

Belief and Difficult Action

Berislav Marušić

Brandeis University

© 2012 Berislav Marušić

*This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 License.
<www.philosophersimprint.org/o12o18/>*

SUPPOSE YOU DECIDE TO DO SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE EVIDENCE is difficult to do. What should you believe about your future course of action when you make this decision? For example, suppose you decide to quit smoking. Should you, at that moment, believe that you won't smoke anymore? Alternatively, suppose you promise to do something that you have evidence is difficult to do. For example, suppose you promise to be with your spouse the rest of your life. Should you, at that moment, believe that you will?

Decisions and promises to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do pose a substantial epistemological problem. I shall call it the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action.¹ The problem, in a nutshell, is this: On the one hand, if we believe that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, then, it seems, we believe against the evidence, for, since we have evidence that it is difficult to do it, it seems that we have reason to doubt that we will do it. On the other hand, if we don't believe that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, then, it seems, our decision is not serious and our promise is not sincere. This is a problem whose force is not adequately addressed in contemporary discussion. Yet it is a problem with tangible importance: Our most important decisions and promises are of this kind. Also, it is a problem with substantial philosophical implications: It suggests, as I shall ultimately argue, that sometimes we should believe something even if it goes against our evidence.

Yet before this conclusion begins to seem even remotely plausible, let me consider the problem, and a number of apparently plausible responses, in some detail. I will proceed as follows: In section one, I will formulate the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action with some care. In section two, I will offer a preliminary defense of my view of the Sincerity Condition for promising and the Seriousness

1. I discuss a related problem in "Promising Against the Evidence" (Marušić [forthcoming a]). There I ask: How could we responsibly promise to do something when we have evidence that there is a significant chance that we won't do it, since we risk misleading the promisee? I also consider how a promisee could rationally trust that we will do something when she has evidence there is a significant chance that we won't do it. I will set aside these issues in the present paper. I think of that problem as the practical counterpart to this epistemological problem.

Condition for deciding. In section three, I will consider and reject three apparently easy solutions to the problem: the appeal to trying, the appeal to different senses of ‘should’, and the appeal to degrees of belief. In section four, I will consider and reject the Practical Knowledge Response, according to which we should believe that we will do what we’re deciding or promising to do, because we have practical knowledge that we will do it. In section five, I will consider and reject the Evidentialist Response, according to which we should not believe that we will do what we’re deciding or promising to do and hence should not make the decision or promise in the first place. In section six, I will consider and reject the Non-Cognitivist Response, according to which we should intend but not believe that we will do what we’re deciding or promising to do. In section seven, I will consider and reject the Acceptance Response, according to which we should accept but not believe that we will do what we’re deciding or promising to do. In section eight, I will consider and defend the Pragmatist Response, according to which we should believe that we will do what we’re deciding or promising to do, provided it’s rational to decide or promise to do it. That is because our belief about what we will do, when doing it is up to us, is to be evaluated in terms of the standards of practical reasoning. In section nine, I will respond to objections to the Pragmatist Response. I will conclude by suggesting that the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action reveals the best case against evidentialism — the view that what we should believe is determined by our evidence.

1. The Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action

In this section, I will formulate the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action more carefully.² My concern throughout the paper will be with decisions as well as promises. Of course, decisions and promises are very different: promising is a speech act and gives rise to moral obligations, and in promising to do something, one acquires

2. My formulation of the problem is indebted to Sartre’s famous discussion of bad faith (1943) and also especially to Moran (2001).

a reason to do it. Arguably, none of this is true of decisions. Strictly speaking, there are therefore two versions of the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action, and my discussion in the following should be understood as putting forward two sets of independent arguments — one about deciding and one about promising. I’ll present the problem first in terms of deciding and then in terms of promising.

Consider the Smoking Case: Suppose you decide to quit smoking. You throw away your cigarettes. When asked, you tell your friends and family that you won’t smoke anymore, and you change your dinner reservations from the smoking to the non-smoking section of the restaurant. However, as serious and firm as your decision can be, you know that it is statistically very likely that you will smoke again. For instance, you read the following in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*: “Most ex-smokers try several times, often as many as 8 to 10 times, before they are able to quit for good.”³ Also, let us suppose, you have no special reason to believe that you will succeed where most people tend to fail. You have no track record to speak of, and you have no special incentive to quit smoking, such as the impending birth of your child. (I’m told that when Charles de Gaulle decided to quit smoking, he declared it on television to the whole nation. Such a declaration might constitute a special incentive to quit smoking.)⁴ We may further suppose that you know that your will is neither remarkably strong nor particularly weak. Should you, at that moment, believe that you will succeed in quitting?

On the one hand, to say that you should believe it seems to imply that you should believe something that goes against your evidence, for you have strong evidence — the statistics from *JAMA* — that suggests that anyone who makes the decision you’ve made will quite likely fail. Furthermore, you have no evidence that would distinguish you from others; you have no reason to believe that the statistics don’t represent your situation. To see this, consider the perspective of an outsider — for

3. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/296/1/130> (last accessed on November 3, 2012)

4. Thanks to Michael Randall.

instance, your doctor—who is considering your decision. She has reason to believe that it is likely that you will fail, even if she is fully informed about the circumstances of your decision. But if your epistemic position is no different, then you do, too. Hence, it seems that you should not believe that you won't smoke anymore. Indeed, it seems that you should believe that it is likely that you will smoke again.

On the other hand, to say that, because of the statistics from *JAMA*, you should not believe that you won't smoke anymore seems to prevent you from making your decision seriously, if you can make the decision at all, for it is not entirely clear that you *can* decide to do something without thereby coming to believe that you will do it. Yet even if you can—and I shall grant this in the following—then your decision is not serious. Thus suppose that you don't believe that you won't smoke anymore but instead you believe, as your evidence suggests, that it is likely that you will smoke again. Then you can't sincerely tell your friends and family, when they ask, that you won't smoke anymore. Instead, it seems that you'll be prepared to say, 'I've decided to quit smoking, but it is likely that I'll fail.' Yet this seems to reveal a lack of seriousness, if not a lack of resolve. Also, if you believe that it is likely that you'll continue smoking, it's hard to see why you would change your dinner reservations to the non-smoking section of the restaurant.⁵ Yet if you don't change your dinner reservations, then, again, it seems that your decision is not serious. Hence it also seems wrong not to believe that you won't smoke anymore.

A parallel argument could be made in terms of the Marriage Case: You are standing before a justice of the peace and are about to promise to be with your spouse the rest of your life. However, you know the divorce rates, and thus you have evidence that it is fairly likely that you won't, in fact, spend the rest of your life with your spouse, for, we may suppose,

5. It might seem that this is not hard at all: You change them because that improves your chances of quitting smoking or that is part of your effort to quit smoking. Yet the problem is that this is irrational from the point of view of what you believe: If you believe that it is likely that you will continue smoking, then it is irrational to act as if you will quit; rather, you should plan for the possibility of failure. I return to this point in section six below.

you have no track record in this matter and nothing that distinguishes your circumstances from those of other, equally committed, prospective spouses. At that moment, should you believe that you will, indeed, be with your spouse the rest of your life? On the one hand, if you believe it, your belief goes against the evidence. (The justice of the peace or your wedding photographer, clearly, shouldn't believe it.) On the other hand, if you don't believe it, your promise won't be sincere.

The central feature of these examples, which gives rise to the problem, is that we have evidence that quitting smoking and being with one's spouse for one's whole life are *difficult* courses of action—difficult in a sense to be clarified shortly—because having evidence that it's difficult to ϕ gives one reason to doubt that one will, in fact, ϕ . That is why an outsider should doubt that one will do what one is deciding or promising to do. Yet the same kind of doubt about one's own decision or promise seems to prevent one's decision from being serious and one's promise from being sincere.

What, then, is the relevant sense of difficulty? There are many senses in which something can be difficult: It can be strenuous, it can require effort or perseverance, it can be agonizing, and it can be such that it is (more or less) likely that one will fail to do it. The latter is the sense of difficulty that is relevant for our purposes.⁶ Indeed, it strikes me as plausible that the difficulty is proportional to the likelihood of failure: The greater the difficulty, the greater the likelihood of failure. Yet two further clarifications are needed. First, the sense of difficulty that is relevant for our purposes is to be understood as *agent-relative*

6. Is equivocation a serious concern, then? An action that is difficult in another sense will typically also be difficult in the relevant sense, if not going through with it is a live option. For example, it is difficult to give birth without pain medication. If receiving pain medication is a live option—if one is in the hospital, for instance, the fact that it's difficult typically entails that it is likely that one will have pain medication. In contrast, though it is difficult to give birth, since it is not a live option not to do so, it does not follow that it is (more or less) likely that one will fail to do it. Equivocation is not a serious concern, I think, because there is a point in deciding or promising to do something only when not going through with the action is a live option. Hence, in the cases that I shall be concerned with, the fact that it is difficult to do something will typically entail that it is likely that one will fail.

difficulty. Thus, although it is (in general) difficult to land a plane, it is not difficult to do so *for the pilots*. And even if doing well on an advanced physics exam is generally difficult, it may not be difficult for a particular student who is motivated by the general difficulty of the exam.⁷ Second, we should assume that it is difficult for one to do what one is deciding or promising to do, *despite the fact that one is making a serious decision or a sincere promise*. That is to say, it remains likely that one will fail to do what one is deciding or promising to do even once one makes the decision or promise.

Let me put forward some further terminological stipulations. In the following, I will refer to cases in which we decide or promise to do what we have evidence is difficult to do as *the problematic cases*. Also, I will simply say that when it is, in the relevant sense, difficult to do something, it is *likely* that we will fail to do what we are deciding or promising to do. Note, however, that it can be likely, in this sense, that we will fail, even if success is more likely than failure, for, even if we have evidence that it is more likely that *p* than that *not p*, our evidence for the likelihood of *not p* can be so high as to make our belief go against the evidence. For example, if you have evidence that the likelihood of your train being on time is .66, your outright belief that it will indeed be on time would go against the evidence – even though it is more likely that your train will be on time than that it will be late. Finally, I will say that our belief, decision, or promise *goes against the evidence* when we have evidence that it is (more or less) likely that we won't do what we believe, decide, or promise to do.

Let me now consider what would be required to solve our problem. The problem arises because, at the moment at which we make our decision or promise, we face a dilemma between, on the one hand, believing against the evidence and, on the other hand, making a decision that is not serious or a promise that is not sincere. (Note that, thus conceived, our problem is synchronic.)⁸ Our problem is that we

7. Thanks to Kevin Falvey for this example.

8. The diachronic question of what we should believe as circumstances change and new evidence emerges poses its own further problems. For a promising

have to violate either the Evidentialist Principle or the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions:

The Evidentialist Principle: If we have evidence that it is likely that *not p*, we should not believe *p*.

Seriousness Condition on Decisions: Our decision is serious only if we believe that we will do what we are deciding to do.

Sincerity Condition on Promises: Our promise is sincere only if we believe that we will do what we are promising to do.

In the problematic cases, it seems, we cannot jointly satisfy the Evidentialist Principle and the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. That is why the problem arises.

But why think that both the Evidentialist Principle and the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions are true? The former hardly seems in need of defense.⁹ The principle should appear plausible even to those who reject a thoroughgoing evidentialism about doxastic norms. The principle is plausible even if whether we should hold certain beliefs – say perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, or *a priori* beliefs – is not determined by our evidence, for the beliefs in the problematic cases are not of this kind. In any case, since I shall ultimately reject the Evidentialist Principle, I won't here offer a defense of it. However, I will offer a defense of the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions.

way to address this question, see Holton's discussion of when it is rational to revise an intention (1999; 2009, esp. Ch. 4) and also Bratman's account of how to rationally resist temptation (2007).

9. Contemporary evidentialists include Adler (2002), Kelly (2002), Conee and Feldman (2004), and Shah (2006). Opponents of evidentialism include Foley (1991; 1993), Nozick (1993), Owens (2000), Stroud (2006), and Reisner (2008; 2009; forthcoming). I discuss the controversy between evidentialism and its opponents in Marušić (2011).

2. Seriousness and Sincerity

To make plausible that the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action is pressing indeed, let me offer an initial defense of the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. I will supplement this defense in sections six and seven below when I consider two alternative accounts of what is required for seriousness and sincerity.

