

Can Non-Epistemic Reasons for Belief Be Normative?

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine both W.K. Clifford's and William James's approaches to the ethics of belief, as well as contemporary commentaries on and defences of these views. I put the debate in terms of what makes a non-epistemic reason for belief normative, and reveal that neither of the two arguments that are traditionally put forward against normative non-epistemic reasons for belief—that it is wrong to believe on non-epistemic grounds and that it is not possible to believe on non-epistemic grounds—is successful. I argue that the use of both hypothetical and real examples lends intuitive support to this position, and assists me in refining it, allowing me to define one of the conditions necessary for a normative non-epistemic reason for belief. I conclude that a non-epistemic reason for belief can be normative only in cases where there is little chance that the resulting belief will be acted upon.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, we rely on epistemology to shape our theories of belief evaluation. The central focus of epistemology is knowledge, and the theories yielded from the field reflect this in their focus on evaluating belief from a knowledge-centred point of view. Within epistemology, beliefs are evaluated based on how well they meet conditions which are set in accordance with what would best transform the belief into knowledge. Such conditions typically include references to truth and epistemic justification, among other things.

I view the use of the epistemic and knowledge-centred approach to belief formation to the exclusion of all other approaches as problematic, but the fault does not lie with epistemologists. The problem is that a knowledge-centred approach is not the only valid approach, and therefore epistemology does not have a monopoly on theories of belief evaluation. Epistemological theories are only a distinct subset of theories of belief justification and evaluation. Epistemology has done and continues to do an excellent job of revealing the conditions under which beliefs can be said to have value, where the value of a belief is related to its truth or epistemic justification. What epistemology does not and cannot do is reveal anything about the value of beliefs beyond their epistemic value, and other sets of conditions under which a belief could be judged. In other words, epistemology says nothing about the value of non-epistemic reasons for belief and how this might be assessed or measured. This is the issue I wish to explore further. The central question I wish to explore in this thesis may shed some light on this issue. I ask: Under what conditions, if any, do non-epistemic reasons for belief count as normative reasons for belief?

What I hope to gain through examining this question is an idea of how non-epistemic reasons might be capable of justifying beliefs in a general sense. In this thesis I will make no proposal about the issue of how epistemic reasons might be compared to or weighed against non-epistemic reasons, although I will discuss work by Andrew Reisner which covers this topic. The aim of my central question is to simply establish what justification, or normative force, if any, such non-epistemic reasons have. It is my hope that such an investigation might someday lead to a general theory of belief evaluation which includes a strong epistemological component, a strong non-epistemological component, and a way of comparing the respective sorts of assessments that each provides.

My central question calls for the clarification of a couple of a important distinctions. The first is the distinction between normative reasons for belief and non-normative reasons for belief. The second is the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic reasons for belief. Only once these have been properly defined can a serious examination of the question and its possible answers be made. In clarifying these distinctions, I aim to have no overlap between them. It would do this discussion no good to define normative beliefs in such a way as to favour either epistemic or non-epistemic beliefs. As such, my definitions of normative and non-normative beliefs might come off as vague, but I do not believe that this reduces their effectiveness for the purposes of the current discussion.

1.1 Normative versus Non-Normative Reasons

A normative reason for belief is a consideration on which it is good to base beliefs; it is a proper and justifiable reason for belief. If an agent were to believe on the grounds of a normative reason, an objective and rational observer would claim that to some extent, at least, the agent is doing well with respect to their belief formation. Even if the belief proves to be false, if it is based on a normative reason, the agent would not be seen as doing entirely poorly in their belief formation. To say that an agent believed on the basis of a normative reason for belief is to say that, to a certain extent they believed as they should have. The main defining characteristics of a normative reason for belief are therefore that it is a good and proper grounding for belief and that it offers enough support for taking on the belief that we would say the agent is to a certain extent justified in believing and that we would not accuse the agent of complete doxastic irresponsibility.

A non-normative reason is, at its simplest, any reason not captured by the above definition of a normative reason. It is insufficient to justify a belief to any extent. If an objective and rational observer were to ask an agent why they held a belief, and the agent offered a non-normative reason, the objective and rational observer would be inclined to criticize the agent for the grounding of their belief. Other rational agents would not accept or adopt a belief simply on the basis of a non-normative reason. If the belief proves to be false, the agent who holds it would be accused of committing an error in reasoning. They would not be as blameless as they would be if they had based their belief on a normative reason.

The central distinction between normative and non-normative reasons for belief is therefore a rather simple one. It is proper to base beliefs on normative reasons for belief, and it is improper to base beliefs on non-normative reasons for belief. What I am asking with my central question then, is about the conditions under which it is proper to base beliefs on non-epistemic reasons for belief. But what is a “non-epistemic reason for belief,” and what is its complementary “epistemic reason for belief”?

1.2 Epistemic versus Non-Epistemic Reasons

Such definitions already exist in the work of Andrew Reisner, who takes very seriously the idea that non-epistemic reasons can still be good reasons for belief. In Reisner (2009), he offers a series of very useful ways of characterizing the epistemic versus non-epistemic reasons distinction.

Reisner begins with a discussion of object-given and state-given reasons for belief. An object-given reason for belief is a reason for belief which is tied to the propositional content of the belief. A conceptual relation between the proposition and the reason for believing the proposition establishes the object-given reason and its support for the proposition in question. A standard kind of object-given reason is evidence, as evidence is linked to the content of the proposition by making the proposition likely to be true (Reisner 2009, 258). This kind of relation appears to be epistemic insofar as it appeals to more traditional views regarding what justifies a belief.

The second kind of reason that Reisner discusses near the start of this article is a state-given reason for belief. Unlike object-given reasons for belief, a state-given reason for belief does not relate to the propositional content of the belief, say by providing

likelihood-of-truth support for the proposition believed. Instead, a state-given reason for belief relates to the belief attitude itself, indicating that belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment with respect to that content would be a good attitude to take, regardless of properties of the content such as truth or likelihood thereof (Reisner 2009, 259). This kind of relation appears to be non-epistemic since it is in line with less traditional views on how beliefs might be justified.

Reisner also gives definitions of evidential and non-evidential reasons, in addition to considering definitions offered by Gilbert Harman (1999). For the purposes of this discussion, evidential and non-evidential reasons can be understood as equivalent to epistemic and non-epistemic reasons, respectively.

Reisner characterizes reasons generally as facts which stand in a certain relation to agents' actions and attitudes (Reisner 2009, 260): reasons are facts which make the actions or attitudes of positive value, or facts which "count in favour of" (Reisner 2008, 17) actions or attitudes. What makes a reason for belief evidential is that it gives this positive value by indicating that the content of a belief is likely to be true. The important aspect of an evidential reason is that it supports the proposition which is the content of the agent's belief itself. A non-evidential reason is a fact which gives positive value on a belief in some other way. It is a reason for believing that does not rely on any indication that the content of the belief likely being true. Like an evidential reason, a non-evidential reason indicates that the belief should be held, but not because of truth concerns. A non-evidential reason for belief does not support the propositional content of the belief itself (Reisner 2009, 261).

Harman uses his own definitions for evidential and non-evidential reasons for belief, which Reisner analyzes and then draws from to finalize his own working definitions. Harman's definition of evidential reasons classifies them as reasons which increase the probability of the belief being true. By believing based on an evidential reason, one has increased their probability of being right. A non-evidential reason is a reason to believe regardless of whether it increases the probability of the belief being true (Reisner 2009, 262; Harman 1999, 17).

Reisner does not adopt these definitions himself, but instead criticizes Harman's first definition. Reisner claims that Harman's definition of evidential reasons leaves out cases in which there is already a one-hundred percent probability of a belief being true, and yet more evidence is discovered to support it. Reisner considers it a flaw that Harman's definition would seem to indicate that in such a case, the new reason is not an evidential one. Reisner's own definitions are not subject to this worry because they do not rely on references to the probability of a belief being true, only that the truth of a belief is supported. A belief can continue to be supported by additional reasons even if its probability is one-hundred percent. Reisner does agree with a simplified version of Harman's definition of non-evidential reasons which states that non-evidential reasons are reasons which are not evidential (Reisner 2009, 262).

After this discussion, Reisner takes what he has addressed so far and forms one more set of definitions. Now an evidential reason is a fact which is evidence for the content of a belief. This reiterates the definitions he has already given, as does his definition for non-evidential reasons. These reasons are facts which are non-evidential and stand in some other relation to the belief (Reisner 2009, p. 263).

Reisner's definitions offer some useful and illuminating insights into definitions for epistemic and non-epistemic reasons for belief. However, because they sometimes appear circular, it is important to read between the lines and restate the definitions I will be using. He is right, I think, in describing the difference as occurring in how the reason relates to the belief. An epistemic reason for belief relates in a truth-indicative way to the belief, and hence to the propositional content of the belief. A non-epistemic reason for belief relates in a non-truth-indicative way to the belief, and hence potentially to the attitude of the belief rather than to its propositional content.

1.3 The Central Question Clarified

With these preliminary characterizations of normative reasons, non-normative reasons, epistemic reasons, and non-epistemic reasons in hand, I am ready to give a clear depiction of what the central question of this thesis is about. Briefly put, in asking "Under what conditions, if any, do non-epistemic reasons for belief count as normative reasons for belief?" I am asking about the conditions under which facts which relate in a non-truth-indicative way to a belief might nonetheless support or justify the belief for an agent—might make it such that an agent ought to hold the belief.

1.4 Three Possible Answers

At the most general level, it seems apparent that there are three possible ways to answer the central question, so understood. The answers are "Under no conditions," "Under some but not all conditions," and "Under all conditions." These three answers exhaust the possible responses to this question.

1.4.1 “Under No Conditions”

The first potential answer denies that there are any conditions under which we might find normative non-epistemic reasons for belief. Such reasons cannot exist. No non-epistemic reason for belief can ever be considered normative. The only genuine normative reasons for belief are epistemic. This general answer has been called the “evidentialist” perspective and has its historical roots in the work of W.K. Clifford. In his widely read essay, “The Ethics of Belief” (1877), Clifford asserted that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence” (Clifford 1877, 180). He based his claim on a consideration of a number of examples, the most commonly cited being the example of a ship owner who has good reliable evidence for believing his ship to be faulty to the point of being unseaworthy, but, for self-interested, prudential reasons ends up believing that it is seaworthy. When the ship sinks, claiming many lives with it, Clifford argues that the owner was not only unjustified in how he acted, but in what he believed (Clifford 1877, 177-8).

This point of view has more current support in the work of Richard Feldman, whose article, also entitled “The Ethics of Belief” (2000), presses two main points. Feldman argues that all normative evaluations of belief are epistemic evaluations of belief, and that epistemic evaluations are limited to evidential evaluations (Feldman 2000, 678). Taking these two points together puts Feldman, like Clifford, squarely in the camp of those who deny that there are any conditions under which non-epistemic reasons for belief count as normative reasons for belief.

1.4.2 “Under Some but not All Conditions”

The second potential answer opposes the idea that there can be no non-epistemic normative reasons for belief. Its main thesis is that there are, in fact, cases where believing on the basis of a non-epistemic reason is fully justified and supported. This is what sets it apart from the evidentialist view. It still places restrictions on what can count as a normative reason for belief, in the form of conditions that must be met. So while it seems that all or virtually all epistemic reasons for belief would be considered a normative reason for belief, it would still only be a limited set of non-epistemic reasons for belief that are issued the same status. If certain clear cut conditions are not met then whether the proposition should be believed would fall to other non-epistemic reasons which are normative, or epistemic reasons for belief. This point of view is the non-evidentialist perspective.

