

Penultimate version. December 2013.

Final version published in *Philosophical Quarterly* 2014, 64 (255): 377–380

Belief and Agency. Edited by David Hunter. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011. Pp. xvii +355. Price \$39.95.)

This is a collection of eleven new essays on belief in the context of practical rationality. Three focal themes emerge from the collection: belief as rational activity rather than state; the normativity of belief; and the significance of belief for action. The following discussion of individual chapters will be organised per theme.

Belief as rational activity is the topic directly addressed in the essays by Pamela Hieronymi, Matthew Boyle, David Hunter and Eric Switzgebel. In particular, the fact that we cannot believe at will is central to Hieronymi's argument. According to Hieronymi, this fact is neither contingent, nor about our psychology. Instead, it tells us something important about the nature of belief as rational activity, with its own distinctive commitment: to settle the question of whether *p*, not that of whether it would be good for an agent to believe that *p*. The latter kind of discretion is what distinguishes voluntary or basic intentional actions, such as raising one's hand from believing. Although both are done for reasons, in the case of believing, there is a distinction between right and wrong kinds of reasons to be made; yet, this distinction doesn't make sense in the case of intentional action since anything that counts in its favour is a reason for performing it. This is a fascinating account. Still, one might have wished the author to also consider an alternative view of intentional action, as responsive to reasons in a way that requires a similar distinction between right and wrong kinds of reasons that is found on the side of believing. On this view, the kind of discretion that Hieronymi rejects as inappropriate for beliefs will also be inappropriate for actions. And if discretion is no longer the mark of the voluntary, the possibility of voluntary control over beliefs remains open.

In his contribution, Boyle argues that belief is best understood as expression of our rational self-determination and that the standard view of belief as a state is mistaken since 'state' implies inactivity. At the root of the problem, Boyle identifies an implicit extrinsic control view, according to which the only control we can have over our beliefs is indirect, in virtue of controlling how we come to believe one thing instead of another. Yet, extrinsic control fails to capture the agential involvement implied in holding a belief. Boyle outlines an alternative, intrinsic control view applicable to beliefs.

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On this view, we exercise direct agential control in the very act of believing, while the activity of bringing it about that we hold a particular belief and the indirect control it allows for are secondary.

The idea that agential involvement should be reconceptualised as guidance from within an action rather than discretionary control from outside is further developed in Hunter's essay. In particular, Hunter proposes to replace the dominant causal theory of action, viz. mental states, such as beliefs and intentions with a dispositional one. On this alternative theory, an agent performs an action when she guides what she is doing. That is to say, she has the required guidance dispositions: readiness to move on to the next phase of the action when the time is right, and to adjust her performance, if obstacles appear. According to Hunter, the same dispositions account for an agent's awareness of her actions and, ultimately, warrant the following dispositional view of belief: to believe that *p* is to guide what one is doing in ways that would be effective if it were the case that *p*.

The essay by Schwitzgebel defends a related dispositional view, which the author terms 'liberal dispositionalism about belief'. On this view, to believe is to possess a cluster of relevant dispositions. These however are not only behavioural, but also cognitive and phenomenal: hence the liberalism of his position. Schwitzgebel argues that self-ascription of the belief that *p* is partly constitutive of the belief that *p*. Self-ascription is most reliable when the belief is normatively neutral, straightforwardly connected to one's behaviour, and manifested in explicit judgments. When these conditions are not met, some divergence is likely to occur between self-ascription and other partly constitutive dispositions of a belief. Schwitzgebel persuasively illustrates the latter claim by the example of a professed egalitarian whose behaviour and attitudes are nevertheless distinctly elitist.

The essays by Nishi Shah, Sharon Street, Matthias Haase and David Checkland are primarily concerned with the normativity of belief. Shah and Street's respective chapters offer contrasting solutions to a version of the Euthyphro dilemma that can be formulated about the relationship between normative facts and evaluative attitudes. According to Shah, the claim that normative facts are ultimately attitude-dependent is in tension with a conceptual truth about belief: a belief that *p* is correct if *p* and incorrect otherwise. That truth is the norm of belief is, argues Shah, implied of the very notion of correctness in the preceding formulation. This becomes apparent in cases of doxastic

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deliberation: when we deliberate whether we should believe that p we end up considering the question of whether p . One implication of Shah's position is that believing that there is at least one true normative proposition turns out to be self-fulfilling. Conversely, believing that there are no true normative propositions turns out to be self-refuting. This is because all believing is assessable in terms of correctness, as being either true or false.