I turn to the Sincerity Condition first. I will defend it by drawing an analogy between promising and asserting. I hold it to be an uncontroversial thesis that belief is a necessary condition for sincere assertion.¹⁰ Furthermore, I hold that simple observation of conversational practice shows that asserting and promising have this Sincerity Condition in common.¹¹ What shows this is the fact that 'I promise to ϕ ' and 'I will ϕ , I promise' are two equivalent ways of making the same promise. Yet in saying, 'I will ϕ , I promise', one explicitly asserts, 'I will ϕ .' Hence, whatever is a necessary condition for sincerely saying, 'I will ϕ ' is also a necessary condition for sincerely saying, 'I will ϕ , I promise.' Indeed, the requirement for sincerely saying, 'I promise to ϕ ' must surely be at least as strong as the requirement for sincerely saying, 'I will ϕ .'¹² Since a necessary condition for sincerely saying 'I will ϕ ' consists in believing that one will ϕ , believing that one will ϕ is also a necessary condition for sincerely saying, 'I will ϕ , I promise' and 'I promise I will ϕ .' In fact, asserting, 'I will ϕ ' in the right circumstances can be a way of making the same promise as one would make in saying 'I promise to ϕ .'¹³

An important objection to the claim that believing is a necessary condition for sincerely promising is that it assumes a controversial

10. An anonymous reviewer asks: Could we sincerely assert p while mistakenly believing that we believe p ? It seems to me that in such a case we would be insincere but mistakenly believe that we are sincere.
11. That is not to say that there are no differences between asserting and promising. For a thorough discussion of the differences, see Watson (2004). Yet Watson, too, seems committed to the view that believing is necessary for sincere promising.
12. Here I am indebted to Jennifer Smalligan Marušić.
13. Árdal (1968, 225) explicitly argues for this. I owe the reference to Scanlon (1990, 211).

view known as strong cognitivism. On this view, intending to do something consists in, or entails, the belief that one will do it. (For ease of exposition, I will refer to this view simply as cognitivism and to its denial as non-cognitivism.)¹⁴ An assumption of cognitivism might seem to figure in the preceding argument for the following reason: It is standardly held that intending is the Sincerity Condition for promising.¹⁵ If intending to do something entails believing that one will do it, then it is clear why one might think that believing is necessary for sincerely promising. Yet on a non-cognitivist view, according to which intentions don't entail the corresponding beliefs, one can intend to do what one is promising to do, and consequently sincerely promise it, without having the belief that violates the Evidentialist Principle.

Non-cognitivism will be the focus of section six below. There I will consider in some detail whether an appeal to non-cognitivism affords a solution to our problem. For now, let me briefly note why I think that our problem does not obviously arise from an assumption of cognitivism. That is because promises are *expressions* of intention. Yet even on non-cognitivist views – most famously Davidson's – belief is the Sincerity Condition for expressions of intention.¹⁶ Hence, if,

14. Cognitivists include Hampshire and Hart (1958), Grice (1971), Harman (1976; 1986, Ch. 8), Davis (1984), Velleman (1985; 1989/2007, esp. Ch. 4; 2000a), Setiya (2003; 2007; 2008), and Ross (2009). For further references to earlier cognitivist views, see Velleman (1989/2007, 113–114, n. 8). Non-cognitivists include Davidson (1978), Bratman (1987, esp. 37–39; 2009), Mele (1992, Ch. 8), Holton (2008; 2009), Hieronymi (2009), and Paul (2009). For further references to earlier non-cognitivist views, see Velleman (1989/2007, 114, n. 9). On certain weaker cognitivist views, such as that defended by Wallace (2001), intending to do something merely entails believing that it is possible to do it. For present purposes, I propose to count such weak cognitivist views as non-cognitivist. Note finally that I use the terminology of cognitivism and non-cognitivism to refer to belief theories of intentions and not, as is sometimes done, to refer to the view that the consistency and coherence requirements on intentions follow from the consistency and coherence requirements on beliefs.
15. Austin (1962, 50 and 135–136), Searle (1969, 60).
16. Davidson writes, "[My] argument proves that a man who sincerely says, ... 'I will do it' under certain conditions must believe that he will do it. But it may

as seems plausible, in promising to do something, we express our intention to do it, we must believe that we'll do it in order for our promise to be sincere.

Let me turn, then, to the Seriousness Condition for decisions. Why should believing be necessary for seriously deciding? Let me offer two arguments in defense of this thesis. First, typically, one's decision is serious only if one plans accordingly; 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. For instance, if one's decision is serious, one will take preliminary steps towards carrying it out, one will take the necessary means, and one will avoid having plans and beliefs that are inconsistent with one's carrying it out.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is plausible that assertion expresses belief¹⁸ and that, hence, if one is prepared to assert *p*, one believes *p*. Finally, it is plausible that if one is prepared to act as if *p*, one believes *p*.¹⁹ Put generally, planning for *p*, asserting *p*, and acting as if *p* are outward signs of believing *p*; they are functional roles of believing *p* – even if belief cannot be analyzed in terms of these functional roles. When someone decides to do something and her decision is serious, she will be prepared to engage in belief-exhibiting behavior, and to the extent that she doesn't do so, she reveals a lack of seriousness. This makes it plausible to hold that believing is necessary for seriously deciding.

My second argument in favor of the thesis that believing is necessary for seriously deciding is that believing that it is likely that we won't do what we are deciding to do is a *disabling condition* for seriously deciding it. Here is why: Our decision to do something is

be the saying, not the intention, that implies belief. And I think we can see this in the case" (1978, 91).

17. Bratman (1987).

18. See Bach and Harnish (1979, 47), Williamson (2000, 255), and Adler (2002, 13–14 and *passim*). Williamson writes, "[O]ccurrently believing *p* stands to asserting *p* as the inner stands to the outer" (255).

19. For discussion, see Fantl and McGrath (2009, Ch. 5). See also Williamson (2000, 99). Williamson writes, "Since using *p* as a premise in practical reasoning is relying on *p*, we can think of one's degree of outright belief in *p* as the degree to which one relies on *p*" (99).

meant to settle for us the question of what we will do.²⁰ If we decide to do something, we thereby mean to settle what we will do (and, on cognitivist views, we, in fact, settle it). But if, at the same time, we also believe that it is likely that we will not do it, then it is not settled for us that we will do it. Hence, our decision is not serious.

Like earlier, though perhaps with even greater vigor, one might object that my arguments assume cognitivism. In particular, to act and plan as if we will do something requires only *intending* that we will do it.²¹ Yet only on a cognitivist picture does intending entail believing. Am I begging the question against non-cognitivism?

Again, I don't think that the problem arises from a simple assumption of cognitivism. This, I think, should be clear from the second argument – the claim that believing that it is likely that we won't do what we are deciding to do is a disabling condition for seriously deciding, for if we believe that it is likely that we won't do what we are deciding to do, then we simply haven't settled what we will do. And to the extent that our decision doesn't settle the question of what we will do, it is not serious.

Note that, on a cognitivist view, to the extent that our decision doesn't settle the question of what we will do, it is not a decision at all. But in allowing for the possibility of decisions that are not serious, I want to allow for the possibility of deciding (that is, settling the question of what to do) without believing (that is, settling the question of what we will do). The two questions may not be equivalent, but they are surely related. And I shall claim, for now, that if one settles the former without settling the latter in corresponding fashion, one's decision is not serious. I will return to this important issue in section six.

This concludes my preliminary defense of the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. I hope it shows that the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action is worthy of further consideration.

20. I borrow the notion of settling the question, and the conceptual framework it is part of, from Pamela Hieronymi (2005; 2006; 2009). See also Bratman (1987, 16–17 and Ch. 5).

21. See especially Bratman (1987).

3. Three Easy Responses

It might be thought, and it is not infrequently suggested to me, that the problem I described is not much of a problem, because there is an easy solution. To show that the problem eludes such an easy solution, I would like to address three responses that may, at first blush, seem to be easy solutions. The three responses are the appeal to trying, the appeal to different senses of 'should', and the appeal to degrees of belief.

The response to the problem that usually first comes to mind is this: "We shouldn't decide to do it. We should only decide to try!"²² But the appeal to trying is of no help with the problem. Here is why: An initial difficulty is that it is not clear what exactly we commit ourselves to if we decide to try to do something. To sharpen this point, I pose the following dilemma to the advocate of deciding to try: Either the decision to try has substance, in which case it is an instance of deciding against the evidence, and the appeal to trying fails to solve our problem, or the decision to try lacks substance, but then it retreats too far; it is not much better than not deciding at all. The appeal to trying collapses into the Evidentialist Response.

To illustrate this dilemma, let me consider a different kind of appeal — not to deciding to try but to an explicitly conditional decision. Imagine that you are considering whether to decide to quit smoking, but you are concerned that it is difficult to do it. What condition could you make your decision conditional on, so that your decision could still have substance but so it wouldn't be difficult to keep it? For example, deciding to smoke no more, unless a major event occurs, would still be difficult. Meanwhile, deciding to smoke no more, unless you really feel like smoking, would lack substance. But no single condition will satisfy both desiderata.

It should be clear that the same dilemma arises with regard to deciding to try. If trying is understood in a substantial way, then trying

22. I will put the argument in terms of deciding, but it can be made, *mutatis mutandis*, in terms of promising (see Marušić [forthcoming a]). I am indebted to Eli Hirsch for helping me develop the subsequent line of argument.

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. The claim that we should only decide to try reduces, then, to the claim that we shouldn't decide to do what we have evidence is difficult to do. And that's simply the Evidentialist Response.²³

I turn to the second allegedly easy response. It might be thought that the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action is just a particular instance of the conflict that can arise between norms of epistemic and norms of practical rationality. Practically speaking, we should believe that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, but, epistemically speaking, we should believe that it's likely that we won't. The question what we (all out) should believe is not further meaningful.²⁴

Yet I do not think that this response constitutes a solution to the problem, even if it is granted that practical rationality applies to belief.²⁵ Rather, it amounts to saying that the problem has no solution, for, when we are deciding or promising to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do, we are in need of advice. What should we believe about our future course of action? To say that our question is meaningless is of no help at all.

I turn, then, to the third allegedly easy response. Is the problem due to the fact that it is stated in terms of outright belief, rather than degrees of belief? There are two ways of understanding this response — depending on whether one takes a framework of degrees of belief to be compatible with a framework of outright belief or

23. I return to the appeal to trying in section eight below.

24. This sort of response is suggested by Feldman (2000).

25. This is a controversial matter. Kelly (2002), Adler (2002), and Hieronymi (2006) deny this. See also Marušić (2011) for an overview.

whether one wants to eschew talk of outright belief altogether. Let me consider each in turn.

Suppose that a proponent of this response does not eschew the framework of outright belief. How, then, is the appeal to degrees of belief supposed to help? The problem remains exactly the same if the degree of belief required for seriously deciding and sincerely promising is that required for outright belief, for we then still face the dilemma between violating the Evidentialist Principle and violating the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. The only hope for a proponent of this response is to argue that a degree of belief that falls short of outright belief is sufficient for seriously deciding or sincerely promising.

But that is implausible. To illustrate this, suppose that the epistemically rational degree of belief that you will, in fact, spend the rest of your life with your spouse is .66. Would believing to degree .66 that you will do it suffice to make your promise sincere?²⁶ The answer is, clearly, no. Thus compare the following case: Suppose that the epistemically rational degree of belief that your friend's train will arrive on time is .66 and, in light of that, you adopt the degree of belief .66 that your friend will be on time. Surely, this would not suffice to sincerely assert that your friend will be on time. Yet it is not plausible that a lower degree of belief is required for sincerely promising than is required for sincerely asserting. Sincere assertion requires outright belief. By parity, so does promising.

But now we can see why the second version of the appeal to degrees of belief fares no better. On this version, we should eschew talk of outright belief altogether. But it is no more plausible that you can sincerely promise to spend the rest of your life with your spouse, when you believe to degree .66 that you will do so, if the notion of an outright belief is incoherent than if the notion is coherent. Rather, what is puzzling is how high a degree of belief is required for sincerely promising — or sincerely asserting, for that matter. The general

26. I put the argument in terms of promising, but the corresponding arguments of section two similarly support a corresponding argument about deciding.

problem is how outright notions, such as asserting and promising, are related to a notion of belief that can be understood only as coming in degrees. This, I think, is a philosophical problem for proponents of such a view about belief. But eschewing talk of outright belief is certainly not a solution to our problem.

I think that none of these allegedly easy responses makes any headway with our problem. I turn now to better proposals.

4. The Practical Knowledge Response

In this section, I turn to the Practical Knowledge Response (PKR). According to PKR, we should believe that we will do what we're deciding or promising to do, even if we have evidence that it's difficult to do it, because we know that we will do it, for surely knowledge is sufficient for rational belief.²⁷ PKR thus rejects the Evidentialist Principle: despite our evidence that it's likely that we won't do what we are deciding or promising to do, we should believe that we will do it. The rationale for PKR is that we have privileged epistemic access to what we will do, because we are the ones who will do it. Just like we can tell, without observation or evidence, what we are doing, we can tell, without observation or evidence, what we will do. In virtue of being agents, we have *practical foreknowledge* of our actions.²⁸

The view that practical knowledge is central to understanding intentional action — present or future — is most famously defended by Elizabeth Anscombe in her seminal book *Intention*.²⁹ The crucial observation, which provides the rationale for understanding intentional action in terms of practical knowledge, is that deliberation

27. I raise difficulties for this view in Marušić (forthcoming b). However, those difficulties are not specific to PKR, and so I will set them aside here.

