see "Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge", p. 104, n. 8: "There is no recipe for ensuring that our judgements are immediate or that they are about the relevant class. There is no internal recipe for avoiding error."

<sup>19</sup> "Reason and the First-Person", p. 264. Also, p. 246.

<sup>20</sup> However, Burge's point that the way in which we acquire knowledge of our own thoughts and knowledge of the thoughts of others concerns "*how* we do it" does not and is not intended to show that it is not of epistemic importance. Consider, by way of analogy, perceptual knowledge. The way in which we

effected by the role that self-knowledge and the first-person concept play in explaining our nature as critical thinkers, specifically, the role that beliefs about one's attitudes play in accounting for that nature. Burge locates the issue of the acquisition of self-knowledge in the account of the psychological mechanism that generates such beliefs. He is not interested in the details of that mechanism. For, in the *cogito*-type cases at least, where one's first-order thought is literally a constituent of one's second-order thought about it, there is no such mechanism. And, in other cases of self-knowledge, such as knowledge of one's standing beliefs, although there is such a mechanism, its details and reliability form no part of the entitlement that springs from being a critical reasoner, but are due to a supplementary warrant. Even in this case, though, knowledge of the reliability of the mechanism is not a condition on self-knowledge. Its reliability is to be determined by whether it issues in appropriate - rational - thought and behaviour, from an informed external point of view.<sup>21</sup>

How, then, do we know that we are good reasoners - that our psychological mechanisms are reliable and that we can trust them to lead us to think and act in accordance with the norms of reason? It might seem that Burge is claiming that we can tell that we are good reasoners on the basis of evidence from what we actually think and do. But this is implausible given his view that our warrant to self-knowledge and the *I* concept is apriori.

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acquire knowledge of objects in the mind-independent world can and often does make a difference to the status of such knowledge. Testimonial knowledge is in general epistemically less secure than knowledge of what is visually present before one. Knowledge acquired by inference is less secure than knowledge that is not based on inference. That some perceptual knowledge is less secure than other such knowledge does not by itself threaten its status as knowledge. But it can, and often does, threaten its status as privileged. Similarly, how we acquire self-knowledge and how we acquire knowledge of others may, and I think does, make a difference to the epistemic status of such knowledge.

<sup>21</sup> Thus, for example, he says,

“I am inclined to think that it is a *conceptual* necessity that there be *causal* relations in perception. But for purposes of my argument, the fundamental feature is that the entitlement to observational beliefs necessarily rests on some pattern of brute, contingent, non-rational relations between observed and observer, regardless of whether the contingent relations are causal. It is common to my view and the opposed observational view of self-knowledge that in many of the cases under dispute, there is a causal mechanism that relates attitudes to judgements about them. What is in dispute is the nature of the epistemic entitlement that one has to such judgements, not the existence of a psychological mechanism. On the simple observational model, our entitlement to self-knowledge always rests partly on the brute, contingent, non-rational causal relations.” (“Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge”, p. 106, n. 12)

Nor does it seem right to say that we know apriori that we are good reasoners – by knowing that the concept of a good reason just is the concept of what we are inclined, on reflection, to be motivated by to think or do. For our inclinations can lead us astray, and our warrant is defeasible in particular cases. In any case, it threatens to rob the notion of reason of its objectivity by making it too agent-relative, something that Burge would not want to allow. For the follower of counter-induction, or the inveterate affirmer of the consequent might be able to judge that those inferential processes are rational and so render it true that they are rational, if these judgments are part of the process of critical reasoning.

It seems that Burge's view is that we cannot *prove* to ourselves that we are good reasoners, but we can do more than just actively commit ourselves to a policy of being sensitive to reasons and reasoning with a certain amount of optimism that it will issue in success.<sup>22</sup> In critical reasoning, we understand our own reasoning, and this alone gives us justification for our standing as critical reasoners. We can know in particular cases, by engaging in such reasoning, that we are reasoning well.

Fundamental to this position is a sharp distinction between the psychological mechanism that generates second-order attitudes from first-order ones, on the one hand, and entitlements to one's self-ascriptions, on the other. But one could agree that there is some such distinction and still think that there is a question of justification that isn't being addressed. Burge's account of our warrant to self-knowledge and to the first-person concept tells us what role self-knowledge and the *I* concept play in constituting a rational agent. This can be viewed as an attempt to defeat a kind of global scepticism about self-knowledge. But it cannot help defeat doubts that arise in particular cases about whether one can trust one's belief-forming mechanisms to lead to correct second-order attitudes, and to lead one to think and act in accordance with the norms of rationality. Burge may give us a sound epistemic policy to follow, but it is difficult to see how this can help reassure us in

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<sup>22</sup> Thus, he says, "... understanding reason entails some optimism and commitment regarding the possibility and effect of reason in one's thinking". ("Reason and the First-Person", p. 257). I am indebted to Laura Schroeter here.

particular cases, cases where doubts can and do arise about whether one is reasoning correctly. The account has the consequence that one cannot support one's self-ascriptions through explicit reasoning.

