Is There an 'Ought' in Belief?

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RESUMEN

De acuerdo con el denominado punto de vista teleológico de la creencia, la idea de que las creencias tienen como objetivo la verdad se considera que significa literalmente que el sujeto, al creer que *p*, tiene un cierto objetivo: el objetivo de aceptar *p* sólo si *p* es verdadera. Por el contrario, de acuerdo con el denominado punto de vista normativo, la afirmación de que las creencias tienen como objetivo la verdad se considera que es equivalente a la tesis de que existe una norma constitutiva de corrección que gobierna la creencia. El normativista argumenta que el punto de vista teleológico no puede dar cuenta a la vez de dos rasgos estándar de la creencia: por una parte, las creencias están a menudo causalmente influenciadas por consideraciones no aléticas; por otra, nosotros sentimos que es exclusivamente la verdad la que nos guía cuando deliberamos sobre si creer algo. En este artículo muestro, en primer lugar, que el argumento normativista no logra establecer conclusivamente que la creencia está gobernada por una norma constitutiva de corrección. En segundo lugar, y de manera más positiva, ofrezco una respuesta teleológica a cada una de las objeciones normativistas. Con ello, bosquejo una nueva estrategia teleológica que nos permite explicar los rasgos de la creencia antes mencionados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *creencia, norma de la verdad, transparencia, deliberación doxástica, normativismo*.

ABSTRACT

According to the so-called teleological view of belief, the idea that beliefs aim at truth is taken to mean literally that the subject, in believing that *p*, has a certain goal: the goal of accepting *p* only if *p* is true. In contrast, according to the so-called normative view, the claim that beliefs aim at truth is considered to be tantamount to the thesis that there is a constitutive norm of correctness governing belief. The normativist argues that the teleological view cannot jointly account for two standard features of belief: beliefs are often causally influenced by non-alethic considerations, yet we always feel we are moved exclusively by truth when deliberating whether to believe. In this paper, I first show that the normativist argument falls short of establishing that belief is norm-governed. Second, and more positively, I offer a teleological reply to each of the normativist objections, thereby outlining a novel teleological strategy that allows us to explain the aforesaid standard features of belief.

KEYWORDS: *Belief, Truth-Norm, Transparency, Doxastic deliberation, Normativism*.

I. INTRODUCTION

Belief has recently attracted the attention of philosophers working on the nature of normativity, for beliefs are naturally correct or incorrect, true or false. Beliefs are also constitutively and distinctively regulated for truth — either through non-conscious mechanisms or through doxastic deliberation, i.e., through the process by which, upon reflection on the available evidence, one comes to make a judgment about whether to believe that a particular proposition is true. The distinctive way in which truth regulates belief, i.e., the way in which beliefs are formed, maintained and discarded, makes belief different from other types of propositional attitudes, such as assumptions or guesses, in which truth nevertheless also plays an essential role. Williams' (1973) classic saying 'beliefs aim at truth' seeks to connect such a distinctive role of truth to the very nature of belief. In an attempt to pin down the exact nature of the truth-regulation that Williams' emblematic phrase suggests, the following two views of belief have recently been put forward.

According to the *teleological* view, the idea that beliefs aim at truth is taken to mean literally that the subject, in believing that *p*, has a certain aim, the aim of regarding *p* as true only if *p is* true.[1] The standard of correctness for belief is an aim: truth [see e.g., Velleman (2000); Steglich-Petersen (2006)]. By contrast, according to the *normative* view of belief [see e.g., Shah (2003); Shah and Velleman (2005)], to claim that beliefs aim at truth is considered to be tantamount to making it a rational requirement that the standard of correctness for belief is a norm: 'believe that *p* only if *p* is true' (the truth-norm henceforth).[2] On the normative view, when a subject believes that *p*, the subject abides by the truth-norm, i.e., the subject implicitly accepts a normative judgment whose content is to believe that *p* only if *p* is true.

