

Belief, Rationality, and Truth

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Abstract

Modern philosophy is often said to privilege rationality over received wisdom, but to some extent this is an ideal which we pursue under a measure of uncertainty. It is not always obvious what rationality requires. Nor is it clear how rationality is to be traded against other ideals. This dissertation seeks to clarify both questions as they pertain to the rationality of belief. The choice of topic is apposite, since many argue that the case of belief illustrates that what is rational and what there is most reason to do is one and the same thing. In particular, so-called evidentialists often argue that to believe what the evidence indicates is both to believe rationally and to believe what one has most reason to believe, since (i) rationality consists in responding to reasons, and (ii) only evidence that p can be a reason to believe that p .

My first objective is to challenge this thesis. I do so by arguing that the class of reasons that rationalise a belief does not coincide with the class of reasons there are to have the belief all things considered. To equate the two classes would be to conflate the psychological issue of how we respond to reasons with the ontological issue of what reasons there are. My case against evidentialism does not depend on pragmatism being true, however. Even if Pascal was wrong to claim that the expected benefit of believing can be a reason to believe, it does not follow that evidentialism is true. Some non-pragmatic form of anti-evidentialism may still be true.

The latter half of the dissertation explores this possibility in greater detail. There I argue that there is at least one class of beliefs which is not subject to common evidentiary strictures. When we use practical reasoning to form intentions about what to do in the future, we typically also form beliefs about what we will do. Yet, those beliefs are not based on evidence about what we will do, I argue. Typically, we do not predict what we do based on what we intend to do. Nor should we. When it is up to us whether we will perform an action, our intentions do to not carry enough weight as evidence that we must use them to predict what we will do. In the last part of the dissertation, I use this point to elucidate how we acquire self-knowledge and how belief relates to truth.

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Chapter One

Introduction

It is often said that modern philosophy begins with the development of a new critical mindset. Rather than have scripture or ecclesiastical authority tell one what to think, philosophy now was to let reason be its guide. Sometimes this story is told as part of more general liberation story in which humans unshackle themselves from the self-imposed limitations of tradition and start seeking enlightenment for themselves. *Sapere Aude!* was Kant's call to such intellectual self-liberation. To some extent, this is an ideal to which we still aspire, but to some extent it is also an ideal which we follow blindly. For even though independence of thought is an ideal to which it is easy to give one's allegiance, it also is not clear what exactly it means to be guided by reason.

This appears most distinctly in the case of belief. Beliefs that are guided by reason are presumably beliefs that are formed in response to reasons or through a process of reasoning. Yet, it remains an open question what these reasons are, since beliefs may be evaluated from different perspectives. Most clearly, one may evaluate a belief *epistemically* with regards to whether the content of the belief is true or how likely it is to be true. At the same time, one may also evaluate a belief *practically* with respect to how morally fitting or prudent it is to hold the belief. Which perspective we adopt may well affect which beliefs appear appropriate, as there is no guarantee that

all beliefs which are practically advantageous are also epistemically justified, and *vice versa*.

Similarly, it also remains an open question what exactly it means to think for oneself, since there are different processes of reasoning by which one can acquire beliefs and opinions. Most obviously, we can do so through theoretical reasoning, but often we can also form beliefs through *practical* reasoning. Again, which form of reasoning we use will affect which beliefs we hold, since theoretical and practical reasoning will not always issue in the same belief. To come to terms with our enlightenment heritage, we therefore have to determine not only what reasons to heed, but also what kind of reasoning to use.

Why bother with this question? One obvious explanation is that the answer has implication for what beliefs we should have, and people are not indifferent to what beliefs they have. Typically they are reluctant to give up deeply held convictions and often they are keen to change others' mind. This is not all, however. In this dissertation, I shall argue that how we answer these question has wide-ranging implications for how we should think about normativity and rationality in general. The following sections explain how I understand the historical debate to which my dissertation responds and what my contribution to this debate is.

1. Evidentialism, Pragmatism, and Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism

What sometimes goes under the name of the ethics of belief is supposed to help us find out what, if anything, to believe. It is dominated by two conflicting views. On the one hand, *evidentialists* claim that it is only permissible to believe that p if one has

sufficient evidence that p , where sufficient evidence is often taken to be evidence that is good enough to provide one with knowledge that p . On the other hand, *pragmatists* claim that it is sometimes permissible to believe without adequate evidence if the practical value of doing so is sufficiently high.

It is safe to say that of these two views, evidentialism is by far the more popular both historically and contemporarily. Indeed, one can argue that evidentialism is part and parcel of the scientific method which is sometimes said to distinguish modern from pre-modern thought. The view has been defended on many different grounds, however. One of its first modern proponents is John Locke. He argues that both in the search for knowledge and in the conduct of life, we ought always to be guided by reason. Further, he argues that reason requires us to only believe that for which we have adequate evidence or else to moderate the strength of our belief to the strength of our evidence. Not doing so is to “transgress against our own light”.

Locke may therefore be seen as a proponent of the enlightenment call to think for oneself rather than appeal to authority and tradition. Yet, he did not follow that maxim unconditionally. In the end, his explanation for why one ought always to proportion one’s belief to the evidence is that God has endowed us with a faculty of reason with the express purpose that we may believe the truth. Moreover, the correct way to exercise that faculty is to only believe that which is sufficiently likely given one’s evidence. Hence, Locke claims that “[h]e that believes without having any Reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies; but neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker”.¹

¹ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. 27, § 24.

David Hume too accepts that belief must be proportioned to the evidence, but unlike Locke, he does not give a theological justification of that principle. Nor does he think that the proportionality principle is a principle of rationality. According to Hume, reason only perceives necessary relations between ideas, not contingent relations between the obtaining of one fact and another. Instead, the principle is founded on custom. Given a piece of evidence e for some proposition p , we should only believe that p to the degree to which past experience has accustomed us to expect that p given that e . Accordingly:

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to his evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full *proof* of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: To that side he inclines with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call *probability*. (*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 10, pt. 1)

Yet, it is unclear whether this claim has any normative import. For why be wise in the first place? If it is sometimes best not to be wise, we should not always proportion our beliefs to our evidence even if that is what the wise men do.

Others have defended evidentialism on unquestioningly normative grounds. Most famously, W.K. Clifford argues that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence”, since believing upon insufficient evidence is bound to lead to harm (1877: 295). He adduces three main considerations in support of his claim. First, believing upon insufficient evidence is likely to cause harm, because beliefs based on insufficient evidence are likely to be false, and false beliefs are likely to lead to harm when acted upon (*ibid.*: 291-2).

Second, even if one does not act on a belief based on insufficient evidence, the belief is still harmful, since it will prompt similar insufficiently founded beliefs which themselves will lead to harm when they are acted upon (*ibid.*: 292). Finally, even if a belief based on insufficient evidence turns out to be true, it is still harmful, since believing upon insufficient evidence fosters credulity both in oneself and others which in turn furthers beliefs leading to harmful acts (*ibid.*: 294). According to Clifford, this applies to all beliefs however trivial they may seem. No belief is so insignificant that it does not have some effect on one's other beliefs as well as the beliefs one forms in the future. Accordingly, the injunction not to believe upon insufficient evidence extends to "all cases of belief whatever" (*ibid.*: 292).

Although Clifford is frequently invoked in contemporary discussions, evidentialism is seldom defended on moral grounds nowadays. Instead, most contemporary defenders of evidentialism recommend it as a view about what it is rational to believe. For example, Bertrand Russell argues that "[p]erfect rationality consists, not in believing what is true, but in attaching to every proposition a degree of belief corresponding to its degree of credibility" where the degree of credibility is determined by how probable the proposition is given one's evidence (1948: 415).² For A.J. Ayer, "[a] rational man is one who makes proper use of reason: and this implies,

² Russell clarifies that: "In regard to empirical propositions, the degree of credibility changes when fresh evidence accrues. In mathematics, the rational man who is not a mathematician will believe what he is told; he will therefore change his beliefs when mathematicians discover errors in the work of their predecessors. The mathematician himself may be completely rational in spite of making a mistake, if the mistake is one which at the time is very difficult to detect" (*ibid.*).

among other things, that he correctly estimates the strength of evidence” (1972: 3).³

Similarly, H.H. Price takes for granted in his Gifford lectures on belief that:

We should all agree that a person can only believe reasonably when he has evidence for the propositions believed. Moreover, our evidence for a proposition p which we believe must be stronger than our evidence (if any) against that proposition, if our belief is to be reasonable. Nor is this all. Belief admits of degrees. And if we are to believe reasonably, the degree of our belief must be no greater than our evidence justifies. (1969: 92)

Brand Blanshard – another Gifford lecturer incidentally – defends essentially the same view:

‘Surely the only possible rule’, one may say, ‘is to believe what is true and disbelieve what is false.’ And of course that would be the rule if we were in a position to know what was true and what false. But the whole difficulty arises from the fact that we do not and often cannot. What is to guide us then? ... The ideal is to believe no more, but also no less, than what the evidence warrants. (1974: 410-1)

And W.V.O. Quine and J.S. Ullian claim that:

Insofar as we are rational in our beliefs, the intensity of belief will tend to correspond to the firmness of the available evidence. Insofar as we are rational, we will drop a belief when we have tried in vain to find evidence for it. (1978)

This of course leaves open whether and why one should be rational. Whether evidentialists owe an answer to that question depends on how they conceive of their view. If it is simply meant to be a view about rational belief, they do not incur a commitment to say why one ought to be rational. Some evidentialists do not mean to incur any such commitment. For example, Price denies that there is anything morally

³ I owe this and quotes from Blanshard and Quine & Ullian to Kelly (2006).

blameworthy about believing without regard to the evidence. Such belief is not “wicked” although it may not be in our long-term interest (1969: 238).

Russell disagrees. He argues that “[w]hether we should aim at rationality is an ethical question” to be settled by how important it is to think and act rationally in a given situation (1948: 415-17). Similarly, epistemic social contract theorists such as Edward Craig (1999) and Bernard Williams (2002) suggest that we should be rational and moderate our beliefs to the evidence, since doing so will better enable us to discharge our epistemic duties towards one another. Whether this provides a *conclusive* reason to be rational depends of course on the further normative question of whether one ought always to honour one’s epistemic duties. As was the case with Hume’s characterisation of wisdom, we have not yet reached normative bedrock.

Pragmatism

These are only a few of the people who have supported evidentialism in one form or another. Nonetheless, it is not hard to find figures who defend the opposite view, namely that there are situations in which it is permissible not to proportion one’s beliefs to the evidence. Most famous are Blaise Pascal and William James both of whom argue that it is permissible to believe out of accordance with the evidence when what belief one holds about some issue is of burning practical importance, but one’s evidence does not speak one way or the other as regards that issue.

Pascal opens his argument for belief in God by noting this precondition of evidential indeterminacy. As he points out, God either exists or does not exist, but we have no way of telling which of these possibilities is the case. Yet, Pascal does not conclude that we should therefore suspend judgment about whether God exists.

Instead, he argues that even if we lack adequate evidence, we should still believe in God, since the potential benefits of believing far outweigh those of not believing. If we believe and God exists, we stand to gain an eternity of bliss, but if we do not believe, we retain at most the earthly pleasures which a religious life must forgo. Since an infinite good always outweighs a finite good even when multiplied by the chance of it occurring, the former is always preferable to the latter. Hence, we should believe that God exists.⁴

William James argues that there are many more beliefs which are not supported by adequate evidence, but which we may hold because of their potential benefit. He argues that we are permitted to believe without sufficient evidence whenever (i) we have a choice of believing one of two live hypotheses, (ii) there is not adequate evidence in favour of either hypothesis, (iii) not believing either hypothesis would itself have significant consequences, and (iv) which hypothesis one believes also has significant consequences.

Other philosophers have not put so strict conditions on when it is permissible to believe without adequate evidence. For example, Nietzsche proposes that we select all our beliefs based purely on how beneficial they are. He suggests that:

We do not consider the falsity of a judgment as itself an objection to a judgment [...] The question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable to us... (*Beyond Good and Evil*, §4).⁵

⁴ *Pensées*, §418.

⁵ In the posthumous writings, he even speculates that “it would be possible that the true constitution of things was so hostile to the presuppositions to life, that we needed appearance in order to live.” (*The Will to Power*: 583)

If this is right, we should not even bother to believe the truth except when doing so is in our interest. In other words, while Pascal and James put epistemic constraints on the pursuit of practical advantage, Nietzsche puts practical constraints on the pursuit of truth.⁶

Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism

Pragmatism is not the only alternative to evidentialism, however. One of the purposes of this dissertation is to show that we must also recognise a third alternative which is neither evidentialist nor pragmatist. One way of reading Descartes makes him one of the earliest proponents of this alternative. While his project in the *Meditations* and elsewhere was to find a set of indubitable truths which might secure a foundation for science, Descartes did not think that all of our beliefs must be based on such strong foundations. He only claimed that:

Concerning objects proposed for study, we ought to investigate what we can clearly and evidently intuit or deduce with certainty, and not what other people have thought or what we ourselves conjecture. For knowledge (*scientia*) can be attained in no other way.⁷

⁶ Nietzsche's view may seem extreme, but there are contemporary philosophers who come close to matching him. Stephen Stich (1990) is the most representative. He argues that from an evolutionary perspective it is bad to have accurate beliefs, since beliefs that systematically overestimate risks of danger and the like will better equip an animal for survival. Robert Nozick (1993) defends the much more modest view that whereas beliefs must always be supported by adequate evidence, we must use considerations of expected utility to settle what to believe when different hypotheses are compatible with the same evidence.

⁷ *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Rule Three, AT X 371–2. In Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R. & Murdoch, D. (1984) (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. I.

That does not mean that we ought always to follow these guidelines. In his reply to the Second Set of Objections to the *Meditations*, Descartes is keen to remind his readers that “in matters which may be embraced by the will”, we should make a “careful distinction between the conduct of life and the contemplation of truth”. Further, he makes clear that:

As far as the conduct of life is concerned, I am very far from thinking that we should assent only to that which is clearly perceived. On the contrary, I do not think that we should always wait even for probable truths; from time to time we will have to choose one of many alternatives about which we have no knowledge, and once we have made our choice, so long as no reasons against it can be produced, we must stick to it as firmly as if it had been chosen for transparently clear reasons.(1984: 106)

Descartes therefore cannot be classified as an evidentialist. Yet, he cannot be classified as a pragmatist either, since he does not argue that it is permissible to believe without adequate evidence because doing so is practically advantageous. Instead, and for want of a better term, we must classify his view as some sort of Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism.

Kant could be grouped under the same rubric. He was no evidentialist, but nor did he rely on the pragmatist idea that it can be permissible to believe without sufficient evidence if it is sufficiently beneficial to do so. Instead, Kant argues that it is permissible to believe without adequate evidence if having the belief in question is a necessary condition for acting in accordance with the moral law. Belief then functions as a “signpost or compass” by means of which one can orient oneself in the absence of adequate evidence.⁸

⁸ “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (8:136), in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*.

Kant's examples are famous if not notorious. First, he argues that we must believe in freedom of the will even though it is impossible to find any *a priori* proof or conclusive empirical evidence that we enjoy freedom of will, since we cannot regard ourselves as acting out of a concern for the moral law unless we also regard ourselves as being free to do so. Further, the ultimate end set to us by the moral law is the promotion of the Highest Good. By that, he means a world in which happiness exists in equal measure to virtue. According to Kant, we cannot rationally pursue this ideal without making two further postulates. Since the degree of virtue required for the highest good is “complete *conformity*” between an agent’s will and the moral law, we must believe in immortality of the soul, as such perfection cannot be attained during one’s lifetime. Finally, we must also postulate that there is a benevolent God who has ensured that virtue will be rewarded with happiness.⁹

I doubt that this argument will impress many contemporary readers, but it nonetheless points to a position in logical space that is not equivalent to either evidentialism or pragmatism.

2. The Retreat to Reasons

Now is a good time to zoom out to survey some of the main differences between these views. First, we must distinguish between a spectrum of more and less strict views. At one extreme, strict versions of evidentialism such as the one that Clifford defends instruct one always to proportion one’s belief to the evidence. At the other extreme, radical versions of pragmatism such as the one hinted at by Nietzsche instruct one

⁹ *Critique of Practical Reason* 5:122.

only to believe what is most beneficial. According to other more moderate views such as James's, it is sometimes permissible to believe what is most beneficial, although one ought in general to proportion one's belief to the evidence.

This makes it somewhat difficult to say when a view counts as evidentialist and when it does not. Perhaps we should take it to depend on how many exceptional cases the view allows for, but this may not provide a sharp distinction either, since there may be no exact number of cases that marks a cut-off point between the two. Rather than try to locate such a point, I shall simply follow the customary practice and reserve the term "evidentialism" to denote those views which tell one to believe that p only if one has adequate evidence that p . By contrast, I shall use the umbrella term "non-evidentialism" to denote any view which denies that one ought only to believe that p if one has adequate evidence that p .

Second, the examples of Descartes and Kant show that although the ethics of belief is commonly presented as a debate between evidentialists and pragmatists, these are not the only alternatives. Rather, we must acknowledge a second non-evidential option which permits one to believe without sufficient evidence not because it is prudent to do so, but because believing without sufficient evidence is sometimes a precondition of acting as one ought. To avoid assimilating this view with the type of view defended by Pascal and James, I have decided to call it non-pragmatic anti-evidentialism. There are therefore at least three general views that one might take in the ethics of belief. In other words, whether evidentialism is true hinges on more than how pragmatism fares. Even if pragmatism is false, evidentialism may be false too if non-pragmatic anti-evidentialism is true.

Third, for each of these views, we must distinguish between a normative version which tells one what one ought to believe all-things-considered and a rationalist version which tells one what it is rational to believe. Often these go together, but it is possible to endorse one version without endorsing the other. Locke and Clifford seem to defend evidentialism both as a view about what one ought to believe and what it is rational to believe whereas contemporary evidentialists often present it primarily as a view about rational belief. Similarly, Pascal and James seem to defend pragmatism both as a view about what one ought to believe and what it is rational to believe, but it is possible only to accept one of these claims. The same applies to Descartes's and Kant's non-pragmatic anti-evidentialism.

We can list these six types of view as follows:

	It is permissible to believe that p ...	It is rational to believe that p ...
only if one has adequate evidence that p	Normative Evidentialism	Rationalist Evidentialism
if it is sufficiently valuable to believe that p	Normative Pragmatism	Rationalist Pragmatism
if one cannot act as one ought unless one believes that p	Normative Non- Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism	Rationalist Non- Pragmatic Anti- Evidentialism

This is not meant as an exhaustive list of all the views there are, but it represents the main views with respect to which I shall orient myself. Many of these views are compatible. Most obviously, all four versions of non-evidentialism can be true at the same time. Similarly, one can be a rationalist evidentialist and a normative non-evidentialist if one does not think that all-things-considered one ought always to be

epistemically rational. Less conventionally, it is also possible to be both a normative evidentialist and a rationalist non-evidentialist. Still, there remains significant conflict. Normative evidentialism is inconsistent with both normative pragmatism and normative anti-evidentialism, and rationalist evidentialism is inconsistent with both of its counterparts.

Why trouble oneself with which view is right? One obvious reason is that which beliefs we may hold and which ones we must give up depends on what view is correct. Insofar as belief in God, immortality of the soul, freedom of the will and other metaphysical and ethical doctrines requires one to go beyond the available evidence, they ought to be given up if evidentialism is correct. Yet, it is reasonable to expect that such beliefs can not be revised without changing many other beliefs as well as altering those of one's practices that are founded on them. If on the other hand non-evidentialism is correct, we may be able to retain some of these beliefs. Either way, how strict an ethic of belief we adopt will have significant implications.¹⁰

This is, however, not the main reason why I am interested in the conflict between evidentialists and non-evidentialism. I shall not try to compile a list of what beliefs are permitted and which ones are not. Instead, I am interested in the conflict because the two sides make radically different claims about normativity and

¹⁰ It is possible to put an existential spin on this point. According Charles Taylor and many philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition, human beings are self-interpreting animals whose interpretation of themselves and their experiences is partly constitutive of who they are (1985: 47). If some version of that thesis is true, then what beliefs one has is partly constitutive of who one is insofar as one's own beliefs may both be an object for interpretation as well as the product of how one interprets oneself and one's experiences. Exemplifying this thesis, Zahavi argues that one's personality is "shaped by the values I endorse and by my moral and intellectual convictions and decisions... I remain the same as long I adhere to my convictions; when they change, *I* change" (2005: 129). Which ethic of belief is correct may therefore have implications not just for what beliefs one ought to have, but also for who one ought to be.

rationality. On the one hand, evidentialism implies that there is a strict division between theoretical and practical reason, since it claims that the type of considerations we typically take to bear on what to do – considerations concerning an action's moral worth and its expected consequences – do not bear on what to believe. By contrast, non-evidentialism implies that there is an overlap between theoretical and practical reason, since it claims that some of the considerations that we typically take to bear on what to do are also apposite for what to believe.

Whether evidentialism or non-evidentialism is true therefore has implications not just for what beliefs are permissible, but also for how we should think about normativity and rationality in general. If evidentialism is true, we must posit a sharp division between practical and theoretical reason. If non-evidentialism is true, it seems that we must give a more unified account of the two domains of reason. The two sides therefore face different explanatory tasks. On the one hand, evidentialists must explain why and in what sense one ought never to believe on anything less than adequate evidence. On the other hand, non-evidentialists must explain how it is that non-epistemic considerations that we usually associate with the justification of action can also have a bearing on what one should believe.

How should we go about deciding which, if any, of these views are right? I can see no better way than starting from the question of what reasons there can be for belief where reasons are facts or considerations that count in favour of acts or attitudes. The concept of a reason thus understood is important, because it serves as a nexus between normativity and rationality. First, the concept of a reason plays a foundational normative role, since what one ought to do or believe is arguably determined by what reasons one has and how those reasons weigh up against one

another. Second, the concept of a reason stands in close connection to rationality, since it is commonly thought that rationality consists at least in part in responding correctly to what reasons one has. What reasons there are for belief and how we might respond to those reasons seems therefore to hold the answer both to what one ought to believe and what it is rational to believe.

This retreat to reasons is also the place from which most contemporary discussions approach the ethics of belief. Again, evidentialism is the dominant view. Yet, contemporary evidentialists often make a much stronger claim than their historical counterparts. Rather than argue that it is always best, on balance, to follow the evidence, they argue that evidence that p simply is the only reason one can have to believe that p .¹¹ Sometimes, this is presented as an *a priori* fact about what it is for something to be a reason for belief.¹² More often, however, the claim is defended with reference to the idea that belief aims at truth, where this is to be understood in the normative sense that if one understands what a belief is, one also understands that one ought only to believe that p if it is true that p .¹³ If Locke's evidentialism found backing in the command of God, contemporary evidentialists find it in the command of belief itself.

The result is a very different kind of evidentialism from the one encountered at the beginning of this chapter. Whereas traditional evidentialists such as Clifford

¹¹ For some philosophers who give explicit expression to this view or come close to doing so, see Chisholm (1957), Gibbard (1990) Parfit (2001, 2011), Adler (2002), Kelly (2002), Williamson (2002), Kolodny (2005), Hieronymy (2005; 2006), Shah (2006) and Skorupski (2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2010).

¹² See Skorupski (2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2010).

¹³ See Alan Gibbard (1990; 2005), David Velleman (2000), Jonthan Adler (2002), Ralph Wedgwood (2002a), and Nishi Shah (2003; 2005; 2006).

defend an aggregation thesis about how different considerations weigh up against each other, new wave evidentialists primarily defend a supervenience thesis about which kinds of considerations get to be aggregated in the first place.¹⁴ This thesis is now so prevalent that it may be described as something of a standard view among normative theorists. Yet, I shall argue that once we gain an adequate grasp of the relationship between reasons, rationality, action, belief, and truth, we shall see that evidentialism is false both in its normative and in its rationalist guise. First, normative evidentialism is false, since it is possible to have pragmatic reasons for belief even if those reasons cannot rationalise belief in the same way as epistemic reasons. Second, rationalist evidentialism fails both because there are other ways of being rational than responding to a reason and because we can form beliefs in response to reasons which are not evidential.

Here is how I shall argue for my case. In chapters two and three, I shall review the most common grounds that evidentialists have for rejecting pragmatism. These are: (i) that we cannot respond to pragmatic reasons, since we lack voluntary control over what beliefs we have; (ii) that we cannot weigh pragmatic reasons against epistemic reasons; and (iii) that it is *a priori* that reasons to believe that *p* are reasons to believe that it is true that *p*. None of these considerations show that beliefs cannot be justified pragmatically, I shall argue. First, our lack of voluntary control over what beliefs we have does not mean that we cannot respond to pragmatic reasons. We can still respond to such reasons, since there are other ways of forming beneficial beliefs than forming them at will.

¹⁴ Cf. Kratzer (2012) on modal bases and ordering sources.

Second, even if there is no scale which allows us to weigh pragmatic and epistemic reasons against each other, this shows at most that the two are incommensurable. Yet, this does not imply that we can never ask what we ought to believe *all things considered* when an epistemic and a pragmatic reason conflict. Even if it is not always possible to say which of the two is stronger, there may still be contexts in which the expected benefit of holding a given belief is so high that it outweighs any epistemic reasons we may have against the belief. In such contexts, pragmatic reasons are emphatically stronger than epistemic reasons even though we cannot say exactly how much stronger they are. Finally, the fact that it is *a priori* that reasons to believe that p are reasons to believe that it is true that p , does not entail that such reasons must be epistemic in nature. It does not, since the addition of the truth predicate does not reveal anything about what reasons for belief there are. Instead, “reason to believe that p ” and “reason to believe that it is true that p ” are just two ways of saying the same thing.

Chapter four takes a different tack. There, I shall argue that even if there are no Pascalian reasons for belief, it follows at most that pragmatism is false. It does not follow that evidentialism is true, since some non-pragmatic form of anti-evidentialism may still be true even if pragmatism is false. For even if there are no pragmatic reasons for belief, there may still be other non-evidential reasons in response to which we can form beliefs. Or there may be other ways of being rational than believing in response to a reason.

Next, I shall argue that the case of practical reasoning shows that non-pragmatic anti-evidentialism is indeed true. When we engage in practical reasoning to form intentions about what to do in the future, we typically also form beliefs about

what we will do. Yet, those beliefs are not based on evidence about what we will do, I shall argue. When we form an intention to ϕ , we typically also form the belief that we will ϕ , but usually we do not employ evidence to predict that we will ϕ . Nor should we. When it is up to us whether we will perform an action, we should not try to predict whether we will, but should instead simply decide whether or not to carry out the action.

This point has important consequences. In chapter five, I shall argue that it implies that we cannot appeal to facts about the first-person perspective from which we deliberate in order to show that only evidence can be a reason for belief. Many evidentialists employ precisely this strategy. They argue that we cannot believe without adequate evidence, since (i) deliberation about whether to believe some proposition p must necessarily attend solely to the truth of p , and (ii) we cannot settle the deliberation in favour of belief unless we have adequate evidence that p . Neither claim is correct, I shall argue. When we engage in practical deliberation, we can deliberate about whether to believe that we will ϕ not by considering whether it is true that we will ϕ , but by considering whether we *ought to* ϕ . Further, we can settle such deliberation not by amassing adequate evidence that we will ϕ , but by deciding either to ϕ or to refrain from ϕ -ing.

Chapter Two

Reason without Rationalisation

“‘Either God is or he is not.’ But to which view shall we be inclined? Reason cannot decide this question [...] Reason cannot make you choose either, reason cannot prove either wrong.” So Pascal begins his examination of religious belief in § 418 of *Pensées*.¹⁵ Remarkably, however, Pascal does not conclude that we ought therefore to be agnostic about God’s existence. Instead, he argues that we ought to believe that God exists, because truth is not the only thing at stake in the case of religious belief. Our own future happiness is also at stake, since Christian doctrine says that only those who believe and devote themselves to God stand a chance of gaining eternal life.¹⁶ “That leaves no choice” but to wager that God exists, according to Pascal. Even though devoting one’s life to God means that “you will not enjoy noxious pleasures, glory and good living”, those are negligible sacrifices to pay for the chance to gain eternal life. When the potential reward is so high, “you must be renouncing reason” if you choose a life of worldly pleasure instead of devoting yourself to God.

¹⁵ All quotations are from *Pensées*, translated by Kralzheimer (1966/1995).