The ability to reassure oneself in particular cases and the exercise of it matters because this is where one's epistemic responsibility for one's second-order thoughts gets a hold and impacts on one's other attitudes and actions. It is reassurance in the particular cases that supports the general view that one is *right* to rely on one's reasoning to produce beliefs and other attitudes that conform to the norms of rationality and reason. That one is right is a fundamental part of Burge's view that subjects are epistemically responsible for their second-order attitudes. But the *sense* that one is right is essential to one's taking on responsibility in particular cases of critical reasoning and action. Further, the motivational aspect of *reasons* depends on subjects' appreciation of this epistemic responsibility in particular cases.<sup>23</sup> So reassurance in the particular cases matters not only to the sense that one is right to trust one's psychological mechanisms, but to one's being an epistemically responsible agent and to one's ability to be motivated to implement certain of one's own thoughts and other attitudes as reasons.

Burge claims that we can know in particular cases that we are reasoning well just by understanding our own reasoning that we are critical reasoners. But cases like those mentioned above – of the follower of counter-induction, and the inveterate affirmer of the consequent – are ones where critical reasoning is taking place, but whose subjects are under an illusion in thinking, judging, that they are reasoning well. These subjects are not non-rational; they are not failing to exercise reason, nor are they incapable of reflecting on their own first-order thoughts and reasoning processes. So, there is a question here, not of *whether* one can know in particular cases, but *how* one can know in such cases that one is reasoning correctly and well. The need for an answer to this question is one motivation for

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<sup>23</sup> In the normal case – since, in certain cases, e.g., ones of akrasia, one might be motivated by reasons one thinks are not responsible, or fail to be motivated by reasons one thinks are responsible.

a bottom-up, internalist epistemology; a source to which one can appeal for reassurance, in cases of doubt, that one has indeed reasoned correctly.

Critical reasoning must involve thoughts that are *cogito*-like, but even if it involves only thoughts of this kind, and even if these thoughts are infallible, this would not by itself suffice to provide assurance in particular cases where doubt arises about whether one is reasoning correctly or well, since this concerns the moves that a reasoner makes from one thought to another. And if critical reasoning involves thoughts of other kinds, thoughts about one's standing beliefs, for example, or about one's thoughts at an earlier time, then doubts of another kind can arise; doubts about whether one's judgements about one's own intentional states are even true. Here a different kind of worry about whether one has reasoned correctly arises, since a causal process connecting two thoughts is involved.

Suppose that I am sitting in a library, and am trying to re-capture a train of thought which seemed to me at the time to constitute a decisive argument against a particular philosophical position. I am doing so in order to re-consider whether the argument is after all as decisive as I had earlier thought. Not having written it down, I need first to try to reconstruct it in thought. At various stages in the reconstruction process, I doubt whether I have recaptured the right thought. I ask myself, did I think that *p* here in the argument, or was it that I thought that *q*? Here the entitlement that has its source in critical reasoning will not help me. Why? Because even if the thoughts I am having right now are ones that I know, and know infallibly because they are *cogito*-type thoughts, the knowledge question that is pressing is whether these thoughts *match* the ones had earlier, and match them in the right order. And that question is left entirely open. But there does seem to be a way that I might try to decide the matter, and that is by working my way up from earlier thoughts that I have already placed in the argument. Here it looks as though I might be able to reassure myself by coming to *see*, as it were, that it was the thought that *p*, and not the thought that *q*, that came next in the argument, by engaging in a bottom up internalist process.

But there is also another process going on in this situation to consider, since I am not just trying to reconstruct a train of thought I went through earlier. I am also trying to decide whether that train of thought – which we can now suppose I have successfully re-captured – really does constitute an argument that is as decisive as I thought it was. I think it through again. I begin to doubt that it is decisive; in fact, I begin to doubt whether I have reasoned correctly at all. Will mere understanding of the thoughts I am having, and/or going through this process of reasoning now, suffice here to reassure me that I am indeed reasoning correctly? No, and for the same reason that was given three paragraphs back: I might be an inveterate affirmer of the consequent, or follower of counter-induction. Even supposing the process here to involve *cogito*-type thoughts, I cannot reassure myself just by knowing those thoughts in virtue of understanding them, and by reasoning.