28. I owe the phrase "practical foreknowledge" to Richard Moran (2004, 48). Cf. also Wilson's (2000) notion of proximal practical foresight, developed from Velleman (1989/2007).

29. Anscombe (1957/2000). Other proponents of the view include Hampshire (1959; 1975), Hampshire and Hart (1958), Moran (2001, Ch. 4; 2004), and Rödl (2007, Ch. 2). I am doubtful that any of them would endorse PKR. See also Velleman (1989/2007), whose view I discuss in section five below.

about our actions is *practical*, whereas deliberation about other matters is *theoretical*. In particular, when we engage in practical deliberation, unlike when we engage in theoretical deliberation, we come to know what we will do without recourse to evidence or observation. We come to know it by considering what *to do*. For example, suppose you're considering whether you'll go to the park this afternoon. To settle the question, you wouldn't just consider evidence about yourself. It would be absurd for you to think, "Every Wednesday afternoon, I go to the park. Today is Wednesday. Hence, it is exceedingly likely that I'll go to the park again" — even if you do go to the park every Wednesday afternoon. Rather, you would consider your practical reasons for going to the park — however exactly practical reasons are to be understood. For instance, you would consider whether you want to go to the park, whether there are other things you want to do more, and whether you have prior commitments. In contrast, if you were thinking about whether someone else will be going to the park, you would look to evidence or observation to settle the question. For example, you might ask the other person, or, if you are a detective, you might observe her behavior and conclude that, because every Wednesday afternoon she goes to the park and today is Wednesday, it is exceedingly likely that she'll go to the park.³⁰

I will now argue that PKR is implausible. That is because evidence of difficulty is a *defeater* for our purported practical knowledge that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do.³¹ To show this, I would like to consider other kinds of knowledge that, arguably, we can acquire without considering evidence — *a priori* knowledge, perceptual knowledge, and testimonial knowledge.³² I will argue that those kinds

30. Cf. Anscombe's discussion of the shopper and the detective (1957/2000, 56).

31. The notion of a defeater is a standard philosophical notion. For our purposes, it could be defined as follows: D is a defeater for subject S's purported knowledge of *p* if and only if D is a body of evidence S has and, because S has D, S does not know *p*. See Bergmann (2005, 422–424) for a thorough discussion.

32. See especially Burge (1993). In interpreting Anscombe's account of practical knowledge, Moran (2004, 61) likens it to *a priori* knowledge, and he draws a parallel to Burge's account.

of knowledge are vulnerable to defeat and that, by parity, practical knowledge is, too.³³

Thus suppose you perform a complicated mathematical calculation. It is plausible that if you correctly performed the calculation and perhaps if other conditions are met, such as that your performing the calculation correctly is not a happy accident, you thereby gain *a priori* knowledge of the result. Moreover, you gain this knowledge without considering evidence. In particular, your knowledge of the result does not depend on evidence that you succeeded in performing this calculation correctly — for instance, evidence that you are good at mathematics. Yet now suppose, furthermore, that you gain evidence that it is likely that you made a mistake: Someone else who is as good a mathematician as you are gets a different result, or it emerges that you might have skipped a line in calculating something by longhand. Clearly, this evidence is a defeater for your purported *a priori* knowledge of the result — even if, in fact, you reached the correct result and your doing so is not a happy accident.

A similar argument can be made in terms of perception: On some foundationalist views, having a perceptual experience of *p* is sufficient to have *immediate* prima facie justification for believing *p*.³⁴ One's perceptual experience of *p* is not evidence on the basis of which one is justified in believing *p* but immediately justifies one in believing *p*. On such views, we can also gain perceptual knowledge without considering evidence; we can have *immediate* perceptual knowledge.

33. It is difficult to say whether Anscombe herself would actually endorse PKR. This depends on whether she would hold that evidence of difficulty is a defeater for one's purported practical knowledge. (Hampshire allows for such defeat [1975, 54–60].) Anscombe does, I think, allow that there can be defeaters for purported practical knowledge — most plausibly falsity: She holds that if one now intends to ϕ and if, when the time comes, one doesn't ϕ , one now doesn't have practical knowledge that one will ϕ (92). Yet, from what she says in *Intention*, it is simply not clear whether she would allow that evidence of difficulty is a defeater. However, without further going into Anscombe's view, let us assume that a proponent of PKR could simply appropriate her account of practical knowledge in order to offer a response to our problem.

34. For a particularly influential articulation of such a view, see Pryor (2000).

Yet, again, it is plausible that, on such views, having evidence that it is likely that *not p* defeats one's purported perceptual knowledge – even if one, in fact, enjoys a perceptual experience of *p*.

Finally, the same kind of argument can be made in terms of testimony:³⁵ On transmission views of testimony, one can gain testimonial knowledge that *p* by being told that *p* – without considering evidence whether *p*. Yet if one has evidence that it is likely that *not p*, one's purported testimonial knowledge is defeated.

Here, then, is my argument against PKR: If, indeed, we can have non-evidential practical knowledge of the sort that Anscombe discusses, it is plausible that such practical knowledge is as liable to defeat as other kinds of non-evidential knowledge. Since other kinds of purported non-evidential knowledge of *p* are defeated if one has evidence that it is likely that *not p*, having such evidence is a defeater for one's practical knowledge.

Indeed, if this were not so, two highly implausible things would follow: First, it could happen that we should believe that we will ϕ , because we have practical knowledge that we will ϕ , and also believe that it is likely that we will not ϕ , because we have evidence that it is difficult for us to ϕ . But that would lead us to have probabilistically inconsistent beliefs, which is surely irrational. (Believing *p* and believing that it is likely that *not p* would make us vulnerable to a Dutch Book.) Second, even if practical knowledge is not defeated by evidence of difficulty, surely theoretical knowledge is. But an outsider who knows that we've settled through practical deliberation that we will ϕ would be in a position to know that we will ϕ , even if she has evidence that it's difficult for us to do so, for, if you know that someone else knows *p*, then you know *p*. For instance, if you know that a mathematician knows *p* because she proved it, you know *p*, even if you didn't prove it. Hence, if practical knowledge is immune to defeat by evidence of difficulty, and if, as seems plausible, we can know that others engage in practical deliberation, then theoretical

35. See especially Burge (1993).

knowledge can be immune to defeat as well. But that is, clearly, not the case. Hence practical knowledge is vulnerable to defeat by evidence of difficulty.

I conclude that PKR is unsatisfactory. In the problematic cases, we do not know that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, precisely because we have evidence that it is difficult to do it.³⁶ Nonetheless, there is an important insight in PKR: Our view about what we will do is different from an outsider's view of what we will do, because we form it through practical reasoning. This observation will be crucial to the Pragmatist Response, which I will return to in section eight below. But first we must look at other responses which will initially appear more plausible.

5. The Evidentialist Response

I turn to the Evidentialist Response (ER). ER holds that since we should not believe against the evidence, we should not make the problematic decisions and promises in the first place. The way to solve our problem is to avoid facing the dilemma between violating the Evidentialist Principle and the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. David Velleman comes close to endorsing ER explicitly when he writes, "Surely, one is not permitted to make a promise if, having made it, one still won't have grounds for expecting its fulfillment" (1989/2007, 62–63, n. 20) and "An agent isn't entitled to intend to do something unless he has reason to believe that he'll do it if he intends to" (95).³⁷ This response strikes me as the *prima facie* most plausible response to our problem. However, I think that the response is inadequate. To show

36. I want to emphasize that a failure to have practical knowledge needn't result in bafflement about what one will do (cf. Velleman 1989/2007). If we have a belief about what we will do, which falls short of knowledge, we are not baffled. This will be important in my discussion in section eight below.

37. However, he seems to affirm that we can intend to do things that we have evidence are difficult to do. For example, he explains in some detail how we could intend to learn Chinese (230). That is why it is not clear whether he is thoroughly committed to ER.

this, I will first clarify how it should be understood, and I will then raise three objections to it.

Few things will seem more plausible than the claim that we shouldn't believe against the evidence. Yet it is important to see that ER requires more than this seemingly plausible claim. To adequately address our problem, ER must do more than simply reassert the Evidentialist Principle.³⁸ Our problem is that we have to violate either the Evidentialist Principle or the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. Thus, ER has to be understood as affirming both the Evidentialist Principle and a version of what I shall call the Bridge Principle:

The Bridge Principle: If we shouldn't believe that we will ϕ , then we shouldn't decide or promise to ϕ .

Yet complications arise immediately. The Bridge Principle, as stated, is too simple. It could be permissible to decide or promise to ϕ yet clearly impermissible to believe that we will ϕ .³⁹ For instance, it could be permissible for us to decide to ϕ even when, in fact, we don't make this decision. Surely it wouldn't follow that even when we don't make the decision, it is permissible to believe that we will ϕ . After all, we might not intend to ϕ , or we might even decide not to ϕ .

To deal with this complication, ER should be understood as relying on a more complicated Bridge Principle:

The Official Bridge Principle: If we shouldn't believe that (we will ϕ , if we seriously decide or sincerely promise to ϕ), then we shouldn't seriously decide or sincerely promise to ϕ .

38. It is worth emphasizing that one can endorse the Evidentialist Principle, and evidentialism in general, without endorsing the Evidentialist Response. For instance, one could endorse the Non-Cognitivist Response or the Acceptance Response instead.

39. When it is not the case that we shouldn't ϕ , then, I shall say, it is permissible to ϕ .

This version of the Bridge Principle avoids the problem, because if it is permissible for us to seriously decide to ϕ , then, even if we don't decide to ϕ , it is not implausible to hold that it is permissible for us to believe that (we will ϕ , if we seriously decide to ϕ).

A proponent of ER could then argue as follows: The Evidentialist Principle implies that if we have evidence that it is likely that (we won't ϕ , if we seriously decide or sincerely promise to ϕ), we shouldn't believe that (we will ϕ , if we seriously decide or sincerely promise to ϕ). From the Official Bridge Principle, we can then infer that, in the problematic cases, we shouldn't decide or promise to do what we have evidence is difficult to do. I hold that this is a plausible way of understanding both the substance of ER and the argument for it. Thus I turn now to my three objections against it.

First, the most straightforward objection to ER is that it implies that too many decisions and promises are impermissible, for we decide and promise all the time to do things that we have evidence are difficult to do. Also, many such decisions and promises are very important to us. For example, we might promise to save up money for a house, to take care of our parents when they are old, and to behave better around the holidays. We might decide to read all of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* next summer, to finally get our children to eat some vegetables, or to learn to dance the tango.⁴⁰ We might decide or promise to exercise once a week, to be financially more responsible, to quit smoking, or to

40. Setiya comes close to endorsing ER when he writes, "I cannot decide to dance the tango at my wedding without an unjustified leap of faith" (2008, 407). However, his position is subtler. He writes, "Can't I decide to dance the tango at my wedding, one might ask, even if I don't yet know how? The answer is that this decision would not be justified. Rather, I must decide to learn how to dance the tango and to exercise this knowledge at my wedding, once it has been acquired. These are things I do know how to do. I can then infer from the knowledge that figures in my intention that I am going to dance the tango at my wedding. But this is a prediction, not the content of a decision in its own right" (406–407). (Compare Velleman [1989/2007, 230–232].) Yet Setiya's view strikes me as problematic, because I don't see how the prediction could be more justified than the decision, for whether one decides or predicts that one will dance the tango, one has evidence that it is difficult to do so.

learn Chinese — despite having excellent evidence that it is likely that we will fail. It is, I think, disheartening to hold that we should not make such decisions and promises.

I turn to my second objection. ER says that we should not make the problematic decisions and promises. That way, we will avoid situations in which we have to violate either the Evidentialist Principle or the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. But in saying this, it fails to properly address the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action, precisely because the problem is epistemological. Our problem is this: Given that we are deciding or promising to do what we have evidence is difficult to do, what should we believe about our future action? It is not clear how it helps to learn that we shouldn't make the decision or promise in the first place. ER is only a proper response to the practical counterpart to the present problem.⁴¹

A proponent of ER could reply that if one decides or promises to do something one has evidence is difficult to do, one should back out. Yet I don't think that this can be the right advice, for if, at one moment, one should not enter into a situation, it does not follow that, at another moment, one should get out of it. For instance, even though one should not enter a minefield, it may well be that once one has entered, one should stay put. Thus, even if you should not promise to spend the rest of your life with your spouse-to-be, it surely does not follow that you should leave him or her at the altar or to file for divorce right after the ceremony.⁴² Hence, it seems to me that, if it addresses our problem at all, ER offers bad advice.