¹⁶ Whether one believes that God does not exist or simply remains agnostic, one runs the same risk. Since being agnostic is just another way of not believing, one forgoes one’s chances of gaining eternal life either way. Indeed, suspension of belief is in one respect the worst option, because that way one loses both the opportunity to win eternal life and the chance to be in the right about God’s existence.

Pascal's argument may be criticised in many ways. One may criticise it on the *theological* ground that it is unreasonable to assume that the only alternative to there being no God is that there is a Christian God who grants eternal life to those who believe.¹⁷ One may attack the argument on the *psychological* ground that it is unreasonable to assume that everyone will prefer to give up a life of worldly pleasure to losing the opportunity to gain eternal life no matter how small the chance of God's existence.¹⁸ Or one may simply argue that the hypothesis that there might be a God is so farfetched that it should not be treated as a relevant possibility when deliberating about what to believe.¹⁹

I shall not consider these objections here, however. What interests me is whether it is at all possible to justify beliefs in the way that Pascal envisions. Even if the particular argument that Pascal offers fails because it relies on implausible theological and psychological premises, other Pascalian arguments may be found that do not rely on the same premises. For example, William James famously argued that when one's evidence does not determine which of two rival hypotheses is true, it is permissible to allow practical considerations to settle which hypothesis to believe provided that: (i) which hypothesis one believes will have significant practical consequences; (ii) both hypotheses represent live possibilities; and (iii) one cannot disbelieve either hypothesis without the other hypothesis coming true.

¹⁷ This is also known as the the many gods objection.

¹⁸ Elster (2003) raises many more objections. See Jordan (2006) for an attempt to rebut the most prominent criticisms that have historically been aimed at Pascal's Wager.

¹⁹ Bertrand Russell advocates this response in *Why I am Not a Christian*: "The Christian God may exist; so may the Gods of Olympus, or of ancient Egypt, or of Babylon. But no one of these hypotheses is more probable than any other: they lie outside the region of even probable knowledge, and therefore, there is no reason to consider any of them" (1957: 50-1).

One of James's favourite examples is that of a mountaineer who must jump across a ravine to save himself, but who cannot complete the jump successfully unless he believes that he can. All three conditions are satisfied here: what the mountaineer believes has significant consequences; success and failure are both live possibilities; and the mountaineer cannot disbelieve either hypothesis without the other hypothesis coming true. James's advice is clear:

In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class), the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to *believe what is in the line of your needs*, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself. You make one or the other of two possible universes true by your trust or mistrust, – both universes having been only *maybes*, in this particular, before you contributed your act. (1907: 59)

If Pascal and James's arguments are anything to go by, belief does not only lend itself to *epistemic* justification. It can also be justified *pragmatically* by appeal to how good or bad it would be to hold a given belief.

Yet, philosophers with their penchant for truth and rationality mostly deny that what we ought to believe depends on anything else than the belief's epistemic merits. What they mean is not just that "[t]ruth is a primary dimension of assessment for beliefs and for sentences that can express or report beliefs", as David Wiggins rightly points out (1989: 147). Few would disagree with that, but truth's being a primary dimension of assessment does not mean that there are no other dimensions. Rather, the idea is that beliefs cannot be justified pragmatically, since the mere fact that it would be good to believe that *p* cannot be a reason to believe that *p*.

This view is so prevalent that it may be described as something of a standard view among normative theorists.²⁰ In this chapter, however, I shall argue that there is little to be said in favour of the view. As I see it, those who deny that we can have pragmatic reasons for belief do so because of one or more of four chief considerations.²¹ These are that:

- (a) We cannot form beliefs at will.
- (b) We cannot believe *for* the reason that it would be good to believe.
- (c) Reasons to believe that *p* are reasons to believe that it is *true* that *p*.
- (d) We cannot weigh pragmatic reasons against epistemic reasons.

I shall argue that none of these considerations show that beliefs cannot be justified pragmatically. First, the fact that we cannot form beliefs at will does not show that the fact that it would be good to believe that *p* cannot be a reason to believe that *p*, since it is not necessary to enjoy voluntary control over one's beliefs for them to be amenable to pragmatic justification. We do not require beliefs that are epistemically justified to be within our voluntary control, so we should not expect this of pragmatically justified beliefs either. Rather, the relevant contrast to draw is that while beliefs that are epistemically justified are usually formed for the reason that *p*, or that it is likely that *p*, beliefs that are candidates for pragmatic justification cannot be formed *for* the reason that it would be good to believe that *p*.

²⁰ See e.g. Gibbard (1990: 36-7), Owens (2000: 25), Parfit (2001: 24 & 2011, vol. I: 51), Kelly (2002), Hieronymi (2005: 448, 2006: 60), Shah (2006: 498), Skorupski (2010: 55) and Raz (2011: 39).

²¹ I reserve a fifth consideration, that belief aims at truth, for Ch. 4.

But does this not show, as many have argued, that rather than being a reason to believe, pragmatic considerations can at most give one a reason to cause oneself to believe? No, I shall argue. All it shows is that such reasons cannot function in rationalising explanations of why one believes as one does. Yet, this does not mean that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. There may still be even if they cannot rationalise belief in the same way as epistemic reasons. Nor does the fact that reasons to believe that p are necessarily reasons to believe that it is *true* that p show that such reasons must be epistemic reasons. All this reflects is that to believe is to regard some proposition as true, not that reasons to regard some proposition as true must be epistemic reasons.

Once we appreciate these points, we must take seriously the question that what one ought to believe *all-things-considered* depends not just on what epistemic reasons one has, but also what pragmatic reasons one may have. We cannot skirt around this question by claiming, as some have done, that because pragmatic reasons cannot be weighed against epistemic reasons for belief, there can be no such reasons. Even if we cannot weigh pragmatic and epistemic reasons against each other, this shows at most that the two are incommensurable. Yet, incommensurable reasons are reasons nonetheless. The question of what one ought to believe all-things-considered therefore remains.

1. Kinds of Reasons

Let us start by making some observations about reasons. When someone believes something, there are two questions we might ask about their reasons for doing so. On

the one hand, we may ask what the reason for which they believe p is. On the other hand, we may ask whether they have any reason to believe that p . Each question can be read as employing a different sense of the word ‘reason’. While the first question asks for an *explanatory reason* that explains why the person believes p , the second question asks for a *normative reason* that provides justification for believing p . Sometimes one and the same reason is both explanatory and normative. That happens when the reason that explains why one believes p is also a reason that justifies believing p . Yet, explanatory and normative reasons can also come apart when the reason for which one believes p is not a reason that provides justification for believing p .

In the following, I shall focus exclusively on normative reasons. Since I am interested in whether beliefs can be justified pragmatically, the question I shall set myself is whether the practical value of holding a belief that p can be a normative reason to believe that p . If there are any pragmatic reasons for belief, they must be very different from standard epistemic reasons for belief. Normative reasons, as I shall think of them, are facts that count in favour of actions and attitudes by virtue of standing in some favouring relation to them.

According to evidentialists, the only kind of fact that can be a reason to believe p is evidence that p . What exactly it takes for something to be evidence that p is a topic in its own right. Here, however, I shall simply assume that something is evidence that p if it indicates that p is true. Accordingly, we may describe an evidential reason for belief as a fact that counts in favour of believing a certain proposition by virtue of indicating that the proposition is true. That is:

(Evidential Reason)	A fact f is an evidential reason to believe that p if f indicates that p is true.
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Putative pragmatic reasons to believe are supposed to stand in a very different justificatory relation to belief. Rather than count in favour of believing p by virtue of indicating that p is true, they are supposed to count in favour of believing p because they in some sense make it good to hold the belief that p . That is:

(Pragmatic Reason)	A fact f is a pragmatic reason to believe that p if f makes it good to believe p .
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We can distinguish between different pragmatic reasons depending on what value is promoted by holding the belief in question. A fact f is a *prudential reason* to believe p if f increases the actual or potential benefit of believing p . If a demon offers to pay one £1000 if one believes p , that is a prudential reason to believe p , since the demon's offer increases the expected benefit of believing p . By contrast, f is a *moral reason* to believe p if f makes it morally valuable to believe p . If the demon threatens to torture an innocent bystander unless one believes p , that is a moral reason to believe p , since it would be morally good to believe p given the demon's threat.

Prudential and moral reasons are prominent examples of non-epistemic reasons for belief, but it is possible that there are yet other non-epistemic reasons. Perhaps there are also aesthetic reasons. One example comes from Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*. At the end of that novel, Pi, the protagonist, argues that we ought to believe in God, not because the reward is eternal life, but because the hypothesis that God created the universe makes for a "better story" than the hypothesis that the

universe does not have a creator.²² Perhaps he meant that we ought to believe the first hypothesis because it is more imaginative than its rival.

A less outlandish example comes from the philosophy of science. According to some philosophers, evidence alone cannot determine whether we should adopt a scientific theory, since many rival hypotheses can always account for the same body of evidence. They argue that to make a choice among a number of competing hypotheses, we must consider which hypothesis is most parsimonious, simple, or elegant. *Prima facie* these seem like aesthetic virtues.²³ If they can count in favour of choosing one hypothesis over its rivals, perhaps they can also count in favour of believing it.

How exactly we should distinguish between evidential and pragmatic reasons is a significant question. Evidential reasons are sometimes said to be *object-given*, since they are provided by facts relating to the object or content of a belief. By contrast, pragmatic reasons are sometimes said to be *state-given*, since they are provided by facts that relate to the value of holding a belief with a given object.²⁴ Such reasons are sometimes described as the wrong kind of reason, since how good it is to believe *p* does not seem to bear on how credible *p* is. By contrast, evidential reasons are

²² Martel (2001: 317).

²³ There is of course room for arguing that these virtues are not purely aesthetic. For example, one might argue that they are really epistemic, since a hypothesis is more likely to be true the more parsimonious, simple, or elegant it is. Alternatively, one might argue that they are pragmatic virtues, since the more parsimonious, simple, or elegant a hypothesis is, the easier to use it is.

²⁴ Note that one and the same fact can be both an object-given and a state-given reason. If an eccentric billionaire offers to pay you a substantial sum to believe *p*, that is a state-given reason to believe *p*, but it may also be an object-given reason to believe that the billionaire does not care much about how his money is spent. What kind of reason something is depends not just on the fact itself, but also on how it relates to the attitude for which it is a reason.

sometimes described as the right kind of reason, since evidence that p does bear on how credible p is.

The distinction between right and wrong reasons is itself sometimes presented as if it corresponds to the distinction between object-given and state-given reasons. There is room to doubt that the distinctions are equivalent, however. For example, there may be reasons that are object-given but of the wrong kind. An example might be Pi 's aesthetic reason to believe in God. It resembles a reason of the wrong kind, since the fact that hypothesis h_1 is more imaginative than h_2 does not make h_1 more credible than h_2 . Still, the reason may be classified as an object-given reason, since how imaginative a hypothesis is is a fact that relates to a potential object of belief rather than the belief itself. It seems therefore that to distinguish between right and wrong kinds of reasons, we must do more than distinguish between whether a fact relates to the object of a belief or to the belief itself. We must also take into account *how* it relates to the object of the belief. In short, the two must relate in such a way that the reason makes the object a *fitting* object of belief.

Indeed, the distinction between right and wrong kinds of reasons takes its name from the so-called Wrong Kind of Reason problem that plagues Fitting-Attitudes theories of value. Such theories analyse value and disvalue in terms of the evaluative attitudes that it is fitting to adopt towards some object of evaluation. What value an object has depends on what attitude it is fitting to adopt towards it. For example, X is admirable if it is fitting to admire X ; $\mathcal{I}$ is regrettable if it is fitting to regret that $\mathcal{I}$. The notion of fittingness adds a normative component to the analysis. For some object to be valuable, it is not enough that people as a matter of fact value it a certain way. Rather, an object is valuable only if one in some sense has sufficient

reason to adopt some evaluative attitude towards it. Thus, for X to be desirable is for there to be sufficient reason to desire X . For p to be credible is for there to be sufficient reason to believe p .

A problem for this analysis is that it seems possible to have a reason to take up an evaluative attitude towards an object that is not a fitting object of that attitude. For example, if some demon offers you a large prize for desiring a saucer of mud, that seems to be a reason to desire the mud. Yet, the demon's offer does not make the saucer of mud any more desirable. Hence, it seems that for some X to be valuable it is not enough that one has sufficient reason to value X . This is the Wrong Kind of Reason problem. To get round this problem Fitting-Attitudes theorists must explain why the demon's offer does not make the mud desirable even though it seems to be a reason to desire the mud. One way of doing so is to argue that for X to be valuable is for there to be sufficient reason *of the right kind* to value X , where reasons of the right kind are reasons that bear on whether X is valuable.

Finding an adequate distinction between right and wrong kinds of reasons is easier said than done, however. We cannot just say that R is a reason of the right kind to value X if R bears on whether X is valuable. Doing so seems circular, since Fitting-Attitudes theories are meant to analyse what it is for X to be valuable in terms of the right reasons we have in favour of valuing X , not the other way round. One way of avoiding this threat of circularity is simply to deny that there are any wrong kinds of reasons. This is sometimes called Wrong Kind of Reason skepticism. According to this response, it is a mistake to think that it is possible to have a reason to have an evaluative attitude towards some object that is not a fitting object of that attitude.

Rather, external incentives such as the demon's offer at most give one a reason to want to have an unfitting attitude and, if possible, to cause oneself to have it.

It is worth noting, however, that in the case of belief, Fitting-Attitudes theorists do not need to embrace this response to find a non-circular solution to the wrong kind of reason problem. Instead, they can say that R counts as a right reason to believe that p only if R indicates that p is true. Thus, for p to be credible is for there to be sufficient reason indicating that p is true. This does not involve any circularity, since we do not have to define what it is for R to indicate that p in terms of what it is for p to be credible. Rather, we can define what it is for R to indicate that p is true in terms of how likely it is that p is true given R . The more likely it is that p given R , the more strongly R indicates that it is true that p . For R to be a sufficient reason of the right kind to believe that p , R must make it sufficiently likely that p .

Since pragmatic reasons for belief are not truth-indicative, they count as the wrong kind of reason according to this classification. Yet, this does not mean that there are no such reasons. Nor does it mean that they cannot play an interesting role in deliberation about what to believe. Even if such reasons do not count in favour of believing p by virtue of indicating that p is true, evidentialists and other wrong kind of reason skeptics must still show that non-evidential reasons cannot count in favour of belief in some other way.

2. The Involuntarist Argument

One observation that may appear to speak against there being any pragmatic reasons for belief is that it seems impossible to form a belief based on how good or beneficial

it would be to hold that belief. Unlike evidential reasons, pragmatic reasons seem to be *motivationally inert* with respect to belief. Whereas one will most likely come to believe that p if one realises that one has strong evidence that p is true, finding out that it would be good to hold some belief will not thereby move one to hold that belief. This marks a sharp contrast between belief and action. While practical considerations cannot move one to believe, they can generally motivate one to act; if we find out that ϕ ing would have good consequences, we can generally decide to ϕ on that basis so long as no debilitating circumstances prevent us from doing so.

It is natural to take this difference between belief and action to stem from the fact that we do not have immediate voluntary control over what we believe whereas we do have such control over our actions. This contrast can be brought out more clearly if we appeal to the notion of a “basic action”.²⁵ A basic action is an action that one can perform simply by executing a choice or intention to do it. Thus, raising one’s arm is a basic action, since one can raise one’s arm simply by choosing to raise it, but opening the door is not a basic action, since it can only be performed by performing the more basic actions of grasping, turning, and pulling the handle which are constitutive of the more complex action of opening the door.

This allows us to articulate one difference between belief and action more precisely. While our actions are under direct voluntary control in the sense that we can usually perform them simply by choosing to do so or choosing to perform a series of constitutive basic actions, we do not have the same direct voluntary control over what beliefs we have, since forming a belief seems never to be a basic action. No matter how much one may want to believe something, or how much someone may offer to

²⁵ As is done by e.g. Alston (1989: 119) and Feldman (2000).

pay us to believe some proposition, it seems impossible simply to form a belief by choosing or intending to do so.²⁶ Chrisman (2008) has usefully named this the *no rewards principle*:

(NRP) No matter how large the reward, *S* cannot simply decide to believe some proposition *p* in order to collect that reward (2008: 346).

It is controversial whether one must actually be able to carry out some action or form some belief in order for one to have a reason to do so, but many philosophers have thought that one cannot have a reason to ϕ , where ϕ includes both belief and action, unless it is in principle within one's control to ϕ . One philosopher who gestures at such an argument as regards belief is Kelly (2002). He writes:

The mere realization that my believing some proposition would issue in good consequences does not result in my believing that proposition. On the other hand, the realization that I have strong evidence that some proposition is true typically does result in my believing that proposition. With respect to beliefs, practical considerations seem to be psychologically impotent in a way that epistemic considerations are not. And it is tempting to conclude from this that practical considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality.

Compare the situation with respect to height. One can, of course, make judgements about the expected consequences of being a certain height. For example, I am confident that I am considerably better off, on the whole, being as tall as I actually am as opposed to

²⁶ Philosophers who defend doxastic involuntarism can be divided into those who think that believing at will is logically impossible and those who think that it is merely psychologically impossible. Williams (1970) defends the former view. Williams's essay initiated the contemporary literature on doxastic voluntarism, but his argument is widely thought to be flawed. The argument is criticised by Winters (1979), Bennett (1990), Hieronymi (2006), and Setiya (2008), amongst others.

Although involuntarism is the dominant view in the contemporary literature, it is not without its dissenters. Philosophers who defend doxastic voluntarism include Ginet (1985) and Meiland (1980) although they do not claim that belief is always under basic voluntary control. Shah (2002) also defends voluntarism, but argues that it does not require decisional control.

being two feet shorter. Still, no one would think that it is more rational for me to be some heights rather than others. Moreover, it's plausible to suppose that the reason why the expected consequences of my being a certain height make no difference to whether it is rational for me to be that height derives from my utter lack of control over my height. (Perhaps if I *could* control my height, then it *would* be more rational for me to be some height rather than others.) Perhaps then holding a given belief is like being a certain height: although one can evaluate the expected consequences of holding that belief, such evaluations make no difference to whether it is rational to hold that belief. (2002: 166-7)²⁷

Even though this does not represent Kelly's whole view, the passage may serve as a useful example of how one might appeal to doxastic involuntarism to argue for evidentialism. How we interpret the passage makes a big difference as to how successful an argument it is, however.

Suppose first that the argument in the passage from Kelly is that just as it cannot be rational to be one height or another because one cannot voluntarily control what height one is, a consideration cannot bear on whether it is rational for one to ϕ if ϕ -ing is not within one's *voluntary* control. If we interpret the argument that way, then the argument counts against not just pragmatism, but also against evidentialism. For just as one cannot simply decide to believe some proposition because of the good consequences that would follow from believing it, so it is not within one's voluntary control to decide whether or not to believe what one takes oneself to have good evidence to believe. Consider, for example, looking out of one's window and seeing that it is pouring down outside. One will then have excellent perceptual evidence that it is raining, but it will not be within one's voluntary control whether or not one

²⁷ See also Hookway (1999: 380).

believes that it is raining outside. All things being equal, one will simply find oneself believing that it is raining upon seeing that it is pouring down.²⁸

Thus, if rationality requires voluntary control in the sense that a consideration cannot bear on whether it is rational to ϕ unless ϕ -ing is within one's voluntary control, then not just the expected utility of believing that p but also the evidence one might have in favour of p will be irrelevant to whether it is rational to believe that p . That sounds absurd, however, so we ought to look for a more charitable interpretation.

Evidently, what is crucial to the argument sketched by Kelly is not just that belief is not subject to voluntary control, but also that belief appears only to be responsive to epistemic considerations. As Kelly writes, it is tempting to “conclude that practical considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality” because they are “psychologically impotent in a way that epistemic considerations are not” (*ibid.*: 166). The guiding idea behind the passage seems then to be that for some fact f to count as a reason to ϕ , it must be possible for one to ϕ in response to f . In terms of belief:

(Response) A fact f is a reason for one to believe that p only if it is possible for one to believe that p in response to f .²⁹

²⁸ Granted, one could try to convince oneself that it is not raining by invoking various skeptical scenarios. Perhaps one might tell oneself that what appears to be rain is really water sprinkled from a hose by a film crew. Yet, even if one managed to convince oneself that it is not really raining, one would not have formed the belief voluntarily in the same way as one can perform an action such as lifting one's arm voluntarily. Rather, one would only have brought oneself to form the belief as a result of telling oneself that it is not raining.

²⁹ This plausibly only amounts to a necessary condition on what it takes for some fact to be a reason for one to be in some state. Any agent A will at any given time be in a variety of states S which are responsive to various facts f , but only in the case of a few of those states and facts does it seem appropriate to say that f is a reason for A to be in S . For example, what blood pressure one's has is responsive to the force and rate at which one's heart beats, but it sounds odd to say that the fact that one's heart beats at such and such a rate gives one a reason to have such and such a blood pressure. Rather, one's heart beating at a certain rate is merely a cause of one's having a certain blood pressure. Some state S being responsive to some fact f cannot therefore be a sufficient condition for f to be a reason for one to be in S .

This together with the observation that practical considerations are motivationally inert with respect to belief as well as the observation that belief is not subject to voluntary control provide the building blocks for the beginnings of an argument for evidentialism. Using those three premises, we can distill the following anti-pragmatist argument from the quote from Kelly:

- (P1) A fact f is a reason to believe that p only if it is possible to believe that p in response to f .
- (P2) Reflection on the fact that it would be beneficial to believe that p will not dispose one to believe that p , and it is impossible to form the belief that p simply by deciding to believe that p .
- ∴
- (C1) It is impossible to believe that p in response to the fact that it would be beneficial to believe that p .
- ∴
- (C2) The fact that it would be beneficial to believe that p is not a reason to believe that p .

Conversely, we might use Response to argue for evidentialism. Thus, one may add that since only awareness of facts that constitute evidence for p can move one to believe that p , it follows that it is only possible to believe that p in response to evidence that p . By premise one, it therefore also follows that only evidence that p can be a reason to believe that p .

3. Direct and Indirect Control

An obvious objection to this argument is that it does not account for all the ways in which one may respond to a putative reason for belief. Even if we grant premises (2)

and (3), the implicit assumption that they represent the only ways of responding to a reason for belief is open to doubt. A third alternative that should not be ruled out is that one may often be able to get oneself to believe what one judges to be most beneficial by taking intermediate steps that will result in one's having the relevant belief. As Kelly himself points out, it is often possible to influence one's beliefs in various ways even though it is not possible to form a belief that p simply by deciding to believe that p (*ibid.*: 167). The point is old and goes back at least to an oft-quoted passage from Pascal where he offers the following advice to those who accept his wager argument, but are unable to believe in God:

... if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so. Concentrate then not on convincing yourself by multiplying proofs of God's existence but by diminishing your passions. You want to find faith and you do not know the road. You want to be cured of unbelief and you ask for the remedy: learn from those who were once bound like you and who now wager all they have. These are people who know the road you wish to follow, who have been cured of the affliction of which you wish to be cured: follow the way by which they began. They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on. That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile. (*Pensées*, § 418)

Just how much indirect control we have is an empirical question, but it is plausible that there are various ways in which one might influence one's beliefs. Pascal suggests spending time with believers and behaving as if one believes whereas other writers draw attention to a wider range of methods. For example, Alston writes that people may sometimes succeed in regulating their beliefs through "selective exposure to evidence, selective attention to supporting considerations, seeking the company of

believers and avoiding non-believers, self-suggestion, and (possibly) more bizarre methods like hypnotism” (1989: 134).

Much is often made of how difficult it is to get oneself to believe using one of these methods. Alston, for one, claims that although people may sometimes manage to manipulate themselves using one of these methods, they will more often than not be unsuccessful (*ibid.*: 135). Suppose, to use Alston’s own example, that one was offered \$500,000,000 to believe that the United States is still a colony of Great Britain. It does not seem that one could reliably form the belief via some indirect means. Any attempt would likely fail given all the evidence to the contrary.

Yet, examples such as this reveal less about our general capacity for controlling our beliefs than they do about the particular beliefs in question. All that Alston’s example illustrates is that when a belief is sufficiently well entrenched, we stand little chance of forming beliefs which are inconsistent with the entrenched belief even if we set out to do so. This only represents one circumstance out of many, however. To get a better sense of the extent to which we can influence our beliefs, we must take into account a series of cases ranging from when there is strong evidence against a proposition to when there is strong evidence for it. It does not seem too much of a conjecture to expect that as we move through the series, the prospects for indirect control will change. If there is only weak evidence that not p , it will be easier to form the belief that p than if there is strong evidence to the contrary. If there is no evidence that not p , it will be easier still. If there is also some evidence that p , even easier, and so on.

Under certain conditions, changing one’s beliefs may not even require seeking out new evidence or ignoring evidence one already has. Instead, it may be enough to

weigh the available evidence in a different way. Suppose one has good but not conclusive evidence that p . It may then be possible to form or give up the belief that p by bringing different possibilities to bear on the question whether to believe p . If one already believes p , one can often revise one's commitment to something less than full belief by invoking some scenario that is compatible with the evidence, but in which it is false that p . Conversely, if one does not believe p , it is sometimes possible to form that belief simply by stopping to take seriously the possibility that p might not be true.

Other forms of indirect control need not involve any self-deception either. As Feldman (2000/2004) points out, one may sometimes get oneself to form a belief simply by altering the world so that the content of the belief becomes true. If it would be advantageous to believe that p and we have control over whether p obtains, we can form the belief that p simply by bringing it about that p (*ibid.*: 171). Indeed, we may well be able to form the belief prior to bringing it about that p . As Marušić (2011) notes, if p is a proposition about the future, we can often form the belief that p simply by deciding to bring it about that p . In chapter four, I shall argue that this is not a trivial point. Since many of our beliefs about the future are based on what we decide to do rather than on what we predict that we will do, many of our beliefs about the future are counterexamples to evidentialism, as they are not based on evidence.

4. Explanatory Arguments

In sum, then, it seems that we *can* sometimes respond to putative pragmatic reasons for belief. Under at least some circumstances, it is possible to take various measures to form beliefs based on their non-epistemic merits. This creates a challenge for

evidentialists. If it is sometimes possible to take means to form some beneficial belief rather than believe what one's current evidence warrants, this seems to leave open the question which belief one ought to hold all things considered. But if this is an open question, evidentialists must explain why we should only take into account what the evidence warrants when determining what to believe. Why not also take into account how good it would be to hold the alternative belief?

Kelly (2002) offers an argument that promises to answer this question. Kelly adopts the Davidsonian view that rational beliefs and rational actions alike are *rationalized*, i.e. made rational, by the considerations on which they are based.³⁰ The point can be illustrated by distinguishing between (i) a case where an individual has a reason to ϕ , but does not ϕ for that reason and (ii) a case where an individual has a reason to ϕ and ϕ -s for that reason. Only in the second case is the individual's ϕ -ing made rational by the reason, Kelly argues, since only in that case does the individual ϕ on the basis of R .

According to Kelly, the fact that we sometimes enjoy indirect control over our beliefs is irrelevant to whether the expected utility of holding a belief can make a difference to the belief's rationality. For even if one may be able to cause oneself to believe that p upon recognising that it would be advantageous to believe that p , the causal relation holding between one's recognition of that putative reason and the resulting belief will not be of the right kind for one's belief to be based on that reason. Rather, Kelly argues that when one succeeds in getting oneself to hold a desired belief in some indirect manner, the resulting belief will be based on some other mediating fact. Thus, if one succeeds in getting oneself to believe that p by acquiring evidence

³⁰ Cf. Davidson (1963/2001).

that p , the resulting belief will be based on that evidence rather than any considerations concerning the practical consequences of believing that p (*ibid.*: 174).³¹

This stands in sharp contrast to how practical considerations figure in relation to the act of causing oneself to believe, Kelly argues. There the causal relation holding between one's recognition that it would be beneficial to believe that p is of the right kind for the act of causing oneself to believe to be based on that recognition. For example, one may set out to acquire evidence that p for the reason that it would be beneficial to believe that p . Or one might set out to change the world so that p for the same reasons. In neither case, however, will the resulting belief be based on one's recognition that it would be beneficial to believe that p . Kelly concludes therefore that while practical considerations can constitute grounds on which actions are based, they cannot constitute grounds on which beliefs are based. Hence, they do not rationalize beliefs even though they can rationalize the actions which may cause one to believe.