It may be that nothing could provide the kind of reassurance that is sought after when doubt arises in the second stage of reasoning envisaged in my example. But the point is not something could; it is that, despite what Burge says, mere understanding and knowledge of one's thoughts when reasoning in particular cases, and mere understanding of one's own reasoning, is not sufficient to dispel doubts that arise in particular cases about whether one is reasoning correctly or well, even when those cases involve *cogito*-type thoughts.

What about the kind of reassurance that is sought after when doubt arises in the first stage of reasoning envisaged in the above example? Here the problem is that the thoughts involved in the process of re-constructing the original argument may or may not match the ones had at an earlier time, since this depends, at least in part, on the accuracy of my memory. Here Burge would agree that the entitlement or warrant that comes from critical reasoning is not sufficient to dispel doubts that arise at this stage of the reasoning process. But this is just where there is a need for a bottom up epistemology of self-knowledge, and where such an epistemology can do some real explanatory work.

Burge's account doesn't actually conflict with a 'bottom-up' internalist one, since it is possible for there to be more than one warrant or justification for an attitude, but he isn't interested in it.<sup>24</sup> This is because what is at issue for him is combating global scepticism with regard to self-knowledge, not accounting for how potential defeaters can come to be defeated in particular cases where doubt arises. As he says, in the *cogito*-type cases, there can be no such defeaters. But since there can and often are such potential defeaters in particular cases other than the *cogito*-type ones, his is not the only issue at stake.

On Burge's behalf we might ask: in the non-*cogito*-type cases, why can't I account for the fact that I am in a better position with respect to knowledge of my own thoughts than others are, and that I need to be in that better position in terms of the facts that (1) the mechanism that subserves self-attributions is more reliable than the mechanism that subserves attributions to others, and (2) this mechanism is more important to my functioning as a rational agent than the mechanism that subserves the interpretation of others? And why can't I account for the fact that the first-person point of view plays a genuine epistemic role in answering the question of how one knows one's thoughts in a way that others do not by saying: of course there is a mechanism that makes one sensitive to the fact that some thoughts emanate from oneself rather than from other people. Why isn't that enough to explain what it is for one to have one's own point of view on one's thoughts and attitudes?

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<sup>24</sup> For a 'bottom-up', internalist accounts, see Sydney Shoemaker, his "On Knowing One's Own Mind", *Philosophical Perspectives 2: Epistemology*. (California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1988), "Qualia and Consciousness, *Mind* 100 (1991) pp. 507-24, and "Self-Knowledge and Inner Sense", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LIV (1994), pp. 249-314. His view that although one normally does not need to go through any explicit reasoning process to be warranted in knowing one's own thoughts, it is necessary to that warrant that one be able to go through such a process in a particular case. See also Peacocke's account of epistemic entitlement (in "Entitlement, Self-Knowledge and Conceptual Redeployment", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 96 (1996), pp. 117-158) for a different account, based on a causal but rational (because reason-based) relation between perceptual beliefs and perceptual experiences with non-conceptual content. Cynthia Macdonald's "Externalism and First-Person Authority", *Synthese* 104 (1995), pp. 99-122, and "Externalism and Authoritative Self-Knowledge, *Knowing Our Own Minds*", ed. C. Wright, B. Smith, and C. Macdonald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 135-54) provides another account.

The answer here has to do, not with the difference between a top-down and a bottom-up epistemology, but with the difference between an epistemically internalist justification and an epistemically externalist one. The argument here is that, in order to reassure oneself in particular cases, ones in which doubt does arise as to whether one knows one's own contents and attitudes, it is important that one be able to explicitly reason one's way from one's first-order beliefs and other attitudes to one's second-order ones. This is precisely because one's entitlement to self-knowledge *is* defeasible in particular cases. This reassurance is critically important because the sense that one is right is what makes agents epistemically responsible for their reasons and reasoning.

### Section 3

In the last section I argued that Burge's account does not explain how it is that knowledge of one's thoughts and other attitudes as one's own makes one epistemically responsible for them. Why do I emphasise the *contents* of the attitudes here, since Burge's focus is on our ownership of them? The reason is that the special kind of awareness of the *contents* of one's attitudes that is marked by possession of the first-person concept (and with it awareness of such contents *as* contents of attitudes that are one's own) is essential to the sense of control and responsibility that – by Burge's own lights – is constitutive of a reason. One cannot have control over, and claim ownership of, thoughts whose contents one does not know, and know as one's own.