It has its roots in William James’s famous “The Will to Believe” essay (1896), which was a response to Clifford and thinkers like him. In this article, James argues that some hypotheses can be believed for reasons other than evidence (James 1896, 108). Several conditions must be met for this to be permissible, however. First of all, this may only occur in cases where the intellect alone, which here can be taken as roughly analogous to epistemic reasons, cannot settle the matter. In addition, it only applies in cases in which the option to believe or not believe a hypothesis is a genuine option (James 1896, 108). A genuine option is one which is living, meaning that it must be one that the intellect is capable of taking seriously, one which is forced, meaning that it must be a decision that cannot be put off, and one which is momentous, meaning that it must be important, immediate, unique, or somehow irrevocable (James 1896, 101-2). If

epistemic reasons alone cannot decide what should be believed and the option is genuine as described above, then the belief can be justified despite being believed for non-evidential reasons (James 1896, 108). In other words, if these conditions are met, then we can accept non-epistemic reasons for belief as normative reasons for belief.

A similar point of view comes about in the recent work of Reisner, who works not just at establishing that normative non-epistemic reasons are possible (Reisner 2009), but also at examining how they ought to be compared against normative epistemic reasons (Reisner 2008). The work of John Heil also serves as an interesting representative of this point of view that also works as something of a middle ground between the evidentialist and non-evidentialist viewpoints. According to Heil we are not necessarily free to believe as we please, but we are free, and perhaps even required, to examine more scrupulously evidence for beliefs which we find distasteful, such as a close friend or loved one doing something bad or harmful to us (Heil 1983, 758-9).

1.4.3 “Under All Conditions”

The third general answer to the central question will not receive much treatment in this thesis, as it is not one that seems in any way tenable. Taking up this position would mean defending the idea that there are no cases in which we would not accept non-epistemic reasons for a belief as normative. The closest thing to historical support for this view is a potential misreading of James, where one fails to note just how restrictive his conditions are. It is a difficult position to see being seriously supported by anyone, as it yields too many unsupportable consequences. As a quick example by way of illustration, imagine a person believing a proposition simply because they find the words

in a linguistic expression of the proposition aesthetically pleasing. This is clearly a non-epistemic reason for belief, and if non-epistemic reasons for belief are under every condition normative, it would seem that this individual is to some extent justified in their belief. If the third answer was an accepted response to my central question, then, we would be forced to regard this kind of reasoning as well as many others that are equally unsupportable as a proper and justified reason for believing a proposition—a deeply counterintuitive result.

1.4.4 The First and Second Answers Compared

It seems that there are then only two general responses to my central question worth seriously considering, the evidentialist or Cliffordian view, and the moderate non-evidentialist or Jamesian view. James helpfully points out the key motivational difference between his view and Clifford's. Those who endorse the first answer to the main question would seemingly be motivated by a desire to avoid error, if even at the cost of also failing to believe some possible truths. Meanwhile, those who adopt the second answer would seemingly be motivated by a desire to know as many truths as possible, if even at the risk of believing in some errors (James 1896, 113-4). James believes that in some cases, a proposition will only have truth if it is already believed, so believing on non-epistemic grounds is the only way to have these beliefs (James 1896, 118-9)

1.5 Case Studies

In determining which of these general answers to endorse, I feel it is important to see how they would fare in real-world scenarios. Rather than rely too much on abstract arguments that appeal to the definitions of reasons and the possibility or impossibility of a non-epistemic reason actually supporting a proposition, it seems to me that it is important to let the hypotheses speak for themselves in the kinds of situations that could realistically be encountered in everyday life. The answer which matches up closest with intuitive responses to these cases will presumably be the better of the two answers.

The first realistic scenario I will consider involves the refusal of medical treatment for religious reasons. Many people choose not to undergo surgery or other forms of modern medicine as they believe that it would be sinful to do so insofar as it demonstrates a lack of faith in their religion. Instead, they choose to let prayer and their faith in their god save them. In many of these cases, the patient dies, even though the problem was easily treatable (e.g. Balik 2008).

The second scenario is of a sort commonly discussed in the literature on the ethics of belief, especially by Susan Haack (1997, 132) and Reisner (2008, 18). The example is of a person who is suffering from a terminal illness, where there is a good chance they will die. The person chooses to believe that they will survive and as a result of their positive attitude, they either recover or at the very least enjoy what remaining time they have.

In the discussion which follows, I will more thoroughly examine and explain both the evidentialist and non-evidentialist perspectives. I will discuss their historical and more current roots, ultimately comparing and contrasting the two. Using the cases above,

I will then evaluate these perspectives and see which one is most suited to matching our intuitions about such cases. I will conclude by offering some concrete suggestions concerning how the most plausible of the two accounts may be modified and further supported so as to make it even better at dealing with such real-world scenarios.

2. Evidentialism

This chapter will discuss evidentialism, and what answer it has to offer to the central question of this thesis. When asking “Under what conditions, if any, do non-epistemic reasons for belief count as normative reasons for belief?” it is the evidentialists who tell us that there are no such conditions. They argue either that it is never possible or never permissible to allow pragmatic, or non-epistemic, concerns to function as reasons in our doxastic processes.

What the evidentialists maintain is that no non-epistemic reason for belief can ever have normative value. According to evidentialists, no reason for belief which is based on concerns other than truth or epistemic value can ever be a genuinely good reason for belief.

In this chapter I will discuss in detail the historical roots of evidentialism, as put forward by W.K. Clifford, as well as two contemporary evidentialists, Richard Feldman and Nishi Shah. I will present their arguments for evidentialism as well as individual responses to each of their arguments. These responses as presented by Susan Haack, Keith DeRose, and Masahiro Yamada, are not defences or presentations of non-evidentialism but simply criticisms of evidentialism.

2.1 Historical Evidentialism: W.K. Clifford

In 1877, Clifford famously argued for evidentialism in “The Ethics of Belief.”

The central thesis of this paper was that believing contrary to one's evidence or when one's evidence is insufficient is wrong (Clifford 1877, 186). This is clearly an instance of arguing that there are no conditions under which a non-epistemic reason might count as a normative reason for belief. What Clifford is saying is that evidence and only evidence can justify a belief, and to have a belief without or contrary to evidence is always wrong. Clifford takes this one step further and argues that if somebody acquires a belief and then spends their entire life avoiding contrary evidence and counterarguments, then their life is full of sin, as the evidence for that belief and any related beliefs rest upon bad inquiry and insufficient evidence (Clifford 1877, 187). Furthermore, Clifford, in arguing that this holds for everyone, states that if one does not have time to study their beliefs and the evidence for and against them, then that particular agent has no business believing (Clifford 1877, 187-8).

To argue for this position, Clifford first makes use of two central examples. The first example involves a man who owns a ship. The ship's owner sends his ship out to sea, having convinced himself that his ship is seaworthy. The problem with this is that the ship is not seaworthy and the ship's owner has good evidence for the fact that the ship is not seaworthy. The owner of the ship, in his greed, wants the ship to sail anyway. His good conscience prevents him from sending the ship on its way while he still believes that the ship is not capable of handling the voyage, so he forces himself to believe otherwise. Having convinced himself that the ship is in good enough shape to make the voyage, the ship's owner allows it to set sail, resulting in the ship sinking and ultimately

the deaths of everyone aboard. Clifford argues that in spite of his genuine belief that the ship was seaworthy, the shipowner is nonetheless guilty as he had no right to hold that belief in the first place. Clifford adds that the shipowner would be no less guilty if the ship were to make the voyage safely. It is his holding a belief illegitimately and not the outcome of his belief that he is at fault for (Clifford 1877, 177-8).

The second example that Clifford invokes in an attempt to support his claim that it is always wrong to form a belief on insufficient evidence involves an island in which there are some people who believe in a different religion from the rest of the people on the island. A rumour spreads that these people who believe differently have done harmful or unfair things to convince children of their doctrine. They are even accused of kidnapping children to forcefully teach them their ways. Unrest gets to the point where a commission is formed to investigate this other group and their religion, and using evidence that would have been readily available to any who had looked, determines that these rumours are false. Like the owner of the ship from the first example, the people of this island have been believing on insufficient evidence and are guilty for it. Also like the ship's owner, the fact that the belief was sincere is no defence against their crime. This case can also be further complicated by extending the story, as Clifford does. A second investigation is conducted, finding overwhelming countervailing evidence against the first investigation and its conclusions, proving the islanders held a correct belief all along. Clifford says that this does not lessen their guilt, that the issue is not whether or not the belief was true or correct, but that it was the fact that they believed on insufficient evidence (Clifford 1877, 178-80).

With these two examples supporting his thesis, Clifford addresses potential objections. He considers the idea that, in each case, it is the actions and not the beliefs which are at fault. The idea behind this objection is that the wrong was committed through the action and not through the belief, and that if the agent in question is to be judged, they should be judged for their actions and not for their belief or its basis. In the case of the ship owner, the claim would be that it was the action of allowing the ship to sail, and not the belief that the ship could sail, that was at fault. In the case of the islanders, this objection makes the case that it is the way the second group is treated, and not the beliefs which cause this treatment, that are wrong (Clifford 1877, 180).

Clifford is willing to go along with this argument to a point. He concedes that even when our beliefs are fixed and unchanging, the option of how to act always remains. He argues that in spite of these considerations, the fact remains that the connection between belief and action cannot be severed to the point where the actions can be condemned without also forcing us to condemn the beliefs which led to the actions. All of our genuine beliefs guide our actions to some extent, and guidance binds our beliefs to our actions in away such that one must judge both (Clifford 1877, 180-1).

The basis for Clifford's argument does not rest solely on the direct kind of actions already discussed, however, as he also argues that beliefs guide us in the social sphere. In our daily interactions, what we believe will influence what we say and what we pass on to other people. In this way, our beliefs are guaranteed to have some effect on other people, even if direct action based on these beliefs is never taken. Therefore, we must be vigilant and only believe when the evidence warrants belief. This restriction applies to

everyone, not just the leaders and the intellectuals, as the beliefs of everyone become mixed in with the shared beliefs and end up guiding actions (Clifford 1877, 181-2).

Another important danger that Clifford points out is that people often equate knowledge with power, sometimes driving them to desire belief for the feeling of power that it provides. Clifford cautions against believing for its own sake and insists that, as tempting as believing without sufficient evidence may be, it is still our duty to only believe when we have sufficient evidence to do so (Clifford 1877, 184).

Finally, Clifford defends his thesis by separating the evil of believing upon insufficient evidence from the negative consequences of doing so. He argues that an evil action is always evil, no matter the consequences. Even if an evil act yields no negative consequences or actually brings about positive consequences, it seems that Clifford is saying that the action itself was still evil. Individual beliefs may not have terrible consequences, but like thieving, if it is done on a wide scale then society becomes evil, and in the case of belief, unable to test the truth or falsehood of a belief (Clifford 1877, 185-6).