The normativist argues that whereas, on their view, all central uncontroversial features of belief and belief formation can be explained at a single stroke, there are two such features that the teleologist cannot *jointly* explain. The first is that some beliefs are regulated, i.e., formed, maintained and discarded, irrespective of truth-supporting considerations — typically those that we gather under the label of 'wishful thinking'. The second feature that resists explanation in teleological terms is, according to the normativist, not a property of belief itself, but a property of doxastic deliberation: transparency. Transparency, to be precise, is a property of doxastic deliberation as such deliberation is experienced from the first-personal point of view. It is the property by which, in deliberating whether to believe that *p*, one cannot take oneself to be moved by anything but considerations relevant to the truth of *p*.

In what follows, I will first flesh out both the teleological and the normative views on belief (Section II). After a brief caveat (Section III), I reconstruct the normativist master argument against the teleological view, thereby emphasizing the role that transparency plays in the argument (Section IV).

The paper has two main aims. First (Section V), I attempt to show that the normativist thesis is, after all, explanatorily idle vis-à-vis transparency and hence that the normativist has given us no reason to hold that the standard of correctness for belief is the truth-norm. The second, more positive aim of the paper (Section VI), is to argue that a teleological view of belief can and does allow us to jointly account for the uncontroversial features of belief and belief formation highlighted by the normativist. Both claims have been defended before.[3] The arguments I put forward, however, build upon some underdeveloped criticisms against the normative view (Section V), and allow me to then unveil a novel teleological strategy for dealing with the normativist objections (Section VI).

II BELIEF: TWO COMPETING VIEWS

The ordinary notion of belief encompasses different kinds of states, which are, in turn, formed through different kinds of processes. Two of these kinds are particularly relevant to the present discussion. On the one hand, 'belief' is correctly used to refer to non-conscious mental states that seem to involve little more than an encoding of information as a guide to action; such states are formed automatically —no conscious activity or inquiry is involved. On the other hand, 'belief' also refers to conscious, often linguistically articulated mental states that are the result of conscious deliberation.[4]

However distinct, beliefs share a number of important uncontroversial features. One such feature is that they are truth-responsive, i.e., that whether automatically or as the result of deliberation, beliefs aim at representing the world as being a certain way and such representation is responsive to whatever evidence there is available to determine what is or is not the case. At the same time, it is all too apparent that non truth-conducive, non-alethic considerations often causally influence belief — both automatically formed beliefs and beliefs formed through doxastic deliberation. Moreover, despite this causal influence of non-alethic considerations in our processes of belief formation, we cannot *knowingly and deliberately* let non-alethic considerations settle the question whether to believe a particular proposition when we form a belief through doxastic deliberation. This feature, dubbed 'transparency' [Shah, (2003)], is described as follows by Shah &Velleman (2005), p. 447:

> 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*.[5]

This notion of transparency thus differs from Richard Moran's (2001) homonym occurring in discussions of self-knowledge. The relevant question in doxastic deliberation is not how I know that I believe that *p*, but how I decide whether to believe that *p*. As in the self-knowledge context, however, the transition from the question *whether to believe that p* to the question *whether p* is taken to be immediate and non-inferential, i.e., not mediated by any psychological or instrumental factor. The idea of transparency aims to capture precisely the absence of any inferential steps between our answer to the deliberative question *whether to believe that p* and our answer to the question *whether p*. Of course, we sometimes think that we are moved only by truth-conducive considerations when we are not. As I pointed out earlier, this causal influence of non-alethic considerations takes place both when forming beliefs automatically and when forming beliefs through doxastic deliberation. Yet, even though all sorts of psychological mechanisms may prevent us from attending to and recognizing what is true, if belief is transparent, then we cannot form the belief that *p* while knowing that *p* is false. If we were to do so, the resulting attitude could not be considered a belief.

Transparency, as stated in the Introduction, is not a property of belief or even a property of doxastic deliberation, if considered from a third person perspective. It is instead taken to be a necessary property of doxastic deliberation as the phenomenon *is experienced* from the first-personal point of view [Shah (2003)]. Transparency, as a property of what we *take ourselves* to be doing while deliberating about whether to believe that *p*, is included among the uncontroversial features to be accounted for by any adequate account of belief, together with the idea that, while in believing we aim at representing just what is true, the causal influence of non-alethic considerations can make us fail to do so.