Yet, this does not show that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. All it shows is that such reasons cannot rationalize belief in the same way as they can rationalize actions or in the same way as evidence can rationalise belief. If the explanatory constraint fails, nothing prevents there being such reasons. If R can be a reason to ϕ without being capable of being the reason for which one ϕ -s, then R can be a reason to ϕ even if R cannot rationalise ϕ -ing in Kelly's sense of the term. Moreover,

³¹ The same observation can be extended to the other means of influencing one's beliefs that were discussed previously. If one manages to get oneself to believe that p via some process of conditioning, the belief will not be based on one's recognition that it would be good to believe that p , but will simply be the causal result of one's acting in a certain way. Similarly, if one gets oneself to believe that p either by changing the world so that p is the case or by resolving to bring it about that p in the future, the resulting belief will either be based on the fact that p is now the case, or it will be based on one's resolving to bring about p in the future. In neither case, will the belief be based on the recognition that it would be beneficial to believe that p .

Kelly's argument only shows that there is a specific sense in which pragmatic considerations cannot make a difference to whether it is rational to believe that p . If they cannot rationalise beliefs, they cannot make the belief itself rational. Yet, this is only one sense of many in which a consideration can bear on whether it is rational to believe that p . Even if pragmatic reasons cannot make a difference in this sense, there is still a sense in which they can make it rational to hold the belief in question. Although they may not rationalize the belief itself, they can still be reasons for having the belief.

Shah (2006) provides an argument that avoids these objections. He argues that only evidence that p can be a reason to believe that p , since only evidence that p can be a reason for which one believes that p . Whereas Kelly follows Davidson, Shah's argument draws inspiration from Bernard Williams's internalism about reasons. Following Williams, Shah starts from the premise that for some R to be a reason for X to ϕ , R must be "capable of being the reason for which X ϕ s" (*ibid.*: 484). He argues that this implies that there is a "deliberative constraint" on reasons: for R to be a reason for X to ϕ , R must be capable of disposing X to ϕ when X deliberates about whether to ϕ . It must, so to say, be possible for X to become disposed to ϕ by virtue of recognising the "normative force" of R (*ibid.*: 485).

When a consideration motivates ϕ -ing in this way, Shah describes it as functioning as a premise in one's deliberation about whether to ϕ . Hence, for R to be a reason for one to ϕ , R must be capable of disposing one to ϕ "in the way characteristic of R 's functioning as a premise in deliberation whether to ϕ " (*ibid.*). Applied to belief, Shah's argument goes as follows:

- B1. R is a reason for X to believe that p only if R is capable of being a reason for which X believes that p
- B2. R is a reason for which X believes that p only if R is capable of disposing X towards believing that p in the way characteristic of R 's functioning as a premise in doxastic deliberation
- B3. Therefore R is a reason for X to believe that p only if R is capable of disposing X towards believing that p in the way characteristic of R 's functioning as a premise in doxastic deliberation.
(*ibid.*: 486-87)

According to Shah, R is a reason for which one can ϕ only if there are no “unalterable features of X 's psychology that prevent R from disposing X to ϕ in the way characteristic of a consideration's functioning as a premise in deliberation about whether to ϕ ” (*ibid.*: 485). Importantly, there is such a feature in the case of belief, Shah argues. It is that when we deliberate about whether to believe that p , “the deliberative question *whether to believe that p* inevitably gives way to the factual question *whether p*, because the answer to the latter question will determine the answer to the former” (*ibid.*: 481-2). Shah calls this the *transparency* of belief. When deliberating about whether to believe that p , we are, so to say, compelled to see right through the candidate belief and to focus solely on whether p , the content of the belief, is true.

Shah argues that since only an answer to the factual question *whether p* can determine the answer to the deliberative question *whether to believe that p*, no considerations concerning the practical value of believing that p can function as premises in deliberation about whether to believe that p . Consequently, they also cannot dispose one to believe that p like they would if they could function as premises in deliberation about whether to believe that p . According to Shah, they are therefore

also incapable of being reasons for which one believes and so cannot be reasons for belief.

It is worth noting, however, that to accept the first and fundamental premise of Shah's argument, one need not also accept the deliberative constraint that he borrows from Williams. One can accept that (i) R can be a reason for X to ϕ only if R is "capable of being the reason for which X ϕ s", but deny that (ii) R must also be capable of disposing X to ϕ when X deliberates about whether to ϕ . Many externalists about reasons make this exact point. John McDowell is the most prominent example. He agrees that "any reason, even an external one, must be potentially explanatory of action" (1998: 98). Yet, he argues that one can have a reason to ϕ even if deliberation about whether to ϕ will not dispose one to ϕ for that reason. For even if deliberation cannot move one to ϕ , one may still be brought to recognize the normative force of the reason via some other, non-deliberative, process.

McDowell argues that we may picture how such a conversion might occur "[i]f we think of ethical upbringing in a roughly Aristotelian way, as a process of habituation into suitable modes of behaviour, inextricably bound up with the inculcation of suitably related modes of thought". Such a process results in "the acquisition, simultaneously, of a way of seeing things and of a collection of motivational directions or practical concerns, focused and activated in particular cases by exercises of the way of seeing things" (*ibid.*: 101). That is, if such an upbringing goes as it should, the agent will acquire correct beliefs about her or his reasons and will be motivated to act in accordance with them. Hence, a person from whose initial starting-point there is "no rational route" to being swayed by a given reason may eventually become motivated to act or believe for that reason nonetheless (*ibid.*: 102).

Perhaps Shah could argue that McDowell's point is compatible with there being a deliberative constraint on reasons. After all, Shah describes the constraint as merely implying there must be no *unalterable* feature of one's psychology that prevents the putative reason from disposing one to ϕ when one employs the reason as a premise in deliberating about what to do or believe. I shall not try to argue that McDowell's view is incompatible with that claim. My point is only that constructing an Explanatory Argument for evidentialism does not depend on finding a resolution to the debate between internalists and externalists. Regardless of whether there can be said to be a deliberative constraint on reasons, internalists and externalists alike can agree that for some R to be a reason for X to ϕ it must in principle be possible for X to ϕ for the reason that R . That is all that is really needed for the following Explanatory Argument.³²

1. R is a reason for X to believe that p only if X is able to believe p for the reason that R .
 2. It is not possible to believe that p for the reason that it would be good to believe that p .
- Therefore,
3. The fact that it would be good to believe that p cannot be a reason to believe that p .

I shall not take issue directly with the deliberative constraint that Shah says applies to reasons. Instead, I wish to take issue with the more basic assumption that for R to be a reason for X to ϕ , R must be "capable of being the reason for which X ϕ s". Call this the *Explanatory Constraint* on reasons. Shah's formulation of the constraint is problematic, since it does not make clear whether the constraint applies both to

³² Strictly speaking, what Shah says about the transparency and normativity of belief is therefore not really needed for showing that there can be no pragmatic reasons for belief.

explanatory and normative reasons. The appeal of the constraint to internalists and externalists alike may well trade on this unclarity. If the constraint is only supposed to apply to explanatory reasons, it is trivially true, since R cannot be an explanatory reason unless it can be a reason for which one can ϕ . This is not enough for Shah's argument, however. I take it that his argument is meant to show not just that only evidence can motivate belief, but also that only evidence that p can be a normative reason to believe that p . Hence, the explanatory constraint must also apply to normative reasons.

Yet, we cannot easily extend the explanatory constraint to cover normative reasons also. Whereas the constraint may be trivially true as regards explanatory reasons, it is vulnerable to counterexamples when applied to normative reasons. Such counterexamples can be found both with respect to reasons for action and with respect to reasons for attitudes. Morauta (2013) presents some counterexamples as regards action and intention. One is the following:

Surprise Parties: Will very much enjoys surprise parties, that is, parties that he isn't aware of in advance. As it happens, there is a surprise party waiting for him next door – a party that he isn't aware of.
(2010: 213)³³

Will cannot go next door for the reason that there is a surprise party waiting for him there. Nor can he intend to do so. For him to go or intend to go next door for the reason that there is a surprise party waiting for him, he would have to believe that there is a surprise party waiting for him. According to Morauta, that is not possible,

³³ Morauta takes the template for his counterexamples from Schroeder (2007: 33, 165-6)

however: “Will can’t believe that there is a *surprise* party waiting for him next door – a party that he isn’t aware of” (*ibid.*).³⁴ Yet, Morauta argues, it does not follow that Will does not have a reason to both go and intend to go next door. Since he after all enjoys surprise parties, the fact that there is one waiting for him next door intuitively is a reason for him to both go and intend to go next door.

These counterexamples to the explanatory constraint in the case of action should make us wary to endorse it in the case of belief. Are there any comparable counterexamples as regards belief? “Yes” appears to be the right answer. There are some facts that constitute normative reasons for belief, but cannot at the same time be reasons for which one believes, since they cease to obtain as soon as one believes the proposition that they support. One ‘blindspot’ case like this is when *R* is an epistemic reason of the form ‘I have evidence that *p*’, but *p* is a proposition that one cannot believe without ceasing to have evidence that *p*. An example is the following:

Perfect Agnostics: Anna suspends judgment about any proposition she ever considers. That is a normative reason to believe that she is the perfect agnostic. If Anna believes that she suspends judgment about any proposition she considers, she will cease to be a perfect agnostic, however. She will no longer suspend judgment about all propositions.

³⁴ An alternative explanation for why Will cannot go next door for the reason that a surprise party is waiting for him there starts from the premise that the ‘reason for which’ locution is factive (*ibid.*: fn. 9). That is, *R* is the reason for which *X* ϕ ’s only if it is the case that *R*. Accordingly, Will can go next door for the reason that a surprise party is waiting for him there only if he both believes that (i) a surprise party is waiting for him next door and (ii) there *is* a surprise party waiting for him. These two conditions are inconsistent, however. If Will believes that there is surprise party waiting for him, the party no longer is a surprise, so it no longer is a surprise party. Given that the ‘reason for which’ locution is factive, Will therefore cannot go next door for the reason that a surprise party is waiting for him there. This is the explanation that I favour in what follows.

The fact that Anna suspends judgement about any proposition she considers is a normative reason to believe that she is a perfect agnostic. Yet, Anna cannot believe that she is a perfect agnostic for that reason. For her to believe that she is a perfect agnostic because she suspends judgment about every proposition she considers, she must first believe that she suspends judgement about any proposition she considers. But if she forms this belief, she ceases to be a perfect agnostic, since there is now one proposition about which she does not suspend judgment. That makes it impossible for Anna to believe that she is a perfect agnostic for the reason that she suspends judgement about any proposition she considers. At most, she can believe that she is a perfect agnostic for what seems to her to be a normative reason to have that belief. Yet, it does not follow that the fact that Anna suspends judgement about any proposition she considers is not a normative reason to believe that she is a perfect agnostic. After all, an agnostic is someone who suspends judgment, so someone who suspends judgment about everything must be a perfect agnostic.

5. Reasons to Believe that P vs. Reasons Indicating that P

I have argued that the fact that belief is not subject to voluntary control does not show that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. Instead, I argued that the fact that belief is subject to indirect control is sufficient for it to be possible to have and respond to such reasons. This conclusion is by no means uncontroversial. Although some philosophers accept it³⁵, most philosophers writing on the topic disagree. A standard rejoinder is to argue that even if we have some indirect control over what beliefs we

³⁵ See e.g. Heil (1983, 1992) and Foley (1987).

have, this shows at most that we sometimes have a reason to *cause* ourselves to have some belief.³⁶ The expected benefit of believing still cannot be a reason to believe, since it is simply the *wrong kind of reason*. This skeptic view gets expressed in a variety of ways which are not all equal. For example, Allan Gibbard writes that:

It might be thought that for something to be rational is for it to be desirable or advantageous. Such a crude pragmatism, though, would leave ordinary thought about rationality mysterious: it may fit actions, but it fails with beliefs and attitudes. Take the stock example of the man who has evidence his wife is unfaithful. Whether it is still rational to believe her faithful – whether such a belief would be warranted – depends on his evidence, and on his evidence alone... but the way the belief would affect his feelings toward her may make it rational for him *to want to believe* her faithful. (1990: 36-7)

By contrast, John Skorupski argues that what pragmatists allege to be reasons for belief are merely reasons to bring it about that one believes:

I may be on an extremely dangerous mission which there is no reason to believe I will survive. But it will greatly aid my peace of mind if I *believe* that I am fated to survive it. So if swallowing this drug or saying this prayer will in fact cause me to believe that I am fated to survive then I have a practical reason to swallow the drug or say the prayer. It does not follow that I have any epistemic reason to believe that I will survive. In this situation there is reason for me to bring it about that I believe something that there *is* no reason for me to believe. (2010: 55)

Finally, Derek Parfit claims that:

When it would be better for us if we had some belief or desire, we have object-given reasons to want to have this belief or desire, and to cause ourselves to have it, if we can. (2011, vol. I: 51)³⁷

³⁶ See e.g. Gibbard (1990: 36-7), Owens (2000: 25), Parfit (2001: 24 & 2011, vol. I: 51), Kelly (2002), Shah (2006: 498), Skorupski (2010: 55) and Raz (2011: 39).

³⁷ Elsewhere, he writes in a similar vein that “... state-given reasons to *have* some desire are better regarded as object-given reasons to *want* to have it, and to try to have it. And, when so regarded, state-given desire-based reasons disappear” (2001: 24).

None of these statements are equivalent. Strictly speaking, Parfit does not say that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. He only says that when it would be better for us to have some belief, we have object-given reasons to want to believe and cause us to believe. This does not entail that there are no state-given reasons. Perhaps we have both kinds of reasons.

Gibbard, by contrast, talks about rationality rather than reasons. He seems to assume that for a belief to be rational is for it to be warranted. Few pragmatists would grant this assumption. Pascal, for his part, seems to treat rationality and warrant as distinct, since he claims that religious belief is permissible even in the absence of any proof of God's existence. Pragmatists need not distinguish the two, however. Even if they grant that rational beliefs must be warranted, they need not agree that we always have most reason to be rational. Such pragmatists, may argue that even if pragmatic reasons do not contribute to a belief's rationality, they might still be strong enough to outweigh the epistemic reasons which do contribute to the belief's rationality. In such cases, we have most reason to be irrational.

Only Skorupski says in unequivocal terms that one cannot have pragmatic reasons to believe. Yet, more needs to be said about why the potential benefit of believing that p can *only* be a reason to cause oneself to believe that p . Why not say, as Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen suggests, that in addition to being a reason to cause oneself to believe, the potential benefit is *also* a reason to believe that p .³⁸ Indeed, it is arguable that one only has the former reason in virtue of having the latter. Since Skorupski's answer to this challenge says a lot about the perspective from which the

³⁸ 2004: 412.

wrong-kind-of-reason skeptics approach the debate, I shall reserve my discussion of it until the next chapter. There I shall argue that Skorupski's case against pragmatism rests on a mistaken conflation between the source of a reason and its content.

In short, Skorupski argues that since it is *a priori* that a reason to believe that *p* is a reason to believe that it is true that *p*, it follows that reasons for belief must be epistemic reasons which indicate that it is true that *p*. This inference is mistaken, I shall argue. From the fact that it is *a priori* that a reason to believe that *p* is a reason to believe that it is true that *p*, it does not follow that such reasons must be epistemic in nature. We cannot use this mode of inference, since the addition of the truth predicate does not reveal anything about what reasons for belief there are. Instead, the fact that it is *a priori* that a reason to believe that *p* is a reason to believe that it is true that *p* merely reflects the T-schematic tautology that it is true that *p* if and only if *p*. Since the two expressions are equivalent, "reason to believe that *p*" and "reason to believe that it is true that *p*" are merely different ways of saying the same thing.

6. 'Ought' All-Things-Considered and Incommensurability

If, after all these efforts, it still has not been shown that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief, what then ought we to believe *all-things-considered* when it would be good to believe something for which one lacks adequate evidence? I shall spend the rest of this chapter arguing that this is both a well-formed question and one which we should take seriously. This is not a trivial exercise, since many deny that this is a meaningful question. One example is Feldman (2000/2004). He asks us to distinguish between synchronic rationality and diachronic rationality where the "former concerns

questions of rationality at a given moment while the latter concerns rationality over time” (*ibid.*: 189). According to Feldman, evidentialism should not be seen as making a claim about diachronic rationality. Rather:

Evidentialism is best seen as a theory about synchronic rationality. It holds that the epistemically rational thing to do at any moment is to follow the evidence you have at that moment. It doesn’t address questions of how to conduct inquiry over periods of time (*ibid.*).³⁹

This is so, he argues, since the fundamental epistemic goal is to have reasonable beliefs. According to Feldman, this goal only concerns what attitude one ought to adopt given the evidence one currently has:

By seeking out new evidence concerning some important proposition and then believing what the evidence supports, I don’t do a better job of achieving the goal of believing reasonably. I achieve that goal at any moment by believing what is then supported by my evidence (*ibid.*).

In Feldman’s view, diachronic questions about how, when, and whether to collect evidence do not fall within the scope of evidentialism, as they are not epistemic questions. Instead, they are moral or prudential questions:

You should gather more evidence concerning a proposition only when having a true belief about the subject matter of the proposition makes a moral or prudential difference and gathering more evidence is likely to improve your chances of getting it right (*ibid.*).

³⁹ It is worth noting that this is Feldman’s own conception of what kind of claim evidentialists should make. Not all authors restrict evidentialism so that it only makes a claim about synchronic rationality. Clifford, for one, does not restrict his version of evidentialism in this way. He argues not only that one ought never to believe upon insufficient evidence, but also that one ought never to make up one’s mind about some matter without taking care to seek any relevant evidence that is readily available to one. Marušić (2011: fn 24) makes the same point.

Even if we grant Feldman this interpretation, his view is open to the objection that it equates two concepts which are distinct. On the one hand, Feldman says that evidentialism is a view about what it is *epistemically* rational to believe – namely, that “the epistemically rational thing to do at any moment is to follow the evidence at that moment”. On the other hand, he also says that the fundamental epistemic goal is to have reasonable beliefs and that the goal of believing reasonably is only promoted by believing what is supported by the evidence one currently has.

Yet, we cannot assume without further argument that the question of what it is reasonable to believe is equivalent to the question of what it is epistemically rational to believe. Why should we not say that in addition to there being a notion of what it is epistemically rational to believe, there is also a notion of what one ought to believe all things considered? Why, in particular, should we not say that sometimes what it is epistemically rational to believe is not what one ought to believe all things considered and *vice versa*? If there is such a notion, we ought, when deciding what it is reasonable to believe, to take into consideration not only what it is epistemically rational to believe, but also what it would be rational to believe from the practical standpoint.

Feldman himself is not sympathetic to this idea. He argues that there is no encompassing ‘ought’, a *just plain ought*, that weighs epistemic, prudential, and other considerations to give an overall assessment of what one ought to believe. According to Feldman, it makes no sense to ask what one ought to believe in this all things considered sense. For that question to make sense, there must be some way of comparing the epistemic and practical value of having a belief to determine if one outweighs the other. Yet, it makes little sense to compare values in this way, he argues, since it is hard to think of any measure that could be used for comparing them. While

it is more or less clear what value is to be promoted when we say that one morally, prudentially, or epistemically ought to ϕ , it is far from certain what value is to be promoted when we say that one ought to ϕ all things considered. According to Feldman, such a value “isn’t to be identified with any of the more determinate kinds of value and there seems to be no uniquely correct (or range of correct) ways to combine moral, practical, epistemic, and other values” (*ibid.*: 193-4).

In a similar vein, Parfit (2011) argues that there are no state-given reasons for belief, since it does not make sense to compare how beneficial it is to believe p with how likely it is that p in order to find out what one has most reason to believe. Suppose, for example, that some despot threatens to torture one unless one believes that he is the world’s greatest genius. Suppose also one has conclusive evidence that this is false. Parfit argues that if there are any state-given reasons for belief, it should make sense to ask whether one has more state-given reason to believe that the despot is a genius than one has evidential reason to believe that he is not. But this does not make sense, Parfit argues:

I could not rationally ask whether my state-given reason to have this false belief is stronger than, or outweighs, my *epistemic* reasons *not* to have it. It makes no sense to compare the strength of my evidence for the falsity of this belief with the badness of my being tortured (*ibid.*: 426).

Parfit argues that this suggests that there are no state-given reasons for belief. Rather, the question of whether it would be worse to be tortured than to have a false belief is a practical question about “which of two outcomes I have more reason to want to prevent or try to prevent” (*ibid.*: 425).

This argument proceeds too quickly, however. From the fact that there is no measure for weighing evidential and pragmatic reasons, it does not follow that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. At most, what follows is that evidential and pragmatic reasons are incomparable. That is not such a surprising result, as different kinds of reasons frequently appear at least weakly incomparable. For example, a government may have both a reason to protect the natural environment and a reason to invest in new infrastructure. Yet, there seems to be no common measure for weighing these reasons against each other, since there is no way of telling for each piece of environment and each piece of infrastructure whether one is more valuable than the other or whether they are equally valuable. Often, it may be indeterminate whether preserving a piece of nature is better than sacrificing it for more infrastructure. Neither option may be better than the other, but nor may they be equally good. Yet, this does not mean that it does not make sense to ask what one ought to do all things considered when two kinds of reason are incomparable. All it means is that there is no answer to that question. In that case, there is no correct way of resolving what to do, but that does not show that we cannot still ask what to do all things considered.⁴⁰

Not everyone will agree with this point. Feldman, for one, disagrees. He argues that asking what one ought to believe all things considered is similar to asking which

⁴⁰ Even if there is no answer to the question, it may still be that what one ought to do all things considered is a matter of faith, feeling, or some other non-rational concern. Indeed, this seems to be how William James proposes we respond if we end up in a situation where the available evidence does not settle which of two rival hypotheses is true, but which hypothesis we believe has significant consequences. He does not say that in such a situation, rationality requires us to believe the hypothesis which has the best practical consequences. Instead, he claims that under such circumstances it is one's "passional nature" which must decide which hypothesis to believe or whether to suspend judgment altogether (1912: 11).

of two objects A and B is bigger when A is taller than B, but B is more voluminous than A. Since “bigger” might mean both “taller” and “more voluminous”, both A and B might properly be said to be bigger, each in their own sense. Yet, it does not make sense to ask which of A and B is bigger all things considered, Feldman claims. No matter how we may weigh A’s being taller against B’s being more voluminous, there is no non-arbitrary way of determining which of A and B is really bigger. It just does not make sense “to ask whether height trumps width or volume trumps height in assessing overall size” (*ibid.*: 192). When asked about A and B, the question which of them is bigger simply is ambiguous between “which of them is taller?” and “which of them is more voluminous?”. Similarly, Feldman argues, the question of what one ought to believe is ambiguous between what one ought to believe either epistemically, morally, or prudentially. Weighing these different ‘oughts’ against each other to determine what one ought to do all things considered just does not make any sense, he argues.

This analogy is misleading, however. When we disambiguate the descriptive question “which of A and B is bigger?” to mean either “which of A and B is taller?” or “which of A and B is more voluminous?”, the correct answer to the first question does not conflict with the correct answer to the second question. A’s being taller than B does not contradict B’s being more voluminous than A, so it makes little sense to inquire further into which of them is really bigger. The situation is different when we ask a normative question concerning what one ought to do or believe all things considered. Suppose one is deciding between giving half of one’s income to charity or investing it in bonds. What ought one to do?

We may try to disambiguate that question so that it means either “what ought one to do, morally speaking?” or “what ought one to do, prudentially speaking?”. Suppose giving to charity will alleviate much suffering whereas investing in bonds will make one better off in the future. It seems then that the correct answer to the first question is that one ought to give to charity while the correct answer to the second question is that one ought to invest in bonds. Yet, learning this does not settle inquiry, since there is still a normative conflict between the two answers. Since they recommend incompatible courses of action, both cannot be realised at the same time. Accordingly, there remains a question of what one ought to do all things considered.

Feldman acknowledges that we are inclined to inquire further in cases such as these. Still, he denies that this is because it makes sense to ask what one ought to do all things considered. Rather, he claims that any further questions one may ask in such a situation concern ‘ought’ in one of its disambiguated senses. For example, one may inquire whether it really is the case that one morally ought to give half of one’s income to charity, as one will be able to donate more later if one invests the money. Or one may inquire whether investing in bonds really is more prudent than giving to charity, since acting morally can also serve one’s own interests. Further, one may inquire about others’ opinion and what they would have done in the same situation. According to Feldman, however, it does not make sense to ask what one ought to do all of these things taken into consideration (*ibid.*: 194).

But this adds nothing new to Feldman’s argument. It simply begs the question against those who claim that when we inquire further about what to do, we really are trying to find out what to do all things considered. Suppose one goes through all the questions one can think of as bearing on the matter and still comes to the conclusion

that morality requires giving to charity whereas prudence requires investing in bonds. If Feldman's proposal is right, there should then be no need to inquire any further about what to do. If that question just is ambiguous between what one morally ought to do and what one prudentially ought to do, settling the answer to each of these questions should also settle what one ought to do. Yet, this is an implausible conclusion. Since we still do not know whether to give the money away or to keep it for ourselves, and we cannot do both, we still need to find out which course of action to pursue. Disambiguating between different senses of 'ought' does nothing to show that there is no such question of what one ought to do all things considered.

There are other stronger counterexamples that cast into relief just how implausible Feldman's position is. Suppose that instead of choosing between giving to charity and investing your money, you are faced with a choice between saving a drowning child and being on time for an important but not crucial meeting. For the sake of argument, suppose also that it is in your interest to be on time rather than save the child. In that case, prudence seems to tell one to be on time whereas morality tells one to save the child. Yet, it would be absurd to deny as Feldman's proposal commits him to – that it does not make sense to ask which of these one ought to do all things considered. On the contrary, it seems clear that what one ought to do, not just morally speaking, but all-things-considered, is to save the child.

Even if the lack of a common measure prevents us from giving a complete ranking when we are dealing with different kinds of reasons, it may still be possible to rank some reasons as better or worse than others. One way they may be better is by being *lexically* superior to their rivals, in which case they always win out even if there is no common measure. Alternatively, reasons of one kind may always take priority over

reasons of another kind once they reach a certain threshold. That is, once a reason of the first kind is sufficiently strong, it cannot be outweighed by any reason of the second kind no matter how strong it is.

I shall call such reasons *emphatic*. Once they reach a certain strength, they are emphatically stronger than their rivals even if there is no common measure that allows us to say exactly how much stronger they are. The term “emphatic” comes from Chang (2001: 55-7) who makes the same point about value. She argues that some ‘higher’ goods are intrinsically better than other ‘lower’ goods not because they are lexically superior in the sense that no amount of a lower good can be better than even the slightest amount of the higher good. Rather, they are intrinsically better in the emphatic sense that once the higher good reaches a certain level, no improvement in the lower good can make it better than the higher good.⁴¹

If one kind of reason is lexically superior or emphatically stronger than another, there is a metaphorical sense in which the two kinds of reason are incomparable. They are incomparable in the sense that one is incomparably stronger than the other. In that regard, Parfit may be right that it makes no sense to compare the strength of one’s evidence that p with the goodness or badness of believing p . If one of those considerations is either lexically superior or emphatically better than the other, there is no point in comparing them, since one consideration will always override the other. Yet, in a literal sense, they are not incomparable. If one thing is

⁴¹ Chang suggests that higher goods such as friendship are better than mere market goods such as money in this sense. Friendship is not lexically superior to money, she argues, since a very large sum of money can be better than a very superficial friendship. Instead, friendship is emphatically better than money, since once a friendship is deep or meaningful enough, no sum of money can be better than it (*ibid.*).

lexically superior or emphatically better than another, we can compare them, since we can always say that one is better than the other.

I cannot help but find it intuitive that if epistemic and pragmatic reasons for belief are incomparable, they are incomparable in this latter metaphorical sense. Although it makes little sense to compare the two, it is possible that pragmatic reasons at some point become emphatically stronger than evidential reasons. That is, once one has a sufficiently strong pragmatic reason to believe p , it overrides all one's evidential reasons to the contrary, no matter how strong they are. This is not to say that we do not also have good reasons to be epistemically rational. They may come from many different sources. One possibility is that epistemic rationality is normative in its own right so that one always has a reason to believe p if doing so would be epistemically rational. Alternatively, there may be strong practical reasons to be epistemically rational, since it is in one's own interest to be epistemically rational most of the time. Perhaps there are also obligations of a communal sort to be epistemically rational. Perhaps one always has a reason to be epistemically rational, because one has an obligation to be a reliable source of information for others.⁴² Yet, to show that we ought always to be epistemically rational all things considered, it would have to be shown that these reasons always take precedence over any reason one may have to be epistemically irrational.