2.2 Contemporary Evidentialism: Richard Feldman and Nishi Shah

What Clifford offers in his essay is a very powerful and demanding thesis, demonstrated through two examples and a series of preemptive responses to counterarguments which also help show some of the more nuanced aspects of his thesis. Contemporary works by both Richard Feldman (2000) and Nishi Shah (2006) seek to establish that Clifford was generally right to say that only evidence can or should count as a reason to believe something. Feldman attempts to demonstrate this through showing

that only evidence can have epistemic value along with what appears to be an assumption that only epistemic value has normative value when it comes to belief. Shah, on the other hand, simply argues that it is impossible for there to be any such thing as a non-evidential reason for belief.

2.2.1: Richard Feldman

At the outset of his 2000 piece, “The Ethics of Belief,” Feldman explains that he differs from Clifford in three important respects. First, normative evaluations of belief are strictly epistemic for him. Unlike Clifford, he does not moralize them and argue that it is a moral wrong to believe on insufficient evidence. Thus, his second distinction from Clifford is that he chooses not to phrase things in terms of right or wrong, but instead describes things in terms of what an agent ought or ought not to do. Finally, Feldman also has the goal of expanding on Clifford's negative claims, which only state what doxastic agents ought not to do. Feldman proposes to build on this, and argues that there are not only things that doxastic agents ought not to do, but also things that they ought to do. Rather than simply not believing on insufficient evidence, the agent should believe when they have sufficient evidence. Feldman's thesis, simply put, is that “One always ought to follow one's evidence” (Feldman 2000, 677-8). This implies that the attitude an agent has towards a proposition, be it belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgement, should match all the evidence that the agent has (Feldman 2000, 678).

After working his way through a preliminary discussion of his thesis, Feldman refines it. Instead of simply stating that one ought to follow their evidence, he specifies that if one is going to adopt an attitude towards a proposition, the attitude they adopt

should reflect the evidence at hand. If evidence speaks against a proposition, they should disbelieve it. If the evidence supports the proposition, they should believe it. If the evidence is neutral, they should suspend judgement. This goes beyond merely permitting one to believe based on good evidence. What Feldman is saying is that if an agent considers a proposition at all and there is convincing evidence for it, then the only permissible option at that point is for them to believe it (Feldman 2000, 679-80).

Immediately, Feldman spots a potential flaw in his thesis. He recognizes that if epistemic claims are analogous to moral claims, then they should allow for ties, but his preliminary account does not. Instead, it restricts what is permissible strictly to whichever direction the evidence at hand points. He goes on to outline three distinct cases which seem as if they should end in ties, but under his conception of what ought to be done, epistemically speaking, they do not. By a tie, Feldman is referring to cases where what an agent should believe would seem to be ambiguous, or cases where more than one attitude could be considered permissible (Feldman 2000, 680).

The first case that Feldman discusses is one in which there is equal evidence for and against a proposition. In a case such as this, where some might think that either of two possible attitudes could be correct, Feldman's account allows for only one to be admissible, since there are three attitudes to choose from. In this case, it would be suspension of judgement that would be the only permissible attitude. Therefore, the first of the three cases need not be a concern for Feldman (Feldman 2000, 680).

The second case that could potentially end in a tie is one in which there are two competing and mutually exclusive propositions, both of which have equal evidential support. Feldman argues that only one attitude is necessary, and that this attitude is also

the only permissible attitude. As with the first case, the attitude in question here is suspension of judgement. This case can be complicated, though, if some action is required based on which proposition is believed. In that case, Feldman first argues that one can pick an action at random without first forming a belief. Feldman gives an example of such a case, in which an agent knows that one of two boxes in front of them is going to explode, and they have only enough time to open one box and disarm the bomb if it is inside that box. Here, Feldman says that the agent need not form a belief about which box actually contains the bomb in order to open it. He does reluctantly admit that if absolutely necessary in a case like this, there might be some sense in which one can be pragmatically permitted to form a belief, while still not being epistemically permitted to do so (Feldman 2000, 680-1).

The final case concerns only one proposition which has modest and inconclusive evidence in support of it. Feldman states that while it is tempting to think that either belief or suspension of judgement could be permissible in this case, only one is. Feldman ultimately decides that belief is the only permissible attitude to take, so that he does not encounter the problem of having to choose a specific point at which belief becomes permissible over suspension of judgement, which would lead to his account being faced with borderline cases (Feldman 2000, 681).

With the basics of his viewpoint established, Feldman goes on to defend it and establish a strong basis for it by determining exactly what makes something epistemically valuable. He argues that epistemic value is derived from agents holding rational attitudes towards propositions. This conception of epistemic value directly supports the thesis that

agents should always follow their evidence by directly giving value to rational attitudes, and thus to following one's evidence (Feldman 2000, 685).

What Feldman is attempting to establish is that his view can be defended in terms of epistemic value. Moreover, this value goes beyond simply being instrumental. While there is no doubt instrumental value in believing as one ought to, Feldman is also trying to establish intrinsic value. He argues that believing as one ought to is a good in and of itself. Here, instrumental value simply means that believing correctly is useful to agents. Intrinsic value, on the other hand, refers to the believing what one ought as being a good in itself. Its value is not derive from how useful it is, but is instead valued for its own sake (Feldman 2000, 682).

At first, Feldman casts epistemic value as being found in following one's evidence and acquiring true beliefs. Value, in this version of Feldman's defence, is rooted in truth. Along these lines, Feldman would be arguing that the way to maximize epistemic value is to believe only true propositions and to reject all false propositions. He ultimately moves on from this argument, having decided that this point of view is too strong and demanding. It implies that one ought to believe propositions for which they have no evidence, so long as these propositions are true. It is also problematic in that it implies the faulty assumption that evidence always leads to truth, and that by following one's evidence, an agent always ends up believing true propositions and disbelieving false propositions. It is, Feldman argues, entirely plausible that evidence will, at least in some cases, lead in the wrong direction (Feldman 2000, 683).

The second conception that Feldman tries before arriving at his idea that a rational attitude is what grounds epistemic value, is the idea that one should know propositions

when they are true, and know that propositions are false when they are false. This goes beyond merely believing when propositions are true, because, he claims, a key element of knowledge is following evidence. By this account, agents are required to have good reasons in addition to their true beliefs in order for their beliefs to have epistemic value. This account still encounters problems given cases where evidence does not lead to truth. Since both truth and evidence are necessary for epistemic value, a case in which evidence leads away from truth prevents a no-win situation, and this fails to support the idea that agents should always follow the evidence they have at hand (Feldman 2000, 684).

A second problem with this idea of value is that it does encounter issues surrounding borderline cases. Feldman argues that epistemic value, where knowledge is said to ground it, needs to deal with cases where one has reason to believe in a true proposition, but not quite enough reason to justify what they believe as knowledge. The end result is that the agent does not end up following their evidence, because they do not have enough evidence to call such a belief knowledge. Since, in circumstances like this, Feldman would want the agent to follow their evidence and believe in the proposition, he cannot accept knowledge as the grounding for epistemic value (Feldman 2000, 684).

Since Feldman's thesis is that one ought to always follow their evidence, he needs an explanation of epistemic value that always places value on following one's evidence, even in cases where the evidence does not lead toward true propositions. Neither of the proposed groundings for epistemic value has been successful in this (Feldman 2000, 684). True beliefs, Feldman says, are always instrumentally valuable, but one who believes them without or contrary to evidence is failing to acquire intrinsic epistemic value. Saying that knowledge is the source of epistemic value fails to show what makes

rational beliefs which fail to be knowledge valuable (Feldman 2000, 685). With truth and knowledge both failing to ground epistemic value, Feldman turns to rational attitudes towards propositions as the basis for epistemic value. By adopting a rational attitude towards propositions at all times, agents will be disposed to following their evidence. This avoids the pitfalls related to truth as the grounding for epistemic value, as it leads agents to hold only true beliefs which they are justified in believing. It also avoids the dangers of knowledge grounding epistemic value, as it has only one condition which must be met, following one's evidence, rather than two conditions which might at times contradict one another (Feldman 2000, 685).

In summary of Feldman's position, he argues that one should always adopt attitudes towards a given proposition that reflects the evidence at hand for or against that proposition (Feldman 2000, 679). This thesis is rooted in the idea that epistemic value comes from holding a rational attitude towards propositions. By holding such an attitude, agents will be disposed towards following their evidence. Thus, if an agents wants to maximize their epistemic value with regard to what they believe, they should follow their evidence as this is the only rational way to approach a proposition (Feldman 2000, 685).

2.2.2: Nishi Shah

The final evidentialist to be considered in this thesis offers a direct defence of evidentialism against the idea that a non-evidential reason for belief is even possible. What Shah argues is that given the best explanation for certain psychological facts regarding the nature of belief, certain conclusions arise which make any non-evidential position implausible. The psychological fact in question is transparency, and Shah argues

that transparency plus a premise which he calls the “deliberative constraint” create a dilemma for any non-evidentialist. When confronted with this dilemma, the non-evidentialist will either have to accept the deliberative constraint and admit that transparency implies that there can be no non-evidential reasons for belief, or reject both the deliberative constraint and transparency and therefore implausibly deny what appears to be a simple and basic fact of human psychology (Shah 2006, 483). This argument, like Feldman's, does not rely on moralizing claims like Clifford's but proceeds from what appears to be psychological fact (Shah 2006, 484).

At the outset, Shah describes transparency as an unalterable psychological fact about doxastic deliberation, the process which connects our reasons to our actions (Shah 2006, 484). Shah's description casts this process as the way in which we proceed from merely having a reason to perform an action or to form a belief to actually performing said action or forming said belief (Shah 2006, 486). Shah, borrowing from Richard Moran, defines transparency as a part of human psychology which forces agents to go from deliberating about whether to believe a given proposition to simply deliberating about whether a proposition is true. Transparency reduces the question of whether a proposition should be believed to the question of whether or not, on a factual level, that proposition is true (Shah 2006, 481). While he says nothing to support his claim that transparency is an unalterable psychological fact with scientific evidence, he claims that it is reasonable to assume that both evidentialists and pragmatists can accept this definition (Shah 2006, 484).

Having defined transparency, Shah moves on to arguing for what he calls the “deliberative constraint on reasons” (Shah 2006, 483). This argument is a series of three

premises, the third premise of which forms the deliberative constraint. The argument (Shah 2006, 486) is paraphrased below:

B1: A potential reason is a reason for an agent to believe a proposition only if the potential reason is capable of being a reason for which the agent believes the proposition

B2: A potential reason is a reason for which an agent believes a proposition only if the potential reason is capable of disposing the agent towards believing the proposition in the way characteristic of the potential reason's functioning as a premise in doxastic deliberation

B3: Therefore, a potential reason is a reason for an agent to believe a proposition only if the potential reason is capable of disposing the agent towards believing the proposition in a way characteristic of the potential reason's functioning as a premise in doxastic deliberation

What this argument, and as a result the deliberative constraint on reasons, seeks to establish is that a reason is only a reason for belief if it can literally be used in internal deliberation and by virtue of that alone, cause a belief (Shah 2006, 486).

The capability mentioned in the argument is, according to Shah, a psychological capability. There must be nothing within the agent's psychology that prevents the agent from using the reason as a premise in their doxastic deliberations. Transparency is such a psychological hindrance. Shah argues that a non-evidentialist cannot accept this deliberative constraint on reasons as non-evidential reasons are based on desire which are not aimed at truth. By lacking this focus on truth, non-evidential reasons fail to get through the screen of transparency, and are thus incapable of functioning as premises in

doxastic deliberations, and given the deliberative constraint, this means they cannot be normative reasons for belief. Taking the doxastic deliberative constraint on reasons as well as transparency thus rules out the non-evidentialist perspective (Shah 2006, 487).