Now, on the teleological view of belief, this idea of a state whose function or aim is to represent the world truly is taken to be constitutive of belief. It is constitutive of belief because that the state has such an aim tells us something about the very nature of belief — something that distinguishes it from other propositional attitudes [Velleman (2000), p. 247]. Given a state *M* with content *p*, it is constitutive of *M*'s being a belief that *M* is of a kind that is regulated in such a way so as to be directed towards attaining the truth [Velleman (2000); Steglich-Petersen (2006)]. The teleologist is thus committed to TEL:

TEL: For any *S, p*: *S* believes that *p* if and only if *S* accepts *p* with the aim of accepting *p* only if *p* is true.

It is a consequence of TEL that, when a subject forms a false belief, she has failed to do what she was trying to do, i.e., to reach the specific goal of that belief's truth. The teleologist also makes it very clear that this regulation by

the aim of truth takes place both intentionally and automatically. At the intentional level, when *S* believes that *p*, *S* intends to accept *p*, only if *p* is true, and *S*'s acceptance of *p* is regulated by this intention. In the case of automatic beliefs, the regulation comes from some cognitive mechanism of *S*'s. This mechanism has been designed, the teleologist claims, by evolution or appropriate training, to produce states consumed by *S* in such a way that *S* accepts *p*, only if *p* is true.[6]

Velleman, once the main advocate of the teleological view [Velleman, (2000)], has since then joined forces with the competing, normative, view. On the version of the normative view that will concern us here [Shah (2003); Shah &Velleman (2005)], what it means for a subject *S* to believe that *p* is characterized as follows:

> NOR: For any *S, p: S* believes that *p* if and only if *S* accepts the truth-norm [*p* is correct only if *p* is true].

NOR is, like TEL, a constitutive claim about belief, but, in NOR, 'correct' has a prescriptive reading.[7] The truth-norm says that *S* ought to believe that *p* only if *p* is true. The prescriptive nature of the truth-norm does not result, the normativist contends, from belief having a constitutive aim. False beliefs are normatively flawed, but not because the agent has failed to reach the aim of accepting only what is true. On the normative view, when a subject forms a false belief, she fails to do what she ought to do, namely, to believe only what is true. The normativist thus argues that belief is not only constitutively governed by truth. It is, in addition, *normatively* regulated for truth, so that, in believing, we are subject to the truth-norm [Shah (2003); Shah and Velleman (2005)].

Interestingly, however, the defence of NOR is combined, on Shah and Velleman's view, with a teleological account of how truth regulates belief in the case of beliefs formed through processes other than doxastic deliberation, and hence formed through processes that do not involve deployment of the concept of belief. It is the immediate and non-inferential nature of the transition from the question *whether to believe that p* to the question *whether p,* in which doxastic deliberation consists that (the normativist contends) is the ultimate challenge for the teleologist. The reasons will become clear in Section IV, where I examine the normativist master argument, but before then, I would like to express a caveat about a certain class of arguments against the normative view of belief.

III. CAVEAT: THE EXACT FORMULATION OF THE NORM

There is a set of objections against normativism, in general, and against the normative view of belief, in particular, that appeal to the inadmissible

logical consequences of particular formulations of the truth-norm — inadmissible in the sense of not being able to capture the appropriate intended doxastic obligations. The arguments here are many [see e.g. Broome (1999); Bykvist and Hattiangadi (2007); Glüer (1999); Glüer and Wikforss (2009); Hattiangadi (2006), (2007); Wikforss (2001)] and focus both on the version of the truth-norm that occurs in NOR and also on the stronger, biconditional, version of it, namely, the idea that a belief that *p* is correct if and only if *p* is true. If we take this stronger, biconditional form and explicitly formulate the truth-norm in prescriptive terms, we can write:

> PRE: *S* ought to believe that *p* if and only if *p* is true.

Roughly, the idea behind these arguments is that no matter whether 'ought' in PRE takes a narrow or a wide scope, PRE does not capture the right doxastic obligations. Hattiangadi and Bykvist (2007) are particularly clear on this issue and argue, quite convincingly, that if the 'ought' took a narrow scope, PRE would become

> (PRE a) For any *S*, *p*: if *p* is true, then *S* ought to (believe that *p*).