⁴² Cf. Craig: 1999.

7. Addendum: An Alternative Wager

I have not been able to find any argument which shows that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief. Suppose, however, that there are no such reasons. It still may not follow that pragmatism of the sort advanced by Pascal is false. It may not, since Pascal's argument may not depend on there being such reasons. Indeed, it is something of a distortion to cast the debate surrounding Pascal's Wager as a debate about what reasons for belief there are, since this assumes that reason is the only legitimate ground for belief.

We cannot take that for granted, since Pascal seems to suggest that faith can also ground belief. Reason, he claims, cannot prove whether God exists, so if we are to believe, the belief must presumably be taken on faith. Hence the tips about how to acquire faith. If "[y]ou want to find faith and you do not know the road", "taking holy water, having masses said, and so on" is better than "convincing yourself by multiplying proofs of God's existence" (*Pensées*, § 418).

This does not mean that faith must take precedence insofar as it conflicts with reason. Pascal is no Tertullian claiming to "believe because it is absurd" (*credo quia absurdum est*). Nor does he try to reconcile faith and reason by confining them to separate domains. Unlike Kant, Pascal does not try to make room for faith by limiting the reach of reason. Rather, Pascal's unique contribution may have been to find room for faith within the realm of reason. This is a topic that I shall have to leave for later, however.

Chapter 3

Against Normative Reductionism

One of the most ambitious works of philosophy written in recent years is John Skorupski's *magnum opus*, *The Domain of Reasons*. There, Skorupski takes upon himself no less of a task than to reduce all normative statements to statements about reasons. If he is right, the implications are considerable. Not only are statements about what is good, right, and rational reducible to statements about reasons, modal statements about what is necessary and possible are similarly reducible. The concept of a reason is the fundamental unit in terms of which we must analyse all other normative notions. Indeed, Skorupski goes as far as saying that it is our grasp of *a priori* truths about reasons that enables us to relate to the world through thought, emotion, and action.

I shall argue that the ambition to reduce normativity to reasons is one which *The Domain of Reasons* fails to fulfil despite its otherwise impressive breadth and historical depth. My strategy is to pluck out one tenuous strand of Skorupski's argument and to keep pulling until his project unravels. I proceed in three steps. First, I argue that Skorupski's treatment of reasons for belief reveals that his reductive

project rests on controversial assumptions about what reasons there are in the first place. Skorupski argues that it is *a priori* that all reasons for belief are truth-indicative, but I show that he only manages to reach this conclusion because he assumes, *contra* his opponents, that all reasons for belief are *epistemic* (§2).

Second, I argue that the same worry applies to the other two classes of reasons that make up Skorupski's domain of reasons, *evaluative* and *practical* reasons. According to Skorupski, evaluative reasons are reasons to *feel* whereas practical reasons are reasons to *act*. I argue that this equation results from treating as equal two different ways of classifying reasons: one which sorts them according to their source, another which sorts them according to what they are reasons for. What is more, and contrary to what Skorupski assumes, the two classifications are not isomorphic, but cut across each other (§3).

Finally, I argue that if Skorupski wants to explain why there is a special connection between epistemic reasons and belief, and between practical reasons and action, his best option is to appeal to statements which are not statements about reasons. To explain why epistemic reasons bear a special relation to belief, he could appeal to the thesis that belief aims at truth in the normative sense that one *ought* only to believe that *p* if it is true that *p*. To explain why practical reasons bear a special relation to action, he could appeal to the thesis that actions are necessarily performed under the *guise of the good*. Yet, I argue that Skorupski fails to reduce these notions to reasons, since he is only able to show that statements about what one *ought* to believe and what it would be *good* to do are equivalent to, rather than explained by, statements about what one has reason to believe and do (§4).

1. Skorupski's Anti-Pragmatist Argument

Can the fact that it would be good – prudentially, morally, or otherwise – to hold some belief that p ever be a normative reason to believe that p ? The question takes central stage in the debate between pragmatists and evidentialists about the ethics of belief. While the former claim that we sometimes have such “pragmatic” reasons to believe – think Pascal's Wager – the latter claim that only evidence that p can be a reason to believe that p . The issue is more wide ranging, however. As we shall see, what side one takes also has ramifications for what theory of normativity one should embrace.

In *The Domain of Reasons*, John Skorupski provides a new argument for why there can be no pragmatic reasons for belief.⁴³ Unlike other arguments with the same conclusion, Skorupski's does not depend on any potentially controversial thesis about the nature of belief. It does not require us to accept that belief aims at truth⁴⁴ or that belief is never subject to voluntary control.⁴⁵ Rather, Skorupski argues that *a priori* reflection on the nature of reasons for belief reveals that the potential benefit of believing that p cannot be a reason to believe that p .

Showing that there are no pragmatic reasons for belief is important for Skorupski's project in *The Domain of Reasons*. At the beginning of that book, he draws a tripartite distinction between reasons to believe, reasons to act, and reasons to feel. He calls these *epistemic*, *practical*, and *evaluative* reasons, respectively (2010: 35-6). This “trichotomy of reasons” is supposed to be both exhaustive and irreducible. Taken

⁴³ Versions of the same argument also appear in Skorupski (2007a: 259), (2007b: 11), and (2009: 136).

⁴⁴ Cf. Velleman (2000), Wedgwood (2002), Shah (2003), Shah & Velleman (2005), Shah (2006).

⁴⁵ Cf. Adler (2002).

together, the three kinds of reason make up the domain of reasons, but no one of them can be reduced to any of the other two kinds of reason.

In the rest of the book, Skorupski relies on the distinction to elucidate the nature of reasons, normativity, and eventually also the relation between self, thought, and world. Indeed, he goes as far as arguing that what enables us to relate to the world through thought, emotion, and action is our grasp of *a priori* “objective universal truths about reason relations” which themselves are “irreal, pure objects of cognition that mediate between knowing subject and known world” (*ibid.*: 504). To relate to the world through thought is to grasp *a priori* truths about what epistemic reasons we have; to relate to the world through emotion is to grasp *a priori* truths about what evaluative reasons we have; to relate to the world through action is to grasp *a priori* truths about what practical reasons we have. Getting the distinction right is therefore of paramount importance for Skorupski’s project.

The equation between reasons to believe and epistemic reasons is significant. The fact that it would be beneficial to believe that *p* plausibly cannot be an *epistemic* reason to believe that *p*. Hence, if Skorupski wants to equate reasons to believe with epistemic reasons, there better not be any pragmatic reasons for belief. He introduces his argument for why there are no such reasons as follows. Suppose, he asks, that someone held that the usefulness of believing that *p* is a reason to believe that *p*. According to Skorupski, such a person:

...would have to have an at least partly pragmatic theory of truth. It is *a priori* that a reason to believe that *p* is a reason to believe that it is true that *p*. Pragmatists about truth can happily accept that: they hold that the usefulness of believing a proposition is *a priori* indicative of the truth of that proposition. For them, therefore, the usefulness of believing that *p* is unproblematically both a reason to

believe that p and a reason to believe that it is true that p . Suppose, in contrast, that one holds the truth of a proposition and the usefulness of believing it to be entirely distinct questions. How, in that case, can the usefulness of believing that p constitute, in and of itself, a reason to believe that it is true that p ? (2010: 88)

Although he does not say so explicitly, it is clear that Skorupski finds pragmatic theories of truth highly implausible. Later, he also argues for a minimalist view of truth which he takes to be incompatible with a pragmatic theory of truth, so it is safe to assume that his observation is meant to count against there being any pragmatic reasons for belief (*ibid.*: 176-78).

I shall not take issue with the point that pragmatic theories of truth are implausible. I accept that they are. What needs explanation, however, is why pragmatists about belief must be committed to pragmatism about truth also. Why does Skorupski think that they must? One possibility is that he assumes that a fact cannot be a reason to believe that it is true that p unless it indicates that p is true. That is:

(Truth-indication) R is a reason to believe that it is true that p
only if R indicates that p is true.

There are some suggestions that Skorupski does indeed assume this hidden premise. Not only does he name reasons to believe *epistemic* reasons, he also emphasises that there can be no pragmatic reasons for belief, because such reasons would not provide any epistemic warrant (*ibid.*: 35, 483). It is natural to think that for a consideration to have epistemic standing, it must bear some connection to the truth of some proposition p so that we can judge how likely p is to be true based on that

consideration. So if reasons for belief are epistemic, it seems natural to suppose that they must be truth-indicative in some sense.

Yet, this begs the question against those who think there are pragmatic reasons for belief. Most philosophers who are sympathetic to the idea that there are such reasons take them to be *non-epistemic* in nature and so do not suppose that they are truth-indicative.⁴⁶ Accordingly, their view does not force them to embrace pragmatism about truth also. To assume that all reasons for belief are truth-indicative, would therefore be to prejudge the very question which is at issue.

In a later passage in *The Domain of Reasons*, Skorupski returns to the same issue. Again he starts from the premise that reasons to believe are reasons to believe that it is true that p , but this time he submits why they must be truth-indicative. Expounding on the original argument, he explains:

Reasons to believe that p are, constitutively, reasons to believe that it is true that p – whatever is a reason to believe that p is thereby also, a priori, a reason to believe that it is true that p . To that we can add that a set of facts constitutes a complete reason to believe that p when it is a priori that it does. Hence a complete reason to believe that p must be a priori indicative of the truth of the proposition that p . (*ibid.*: 482)

This argument fails to establish its intended conclusion. From the premise that R is a reason to φ that it is true that p , it does not follow that R must be indicative of the truth of p . If someone offers me a thousand pounds to suppose that the earth is flat, that is a reason for me to suppose that it is true that the earth is flat. It does not follow

⁴⁶ For example, Richard Foley claims that one can have a non-epistemic pragmatic reason to believe something which it would not be epistemically rational to believe (1993: 29). Reisner (2009) also thinks of pragmatic reasons for belief as non-epistemic in nature, as does Raz (2009). Reisner thinks there are such reasons while Raz appears to take an agnostic stance.

that the fact that I will receive a thousand pounds if I comply must therefore somehow indicate that it is true that the earth is flat. Adding that a set of facts constitutes a complete reason to believe that p when it is *a priori* that it constitutes a complete reason to believe that p contributes nothing to Skorupski's argument. Suppose that some set of facts $\{f_1 \dots f_n\}$ constitutes a complete reason to believe that p . All that follows is that it is *a priori* that $\{f_1 \dots f_n\}$ is a complete reason to believe that p and that it is *a priori* that it is *a priori* that $\{f_1 \dots f_n\}$ is a complete reason to believe that it is true that p . Nothing follows about what kinds of facts must be in the set. In particular, it does not follow that they must be facts which indicate that p is true.

This fallacy leads to some absurd conclusions. Belief is not the only attitude that involves regarding some proposition as true. The same applies to supposing, accepting, or imagining that p : to suppose that p is to suppose that it is true that p , to accept that p is to accept that it is true that p , and so on.⁴⁷ For all those attitudes, we may say that a reason to φ that p is a reason to φ that it is true that p . By parity of reasoning, then, if one cannot think that there are pragmatic reasons for belief without committing oneself to a pragmatic theory of truth, because they are reasons to believe that it is true that p , then thinking that there can be pragmatic reasons for supposing, accepting, or imagining ought also to commit one to a pragmatic theory of truth. That is absurd. The usefulness of, say, supposing p to be true for the sake of argument can be a pragmatic reason to suppose that p even though it does not indicate that p is true.

⁴⁷ As is pointed out by e.g. Shah & Velleman who argue that all cognitive attitudes distinguish themselves from so-called conative attitudes by treating their "propositional objects as *satisfied* or *true*" while the latter "treat their propositional objects as *to be satisfied* or *to be made true*" (2005: 497). See also Glüer & Wikforss (2009: 42).

Perhaps some argument can be found which shows that all reasons to believe are truth-indicative. Noting that they are reasons to believe some proposition to be true cannot serve as the basis for such an argument, however. Rather than reveal any deep lesson about the nature of reasons for belief, that point seems merely to reflect a trivial feature of the T-schema for truth. According to that schema, the proposition that p is true if and only if p . It follows that saying that it is true that p is equivalent to saying that p . By the same token, saying that R is a reason to believe that it is true that p is equivalent to saying that R is a reason to believe that p . Nothing seems therefore to be revealed by observing that a reason to believe that p is a reason to believe that it is true that p .⁴⁸

2. The Trichotomy of Reasons Deconstructed

Although Skorupski's anti-pragmatist argument only plays a minor role in his book, its failure is a crack that reveals a deeper fault in his project at large. The main thesis defended in *The Domain of Reasons* is that "all normative propositions are propositions about reasons relations" (*ibid.*: 29). According to Skorupski, it is our grasp of *a priori* truths about such relations that enables us to relate to the world through thought, emotion, and action. Yet, the failure of the anti-pragmatist argument reveals that his characterisation of the domain of reasons to which normativity is supposed to reduce takes for granted controversial assumptions about what kinds of reasons there are in the first place. Far from revealing it to be an *a priori* truth that there are no pragmatic

⁴⁸ Cf. Shah's point that "adding that one believes that p to be true adds nothing to one's assertion that one believes that p ". The same applies to "any attitude that takes a truth-bearer as its object", he argues (2003: 448).

reasons for belief, Skorupski's argument seems only to allow him to draw that conclusion if he assumes – contrary to his opponents – that all reasons for belief are epistemic.

Similar worries can be raised about the rest of the trichotomy of reasons that makes up Skorupski's domain of reasons. Even if we grant that epistemic, practical, and evaluative reasons are distinct, it remains an open question whether that distinction is isomorphic with the distinction between reasons to believe, act, and feel, respectively. Why can there not be epistemic reasons which in addition to being reasons to believe are also reasons to feel and act? Why can there not be evaluative reasons which in addition to being reasons to feel are also reasons to believe and act? In assuming that the two distinctions are isomorphic, Skorupski runs the risk of including his own normative views in the base to which he wants to reduce normativity. The potential cost of taking that risk is of course that if the base turns out to be biased, the normative superstructure resting on it will be skewed too. Worse still, if Skorupski's assumptions about what reasons there are are false, chances are that the normative theory derived from those assumption will be mistaken too.

Unfortunately, that is a cost which *The Domain of Reasons* incurs. Suppose the papers cite new evidence e that the poles are melting at a faster rate than expected. By all means, e seems to be an epistemic reason. But why only say that e is an epistemic reason to believe that the poles are melting quicker than expected? Surely, e is also a reason to worry about the state of the world and to take appropriate action. I take this to be obvious. Perhaps Skorupski could try to accommodate this example in some way, however. Most obviously, he could argue that since one and the same fact can be both

an epistemic, evaluative, and practical reason, the example of the melting poles is not a counterexample to his equation of epistemic reasons with reasons to believe.

This move does not secure Skorupski's view. To see why, contrast the melting poles example with an example in which one and the same fact is both an epistemic, evaluative, and practical reason. If someone stops me at gunpoint asking for my wallet, their threat is: (i) an epistemic reason to believe that they want my money, since the threat indicates that they want the money; (ii) a (prudential) practical reason to hand them my wallet, because the threat ensures that handing over the wallet is what is in my best interest (let's assume that legging it is not a viable option); and (iii) an evaluative reason to be afraid, because the threat is a fitting object of fear.

Things are different in the melting poles example. There, we have reason to worry about the state of the world and to take appropriate action, because we have evidence e that the poles are melting. It is plausible of course that e only grounds these reasons in the presence of other evaluative and practical reasons. If global warming was a good thing, e would not be a reason to worry about the state of the world and to take appropriate action.⁴⁹ Yet, e itself is not a practical reason to act, since it does not make it the case that the world is in a bad state. Rather, e is an epistemic reason to act, because it indicates that the world is in a bad state. Nor is e an evaluative reason to feel sorry about the state of the world, since e does not make it the case that the world is in a lamentable state. Rather, e is an epistemic reason to feel sorry about the state of the world, since it indicates that the world is in a lamentable state.

⁴⁹ This suggests that epistemic, evaluative, and practical considerations cannot ground reasons for belief, feelings and actions on their own, but can only do so in combination with one another. That is a thesis which I am prepared to defend although I do not have the space here.

The same goes for evaluative reasons. If a musician gives a virtuosic performance, the fact that it is a brilliant performance is an evaluative reason if anything is. But why only say that it is an evaluative reason to admire the musician's skill? The fact that the performance is brilliant is also a reason to clap our hands after the performance and to believe that we are fortunate to have been in the audience. Again, it is not helpful to point out that one and the same fact can be both an epistemic, evaluative, and practical reason. The fact that it is a brilliant performance is not a practical reason to clap, since, other things being equal, we are not obliged – morally, prudentially, legally, or otherwise – to clap after the performance.⁵⁰ (Nor is it purely a reason of etiquette, although it may be in part, since etiquette would require one to clap even if the performance was not brilliant). Rather, the fact that it is a brilliant performance is best described as an evaluative reason to clap, since that fact makes clapping a fitting response to the performance.

I think the correct response to examples such as these is to give up the trichotomy of reasons even if this is a heavy blow to Skorupski's theory. Far from helping him to elucidate how people relate to the world through thought, feeling, and action, the trichotomy sets us up with an unduly regimented picture of the domain of normativity which threatens to distort how we relate to the world. The distorting feature is readily identifiable. It results from treating as equal two different ways of classifying reasons. One classifies them according to what they are reasons for: belief, action, and feeling. The other sorts them according to *how* they count in favour of

⁵⁰ We might of course have such reasons if state censure or peer pressure requires us to clap when we hear a brilliant performance. In that case, however, what constitutes the practical reason is not just the brilliance of the performance, but that fact in conjunction with the fact that we are under these other pressures.

those outputs. Thus, epistemic reasons presumably are considerations that indicate that some proposition is true whereas practical and evaluative reasons are considerations that have to do with the goodness or rightness of some action or state of affairs, be that value prudential, moral, aesthetic etc. We could say that the former classification sorts reasons based on their *output* – what they are reasons for – whereas the latter sorts them based on their *source* – whether it is experience, rationality, prudence, morality, etiquette etc. that provides the reason:

<i>Reasons</i>		<i>Output</i>		
		belief	feeling	action
<i>Source</i>	epistemic			
	evaluative			
	practical			

Normative theorists should not take for granted that these classifications are equal, but should try to understand how they relate to one another. Of course, one could simply treat “epistemic”, “practical”, and “evaluative” as synonyms for reason for “belief”, “action”, and “feeling”, but this would not reveal anything about what reasons there are. Nor would it be in the spirit of Skorupski’s complex treatment of reasons. He argues that to be a reason is not just to be a certain kind of fact. Rather, “*being a reason* is a relation – between facts, persons, and beliefs, actions, or feelings” (2010: 36). Moreover, reasons can vary in degrees of strength and they can vary with time. Hence, all reasons are instances of “a general relation, R , which holds between the following items: facts; times; degrees of strength of reason; actors; and acts:

$R(\pi_i, t, d, x, \psi) - \pi_i$ is/are at time t a reason of degree of strength d for x to ψ .” (*ibid.*: 37)

This cannot be all, however. To the above variables we must add another which specifies in virtue of what π is a reason to ϕ , or *how* π counts in favour of ϕ ing. We must specify how π “reasons” ϕ ing, so to speak.

Skorupski’s trichotomy points to three main ways in which it may do so (I do not deny that there are more). First, π can reason ϕ ing *epistemically* either by indicating that π itself is true or by indicating that some other fact π_i is true. For example, the fact that there is a mouse in the kitchen is an epistemic reason both because it indicates that there is a mouse in the kitchen and because it indicates that mice have some way of accessing the kitchen. Second, π can reason ϕ ing *evaluatively* either by itself being a fitting object of approbation or disapprobation or by making some other fact π_i a fitting object of dis-/approbation. Thus, the fact that a performance is virtuosic is an evaluative reason both because the performance itself is a fitting object of approbation and because it makes the musician’s skill a fitting object of approbation.

Third, π can reason ϕ ing *practically* either by itself issuing in good consequences or by causing some other fact π_i to issue in good consequences. For instance, the fact that exercise boosts personal health is a pragmatic reason both because exercise has this good consequence and because increased health brings with it other good consequences.⁵¹ This does not mean that there are only three kinds of reasons. If what I said before is correct, we must reckon with at least nine kinds of reasons, since beliefs, feelings, and actions can stand in each kind of reason relation.

⁵¹ Often one and the same fact stands in all of these reason relations. For example, the fact that this week’s lottery prize is particularly large is both a pragmatic reason to buy a ticket, an epistemic reason to think that others will do the same, and an evaluative reason to be rather dejected about one’s chances of winning.

Suppose one insists on defending Skorupski's trichotomy of reasons, however. The most promising strategy I can think of is to argue that there is something about the nature of intentional action and the propositional attitudes that justifies the distinction.⁵² Take first action and considerations concerning goodness. One suggestion is that such considerations bear a special relation to action, because actions are necessarily performed with a view to promoting the good.⁵³ Similarly for belief and epistemic considerations. One suggestion is that such considerations bear a special relation to belief, because belief in some sense aims at truth. Many philosophers have argued that it does on the ground that a belief counts as correct if and only if it is true, where this is to be understood in the normative sense that one ought only to believe that p if it is true that p .⁵⁴

This is not the place to evaluate how well these fare as accounts of belief and action. What bears mentioning, however, is that to save the trichotomy of reasons, one would have to draw an especially strong conclusion from each account. For the trichotomy to hold, it cannot just be that practical reasons bear a special relation to action, because action aims at the good. Nor can it merely be that epistemic reasons bear a special relation to belief, because belief aims at truth. This would leave open whether there are other reasons which do not stand in the same special relations to

⁵² Skorupski says something very similar himself: "The distinction between epistemic, evaluative, and practical reasons is independently based on what kind of act – belief, feeling, or action – a given reason is a reason for" (2010: 88).

⁵³ The view is commonly traced to Aristotle. Critics include Velleman (1992) and Setiya (2007).

⁵⁴ Prominent exponents of this view include Wedgwood (2002), Shah (2003), and Shah & Velleman (2005). Whether their view is right depends of course on whether correctness is normative. Hattiangadi (2007) argues that it is not whereas Shah (2003) and Wedgwood (2007) argue that considerations of correctness are normative in the case of belief at least.

action and belief. Rather, for the trichotomy to hold, it must be that since action aims at the good, only practical reasons can be reasons for action. Similarly, it must be that because belief aims at truth, only epistemic reasons can be reasons for belief.

I doubt that we can draw such a strong conclusion in either case. Even if we grant that actions are always performed under the guise of the good, this does not exclude there being epistemic reasons for action. There can still be such reasons, since one can act on such reasons out of a concern to promote some good.⁵⁵

What about the thesis that belief aims at truth? Whether it entails that all reasons for belief are epistemic depends on how we understand the claim that it is correct to believe that p iff it is true that p . Ralph Wedgwood, who has done the most to elucidate what modality is involved, takes the claim to be about what one ought *epistemically speaking*.⁵⁶ If this is so, the claim that belief aims at truth does not entail that there are no pragmatic and evaluative reasons for belief. Even if they do not have the same status as epistemic reasons, there could still be such reasons insofar as it makes sense to ask what one ought to believe *all things considered* when there is not sufficient evidence that p , but it would be in some way good to believe that p .

⁵⁵ If I desire to protect the environment, evidence that the poles are melting is an epistemic reason that I could act on out of a concern to promote this good.

⁵⁶ “...the essential conceptual role of the epistemic ‘ought’ is that the canonical rational ground or basis for beliefs involving this sort of ‘ought’, of the form ‘In relation to evidence E , it ought to be that p ’, is the fact that possessing evidence E is a rational mental state, and if E were all the information that one had about the relevant question, then it would commit one to at least a tentative belief that p ” (2007: 123).

3. Against Normative Reduction

Suppose however that we can rescue the trichotomy of reasons by appealing to the theses that action aims at the good whereas belief aims at truth. Even then Skorupski's view would not be safe. For recall that the main thesis defended in *The Domain of Reasons* is that "all normative propositions are propositions about reasons relations." The problem with salvaging the distinction this way is that it does not let us explain why all reasons for belief are epistemic and why all reasons for action are practical without appealing to normative concepts other than the concept of a reason.

To explain why all reasons for action are practical, we must also appeal to the *value* of performing an action. To explain why all reasons for belief are epistemic, we must appeal to the idea that one *ought* only to believe that p if it is true that p . In other words, the danger is that to save the trichotomy of reasons around which Skorupski constructs his theory, he must give up the book's central tenet. If statements about what is good and what one ought cannot be reduced to statements about reasons, he must give up the claim that all normative propositions are reducible to propositions about reasons relations.

Skorupski will of course respond that we can give such a reduction. Yet, it is unclear whether he has shown as much. Consider first statements about what one ought to believe or do. Skorupski claims that they are reducible to statements about reasons, since to say that " x ought to ϕ " is to say that "there is sufficient reason for x to ϕ " (2010: 48).⁵⁷ This is not enough to allay the present worry. For even if " x ought to

⁵⁷ This by itself is controversial, since " x ought to ϕ " seems often to express a stronger claim than "there is sufficient reason for x to ϕ ". Whereas the latter statement is easily read as a claim about what is permissible, the former is better interpreted as a claim about what is obligatory.

ψ ” is equivalent to “there is sufficient reason for x to ψ ”, we still need to be told which statement is conceptually more basic. Does “ x ought to ψ ” mean “there is sufficient reason for x to ψ ”, because x ’s having sufficient reason to ψ explains why x ought to ψ ? Or does “ x ought to ψ ” mean “there is sufficient reason for x to ψ ”, because the fact that x ought to ψ explains why x has sufficient reasons to ψ ? Only if the former analysis is correct would statements about what one ought reduce to statements about what one has reason to do. But why prefer that analysis? In the absence of an answer to this question, Skorupski’s reduction remains incomplete.⁵⁸

Consider next statements about value. Skorupski claims that they are reducible to statements about reasons to favour. To say that X is admirable is to say that there is sufficient reason to admire X . To say that $\mathcal{I}$ is desirable is to say that there is sufficient reason to desire $\mathcal{I}$. A well-known problem for this type of analysis is that it seems possible to have sufficient reason to have some pro-attitude towards X without X being good in the relevant respect. For example, the evil demon that value theorists so often worry about could threaten to “punish me with eternal torture” if I do not admire a bad violin performance (*ibid.*: 87). I then seem to have sufficient reason to admire the performance, but the performance itself is not any better for it.

⁵⁸ What if statements about what one ought turn out to be reducible to statements about what one has reason to do or believe? Skorupski’s view may still have trouble establishing that all reasons for belief are epistemic if the thesis that a belief is correct iff true cannot be analysed in terms of what one ought or has reason to believe. Some authors have argued that it cannot, since correctness is a *sui generis* normative notion. For example, Rosen argues that correctness is in one sense a normative term, since to say that an act or state is correct is “to articulate a standard that applies to these acts and states” (2001: 621). Yet, he also argues that unlike judgments about what one ought or what one has reason to do or believe, “judgment of correctness is like a ‘factual’ judgment: inert in itself, reason-giving only in conjunction with something else” (*ibid.*). If this is so, not all normative statements may be reducible to statements about reasons, even if all statements about what one ought are.

Skorupski argues that buck-passing theories of value such as his do not face this problem, since putative pragmatic reasons to have some pro-attitude are merely reasons to cause oneself to have that attitude. The demon's threat only constitutes a reason to cause oneself to admire the awful violin performance. Gibbard (1990: 36-7) and Parfit (2001: 24), (2011, vol. I: 51) have made similar claims, but Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen have replied that "Gibbard and Parfit have no argument for their claim, apart from an appeal to intuitions that we do not share" (2004: 412).