In order for his dilemma to be a genuine one, Shah still needs to demonstrate that transparency cannot be admitted without also admitting the deliberative constraint, and this is what he moves on to do. He begins by looking into why transparency applies in cases of genuine doxastic deliberations, but not in other kinds of deliberations, such as assuming a given proposition for the sake of argument. His hypothesis is that belief is truth-centred, so when it comes to deciding what to believe, one automatically aims to believe whatever seems true. This explains why transparency, which is also aimed at truth, applies in cases of belief but not in other kinds of deliberations (Shah 2006, 488).

Moving on, Shah claims that deliberation is an activity governed by norms. The best explanation of transparency will be one that explains the norms involved in doxastic deliberation, the act of reasoning about whether to perform an action or form a belief. Ultimately, when deliberation presents its results and issues an order to act or not to act, or to believe or not to believe, it does so in accordance with the norms which apply to the kind of activity it is ruling on. In this way, deliberation is the most explicit and efficient route to determine whether to perform a norm-guided action. A reason for acting is a consideration which indicates whether acting would be good, given the norms of that particular action (Shah 2006, 489).

It follows from this that deliberation is a good place to look for an understanding of what constitutes a good reason for acting. The deliberative constraint says that only the considerations which are capable of entering into deliberations and result in the action

are good reasons for acting. This is because those are the only considerations that can determine whether acting would be good according to the norms of that kind of action (Shah 2006, 489).

This argument can be applied to deliberating regarding belief, with the sole norm being that believing is correct only if the belief is true. This claim, that the sole norm for correct belief is that the belief be true, is Shah's explanation for transparency, and is drawn from Shah's argument that truth is essential to the concept of belief. Proceeding from this, Shah argues that all doxastic deliberation must be done in accordance with the norm truth. What Shah is not denying is that non-evidential reasons have power over beliefs. He says that they do, but since they cannot fulfil a function as premises within doxastic deliberation, they cannot be consciously acknowledged as reasons nor do they work as reasons. Shah admits that there are potentially other methods of forming beliefs that do not require deliberation and therefore these other methods can be influenced by non-evidential concerns even though deliberation itself cannot be (Shah 2006, 489).

Given the preceding argument, a non-evidentialist cannot abide by Shah's definition of transparency, as they would then be forced to accept the deliberative constraint on reasons. Transparency is a psychological fact, and the best explanation of it, that it is due to the sole, truth-oriented (i.e. evidentialist) norm applying to doxastic deliberation, entails the deliberative constraint on reasons. The deliberative constraint on reasons is incompatible with the very root of non-evidentialism, and so the only remaining choices available to the non-evidentialist are to either deny transparency outright, or to attempt to define it differently (Shah 2006, 490).

In order to counter potential non-evidentialist responses, Shah moves to give potential alternate definitions and explanations of transparency that do not by default imply the deliberative constraint on reasons. The first alternative explanation is that having true beliefs on matters we are concerned with is desirable. Rather than transparency being explained by truth being the norm which guides our deliberative processes, this explanation characterizes transparency as being caused by a desire to believe true propositions. Transparency is thus explained by virtue of our largely overriding desire to believe the truth in matters which concern us. We automatically form beliefs based on their apparent truth because of our desire to possess such true belief (Shah 2006, 490).

Shah is quick to point out the flaws in this attempt at redefining transparency. He argues that this explanation does not work because it seems to imply that during doxastic deliberations, whether or not a proposition is true is simply one among several questions that gets asked, but this is not the case. During doxastic deliberations, the truth of the proposition is not just a question, it is the only relevant question. If the non-evidentialist point of view was correct, other questions about other desires would come into play. The problem is that transparency holds in all cases, even in the ones where one would rather believe something that they know is actually false (Shah 2006, 491).

The other potential definition that's available to non-evidentialists is to say that since it is a psychological fact that beliefs are determined by evidence, agents must choose to believe based on their evidence and, using doxastic deliberation, they must focus on evidential reasons. The problem with this kind of explanation, according to Shah, is that it implies an inferential step where the agent goes from deciding what to

believe, to realizing that they will only decide what to believe through basing their belief on evidence, to actually basing their belief on evidence. The problem that Shah has with this is that there is no reason to believe that this kind of middle step actually occurs. A non-evidentialist might still argue that the link is so close so as to appear seamless, and even though we may not be aware of it, this inferential step occurs (Shah 2006, 491-2).

A worse problem than demonstrating the inferential step arises for the non-evidentialist, however, as the argument in question still seems to imply that the only thing which can cause belief is evidence, which is clearly false when one takes into account other processes such as wishful thinking, prejudice, and preference. A correct account of transparency should look specifically at doxastic deliberation, and attempt to say nothing in general about other belief forming processes (Shah 2006, 492).

One more route appears available to the non-evidentialist, who could still potentially argue that other belief forming processes can be influenced by non-evidential considerations, but when it comes to deliberation it is simply a basic brute fact that only evidence counts. Shah disagrees with this argument, however, since it seems to deny that there is a plausible account of transparency available. Shah has arguably just given a plausible account of transparency, and therefore claiming that no plausible account exists is false (Shah 2006, 492).

2.3 Responses to Evidentialism

The argument that something is impossible or that something should never be the case is often radical, and often meets with a sizeable level of criticism. Since the evidentialist position maintains either through impossibility or what ought to be the case

that there can be no such thing as a normative non-epistemic reason for belief, it is no exception to this. In the remainder of this chapter I will summarize the responses offered by Susan Haack (1997), Keith DeRose (2000), and Masahiro Yamada (2009). Each of these authors is a critic of one of the evidentialist positions presented in this chapter.

2.3.1 Susan Haack and W.K. Clifford

Haack's criticism of Clifford begins with the case of the man who owns a ship, and on poor evidence, judges it to be fit to sail when in fact, it is not. As a result, the ship sinks and everyone on board is killed. Clifford's argument, according to Haack, is that the owner of the ship knowingly and willingly committed self-deception, and that this was wrong. However, Clifford fails to make clear exactly what it is about this case that makes it morally wrong. Clifford is right in claiming that this is clearly a case of immoral ignorance. The owner of the ship is certainly guilty of believing without justification and through self-deception (Haack 1997, 135-6).

However, according to Haack, this case is not a common case. It represents many extremes which are not common to every case of unjustified belief. This case, in fact, is distinct from many other cases of this kind of belief, and differs from them in a number of ways. First of all, the unjustified belief is false. In addition to having poor evidential support and poor justification, the owner of the ship is also believing a false proposition. The proposition is also important in a practical way. Whether or not the proposition is true or believed will lead to a vitally important decision. The ship's owner also has high responsibility with regard to the decision and the lives of those on the ship. Everything hinges on what he decides, and therefore, on what he believes to be the case. There are

also severe harmful consequences should the ship sail and the belief prove to be false. If the ship's owner is wrong in their belief and the ship sails, then the lives of everyone on board are at risk. Finally, the belief that the ship is safe to sail is also a wilfully caused belief. The owner of the ship did not come to believe this through valid means of inquiry, but decided that he wanted to believe that the ship was seaworthy and chose to view all of the evidence in that light (Haack 1997, 136).

Haack points out that Clifford's thesis that it is always wrong to believe without epistemic justification, or epistemic reasons, is wrong unless a case which is absent all of the features mentioned above is also a case where the agent in question is wrong. Therefore, a case of epistemically unjustified belief that is true, unimportant, perfectly harmless, unwillingly caused, and held by an agent who has no responsibility, would have to be viewed as wrong or as a belief which should not be held (Haack 1997, 136). For example, a student sitting in a psychology class, idly wondering why a certain obscure fact of human psychology is the case, might form a hypothesis which is ultimately correct. However, they have done no experimentation and gathered no evidence in forming this hypothesis, and their belief in the hypothesis is therefore completely unjustified. Their belief in this hypothesis meets all of the above conditions, and yet, by Clifford's view, it is still arguably morally wrong for the psychology student to believe in the hypothesis as they do.

What Clifford does make clear is that it is a belief's being held without proper justification or evidence that makes it wrong to hold. It is not the truth or falsity of the belief. Whether the belief is true or false is irrelevant to the question of whether an agent should hold the belief. This leads to two more potential outcomes of the ship case. The

first case that Haack raises is one which Clifford does not discuss. It is the case where if the owner of the ship had been justified in his belief that the ship was seaworthy, he would be, under Clifford's view of things, committing no wrong whatsoever, even if on believing this way, he sent those people to their deaths. The second case is one discussed by Clifford, it is the case where the ship's owner turns out to be correct, but still unjustified, in believing that the ship is okay to sail. Under Clifford's view of things, the owner of the ship is no less guilty in this case than in the one where the ship actually sinks, since he believed as he believed without the proper justification to do so (Haack 1997, 136).

Haack moves on to criticize Clifford for failing to distinguish between morality and epistemology in defining what is right, wrong, and one ought to do. When Clifford claims that the owner of the ship did not have the right to believe as he did, Clifford does not make it clear whether he is speaking about a moral right, an epistemic right, or both. He seems to confuse the two and take them as being roughly the same when discussing what one has a right to believe. She does, however, admit that he judges well when he says that the ship's owner used poor investigation techniques, and that his self-deception led to an unacceptably high risk of harm. (Haack 1997, 136).

Haack poses a question for Clifford's thesis. What if the proposition in question is inconsequential or the agent is not in a position of any kind of power, authority, or responsibility? What is the harm in believing without justification then? One possible Cliffordian response is his argument that there is an inherent link between belief and action, and therefore they are always tied together so closely that one cannot hold a belief without acting on it to some extent. In the example of the psychology student used

above, even having the hypothesis in the back of their mind could cause them to answer questions on a test or to write a paper differently than they otherwise would have, and potentially cost them marks. The risk that a belief will be acted upon is always present, and therefore, it is the responsibility of agents to only believe when they have sufficient evidence to support their belief. A second possible answer to Haack's question is his argument that if agents permit themselves to believe without justification in some cases, they may come to allow this kind of sloppy believing more and more frequently, putting themselves at greater risk of acting on beliefs that they are not justified in holding (Haack 1997, 136-7).

These responses, Haack argues, are based on false assumptions that Clifford holds. As such, she rejects both of Clifford's responses to her question. The first false assumption that Clifford makes when he gives these responses is that the mere existence of some potential for harm is a sufficient condition for negative moral judgements. Haack argues that based on this, one would have to conclude that not just driving drunk, but merely owning a car, is morally wrong, since there is always a potential for harm, however remote, associated with owning an automobile. Haack also argues that Clifford falsely assumes that unjustified belief is always wilfully caused, that one always intends and chooses to form an unjustified belief. She argues, however, that the cause of unjustified belief can sometimes be cognitive inadequacy. The first false assumption underlies Clifford's first response, and demonstrates that this response rests on the unstated premise that some potential for harm is always sufficient for a negative moral judgment, which is an implausible premise to maintain, as Haack points out. The second false assumption, that unjustified belief is always wilfully caused, is his key support for

his second response. Showing that this premise is false shows that it is not always the case that one unjustified belief will cause agents to become intellectually sloppy and less careful about their beliefs (Haack 1997, 137).