Alternatively, a proponent of ER could reply that ER is not meant to be understood as giving advice, but as part of a third-personal theory of rationality. ER solves our problem from a third-personal point of view: When we decide or promise to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do, we do something that we shouldn't do. The

fact that this is not useful advice reflects poorly not on ER but on the agent's decision or promise.⁴³

This reply, even if successful, strikes me as concessive, for the reply grants that ER cannot offer advice to someone who faces our problem. But our problem arises, first and foremost, out of a need for advice. Moreover, ER is, ostensibly, a response that advises us how to proceed — to avoid situations in which we face the dilemma between violating the Evidentialist Principle and violating the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions. This is advice for the righteous, so to speak, but we are all sinners. At the very least, we would want to know what the second-best option is if we do decide or promise against the evidence. Shall we then violate the Evidentialist Principle or the Seriousness or Sincerity Conditions? In sum, ER doesn't seem to give us enough, or very useful, advice.

I turn to my third objection. ER evaluates the problematic decisions and promises, which are conclusions of practical reasoning, in terms of the standards of theoretical reasoning. But that is an evaluation by appeal to the wrong kind of reasons.⁴⁴ Here is why: Whether to decide or promise to do something is to be settled by determining what *to do*; it is a question which is to be settled by practical reasoning, and our answer to it is to be assessed in terms of the standards of practical reasoning. Yet ER implies that the question whether to decide or promise to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do should be *settled* by the fact that we have evidence that it is difficult to do it. This, I think, is implausible, for, in practical reasoning, unlike in theoretical reasoning, evidential considerations are not sufficient to settle how one should answer a question.⁴⁵

41. This is the subject of Marušić (forthcoming a).

42. No analogy between minefield and marriage is intended!

43. Similarly, it might be held, it can be rational to act against one's best judgment, even if one cannot be advised that it is rational to act against one's best judgment (Arpaly [2003, Ch. 2]).

44. See especially Hieronymi (2005) for a congenial account of the wrong kind of reasons.

45. For further discussion of this line of argument, see Marušić (forthcoming a).

A proponent of ER who also endorses cognitivism might object as follows: “Practical reasoning is a species of theoretical reasoning. When evidential considerations rationally prohibit believing, they rationally prohibit intending, since intending constitutes, or entails, believing.” For instance, Velleman identifies intentions with what he calls self-fulfilling beliefs.⁴⁶ He argues that those beliefs are grounded on, or supported by, evidence, even though they are not occasioned by it. They cannot be occasioned by it, because they are their own evidential ground, since it’s in virtue of intending to do something that one has evidence that one will do it, and that evidence is unavailable prior to the formation of one’s intention. Self-fulfilling beliefs are, rather, occasioned by the agent’s reflection on her preferences. On Velleman’s view, there are therefore two distinct ways of forming beliefs: By considering one’s evidence, one forms ordinary theoretical beliefs, and by considering one’s preferences, one forms self-fulfilling beliefs.⁴⁷

I have two responses to Velleman. First, it seems to me that he doesn’t offer a satisfactory explanation of why self-fulfilling beliefs should be subject to evaluation in terms of evidential rationality when they are not formed in response to evidence. It is not obvious why two processes of belief formation — reasoning from evidence and reasoning from preferences — which take into account considerations that are different in kind, should be evaluated in the same terms. Indeed, it is not plausible to hold that the weight of our preferences will correspond to evidential weight. We may want or value something immensely, and this can make it practically rational to perform an action, but the fact that we value it so much need not constitute equally good evidence that we will actually succeed in performing it.⁴⁸

46. Velleman (1985, esp. 55–58; 1989/2007) (though see, also, the caveat about the identification of intentions and beliefs [1989/2007, xix]).

47. For criticisms of Velleman’s view, see Langton (2003), Setiya (2008), and Ross (2009).

48. Velleman claims that reasons recommend an action “by indicating that it’s best for a very specific purpose — namely the pursuit of self-knowledge” (1989/2007, 206). He also identifies what’s best for the agent with what

Second, on Velleman’s view, we cannot rationally reason our way to self-fulfilling beliefs. That is because the rational basis of such reasoning would have to be the fact that we already hold the belief.⁴⁹ Indeed, we can *never* rationally base our self-fulfilling belief that we will ϕ on adequate evidence, for, to be adequate, our evidence would either have to include the belief that we will ϕ itself and so couldn’t be the basis for forming the belief, or, in case our evidence independently supports the belief that we will ϕ , it would preclude the belief that we will ϕ from being self-fulfilling. Yet it strikes me as implausible to affirm a broadly evidentialist view and also hold that beliefs of a certain kind can never be arrived at by considering evidence. Indeed, I find it plausible to hold that one’s theoretical belief is epistemically rational only if it is *based* on adequate evidence. Only then does the evidence rationalize that belief — that is, make it rational.⁵⁰ Thus I conclude that Velleman’s defense of ER should be rejected.

I conclude that ER is not a satisfactory response. It is not as implausible as PKR, but I think we can do better.

6. The Non-Cognitivist Response

In section two I offered a preliminary defense of the view that our decision to ϕ is serious and our promise to ϕ sincere only if we believe that we will ϕ . I also stressed that one might think that this involves

“makes most sense” — that is, yields most self-knowledge (248). I have considerable difficulty understanding these claims. Does Velleman mean to deny that there are any other goods besides self-knowledge? This, I think, would be highly implausible. It would also be at odds with some other remarks in which Velleman does seem to allow that there are goods besides self-knowledge (1989/2007, 45, 55, 248–249). In any case, as soon as it is allowed that there are goods besides self-knowledge, as there surely are, then it is possible that the practical weight of one’s practical reasons is different from their evidential weight.

49. For an extensive discussion of this objection, see Ross (2009).

50. Velleman claims that this view confuses epistemology with psychology (1989/2007, 61). However, it seems to me that, in this respect, the psychology is essential to epistemology. Here I follow Kelly (2002).

the assumption of cognitivism — that we intend to do something only if we believe that we will do it.⁵¹ In this section, I will assume that we *can* intend to do something without believing that we will do it. I will consider whether this would be enough to solve our problem.

Here is how such a Non-Cognitivist Response (NCR) could proceed: It could reject the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions I proposed and defend an alternative, non-cognitivist version of the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions:⁵²

Non-Cognitivist Seriousness Condition on Decisions: A decision is serious if one intends to do what one decides to do.

Non-Cognitivist Sincerity Condition on Promises: A promise is sincere if one intends to do what one promises to do.

A proponent of NCR could then maintain that we can satisfy these conditions without believing that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do.

Yet it is important to note that NCR must do more than this to constitute a satisfactory solution to our problem. To be adequate, the response must make it plausible that we can jointly satisfy the Non-Cognitivist Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions and the Evidentialist Principle without succumbing to irrationality. Yet I will argue that NCR cannot solve our problem without leading us into irrationality.⁵³

51. See references in note 14 above.

52. Strictly speaking, a cognitivist could endorse these conditions as well as the conditions I defended in section two. I call them Non-Cognitivist Conditions for ease of exposition.

53. I discuss Bratman's (1987, 37–39) view in Marušić (forthcoming a). My argument there, in a nutshell, is that even if Bratman is right that it is not irrational to outright intend to ϕ without believing that one will ϕ , it is irrational to outright intend to ϕ and believe that it is likely that one won't ϕ . In that case, one's intentions and beliefs are probabilistically inconsistent, even if not

To show this, I will offer an argument that proceeds from expressions of intention and that can be regarded as an extension of the argument presented in section two. Anscombe argues, I think persuasively, that we express an intention by asserting outright that we will do what we intend to do (1957/2000, 1–5). For example, I would express my intention to go to the park by asserting, 'I will go to the park.' But if we intend to do something and believe that it is likely that we won't do it, and we express our intentions and beliefs, we would assert something of the form 'I will ϕ , and I believe that it is likely that I won't.' This exhibits irrationality of some sort. Indeed, if, as Jonathan Adler and others have argued,⁵⁴ we express outright belief by outright assertion, we might even assert something of the form, 'I will ϕ , and it is likely that I won't.' But, clearly, it cannot be rational to assert something like this.

What kind of irrationality do we exhibit if we assert, 'I will ϕ , and it is likely that I won't'? It's the same irrationality as that involved in asserting the commissive version of Moore's Paradox — in asserting, 'It's raining, but I believe it is not.' Indeed, a further plausible hypothesis defended by Adler and others would explain why, if we intend to do something and believe that it is likely that we won't do it, we could sometimes express our intention and belief by asserting a commissive Moore's Paradox. Adler argues that the phrase 'I believe' expresses a high degree of belief rather than outright belief.⁵⁵ Thus when we assert something of the form, 'I believe p ', we often express a high degree of belief in p , but we suggest that we don't believe p

outright inconsistent. One's irrationality in that case is comparable to one's irrationality in outright believing p and believing that it is likely that *not* p .

54. See Adler (2002, 13–14 and *passim*), Bach and Harnish (1979, 47), and Williamson (2000, 255).

55. Adler (2002, Ch. 7). A similar point is made, independently, by Sutton (2007, 64) and Fantl and McGrath (2009, 132, 145–149). However, see the following notes.

outright.^{56, 57} For example, if I say, 'I believe that it will rain', I express a high degree of belief that it will rain – not outright belief that it will rain. But suppose, then, that we intend to ϕ , we outright believe that it is likely that we won't ϕ , and we have a degree of belief that corresponds to the likelihood that, as we outright believe, we won't ϕ . If our degree of belief that we won't ϕ is sufficiently high, we could express our intention and degree of belief by asserting, 'I will ϕ , but I believe I won't.'⁵⁸

There are two replies a proponent of NCR could offer. First, she could seek to draw a line between expressions of intention and intentions themselves. Second, she could deny Anscombe's thesis that intentions are expressed through outright assertion. Let me consider each reply in turn.

Could it be that it's irrational to *express* one's intention and belief by asserting, 'I will ϕ , but it is likely that I won't', although it is not irrational to *have* the intention and belief? On this view, what would ensure that we avoid irrationality in the problematic cases is that we keep quiet. This seems exceedingly implausible in the case of promising, for, when we make a sincere promise to do something, we not only intend to do it but *express* our intention to do it. (Indeed, we represent

56. This could be explained in Gricean terms (Grice 1989): Since I use the phrase 'I believe', it may be presumed that I am not prepared to assert p outright, which would be more perspicuous. Since outright assertion expresses outright belief, it must be that I do not outright believe p .

57. Eli Hirsch has argued in conversation that the phrase "I believe" sometimes expresses outright belief and sometimes expresses merely a high degree of belief that falls short of outright belief. I am inclined to agree. However, when the phrase is used in a conjunction in which the other conjunct conveys doubts about what one claims to believe, the phrase typically doesn't express outright belief. This can be explained in Gricean terms, as sketched in the previous note.

58. What if our degree of belief that we won't ϕ is not very high? It may be that we could then assert an omissive Moore's Paradox, assuming "I don't believe" can be used to express absence of outright belief (as seems plausible if Hirsch's view, described in the preceding note, is right). We could assert, "I will ϕ , but I don't believe I will ϕ ." The first conjunct would express our intention to ϕ , and the second conjunct would express the absence of outright belief that we will ϕ .

ourselves as having this intention even when we promise insincerely.) Yet then, it seems, the only thing that prevents us from succumbing to irrationality is that we don't also express our belief that it is likely that we won't do it. But that seems implausible. Surely it can't be that we may promise to do something, when we have evidence that it is likely that we won't do it, only because we don't also express our belief that it is likely that we won't do it. Having the belief, not expressing it, is what gives rise to our problem.

The same reply to my argument from expressions of intention is somewhat more plausible when it comes to decisions, for, when we decide to do something, we don't thereby express our decision. Moreover, our decision can be serious even if we never express it. I do think, however, that our *unwillingness* to express a decision would typically constitute a lack of seriousness.⁵⁹ After all, typically our decision is serious only when we are prepared to assert, act, and plan as if we will do what we are deciding to do. Indeed, here, too, we can see a parallel to Moore's Paradox. Moore's Paradox is not simply a matter of assertoric oddness; even merely believing a Moore's Paradox is irrational.⁶⁰ One way to see this is to note that it's impossible to rationally act on a Moore's Paradox: We can't rationally act as if it is raining and, at the same time, rationally act as if we believe that it isn't; we can't bring an umbrella and not bring it. Similarly, we can't rationally act as if we will do what we are deciding to do and as if it is likely that we won't. Thereby it doesn't matter whether it's rational to act one way or the other; the combination of the intention and the belief gives rise to irrationality.

This observation has an important corollary: Sometimes it is suggested to me that one should act as if one will do what one decides to do, because that will increase the likelihood of one's success or

59. We might have special reason to refrain from expressing the decision – for instance, to prevent "psyching ourselves out" or to surprise everyone. (Thanks to anonymous reviewers for raising these possibilities.) But I think that these would be independent reasons against expressing the decision and would not show that belief is not required for seriousness.

60. See Moran (2001).

because that is part of carrying out one's decision (see note 5 above). Yet even if this suggestion is correct, it would not, by itself, constitute a solution to our problem, for if we believe that it is likely that we won't succeed in doing something, it is irrational to act as if we will; it's rational to hedge our bets. Thus, if we follow this suggestion, we will act irrationally in light of what we believe. Hence, this suggestion, by itself, cannot adequately explain how we should act in the problematic cases.