Skorupski does not accept this response. He argues that his, Parfit's, and Gibbard's view is not *ad hoc*, since "[t]he distinction between epistemic, evaluative, and practical reasons is independently based on what kind of act – belief, feeling, or action – a given reason is a reason for" (*ibid.*: 88). As a result, the onus of proof is on those who claim that the demon's threat is both a reason to cause oneself to admire the violin performance *and* a reason to admire it:

If someone holds that the usefulness of admiring *y* really *is* a reason to admire *y*, and not just a reason for bringing it about that one admires it, then he has an unusual proposal to make in the substantive theory of evaluative reasons. On what principled basis can he refrain from an equally unusual theory of aesthetic value? If I'm threatened with torture unless I admire the violin performance, then on this theory the performance now becomes distinctly valuable for me. (2010: 89)

It should be clear by now that this demand is based on a stunted conception of what reasons there are. Skorupski only manages to shift the burden of proof on to his opponents by saddling them with a distinction that equates evaluative reasons with reasons to feel. If anything, it is this equation that is *ad hoc*. Even if Skorupski's opponents accept that the demon's threat is a reason to admire the violin performance, they do not have to accept that it is an *evaluative* reason to admire the

performance if evaluative reasons are meant to be reasons that have to do with a thing's aesthetic value. A more sensible view would be to hold that the demon's threat constitutes a *practical* reason to admire the performance, since it has to do with the expected utility of admiring the performance.⁵⁹

This by itself does not derail Skorupski's attempt to reduce all statements about value to statements about reasons relations. He could still hold that for something to be valuable is for there to be sufficient reason *of the right kind* to value it. Thus, for X to be admirable is for there to be sufficient *evaluative* reason to admire X . For Y to be credible is for there to be sufficient *epistemic* reason to believe Y . For Z to be choice-worthy is for there to be sufficient practical reason to choose Z . This, however, throws up the challenge to explain what makes some reason a reason of the right kind. More still, it raises the worry that if something is a reason of the right kind to value X , this is so because X itself is valuable. The worry here is that although we may be able to analyse value in terms of what we have reasons to value, the analysis will be uninformative. Although it identifies the things that we have a reason to value, it does not explain why they are valuable.

Ultimately, this is a worry that Skorupski does not manage to dispel. He argues that the buck-passing analysis of value is informative as an analysis of value, since

⁵⁹ The same goes for what Skorupski says about reasons to believe. He argues that it is more *ad hoc* to distinguish between evidential and pragmatic reasons to believe than it is to distinguish – as he does – between reasons to believe and reasons to cause oneself to believe, since his adversaries “need to justify a difference between two kinds of genuinely epistemic [...] reasons – evidential and pragmatic” (*ibid.*: 89). Again, the demand is based on a restricted conception of what reasons there are. Most pragmatists about belief are not forced to make an *ad hoc* distinction between two kinds of epistemic reasons, since they do not hold that pragmatic reasons for belief are epistemic in the first place.

“there may be reason to favour a thing in one way because there’s reason to favour it in some other way.” For example:

... the reason to *choose* this CD performance may be that it’s the best performance – the one there’s most reason to admire. However, we might have reasons to choose this particular CD for reasons other than the quality of the performance: because it’s cheap, for example. If we’re working to a tight budget the cheapest CD performance might be the best choice, even though the performance is not the best. So it has genuine explanatory force to say that there’s reason to choose the CD because it contains the best performance. (*ibid.*: 89-90)

This does not stave off the worry that the buck-passing theory does not explain why the things we have reason to value are valuable. Although Skorupski is right that we may have different reasons to choose a CD and that “it has genuine explanatory force to say that there’s reason to choose the CD because it contains the best performance”, this explanatory force is not what we are looking for when we want to know why something is valuable. It only points out that in the former case we have a practical reason to choose the CD – “because it’s cheap” – whereas in latter case we have an evaluative reason to choose the CD – “because it contains the best performance”. This may explain why we sometimes buy bad CDs – because they’re cheap – but it does not explain what makes good CDs good.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Nor is it helpful to point out that a performance is “the best performance as a performance because it’s the one there’s reason to favour the most as a performance” (*ibid.*: 90). That lets us identify what performances are best: they are the ones there is reason to favour the most as performances. Yet, it does not explain what it is about these performances that makes them so good that there is reason to favour them the most as performances.

Conclusion

I conclude that Skorupski fails to reduce all normative talk to talk about reasons relations. While he has shown how one might go about reducing one to the other, it remains to be seen whether the goal he has set for himself is at all attainable. First, the failure of Skorupski's anti-pragmatist argument reveals that he takes for granted controversial assumptions about the contents of the domain of reasons to which he wants to reduce normativity. Second, the trichotomy of reasons which is supposed to be the fulcrum around which Skorupski builds his view falls apart once we appreciate that it equates two cross-cutting ways of classifying reasons. Third, the most promising way of patching up the trichotomy of reasons requires us to refer to other normative notions such as what one *ought* to believe and what it would be *good* to do. Skorupski fails to reduce these notions to reasons, since he is only able to show that statements about what one *ought* to believe and what it would be *good* to do are equivalent to, rather than explained by, statements about what one has reason to believe and do.

Chapter 4

Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism

I have not been able to find any argument that shows that pragmatism is false because there are no Pascalian reasons for belief. Suppose, however, that there are no such reasons. In this chapter, I shall argue that it still would not follow that evidentialism is true. It would not follow, because even if pragmatism is false, some other form of non-evidentialism may still be true. There are at least two ways that this may be so. First, even if there are no Pascalian reasons for belief, there may be other non-evidential but non-Pascalian reasons in response to which we can form beliefs. Alternatively, evidentialism may be false because there are other ways of being rational than believing for a reason.

I shall investigate both options in this chapter. I start by explaining that even if pragmatists are wrong to think that the expected utility of believing p can affect whether it is rational to believe that p , it would be wrong to conclude – as some evidentialists do – that the only way to be doxastically rational is therefore to moderate all of one's beliefs to one's evidence. We cannot draw that inference, for even if practical rationality does not apply to belief in the same way as it applies to action,

there may still be principles that connect practical and theoretical rationality in ways that make it permissible to believe rationally without doing so in response to evidence.

Next, I shall argue that in the case of practical reasoning, we not only can, but also have permission to form beliefs that are not based on adequate evidence. In particular, if one intends to ϕ , it is, other things being equal, permissible to believe that one will ϕ without forming that belief in response to evidence that one will ϕ . I shall consider three suggestions for why this is so: that (i) rationality requires that if one intends to ϕ , one believes that one will ϕ ; that (ii) one cannot seriously intend to ϕ unless one believes that one will ϕ ; and (iii) that beliefs which concern our own future actions should not be held to the same standards as other beliefs, since it is up to ourselves whether the contents of such beliefs are true.

I shall reject the first two suggestions on the ground that it is possible to be both serious and rational in intending to ϕ without believing that one will ϕ . Instead, I shall defend the third by arguing that when a belief concerns our own future actions, we do not have to rely on evidence to predict what will happen as a result of our action. As long as we do not have reason to doubt otherwise, we can simply decide what will be the case.

1. The Evidentialist Thesis

Few evidentialists appreciate that to show that (i) it is only rational to believe that p if one has adequate evidence that p , it does not suffice to show that (ii) it cannot be rational to believe that p because it would be beneficial to believe that p . Instead, they assume that once this second thesis has been established, the first thesis follows as a

corollary. For example, Thomas Kelly argues that (a) considerations about expected utilities cannot “rationalise” beliefs in the same way as they rationalise actions, and that (b) as a corollary it follows that “[w]ith respect to belief, rationality just is epistemic rationality” (2002: 172).

By epistemic rationality, Kelly means “roughly, the kind of rationality which one displays when one believes propositions that are strongly supported by one's evidence and refrains from believing propositions that are improbable given one's evidence” (2003: 612). In saying that rationality as regards belief just is epistemic rationality, he must therefore imply that, necessarily, if a belief is rational, it is supported by adequate evidence. Call this the *Evidentialist Thesis*:

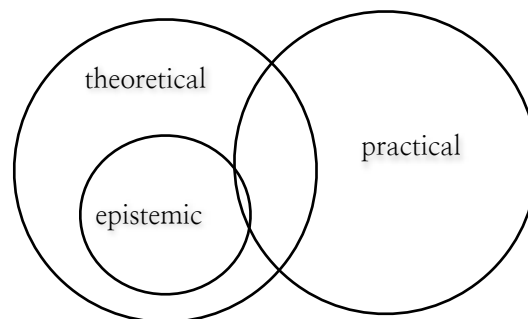
(Evidentialist Thesis) It is rational to believe that p if and only if one has adequate evidence that p .

There is a popular picture of rationality that supports drawing the inference that if it cannot be rational to believe that p because it would be beneficial to believe that p , then the Evidentialist Thesis must be true. According to it, rationality divides into a practical and an epistemic realm, where practical rationality consists in doing what has most practical value and epistemic rationality consists in believing no more and no less than what the evidence supports. If one accepts this picture of rationality, it is natural to make the inference that if the fact that it would be practically valuable to believe that p cannot make it rational to believe that p , then rationality for belief just is epistemic rationality.

Yet, natural as it may be, we cannot draw the inference if we do not also assume that practical and epistemic rationality are all there is to rationality. We cannot

draw the inference without that assumption, because even if practical rationality does not apply to belief, epistemic rationality might not be all that is left of rationality. Even if there is such a thing as epistemic rationality, there are at least two ways that it may fail to exhaust all of rationality that is not exclusively practical.

First, the realm of theoretical rationality might prove to be larger than that of epistemic rationality by having within its reach principles of rational belief that are not principles of epistemic rationality. Second, there might be principles connecting practical and theoretical rationality which apply to beliefs, but which are not principles of epistemic rationality. Either way, it would not follow that if practical rationality does not apply to belief, rationality for belief just is epistemic rationality. Instead, rationality for belief would be a broader category of belief, call it *doxastic rationality*, that is not equivalent to epistemic rationality.



Nothing that evidentialists like Kelly say rules out that the spheres of rationality interlock in this way. Suppose they are right to think both that:

- (1) A normative reason R can make it rational to believe that p only if R can be a reason for which one believes that p ,

And that:

- (2) The fact that it would be beneficial to believe that p cannot be a reason for which one believes that p .

It follows that the fact that it would be beneficial to believe that p cannot make it rational to believe that p . Yet, it does not follow that one is rational to believe that p only if one has adequate evidence that p . For that to follow, it would have to be true not only that:

- (3) Only evidence that p can be a normative reason for which one believes that p ,

But also that:

- (4) It is rational to believe that p only if there is a normative reason for which one believes that p .

If (3) is not true, the Evidentialist Thesis does not follow from (1) and (2). For even if one cannot believe that p for the reason that it would be beneficial to believe that p , there might be other non-evidential reasons for which one can believe that p . If (4) is not true, the Evidentialist Thesis does not follow from (1), (2) and (3), since one might be rational to believe that p other than by believing that p for a reason.

Put differently, if non-evidentialism about rational belief just is the converse of evidentialism – namely, that:

- (Non-evidentialist Thesis) Not all rational beliefs must be based on adequate evidence

then evidentialists like Kelly can at most claim to have ruled out one potential defence of non-evidentialism if (3) and (4) are not true. At most, they can claim that it is not open to non-evidentialists to argue that it can be rational to believe that p without

adequate evidence by believing p for the reason that it would be beneficial to believe that p . That does not mean that there is no other way of defending non-evidentialism, however. If (3) is false, there may be other non-evidential reasons for which one may believe that p . If (4) is false, there may be ways of being rational that do not consist in believing p for a reason.

2. A Dilemma for Evidentialists

I wish to argue that (3) and (4) cannot both be true. In short, my argument is that if we want to endorse (4), we must interpret it in a way that is inconsistent with (3). Consider first the claim that:

- (4) It is rational to believe that p only if there is a normative reason for which one believes that p .

It is controversial, since it is controversial whether rationality is only a matter of responding correctly to one's reasons. Many philosophers argue that it is, but equally many deny that this is all there is to rationality. One example is John Broome (2013) who argues that in addition to responding to reasons, rationality is also to be a matter of maintaining coherence among one's attitudes. We can think of rationality as a source of requirements that specify what relations must obtain among one's beliefs and other attitudes if they are to be coherent. For example, it seems to be a requirement of rationality that one's beliefs ought to be ordered in such a way that if one believes that p and that p implies q , then one also believes that q . We can use the locution "rationality requires" to give expression to this idea. Thus:

(Modus Ponens) Rationality requires that: if one believes that p , and that p entails that q , then one also believes that q .

Notice that according to this formulation, the requirement takes a wide scope since it ranges over the whole conditional. That is, the requirement does not tell one to have any specific attitude, but only requires one not to have a certain combination of attitudes. Accordingly, there is more than one way of satisfying Modus Ponens. One may either satisfy it by believing q if one believes that p and that if p then q . Or, one may satisfy it by giving up the belief that p and that if p then q . Yet, it does not seem that if one satisfies Modus Ponens and believes that q , there must be a normative reason for which one believes q . Perhaps one has no evidence that q is true. Rather, one may satisfy the requirement simply by believing that q or by giving up the belief that p and that if p then q .

Besides Modus Ponens, there are many other candidate requirements of rationality. Like Modus Ponens, some of these are requirements of theoretical rationality that stipulate what relations must obtain between one's beliefs if one is to be rational. For example, it is plausible that it is a rational requirement that one must not hold contradictory beliefs. That is:

(Non-Contradiction) Rationality requires that: if one believes that p , then one does not at the same time believe that not- p .

Other requirements stipulate what relations must obtain between one's intentions if one is to be practically rational. For example, it seems to be a requirement of practical rationality that one must not have contradictory intentions. Still other requirements bridge practical and theoretical rationality by stipulating what relations must obtain

between one's intentions and beliefs. For example, when one intends to perform some action and one believes that performing a second action is a necessary means to performing that first action, it seems that one is not rational unless one also intends to perform the second action. Similarly, it seems that when one believes that one ought to F , one is not rational unless one also intends to F . This is sometimes called the Enkratic Requirement, since if one obeys it, one is not akratic but acts in accordance with one's considered judgment.

In sum, there appear to be many requirements of rationality that apply to belief but which are not principles of epistemic rationality if we take epistemic rationality to consist in moderating one's beliefs in accordance with one's evidence. Of these requirements, only the Enkratic Requirement is a requirement that one cannot satisfy without responding to what one takes oneself to have a normative reason to do. Plausibly, what one ought to do is what one has most reason to do, so to satisfy the Enkratic Requirement, one must intend to do what one thinks one has most reason to do.

For all the other requirements, however, it seems that one can satisfy them not by responding to a normative reason one has, but simply by having the combination of mental states that the requirement prescribes. As I mentioned, one may satisfy Modus Ponens simply by coming to believe that q when one believes (p , and $p \rightarrow q$). If that is so, then (4) is in danger of being false, however. If there are rational requirements that one can satisfy without responding to a normative reason, it seems that it can be rational to hold a belief without there being a normative reason for which one holds it.

In defence of (4), it may be objected that when one satisfies one of the above requirements, one always has a normative reason for which one does so, because whatever attitudes one has at the time constitute a reason in response to which one ought to adjust one's other attitudes so that they conform to the requirements of rationality. For example, it may be said that in the case of Modus Ponens one's belief that $(p$ and $p \rightarrow q)$ constitutes a normative reason for which one will believe that q if one is to be rational. This view is unattractive, however. It is controversial that one can acquire a normative reason just by virtue of being in a certain mental state. If that were so, one could acquire a reason to believe that q simply by forming the belief that $(p$ and $p \rightarrow q)$. That seems implausible, since it does not seem that we can control what normative reasons we have by controlling what mental states we have.

To this, it may be replied that the belief that $(p$ and $p \rightarrow q)$ gives one a reason to believe that q only if the belief that $(p$ and $p \rightarrow q)$ itself is based on good reasons. This does not help the evidentialist cause, however. Even if we grant this reply, it forces one to concede that it is not true that:

- (3) Only evidence that p can be a normative reason for which one believes that p

For even if the fact that one believes both that p and if p then q might be evidence that q is true, it is not in virtue of that fact that one is rationally required to believe that q if one holds the previous belief. It is not because that belief makes it more likely that q that one ought rationally to believe that q . Rather, it is because p and if p then q entail q that rationality requires one to believe that q . The fact that one thing entails another does not indicate that the latter thing is true, however. So if it is rational to obey

Modus Ponens because believing that p and if p then q is a reason to believe that q , it cannot be because that belief constitutes evidence that q is true. Again, however, this leaves open the possibility that it can be rational to believe without sufficient evidence. If things other than evidence can be a normative reason for which it can be rational to believe, it is possible that one could have sufficient reason to believe that p without having sufficient evidence to believe that p .

In sum, evidentialists cannot have both premises that would secure their view. Either they are forced to acknowledge that there are rational requirements that one can satisfy without there being a reason for which one believes that p . Or, to defend the doctrine that to be rational one must believe for a reason, they must concede that things other than evidence that p can be a reason for which it can be rational to believe that p . Either way, they leave open the possibility that it might sometimes be rational to believe without adequate evidence. On the one hand, there might be rational requirements that one can satisfy without believing in response to adequate evidence. On the other hand, there might be reasons other than evidence for which it could be rational to believe.

To this evidentialists may reply that whether it is ever permissible to believe without adequate evidence depends not just on how it is possible to satisfy the requirements that I have listed, but on how in fact we ought to satisfy them. Further, they may argue that for all the requirements that have been mentioned, how we ought to satisfy them depends on the evidence we have for the beliefs in question. Thus, one ought to satisfy Modus Ponens by forming the belief that q only if one's belief that (p and $p \rightarrow q$) is based on sufficient evidence, thereby providing sufficient evidence for q also. If by contrast (p and $p \rightarrow q$) is not based on sufficient evidence, one ought to

satisfy Modus Ponens by giving up the belief that $(p$, and $p \rightarrow q)$. Similarly, one ought always to satisfy No Contradictory Beliefs by retaining which ever of two contradictory beliefs is best supported by the evidence, or give up both beliefs altogether if neither has adequate support. This way, rational belief will always be based on adequate evidence even if it is subject to requirements of rationality which arguably are not principles of epistemic rationality.

This is a good reply as far as Modus Ponens and No Contradiction go. Still, it does not establish that evidentialism is true. It does not, since theoretical reasoning is not the only way we reason. We also engage in *practical* reasoning that departs from practical considerations and issues in intentions to act. We weigh up the pros and cons between different courses of action, and, if we are rational, we decide to pursue the best of those options, thereby forming an intention to act that way. Intentions are not the only attitude we acquire through practical reasoning, however. Typically, we also form beliefs about our own future actions. Other things being equal, when we form an intention to ϕ , we also form the belief that we will ϕ . Yet, when we reason practically, the beliefs that we form about our own future actions are not based on *evidence* about our future behaviour. So, at least, I shall argue in the following few sections.

3. Belief and Action

The fact that we can form beliefs through practical reasoning is sometimes presented as a putative counterexample to doxastic involuntarism. Thus, Richard Feldman (2000/2004) argues that we have nonbasic voluntary control over some of our beliefs, since we can sometimes acquire beliefs simply by altering the world so that the

contents of those beliefs come true. Suppose, for example, that someone offered one an award for believing that the lights in one's office are on. If they are not already on, one could then collect the award simply by flicking on the switch for the lights, thus causing oneself to believe that they are on (*ibid.*: 171). This point generalises to all beliefs which track a state of affairs which one can control, Feldman argues. In general, “when I have control over a state of the world and my beliefs about that state track that state, then I have just as much control over my belief about the state as I have over the state itself.”⁶¹

All the same, Feldman claims that this form of doxastic control is “without a great deal of epistemological significance”, since we do not often exercise this kind of control over our beliefs (*ibid.*). This downplaying is a mistake, however. Feldman should not brush aside his own point so easily, since it may be given a more general formulation. As Berislav Marušić (2011) notes, one need not make it the case that p in order to form the belief that p . Rather, when p concerns some future state of affairs, one can form the belief that p simply by deciding to make it the case that p . Suppose again that one is offered an award for believing that the lights in one's office *will* be on within the next two hours. One then does not have to flick on the lights to form the belief and thus collect the award. Rather, one can form the belief simply by deciding to turn on the lights within the next two hours (2011: 39).⁶²

⁶¹ Other philosophers accord more importance to Feldman's point. Kelly (2002) argues that people do in fact often behave in ways which serve to regulate beliefs that they hold about themselves. He claims, for example, that what motivates people to exercise and go on diets often is not just a desire to be healthy, but also a desire to maintain a positive image of themselves. More generally, he argues that a need for self-respect – the most important primary good according to John Rawls – may often lead people to act so as to acquire beliefs about themselves that allow them to uphold a sense of self-worth (*ibid.*: 168).

⁶² See also Marušić (2013).

It is not just in imaginary prize-giving contexts that this point is relevant. Arguably, most of our beliefs about our own future actions are formed through practical deliberation. Not only that. Our beliefs about whatever states of affairs will result from our actions are similarly formed. When we decide to pursue a course of action – and we do not doubt that we can do so – we typically also believe that whatever needs to be the case for us to carry out our plan will be the case. Yet, we typically do not base this belief on evidence about what will be the case given that we now intend to act a certain way. Rather, we already believe that if we act in such-and-such a manner, such-and-such will be the case. If we do not, our decision to perform the given course of action does not make much sense except perhaps as a way of finding out what will happen if we act a certain way.

There is therefore a potentially very expansive range of beliefs that are not formed in response to evidence if this picture of practical cognition is correct. Somewhat curiously, this point does not receive much attention in contemporary debates about the ethics of belief. Marušić is, to my knowledge, the only contemporary philosopher to have drawn significant epistemic theses from this point. His argument will also be the focus of section five of this chapter. As with most other things in philosophy, however, the idea that practical deliberation does not require the same attention to evidence as theoretical deliberation is not without its precedents. According to one interpretation, Descartes - who is so often accused of propagating an overly intellectualist view of human cognition - can be read as recognising that practical and theoretical reasoning diverge in precisely this way. In his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, he argues that:

Concerning objects proposed for study, we ought to investigate what we can clearly and evidently intuit or deduce with certainty, and not what other people have thought or what we ourselves conjecture. For knowledge (*scientia*) can be attained in no other way.⁶³

Yet, Descartes does not mean to say that we ought always to follow these guidelines. In his reply to the Second Set of Objections to the *Meditations*, Descartes is keen to remind his readers that “in matters which may be embraced by the will”, we should make a “careful distinction between the conduct of life and the contemplation of truth”. Further, he makes clear that:

As far as the conduct of life is concerned, I am very far from thinking that we should assent only to that which is clearly perceived. On the contrary, I do not think that we should always wait even for probable truths; from time to time we will have to choose one of many alternatives about which we have no knowledge, and once we have made our choice, so long as no reasons against it can be produced, we must stick to it as firmly as if it had been chosen for transparently clear reasons. (1984: 106)

Contrast this with what William James says about belief and action. In one of his most famous examples, “you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap”. James argues that in cases like these it is permissible to believe something for which one does not have adequate evidence, since “our faith beforehand in an uncertified result *is the only thing that makes the result come true*”:

Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of maybes, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss. In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class), the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to *believe*

⁶³ *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Rule Three, AT X 371–2. In Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R. & Murdoch, D. (1984) (eds.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. I.

what is in the line of your needs, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself. (1895: 59)

James's example is often held up as a case in which it is permissible to believe that p not because one has sufficient evidence that p , but because having the belief will help bring it about that p . The belief, in other words, is *self-fulfilling*⁶⁴

I take Descartes to make an altogether different point. His point is not that one ought to believe that one will ϕ when intending to ϕ , because it would be good if one ϕ -ed and believing that one will ϕ is a productive means to ϕ -ing. Rather, his point is that when we intend to ϕ , we do not have to look to probable evidence that we will ϕ , since we possess the power to determine for ourselves whether we ϕ . That is, "in matters which may be embraced by the will", we can simply decide what will be the case instead of using evidence to forecast what will be the case.⁶⁵ I shall call this Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism to distinguish the view from the pragmatism of Pascal and James.

⁶⁴ In this respect, James's example differs from Pascal's Wager, since Pascal does not claim that believing that God exists will help bring it about that God exist. Yet, James's case does not differ from Pascal's Wager in terms of what is supposed to justify the belief. For both thinkers, the relevant belief is justified because of the good consequences that having the belief would cause. The chief difference lies only in how the belief relates to action. In Pascal's example, one must take appropriate action – to say prayers and so on – in order to get oneself to believe what has the best outcome. In James's case, one must have an appropriate belief – that one can make the jump – in order to get oneself to do what has the best outcome.

⁶⁵ Admittedly, my reading of Descartes here diverts from that of many commentators. While I take Descartes to make the point that when a belief concerns our own agency we do not have to base it on probable evidence, they read Descartes as making the Humean point that in our ordinary practical lives we just have to get on with our daily business instead of stopping to check if we have adequate justification for each and every belief we hold. If their reading is right and mine cannot be reconciled with it, my view will just have to stand on it own. Just as Marx was not a marxist, so Descartes may not have been a cartesian in my sense of the term. For some commentaries on the relevant passages from Descartes, see Frankfurt (1970: ch. 2), Wilson (1978: 42–9), Wolterstorff (1996: 180–218), Burnyeat (1997: 118–20), Owens (2000b & 2008b), and Broughton (2002: 7–18, 42–61).

4. A Cognitivist Argument

I have argued that when we reason practically, it is possible to form beliefs about our own future actions without basing those beliefs on evidence about our future behaviour. It remains, however, to be seen whether it can be rational to do so. Can we say anything more about whether it can? One suggestion is that it is simply a requirement of rationality that if one intends to perform some action, one also believes that one will perform that action. Call this the *Intention Requirement*:

(Intention Requirement)	Rationality requires that: if you intend to ϕ , you believe that you will ϕ .
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If there is a requirement such as this one, it is a very interesting requirement. Unlike Modus Ponens and No Contradictory Beliefs, the intention requirement is not a pure theoretical requirement, but connects practical and theoretical rationality. As with the other requirements already mentioned, there is more than one way to satisfy it. If one intends to ϕ , one may satisfy the requirement either by forming the belief that one will ϕ or by giving up the intention to ϕ . Importantly, however, how one ought to satisfy the requirement does not depend only on what evidence one has that one will ϕ . It also depends on what reason one has to intend to ϕ . Yet, those reasons are practical rather than evidential, so how we ought to satisfy the requirement will also depend on how strong our practical reasons are.

Crucially, it is possible to respond to both kinds of reason through practical deliberation about what to do. Suppose one has sufficient evidence to believe that one

will not ϕ even if one succeeds in forming an intention to ϕ . One may then satisfy the intention requirement either by deciding not to ϕ , or by deciding merely to *try* to ϕ . If on the other hand we have strong practical reasons to intend to ϕ and no evidence that we will not be able to ϕ , we may satisfy the intention requirement by deciding to ϕ . In that case, we do not have to manipulate ourselves to also believe that we will ϕ . Rather, we can form the belief that we will ϕ simply by forming the intention to ϕ .

For example, I can form the belief that I will be in London tomorrow by forming the intention to go to London tomorrow. I can do that through an act of practical reasoning. For instance, I might reason that if I do not go to London, I will not catch my meeting, thus forming the intention to go to London. When we reason this way, our reasoning commonly issues not just in an intention to ϕ , but also in a belief that we will carry out the intention to ϕ . Yet, the resulting belief is not formed in response to prior evidence that one will ϕ . I do not predict that because I now intend to be in London tomorrow, I will be there tomorrow. Rather, I form the belief as part of forming the intention to go to London.

Because beliefs may be formed through practical reasoning in this way, there is a sense in which not all of one's beliefs must be based on adequate evidence. In particular, beliefs about one's own future actions need not be formed in response to prior evidence about what one will do. To form an intention to ϕ through practical reasoning, we do not first have to seek out adequate evidence that we will in fact ϕ if we were to intend to ϕ . Rather, to form an intention to ϕ , it is enough that one thinks it is possible for one to ϕ . By the same token, the corresponding belief that one will ϕ also need not be formed in response to adequate evidence that one will ϕ if one intends to

ϕ . Since the belief is formed in conjunction with the intention to ϕ , it is enough that one thinks it is possible for one ϕ so that one is able to intend to ϕ .

Accordingly, if rationality does indeed require one to believe that one will ϕ if one intends to ϕ , there is a sense in which it may be permissible to believe without adequate evidence. When it is appropriate to form an intention through practical reasoning, we do not have to find adequate evidence that we will ϕ in order to believe that we will ϕ . Rather, we can form the belief that we will ϕ simply by forming the intention to ϕ .

Why think that rationality requires one to believe that one will ϕ if one intends to ϕ ? A seeming piece of linguistic evidence comes from observing that it sounds irrational to assert that one intends to do something, but that one does not believe one will do what one intends to do. As Velleman (1989) and before him Anscombe (1957/2000: 1–5) point out, when asserting that one intends to ϕ , the natural expression to use is “I will ϕ ”. If one instead says “I intend to ϕ ”, the word “intend” indicates that one’s commitment to ϕ ’ing is qualified in some way. It might indicate that there is a chance that one will pursue an alternative option, or it might indicate that there is a chance that one will neither ϕ nor pursue any alternative option. But if the natural expression of an unqualified intention is “I will ϕ ”, one cannot add that one does not believe that one will ϕ without contradicting oneself in some sense. Just as uttering a Moore-Paradoxical sentence of the form “ p , but I don’t believe that p ” sounds irrational, so uttering a sentence of the form “I will ϕ , but I don’t believe that I will ϕ ” sounds irrational.