Haack defines cases of cognitive inadequacy as ones where agents try, to the best of their ability, to perform well epistemically, but their performance is still below par and results in an unjustified belief. There are two kinds of cognitive inadequacy. The first is personal. A case of personal cognitive inadequacy occurs when an agent simply makes a mistake or a misjudgement as they weigh a complex set of evidence. The second is cultural, and cases of this occur when faulty background beliefs enter into ones intellectual processes (Haack 1997, 133).

Finally, Haack argues that Clifford muddles the issues when he claims that believing without justification will encourage further credulity and beliefs formed without justification, and therefore will carry an increased risk of harm. It is true that carrying out poor inquiry is a bad habit, and it is also true that some agents do have this habit. Further, Haack admits that allowing oneself to operate this way does increase one's chance of continuing to operate that way. However, Haack differs from Clifford and argues that it is not always the case that an unjustified belief is a case of poor or sloppy inquiry. Sometimes the culprit is not the agent's will, but cognitive inadequacy, so Clifford's argument that one must never allow an unjustified belief because this will bring them closer to allowing it habitually ultimately fails (Haack 1997, 137).

2.3.2 Keith DeRose and Richard Feldman

Keith DeRose's (2000) paper, "Ought We to Follow Our Evidence?" was a direct response to Richard Feldman's (2000) paper, "The Ethics of Belief." In his responses to and critique of Feldman, DeRose made arguments that were almost entirely epistemic in nature, and therefore largely irrelevant to the purposes of this thesis. While he does offer interesting criticisms of Feldman's epistemological arguments, it is not Feldman's epistemological arguments I am interested in discussing. However, DeRose's final criticism, while still aimed at Feldman's epistemological account, can actually work as a critique of the evidentialist position by pointing to something beyond evidence that is actually still necessary to any complete theory of belief.

In an effort to criticize Feldman, DeRose discusses sceptical hypotheses in an attempt to show that these offer counter-intuitive results when it comes to Feldman's account of evidentialism. DeRose argues that it would be "epistemically defective" (DeRose 2000, 703) to not thoroughly disbelieve sceptical hypotheses such as the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis (DeRose 2000, 703). This sceptical argument basically argues that one could be a brain in a vat being fed information electronically that simulates the real world. The result of such simulation is that the brain would not be able to tell the difference between this and the real world. We, therefore, cannot tell the difference between being a brain in a vat and being in the real world, and if we cannot be sure that the world around us is real, then we cannot be sure that any individual proposition about the world around us is true. I cannot be sure that I even have a left hand, since if I were a brain in a vat, this left hand would be simulated. It is this kind of hypothesis that DeRose claims should be thoroughly disbelieved (DeRose 2000, 703).

In attempting to show that Feldman's hypothesis cannot yield the right verdict about radical scepticism such as the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, DeRose begins by explaining that evidence is context sensitive. For example, a sports broadcast can give an agent evidence to support their belief in the outcomes of certain games. However, if the reliability of that very sports broadcast is called into question, then the agent's evidence for the broadcast's reliability cannot simply be the outcomes of the games that they broadcast, since the agent's only evidence for these results is the sports broadcast whose reliability is in question. Similarly, DeRose argues that everyday evidence such as "I have a hand" cannot be effective against the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis because that hypothesis, and others like it, calls into question the very idea that I have a hand. What DeRose is therefore arguing is that we do not have evidence to support us in disbelieving sceptical hypotheses, and that by Feldman's account we require such evidence in order to disbelieve them, and therefore the results of this kind of hypothesis, when placed under Feldman's evidentialist position, run contrary to what we would ideally expect from a theory of belief justification (DeRose 2000, 704-5).

Having made this point, DeRose tries to find potential ways out for the evidentialist. He says that evidentialists could attempt to find salvation in the claim that believing in the real world better explains sensory experience, and that believing in sceptical hypotheses is a less likely and less effective explanation. However, DeRose feels this argument is weak and it does not count very well as evidence. Even if it does count as evidence, DeRose argues that it would count only as very weak evidence which is not very compelling. Therefore, he feels that the evidence alone does not support the

level to which he thinks it is rational to believe the real world hypothesis (DeRose 2000, 705).

DeRose's argument is not necessarily an argument against the idea that there can never be a normative non-epistemic reason for belief, but in pointing out evidentialism's weakness and inability to cope effectively with sceptical hypotheses, he does seem to be showing that perhaps normative epistemic reasons are not enough. It is not clearly an argument for pragmatism, and thus for the idea that there can be non-epistemic reasons for belief, but in showing that normative epistemic reasons, at least as they're described by Feldman, cannot do everything that we would think it necessary for normative reasons to do, it does help point to the necessity of something beyond epistemic reasons in deciding what to believe.

2.3.3 Masahiro Yamada and Nishi Shah

In a 2009 paper, Yamada presents a series of objections against Shah's "New Argument for Evidentialism." The first of these objections is an attempt to show that Shah's premises do not support the conclusion he draws from them: that evidentialism is true and that pragmatic (i.e. non-epistemic, non-evidential) reasons for belief are impossible. After Yamada finds this approach inadequate and determines that Shah's premises actually do support his conclusion, Yamada instead argues that there are questionable premises in Shah's argument and that ultimately there is a circularity that assumes evidentialism at the outset, i.e. Shah's overarching argument is question-begging (Yamada 2009, 399-401).

Yamada claims that Shah's assertion that pragmatists must accept his deliberative constraint on reasons is questionable, as his B1 premise is itself questionable. Recall that the B1 premise states that a potential reason is a reason for an agent to believe a proposition only if the potential reason is capable of being a reason for which the agent believes the proposition. The underlying principle of B1, according to Yamada, is controversial and rejected by externalism—the view that reasons need not be tied to internal considerations like deliberation—so in order to win against the deliberative constraint on reasons, a pragmatist needs only to be an externalist. Additionally, Yamada sees it as unproblematic for a pragmatist to reject B1 in order to preserve the possibility of pragmatic reasons for belief, since the pragmatist believes that there are pragmatic reasons for belief and accepting both transparency and B1 would rule out this possibility from the beginning (Yamada 2009, 401-2).

Yamada points out that instead of arguing for internalism—the view that reasons must be tied to internal considerations like deliberation—and thus attempting to force the pragmatists to give up their position by eliminating the security they find in externalism, Shah goes in a completely different direction and argues that transparency by its very nature implies the deliberative constraint on reasons, and so no pragmatist can accept transparency without also accepting the deliberative constraint and therefore giving up pragmatism. This creates a strong position for Shah, the result of which is that he no longer even needs his B1 and B2 premises in order for his argument to stand (Yamada 2009, 402).

Shah argues that it is the kind of activity that transparency is, combined with a norm which governs belief that creates this strong link between transparency and the

deliberative constraint on reasons. The norm which governs belief, according to Shah, is that a belief is correct if and only if that belief is true (Yamada 2009, 402).

With the norm governing belief in mind, Yamada moves on to argue that Shah's explanation of transparency is that doxastic deliberation aims at producing beliefs according to certain norms which guide the process of forming and justifying beliefs. With this norm, it is evidence and evidence alone which can yield a correct belief (Yamada 2009, 402).

At first, this explanation of transparency arguably does not seem to imply the deliberative constraint, but Yamada manages to give it further support by explaining Shah's definition of reasons. Shah's definition of reasons, according to Yamada, states that a reason for acting indicates whether acting is correct according to the norms applying to that action. "[Reasons]: R is a reason to believe that p if and only if R is a consideration that indicates whether believing that p would be correct according to the norm [governing belief]" (Yamada 2009, 402). Yamada follows this up with an additional premise, which states that any reason that meets this definition of reasons is capable of motivating an agent to believe a proposition in the way a reason would as a premise in doxastic deliberation. In other words, any reason which fulfills this definition also fulfills the deliberative constraint on reasons. Taken together, this additional premise and the definition of reasons therefore entail the deliberative constraint on reasons, and the combination of the deliberative constraint and transparency together entail evidentialism (Yamada 2009, 403).

This is, however, not an inescapable position for the pragmatist. Yamada argues that pragmatists can simply reject this definition of reasons and say that there can be good

reasons to hold an incorrect belief. In this way they can even manage to accept the definition of a correct belief as one that is true. Following this tactic further, they are able to accept Shah's definition of transparency without being forced to accept Shah's deliberative constraint (Yamada 2009, 403).

Because the definition of reasons effectively captures evidentialism, Yamada argues that it is fair for the pragmatists to reject it because any attempt made to disprove pragmatism with the definition of reasons is circular. This definition presupposes the truth of evidentialism and therefore the falsehood of pragmatism, creating a circularity when it is used to justify endorsing evidentialism and rejecting pragmatism. Yamada goes on to present a weaker formulation of the definition of reasons which Yamada claims would be acceptable to pragmatists. This weaker definition claims that a potential reason is a reason to believe a given proposition if and only if that potential reason is a consideration that indicates whether believing that proposition would have positive normative or evaluative status. This option, however, is not open to the evidentialist because they deny that pragmatic reasons can function as premises, which the weaker definition admits as a possibility (Yamada 2009, 403).

The problems posed by the weaker definition could potentially be solved by a stronger restatement of the norm. Yamada redefines the norm that governs belief processes as granting positive normative and evaluative status to propositions which are true. Yamada argues that this redefinition of the norm is highly implausible since both sides agree that a belief may be desirable for pragmatic reasons. In addition, the redefinition begs the question against pragmatism just as the original definition of reasons does, since it is simply a flat denial of the basic premise of the pragmatist in this debate:

that reasons for belief can be reasons for belief on grounds other than evidence (Yamada 2009, 403).

Yamada argues that the ultimate failure of Shah is his need for a connection between transparency and the deliberative constrain on reasons, and that this connection relies on either his original definition of reasons or the weaker definition along with the stronger norm, both of which simply assume evidentialism over pragmatism at the outset. Therefore, according to Yamada, Shah's new argument for evidentialism fails (Yamada 2009, 404).

3. Non-Evidentialism

In the second chapter, I discussed the historical roots of evidentialism as well as some contemporary attempts to clarify, defend, or refine the position. This chapter will consider non-evidentialism in the same manner. The non-evidentialists endorse the second answer to the central question of the thesis, and make the claim that there are cases where non-epistemic reasons for belief can become normative, and therefore a proper reason on which belief can be based. In their view, it is possible that certain conditions can be met that will allow a non-epistemic reason for belief to become normative, and compete with the better established epistemic reasons for belief.

This chapter will cover the historical roots of this non-evidentialist or pragmatist view, found in the works of William James, and then move on to discuss two contemporary non-evidentialists, including an article by John Heil and two works by Andrew Reisner. I will conclude by briefly revisiting Susan Haack, and discussing her verdict on non-evidentialism.

3.1 Historical Non-Evidentialism: William James

In his 1896 work, “The Will to Believe,” James aimed to establish that the will is not only capable but permitted to enter into intellectual doxastic decisions under a very specific set of conditions. The goal of that essay was to show that the formation of belief can and should allow for the normative consideration of non-epistemic reasons, as long as such cases meet his criteria (James 1896, 108).