I turn to the second reply to my argument from expressions of intention. One could deny that intentions are always expressed through outright assertion. There is, after all, another candidate for expressing intentions – the phrase 'I intend'. And there is nothing irrational in asserting, 'I intend to φ , but it is likely that I will fail.' Indeed, it may seem plausible that this is exactly how we should express our intention when we have evidence that it is likely that we'll fail.

To see why this reply is not persuasive, first note that there is a parallel argument that could be made about belief. There is nothing irrational in asserting, 'I believe p , but it is likely that *not* p .' However, I concur with Adler that, in this assertion, the phrase 'I believe' expresses merely a high degree of belief that falls short of outright belief. But then the fact that there is nothing irrational in asserting, 'I believe p , but it is likely that *not* p ' does not show, as one might have thought, that it can be rational to outright believe p and outright believe that it is likely that *not* p . By the same token, the fact that there is nothing irrational in asserting, 'I intend to φ , but it is likely that I won't' doesn't show that there is nothing irrational in outright intending to φ and outright believing that it is likely that one won't, for the phrase 'I intend', at least in this context, is used to express something that falls short of outright intention. It may express what Richard Holton calls a "partial intention" (2008; 2009, 34–40).⁶¹

61. To be clear: The linguistic hypothesis that the phrase 'I intend' sometimes expresses partial intentions is mine, not Holton's. He is not concerned with ordinary talk (2009, 37). However, I think that this hypothesis is helpful for his account of partial intentions.

These considerations show that the second reply to my argument from expressions of intention is not persuasive. It is implausible to infer that we can rationally believe that p and that it is likely that *not* p from the fact that we can sometimes rationally assert, 'I believe that p , but it is likely that *not* p .' And, by the same token, it is implausible to infer that we can rationally intend to φ and believe that it is likely that we won't φ from the fact that we can sometimes rationally assert, 'I intend to φ , but it is likely that I won't φ .'⁶²

In concluding, I want to point out that the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action can be seen as arising in a different way than I described at the outset of the paper. In particular, it needn't arise from the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions I defended in section two. If cognitivism is false and the Non-Cognitivist Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions are true, the problem arises because we cannot jointly satisfy the Non-Cognitivist Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions and the Evidentialist Principle without succumbing to irrationality. I think that even if it is understood in that way, the problem remains pressing. This shows, I think, that an appeal to non-cognitivism doesn't hold the key to solving our problem.

62. Let me add two remarks about Holton's account of partial intentions. First, although Holton endorses non-cognitivism, it strikes me that his notion of partial intentions is ideally suited for a defense of cognitivism, for it allows the cognitivist to explain away what are the best potential counterexamples to cognitivism. Second, although, on Holton's view, partial intentions are compatible with doubt in success, Holton does not define them in terms of the possibility of doubt. Rather, Holton defines partial intentions in terms of the presence of alternative intentions to achieve the same end: "An intention to F is partial iff it is designed to achieve a given end E and it is accompanied by one or more alternative intentions also designed to achieve E . If an intention is not partial, it is all out" (2009, 36). On his view, whether something is a partial intention is a matter of whether one has other partial intentions. He explains his rationale as follows: "If something is partial, there should be other parts that make up the whole" (36). However, I don't find this the most plausible account of partial intentions. After all, something can be partial even if there are no other parts that do make up the whole. There can be actual parts without an actual whole; for instance, something can be unfinished. That is why, I think, one can have partial intentions in the presence of partial belief in failure even if one doesn't have the relevant outright intention.

7. The Acceptance Response

In this section, I will consider the Acceptance Response (AR). A proponent of AR holds that, in the problematic cases, we should *accept* but not believe that we will do what we are deciding or promising to do. Thus AR also rejects the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions I defended in section two and proposes an alternative view. According to AR, accepting that we will φ is sufficient for seriously deciding or sincerely promising to φ . Moreover, we can accept that we will φ without violating the Evidentialist Principle or being otherwise irrational. And that solves our problem.

A general difficulty for AR is that it is not very clear what acceptance is. The notion has been used very differently in various philosophical accounts. On three prominent ways of understanding the notion, it won't be suitable for the purposes of AR. First, according to Velleman, acceptance is already part of the notion of belief. He holds that "to believe something is to accept it with the aim of doing so only if it is really true" (1996, 184).⁶³ Yet if acceptance is already involved in belief, a proponent of AR must distinguish the kind of acceptance that is suitable for her purposes from the notion which is involved in belief. Otherwise it's not clear how we could accept that we'll do what we are deciding or promising to do without thereby believing that we'll do it and thus succumbing to irrationality in the problematic cases. Thus, Velleman's way of understanding the notion of acceptance is not suitable for the purposes of AR.

On a second view of acceptance, put forward by Jonathan Cohen (1989; 1992), acceptance is distinct from belief. According to Cohen, acceptance is a mental act, whereas belief is a mental disposition. On Cohen's view, most discussions that are concerned with belief should really be concerned with acceptance. For instance, assertion is the speech act that expresses acceptance rather than belief; acceptance rather than belief explains action; and knowledge requires acceptance

63. In light of his later work with Nishi Shah, Velleman would add that one must also conceive one's accepting it as correct if and only if it is true (Velleman and Shah 2005; cf. Shah 2003).

rather than belief. Cohen also holds that norms can govern only acceptance but not belief, since the latter is involuntary. Yet Cohen's account of acceptance is also not suitable for the purposes of AR, for, if we endorse Cohen's view of acceptance, then our problem arises in terms of acceptance rather than belief. Our problem becomes: When we decide or promise to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do, should we accept that we'll do it, or should we accept that it is likely that we will fail? If the former, then, it seems, we violate a version of the Evidentialist Principle formulated in terms of acceptance. If the latter, then it seems that we violate a version of the Seriousness and Sincerity Conditions formulated in terms of acceptance. The move to acceptance solves nothing.

But let me consider what I think would be the best version of AR. This version is formulated in terms of Michael Bratman's (1992) account of acceptance – though I do not think that Bratman would actually endorse AR. Bratman holds that acceptance is to be understood as a context-relative notion, distinct from belief. Bratman explains:

Belief has four characteristic features: (a) it is, in the sense explained, context-independent; (b) it aims at the truth of what is believed; (c) it is not normally in our direct voluntary control; and (d) it is subject to an ideal of agglomeration. In contrast, what one accepts/takes for granted (a) can reasonably vary ... across contexts; (b) can be influenced by practical considerations that are not themselves evidence for the truth of what is accepted; (c) can be subject to our direct voluntary control; and (d) is not subject to the same ideal of agglomeration across contexts. (27)

According to Bratman, the function of acceptance is to adjust the background of one's deliberation. He holds that "[a]n agent's beliefs provide the *default cognitive background* for further deliberation and planning" (29). This means, in particular, that beliefs, together with

prior intentions and plans, delimit which options are to be considered in practical deliberation.⁶⁴ Then, Bratman adds, “one may adjust the default cognitive background in two main ways: one may *posit* that *p* and take it for granted in one’s practical context even though *p* is not believed (or given a probability of 1) in the default background; or one may *bracket* *p* in one’s practical context even though *p* is believed in the default background” (29). Finally, on Bratman’s view, one accepts what is part of the actual background in one’s practical context — that is, one accepts whatever remains once one brackets and posits propositions in the default background.

Yet I think that even if AR is understood along the lines of Bratman’s account of acceptance, it is inadequate, for two reasons: First, our problem is not context-dependent in the way that would be required for Bratman’s notion of acceptance to find application. It’s not that, in the particular context in which we’re deliberating about whether we will do what we are deciding or promising to do, we can accept that we’ll do it but then, in another context of deliberation, we can accept that it is likely that we won’t do it. To be serious and sincere, our decisions and promises must have stability; they must persist beyond the context of practical deliberation. Thus Bratman writes,

The context-relativity of acceptance ... allow[s] us to be sensitive to various special practical pressures on how we set up our decision problems. But we also need to ensure continuity and coordination of our activities at one time, over time, and in the world as we find it. And that is a major role of our context-independent intentions and plans, taken together with our context-independent beliefs. (33)

Our decisions and promises must have stability beyond the deliberative context in which we make them. That is why seriousness and sincerity

64. Here Bratman develops his early formulation of the planning theory of intentions (1987).

require the presence of a context-independent commitment — an intention. Hence, I think, Bratman would not endorse AR.

The second reason why, I think, AR remains inadequate is that, on Bratman’s view, we can accept propositions that are outright inconsistent with our beliefs, and we can posit propositions that, we believe, are not up to us. But we cannot seriously decide or sincerely promise to do something that, we believe, is not up to us to do or that we believe we won’t do. Hence acceptance is not sufficient for seriousness and sincerity.

So far, my arguments against AR have been mainly based on philosophical accounts of acceptance. Let me now discuss an example to bring out the intuitive implausibility of AR. Thus suppose you are planning a dinner party to which you invite your friend Caitlin. You believe that it is likely that Caitlin won’t be able to come, but, for planning purposes, you accept that she will be there. You set a place for her at the table, and you cook enough food so that you could offer her a portion. Yet surely you couldn’t sincerely assert, ‘Caitlin will be there.’ This shows, I think, that you couldn’t sincerely promise it either. For instance, you couldn’t sincerely promise to your son, who adores Caitlin, that she will be there. Hence acceptance is not sufficient for sincerely promising to do something. And the same holds for deciding: Even if you accept, for planning purposes, that Caitlin will be there, you can’t seriously decide that Caitlin will be there.⁶⁵ Thus I conclude that AR is inadequate.⁶⁶

65. In contrast, you could seriously decide it if, for instance, you knew, or rationally believed, that if you invited her, she would come; in that case, you could think of it as up to you. Cf. Bratman (1997), Velleman (1997), and the discussion in section eight below.

66. Note that the arguments I offered against AR could also work against responses which rely on certain other notions — for instance, aiming to ϕ , endeavoring to ϕ , or having ϕ as our goal. We can have inconsistent aims, and we can aim to achieve things that are not up to us (Velleman 1997, 203–204). But we cannot seriously decide or sincerely promise to ϕ when it is not up to us to ϕ , or when we recognize that ϕ -ing involves an inconsistent course of action. Thus aiming to ϕ — as well as endeavoring to ϕ or having ϕ as our goal — is not sufficient for seriously deciding or sincerely promising to ϕ .

One might wonder—or might have been wondering for a while—why I bother with all these responses. I have two replies: First, all of these responses will appear to some people to be plausible, at least *prima facie*, and certainly to be preferable to the response I am about to defend. Second, the response I favor requires rejecting the Evidentialist Principle and is, hence, highly unorthodox. To appreciate its appeal, one must first see that there are no other good responses available. I hope that the preceding discussion has made at least that sufficiently plausible.

8. The Pragmatist Response

I turn, then, to the *Pragmatist Response* (PR). This response develops Anscombe's insight that our deliberation about our own future actions is practical—though not in terms of practical foreknowledge or, indeed, any other epistemic terms. According to PR, 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. PR thus rejects the Evidentialist Principle. In this section, I will first motivate PR. I will then explain why it is proper to evaluate our beliefs about our own actions in terms of the standards of practical reasoning. In the next section, I will respond to some objections.

To motivate PR, let me again compare the perspective of the agent who is making the decision or promise and the perspective of the outsider who is considering whether the agent will do what she is deciding or promising to do. As argued earlier, even if the outsider is fully informed about the agent's circumstances, she doesn't know that the agent will do what she is deciding or promising to do. Indeed, since she has evidence that it is difficult for the agent to do it, she should believe that it is likely that the agent will fail.⁶⁷ However, the

67. I hold that someone who trusts the agent may believe as the agent does. See Marušić (forthcoming a) for a defense of this view.

agent herself should believe that she will do what she is deciding or promising to do. Otherwise, her decision is not serious, and her promise is insincere. Hence, even if their evidence is the same, there is an asymmetry between the agent's and the outsider's perspective. What explains this asymmetry is that it is the agent herself who is forming a belief about her own future course of action. And, as Anscombe correctly points out, deliberation about one's own future actions proceeds, and should proceed, through practical reasoning.

Here is how I propose to explain the significance of Anscombe's observation: There are two possible ways of settling the question of whether we will ϕ —through theoretical reasoning and through practical reasoning. If we settle the question through theoretical reasoning, we *predict* whether we will ϕ ; in particular, we predict whether we will ϕ , given that we are deciding or promising to ϕ . In that case, our evidence determines whether we should believe that we will ϕ . If we settle the question through practical reasoning, we *decide* whether we will ϕ . In that case, our practical reasons for ϕ -ing, and for deciding or promising to ϕ , determine whether we should believe that we will ϕ .