We can appeal to Gricean pragmatics to explain why utterances of the form “ p , but I don’t believe that p ” are paradoxical. According to Grice, part of the purpose

of making an assertion is to communicate to one's audience that one believes the proposition asserted. If that is so, one cannot assert that p and add that one does not believe that p without communicating to one's audience the contradictory proposition that one both believes and does not believe that p . The same explanation can be used to explain why it sounds irrational to assert that "I will ϕ , but I don't believe that I will ϕ ". If the purpose of assertion is to communicate to one's audience that one believes the proposition uttered, one cannot assert that one will ϕ but add that one does not believe that one will ϕ without thereby communicating to one's audience that one both believes and does not believe that one will ϕ .

The Gricean analysis does not capture all that is paradoxical about Moore's Paradox, however. The paradox is puzzling not just because Moore-paradoxical sentences sound incongruous. There remains something irrational about believing a conjunction of the form " p , but I don't believe that p " even if one does not give verbal expression to that belief. Call a belief with such a content a *Moorean belief*. Such beliefs seem irrational whether or not they are expressed in language, since someone who is committed to both conjuncts of a Moorean belief is committed to both p and not- p . Since p and not- p entail $(p \ \& \ \text{not-}p)$, epistemic closure requires such a person to believe an outright contradiction. Yet, believing a contradiction is irrational if anything is, so someone who holds a Moorean belief is bound to be irrational too.

There is a straightforward sense in which the same lesson applies to intention. According to cognitivists about practical reason, intention necessarily involves belief either because intentions themselves are a kind of belief, or because one cannot intend

to do something unless one believes that one will do that thing.⁶⁶ Either way, one cannot intend to ϕ and not believe that one will ϕ without having the Moorean belief “I will ϕ , but I don’t believe that I will ϕ ”. Such beliefs are irrational for all the same reasons that ordinary Moorean beliefs are irrational.

If cognitivism is true, the same explanation can be used show that it is irrational to intend to ϕ without believing that one will ϕ . It is irrational, since it commits one to believing an outright contradiction. If one believes that “I will ϕ , but I don’t believe that I will ϕ ” and considers that belief, one ought also to believe that “I believe that I will ϕ , but I don’t believe that I will ϕ ”. Yet, rationality arguably does not permit believing a contradiction, so it must be irrational to intend to ϕ but not believe that one will ϕ if that commits one to believing a contradiction. We can represent the argument more formally as follows:

Cognitivist Argument

$\Box(\text{intend } p \rightarrow \text{believe } p)$	(cognitivist assumption)
$\therefore \Box(O(\text{intend } p) \rightarrow O(\text{believe } p))$	(deontic introduction)
$\therefore (O(\text{intend } p) \rightarrow O(\text{believe } p))$	(necessity elimination)
$\frac{O(\text{intend } p)}{\therefore O(\text{believe } p)}$	(practical assumption)
	(conditional elimination)

This would give us an argument if cognitivism about practical reason is true. Yet, I do not wish to endorse this argument, since I do not want to take for granted that intention always involves belief. Michael Bratman offers two well-known examples

⁶⁶ See e.g. Hampshire and Hart (1958), Grice (1971), Harman (1976), Davis (1984), Velleman (1989), Setiya (2008b; 2009).

that suggest it does not. The first is one “in which there is intention in the face of agnosticism about whether one will even try when the time comes”:

I might intend now to stop at the bookstore on the way home while knowing of my tendency toward absentmindedness – especially once I get on my bike and go into “automatic pilot.” If I were to reflect on the matter I would be agnostic about my stopping there, for I know I may well forget. It is not that I believe I will not stop; I just do not believe I will. (1987: 37)

The second counterexample is one in which “there is intention in the face of agnosticism about whether one will succeed when one tries”:

Perhaps I intend to carry out a rescue operation, one that requires a series of difficult steps. I am confident that at each stage I will try my best. But if I were to reflect on the matter, I would have my doubts about success. I do not have other plans or beliefs which are inconsistent with such success; I do not actually believe I will fail. But neither do I believe I will succeed. (*ibid.*: 37-8)

Bratman argues that in neither example is one guilty of irrationality. For although, (i) “intentions and plans normally support coordination in part by providing support for expectations that they will be successfully executed”, and (ii) “there is a defeasible demand that one’s intentions be consistent with one’s beliefs”, this does “not entail that an intention to *A* actually requires a belief that one will *A*” (*ibid.*: 37). For even though intentions support expectations, those expectations may not be sufficient for belief if there is reason to doubt that the intention will be carried out.

Bratman admits that his examples “do not *prove* that an intention to *A* does not require a belief one will *A*”, since “it remains open to the defender of that view to insist that the intentions in such cases are conditional in some way or otherwise qualified.” Still, he thinks that the examples are “worrisome enough” that it is best to

develop his account of intentions and plans “in a way that does not require the strong assumption that to intend to A I must believe that I will A ” (*ibid.*: 38).⁶⁷

I share Bratman’s worry that it is not a violation of rationality to intend to ϕ without believing that one will ϕ . Perhaps all is not lost, however. Even if intention-belief incompleteness is not a failure of rationality, intentions that are not accompanied by belief may belong to a special class of intentions that we should treat separately. Richard Holton argues that this is indeed so. He argues that when we intend to do something without believing that we will do it, we only have a *partial* intention, since the intention “is accompanied by one or more alternative intentions also designed to achieve” the same end (2009: 41). In other words, those who do not believe that they will do what they intend better have a backup plan.

If this is right, then we can revise the cognitivist argument so that it only applies to full intentions. Such intentions will still be accompanied by belief. Hence, when we ought fully to intend to ϕ , we ought therefore also to believe that we will ϕ . To formalise this argument, we need only insert “fully” before “intend” in the original cognitivist argument:

Revised Cognitivist Argument

$$\begin{aligned} & \Box (\text{fully intend } p \rightarrow \text{believe } p) \\ \therefore & \Box (O (\text{fully intend } p) \rightarrow O (\text{believe } p)) \end{aligned}$$

⁶⁷ This is not to say that there are no rational constraints linking belief and intention. According to Bratman, there still remains “a defeasible demand that one’s intentions be consistent with one’s beliefs”, since it is usually irrational to intend to ϕ while believing that one will not ϕ . This will undermine coherent planning more directly than merely not believing that one will ϕ . For if one believes that one will not ϕ , it would seem that one should plan as if one will not ϕ , but this is precisely what one does not do in intending to ϕ . In other words, “intention-belief *inconsistency* is closer to criticizable irrationality than is intention-belief *incompleteness*”. Bratman calls this the *asymmetry thesis* (*ibid.*: 38-39).

$$\begin{array}{l}
\therefore (O(\text{fully intend } p) \rightarrow O(\text{believe } p)) \\
\frac{O(\text{fully intend } p)}{\therefore O(\text{believe } p)}
\end{array}$$

Now comes a different challenge, however. For even if we can construct a revised cognitivist argument, it remains to be seen why we should fully intend to do something when it is instead possible only to have a partial intention. Rationality by itself cannot answer this question, since rational requirements only dictate what relations should obtain between one's mental states, not which mental states one should have in the first place. I shall therefore have to set aside the cognitivist argument.

5. Marušić's Argument from Sincerity and Seriousness

Even if it is not a requirement of *rationality* that one ought to believe that p if one intends that p , there might be other normative requirements which tie belief to action in similar ways. Berislav Marušić defends two such principles. He argues that when we decide to pursue a course of action, we must believe that we will do as we decide, since one cannot seriously decide to ϕ unless one believes that one will ϕ . Call this the *Seriousness Condition on Decisions*:

Our decision is serious only if we believe that we will do what we are deciding to do (2012: 4).

A similar condition applies to promises, Marušić argues. When we promise to do something, we must believe that we will keep our promise, since one cannot sincerely

promise to ϕ unless one believes that one will ϕ . Call this the *Sincerity Condition on Promises*:

Our promise is sincere only if we believe that we will do what we are promising to do (*ibid.*).

If these conditions hold, many of our most important pursuits put us in a quandary. We often have good evidence that some feats that we decide or promise to undertake are difficult enough that there is a good chance that we will fail. Hence, respect for the evidence seems to require assigning a significant credence to the possibility that we will not succeed. Yet, if we are to be serious and sincere in our pursuits - and we cannot be that unless we believe that we will do what decide or promise to do - then it also seems that we must believe that we will follow through on our decisions and promises regardless of what the evidence says.

For example, someone who wishes to quit smoking may have excellent evidence that most people who decide to quit smoking fail to do so. Similarly, someone who is about to take the vow of marriage may be well aware that a significant proportion of marriages end in divorce. In both cases, the evidence requires having less than full belief that one will do as one intends, but in neither case can one respect this requirement without repercussions. The smoker cannot believe that the decision to quit will fail without rendering the decision half-hearted. The spouse-to-be cannot believe that the marriage will not hold without being insincere in promising their partner lifelong fidelity. To find a way out of this quandary, we must therefore weigh up which of these requirements deserves our allegiance.

Marušić calls this the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action. At first sight, it seems that there can be no solution to this problem, since it takes the form of a dilemma. Whatever one does, one will either disrespect the evidence or violate a condition on serious and sincere action. Yet, Marušić argues that the epistemological problem of difficult action can be solved without leaving any dilemmatic residue:

because we reach our view about our future actions through practical reasoning, our beliefs about our future actions are to be evaluated by the standards of practical reasoning. Hence, we should believe that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, if it is practically rational to seriously decide or sincerely promise to do it (*ibid.*: 19).

That it is sometimes rational to embark on a difficult course of action seems uncontroversial. After all, we usually applaud people who manage to do something difficult such as kicking a bad habit. Sometimes there is no better option, so even those who try but fail need not be foolhardy. But must such people not be theoretically irrational insofar as they believe in the face of good evidence? No, argues Marušić, building on a suggestion made by G.E.M. Anscombe. When settling whether we will ϕ , there are two ways we may do so. We may either use theoretical reasoning to *predict* whether we will ϕ , given that we are deciding or promising to ϕ , or we may use practical reasoning to *decide* whether we will ϕ . Only theoretical reasoning is meant to give an estimate of how likely it is that we will ϕ , but this is not the kind of reasoning we should use in deliberation whether we will ϕ , Marušić argues.

Rather, deliberation about our future actions should proceed through practical reasoning. By the same some token, the beliefs we thus form about our future actions should be evaluated according to the standards of practical reasoning. And since

practical reasoning proceeds from practical reasons, “our practical reasons for ϕ -ing, and for deciding or promising to ϕ , determine whether we should believe that we will ϕ .” Hence, it is not irrational to believe that we will ϕ as long as we have good enough reasons to ϕ in the first place (*ibid.*).⁶⁸

Why engage in practical rather than theoretical reasoning? Marušić’s answer is that not doing so would be to deny one’s own agency. If we prioritise theoretical over practical reasoning when it is up to us whether something is the case, we do not give proper weight to our practical reasons. We would be guilty of “epistemic evasion”, so to say, since we would take an observer’s view of our own future. In so doing, we not only distort our own agency. Insofar as we fail to take an agent’s perspective of our own future, we also fail to take responsibility for our actions (2013: 308-11).

Being serious and being sincere

Whether this argument goes through obviously depends on whether there is a seriousness condition on decisions and a sincerity condition on promises. Why think that there is? Marušić offers three arguments, one in favour of the sincerity condition and two for the seriousness condition. His defence of the sincerity condition draws a connection between promising and asserting. The two are analogous, Marušić argues, since we can make the same promise by saying either “I promise to ϕ ” or “I will ϕ , I promise”. Both express the same promise, but in uttering the latter one explicitly asserts that one will ϕ . As a result, whatever is a necessary condition for sincerely asserting “I will ϕ ” must also be a necessary condition for sincerely promising “I will ϕ ,

⁶⁸ As he puts it elsewhere, “when matters are up to us, we are in a position to settle the question of how that future will be through practical reasoning, and that licenses us to speak and think differently about it” (2013: 309).

I promise”. The exact formulation of the norm for assertion is a topic of contention, but according to Marušić, it is uncontroversial that to assert something sincerely, one must at the very least believe what one asserts. Hence, to sincerely promise that one will ϕ , one must also believe that one will ϕ (*ibid.*: 5).

Second, Marušić argues that one’s decision to do something is serious only if “one acts as if one will, in fact, do it; and if one is prepared to assert as if one will do what one has decided to do.” Both are “outward signs” of belief, since being prepared to act and assert are functional roles of belief. As a result, those who decide seriously will be prepared to engage in belief-exhibiting behaviour whereas those who are not serious will not (*ibid.*: 6). Third, Marušić argues that belief is necessary for serious decision, since a decision “is meant to settle for us the question of what we will do”. Further, one cannot settle that one will ϕ if one does not believe that one will ϕ , since that would leave open the possibility that one will not ϕ . In that case, one’s decision is not serious, as it does not settle what one will do (*ibid.*).

Marušić’s defence of each condition raises questions for further inquiry. First, the analogy that he draws between promising and asserting only goes as far as the linguistic data suggests. While we certainly can make promises by saying sentences of the form “I will ϕ , I promise”, it is a further question whether such utterances always function as assertions in the full-blooded sense that they are not sincere unless we believe what we say. For although we normally believe what we assert, not all contexts require speakers to believe what they assert. An actor might assert “I will ϕ , I promise” whilst performing on stage, but he is not insincere if he does not believe what he says. As Robert Stalnaker notes:

A speaker may presuppose what is untrue to facilitate communication, as when an anthropologist adopts the presuppositions of his informant in questioning him. Most innocent of all are cases of fiction and pretending: speaker and audience may conspire together in presupposing things untrue (1970/1999: 39-40).

The actor saying “I will ϕ , I promise” in a play is of course not making a genuine promise, but there may be contexts in which it is appropriate to make promises using Stalnaker's strategy. If we are unsure whether we will in fact ϕ , but promising to ϕ is the best way of showing goodwill, perhaps the best we can do is to conspire together in presupposing that we will ϕ . Marušić's wedding example is a case in point. Since marital vows are given in a ceremonial context to mark a rite of passage, they still have symbolic value even if both parties must cooperate in presuming something uncertain.

Must such promises be insincere insofar as the parties are unsure whether what they promise will transpire? Not necessarily, it seems to me. If we believe that we will *not* keep our promise, it does of course seem disingenuous to make the promise in the first place. If, however, we are only unsure whether we will keep our promise, we need not be acting disingenuously so long as we *intend* to keep the promise and believe that we can do so through our own effort. Nor need we be deceitful, as Marušić warns (2013: 305-7). As long as both parties cooperate in presuming something of which they are unsure, they will not cause each other to form false expectations about how likely it is that the promise will be fulfilled.

I have argued that to sincerely promise to do ϕ , it is enough that we intend to ϕ . This is a standard view although there is disagreement about how intention relates to promising. J.L. Austin (1962: 135-36) argues that intending to ϕ is both necessary and sufficient for sincerely promising to ϕ whereas David Owens (2008a) argues that it is possible to promise to ϕ without intending to ϕ . We can do so, since on Owen's view, promising to ϕ only requires that we transfer our right to decide whether to ϕ . Yet, Owens nevertheless agrees that a promise to ϕ usually *implies* that one intends to ϕ . If one does not intend to keep one's promise, something has typically gone wrong (*ibid.*: 755).

My reply can only unravel part of Marušić's argument, however. Someone arguing on his behalf should object that even if promises are sincere so long as we intend to keep them, (i) our decision to keep those promises must still be *serious*, and (ii) the decision is not serious unless we believe that we will do what we decide. Hence, we cannot sincerely promise to ϕ if we do not believe that we will ϕ . By implication, we cannot sincerely promise to do something unlikely unless we believe that we will do what we promise to do. This shows that Marušić's two conditions are not independent of each other. Although the sincerity condition on promises may be inadequate on its own, it still receives support from the seriousness condition on decision. To see if this is enough to bolster the overall argument, let us therefore switch our attention to the latter condition.

Must we believe that we will ϕ if our decision to ϕ is to be serious? To decide to ϕ plausibly is to form an intention to ϕ .⁶⁹ Hence, if Marušić is right, to make a serious decision is to form an intention to do something which one believes that one will do. This strikes me as too stringent an analysis. Although a lack of belief often indicates a lack of seriousness, not believing that one will do what one intends need not be a sign of half-heartedness. Michael Bratman's counterexamples to cognitivism suggest as much. Here again is one of his examples of intention-belief incompleteness:

I might intend now to stop at the bookstore on the way home while knowing of my tendency toward absentmindedness – especially once I get on my bike and go into “automatic pilot.” If I were to reflect on the matter I would be agnostic about my stopping there, for I know I may well forget. It is not that I believe I will not stop; I just do not believe I will (1987: 37).

Bratman argues that this is not a case of irrationality. Although, (i) “intentions and plans normally support coordination in part by providing support for expectations that they will be successfully executed”, and (ii) “there is a defeasible demand that one’s intentions be consistent with one’s beliefs”, this does “not entail that an intention to A actually requires a belief that one will A ” (*ibid.*: 37). For even though intentions support expectations, those expectations may not be sufficient for belief if there is reason to doubt that the intention will be carried out.

Nor need a lack of belief mark a lack of seriousness, we may add. If we do not believe that we will do what we intend, it may not be because of half-heartedness. We may simply have made a realistic assessment of our chances, but a realistic assessment

⁶⁹ The thesis that to decide is to form an intention is explicitly defended by *inter alia* Goldman (1970: 176), Aune (1977: 54), Beardsley (1978), and Mele (2009: ch.1). The thesis is criticised by Hall (1978) while Aune (1978) delineates some ways of responding to those criticisms.

of one's chances need not prevent one from making every effort to carry out one's intention.

Marušić disagrees. He argues that although intention-belief incompleteness is not a case of outright inconsistency:

it would be probabilistically inconsistent, and hence irrational, to intend to do something and withhold judgment about whether we will do it – just as it would be probabilistically inconsistent, and hence irrational, to believe p and also withhold judgment whether p (2013: 302).

Moreover, Marušić argues that Bratman's own planning theory of intentions explains why this is irrational. That theory treats intentions as elements of plans of actions, which allow agents to keep to a course of action as well as coordinate with others. According to Marušić, however, Bratman cannot rationally intend to ϕ without believing that he will ϕ , since he would then end up with conflicting plans. In intending to stop at the book shop, Bratman would be planning as if he will stop at the shop, but in not believing that he will stop at the book shop, he would be planning as if it is an open question whether he will do so (*ibid.*: 303).

This response is a bit puzzling. First of all, it is puzzling why Marušić should object that intention-belief incompleteness is irrational when he himself is concerned with the *seriousness* of actions. This focus would only be relevant if the rationality and seriousness of an action always follow on the heels of each other, but there is little reason to suppose that they do. After all, it is possible to be serious in doing something irrational and to be rational in not taking everything so seriously.

Second, the suggestion that intention-belief incompleteness is irrational only makes sense against the backdrop of cognitivism about practical reason. If cognitivism is true, intention-belief incompleteness is indeed inconsistent, since intentions themselves involve belief in their own success. The same does not hold true for non-cognitivist theories such as Bratman's. His planning theory of intention only claims that intentions *normally* support expectations that the intentions will be successfully executed, not that they always support such expectations. Nor does it imply that intentions themselves contain any expectations as to their own successful execution. But if intentions themselves do not express an expectation, they cannot be probabilistically inconsistent with other mental states.

Contrary to what Marušić claims, someone who does not believe that they will do what they intend need not be committed to conflicting plans. It is true, of course, that if one does not believe that one will do as one intends, then one is in some sense treating it as an open question whether one will do as one intends. One keeps it open in the *epistemic* sense that one is unsure whether one will carry out the intention. Yet, that need not mean that one is treating the question as open in the *practical* sense that one has not made up one's mind about what to do. Even if one does not believe that one's plan will succeed, one need not plan against carrying it out.

Trying one's best

I think that these reflections raise doubts that should make us abandon the seriousness and sincerity conditions. Suppose, however, that both conditions withstand scrutiny. Even if they do, there remains the further question whether we ought to make serious decisions and sincere promises when the going gets tough in the first place. Only if we

invariably ought to be serious and sincere in Marušić's sense would difficult action require belief in the teeth of good evidence. This is exactly what some may question. A simple objection is that when one sets out on a difficult course of action, it is enough that one either decides or promises *to try* one's best to complete the feat. Yet, trying does not require belief, since one may well try to accomplish something without believing that one will do so. Hence, difficult actions need not require us to believe against the evidence.

Marušić does not think much of this objection. He argues that those who press it face a dilemma. Either they must acknowledge that deciding to try does itself require belief against the evidence, since trying to do something difficult is itself difficult - in which case the epistemological problem of difficult action remains - or they must concede that merely deciding to try does not address the problem, as the decision lacks substance if trying to do something difficult is not itself difficult:

If trying is understood in a substantial way, then trying will still be difficult. For instance, trying will be difficult if, in order to keep the decision to try to quit, you have to refrain from smoking even when you really want to smoke. Yet if it is not difficult to try to quit, then the decision lacks substance. If the decision leaves open the possibility of lighting a cigarette because you really feel like having one, then it is not significantly better than not deciding at all (2012: 7).

This strikes me as a false dilemma. First of all, Marušić's example does not make it clear why trying to do something difficult must involve belief against the evidence. He mentions that "trying will be difficult if, in order to keep the decision to try to quit, you have to refrain from smoking even when you really want to smoke", but this does not explain why one must believe that one will succeed in one's try. To complete the

argument, we must rely on the seriousness condition on decisions. Presumably, trying to do something difficult requires belief against the evidence, because (i) trying itself is a kind of action, (ii) a decision to try is not serious unless one believes that one will try. Therefore, tryings that themselves are difficult require belief against the evidence.

I agree that tryings can be described as a kind of action. As Gideon Yaffe points out, merely intending to ϕ is not enough to count as trying to ϕ (2004: 505). One must also make the effort to take steps towards what one is trying to accomplish. Yet, tryings, unlike ordinary actions, also necessarily refer beyond themselves to some other action or event the completion of which is their goal. As such, trying always implies the possibility of failure, since we cannot rule out the possibility of some impassable obstacle or slip-up along the way. As Brian O'Shaughnessy notes, trying by itself does not amount to a success, since it is always aimed at some outcome which is yet to occur (2009: 165-67).

I think these points show that Marušić's seriousness condition cannot be applied to tryings in the same way as he applies it to actions. Since trying implies the possibility of failure, it is implausible to suppose that one cannot seriously try to do something unless one believes that one will do what one tries to do. Instead, we would do better to distinguish between serious and halfhearted tryings by reference to the effort put into them. Thus, someone who tries seriously makes every effort to achieve their goal whereas the halfhearted give up before giving their all. Yet, that does not mean that to be serious one must believe that one will carry out all of one's efforts successfully.

Even when an attempt to perform a difficult action can be broken into comparatively easy steps, the accumulated risk of failure may be enough to warrant

agnosticism about one's future success. Suppose, for example, that I wish to give up smoking and that it is easy for me to refrain from smoking. I can be 0.99 certain that for every cigarette I am offered, I will withstand temptation, but add enough cigarettes and I shall lose confidence that I will decline them all. $0.99^{70} = 0.49$, so seventy cigarettes should be enough to bring my confidence below even the most generous threshold for belief. Yet, it sounds absurd to say that I cannot seriously try to refrain from smoking any of the cigarettes. This would be tantamount to saying that even those for whom it is easiest to quit smoking cannot seriously try to quit. I conclude therefore that even serious tryings do not require belief in their success.

6. Belief in Freedom of the Will

I have considered two ways of justifying what I have called Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism and have found both lacking. First, we cannot argue that rationality requires that if one intends to ϕ , one believes that one will ϕ , since intention-belief incompleteness need not be a rational failing. Second, we also cannot defend the view by appeal to the idea that belief is required for seriously deciding or sincerely promising to do something. Even if these are genuine principles, it does not follow that we must decide or promise to do the unlikely when the evidence is against us. When the going get tough, it is enough that we decide and promise to try our best.

I now turn to a third line of defence which I take to hold more promise. While – as I have conceded to Bratman – it is not a *requirement* of rationality that if one intends to ϕ , one believes that one will ϕ , rationality may still, under certain circumstances, *permit* believing that one will ϕ when one intends to ϕ . If so, Non-

Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism may still be true insofar as it is permissible to believe that one will ϕ even if one does not have adequate evidence that one will ϕ . This is what I now wish to argue. I shall do so by articulating a handful of rational requirements which, when considered together, show that rationality leaves room for beliefs which are not formed in response to adequate evidence. Before so doing, however, it will be good to situate ourselves with respect to the main views about how belief relates to intention.

It is by no mean uncontroversial that we can permissibly form intention-beliefs without any prior evidence that we will do as we intend. Cognitivists hold that we can, but there are many others who worry that such beliefs must be faulty in some respect or other. For example, Paul Grice argued that so-called belief “which it is reasonable to hold because one would like that which one believes to be the case, it is not properly called a belief at all” (1971: 268). Similarly, Rae Langton argues that to think of intention as involving belief without evidence is to conceive of intention as a sort of faith, or at least to “make intention as bad as faith—as difficult to achieve, and as dubious, epistemologically speaking” (2004: 245). Finally, Sarah K. Paul argues that “[i]f there are situations in which we are licensed to form beliefs without sufficient prior evidence, we would expect such cases to be exceptional, rather than the basis of our entire practical lives.” For although gods and other omnipotent agents “may experience no breakdowns between intending and doing, we human agents need sufficient grounds to believe we will accomplish our aim in any given case” (2009b: 7).

Cognitivists such as David Velleman and Kieran Setiya must, and do, seek to assuage these worries, since they take intentions to be beliefs which we form spontaneously in deciding to act. According to Velleman (1989), intentions are self-

fulfilling expectations which we form, partly at least, out of a desire for self-knowledge – to know what we are doing and what we will do. Since such beliefs are formed in response to reasons about what we would like to be the case, rather than evidence about what will be the case, they result from a kind of wishful thinking. Yet, this is a *licensed* form of wishful thinking, Velleman argues. Since intentions – unlike ordinary wishful beliefs – tend to be *self-fulfilling*, they gain their justification in retrospect by reliably generating their own truth, thus ensuring that we stand in a non-accidental relation to the truth (*ibid.*: 56-57, 69).

According to Setiya (2007 & 2008b), intentions are a distinctive kind of desire-like beliefs which both represent one as hereby ϕ -ing, or as going to ϕ , and motivate one to do so. Again, such beliefs are not formed in response to prior evidence that one will ϕ . Contrary to Velleman, however, Setiya argues that to have justification to form these beliefs, it is not enough merely to have faith that they will be supported by adequate evidence once they are formed. There must also be some *antecedent* condition in place which explain when and why it is permissible to form beliefs about what one is doing without prior evidence. According to Setiya, it is when and because we have *knowledge how* to ϕ that we are epistemically justified in forming intention-beliefs without prior evidence. If we lack the requisite practical knowledge, we also lack the requisite epistemic justification.⁷⁰

Velleman and Setiya's answers have not appeased everyone. Most prominently, Sarah K. Paul has developed a neo-Gricean account of intention which by-passes the worries plaguing cognitive theories of intention. Grice's (1971) original idea was that

⁷⁰ Paul (2009a) provides an extensive critique of Setiya's view. Setiya (2009) responds to Paul's critique while Setiya (2012) explains in more detail how knowledge-how can provide adequate epistemic support for intention-belief.

intending that ϕ consists in willing that ϕ and expecting that one will ϕ as a result of willing it. The belief that one will ϕ is not groundless, however. It is evidentially based, since the conclusion that one will ϕ is inferred from (i) one's (non-observational) knowledge of one's own will, (ii) one's (empirical) knowledge of what one will do when willing that ϕ , as well as (iii) one's evidence that no obstructions will prevent one from ϕ -ing. This departs from strong cognitivist views, since Grice does not see intention-beliefs as being formed spontaneously. Yet, Grice's view still amounts to a weak form of cognitivism, since it still treats intention as partly constituted by belief.