> (PRE b) For any *S*, *p*: if *S* ought to (believe that *p*), then *p* is true.

But (PRE a) is clearly false. There is no obligation to believe all truths, especially the most insignificant and trivial ones. (PRE b), they argue, also fails to reflect the required regulation that truth exerts over belief formation, since if *p* were false, the norm would only tell us that it is not the case that we ought to believe it. The norm would not tell us that we ought not to believe it. Similar problems arise when the 'ought' in PRE takes wide scope as in (PRE c) below, since detachment is again not permitted and the doxastic obligation to believe what is true and to avoid believing what is false becomes diluted in the conditional form.

> (PRE c) For any *S*, *p*: *S* ought to (believe that *p* if and only if *p* is true).

I am going over these very significant arguments against the normative view of belief with such haste, not because I do not deem them important, but because I believe there are more general considerations — considerations that do not depend on the exact formulation of the truth-norm — that help show that the normativist has given us no reason to hold that the standard of correctness for belief is a norm. I will try to articulate such considerations in Section V after examining the normativist master argument in the following Section.

IV. THE NORMATIVIST ARGUMENT AGAINST THE TELEOLOGICAL VIEW

Remember that the teleologist's main thesis is that belief is truth-regulated acceptance. *S*'s acceptance of *p* is *truth-regulated* if and only if it is regulated either by *S*'s intention to accept *p* only if *p* is true or by a truth-tracking cognitive mechanism that tracks only what is true. What is the nature of this truth-regulation? — the normativist inquires. The answer comes in the form of a dilemma: the so-called *teleologian's dilemma* [Shah (2003), pp. 460-465]. On the one horn of the dilemma, if truth-regulation were weak enough to allow us to count as beliefs cognitive states influenced by non-alethic considerations, then, the normativist claims, we would not be able to explain transparency, as doxastic deliberation is regulated *exclusively* for truth, i.e., in doxastic deliberation we always take ourselves to be moved exclusively by alethic considerations. On the other horn, were the notion of truth-regulation strong enough to explain transparency, many cognitive states that are typically considered beliefs would be unjustifiably disqualified as such. For many beliefs, e.g. those in which wishful thinking is in operation, are, as a matter of fact, causally influenced by non-alethic considerations and hence not exclusively regulated for truth.

Interestingly, though, and twisting the horns slightly, even strong truth-regulation is not appropriate for explaining transparency, for the role of truth on the teleological view is, the normativist claims, instrumental in the transition from the question *whether to believe that p* to the question *whether p* (more about this in Section VI). The solution to the teleologian's dilemma, the normativist argues, is to make the truth-norm, namely, 'believe that *p* only if *p* is true', a *conceptual* truth about belief. It is thus crucial for the normativist to conceive the concept of belief as including a standard of correctness — the standard of being correct if and only if it is true.[8] Since what we are trying to do in doxastic deliberation is precisely to settle the question *whether to believe that p*, and, in doing so, we deploy the concept of belief, we already commit ourselves to considering the attitude we thus form as subject to the truth-norm. By making the truth-norm a constitutive part of the concept of belief, the normativist claims to capture, on the one hand, the lack of any inferential or instrumental steps in the transition from the question *whether to believe that p* to the question *whether p*, and thus to explain the transparency of doxastic deliberation. On the other hand, such an account allows us, the normativist claims, to regard instances of defective beliefs formed through doxastic deliberation as beliefs, for although we do not abide by the truth-norm in thus being causally influenced by non-alethic considerations, we *ought* to do so. Finally, on the hybrid normative proposal endorsed by Shah and Velleman, automatically formed beliefs — beliefs formed without deployment of the concept of belief — are weakly regulated for truth and will thus count as instances of belief whether they are defective or not.

Here is, in a nutshell, the normativist master argument:

1. All cases of doxastic deliberation necessarily exhibit transparency.

2. (1) needs to be explained.