This proposal raises many questions: Do I assume cognitivism? Do I mean to suggest that we should disregard our evidence? Do I assume doxastic voluntarism? Do I hold that we should engage in wishful thinking? I will discuss these questions shortly. First, however, I want to consider why we should engage in practical reasoning rather than theoretical reasoning when considering our future actions.

Why should we engage in practical reasoning, rather than in theoretical reasoning, to settle the question of what we will do, when both ways of reasoning are available? The answer is simple: We should engage in practical reasoning about what to do if and only if it is up to us to do it. Put differently: We should take the agent's perspective on the question of what will happen when, and only when, it is up to us to settle what will happen.

The hard question that this simple answer raises, however, is how it could be up to us to do something when we have evidence that it

is likely that we will fail to do it. Doesn't this evidence show that it is, precisely, not entirely up to us to do it?⁶⁸ To adequately answer this question, I have to put forward an account of what it is for something to be up to us, and I have to argue that this is not to be understood in epistemic terms. By defending a non-epistemic account of when it is up to us to do something, I will seek to vindicate the claim that we should settle the question of what we will do through practical reasoning even when we have evidence that, if we decide or promise to do it, it is likely that we will fail.

I will contrast my account with what I shall call an epistemic account of freedom.⁶⁹ On such an account, whether something is up to us is to be understood in terms of whether, through practical reasoning, we can come to know, or come to be in a position in which we have adequate evidence to believe, that we will do it:

An Epistemic Account of Freedom: It is up to us to φ if and only if, in forming the intention to φ , we come to know, or have adequate evidence to believe, that we will φ .⁷⁰

We are free, on this account, if and only if our evidence about what we will do, before we've formed an intention about what to do, is inconclusive about what we will do and we can, by forming an intention to do something, acquire adequate evidence to believe that we will, in fact, do it. Since initially our evidence about what we will do is inconclusive, we can settle the question of what we will do through practical reasoning — namely, by considering our practical reasons for what to do.

It should be immediately apparent that, on this way of understanding what it is for something to be up to us, PR will fail, for if, in forming

68. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to address this question.

69. See Velleman (1989/2007, Ch. 5; 1989) for a particularly well-developed account of freedom along such lines.

70. I leave open whether the epistemic account is to be understood in terms of knowledge, which implies truth, or adequate evidence, which may not.

the intention to φ , we don't come to know, or have adequate evidence to believe, that we will φ , then it is not up to us to φ . Yet our problem arises precisely in those cases in which forming the intention to φ does not put us in a position in which we have adequate evidence to believe that we will φ .

However, I don't think that an epistemic account of freedom is an adequate account of when it is up to us to do something and of when we should engage in practical reasoning. That is because there are many things that are difficult for us to do that are, nonetheless, entirely up to us. Difficulty does not imply absence of freedom! For instance, it's up to us to quit smoking and to be faithful to our spouses. It's up to us to be more responsible, considerate, thoughtful, or gentle — however difficult this may be. The fact that we might fail does not show that it is out of our hands. Indeed, we can be morally obligated to do something that is difficult for us to do; we can be morally obligated to be faithful, truthful, or resolute — even in the face of temptation or threats. The fact that it is difficult for us to do this does not absolve us of the obligation. Yet if "ought" implies "can" — that is, if being obligated to do something implies that it is up to us to do it — then an epistemic account of freedom is incorrect.

Let me, then, turn to an alternative account of freedom. Here are some intuitive claims about what it means for something to be up to us: When something is up to us to do, then it is in our power to do it; we alone can bring it about; our agency suffices to make it happen. When something is up to us to do, then the only way we will fail to do it is if we don't go through with it. As long as we continue trying to do it, we will succeed in doing it. I will take the following condition as my official formulation of when it is up to us to do something:⁷¹

A Non-Epistemic Account of Freedom: It is up to us to φ if and only if, in all possible worlds in which we fail to φ , we fail because we cease to try to φ .

71. I am grateful to Eli Hirsch for suggesting this formulation and for helping me a great deal in developing the subsequent line of argument.

This condition is meant to capture the formulations I just gave. It captures the thought that if something is up to us to do, then we will fail to do it only because we fail to exercise our agency — fail to exercise our power to ϕ — before we've achieved success.⁷² For instance, it is up to us to quit smoking; the only way we would fail to quit smoking is if we cease to try — if we light a cigarette (or perhaps if we light sufficiently many — provided that shaking the habit of smoking is compatible with an occasional cigarette). It is up to us to be faithful; the only way we would fail to be faithful is if we cease to try to be faithful — if we take up with someone else. Moreover, it is not up to us to get into Yale Law: we can fail because, despite our best effort, we don't measure up to the competition.⁷³

72. Wayne Davis proposes the following condition: "It is up to S whether p provided if S desired p to a sufficient extent, the desire would motivate him to act in such a way that p " (1984, 51). What is right in Davis's formulation is, I think, that something is up to us if we could be motivated to do it. As it stands, however, Davis's condition strikes me as inadequate, for two reasons: First, the emphasis on desires strikes me as misplaced; what does the work for Davis is the claim that something is up to us if we could be motivated to act to ensure it. That we must be motivated by desires seems to me an unrelated, and controversial, claim. Second, it is unclear what Davis means by "act[ing] in such a way that p ". On the face of it, this seems too weak: I could act in such a way that I get into Yale Law — I could study hard. That does not mean that it's up to me to get into Yale Law.

73. It might be objected that the proposed condition is too restrictive. For instance, it seems to imply that it is not up to you to spend the rest of your life with your spouse, for you might fail to do so, not because you cease to try, but because your spouse leaves you!

This objection reveals an important qualification to the proposed condition. (The following argument is inspired by an exchange between Velleman [1997] and Bratman [1997].) Whether something is up to us must be relativized to a domain of possible worlds. Let me explain: According to the condition I proposed, it is up to us to ϕ if and only if, in *all* possible worlds in which we fail to ϕ , we do so because we cease to try to ϕ . But universally quantified statements are relative to a domain of quantification. Some possible worlds may simply fail to be in the relevant domain. Thus it can be true on a particular occasion that, in *all* possible worlds in which I fail to ϕ , I do so because I cease to try to ϕ — even though there are some possible worlds in which I fail to ϕ for other reasons. Thus compare: 'Everyone attended last week's colloquium — though not, of course, Barack Obama.' 'Everyone is coming to the party; you should come, too!' And: 'I eat everything — though not tires. And the fact that I don't eat tires does not show that I don't eat everything.'

This account of freedom also helps shed further light on the appeal to trying, which I discussed earlier. In section two, I argued that the appeal to trying is of no help with our problem, because deciding or promising to try to do something will either lack substance or go against the evidence. We can now see more clearly why that is so: When something is up to us, then the only way we could fail to do it is by ceasing to try. Hence, the decision or promise to continue trying to do something is no different from the promise to do it — since one will do it as long as one does not cease to try. But any decision or promise that does not commit one to continue trying will lack substance — precisely because it falls short of full commitment.

Let me sum up my argument so far: I have argued that difficulty does not entail absence of freedom. That is why an epistemic account of freedom is not the correct account of the sort of freedom that licenses practical reasoning. Rather, what licenses practical reasoning is that it is in our power to make something be true — even when we have evidence that it is likely that we will fail to exercise this power and cease trying what, we now realize, is the rational thing to do. This explains why, provided it is up to us to do something, it can be

The qualification of the proposed condition allows me to address the objection. For instance, when you promise to spend the rest of your life with your spouse, the possibility that your spouse might leave you is, in an important sense, irrelevant. To see this, consider another example: Suppose you and I are going out for coffee. It may seem that it is not up to me to determine where we go; after all, you have a say in it. But suppose that when I ask you where you want to go, you say, 'It is up to you.' I think that what you say can be *true*. In saying this, you restrict the set of relevant possible worlds to those in which I fail to determine that we are going to, say, Starbucks, only if I cease trying to go there. That is how you make it up to me where we go. And I can then settle this question through practical reasoning — through reflecting on my practical reasons for where to go. Yet before you restrict the set of relevant possible worlds, the question where we will go is not up to me, and I cannot settle it by practical reasoning. And the point is exactly analogous in the Marriage Case: When you are standing before the justice of the peace, it is understood that the possibility of your spouse's leaving you is irrelevant. This ensures that it is up to you to settle whether you will spend the rest of your life with your spouse, even though she or he has a say in it.

practically rational to seriously decide or sincerely promise to do something, even when we have evidence that it is difficult to do it.⁷⁴

If it is granted that it can be practically rational to seriously decide or sincerely promise to do something, even when we have evidence that it is difficult to do it, then the defense of PR is straightforward. From a version of the Bridge Principle, discussed in section five above, it follows that when we should seriously decide or sincerely promise to do something, we also may believe that we will do it – or, at least, believe that we will do it if we seriously decide or sincerely promise to do it.⁷⁵ Furthermore, on the plausible assumption that our decisions should be serious and our promises should be sincere, it follows that we also should believe it. PR and ER thus have an important element in common.⁷⁶ Their fundamental difference is over how to settle the question of whether to seriously decide or sincerely promise to do something. ER holds that it is to be settled through theoretical reasoning. PR holds that it is to be settled through practical reasoning. I think that PR is right, provided the subject matter of the decision or promise is up to us.

In concluding this section, let me distinguish PR from classic pragmatism, which is inspired by Pascal's Wager. On a classic pragmatist view, the fact that one has practical reasons to believe something can make it rational to believe it.⁷⁷ PR both vindicates and

limits classic pragmatism. It vindicates classic pragmatism because it explains why practical reasons can sometimes make beliefs rational: When the beliefs concern something that it is up to us to do, we can, rightly, look to our practical reasons to settle the question of what we will do. It limits classic pragmatism because, according to PR, practical reasons can make it rational to believe something only when it is up to us to ensure its truth. PR is thus sympathetic to William James's claim that "in truths dependent on our personal action ... faith based on desire is certainly a lawful and possibly an indispensable thing" (1896, 29). However, it also rules out the beliefs that James is most interested in; it rules out believing in God on the basis of practical reasons, since it's not up to us whether God exists. PR thus cannot form the basis of a rational fideism.

9. Objections and Replies⁷⁸

1. *Does my defense of PR assume cognitivism? After all, only on a cognitivist view does practical reasoning conclude in beliefs. Yet, on a non-cognitivist view, practical reasoning concludes in intentions; practical reasoning concerns what to do, not what we will do.*

Even if it is possible to settle the question of what to do without thereby settling the question of what we will do, as non-cognitivists hold, those questions are not unrelated. If we settle the question of what to do differently than the question of what we will do, we succumb to a form of irrationality. In effect, this is shown by the argument of section six. Hence the practically rational conclusions of practical reasoning – our rational intentions – will constrain what beliefs we can rationally hold. If it is rational to intend to do something, then it will also be rational to believe that we will do it, provided we have a doxastic attitude on the matter at all.⁷⁹ That is why the non-cognitivist, too, should hold that, in light of practical reasoning, it can become rational to have certain beliefs. It's just that those beliefs

74. This will not be possible if it is not (entirely) up to us to do it. For instance, Davidson's carbon copier cannot seriously decide, or sincerely promise, that he will make ten carbon copies in one attempt (1978).

75. Here I am assuming, as seems plausible, that 'S shouldn't ϕ ' entails 'It is not the case that S should ϕ '. From this assumption and the Bridge Principle, it follows that when we should promise or decide to do something, it is permissible for us to believe that we will do it.

76. Attempts to reject PR by rejecting the Bridge Principle will therefore also sink ER.

77. As Kelly (2002, 170–171) points out, Pascal himself does not endorse classic pragmatism, since he does not propose to believe in God on the basis of the wager. Rather, Pascal holds that the wager shows that one should *get oneself* to believe in God by engaging in religious practice and emulating those who believe (Pascal 1670, 152).

78. I address the first two objections in greater depth in Marušić (forthcoming a).

79. One needn't be rationally required to form a belief about the matter.

won't be entailed by, but rather will be rationally required by, the corresponding intentions.⁸⁰

2. *Does PR suggest that we should disregard our evidence? Aren't our beliefs, then, epistemically irrational?*

According to PR, our answer to the question of whether we will ϕ , when it is up to us to ϕ , is to be evaluated in terms of the standards of practical reasoning, not theoretical reasoning. This means that beliefs about what it is up to us to do *are not subject to the canons of theoretical rationality*. Hence, the fact that our belief that we will do something goes against the evidence does not entail that the belief is epistemically irrational or that it is irrational in any sense. Rather, it is the wrong candidate for assessment in terms of epistemic rationality.