In contrast, Street argues that epistemic reasons are attitude-dependent. On her view, 'facts supply us with reasons always ultimately because we *take* them to do so' (p. 215). As Street points out, this is consistent with a strong form of objectivity: it may turn out that no evaluative standpoint can do without certain kinds of normative commitments. Yet, that our beliefs aim at truth is not a conceptual matter. This is not to say that there are no attitude-independent facts that our beliefs are tracking, but only that the normative reasons for doing so are themselves attitude-dependent. By reflecting on the practice of induction from observed to unobserved cases, Street concludes that realism about epistemic reasons is unconvincing, for it is at odds with an evolutionary explanation of why humans ended up being the kind of believers we are.

Haase's contribution describes a distinctive paradox that arises because 'the laws that explain our acts of thinking and the laws that figure as standard for these acts come apart (p.250). This gap between the logical and the psychological, between the normative and the explanatory in the realm of thought appears to be unavoidable and yet, at the same time, unintelligible. In support of this claim, Haase offers a detailed and insightful discussion of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations. According to Haase, these considerations suggest a possible solution: rule-following is meant to bridge the gap between explanatory and normative laws of thought since the possession of a concept is accounted for in terms of an individual's capacity to use this concept, capacity acquired by being initiated into a social practice. Haase argues that we should resist this solution since the central notions of capacity and practice are as yet insufficiently defined. As a result, they can do no more than restate the initial paradox.

Folk psychology often ascribes beliefs and other propositional attitudes to languageless animals. Yet, there is an at least *prima facie* strong philosophical case to be made against this practice: holding

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propositional attitudes, such as belief seems to require a degree of sophistication that no languageless animal can be credited with. In his contribution, Checkland explores several strategies for tackling the ensuing discrepancy between philosophical and folk psychology. He concludes that in order to settle this question, we should get clearer about the underlying presuppositions that make descriptions, such as ‘feeling ashamed’ natural and yet problematic when applied to pets, a category of languageless animals that might require a philosophical inquiry in their own right.

The essays by Robert Stalnaker, Jesse Steinberg and Sergio Tenenbaum offer complementary perspectives on the significance of belief for action. In his contribution, Stalnaker addresses the problem of what makes a change in belief rational. He focuses on self-locating beliefs or beliefs about where one is located in the world, such as who one is and what the time now is. This issue bears directly upon motivation to act: to decide what to do, I need not only know what the world is like, but also how I am positioned in it. Stalnaker reflects on a thought-experiment in which Sleeping Beauty wakes up one morning not knowing which day of the week it is, although she knows that it is either Monday or Tuesday morning. According to Stalnaker, this experiment shows that rational change in belief is not fully explained by appeal to new information becoming available to the believer. The believer’s perspective on this information is just as important. This point can be helpfully generalised: as propositional *attitudes*, beliefs are not fully accounted by elucidating their propositional content. The relationship or attitude that a believer is in a position to form with respect to such content, in virtue of her location in the actual world, cannot be neglected.

Steinberg’s essay also focuses on the distinction between content and attitude, this time in the context of motivational internalism, the claim that there is a necessary connection between an agent’s moral judgements and what she is motivated to do. According to Steinberg, motivational internalism is correct only for a subset of moral judgements – not in virtue of their being moral, but in virtue of their being passionate or emotionally robust. In addition to cognitive content, e.g. ‘it is wrong to steal’, such passionate judgments also possess what Steinberg terms ‘dispositional stereotype’, a cluster of dispositions to feel, think and act in accordance with a judgement’s cognitive content.

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The chapter by Tenenbaum expands on a scholastic view of intentional action, according to which to intentionally ϕ is to judge that ϕ -ing is good. Tenenbaum argues that this view is well equipped to account for the knowledge condition of intentional action: I know what I am doing because I know the reasons for my doing what I am doing. Thus, evaluative judgment is considered as constitutive to intending: I cannot intend to ϕ unless I judge that ϕ -ing will be a good thing for me to do. On this picture, the relationship between intentional action and a formal notion of the good, i.e. what the agent judges to be good is analogous to the relationship between belief and the truth. This analogy is meant to explain phenomena, such as the Toxin puzzle as practical counterparts of Moore's paradox. If, as Tenenbaum suggests, the moral of Moore's paradox is that to believe that p is also to accept the truth of p , the inability to bring myself to now form the intention to drink the poison tomorrow when my drinking the poison will be superfluous— the crux of the Toxin puzzle – is no longer perplexing: I know that at the moment of action, I will no longer have reason to perform that action. This is an exciting and suggestive account; still, it would have been helpful to see discussed a possible objection to the analogy between belief and action, and their respective constitutive aims. This objection is as follows: if truth is not defined as what a believer takes to be true, why should the formal good of an action be just what an agent takes to be good? The analogy with truth seems to call for a more robust conception of the good than a formal notion could support.

In sum, everyone interested in the philosophy of mind and action will benefit by reading closely all essays in this collection. Those working on topics, including intentional action, normativity, rationality, propositional attitudes, responsibility and control will find this volume particularly rewarding, possibly indispensable.

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