3. Weak truth-regulation is not enough to explain (1).

4. Strong truth-regulation entails that defective beliefs cannot be considered beliefs.

5. Strong truth-regulation is not appropriate to explain (1).

6. *Assumption*: the truth-norm norm is constitutive of the concept of belief.

7. All cases of doxastic deliberation are cases in which the subject (*S*) deploys the concept of belief.

8. (6-7) explain (1)

C: The truth-norm is a constitutive part of the concept of belief.

In the rest of the paper, I first argue that, even if we took (1-7) to be true, (8) is false and hence the normativist has given us no reason to endorse the truth of (*C*). Assuming that the truth-norm is constitutive of the concept of belief does not have a genuine explanatory role vis-à-vis (1). Secondly, I challenge the truth of premises (3), (4) and (5) and thus show that the teleologist has the required theoretical resources to explain (1).

V. THE EXPLANATORY IDLENESS OF NORMS

For the normativist master argument to work, the assumption that the truth-norm is constitutive of the concept of belief must explain (1), i.e., it must explain that deployment of the concept of belief in doxastic deliberation entails a particular kind of phenomenology: the experience of being subject solely to the truth-norm. The assumption has to explain the apparent fact that that we cannot *knowingly* and *deliberately*, i.e., without self-deception and the like, form a belief in a proposition while taking the available evidence to count against it; Yet, as has often been pointed out [see e.g. McHugh (2011); Steglich-Petersen (2006)], we are capable of engaging in activities governed by constitutive norms while knowingly and deliberately failing to abide by such norms. Consider, for instance, the view that assertion is constitutively governed by the truth-norm, both in the sense of claiming that it is a conceptual truth about assertion that an assertion is correct if and only if it is true, and in the prescriptive sense of claiming that one ought to assert *p* only if *p* is

true. This view does not entail that we cannot knowingly and deliberately assert something false. A false assertion still counts very much as an assertion.

The main difference between belief and assertion seems to be that while we can knowingly and deliberately assert something false and remain rational, it would be irrational for us to believe that *p* while knowingly and deliberately taking *p* to be false. If this is so, then the norm that guides us during doxastic deliberation is not as simple as the normativist suggests. While engaged in doxastic deliberation the question *whether to believe that p* is transparent, first and foremost, to the question *whether it would be correct to believe that p* in the sense of whether *it would be rational to believe that p*. Yet one need not take the question *whether it would be rational to believe that p* to be settled just by an answer to the question *whether p*. The question *whether it would be rational to believe that p* leaves room for a weighing of norms other than the truth-norm. The normativist may reply that norms other than the truth-norm can be relevant to the question *whether to believe that p* as long as such norms are compatible with the truth-norm [Shah and Velleman (2005), ft. 40]. Yet, if that is the case, the idea that in deploying the concept of belief we commit ourselves to abiding by the truth-norm does not guarantee our *experiencing its sole authority* over relevant acts of belief formation, which amounts to leaving (1) unexplained. Thus assuming that the truth-norm is constitutive of the concept of belief does not seem to be able to explain (1). So, even if (1-7) were true, (8) is false, hence the normativist has given us no reason to accept the truth of (*C*).

Here is another way to identify the problem. In taking transparency to be a feature of all cases of doxastic deliberation that is allegedly explained by making the truth-norm constitutive of the concept of belief, and in correctly noting that we deploy such a concept in episodes of doxastic deliberation, the normativist is also committed to the truth of the following implicit premise:

7'. In all cases of doxastic deliberation *S* abides *only* by the truth-norm.

Yet, (7') does not follow from (6-7). It is a much stronger thesis, which calls for independent justification. What the normative view of belief seems to require is the truth of some form of motivational internalism.[9] Since cases of akrasia illustrate the possibility of *S*'s believing a proposition to be true while not being motivated by its truth, the more plausible form of motivational internalism for the normativist to rely on is one according to which if *S* takes *p* to be true, then *S* will be motivated to believe *p* insofar as *S* is rational. On this view, one can accept that all the evidence indicates that *p*, and at the same time fail to believe it. It is just that one would be, to that extent, irrational. But relying on this form of motivational internalism seems to defeat the purpose of making the truth-norm part of the concept of belief. The purpose of doing so is to guarantee that the transition from the question *whether*

to believe that p to the question *whether p* is immediate, i.e., that the transition should not depend on anything other than the very deployment of the concept of belief. Yet, once this type of motivational internalism gets in, the transition seems to depend on the concept of *rational* belief, not just the concept of belief.