Paul rids Grice's account of this cognitivist residue. She argues that rather than go with Grice's composite analysis, we can simply treat intentions as *sui generis* “distinctively *practical*, conative commitments that do not constitutively involve the belief that one will do what one intends” (2009b: 11).⁷¹ Instead of trying to explain intention in terms of other mental states, we can define it in terms of the unique functional role played by intentions as “settled objectives” that shape practical thinking and initiate and sustain action (*ibid.*: 12).⁷² This lets us tell a different story about how we reach the beliefs we hold about our own intentions. According to Paul, we know what we intend non-observationally on the basis of knowing what we decide, since deciding to ϕ is usually enough to form the intention to ϕ . From the knowledge that we intend to ϕ , we can then infer that we are ϕ -ing, or that we will ϕ , provided that some background conditions also obtain.⁷³

⁷¹ In addition to Paul, Davidson (1978), Bratman (1987), and Mele (1992) defend well known non-cognitivist accounts of intention.

⁷² The term comes from McCann (1991).

⁷³ Paul (2012) explains in more detail how we know what we intend.

First, one must have good reason to believe that one is able to ϕ if one intends to. Second, one must not have any reasons to believe that one's circumstances will prevent one from ϕ -ing. Third, to have foreknowledge of what one will do, one must also have reason to believe that one will carry out one's intention. In contrast to our non-observational knowledge of what we intend, our knowledge of these latter reasons is gained from observation of ourselves and our environment (*ibid.*: 12-18). Paul therefore presents us with a picture according to which we use both practical and theoretical reasoning to establish what we do and will do. When we decide to ϕ – and so form the intention to ϕ – we do so as a result of practical reasoning, but when we infer that we are ϕ -ing, or that we will ϕ – and so form the corresponding belief – we do so on the basis of theoretical reasoning.

Now for the view that I wish to defend. As I interpret it, Non-Pragmatic Anti-Evidentialism does not coincide with any of the above views. My defence, at least, will not follow Velleman and Setiya in supposing that intention necessarily involves belief. It cannot, since I have already endorsed Bratman's point that it is possible to intend something without believing that one will do it. Yet, I shall not follow the inferential strategy adopted by Grice and Paul either. They argue that when we believe that we will do as we intend, we must do so in response to adequate evidence that we will do as we intend. This seems to be precisely what Descartes denies if we read him in the way that I have done.⁷⁴ He “should like you to remember here that, in matters which may be embraced by the will, I made a very careful distinction between the conduct of life and the contemplation of truth”:

⁷⁴ Note, however, that this is an unorthodox reading of Descartes' view. The caveat raised in fn. 65 still applies.

As far as the conduct of life is concerned, I am very far from thinking that we should assent only to that which is clearly perceived. On the contrary, I do not think that we should always wait even for probable truths; from time to time we will have to choose one of many alternatives about which we have no knowledge, and once we have made our choice, so long as no reasons against it can be produced, we must stick to it as firmly as if it had been chosen for transparently clear reasons. (AT vii, 149)

Why think that in matters “embraced by the will” we do not have to “wait even for probable truths”? One natural suggestion is that we simply cannot hope to attain the same clarity of thought in the day-to-day conduct of life as we can when contemplating the truth. There may not be enough time, or the matters at hand may be too intractable.

This is not all, however. We must also look to a deeper explanation in Descartes’s conception of the mind as composed of two faculties: the intellect and the will. Of these two, only the will is active. The intellect is passive, since it is limited by nature to receiving ideas and considering the contents of thoughts. In Descartes’s words, “all that the intellect does is to enable me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgments” (AT vii, 56). The will is not similarly constrained. Rather:

the will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather, it consists simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we do not feel we are determined by any external force. (AT vii, 57)

This may explain why Descartes suggests that in matters embraced by the will, we do not have to wait for probable truths when making up our minds. Since the will enables

us to act undetermined by any external force, we do not have to wait for any deliverances to the intellect to predict what will happen as a result of our action. As long as we do not have reason to doubt its efficiency, the movement of the will is enough by itself. Rather than rely on the intellect to perceive what will be the case, we can simply decide what will be the case.

Kant and, following him, Sartre give voice to much the same view. Kant points out that there are two opposing perspectives which we can adopt towards ourselves. We:

take one standpoint when by means of freedom we conceive ourselves as causes acting *a priori*, and another standpoint when we contemplate ourselves with reference to our actions as effects which we see before our eyes.⁷⁵

According to Kant, however, we cannot take the latter standpoint towards our own actions insofar as we are rational, since a rational will cannot act except as “under the idea of freedom”:

...to every rational being possessed of a will we must also lend the Idea of freedom as the only under which he can act. For in such a being we conceive a reason which is practical – that is, which exercises causality in regards to its objects. But we cannot possibly conceive of a reason as being consciously directed from outside in regard to its judgments; for in that case the subject would attribute the determination of his power of judgment, not to his reason, but to an impulsion. Reason must look upon itself as the author of its own principles independently of alien influences. Therefore as practical reason, or as the will of a rational being, it must be regarded by itself as free; that is, the will of a rational being can be a will of his own only under the Idea of freedom, and such a will must therefore – from a practical point of view – be attributed to all rational beings.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 450.

⁷⁶ *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 448.

If this is right, it follows that one cannot conceive of oneself as an agent unless one conceives oneself as free. Even if it should turn that we do not possess freedom of the will, we still cannot but act as if we do.⁷⁷

Sartre too emphasises the need to conceive of oneself as free, but he does not deny that one can act as if one is unfree. Indeed, one of the main ways that one can fall into inauthenticity is to disown one's freedom and act as if one's actions are wholly determined by facts about one's body, psychology, social standing, and past history. If one identifies oneself with one's "facticity" like this, one acts out of bad faith, since one treats oneself as an object rather than an agent with the capacity to transcend the circumstances into which one is born. Yet, the cure for inauthenticity is not to ignore one's facticity. According to Sartre, it is equally a form of bad faith to identify solely with one's freedom and think that one can do anything one wishes to. To do so is to act unawares of the contingency of one's own existence, since one would thereby disregard the constraints against which one must make one's free choices. To avoid bad faith we must therefore conceive of ourselves as at the same time free but also constrained by our heritage and circumstances.⁷⁸

These arguments have different implications for contemporary debates about the relation of belief to intention. If Kant is right, we simply cannot reason about ourselves in the way that Grice and Paul suggest without thereby ceasing to conceive

⁷⁷ Christine Korsgaard clarifies: "The point is not that you must believe that you are free, but that you must choose as if you were free. It is important to see that this is quite consistent with believing yourself to be fully determined. [...] Kant's point, then, is not about a theoretical assumption necessary to decision, but about a fundamental feature of the standpoint from which decisions are made. It follows from this feature that we must regard our decisions as springing ultimately from the principles that we have chosen. We must regard ourselves as having free will" (1996: 162-3).

⁷⁸ *Being and Nothingness*, Ch. 2.

of ourselves as agents. For if we infer what we will do on the basis of what we intend and what we are disposed to do when we so intend, we treat our own intention as an impulsion compelling us to act a certain way. We no longer “conceive ourselves as causes acting *a priori*”, but merely “contemplate ourselves with reference to our actions as effects which we see before our eyes”.

If on the other hand Sartre is right, it is not out of the question to reason about oneself in the way that Grice and Paul suggest. Insofar as we cannot escape the weight of our own facticity, we also cannot ignore that we will be disposed to act in specific ways under certain circumstances. Yet, it would be a form of bad faith always to infer what one will do on the basis of what one intends and how one tends to behave when one so intends. This cannot be our sole way of thinking about ourselves, since we would then disregard our capacity to transcend both the circumstances into which we are born and the dispositions which we acquire.

Kant and Sartre’s are lofty ideals, but I think that we can also cite plainer considerations against taking an empirical stance towards oneself. One such reason is that we often simply cannot tell whether there is good enough evidence one way or another to predict whether we will succeed in doing what we intend. What we intend may be an action which we have not attempted before, in which case there is no prior evidence to go by. Or the action may be one which we not have attempted in a long time, in which we may have forgotten what evidence we had. If we are at all serious about predicting our own behaviour, we should be agnostic about whether we will do what we intend in cases like these. There just is not enough evidence to make any firm conjectures. Yet, such caution seems excessive under normal circumstance. Unless we

have reason to think otherwise, it seems permissible to believe that one will carry out a novel action even if one has not performed that action before.

What is more, even when we have evidence about what we will do, such evidence is not worth much as evidence, since we can undo it at any point. If we have freedom of the will, we can at any time change our course of action so that we no longer have reason to expect the same as we did just a moment ago. When evidence is hostage to the will in this way, it makes little sense to privilege evidential thinking about one's future actions. For that to make sense, we would have to see our actions as the outcome of some general empirical law which we can use to predict what we will do.

But this is precisely what does not make much sense if we are free to do as we choose. There can be no such laws if we are free to give up or revise our intentions at any time. At the very least, we cannot see ourselves as acting according to such laws at the same time as seeing ourselves as exercising the power of freely choosing what we do. Rather, it is because we, to begin with, resolve to take it upon ourselves to make something the case that we can also expect ourselves to act in ways conducive to this end. This resolution – and not the evidential relation it bears to our future behaviour – is the very thing which makes an intention to ϕ a reason to believe that one will ϕ in the first place.⁷⁹

This raises a question. If we do not infer what we will do on the basis of evidence about what we intend to do, how then do we come to believe that we will do what we intend to do? One possible answer would be to affirm the cognitivist idea that

⁷⁹ My argument here draws inspiration from Angus Ross's (1986) case against evidential construals of the epistemic value of testimony. His arguments are further developed by Richard Moran (2005) whose arguments, in turn, are further refined by Paul Faulkner (2007).

intention involves belief. In that case, forming the belief that one will ϕ does not require any inference, since forming an intention to ϕ includes forming the belief that one will ϕ . Such an explanation would inherit all the potential demerits that attach to cognitivism, however. Nor is it one that I can coherently pursue, since I have already expressed reservations about cognitivism.

Instead a more neutral and, dare I say, plausible account can be had if we take seriously an analogy between how we acquire beliefs through perception and how we acquire beliefs through intention. Just as intending to ϕ usually carries with it the belief that one ϕ -ies, or that one will ϕ , so being in perceptual state where it seems as if p usually carries with it the belief that p . Yet, perception is not easily equated with belief. Just as there are cases of intention without belief, so there are cases of perception without belief. For example, a stick partly submerged in water may appear to be curved, but we will not believe that it is curved if we know it to be straight. All the same, perception bears an especially close relation to belief. Unless the belief that a perception supports is inhibited by other more entrenched beliefs, we will almost invariably believe what we perceive. Perception, we might say, is a disposition to believe, since it will result in belief unless impeded in some way.

Similarly, intentions are not easily equated with beliefs, but the two still bear close relations to one another. For just as perceptions that are not suppressed by conflicting beliefs tend to issue in belief, so intentions that are not similarly opposed tend to issue in belief. Further, in neither case does it seem that we have to draw any inference to form the corresponding belief. Instead, the belief follows immediately so long as it does not conflict with other more entrenched beliefs. In this respect, intention and perception are both *potent potentialities*. That is, to produce belief, they do

not require the addition of anything, but only the absence of any impeding obstacles.⁸⁰

The foregoing can only go so far as a defence of anti-evidentialism, however. For even if Descartes, Kant, and Sartre succeed in explaining why we should not take an empirical stance towards our actions, the epistemic worry which Grice, Langton, and Paul raise – and which cognitivists like Velleman and Setiya seek to quell – still remains. For if our beliefs about our future actions are not based on adequate evidence about what we will do, they seem to float free of any foundations. As long as we do not have an answer to this worry, the suspicion remains that such beliefs are epistemically flawed. Although we may have made room for freedom, we may only have done so at the expense of theoretical irrationality.

Why, then, think that we can permissibly form the belief that we will ϕ without treating our intention to ϕ as adequate evidence to infer that we will ϕ ? One suggestion is that rather than being inferentially justified, such beliefs receive their justification *non-inferentially*. Just as some suggest that the beliefs we acquire from perception and memory rest on non-inferential justification, so one may suggest that the beliefs that accompany intentions are similarly justified. This has the advantage of explaining the seeming immediacy with which we come to believe that we will do as we intend. When we form an intention to ϕ , there does not seem to be a further step in reasoning by which we conclude that because we now intend to ϕ , we will ϕ . Instead, the belief seems simply to follow on the heels of the intention.

⁸⁰ The contrast between latent and potent potentialities with respect to perception is drawn by A.D. Smith (2001: 289-292).

The distinction between inferential and non-inferential justification is sometimes also known as that between *mediate* and *immediate* justification.⁸¹ Thus, beliefs for which we have mediate justification receive at least part of their epistemic support from the justification we have for other beliefs. We must use the latter to infer the former. In contrast, beliefs for which we have immediate justification do not require support from the justification we have for other beliefs. Since their justification is not mediated by the justification we have for any other beliefs, we also do not have to infer them from any other beliefs.

This does not mean that to have immediate justification, the justification cannot have any source. Again, the example of perception is apt. Beliefs acquired through perception are candidate examples of beliefs for which we have immediate justification, but their justification has its source in experience nonetheless. All it takes for them to be immediately justified is that their justification does not depend on the justification we have for some other belief. Thus, seeing a dog scratch itself provides putative immediate justification to believe that the dog is scratching itself, but to believe that the dog has lice, we must also have justification to believe that the dog is not scratching itself for some other reason. While we have defeasible justification to believe that the dog is scratching itself just by virtue of its appearing to scratch itself, we can only infer that the dog has lice on the basis of other beliefs.

The same story could be told about the relation of belief to intention. When we form an intention to ϕ , the intention is a source of justification to believe that we will ϕ , but this justification is immediate. It does not depend on us having justification

⁸¹ Whether there is such a thing as immediate justification is a matter of controversy. For some recent arguments that there is such a thing, see Pryor (2000) & (2005) and Silins (2008).

for any other belief. Contrary to what Grice and Paul claim, the belief would not rest on an inference from a belief about how we are disposed to behave to a belief about how we will behave. Instead, we would have justification to believe that we will ϕ just by virtue of intending to ϕ . Such justification would of course be defeasible. Just as perceptual beliefs can be defeated by contrary evidence, so intention-beliefs can be defeated by evidence that we will not do what we intend. Indeed, this seems to be one of the lessons that Bratman's cases of intention-belief incompleteness teach.⁸²

7. Two Paths to Self-Knowledge

If what I have argued in this chapter is along the right lines, we do not only have a counterexample to traditional evidentialism. We have also found an alternative path to self-knowledge. It is often said that self-knowledge is special, since we can attain it not by focusing on facts about our private mental lives, but by attending to the outer world. For example, Roy Edgley writes that:

[M]y own present thinking, in contrast to the thinking of others, is transparent in the sense that I cannot distinguish the question "Do I think that P?" from a question in which there is no essential reference to myself or my belief, namely "Is it the case that P?" This does not of course mean that the correct answer to these two questions must be the same; only I cannot distinguish them, for in giving my answer to the question "Do I

⁸² Note, however, that there is a seeming dissimilarity between perception and intention here. When we have defeating evidence that something is not as it seems, we often cease to see it as we did before. If, on further inspection, the dog scratching itself turns out to be a big cat performing a funny dance, it may no longer appear to us as if there is a dog scratching itself. By contrast, when we have evidence that we will not do what we intend to do, we do not always revise our intention. Thus, Bratman may still intend to stop by the book shop even though he is aware of evidence that he will not. Whether this is a substantial disanalogy obviously depends on whether intentions that are not accompanied by belief are substantially different from intentions that are.

think that P ?” I also give my answer, more or less tentative, to the question “Is it the case that P ?” (1969: 90)⁸³

Gareth Evans makes much the same suggestion in the following famous paragraph:

[I]n making a self-ascription of belief, one’s eyes are so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward - upon the world. If someone asks me “Do you think there is going to be a third world war?,” I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question “Will there be a third world war?” (1982: 225)⁸⁴

Richard Moran offers an alternative account. He argues that to say that one type of question is transparent to another type of question is to make a normative claim “about *how* a set of questions is to be answered” and “what sorts of reasons are to be taken as relevant.” Specifically, the claim is that “a first-person present-tense question about one’s belief is answered by reference to (or consideration of) the same reasons that would justify an answer to the corresponding question about the world” (2001: 62).

⁸³ Quoted in Moran (2001: 61).

⁸⁴ In fact, both of these statements are too strong. Edgley goes too far when claiming that the question “Do I think that p ?” is transparent to the question “Is it the case that p ?” because we cannot distinguish between the two from within the first-person point of view. This cannot be, since it is not as if considering “Do I think that p ?” will prevent one from distinguishing that question from the question “Is it the case that p ?”.

Evans’s characterisation is also too strong. He claims that in answering the question “Do I believe that p ?”, one *must* attend to exactly the same outward phenomena as one would in answering whether it is true that p . Yet, it seems that one can at least sometimes answer whether one believes that p by turning one’s attention inwards to facts about oneself.

Brie Gertler offers a telling counterexample: “Suppose I remember that, just this morning, I sincerely told a friend that I feared we were on the verge of a third world war. On the basis of this memory, I may be justified in believing that I believe there will be a third world war.” Yet, I will not have directed my attention to the same outward phenomena as I would if I were answering the question “Will there be a third world war?” (2011: 125). Saying that question A is transparent to question B can therefore not mean that to answer A one must necessarily answer B .

Moran takes care to point out that this is not supposed to be an empirical or conceptual claim. It is not that as a matter of empirical fact we must always answer the self-directed question “Do I believe that p ?” and the world-directed question “Is it the case that p ?” in the same way. Nor is it that “for conceptual reasons”, we cannot make sense of the idea of answering the two questions by appeal to different considerations. Rather, the claim is supposed to capture a normative ideal telling one to “treat the question of my belief about P as equivalent to the question of the truth of P ”.

Yet, even if Moran is right about this ideal, he fails to notice that deliberation about whether it is true that p is not the only way to pursue it. Suppose with Evans that someone asked “Do you think there is going to be a third world war?” What facts one should attend to in answering that question surely depends on who one is. For most people, the only relevant facts will be facts that are evidence for whether or not there will be a third world war. Yet, if I am, say, the president of the United States, things are different. Rather than merely attend to the available evidence, I can also answer the question in the affirmative by forming the intention to start a third world war. More mundane examples are readily available. To construct them, we need only adjust the situation so that p describes some state of affairs that one can decide to bring about. Arguably, some of the most important choices we face are choices about whether to engage in theoretical or practical reasoning in cases such as these. When we face them, how we come to know ourselves will depend on which choice we make.

Chapter 5

Deliberation and the First–Person Perspective

Modern philosophy contains two seemingly incompatible traditions for thinking about the normative constraints on belief. On the one hand, there is a tradition which emphasises the need for belief to respect evidence and the dictates of reason. Locke argued that so as not to “transgress against our own light”, we should moderate the strength of our beliefs to the strength of our evidence.⁸⁵ And in Hume’s view, wise people proportion their beliefs to the evidence so that they obey the laws of probability.⁸⁶ On the other hand, there is a philosophical tradition which finds a role for belief precisely when evidence and reason give out. In Kant’s epistemology, belief functions as a “signpost or compass” by means of which we can orient ourselves when we must pass judgement on matters about which we lack adequate evidence.⁸⁷ According to Wittgenstein, we have no choice but to take most of our beliefs on trust from others’ testimony only to adjust them to evidence if doubt or observation allow us to do so.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. 27, § 24.

⁸⁶ *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 10, pt. 1.

⁸⁷ “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (8:136), in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*.

⁸⁸ *On Certainty*, §§ 159–162.

It would seem, therefore, that to resolve this conflict between evidentialism and non-evidentialism, we must delve deeper into the relation between belief, evidence, and rationality to find out whether it is ever permissible to believe without adequate evidence. Not everyone agrees, however. A more recent normativist strain in philosophy would have us take a different approach. According to this new normativism, it is a mistake to even inquire whether it is ever appropriate to believe without adequate evidence, since it is part of the very concept of belief that one ought only to believe that p if one has sufficient evidence that p . Jonathan Adler, Nishi Shah and David Velleman have developed some of the most intriguing arguments for this view. Adler (2002) argues that it is not even possible, let alone permissible, to believe without adequate evidence, since this would amount to a contradiction in thought. Shah and Velleman (2005) claim that one cannot answer the deliberative question “Should I believe that p ?” without addressing the factual question “Is it true that p ?”. The best explanation for this, they argue, is that it is part of the concept of belief that one ought only to believe that p if it is true that p .

I wish to probe each argument to see whether the conflict between evidentialism and non-evidentialism can be set aside like this. My conclusion is negative. Not only are both arguments subject to counterexample, they do not get off the ground without assuming the very conclusion which they are supposed to establish. Contrary to what Adler argues, believing without adequate evidence does not involve any contradiction in thought unless we assume that rational persons never believe without adequate evidence. Similarly, Shah and Velleman’s argument only succeeds if we assume that belief ought always to be moderated to the evidence. Yet, this is exactly the assumption which the traditional debate between evidentialists and

non-evidentialists brings into question. To resolve that question, we have no choice but to return to that debate.

1. Adler's Conceptual Argument

Jonathan Adler devotes most of his book, *Belief's Own Ethics*, to arguing that evidentialism “is the ethics of belief imposed by the concept of belief itself” (2002: 2). Adler's argument proceeds in two stages. First, he claims that it is impossible in full consciousness to regard oneself as believing something for which one does not have sufficient evidence. Second, he argues that the best explanation for why we are unable to do so is that it is part of the concept of what a belief is that it is only proper to believe that p if one has sufficient evidence that p .

Adler supports the first claim by way of examples and observations. The main example to which he refers throughout is the ancient challenge to believe the proposition “The number of stars is even”. It is impossible to meet this challenge, Adler claims, as there simply is not sufficient evidence that the number of stars is even. The same holds for any other proposition about which we lack adequate evidence. If we judge in full awareness that there is insufficient evidence for p , we thereby find ourselves unable fully to believe that p . Adler calls this the Subjective Principle of Sufficient Reason:

When one attends to any of one's beliefs, one must regard it as believed for sufficient or adequate reasons. (*ibid.*: 26)

Adler offers three observations in support of the principle. First, he claims that “we find ourselves compelled to follow” the principle when attending to our own beliefs. If

we attend to a belief and judge it not to be based on sufficient evidence, we thereby find ourselves compelled to revise it to something less than outright belief (*ibid.*: 27). Second, “[w]e also attribute acceptance of the subjective principle to others, at least for what they *assert*” (*ibid.*). Finally, Adler argues that the subjective principle gains support from the fact that even delusional persons seem to recognise the principle. They should be the ones who have most reason to disregard the principle, but they too seek to rationalise their beliefs by adducing evidence in their support (*ibid.*).

This cannot be the whole of the argument, however. More still needs to be said to show why the subjective principle is grounded in the concept of belief and why possession of that concept puts us under any normative pressure. For all that has been said so far, the principle might only hold because we are *psychologically* unable to regard ourselves as believing on the basis of insufficient evidence. That does not show that there is an “ethics of belief imposed by the concept of belief itself”, but only goes to show that nature has built us a certain way.

This brings us to the second and central part of Adler’s argument. According to Adler, the subjective principle holds not just because it is *psychologically* impossible to regard one’s beliefs as being believed for insufficient reasons. Rather, the “must” governing the principle is supposed to express that it is *conceptually* impossible to regard oneself as believing for insufficient reasons. Why think that it is? According to Adler, the explanation for why it is not merely psychologically but conceptually impossible to violate the Subjective Principle of Sufficient Reason is that recognising that one believes that *p* while acknowledging that one does not have adequate evidence that *p* would be “*incoherent* (a stark contradiction)” (*ibid.*: 29).

What makes such a recognition incoherent is not the sentence used to express

it. “I believe that p , but I lack adequate evidence that p ” is not a contradiction, since both conjuncts can be true at the same time. Rather, what would be incoherent according to Adler is the *thought* that is required to acknowledge oneself as believing that p on the basis of insufficient evidence. Take again the proposition that the number of stars is even. According to Adler, one cannot believe that proposition while acknowledging that one lacks sufficient evidence that the number of stars is even, because doing so would require one to have the following “Moore’s Paradox-like thought”:

I believe that the number of stars is even. All that can secure for me the belief’s claim of truth is adequate evidence (reason) of its truth. I lack adequate evidence. So I am not in a position to judge that the number of stars is even. So I do not judge it true. So I do not believe that the number of stars is even. (*ibid.*: 30)

Thoughts like these are not only incoherent but impossible, Adler argues. One cannot in full consciousness believe the first and last proposition at the same time, since “[t]he initial statement is implicitly rejected by the end of the reasoning”. The realisation that one lacks adequate evidence simply “erases” the original belief (*ibid.*: 30-1). Likewise, he argues, it is impossible not to believe something for which one recognises there to be sufficient evidence. “Once one judges that the evidence or reasons are adequate, one thereby does hold the belief” (*ibid.*: 32).-

2. What Contradiction in Thought?

Neither part of Adler’s argument is convincing. Consider first the claim that one cannot regard oneself as fully believing something for which one lacks sufficient

evidence. As it stands, it is not immune to counterexamples. Adler mentions some putative counterexamples himself. For example, he concedes that subjects suffering from various delusions sometimes continue to hold beliefs which they in some circumstances concede are not supported by adequate evidence. Yet, Adler argues that these are not genuine counterexamples to the subjective principle of sufficient reason, since it is unclear whether such subjects are fully aware of the dissonance between their pathological beliefs and their own appraisal of those beliefs (*ibid.*: 35).

Not all counterexamples can be brushed aside like this. Sometimes, it seems, even reflective individuals free from mental disorder fail to give up beliefs which they in full awareness judge not to be supported by adequate evidence. One example is this confession from Brian Ribeiro:

I do judge that there is a completely persuasive argument for radical skepticism. I do reflectively accept and (even publicly) endorse that argument. As far as I can tell, my acceptance of that argument's cogency is as clear-headed as my acceptance of anything is ... But I still believe I have two hands.⁸⁹

Similar imagined examples are readily available. Eric Schwitzgebel asks us to imagine Kaipeng, a trembling Stoic who “quite sincerely judges, not just on one occasion but repeatedly, that death is not bad”, but whose behaviour is “indistinguishable from the actions and reactions of someone who considers death bad” (2010: 532-33). Similarly, Andrew Huddleston presents the example of Mary, a self-conscious believer who judges that she has no evidence that God exists, but nonetheless continues to believe in God (2012: 211). All of these subjects seem fully aware of the dissonance between the beliefs they hold and their own appraisal of those beliefs. Yet, none of them can be

⁸⁹ Ribeiro (2011: 21).

fairly accused of mental disturbance without thereby imputing the same fault to a large part of humanity so unexceptional are these examples.

There are no doubt many ways in which one may resist the force of these examples. One may argue that skeptics who doubt the existence of an external world are operating with two concepts of belief, one used for evaluating beliefs from an epistemic standpoint, the other employed when going about their daily business. Similarly, one might argue that Kaipeng and Mary do not fully believe that death is bad and that God exists, but merely have a high degree of confidence in those propositions. Or one might argue that Kaipeng and Mary neither are confident nor believe, but that they are in some other belief-like state.⁹⁰

Yet, it would be groundless to opt for one of these views without further explanation as to why we cannot simply say that Ribeiro, Kaipeng, and Mary hold beliefs which they acknowledge are not supported by adequate evidence. As the putative counterexamples accumulate, Adler's view incurs a burden of proof to at least explain why it is impossible knowingly to believe something without adequate evidence. This is what the second part of Adler's argument is meant to explain. His answer, as we have seen, is that one cannot violate the subjective principle in full consciousness because doing so would involve a contradiction in thought.

Adler's account here builds on Sydney Shoemaker's analysis of Moore's Paradox. That paradox is usually introduced by noting the puzzling nature of sentences that take the form "*p*, but I do not believe that *p*". Such sentences are puzzling because their assertion sounds contradictory or at least logically anomalous even though both of their conjuncts can be true at the same time. Since the sentence

⁹⁰ This is indeed the view which Schwitzgebel uses his example to motivate.

“ p , but I do not believe that p ” is not a logical contradiction, some other explanation must be given for why it sounds contradictory. According to one popular pragmatic analysis, statements of the form “ p , but I do not believe that p ” sound contradictory because in asserting the first conjunct one conversationally implies that one believes that p while in asserting the second conjunct one explicitly says that one does not believe that p . That is not the kind of explanation that Shoemaker favours, however. In his view, Moore’s paradox is not primarily due to the conversational conventions that govern the expression of belief. Rather, he argues, Moore’s paradox arises in the first instance because “there is something paradoxical or logically peculiar about the idea of someone’s *believing* the propositional content of a Moore-paradoxical sentence, whether or not the person gives linguistic expression to this belief” (1996: 75-6).