However, this knowledge is not sufficient by itself to explain what it is to know one's reasons as one's own. One needs to understand how one's awareness of ones attitudes as one's own can confer control over them in such a way as to transform them into rational motivators of action. At the very least, awareness must be coupled with *endorsement*. When I endorse my thought contents and attitudes in self-avowals of the form 'I believe that *p*', I commit myself to things standing a certain way. I openly acknowledge that, however else the world may be, it is not an open question for me whether

*p.*<sup>25</sup> I do not endorse all of my thoughts and attitudes, even when I know them and know them as my own. On the contrary, many of the thoughts that I have are ones that I do not endorse, although I am perfectly aware that they are my own. Think, for example, of fleeting thoughts, speculations, memories, daydreams, and beliefs when not currently consciously entertained.

Mere knowledge of one's thought contents and attitudes as one's own, then, does not thereby constitute endorsement of them. To endorse one's thought contents and attitudes is at least to acknowledge epistemic responsibility for them. In cases of schizophrenia, for example, patients remark that they are undergoing thoughts that have been 'inserted' in them, which they do not 'own'. These patients are plainly aware of their thoughts and contents, and they in some sense do know that these thoughts are their own, in that they are able to introspect them, and recognise them as thoughts that they are undergoing. But they do not *experience* them as their own. And because they do not, they are not prepared to claim ownership over, and epistemic responsibility for, them.<sup>26</sup> In these cases it seems right to say that there is indeed a dissociation between the point of view of the reviewer and the point of view of the thought reviewed which leads to a failure of endorsement of the thought. But there is no lack of knowledge of the thought as one's own.

So, besides endorsement, a further requirement seems to be that one in some sense 'experiences' one's own thought contents and attitudes as one's own. And in fact Burge's own explanation of how it is that one knows one's reasons as one's own seems to require this further element. He appeals to the notion of "intellectual experience" in accounting for them. Thus, when arguing that there is no asymmetry between one's entitlement to self-knowledge and one's entitlement to knowledge of others, he says,

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<sup>25</sup> For more on this see Richard Moran, "Self-Knowledge" Discovery, Resolution, and Undoing", *Op. Cit.*, and *Authority and Estrangement*, *Op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Nicolas Georgieff and Marc Jeannerod, "Beyond consciousness of External Reality: A "Who" System for Consciousness of Action and Self-Consciousness", *Consciousness and Cognition*7

One's entitlement to believe in other minds can depend for its justificational force on intellectual understanding of instantiations of intentional content – intellectual 'experience' – rather than sense-perceptual experience.<sup>27</sup>

Further, he takes this experience of the force, or 'pull', of reasons to be essential to self-knowledge of them.

This notion of 'intellectual experience' is plainly critical to Burge's appeal both to the importance of the role of the first-person point of view in knowing one's thought contents and attitudes as one's own and to the importance of the motivational aspect of reasons in critical reasoning. It encourages a kind of bottom-up internalist epistemology of self-knowledge of thoughts and others attitudes as one's own of the kind argued for at the end of Section 2.

An epistemology of this kind – one that derives the epistemic warrant or justification for self-knowledge from considerations that are located in the mental states of subjects that lead them to form their second-order beliefs (namely, the contents of prior beliefs and experiences) - need not be committed to there being some kind of epistemic intermediary, such as a process of inference, between first-order and second-order states involved in self-knowledge. In other contexts, I have argued that the kind of epistemology needed is one that focuses on the notion of direct epistemic access.<sup>28</sup> As Burge notes, there is a kind of epistemic immediacy that is characteristic of many cases of self-knowledge, specifically ones involved in critical reasoning. There may be no need for an explanation of this in the *cogito*-type cases, although I myself think that the fact that they are self-verifying does not by itself explain their epistemic immediacy. There does seem to be a need for an explanation of this in other cases of self-knowledge, like the case described in Section 2 above.

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(1998), pp. 465-77, and Daniel M. Wegner and Thalia Wheatley, "Apparent Mental Causation: Sources of the Experience of Will", *American Psychologist* 54 (1999), pp. 480-92.

<sup>27</sup> "Reason and the First-Person", p. 268.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, "Externalism and First-Person Authority", and "Externalism and Authoritative Self-Knowledge", where the account is defended in detail.