Again, the normativist may reply that since the concept of belief is, on their view, a normative concept, judgment internalism will kick in as soon as the concept is applied, and so the subject will immediately be disposed to reason in a way that is guided by the truth-norm. But at this point, the normativist is still giving us reasons to accept that it is a conceptual truth about belief that it is constitutively normative by attempting to show that the property of transparency can only be explained by assuming such a conceptual truth, so an appeal to the very normative view that has been assumed would just beg the question.

VI. A Teleologist's Reply

In this final section, I argue against premises (3), (4) and (5) in the normativist master argument. I show how a teleological view of belief can overcome all the problems the normativist master argument raises, in particular, the explanation of (1).

Let us begin with premise (3). Remember that the normativist claim here is that, if belief were to be considered acceptance *weakly* regulated for truth, then (1) could not be explained, i.e., the teleologist could not explain why all cases of doxastic deliberation exhibit transparency. It is important to bear in mind that even the formation of beliefs through doxastic deliberation is open to the causal influence of non-alethic considerations. Transparency, as has been stressed throughout, is a property of doxastic deliberation as experienced from the first-personal point of view, i.e., a property of what we take ourselves to be doing when deliberating about whether to believe that *p*. Yet what explains the pervasive phenomenology of a cognitive process, such as deliberating about whether to believe that *p*, has more to do with the properties of the process itself than with the properties of the resulting outcome — the properties of belief. It thus seems odd to make it a requirement that just the properties of belief explain what we *take ourselves* to be doing when deciding whether to believe that *p*, i.e., when trying to settle the question *whether to believe that p* through a process of doxastic deliberation. It makes much more sense to say that what explains the properties of what we take ourselves to be doing when we engage in the process of deliberating about whether to believe that *p* is what we do when we engage in such a process. And what we do when engaged in doxastic deliberation is to make a judgment — to judge upon reflection on the available evidence. To judge is to mentally do some-

thing. Although the thesis that judging is a type of mental action is not completely uncontroversial [see e.g. O'Shaughnessy (1980); Strawson (2003)], its acceptance does not distort or affect the overall terms of the dialectic here. The normativist certainly takes the thesis to be completely uncontentious. A judgment, they claim 'is a cognitive mental act of affirming a proposition … It is an act because it involves occurrently presenting a proposition, or putting it forward in the mind; and it is cognitive because it involves presenting the proposition as true — or, as we have said, affirming it' [Shah and Velleman (2005), p. 503].

Now, it is notoriously difficult to give a precise account of what makes a mental event or process a mental action. This topic certainly goes beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, there are such accounts on the philosophical market. Peacocke (2008) provides a plausible analysis of what is most distinctive about judging and other types of mental actions, such as deciding, calculating, accepting, reasoning or trying. 'For a mental event to be a mental action, it must consist of an event which either is, or constitutively involves, a trying. If 'constitutively involves' is allowed to count as a reflexive relation, this criterion can be simplified. To be a mental action, a mental event must constitutively involve a trying' [Peacocke (2008), p. 249]. Tryings themselves are, in turn, attempts to successfully do something. It is indeed a constitutive feature of what we refer to as 'trying to φ' that one cannot try to φ while, at the same time, *taking oneself* to be bringing about a defective instance of φ-ing. With this account in hand, the following strategy is open to the teleologist. In doxastic deliberation, we settle the question *whether to believe that p* by making a judgment. Judging, as a type of mental action, constitutively involves a trying and hence it constitutively involves aiming at *successfully* doing something — even if one, as a matter of fact, may fail in doing so.[10] In settling the question *whether to believe that p*, we thus cannot but take ourselves to be moved solely by considerations pertaining to the truth of *p,* for we take ourselves to be bringing about a successful instance of a judgment, and a successful instance of a judgment is a judgment that is true. So, were the teleologist to consider belief to be acceptance weakly regulated for truth, appeal to the properties of the practice of doxastic deliberation — as a practice that constitutively involves judging as a type of mental action — would allow him to account for transparency as a necessary property of such practice — premise (1) in the master argument. Hence premise (3) is false.