Shoemaker suggests two explanations for why that is so. The first relies on the premise that assertion “requires that the speaker be conscious of the belief being expressed by the assertion – or, to allow for insincere assertion, that the speaker present herself as conscious of the belief” (*ibid.*: 76). If we furthermore assume that to be conscious of a belief one must have a higher-order belief to the effect that one has that belief, then asserting a Moore-paradoxical sentence such as “It is raining, but I do not believe that it is raining” would require one to have – or at least present oneself as having – the higher order belief that “I believe that it is raining, but I do not believe that it is raining”. But the content of that belief is incoherent, since the two conjuncts contradict each other. Accordingly, it appears that one cannot consciously believe the content of a Moore-paradoxical sentence without involving oneself in a self-contradiction.

The second explanation, which is the one that Shoemaker prefers, does not

depend on any connection between assertion and conscious belief, but appeals to the idea that “believing something commits one to believing that one believes it” (*ibid.*: 77). Thus, Shoemaker argues that if one assents to the proposition that p - and the resulting (episodic) belief is available to serve as a guide to action and as a premise in one’s reasoning - one must, on pain of irrationality, also assent to the proposition that one believes that one believes that p if presented with that proposition. If one does not, he argues, one is either joking or “has, at best, a very imperfect grasp of the concept of belief” (*ibid.*: 78). This gives us another answer as to why there is something paradoxical about the idea of someone believing the content of a Moore-paradoxical sentence. For if someone were to assent to a sentence such as “It is raining, but I do not believe that it is raining”, then it is reasonable to suppose that that belief is available to the person. On the present view, therefore, if one were to assent to that sentence one would, on pain of irrationality, also have to assent to the proposition “I believe that it is raining, but I do not believe that it is raining”. Again, however, the content of that proposition would be self-contradictory, so one could not believe the Moore-paradoxical sentence without contradicting oneself.

Adler’s argument is supposed to follow the same strategy as Shoemaker’s. Although he does not say which of Shoemaker’s two explanations he supports, he claims that just as Moore-paradoxical sentences are unassertable, because they express a contradiction in thought, so one cannot violate the subjective principle of sufficient reason because that, too, would involve a contradiction in thought (2002: 30). This is a false analogy, however. On closer inspection, it turns out that neither of Shoemaker’s two explanations can be transposed to explain why believing “ p , but I lack adequate evidence that p ” involves a contradiction in thought.

Suppose first, in line with Shoemaker's first explanation, that to recognise oneself as believing something, one must be conscious of that belief, and that being conscious of a belief is a matter of having a second-order belief to the effect that one has the first belief. In that case, recognising that " p , but I lack adequate evidence that p " would require one also to have the second-order belief "I believe that p , but I lack adequate evidence that p ". That is not a contradiction, however, since both conjuncts can be true at the same time. If, on the other hand, we follow the second explanation and assume that believing something commits one to believing that one believes it, then believing that p , but recognising that one lacks adequate evidence that p , would commit one to believing that one believes that p , but that one lacks adequate evidence that p . Again, however, that is not a contradiction, since the last two conjuncts may be true at the same time.

Clearly, Adler's derivation of a contradiction from the sentence " p , but I lack adequate evidence that p " depends on the tacit assumption that in realising that one lacks adequate evidence that p one must also cease to believe that p . That Adler makes this assumption is clear from his explanation of why it is impossible to believe that the number of stars is even. Consider again Adler's characterisation of the contradiction in thought that he claims would ensue if one were to believe that proposition. In numbered form, it goes as follows:

- i) I believe that the number of stars is even.
- ii) All that can secure for me the belief's claim of truth is adequate evidence (reason) of its truth.
- iii) I lack adequate evidence.
- iv) So I am not in a position to judge that the number of stars is even.
- v) So I do not judge it true.
- vi) So I do not believe that the number of stars is even. (*ibid.*: 30)

Evidently, a contradiction only arises between (i) and (vi) because Adler assumes that one must stop believing that p if one judges that one does not have adequate evidence that p . This assumption is too strong. Even if it holds for most beliefs, it is not true that one must always stop believing that p if one judges that one does not have adequate evidence that p . Nor is it true that “[o]nce one judges that the evidence or reasons” for some belief are adequate, “one thereby does hold the belief” (*ibid.*: 30-2). The cases mentioned above are *prima facie* counterexamples to both of these theses. Mary’s realisation that she lacks adequate evidence that God exists does not erase her belief in God. Nor is it true that once Kaipeng judges that he has sufficient reason to believe that death is not bad, he thereby believes that death is not bad.

Cases like these may be atypical, but that does not mean that they do not happen. Nor should we expect them not to occur. Although we can distinguish between different types of mental states based on the functional role they play in a subject’s cognitive economy, each token state need not always manifest the functional profile of the type to which it belongs. Although it may be definitive of belief as a mental state that S is disposed to not believe that p if S judges that there is not sufficient evidence that p , that does not mean that S will never believe that p if he or she judges that there is not sufficient evidence that p . Sometimes S may simply fail to manifest that disposition and continue to believe that p despite judging that there is not sufficient evidence that p .

I conclude that Adler’s conceptual argument for evidentialism fails. If evidentialism is a conceptual truth about belief, it is not because believing without adequate evidence involves a contradiction in thought. Perhaps Adler could rest his case for evidentialism on a different claim, however. He sometimes suggests that

evidentialism is true not because it is impossible to believe without adequate evidence, but because belief aims at truth. For example, he suggests that “[a]ll that can secure for me the belief’s claim of truth is adequate evidence (reason) of its truth” (*ibid.*: 30). I turn to this claim next.

3. The Transparency Argument for Normativism

Many philosophers claim that what distinguishes belief from other propositional attitudes such as imagination and desire is that belief in some sense “aims at truth”. If this is so, then perhaps evidentialism is true even if it is possible to believe without adequate evidence. Whether the thesis that belief aims at truth entails that one should only believe that p if one has adequate evidence that p depends on how we interpret it, however. As it stands, the thesis is expressed in metaphorical terms. “Beliefs”, as Ralph Wedgwood puts it, “are not little archers armed with little bows and arrows: they do not literally “aim” at anything” (2002: 267).

Those who claim to glimpse some grain of truth in the metaphor must, therefore, explain in what sense exactly belief aims at truth. Only if that relation turns out to be normative in nature can we use it to draw any conclusions about what one ought to believe. Kathrin Glüer and Åsa Wikforss make this clear in their elucidation of the metaphor. They wish to take seriously the claim that belief aims at truth, but argue that it is to be understood in purely functionalist terms. In terms of input, belief aims at truth, since it is sensitive to evidence. In terms of output, belief aims at truth, since it can be employed in further practical and theoretical reasoning to act and draw inference on the basis of what one takes to be true (140: 2013).

Less obviously, David Velleman's early teleological account of belief also does not say anything about what one ought to believe. Velleman argues that belief aims at truth because it involves regarding a proposition as true with the aim of regarding it as true only if it is true. This aim can be realised in different ways. A belief may aim at truth if one intentionally aims at believing p only if p is true, or it may aim at truth if the cognitive processes that govern its formation function to regulate belief in response to evidence that the belief is true (2000: 252-3). None of this has normative implications, however, since, as Velleman himself now acknowledges, "how an attitude *ought* to turn out is not necessarily determined by how it *is* regulated" (2005: 499).⁹¹

One possible lesson to take from this is to acknowledge that if belief aims at truth, it does not do so in any normative sense. Rather, the metaphor simply captures a descriptive fact about the nature of belief. Velleman, however, takes the lesson to show that his work is not over. Rather than conclude that belief does not aim at truth in any normative sense, he concludes that we must add to the concept of belief a separate standard of correctness. Together with Nishi Shah, he suggests that:

... conceiving of an attitude as a belief must entail not only conceiving of it as regulated for truth but also, and independently, applying to it the standard of being correct if and only if true. The concept of belief, in short, is that of a cognition that is governed, both normatively and descriptively, by the standard of truth. (2005: 499)

Yet, more needs to be said about why including a standard or correctness in the concept of belief adds to it any normative component. As Gideon Rosen points out:

⁹¹ The concession is made in response to Shah's (2003) criticism.

The simple fact that A would be incorrect does not constitute a reason not to perform it unless there is in the background a substantive synthetic principle to the effect that one has a reason not to do what is incorrect. (1999: 19)⁹²

This is also how considerations about correctness typically figure in deliberation. For example, the fact that it is wrong etiquette to place the fork to the right of the plate when laying a table does not in and of itself strike us as a reason not to place the fork to the right. Only if we have a further interest in complying with the rules of etiquette would we have a reason not to place the fork to the right.⁹³

According to Shah and Velleman, however, things are different when it comes to belief. To say that a belief is correct if and only if it is true is not a mere judgement of fact. Rather, it is a normative judgement to the effect that one ought to hold the belief if and only if it is true.⁹⁴ Why think that the concept of belief includes a standard of correctness in this normative sense? Shah and Velleman say that we must attribute such a standard to the concept of belief, since it best explains an important feature of doxastic deliberation.

What Shah and Velleman want to draw attention to is that when we deliberate about what to believe, the question of whether we should believe that *p* is *transparent* to

⁹² See also Hattiangadi (2007).

⁹³ This also is how considerations concerning correctness typically figure in practical deliberation. When we deliberate about what to do, considerations about what is correct only motivate us to act if we have a prior interest in doing what is correct. Someone with an interest in adhering to the rules of etiquette will take the fact that it is correct to place the fork to the left of the plate as a reason to do so. Yet, a nonconformist may well take the same consideration as a reason not to place the fork to left.

⁹⁴ How exactly we should formulate this norm is a matter of debate. See Bykvist & Hattiangadi (2007) for counterexamples to many of the most common ways of formulating the norm.

the question whether p is true, since the only way to answer the former question is by way of answering the latter. In their words:

The feature that we call transparency is this: The deliberative question *whether to believe that p* inevitably gives way to the factual question *whether p* , because the answer to the latter question will determine the answer to the former. That is, the only way to answer the question *whether to believe that p* is to answer the question *whether p* . (2005: 499)

Not so with other attitudes, Shah and Velleman argue. When we deliberate about whether to suppose or imagine that p , “the answer to the question *whether p* will not settle either the question *whether to suppose that p* nor the question *whether to imagine that p* ” (*ibid.*: 499). Instead, all kinds of other considerations may be relevant to whether one should suppose or imagine that p . For example, the fact that it would be useful to suppose that p for the sake of argument may be a reason to suppose that p even if it is not true that p . This calls for an explanation, Shah and Velleman claim, and according to them, “[t]he best explanation for the transparency of doxastic deliberation to factual inquiry [...] is that the very concept of belief includes a standard of correctness, to the effect that a belief is correct if and only if it is true” (*ibid.*: 499-500). Moreover, this standard carries genuine normative force, since in deliberating about what to believe one is already engaged in a practice to which the standard applies:

When one deliberates whether to have an attitude conceived as a belief that p , one deliberates about an attitude to which one already applies the standard of being correct if and only if p is true, and so one is already committed to consider it with an eye exclusively to whether p (*ibid.*: 501).

Alternative accounts of belief cannot explain this exclusive focus, Shah and Velleman argue. The nearest competitor, the teleological account of belief, cannot

accommodate transparency, since it must allow for the possibility that we are sometimes influenced by evidentially irrelevant considerations such as wishful thoughts. That there are such influences seems undeniable even if belief is mainly responsive to evidential considerations. Hence, the teleological account cannot explain transparency if it is also to respect another common feature of belief. To explain why truth occupies the sole focus in doxastic deliberation, we must add that in deliberating about whether to believe that p , we are committed to it being correct to believe that p only if it is true that p (*ibid.*: 500-501).⁹⁵

4. What Transparency?

Since Shah and Velleman's argument rests on an inference to the best explanation, it leaves itself open to three types of objection. One is that their account of belief does not provide an adequate explanation of transparency. Another is that the phenomenon is better explained by some alternative hypothesis – be it one that Shah and Velleman have failed to consider, or one whose strengths they have failed to appreciate. Finally, one may object that the phenomenon which they take to stand in need of explanation is not a genuine phenomenon and so does not provide a basis for abductive argumentation.

The first two routes of argumentation have been pursued by several authors. For example, Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen argues that normativism fails to account for transparency, because it is implausible to suppose that the mere acceptance of a norm of truth could motivate us always only to deliberate whether p when deliberating

⁹⁵ Shah (2003) develops this point in greater detail.

whether to believe that p . After all, we sometimes fail to comply with norms that we accept. Just think of those cases when we fail to keep a promise even though we accept that one ought only to make a promise if one will keep it (2006: 506-7). Secondly, Steglich-Petersen argues that no norm is needed to explain transparency. Teleological accounts of belief can provide an adequate explanation once we acknowledge that when we deliberate about what to believe, we do so in the interest of getting to the truth (*ibid.*: 510-16).⁹⁶

I wish to concentrate on the much less explored possibility that transparency is not as robust a phenomenon as Shah and Velleman contend. This really is the question that needs to be asked before considering the first two objections. If the explanandum which Shah and Velleman's account of belief is supposed to help explain is not a genuine phenomenon, their account is not called for. If transparency is not quite the phenomenon they describe it to be, other accounts of belief may provide sufficient resources to explain it.⁹⁷

To see if there is such a thing as transparency and, if so, what exactly it is, we must look more closely at Shah and Velleman's characterisation of the phenomenon. Their description involves three claims. First, they claim that:

- (A) doxastic deliberation is transparent in the sense that "[t]he deliberative question *whether to believe that p* inevitably gives way to the factual question *whether p*".

Second, they argue that:

- (B) the first question gives way to the second, "because the answer to the latter question will determine the answer to the former."

⁹⁶ See also McHugh (2013) for further objections.

⁹⁷ Steglich-Petersen (2013) offers a deflationary account of transparency.

Third, they argue that:

- (C) the first question gives way to the second, since “the only way to answer the question *whether to believe that p* is to answer the question *whether p*.” (2005: 499)

None of these claims are equivalent. (A) does not entail (B) and (C), since it could be part of one’s psychological make-up that deliberation about question x inevitably gives way to deliberation about question y even though answering x will not provide an answer to y . (B) does not entail (C), because the answer to question y could determine the answer to question x without it being the only way to answer x . Conversely, (C) does not entail (B) either. For even if considering whether p is the only way to answer whether to believe that p , the answer to the former question may not determine the answer to the latter if one is uncertain whether p is credible enough to merit belief. To see whether there is a kernel of truth in Shah and Velleman’s argument, let us therefore consider each claim in turn.

Evaluating (A)

Take first the claim that doxastic deliberation is transparent because “[t]he deliberative question *whether to believe that p* inevitably gives way to the factual question *whether p*”. It is open to counterexample, since there are all kinds of obstacles which may prevent one from even getting to the factual question when considering the deliberative question. One might get distracted, fall asleep, get hit by a car, etc., before one even gets to the factual question whether p . This is enough to falsify the claim that doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the deliberative question whether to believe that p *inevitably* gives way to the factual question whether p .

Perhaps Shah and Velleman do not intend to make such a strong claim, however. Perhaps the claim is just that *barring external interference*, deliberation about whether to believe that p inevitably gives way to deliberation about whether p . This too is open to counterexample, however. Although we may not often do so, nothing prevents one from considering how good, funny, or well-liked it would be to believe that p when deliberating about whether to believe that p .

Indeed, such reasoning is not unheard of in philosophy. Take only Blaise Pascal. Whatever one may think of his wager argument, Pascal himself concludes that considerations of expected utility favour theism even if we have no way to ascertain whether or not God exists. If one person was able to deliberate this way, it cannot be *inevitable* that considering whether p should lead one only to consider whether p is true.

Evaluating (B)

Perhaps (B) better captures what transparency is supposed to be. Perhaps the claim is not that considering whether to believe that p *inevitably* gives way to considering whether it is true that p , but that doxastic deliberation is transparent “because the answer to the latter question will determine the answer to the former.” It is not clear what this means, however. The word “determine” stands in need of further clarification, since it is ambiguous between a normative and a descriptive reading. On the one hand, (B) could be taken to mean that:

- (ought-B) Doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the answer to whether p will determine whether one *ought* to believe that p .

On the other hand, the claim could be taken to mean that:

- (is-B) Doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the answer to whether p will determine whether one believes that p .

The latter statement may seem trivial. After all, “to judge that p ” is commonly used as a synonym for “to believe that p ”. What judgement one passes as to *whether* p will therefore determine whether one believes that p . No normative conclusion can be drawn from this lesson, however. From the fact that our judgement *whether* p determines whether we believe that p , it does not follow that the former ought to determine the latter.

If transparency is to ground a normative theory of belief, (B) must therefore be read in the normative sense. This is also the more natural reading, since the infinitive marker “to” in the clause “whether to believe that p ” is most naturally read as raising the normative question what one is to believe. Yet, if this is what (B) is supposed to be, the claim is beset by a fatal problem which surfaces as soon as we try to clarify how an answer to whether p is supposed to determine whether we ought to believe that p . Is it that:

- (objective norm) One ought only to believe that p if it is true that p ?

Or is it that:

- (subjective norm) One ought only believe that p if one has sufficient evidence that p ?

Shah and Velleman sometimes suggest that both interpretations are correct, since the latter norm specifies a means to satisfying the former. Yet, neither interpretation clarifies (B) without rendering their view question-begging. The objective norm is

unacceptable, because in assuming that one ought only to believe that p if it is true that p it assumes the very thesis that the phenomenon of transparency is supposed to motivate. The subjective norm is unacceptable, since it assumes evidentialism – the view that one ought only to believe that p if one has adequate evidence that p – which in Shah and Velleman’s view is supposed to be a corollary of normativism about belief.⁹⁸ If we are out to defend normativism, we cannot, therefore, take either norm for granted.

One could try to escape this problem by weakening (B) so that it only says that the answer to whether p determines whether it is *rational* to believe that p , not whether one *ought* to believe that p all things considered. This would not rescue Shah and Velleman’s argument, however. First, it is unclear whether rationality is at all normative, since it is not clear that its being rational to have some attitude is a reason to have that attitude.⁹⁹ Some are skeptical that it is even a *pro tanto* reason. If they are right, the fact that whether p determines whether it is rational to believe that p does not provide a reason for or against believing that p . Second, even if rationality turns out to be normative, it still needs to be shown why only an answer to whether p can determine whether it is rational to believe that p . Pascal’s argument for the rationality of religious belief once more comes to mind. Without an argument for why Pascal

⁹⁸ This is especially clear in Shah (2006).

⁹⁹ See Kolodny (2005).

was wrong to defend religious belief on grounds of its expected benefit, this rationalist reading of (B) is just as question-begging as the normativist reading.¹⁰⁰

Evaluating (C)

What about (C)? Perhaps what Shah and Velleman really mean is that doxastic deliberation is transparent because the answer to whether p determines whether to believe that p , and that this is so because “the only way to answer the question *whether to believe that p* is to answer the question *whether p* .” This may seem to do away with the problems that (B) encounters, since it purports to explain why answering whether p determines whether to believe that p : it does so because there is no other way of answering whether to believe that p .

Again, however, we must clarify whether (C) is a descriptive or normative claim. Suppose first it amounts to the normative claim that:

(ought_C) Doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the only way to answer the question whether one ought to believe that p is to answer the question whether p .

¹⁰⁰ Still more, even if we grant that the only way to answer whether it is rational to believe that p is to seek out an answer to whether p , it is not true that “the answer to the latter question will determine the answer to the former.” At least, it will not if we allow that the answer to whether p can come in degrees, but that it can be rational to adopt a coarse-grained attitude towards p . Suppose, for example, that one determines that given one’s evidence, the probability of p ’s being true is 0.9. Should or should one not believe that p ? The answer depends on how one thinks belief should reflect probability. Probabilists will say that one should have a 0.9 credence that p . Suppose, however, that one thinks – as do Shah and Velleman – that coarser attitudes have an important role to play in our cognitive economy. What should one then do? Should one believe that p , or should one suspend judgment? Evidence alone cannot answer this question, since we must appeal to some other factor which turns evidence into a reason for belief: a threshold which the probability that p given the evidence must exceed; a safety condition that rules out alternative possibilities; or some third factor.

Immediately, the previous charge of question-begging reappears. Pascalians would deny that (ought_C) describes the only way to find out whether one ought to believe that p . They argue that sometimes one must also take into account the belief's expected benefit. Hence, Shah and Velleman cannot take (ought_C) for granted. Doing so would be to build into transparency the very claim which it is supposed to establish.¹⁰¹

The same problem does not arise if we opt for the descriptive reading that:

(is_C) Doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the only way to answer the question whether one believes that p is to answer the question whether p .¹⁰²

This does not entail any normative conclusion. From the fact that there is only one way to answer a question, it does not follow that we *ought* ever to answer the question that way. (The question may simply not be worth answering). Yet, even when evaluated purely for its descriptive merits does (is_C) meet with problems. It is true, of course, that rarely, if ever, is answering whether it would be good to believe that p a way of answering whether one believes that p . That does not mean that answering whether p is the only way of so doing, however. There are at least two alternatives: practical reasoning and testimony.

When p describes a future state of affairs within the control of our will, we can often answer whether we believe that p not by answering whether p , but by answering

¹⁰¹ One could, of course, interpret (C) in terms of some other notion such as rationality or justification. E.g. "Doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the only way to answer the question whether it is rational/epistemically justified to believe that p is to answer the question whether p ." Yet, this would not help the normativist case for the same reasons as mentioned in the previous section.

¹⁰² I have changed the "whether to believe" construction to "whether one believes" in order to avoid any normative connotations.

whether we intend that p . We can, since intending that p commonly brings with it believing that p . Suppose, for example, that someone asks whether one believes that one will be at a friend's wedding. Other things being equal, one can answer that question simply by forming or affirming the intention to attend the wedding. One can, since the fact that one intends to be at the wedding is a reason to believe that one will be at the wedding. In such cases, it seems perfectly acceptable to answer "I believe that p because I intend that p ".

Similarly, if p is a proposition we have been told by someone we trust, we can often answer whether we believe that p not by answering whether p , but by answering whether S told us that p . We can, since trusting someone typically involves believing what they say. (Indeed, it would be a sign of distrust to wonder whether p when someone has told one that p). Suppose, for example, that someone asks whether one believes that the Democrats will win the next election. If a trustworthy source has said that the Democrats will win, one can often make up one's mind simply by accepting the testimony rather than trying to estimate the result oneself. In such cases it seems fine to answer "I believe that p because S said that p ". There are thus at least two counterexamples to (is.c). Hence, it cannot be that doxastic deliberation is transparent, because the only way to answer whether one believes that p is to answer whether p .

5. The Opacity of Doxastic Deliberation

I have not been able to find any sense in which doxastic deliberation is necessarily transparent. Instead, the phenomenology of doxastic deliberation appears to be more complex than Shah and Velleman suggest. Context is crucial here, since most of our

beliefs are not formed via deliberation. Many more are formed via perception or testimony without recourse to deliberation. Only certain circumstances call for deliberation. One case is when perception or testimony cannot establish whether p . We are then confined to trying to infer whether p based on what we already know or believe. This may well involve deliberation, but not necessarily doxastic deliberation. If it is p that we are interested in, we are often better off moving straight to the question whether p rather than raising the question whether to believe that p .

The doxastic question only becomes salient when it is not possible to say for sure whether p . I, for my part, only find myself deliberating about whether to believe that p when I cannot ascertain whether p . Yet, contrary to Shah and Velleman, I do not try to answer that question by answering whether p . Usually, it is precisely because I have failed to determine whether p that the question whether to believe that p arises. It therefore seems pointless to attempt once more to determine whether p . Instead, the best option is to weigh whatever evidence is available to see whether it is strong enough to warrant belief.

Take this as a description of deliberation instigated by oneself. Things are different when others prompt it. If someone asserts that p , I *do* sometimes deliberate about whether to believe that p . It happens when I suspect either that they are mistaken, or that they are out to mislead me. When this happens, I sometimes also do try to find an answer to whether to believe that p by answering whether p . I do so if I think that it will allow me to reach a conclusion on the matter. In cases like these, it is as if the former question gives way to the latter, as Shah and Velleman put it.

Still, I do not move to this second question because I am somehow compelled to do so. I do it out of my own accord, since what I want to know is whether I am

being misled. If I wanted to, I could try to answer whether to believe that p by considering how good, funny, or well-liked it would be to believe that p . Doing so seems a bit pointless, however, as what I want to know is none of these things, but whether p .¹⁰³ Not only that. I want to find out whether p because it pains me, if only ever so slightly, that I might be taken for a ride.

It is a shame that Shah and Velleman do not say more about testimonial cases of this kind. Such cases seem to be exactly what they have in mind when talking about doxastic deliberation. They write:

We think that doxastic deliberation is not only possible but commonplace. When someone makes an assertion that is not in itself convincing, the question that naturally comes to mind is whether to believe what he has said. When the president asserts that Iraq is harboring weapons of mass destruction, the natural question to ask is not "Is Iraq harboring weapons of mass destruction?" but rather "Should I believe that?" – whereupon this question transparently gives way to an inquiry into the truth of the president's claim. (2005: 502)

I doubt that in cases like these we can always find out what to believe in the way that Shah and Velleman suggest. Whether we can depends on whether p describes a state of affairs to which we have access. If A and B give conflicting testimony about p , and we can check whether p , we can find out whom to believe simply by seeing for ourselves whether p is true. This is not a straightforward case of testimony. When we ask whom to trust in cases such as this, what we mean is usually not whose testimony to believe here and now, but who is more trustworthy as a source of information. If on

¹⁰³ Foley makes the same point. He argues that the explanation for why "you ordinarily don't consider what practical reasons you might have to believe something" is not that there are no such reasons. Rather, the explanation is that "[d]eliberations concerning your practical reasons are customarily inefficacious and hence pointless" (1993: 16).

finding out that p , we decide that informant A is more trustworthy than B , we do not believe that p because A told us so. We believe that p because we found out that p for ourselves. If A said that p and B said that not- p , we may well also conclude that our findings confirm that A is more trustworthy than B . In that case, our inquiry serves a double purpose: to find out whether p and to determine whom to trust in the future.

Shah and Velleman's example is not one of these cases, however. At least not for most people. I, for one, know too little about weapons of mass destruction to determine whether Iraq has any. Nor can I afford to send experts to find out for me. What one can do, of course, is listen to people who are in a better position to know, but there is no guarantee that this will settle the matter. There always remains the question of whom, if anyone, to believe. This last point bears elaborating. Shah and Velleman say that "When someone makes an assertion that is not in itself convincing, the question that naturally comes to mind is whether to believe what he has said" (*ibid.*). I am not so sure. An equally natural question to ask is whether to believe that person. There is a difference between believing someone and believing what they say. After all, it is only when we believe someone that we base our own belief on their testimony. If we instead ask whether to believe what they say, we seem more intent on finding out for ourselves whether what they say is true.

When George W. Bush and his allies argued that armed intervention was necessary to halt Iraq's acquisition of WMDs, they were gainsaid by Hans Blix, whose UN commission had failed to unearth any significant evidence that Iraq had such weapons. All the same, Bush & co. decided to forge ahead on the ground that they themselves were in possession of classified evidence that Iraq was harbouring weapons of mass destruction. How can we find out whom to believe in such a situation? This is

perhaps the most urgent question which recent history throws up for the ethics of belief.

This question requires a whole investigation of its own, something we cannot hope to accomplish here. What seems clear, however, is that when two parties try to inform us about some matter to which we have no access, we cannot find out whom to believe by taking it upon ourselves to establish whether what they say is true. Instead, we are forced to rely in part on non-epistemic considerations: what interest our informants have in the matter; what interest they have in us believing what they say; and so on. None of these are necessarily evidence for or against what we are being told, since a person's interests need not affect whether they speak truly or not. Yet, if this is so, evidence alone will not always be enough to determine what we are to believe.

Conclusion

Normativists have long argued that belief and truth are bound together by a normative connection enjoining us only to believe what is true or that for which we have adequate evidence. That connection has come undone in this paper. First, Adler's argument that it is not even possible knowingly to believe without adequate evidence has been shown to work only if we assume that very view. Second, Shah and Velleman's argument from doxastic deliberation has been shown to either presuppose normativism, or else to describe a phenomenon which does not have normative implications. What is more, we have seen that doxastic deliberation is called for precisely when we cannot say for sure whether p , but have to make up our minds in the absence of conclusive evidence. How we ought to proceed under these conditions is a topic for future work.

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