At the outset, James reveals that he intends to justify the use and practice of faith, even in those who tend to engage in things logically and philosophically. He does not see this as a vice or as something that needs to be avoided, even for intellectuals, but instead as something that should be defended (James 1896, 100).

James begins this defence by explaining some core notions and distinctions pertaining to belief. First of all, a proposition (or “hypothesis,” in James’s terminology) can be living or dead. This is not a property of the proposition itself, but a relational property. Whether or not a proposition is living or dead depends on the person considering it, and whether or not they consider it plausible. If an agent considers a proposition living, it means that they feel that there is a possibility that it is true, and therefore a possibility that it would be right to believe it. If, however, the proposition is dead to that particular agent, then it does not seem at all possible to them, and they are unable to take it seriously (James 1896, 100-1).

When faced with the choice between believing one or the other of two competing propositions, James argues that there are other important distinctions to be made. In addition to each competing proposition’s being a living or dead option, the choice itself

as to whether to believe it (an “option,” as James calls it) might be forced or avoidable. If the option is forced, this means that the choice between believing one or other of the competing propositions is unavoidable. For example, when an agent is asked to either believe a proposition or go without believing it, that choice becomes unavoidable. No matter what they choose to do, they are making the choice. The agent is forced to make a choice between one proposition “I will accept p as true,” or another proposition “I will not accept p as true.” There are no options other than to accept or not accept p and therefore the choice is unavoidable and, as James puts it, forced (James 1896, 101).

An avoidable choice is one in which an agent need not make a choice, but could do something else altogether. The example James gives is that in being asked to choose between going out with an umbrella or going out without an umbrella, one could avoid the choice altogether by simply staying inside. Instead of choosing between the proposition “I will go out with an umbrella,” and its competing proposition “I will go out without an umbrella,” the agent has the option to believe neither and instead endorse a third proposition: “I will stay inside.”

A third distinction James makes about choices concerns their potential to be either momentous or trivial. Choosing between two competing propositions could be either low-stakes or high-stakes. A high-stakes, unique, or irrevocable choice is momentous, while one which is not so unique is trivial. An option which is momentous in nature holds the potential for bringing the agent something of significant value. Finally, James describes a genuine option as one which is forced, living and momentous (James 1896, 101-2).

Having established these distinctions between choices, as well as the overarching distinction between a genuine choice and one which is not genuine, James moves on to talk about how optional belief is. He begins this phase of the discussion with a full admission that on the surface, it seems difficult to say that belief is a voluntary choice. As an agent begins to explore science, philosophy, and other forms of reasoning, the idea that they could choose what they believe seems less plausible (James 1896, 102-4).

James argues that even if free will and simple wishing are taken out of the process, more remains than pure intellectual insight. He claims that we are unable to resurrect hypotheses which are dead to us by the force of our will, but many of these hypotheses come to be dead to us because of our will. It is important to note that when he discusses the will James means more than simply deliberate choices; he also includes under that term subconscious features such as fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship. Which hypotheses are dead to us relies in large part on all of these subconscious features, and so James claims that all belief is a matter of faith and dependent on the will. In this way, our will automatically rules out any and all hypotheses which are useless to us. For example, a biologist will not look at the evidence for telepathy unless a scientific development can be made by doing so. In addition, volitions occur both before and after belief-forming processes occur, and it is only those which occur afterward which can be impotent to cause belief. If, however, earlier volitions were on their side, those which occur after the fact might not be too late to serve a purpose (James 1896, 105-7).

James also discusses what he refers to as two distinct “commandments” regarding the formation of belief. James points out that, when engaging with the world, it is

seemingly necessary for agents to not only believe truths, but also to avoid errors. These two imperatives are not the same thing, as avoiding one error would not necessarily cause one to believe in the truth of the matter, but could simply lead to a different but related error. James argues that agents must therefore decide which of these imperatives is more important. He claims that while many have a fear of error and thus take avoiding error as more important than finding the truth of the matter, he views things differently. James believes that worse things can happen than believing in some falsehoods and that every agent is guaranteed to believe in some falsehoods throughout the course of their lives, so he concludes that believing truths is more important than avoiding falsehoods (James 1896, 113-4).

After establishing the priority of believing possible truths over avoiding possible falsehoods, James quickly moves to qualify it. He argues that in cases where the possible belief is a trivial one, it is better to avoid the possible error than believe the possible truth, at least until there is more evidential reason to believe. Also, in cases where making the choice to believe is not forced, it is better to not make a choice than to make one and end up believing in error (James 1896, 115).

James continues to argue for the permissibility of the will playing a role in belief by demonstrating that there are some cases where it is actually necessary. He argues that there are cases in which a fact will not come to be true unless there is a faith in the fact itself which comes prior to evidence, and as such, is a non-evidentially supported belief. He gives an example of this, which is analogous to religious faith. Relations between people, such as whether or not one person is liked by another, depend not on evidence but on already having and acting on a belief in the friendship. In order for one person to

befriend another, the first person must, in a sense, believe in the friendship and act on it without waiting for evidence of the friendship. Waiting for such evidence will not secure the friendship. Believing in the friendship will cause the first person to act friendly toward the second person, and then the second person to act friendly to the first person, so that the friendship actually comes to be (James 1896, 118-9).

Since it is permissible and even necessary to believe in cases like this, so that the truth will be believed and even realized, James claims that agents have the right to believe any proposition which is presented in a genuine option between believing it and a competing proposition. He claims that any opposition to his point of view likely stems from people who think of propositions which are dead to them, which he is not saying one can or should believe in. In addition, James is not claiming that it is a requirement of agents to believe all hypotheses which are live to them, but simply pointing out that a failure to believe a truth is as much a failure as believing in a falsehood, so simply awaiting further evidence can in itself be a failure (James 1896, 122-3).

3.2 Contemporary Non-Evidentialism: John Heil and Andrew Reisner

James offers a compelling reason to endorse the idea that there can be good non-evidential reasons for belief. His defence seems to be rooted primarily in facts about the will and the intellect, as well as facts about the world and beliefs in general. Like Clifford's evidentialist thesis, James's discussion has been fleshed out by contemporary philosophers who have worked to explain, refine, and defend non-evidentialism. Among these philosophers are John Heil (1983) and Andrew Reisner (2008 and 2009). Heil's inquiry of comparing intellectual to practical demands leads him to believe that

intellectual demands are simply a subset of the larger set of practical demands (Heil 1983, 752-3), while Reisner's investigations attempt primarily to show that normative non-epistemic reasons for belief are possible (2009), and that it is possible to weigh them against normative epistemic reasons for belief (2008).

3.2.1 John Heil

The main purpose of Heil's article is to question whether and how intellectual demands, or epistemic reasons, and practical demands, or non-epistemic reasons, might be compared to one another. He begins this discussion with an example where these two demands are in conflict. A woman named Sally finds compelling evidence that her husband, Bert, is being unfaithful, but Sally believes that the marriage should not fall apart. Her intellect demands that she believe the evidence she has, but since she cannot conceal her suspicions very well, practicality demands that she believe that her husband is faithful in order to keep the marriage alive. Heil admits that the forming of a belief might not in itself be a deed, and therefore voluntary, but also claims that it is possible to take actions to acquire it, and so belief is to some degree voluntary, and Sally is thus capable of believing either that her husband is faithful or that he is not. Heil then asks what it would be most reasonable for Sally to believe (Heil 1983, 752-753).

While some might hold that the most reasonable thing to do is to always follow the intellect, Heil argues that in Sally's case practical concerns might outweigh the evidential concerns. He defends this with what he calls a natural definition of reasonable belief, stating that reasonable belief is the result of practical reason. This takes into account epistemic warrants but also includes non-epistemic reasons. Epistemic reasons

are considered a part of practical demands, but practical demands encompass more than epistemic demands. A practical reason or demand can be understood as whatever is in the best interest, generally speaking, of the agent. This argument alone does not make it so that epistemic reasons can be defeated by other kinds of practical considerations. The possibility still exists that it is always most reasonable and practical to follow what one is epistemically entitled to believe (Heil 1983, 753-4).

Once one agrees that epistemic reasons are part of an overall consideration, Heil argues that it is very difficult to maintain that epistemic reasons can never be outweighed by other considerations. It is the case with Sally that her other practical considerations intuitively outweigh what would be epistemically rational for her to believe (Heil 1983, 754).

Heil moves on to distinguish between two basic approaches to the problem he's discussing. The first approach is consequentialism, which is, to an extent, roughly what he's been describing so far. *It treats epistemic rationality as a form of practical rationality, so that what is epistemically reasonable is to be considered only in the light of practical consequences. Nonconsequentialism, on the other hand, ignores practicality altogether so that reasonableness is decided solely on epistemic grounds without taking what is otherwise practical into account (Heil 1983, 755). Nonconsequentialism would deny that Sally would be at all reasonable in believing her husband to be faithful, while consequentialism encounters a conflict between epistemic and other kinds of practical demands (Heil 1983, 757-8).*

Heil argues that there are several characterizations of reasons for believing a proposition. The epistemic characterization relates propositions to one another and the

subject. He has in mind here the same kind of epistemic reason as described in the first chapter of this thesis. There are other, non-epistemic reasons for holding a proposition. These are not necessarily non-epistemic reasons as I have described them. They consist of explanatory reasons, which are reasons which simply state why a given agent holds a belief, and motivational reasons, which state why an agent would want to hold a given belief or why it would be good for them to hold a belief. In order to differentiate himself from the consequentialist without endorsing the nonconsequentialist thesis, Heil intends to focus on distinguishing between the motivational reasons from the epistemic ones, which is an issue ignored by consequentialists (Heil 1983, 755).

Heil wants to maintain that Sally has practical but not epistemic reason to believe that Bert is faithful, and that practical and epistemic reason are distinct from each other. In this way, he might get the correct answer to his example without having to endorse consequentialism. In the end, however, he would still be left with the problem of what it is that Sally should believe. Consequentialists can offer no firm solution to the problem. They would say that epistemic judgment must be modified by practical considerations, which leads right back to the original question of what Sally should believe (Heil 1983, 757-8).

It would sever Sally from practical rationality altogether to endorse the nonconsequentialist and deny that Sally should believe as her best interests demand. Heil argues that solving this problem seems to depend on denying the consequentialist and upholding distinctions which are useful. In the end, Sally's practical reason for belief is just that, a reason for belief. It is motivational in nature. It is a reason for which she should believe. It is not, however, an epistemic reason. It is not a reason to believe. In

having a reason for belief, Sally has a motivation to seek evidence for her belief. At the moment, what she should do, as dictated by her epistemic rationality, is to disbelieve that her husband is faithful. However, she also should investigate further and hope to find evidence of his innocence. She has practical reason to search for evidence of his innocence even though she does not yet have reason to believe in his innocence (Heil 1983, 758).

Heil moves on to discuss the different but not unrelated topic of duties, such as the duty to give certain people the benefit of the doubt. He has two initial ways of characterizing such duties. When these kinds of duties are called into play, Heil thinks that the agent ought to carefully scrutinize the evidence, and that the agent ought also to avoid acting on certain kinds of belief (Heil 1983, 759-60). In the case of Sally, for example, her duty might require her to carefully examine whatever evidence there is against her husband, and in the meantime to avoid acting on the belief supported by the evidence.