What about premise (4)? According to premise (4) of the master argument, if belief were acceptance *strongly* regulated for truth, then the teleological account would entail that defective beliefs are not beliefs at all, since it would be constitutive of the state that we call 'belief' that it is always true. It is, however, difficult to see how strong truth-regulation would entail the exclusion of defective beliefs from the category of belief. We just need to appreciate that a very natural way of understanding this (and other) teleological

account(s), is to characterize the aim or function of the item or state under discussion in historical terms, i.e., in terms of what is sometimes called its 'proper function'. Taking Millikan's (1984, 1989) teleological approach as paradigmatic of this view, the idea is that some item *A* has a function *F* as its proper function only if either [Millikan (1989), p. 288]:

> (1) *A* originated as a 'reproduction' ... of some prior item or items that, *due* in part to possession of the properties reproduced, have actually performed *F* in the past, and *A* exists because (causally historically because) of this or these performances. (2) *A* originated as the product of some prior device that, given its circumstances, had performance of *F* as a proper function and that, under those circumstances, normally causes *F* to be performed by means of producing an item like *A*.

It is thus a condition of adequacy for any teleological account that characterizes a type of object, mechanism or state in terms of its proper function that the tokens of that type that fail to perform its proper function on occasion would still be considered as pertaining to the relevant type. On the teleological view of belief, beliefs are characterized as states formed through mechanisms that have been *designed* (by evolution, training, education and the like) to track *only* the truth. The proper function of such mechanisms is precisely to produce states that represent only the truth. Yet, this does not entail that such mechanisms always function as they were designed to. Automatically formed defective beliefs would thus still count as beliefs on the strong reading of the truth-regulation endorsed by the teleologist, since their proper function remains to represent only the truth even if, *qua* defective beliefs, they fail to perform such a function. In the case of beliefs formed through doxastic deliberation, since they are the result of a subject's acceptance of a proposition regulated by the subject's *intention* to accept *only* the truth, the relevant properties to focus on are those constitutive of the notion of intention. Yet, there does not seem to be a problem here, since the fact that subjects intend to accept only what is true in doxastic deliberation does not entail that they are always successful at achieving what they intend to achieve. There is thus no reason to think that premise (4) in the master argument is true.

Now, the normativist thinks that even if strong truth-regulation yielded a correct metaphysical characterization of belief, such a characterization would still fail to explain (1), i.e., it would still fail to explain the phenomenological immediacy of the transition from the deliberative question *whether to believe that p* to the factual question *whether p*, in which doxastic deliberation consists. In the end it is premise (5) that carries the heaviest dialectical weight in the normativist master argument. Thinking of belief as acceptance strongly regulated for truth, the normativist argues, makes truth instrumental in such a transition. The following long quote [Shah (2003), p. 469] illus-

trates the normativist (erroneous, as I shall shortly argue) take on why the teleologist appears to be committed to this instrumental role of truth in doxastic deliberation:

> I know that if my object is to form a belief about *p*, focusing on anything other than evidence of *p*'s truth (or falsity) will be ineffective. Expressing this to myself, I might think, "I'd like to form a belief about *p*. But my reasoning won't count as belief-formation unless I focus solely on whether *p* is true; therefore in order to achieve my goal, I had better go about discerning whether *p* is true." The focus on truth here is of *instrumental* value in the achievement of the goal of belief; therefore the focus on truth is *mediated* by an inference that it would be conducive to my goal to focus on truth.