To say that beliefs about what it is up to us to do are not subject to the canons of theoretical rationality, however, is not to say that we should disregard our evidence, for, when we engage in practical reasoning to settle the question of what we will do, our evidence bears on the question, though it doesn't suffice to settle it. We could not be practically rational if we ignored our evidence. Evidential considerations will bear both on what to do and on how to do it. Yet the crucial point is that they are not the only considerations that bear on these questions.⁸¹

3. *But isn't PR and, in particular, the claim that we can rationally believe against the evidence conceptually incoherent? Bernard Williams famously argued that "belief aims at truth" (1973). One way to explain this claim is to say that it is conceptually impossible to believe that p while being aware that*

80. Why, then, think that, in the problematic cases, we would have the relevant beliefs, rather than no doxastic attitudes at all? Because we should make sincere promises and serious decisions, and belief is required for seriousness and sincerity.

81. This is clearest on a decision-theoretic model of practical reasoning, since evidential considerations are a factor in calculating expected utilities, but preference assignments are another factor.

*one's belief goes against the evidence,*⁸² *for, if one's alleged belief goes against the evidence, one is not aiming at the truth, and, hence, one does not really have a belief.*

I hold that the beliefs we rightly arrive at through practical reasoning do aim at truth, because we are in a position to *make* them true. After all, the beliefs concern matters that are up to us. To explain this, I would like to develop Velleman's account of self-fulfilling beliefs.⁸³ Velleman holds that "to believe something is to accept it with the aim of doing so only if it is really true" (1996, 185). That is how he spells out Williams's observation that belief aims at truth.⁸⁴ He then points out, and I take this to be his crucial insight for present purposes, that there are two ways of accepting something in this sense: "accepting [it] so as to reflect the truth" and "accepting [it] so as to create the truth" (1996, 195, n. 55). When one accepts something so as to reflect the truth, one holds a theoretical belief. When one accepts something so as to create the truth, one holds a self-fulfilling belief, for it is in virtue of holding this belief that the belief is made true. For example, if you decide to have an espresso and, in so doing, accept that you'll have an espresso, it's in virtue of the fact that you accept it that this is true. That is why, according to Velleman, your belief is self-fulfilling.⁸⁵

My response to the objection differs from Velleman's account in two respects. First, I don't think that the relevant beliefs — I shall call them practical beliefs, since they result from, and are evaluated in light of, practical reasoning — should be understood as self-fulfilling. Indeed, I think that Velleman's account is mistaken on this point. A better way to characterize the relevant beliefs, and indeed a way that is much

82. For defenses of evidentialism which develop this line of thought see Adler (2002) and Shah (2006).

83. Velleman elaborates his account of self-fulfilling beliefs at various places: (1985, esp. 55–59), (1989, 50–52), (1989/2007), (1996, 194–196), and (2000b, 22–26). Cf. also Grice (1971, 273–274).

84. Cf. Velleman (1989/2007, 127–128).

85. See also Reisner (forthcoming) for other examples of this kind.

more in line with Velleman's own account of belief, is as *aiming at self-fulfillment*.⁸⁶ If theoretical beliefs aim at truth, why should practical beliefs have to *be* true – which is implied by characterizing them as self-fulfilling? For example, if you decide and thereby come to believe that you'll have an espresso and, as you are making your espresso, the machine breaks down, your belief is identical to the belief you would have had if the machine hadn't broken down. However, since it's not true, it's not self-fulfilling. What matters is that your belief *aims at self-fulfillment* – that, as Velleman would put it, you accept that you'll have an espresso with the aim of doing so only if you make it true (2000a, 185).⁸⁷

A second way in which my account of practical beliefs differs from Velleman's is that I don't take it to be necessary that practical beliefs aim at *self-fulfillment*. Velleman speaks of *self-fulfillment*, because he identifies self-fulfilling beliefs with intentions; he holds that an intention just is this particular kind of belief.⁸⁸ And since, when one acts intentionally, one does what one does in virtue of one's intention, it follows, on Velleman's account of intention, that it is in virtue of one's belief that the belief is made true. Hence the belief necessarily aims at *self-fulfillment*. However, the controversial identification of intentions with beliefs is not needed to make this point. Practical beliefs needn't be intentions; they can be distinct psychological states. If they are distinct, we can simply say that practical beliefs, unlike theoretical beliefs, *aim at fulfillment*.

86. One might add an independent normative claim, following Shah (2003) and Velleman and Shah (2005), that, in addition to the belief's aiming at self-fulfillment, self-fulfillment is to be the standard of correctness for the belief. This would not affect the present line of argument. See especially Velleman and Shah (2005, 517, n. 37).

87. Or, to put the point in the terminology of Velleman and Shah: What matters is that you conceive of your accepting that you'll have an espresso as being correct only if you make it true (2005).

88. However, see Velleman (1989/2007, xix).

4. Does PR assume doxastic voluntarism? If so, PR is implausible, since we cannot believe at will.⁸⁹ In particular, we cannot believe something when we are aware that our belief goes against the evidence – even if the impossibility here is not conceptual but psychological.⁹⁰

PR does, indeed, accept doxastic voluntarism of some sort. However, the voluntarism is confined to beliefs about what it is up to us to do, and in that domain, it is not problematic. To explain this, I would like to develop an observation by Richard Feldman which he takes to have "absolutely no epistemological significance" (2000, 670).⁹¹ Feldman points out that there is a specific class of beliefs over which we enjoy voluntary control. We enjoy voluntary control over a belief if we enjoy voluntary control over whether to make the belief true. Feldman gives the following example: "If the department chair announces that she'll give a raise to all and only those members of the department who, in 30 seconds, believe that the lights in their office are on, I'll head for the light switch and turn on the lights to make sure that I have the belief" (2000, 672). However, since this observation seems to hold true of a fairly limited class of beliefs, Feldman thinks that it is not of epistemological significance.

Yet Feldman fails to see that this point extends to all cases in which we form beliefs about what it is up to us to do. To vary his example, we could imagine that the department chair offers a raise to all and only those who believe that the lights in their office *will* be on in 30 minutes. Feldman could form the relevant belief simply by deciding to turn on the lights when he gets back to his office. The crucial point is that to the extent that our belief is about what it is up to us to do, to

89. Though there is undoubtedly something right about this, I think that the issue requires careful examination. After all, even if we cannot believe at will, we are not passive with regard to what we believe. We enjoy, as Philip Pettit and Michael Smith persuasively argue, freedom of thought (1996). See Moran (2001), Hieronymi (2006), and Boyle (2011) for careful discussion of what is involved in making up one's mind.

90. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to address this objection.

91. I also present this argument in Marušić (2011).

that extent our belief that we will do it is under our voluntary control, and we can form it through practical reasoning.

Once we see how to extend Feldman's observation to other matters that are up to us to do, we can see that even when we have evidence that it is difficult for us to do something, we can believe that we will do it, precisely because we can settle the question through practical reasoning. To think otherwise is to assume an epistemic account of freedom — to assume that if we have evidence that there is a significant chance that we won't do something (were we to intend to do it), it is not up to us to do it. In short: We can believe against the evidence because we can decide against the evidence, and we can decide against the evidence because something can be up to us to do even if we have evidence that it's likely that we won't do it.

It might be objected that Feldman's observation does not show that we can believe at will; it shows merely that we can easily get ourselves to form beliefs.⁹² I certainly don't mean to insist that this objection is mistaken. It may show that PR is not fundamentally committed to doxastic voluntarism, which surely wouldn't speak against it. It will all come down to what doxastic voluntarism exactly entails. However, PR does imply that we can sometimes rationally believe that we will ϕ because it is advantageous to do so.⁹³ Hence PR accepts doxastic voluntarism of some sort.

5. *But aren't beliefs that are formed through practical reasoning cases of wishful thinking?*⁹⁴

If it is up to us to do something, and if, hence, we can settle the question of what we will do by considering our practical reasons

92. Cf. Hieronymi (2011). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this issue.

93. On the view I am defending, it will typically be practically rational for us to believe that we will ϕ because it is advantageous to ϕ , not because it is advantageous to believe that we will ϕ . Nonetheless, there are possible cases — like Feldman's and variations thereof — in which it is practically rational to believe that we will ϕ because it is advantageous to believe that we will ϕ .

94. Thanks to Michael Bratman for pressing me on this issue.

to do it, then wishful thinking is neither impossible nor necessarily irrational. Wishful thinking that accords with the canons of practical reasoning is, at least sometimes, to use Velleman's phrase, "licensed wishful thinking" (1989/2007, 69).⁹⁵

I want to emphasize, however, that many cases of wishful thinking are not licensed according to PR. Thus let me offer two clarifications: First, beliefs formed through practical reasoning are cases of licensed wishful thinking only when the fact that we desire to ϕ makes it practically rational to ϕ . This will often not be the case.⁹⁶ There are reasons to ϕ besides desiring to ϕ or desiring an end to which ϕ -ing is a means.⁹⁷ Second, we are not always licensed to think, 'I want it, so I will do it.' We are licensed to think this only if this thought embodies a conclusion of practical reasoning.⁹⁸

95. My response to this objection follows Velleman (1989/2007, 129–130; cf. Grice 1971). However, I differ with Velleman over how much wishful thinking is licensed — in particular, whether wishful thinking that goes against the evidence can be licensed by practical reasons.

96. Even on Humean theories of normative reasons! For instance, Mark Schroeder holds that desires are background conditions for having normative reasons, not reasons themselves (2007).

97. I do think, however, that the fact that we desire to do something constitutes a *pro tanto* normative reason to do it. See Marušić (2010) for a defense of this view.

98. Paul (2009) holds that we can avoid problematic wishful thinking only if we think something like 'We will do it because we intend to do it', for she argues that we infer what we will do from what we intend to do and not from our reasons for doing it. However, I don't think, as she seems to, that in forming our view of our future, our intentions are just inputs to theoretical reasoning about ourselves. We don't treat the question of whether we will ϕ as a *separate* question from the question of whether to ϕ , even if we can settle the latter without settling the former. Our intentions normally embody our view of the future, insofar as that future is up to us. Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that the viability of PR does not depend on this issue. A version of PR would be available on a view like Paul's, though it would have to be presented somewhat differently than I present it here. On this version, we should believe against the evidence when it is practically rational to intend against the evidence — though our rational beliefs wouldn't be conclusions of practical reasoning. Rather, we would be rationally required to hold these beliefs in virtue of having the corresponding rational intentions. (Cf. the response to objection 1 above.)

6. Why does PR fare better than the Practical Knowledge Response and the Non-Cognitivist Response, since it, too, leads to inconsistency? After all, in the problematic cases, we have evidence that it is likely that we will fail to do what we are deciding or promising to do. We might even know that it is likely that we will fail to do it. Shouldn't we, then, believe both that we will do it and that it is likely that we won't?

This is a formidable objection. Here is what, I think, a proponent of PR should reply: Suppose we do, in fact, know that it's difficult for us to do what we are deciding or promising to do. It is plausible that we could infer, and come to know, that it is likely that we won't do it.⁹⁹ Yet we shouldn't make this inference; rather we should settle the question of what we will do through practical reasoning — and leave it at that.¹⁰⁰ As long as we don't make this inference and refrain from believing that it is likely that we won't do what we are deciding or promising to do, we will avoid inconsistency, and, assuming belief is necessary for knowledge, we will avoid knowing that it is likely that we will fail.

PR thus implies that we should *forgo* self-knowledge. According to PR, sometimes real gains of self-knowledge will come at the price of our capacity for agency. Often we are in a position to know, when we decide or promise to do something, that it is likely that we won't follow through. But we shouldn't believe it anyway, since this belief would be inconsistent with the conclusion we've reached through practical reasoning.¹⁰¹

99. This assumes closure under known implication, which strikes me as plausible.

100. We shouldn't even believe that if it is difficult for us to do it, then there is a significant chance that we won't do it. After all, whether we will do it is not settled by the evidence of difficulty; we still have to make up our mind whether to do it.

101. This claim may seem to go against Velleman's account of reasons for action and the constitutive aim of action. Velleman holds that reasons recommend an action "by indicating that it's best for a very specific purpose — namely the pursuit of self-knowledge" (1989/2007, 206). He furthermore claims, "I conceive of agency itself as being constituted by a particular purpose, the very purpose to which I have subordinated the force of reasons — the pursuit of self-knowledge" (207). Yet surely Velleman doesn't mean that the practically rational course of action is necessarily the course of action which would produce the most self-knowledge. After all, the practically rational course of

To illustrate my reply to this objection, consider the case of Saint Peter at the end of Anscombe's *Intention* (1957/2000, 93–94).¹⁰² Peter persists that he will not deny knowing Christ — even though Christ has foretold him that he would deny Him three times. Peter is in a position to know not just that he is likely to do what he intends to avoid doing—deny knowing Christ—but that he most certainly will do it. He has it, after all, from God himself — or at least that's how it will appear to him. Yet Peter persists in his intention. And I think that Peter does exactly the right thing! It is up to him to refrain from denying Christ, and it is immensely important for him to do so. Even God's own prediction that he will fail should not, for him, settle the question of what he will do — since that question is to be settled by practical reasoning. Thus I think that Saint Peter, however sinful or fallible he is, is free from irrationality if he persists in his intention and does not believe Christ's prediction.