My suggestion is that the notion of direct epistemic access at stake in these cases of self-knowledge can be best understood in terms that have a natural home in the epistemology of perception, while acknowledging that self-knowledge is not perception, and is in some fundamental ways quite unlike it. My view is that there are certain features of properties to which subjects have direct epistemic access that are both essential to them being directly epistemically accessible and also to mark them off from other sorts of properties to which subjects do not typically have direct epistemic access. One is that such properties are epistemically basic in that they are the fundamental and favoured means by which knowledge of the objects that have them is obtained. Another is that such properties typically *are* as they appear to be to normal subjects in normal circumstances. These two features are applicable to properties that fall into the broad category of observable, specifically, primary qualities such as being square, and secondary qualities such as being red, of objects of perceptual experience. But they are also applicable, I think, to contentful intentional properties in cases of self-knowledge involved in conscious reasoning. Here, in brief, is the argument.

Consider properties other than contentful intentional ones, where the notion of direct epistemic access is generally thought to apply. I know that the table visually present before me is brown, and that it is rectangular, and this knowledge is plausibly understood as being direct (although not baseless). One explanation of how I can know directly that the table is an instance of this particular shape property, or an instance of this particular colour property, is that the instance is presented to me *as* an instance of that property through my sense of sight. I perceive the instance *as* an instance of that property, and so no evidence is needed to come to know that it is an instance of that property.

This is not true of other properties. Water, for example, is an instance of the chemical structural property,  $H_2O$ , but this instance is not manifested to me as an instance of that property through one of my senses. In short, certain properties seem to be ones to which we have direct epistemic access because they are observable: whether objects are

instances of them can be determined just by unaided observation of those objects. This is not to say that one can know which observable property is being manifested to oneself on any one occasion just by being presented with an instance of it. One must be capable of recognising another instance of that property as of that property when presented with it on another occasion, and this requires one to have mastery of the concept of the relevant property. This means that the notion of direct epistemic access is intentional: in order for one to have such access to a colour property such as the property, *brown*, it is not sufficient that one sees an instance of the property. One must see it *as* an instance of that property.

Certain features of observable properties characterise their epistemic directness in a way that marks them off from other properties. One is that they are epistemically basic or fundamental to knowledge of objects that instance them. Another is that they *are* in general as they appear to be when instances of them are presented to normal perceivers in normal circumstances.

I think that these two features apply to intentional properties even in the *cogito*-type cases of self-knowledge involved in current conscious reasoning. Consider the first feature. When one thinks of a first-order intentional state while undergoing it, from the point of view of a second-order intentional state, one's grasp of that first-order state is first and foremost a grasp of it *as* a state of a certain contentful type. Consider the second feature: that such properties are in general as they appear to be to their subjects. This feature also applies to intentional properties in the *cogito*-type cases. The reason is that the relation between them and normal subjects is in an important respects like that between certain observable properties, namely, secondary qualities, and normal perceivers in normal circumstances.

Given that contentful intentional properties are in general as they appear to be to normal subjects in normal circumstances in the *cogito*-type cases, and given that subjects are the only ones to whom their contentful types appear when they appear in the epistemically direct way, it follows that, in these cases, one's first-order state cannot but be of the particular contentful type by which one grasps it. It could only be an intentional state other

than one of the type a subject takes it to be in virtue of that subject's grasping a different contentful property. But in that case one would be thinking a different thought altogether.

This account also applies to cases of distinct thoughts and instantiations of thought contents involved in critical reasoning, of the sort described in Section 2. When one thinks of a first-order intentional state by employing a second-order state with a content that is intended to target the – distinct - content of an earlier intentional state, one employs a contentful type which is epistemically basic and is in general as it appears to normal subjects in normal circumstances. But the content of the earlier state that one aims to target is also one to which one has direct epistemic access in just this sense. So the intellectual moves involved in re-capturing an earlier train of thought no more involve a process of inference than do those involved in thinking *cogito*-type thoughts themselves. One either grasps the contents of the earlier states, or one does not. If one does, it cannot be by employing thoughts with different contents. So if one does, one grasps the contents of the earlier states with as much epistemic immediacy as one grasps the contents of the states one employs - *cogito*-type states - to target them.

### Conclusion

I have argued that a certain highly influential account of our knowledge of our thoughts and attitudes as our own developed by Tyler Burge is inadequate because incomplete. Central to my argument is the claim that, in order to account for how potential defeaters come to be defeated in particular cases where doubt can and does arrive, and to account for the epistemic immediacy on which the motivational force of reasons depends, some kind of bottom-up internalist epistemology is required. I have given some idea of the kind of epistemology I think would work, and how it might help to provide the kind of reassurance that is so important to the motivational status of reasons and reasoning.

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