The normativist thus seems to assume that if belief is characterized as acceptance that is strongly regulated for truth, then forming a belief through doxastic deliberation will involve two different mental states, a first-order state of discerning whether *p* is true and a second-order state of accepting *p* only if *p* is true — a second-order state at which *S* arrives upon *explicitly* reflecting on the truth of *p*. But why should the teleologist accept such a picture? Why should a transition between states that takes place at the metaphysical level also be felt as a transition when deploying the concept of belief in doxastic deliberation? After all, the teleologist does not just provide a metaphysical characterization of belief. The claim that belief is acceptance with the aim of accepting only what is true is also considered a conceptual truth about belief. Yet, no theory of concept possession requires that there be an explicit, i.e., conscious recognition of the metaphysical make-up of the concept deployed. So even if belief, characterized as *S*'s acceptance of *p* with the aim of accepting *p* only if *p* is true, involved a second-order state, and the formation of such a second-order state were mediated by a causal process, *S* need not be aware of this underlying causal process in deploying the concept of belief.

In general, the phenomenology that comes with deployment of a concept need not be such that the subject is aware of the putative underlying causal processes constitutive of what the concept refers to. There is therefore no reason why the teleologist could not explain that what *S* takes herself to be doing when forming a belief through doxastic deliberation, and hence tokening a second-order state of accepting only what is true, is *felt* as non-inferential and immediate — in the sense of *not seeming mediated* to *S* — even though the action of thus forming a belief constitutively involves a transition between states. The teleologist can explain that *S*'s awareness of the exclusive authority of truth over her processes of belief formation through doxastic deliberation is thus *immediate*, although it may not be *unmediated*, because the formation of the second-order state in which *S*'s belief consists would be *mediated* by causal processes of which *S* is unaware. There are hence ways of

construing a teleological view of belief that account for the transparency of the processes by which we consciously form beliefs without forsaking the normative nature of belief.

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NOTES

[1] On some teleological views, e.g. McHugh's (2011), the constitutive aim of belief is knowledge, not truth. I will not discuss such views here.

[2] Other versions of normativism about belief can be found in e.g. Boghossian (2003), Engel (2007), Gibbard (2005) and Wedgwood (2002). The formulation of the truth-norm is slightly different to the one just mentioned in some of these versions. Such differences can be ignored for the purposes of this paper.

[3] See especially Steglich-Petersen (2006) and, more generally, against content normativity, Glüer & Wikforss (2009).

[4] Some philosophers, e.g., Frankish (2004) claim that the cognitive role of these two types of mental states is so importantly different that we should regard them as exemplars of different *cognitive kinds*, reflecting a genuine distinction in the mental domain. This stands in sharp contrast with the background view to this paper.

[5] See also e.g. Hieronymi (2005).

[6] In talking about states consumed by a subject, I am just trying to exploit a standard theme in teleological views of representations and their content. The key to the idea is that for something to be a representation at all, it must be a representation *for the system — for the subject — itself*. To illustrate: "[i]t is the devices that *use* representations that determine these to be representations and, at the same time ... determine their content" [Millikan (1989), p. 282]. I take the transition from talk about representations and their contents to talk about beliefs to be unproblematic in this context.

[7] I prefer to use 'prescriptive' rather than 'normative' here so as to leave it open that TEL could also be considered, as I intend to argue, a constitutively normative view of belief — it is just that the normativity is construed in teleological terms.

[8] Although the normativist formulates the standard of correctness for the concept of belief in this biconditional form, i.e., a belief is correct if and only if it is true, the truth-norm itself is usually articulated in the simpler, conditional, form so as to avoid the obvious problem of prescribing to believe everything that is true (see Section III above).

[9] Shah and Velleman (2005), ft 40, come close to addressing this issue, but they do not press the matter any further and simply suggest that their explanation presuppose only a 'weak' form of motivational internalism.

[10] The mental action of judging, like any other mental action, need not be caused by a previous trying, as it should be clear from the idea that tryings themselves are mental actions, so there is no risk here of vicious regress [cf. Peacocke (2008), pp. 249-250].

[11] Steglich-Petersen (2006), pp. 512-513, makes a similar point but focuses instead on the constitutive properties of intention as opposed to the constitutive properties of the mental act of trying involved in judging. It is a necessary property of the very idea of intending to φ, he claims, that we experience what we do as the bringing about of a correct instance of φ-ing. Hence it is a necessary property of our intending to settle the question *whether to believe that p* that we experience what we do as the bringing about of a correct, true belief — even in those cases in which, as a matter of fact, the belief thus formed is not true.

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