In general, Heil dislikes the possibility that, epistemically speaking, agents should treat beliefs about their loved ones the same as beliefs about other people and even inanimate objects. Heil also raises the question as to whether these duties apply strictly to behaviour or also to the underlying beliefs and the processes which form them. He dislikes the potential consequence that if the duties apply to beliefs they may warrant agents in engaging in sloppy or biased inquiry, to the point where inquiry is just a way of reinforcing one's own self-deception (Heil 1983, 761).

Typically, agents do not simply draw conclusions about their friends and family the same way they would with random strangers. This difference in behaviour is natural

and unintentional. Further, Heil argues that it is a morally good behaviour, and not a bad epistemic one. This is a duty we learn along with proper and virtuous epistemic habits. These intellectual virtues, which are learned and taught in ways similar to moral virtues, pay heed to both epistemic and practical norms. Heil thinks that this account allows us to speak of duties to believe even when we are not discussing a directly voluntary process. We can also encourage the development of both epistemic and prudential habits that reflect our duties, and this can all be done without reducing epistemic concerns to only being relevant through their practical implications (Heil 1983, 762-4)

3.2.2 Andrew Reisner and Non-Epistemic Reasons for Belief

The first paper by Reisner which I will be discussing is his 2009 article, “The Possibility of Pragmatic Reasons for Belief and the Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem.” In this paper, Reisner wants to argue against the evidentialist viewpoint, which maintains that the only valid reasons for belief are evidential, and instead make room for the possibility of other kinds of reasons for belief (Reisner 2009, 257).

In the first chapter, I summarized Reisner’s definition of object-given and state-given reasons. I will review them briefly here. An agent obtains object-given reasons for belief as the result of a conceptual relation between the reason and the truth (or likelihood of truth) of the object of the attitude. In the case of belief, the object—the proposition and its contents—are important. The standard object-given reason for belief is evidence. An agent obtains a state-given reason as the result of a relation between the reason and the attitude itself. In the case of belief, whether or not one believes is important, regardless of the (likelihood of the) truth of the proposition (Reisner 2009, 258).

The first line of argument that Reisner explores is to deny the evidentialist thesis that the logical structure of a reason prevents genuine state-given reasons for belief from being possible. Reisner begins by examining the logical structure of reasons. He argues that the structure of reasons is that a certain fact is a reason for an agent to do something. Being a reason is a relation between a fact and an action of the agent. A fact, any fact, can be a reason to act, to believe, or to do anything else, but Reisner chooses to focus on action and belief (Reisner 2009, 260).

He demonstrates this structure of reasons through the use of an example. If an agent is on safari and suddenly sees that a nearby rhino has begun to charge, the agent has both a reason to act and a reason to believe. The charging rhino provides the agent with a reason to believe that the rhino is angry and intends to do harm, and also a reason to jump out of the way to avoid such harm. A single fact can thus instantiate multiple reason-relations, one for each kind of reason. Types of reasons do not depend on the kind of fact they stem from. Being a particular type of reason, or a reason at all, is not an inherent property of individual facts but a relational one that depends on both the fact itself as well as the possible actions of those being exposed to the fact (Reisner 2009, 261).

There is more to a reason than this however. Just as we can discuss different types of reason, such as reasons to act or reasons to believe, it is also possible to discuss the kind of ground that they have. Reisner argues that the distinction between evidential reasons for belief and non-evidential reasons for belief is a distinction of grounds, and not of type. Returning to rhino example, Reisner points out that seeing the charging rhino provides an evidential reason to believe that the rhino is angry and a non-evidential reason to act by jumping out of the way (Reisner 2009, 261).

Moving on from this discussion, Reisner claims that it is necessary for evidentialists to explain and defend why they take only evidence, which is just one ground, as the suitable ground for reasons for belief (Reisner 2009, 262). Reisner concludes that something's being a reason for belief is a distinct issue from its being an evidential or non-evidential reason for belief, and therefore that the evidentialists cannot simply appeal to the structure of belief in support of their point of view (Reisner 2009, 264).

Having established to his own satisfaction that the logical structure of reasons does not in itself preclude the possibility for non-evidential reasons, Reisner moves on to counter a second common line of evidentialist thought. This other possible approach is the argument that something about beliefs makes it so that only evidential reasons and not non-evidential ones could relate to belief as a reason. In taking on this line of thought, Reisner intends to show that the involuntary nature of belief fails to support evidentialism just as the structure of reasons fails to support evidentialism (Reisner 2009, 264).

One person who argues for the position which Reisner is defending against is Christopher Hookway (Hookway 2000, 60), who claims that beliefs are not actions and belief formation cannot be subjected to the will, so evidential evaluations are the focus of epistemic evaluations, guided by different norms than action. Reisner puts the issue more simply. Since actions are voluntary and beliefs are involuntary, there must therefore be a difference between the two, and evidentialists think that this difference is that only evidence can count as a reason for belief whereas non-evidential considerations are reason for actions (Reisner 2009, 264).

Reisner mentions that Thomas Kelly also brings up important points in this regard. Kelly claims that there is a connection between acquiring evidence for a belief and acquiring that belief itself, while there is no connection between acquiring a non-evidential reason for a belief and acquiring the belief. This is important because having a reason to do something implies that an agent can voluntarily do that thing. But one cannot voluntarily form beliefs (Kelly 2002, 6; Reisner 2009, 264-5). Reisner goes on to say that while Kelly does not weigh in on evidentialism in particular, other evidentialists accept a broad form of involuntarism, where belief is never or nearly never subject to the will, rather than more limited forms of involuntarism where belief is not subject to the will only in specific cases (Reisner 2009, 265).

Assuming that involuntarism is true, it therefore appears that the important distinction between beliefs and actions stand. The question then becomes whether this means specific kinds of reasons apply to each. Reisner intends to show that this is not the implication (Reisner 2009, 265).

The discussion moves on to Reisner recapping a basic “ought implies can” picture. A normative reason has to be a reason that the agent is capable of acting on or fulfilling. This works well for action, where once an agent realizes that they have a reason to do something they are generally capable of performing the task. It does not, however, translate easily to beliefs, as it does not seem possible to influence one’s beliefs in the same way actions can be influenced. The end result of this line of reasoning is that because one cannot choose to have certain beliefs, we can therefore not say that one ought to have certain beliefs (Reisner 2009, 266).

Reisner decides to investigate this way of viewing things in order to see if it does lend support to evidentialism. He determines that there are two possible meanings of the word “can” in this instance. Either evidentialists are discussing psychological possibility or they are discussing physical possibility (Reisner 2009, 266).

The first option, psychological possibility, implies that agents are victims of their beliefs and that beliefs are forced upon them. The end consequence of this is that if their faculties are somehow faulty or limited, the agents are helpless and forced to process incorrectly and to believe things not warranted by the evidence. An example Reisner gives is that of somebody who is brainwashed to believe that all scientists are liars. The consequence of this would be that scientific evidence for a proposition would actually to them count as evidence against said proposition (Reisner 2009, 266-7).

If evidentialists accept psychological possibility as the basis for what can do with respect to belief formation, then this argument illustrates, using the above example, that the agent in question ought to believe as they do, since they are incapable of believing otherwise and it makes no sense to say that they ought to believe otherwise. Reisner follows this line of reasoning to its ultimate consequence and argues that if we accept the *ought implies can* argument regarding belief, and if we accept psychological possibility as the kind of possibility being referred to, then it can never be the case that an agent ought to believe other than they do, because it is impossible for them to do so, which is an absurd conclusion (Reisner 2009, 267).

Reisner goes on to investigate the other kind of possibility, physical possibility, to see if it supports evidentialism any better than psychological possibility. He is quick to point out that physical possibility will cause other problems for the evidentialist account.

Reisner claims that it is, technically speaking, physically possible to encode any beliefs into the brain. With the above example, it is possible for one to maintain their beliefs about scientists while still believing the things that the scientists say. It is physically possible to believe a contradiction (Reisner 2009, 267).

From the preceding argument, Reisner claims that physical possibility is too weak of a basis to support the evidentialist line of reasoning in question. A neurologist could rewire somebody's brain to make them believe that Japan is located next to Ghana and make it impossible for the agent to investigate this belief and why they have it. It is possible, under the physical understanding of what is possible, to have the belief without ever acquiring any evidence. If it is possible to believe for these kinds of reasons, then there seems to be a potential case to be made that it is possible to believe for non-evidential, pragmatic reasons. Reisner also points out that the evidentialists themselves cannot talk of agents willing themselves to believe on evidential grounds, since what is in question is an involuntaristic picture which the will cannot affect (Reisner 2009, 267-8).

After examining both psychological and physical possibility, Reisner finds it safe to conclude that if the evidentialist wants to use an involuntaristic ought implies can picture to defend their position, they are left with a major dilemma. Either they must use a psychological understanding of possibility, which would cause them to accept too strong of a position, and rule things out which they would not want to rule out, or they must use a physical understanding of possibility, which would cause them to accept too weak of a position, and admit any and all beliefs and reasons for belief (Reisner 2009, 269).

Having made room for the possibility of non-evidential reasons, Reisner decides to make one more move against the evidentialist, and offer a line of argument that will

shift the burden of proof to the evidentialists (Reisner 2009, 269). He begins this line of argument with an example in which a wealthy eccentric offers Joe half of his fortune if Joe believes that next Tuesday is Wednesday. While the evidentialist view must state that this simply gives Joe a reason to cause himself to believe, not a reason to believe, Reisner wants to show that this defence is implausible, thus making it necessary for the evidentialist to seriously defend that viewpoint (Reisner 2009, 268-9).

The first argument is what Reisner refers to as the “argument from the unity of normativity” (Reisner 2009, 269). Assuming that there is enough non-evidential reason for Joe to cause himself to believe that next Tuesday is Wednesday, and also that there is enough evidential reason for Joe not to believe that next Tuesday is Wednesday, then Joe cannot possibly satisfy normative demands because this will require him to believe both contradictory propositions, that is, it would require him to believe both that he should believe that next Tuesday is Wednesday and that he should not believe next Tuesday is not Wednesday. Since evidence for a proposition is also evidence against the negation of that proposition, evidentialism would not be able to support this, since norms would pull Joe in two directions. Reisner admits that some evidentialists might deny that normativity is unified in the way he is describing, but insists that this argument is a problem for those who do not wish to make that move (Reisner 2009, 269).

The second argument stems from the “transmission of normativity from the end to the means” (Reisner 2009, 270). Reisner makes the case that whether or not Joe gets the prize depends entirely on what he believes, no matter how he comes by that belief. How he causes himself to believe is irrelevant; only believing counts. To make matters clearer, Reisner offers a second, analogous example. A woman named Jill has tickets to a

concert but she will not be admitted if she arrives late to the show. This gives her reason to arrive on time. Whether she causes herself to arrive on time or is caused by somebody else to arrive on time is an irrelevant matter. The only issue of consequence is that she arrives on time. She has reason to arrive on time, therefore she has reason to cause herself to arrive on time (Reisner 2009, 269-70).

From this discussion, Reisner draws a conclusion regarding the Joe case. In Joe's case, there is a similar transmission of normativity, where it seems that his reason to cause the belief is also a reason to have the belief, and to argue that this is not the case simply because there can be no non-evidential reasons for belief is only begging the question against non-evidentialism and in favour of evidentialism. Reisner tentatively admits that these cases could potentially be different since one involves a direct action and the other involves belief, but he also argues that demonstrating this difference falls to the evidentialist (Reisner 2009. 270).