I suspect that some readers will find my reply to this objection to be tantamount to a *reductio* of PR. I do acknowledge that my reply to the objection is uncomfortable. However, I invite those readers to consider the alternatives: Shall we embrace inconsistency, as the Non-Cognitivist Response suggests? Shall we shun commitment to difficult action, as the Evidentialist Response suggests? Or do we know that we will succeed even when the evidence is against us, as the Practical Knowledge Response suggests? — I think that when matters are up to us, and it is sufficiently important for us to do something, we must stand firm against the evidence, even in our beliefs.

action needn't correspond to the course of action that is most conducive to self-knowledge — even if self-knowledge is an important consideration. Cf. n. 48 above.

102. Here, I am indebted to Kevin Falvey and John Schwenkler. Also, I am not exactly sure how to understand Anscombe, and I suspect that the following interpretation of the case of Saint Peter is not what she had in mind. Holton (2009, 20, n. 1 and 50) takes her discussion of the example as an endorsement of non-cognitivism. Yet this seems to go against her otherwise cognitivist arguments — that outright assertion expresses intentions and that intentional action requires practical knowledge.

7. *What about irrational decisions and promises? Suppose we irrationally decide or promise to do something. Should we then not believe that we will do it?*

My strategy, in responding to this objection, is to show that it is analogous to other, familiar questions, such as these: Suppose you irrationally intend to φ . Is it, then, rational to take the means to φ -ing? For example, suppose you irrationally intend to start smoking. Is it, then, rational to buy cigarettes? Similarly, suppose you irrationally believe p . Is it, then, rational to believe a known implication of p ?

Speaking simplistically: If you irrationally intend to start smoking, it is rational to buy cigarettes in one sense, but it is irrational to buy them in another sense. Given that you're going to start smoking, it is rational to buy cigarettes. But it is irrational to start smoking, and so it is also irrational to buy cigarettes. Similarly, given that you believe p , it is rational to believe a known implication. But it is also irrational to believe the known implication, since it's irrational to believe p . I want to say the same thing about the belief that you will do what you are irrationally deciding or promising to do: In one sense you should, and in another sense you should not, believe that you'll do it.

There is considerable controversy over how these simplistically claims are to be understood.¹⁰³ Are there really two notions of rationality involved here—say, subjective and objective? Is one kind of rationality explicable in terms of the other? Are both kinds of rationality normative? These are, I think, exceedingly difficult questions, and an adequate defense of PR does not have to settle them.

However, let me here sketch one answer that seems plausible. It strikes me as plausible to hold that rational requirements of consistency can be understood as wide-scope claims: It is rational that if one intends to φ , one takes the means to φ . It is rational that if one believes p , one believes known implications. Similarly, it is rational that if one intends to φ , one believes that one will φ (if one has a doxastic attitude about the matter). It also strikes me as plausible to

103. For discussion, see Broome (1999), Dancy (2000, esp. 70–76), Wallace (2001), and Kolodny (2005).

hold that material detachment of these wide-scope claims is invalid. From the fact that I believe p , it does not follow that it is rational to believe a known implication. It may, rather, be rational to abandon the belief. Nonetheless, from my point of view, this ought to appear rational. Similarly, from the fact that I intend to φ , it does not follow that it is rational to believe that I will φ . Nonetheless, from my point of view, it ought to appear rational to believe this. Hence, there is a perfectly good explanation of why, when it is irrational to intend to φ , it could appear, and in some sense perhaps be, rational to believe that one will φ , even though, in a salient sense, one also should not believe it.

Conclusion

Let me offer two conclusions. First, the Epistemological Problem of Difficult Action is a substantial philosophical problem whose force is not properly recognized in contemporary discussion. It is a tangible problem, since it concerns some of our most important decisions and promises. And it is a very difficult problem. Ultimately I think that it is a very hard question what we should believe when we are deciding or promising to do something that we have evidence is difficult to do. Even if my proposal for solving the problem is rejected, my discussion of the various responses shows how difficult it is to find an adequate solution.

Second, I hold that our problem reveals the best potential counterexample to evidentialism—the view that our evidence determines what we should believe. The real threat to evidentialism is, I think, neither practically advantageous belief nor religious belief but our view of ourselves as agents who are capable of interesting, difficult action. I also hold that our problem reveals that evidentialism is not a conceptual truth that somehow follows from the concept of a belief.¹⁰⁴ Belief is not, by nature, the state that is responsive to evidence; we

104. *Contra* Adler (2002) and Shah (2006).

can aim at the truth by creating it, not just by reflecting it – even if the evidence is against us.

Although surprising, I think that this should be a welcome result. It vindicates the thought that we are right to think of ourselves as agents even when we know that we are predictable.¹⁰⁵

Bibliography

- Adler, Jonathan E. (2002). *Belief's Own Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. (1957/2000). *Intention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Árdal, Páll S. (1968). "And That's a Promise". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 18, 225–237.
- Arpaly, Nomy. (2003). *Unprincipled Virtue: An Inquiry Into Moral Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bach, Kent and Robert M. Harnish. (1979). *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Bergmann, Michael. (2005). "Defeaters and Higher-Level Requirements". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 55, 419–436.
- Boyle, Matthew. (2011). "Making up Your Mind' and the Activity of Reason". *Philosophers' Imprint* 11, 1–24.
105. Thanks to Jonathan Adler, Matthew Boyle, Michael Bratman, James Genone, Matthias Haase, Pamela Hieronymi, Richard Holton, David Hunter, Duncan MacIntosh, John Maier, Richard Moran, Matthew Parrott, Andrew Reisner, Ian Schnee, John Schwenkler, Susanna Siegel, and two anonymous reviewers for comments on earlier drafts or for helpful conversations. I benefitted from discussing this paper with audiences at EthRG (Ethics Reading Group) at MIT, with special thanks to Daniel Greco, Sally Haslanger, Miriam Schoenfield, and Paulina Sliwa, and at the Pacific Division Meeting of the APA, with special thanks to Kevin Falvey and Amir Saemi, who commented on the paper. I am especially indebted to Jeremy Fantl, Eli Hirsch, and Jennifer Smalligan Marušić for reading several drafts and suggesting numerous improvements.
- Bratman, Michael E. (2009). "Intention, Belief, Practical, Theoretical". In *Spheres of Reason: New Essays in the Philosophy of Normativity*, edited by Simon Robertson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bratman, Michael E. (2007). "Temptation Revisited". In *Structures of Agency: Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bratman, Michael E. (1999). *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bratman, Michael E. (1997). "I Intend That We J". In Bratman (1999).
- Bratman, Michael E. (1992). "Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context". In Bratman (1999).
- Bratman, Michael E. (1987). *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Broome, John. (1999). "Normative Requirements". *Ratio* 12, 398–419.
- Burge, Tyler. (1993). "Content Preservation". *The Philosophical Review* 102, 457–488.
- Cohen, L. Jonathan. (1992). *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, L. Jonathan. (1989). "Belief and Acceptance". *Mind* 98, 367–389.
- Conee, Earl and Richard Feldman. (2004). *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dancy, Jonathan. (2000). *Practical Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, Donald. (1978). "Intending". In *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Davis, Wayne. (1984). "A Causal Theory of Intending". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, 43–54.
- Fantl, Jeremy and Matthew McGrath. (2009). *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feldman, Richard. (2000). "The Ethics of Belief". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, 667–695.
- Foley, Richard. (1993). *Working Without a Net: A Study of Egocentric Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Foley, Richard. (1991). "Evidence and Reasons for Belief". *Analysis* 51, 98–102.

- Grice, (H.) Paul. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grice, (H.) Paul. (1971). "Intention and Uncertainty". *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57, 263–79.
- Hampshire, Stuart. (1975). *Freedom of the Individual*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hampshire, Stuart. (1959). *Thought and Action*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Hampshire, Stuart and H. L. A. Hart. (1958). "Decision, Intention and Certainty". *Mind* 67, 1–12.
- Harman, Gilbert. (1986). *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Harman, Gilbert. (1976). "Practical Reasoning". *Review of Metaphysics* 29, 431–463.
- Hieronymi, Pamela. (2011). "Believing at Will". In *Belief and Agency*, edited by David Hunter. *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 35, 149–187.
- Hieronymi, Pamela. (2009). "The Will as Reason". *Philosophical Perspectives* 23, 201–220.
- Hieronymi, Pamela. (2006). "Controlling Attitudes". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87, 45–74.
- Hieronymi, Pamela. (2005). "The Wrong Kind of Reason". *The Journal of Philosophy* 102, 437–457.
- Holton, Richard. (2009). *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holton, Richard. (2008). "Partial Belief, Partial Intention". *Mind* 117, 27–58.
- Holton, Richard. (1999). "Intention and Weakness of Will". *The Journal of Philosophy* 96, 241–262.
- James, William. (1896). "The Will to Believe". In *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Kelly, Thomas. (2002). "The Rationality of Belief and Some Other Propositional Attitudes". *Philosophical Studies* 110, 163–196.
- Kolodny, Niko. (2005). "Why Be Rational?". *Mind* 114, 509–63.
- Langton, Rae. (2003). "Intention as Faith". In *Agency and Action*, edited by John Hyman and Helen Steward. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Marušić, Berislav. (Forthcoming a). "Promising Against the Evidence". *Ethics*.
- Marušić, Berislav. (Forthcoming b). "The Self-Knowledge Gambit". *Synthese*.
- Marušić, Berislav. (2011). "The Ethics of Belief". *Philosophy Compass* 6, 33–43.
- Marušić, Berislav. (2010). "The Desires of Others". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91, 385–400.
- Mele, Alfred R. (1992). *Springs of Action: Understanding Intentional Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, Eugene. (1998). "The Unity of Justification". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58, 27–50.
- Moran, Richard. (2004). "Anscombe on 'Practical Knowledge'". *Philosophy* 55, 43–68.
- Moran, Richard. (2001). *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Nozick, Robert. (1993). *The Nature of Rationality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Owens, David. (2000). *Reason Without Freedom: The Problem of Epistemic Normativity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pascal, Blaise. (1670). *Pensées*. Oxford: Penguin, 1966.
- Paul, Sarah K. (2009). "How We Know What We're Doing". *Philosophers' Imprint* 9, 1–24.
- Pettit, Philip and Michael Smith. (1996). "Freedom in Belief and Desire". *The Journal of Philosophy* 93, 429–449.
- Pryor, James. (2000). "The Skeptic and the Dogmatist". *Noûs* 34, 517–549.
- Reisner, Andrew. (Forthcoming). "Leaps of Knowledge". In *The Aim of Belief*, edited by Timothy Chan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Reisner, Andrew. (2009). "The Possibility of Pragmatic Reasons for Belief and the Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem". *Philosophical Studies* 145, 257–272.
- Reisner, Andrew. (2008). "Weighing Pragmatic and Evidential Reasons for Belief". *Philosophical Studies* 138, 17–27.
- Rödl, Sebastian. (2007). *Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ross, Jacob. (2009). "How to be a Cognitivist about Practical Reason". *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 4, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 243–282.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1943). *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1984.
- Scanlon, Thomas. (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schroeder, Mark. (2007). *Slaves of the Passions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Searle, John R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Setiya, Kieran. (2008). "Practical Knowledge". *Ethics* 118, 388–409.
- Setiya, Kieran. (2007). *Reasons without Rationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Setiya, Kieran. (2003). "Explaining Action". *The Philosophical Review* 112, 339–393.
- Shah, Nishi. (2006). "A New Argument for Evidentialism". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 56, 481–498.
- Shah, Nishi. (2003). "How Truth Governs Belief". *The Philosophical Review* 112, 447–482.
- Stroud, Sarah. (2006). "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship". *Ethics* 116, 498–524.
- Sutton, Jonathan. (2007). *Without Justification*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Velleman, J. David and Nishi Shah. (2005). "Doxastic Deliberation". *The Philosophical Review* 114, 497–534.
- Velleman, J. David. (2000a). *The Possibility of Practical Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Velleman, J. David. (2000b). "Introduction". In Velleman (2000a).
- Velleman, J. David. (1997). "How to Share an Intention". In Velleman (2000a).
- Velleman, J. David. (1996). "The Possibility of Practical Reason". In Velleman (2000a).
- Velleman, J. David. (1989/2007). *Practical Reflection*. CSLI Publications.
- Velleman, J. David. (1989). "Epistemic Freedom". In Velleman (2000a).
- Velleman, J. David. (1985). "Practical Reflection". *The Philosophical Review* 94, 33–61.
- Wallace, R. Jay. (2001). "Normativity, Commitment, and Instrumental Reason". *Philosophers' Imprint* 1, 1–28.
- Watson, Gary. (2004). "Asserting and Promising". *Philosophical Studies* 117, 57–77.
- Williams, Bernard. (1973). "Deciding to Believe". In *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956–1972*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Williamson, Timothy. (2000). *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, George. (2000). "Proximal Practical Foresight". *Philosophical Studies* 99, 3–19.