Reisner feels it is necessary to raise one final point, regarding special cases of non-evidential reasons for belief. There are at least two kinds of cases in which agents do not need to cause a belief which is warranted by their non-epistemic considerations. The first of these is where there is evidential support for a belief. Having evidence for a belief that makes an agent happy does not require that the agent take steps to cause themselves to hold that belief, since the evidence can already do that work for them. The second case is where the belief is already held. Having additional non-epistemic reason to believe something does not make it necessary to cause the belief all over again if the agent already holds the belief (Reisner 2009, 270-1).

Having all but concluded his discussion, Reisner does offer one more objection to the argument that agents can only cause themselves to believe on non-epistemic grounds and cannot form beliefs directly. Reisner argues that an agent could be offered a deal which promises a reward or the prevention of severe negative consequences for believing something, and the evidentialist, he has shown, can allow for the agent to cause themselves to have the belief. But, Reisner asks, what if as part of the deal, the agent is not allowed to indirectly cause the belief? Reisner argues that since they do not admit for direct non-epistemic reasons for belief, the evidentialist is stuck saying that even if saving the world from a terrible fate hangs in the balance, the person in question has nothing that counts in favour of the belief (Reisner 2009, 271).

3.2.3 Andrew Reisner and Weighing Non-Epistemic Reasons for Belief

Making room for the possibility of normative non-epistemic reasons for belief is a huge step forward, but in a 2008 paper entitled “Weighing Pragmatic and Evidential Reasons for Belief,” Reisner takes it one step further and shows that in addition to normative non-epistemic reasons for belief being possible, there are viable methods of comparing non-epistemic and epistemic reasons for belief. We can devise measures for weighing pragmatic and evidential reasons for belief. The goal of the paper is to offer a way to do so that is complex without assigning any complex attributes to either pragmatic or evidential reasons (Reisner 2008, 17).

While this paper does not make a direct argument regarding the possibility for normative non-epistemic reasons for belief, Reisner claims that it will at least contribute to resolving the issue by showing that the two kinds of reasons can be compared and that

they have similar logical feature. The overarching goal, however, is to offer a way of comparing evidential normative reasons to non-evidential normative reasons when they conflict with one another (Reisner 2008, 18).

Reisner begins the discussion with a clear definition of the logical structure of normative reasons for belief. He defines reasons such that a given fact is a reason for an agent to believe a given proposition to a certain degree (Reisner 2008, 19). The definition of reasons is similar to the definition he offers in his 2009 paper, but with the addition of degrees. He clarifies this definition by stating that a certain fact provides a normative reason for the agent to believe the proposition. The kind of degree he is discussing is not a degree which suggests the extent to which the agent should believe the proposition, but the degree to which the reason itself offers support for the belief (Reisner 2008, 19).

Under this definition, there is also a slight difference between how evidential normative reasons count and how non-evidential normative reasons count. For evidential reasons, the fact counts to a higher or lower degree relative to its strength as evidence for the proposition. For pragmatic reasons, on the other hand, the fact counts to a higher or lower degree relative to how good it is to believe the proposition (Reisner 2008, 19).

It is at this point that Reisner introduces an example which he intends to use to compare a strictly evidentialist view, a strictly non-evidentialist view, and a mixed view. Suppose that a man named Jones grew up in Grodno, a city in Poland, but since growing up the borders have moved and now Grodno is in Belarus. Jones has an atlas which indicates this and believing that Grodno is in Belarus causes Jones great distress which can only be alleviated by not believing this (Reisner 2008, 19).

Reisner argues that the evidentialist point of view is obligated to make the claim that Jones should believe that Grodno is in Belarus, because that is what the evidence says. A strictly pragmatist or non-evidentialist view, however, would be concerned with only the benefit of the belief. The argument would be that whichever belief is of a greater benefit to Jones is the belief he should hold. His belief in the location of his hometown would rest entirely on which belief would be better for him. The mixed view would admit both kinds of reasons, and then would need to be developed so that the reasons could be compared to one another (Reisner 2008, 20).

The first step that Reisner takes in the process of figuring out how to weigh non-evidential beliefs against evidential beliefs is to state that he does not take all reasons as roughly equivalent *pro tanto* oughts, or oughts which automatically provide enough weight to believe something so long as they are not outweighed by other oughts. Instead he makes the claim that reasons have to reach a certain threshold or weight in order to make it such that an agent ought to believe. Not all reasons to believe, under Reisner's account, are sufficient reasons to believe (Reisner 2008, 20-1).

Weighing these two differing sets of reasons therefore forms the basis of comparing them, but it is not all there is to Reisner's account. He argues that once one's non-evidential reasons for belief outweigh one's evidential reasons any and all evidential reasons are to be considered silenced or defeated. He returns to the Jones case and examines what an account of just plain weighing would look like (Reisner 2008, 21).

In one set of circumstances, Reisner makes it so that the evidential reasons outweigh the pragmatic reasons. Jones has a lot of evidence and his suffering for the belief is mild. In another set of circumstances, the non-evidential reasons just barely

outweigh the evidential reasons. He has a lot of compelling evidence but his suffering outweighs these evidential concerns. Jones then acquires some more strong evidence which tips the scales back the other way and causes him to change his belief. Reisner claims that this tipping-the-scales kind of thinking does not actually capture the way reasons interact with one another. He goes on to argue that a more complex method involving “all or nothing” steps, is necessary for accurately portraying how non-evidential reasons play their role (Reisner 2008, 21-2).

To do so, Reisner introduces another example. This example concerns Smith, a basketball player whose odds of making free-throws are always five percent lower than he estimates they are. So if he believes the evidence about his condition, then, logically speaking, he will quickly end up with a zero percent chance of making free-throws, as every time he estimates his chances of making the free throw, he will have to subtract five percent from the estimate. He thus has a strong normative evidential reason to believe that he has no chance of making a free-throw, given his condition and awareness of it. Smith also happens to be a gambling philanthropist who has bet a large sum of money on the outcome of this particular game and intends to donate his winnings to charity. The game’s outcome now rests on Smith making a free-throw. He accordingly has a strong normative non-evidential reason to believe that he will make the free-throw (Reisner 2008, 22).

Reasoning from this scenario, Reisner claims that there is no doubt not only that Smith should believe that he will make the throw, but also that the evidence ceases to count altogether under the weight of his non-evidential reasons. He demonstrates this by adding to the example, where three coaches come out to him and show him statistics

indicating that his average success rate at free-throws for this game, the season, and the last three years has been fifty-five percent. Reisner argues that none of this evidence has any weight at all, given Smith's awareness of his condition, and that the evidence should not affect Smith's belief. This conclusion also works in reverse. If the potential good of a belief decreases far enough, non-evidential reasons decrease and evidential reasons come back into play as the only reasons which count (Reisner 2008, 22-3).

To further support his argument so far, Reisner provides additional evidence that a simple weighing procedure does not work. Once an agent has conclusive evidence for or against a proposition, more evidence on that side of the proposition does not add any weight to the evidence at all (Reisner 2008, 23). Discovering, for example, that certain previously unobserved astrological patterns indicate that the geocentric view of the world is wrong would not add any weight to the argument against the geocentric view of the universe. It has already been established as a scientific fact that the universe is not geocentric, no further evidence is needed and further evidence counts for nothing. In addition Reisner says that evidential reasons need to cross a certain threshold in order to become sufficient reasons for belief. The totality of the evidence in favour of a position must reach a certain weight before these reasons actually make it so that one ought to believe a certain way (Reisner 2008, 23).

Non-evidential reasons do not work the same way. As long as one has even a small non-evidential reason to believe or disbelieve a proposition, this provides a strong enough non-evidential reason to believe it, at least in cases where non-evidential reasons are all that there is to consider. Non-evidential reasons also have no upper threshold. If somebody offers money to believe something, this becomes a non-evidential reason to

believe in the proposition, and there is no upper limit to how much money can be offered or how strong a non-evidential reason can get (Reisner 2008, 23). The asymmetry between how evidential reasons work and how non-evidential reasons work prevents a simple weighing procedure from being effective. Instead, Reisner thinks that the question is whether one ought to believe what the evidence says they ought to believe or what their non-evidential reasons say they ought to believe (Reisner 2008, 23-4).

Reisner's proposed model goes as follows. When comparing non-evidential reasons to evidential reasons, if there is some non-evidential reason to believe and evidential reasons have not reached the threshold at which they begin to count, then only the non-evidential reasons count. If evidential reasons have crossed their lower threshold and exceed the non-evidential reasons, then only the evidential reasons count. If, however, in spite of crossing their lower threshold, the evidential reasons do not outweigh the non-evidential reasons, then the non-evidential reasons count. If the evidence reaches its upper threshold and cannot get any higher, then it is all that counts until non-evidential reasons manage to outweigh it, at which point the evidence is once again silenced and the non-evidential reasons become what counts (Reisner 2008, 24-5).

As an example, suppose Tiffany gets really anxious regarding her bank account balance, such that if it falls below a \$2,500 she has anxiety attacks regarding her finances. This provides a basic non-evidential reason for her to consistently believe that her bank account balance is above \$2,500. Unless she has evidence to the contrary, that is what she should believe. If she were to add up all the receipts in her purse and subtract that total from her last remembered bank account balance and discover that those deductions from her account would result in her account dropping below \$2,500, this would provide

an evidential reason to believe that her bank account balance is below \$2,500. However, if her memory is foggy and she's unsure about when she last checked her account balance as well as when she was last paid, this probably does not cross the lower evidential threshold. Even if she were without her non-evidential reason to believe that her account was above \$2,500, she would not have a strong enough evidential reason to change her belief.

If Tiffany were to then receive a bank statement in the mail indicating that her bank account balance was below \$2,500, but the statement was dated two weeks earlier, she would perhaps have enough evidential reason to cross the lower threshold. However, this is not enough to outweigh her non-evidential reasons to believe that her account balance is above \$2,500. So at this point, even though Tiffany has enough evidential reason to count under normal circumstances, this evidential reason does not outweigh her non-evidential reason and is therefore still silent at this point.

Suppose Tiffany, deciding to settle the matter, goes to the bank to check her account balance in person. At the bank, a teller tells her that her bank account is, in fact, below \$2,500. Tiffany's evidential reasons have just grown and reached their upper threshold. The facts are in, and she now has more evidential reason to believe that her bank account is below \$2,500 than she does non-evidential reason to believe it is still above \$2,500. In the face of such compelling evidence, the fact that she will have anxiety over her account balance is silenced.

If Tiffany went to the doctor the next day, and he told her that she had high blood pressure and was at risk for a heart attack if she did not reduce her stress, Tiffany's non-evidential reasons would suddenly weigh much heavier, surpassing the weight of the

evidential reasons and therefore silencing them. Since the evidential reasons are at their upper threshold, they are unable weigh any heavier than they do, and cannot count in favour of the proposition that Tiffany's bank account balance is below \$2,500 again until her non-evidential reasons become less significant.

Reisner argues that this is a more complex and nuanced view than a typical weighing procedure, insofar as the evidence is capable of silencing the non-evidential reasons and vice versa. There is still some weighing involved where the increase and reduction in non-evidential and evidential reasons determines which ones are counted. In the end, Reisner claims that the range of thresholds for considering evidential reasons is better thought of as variable than as being either fixed narrowly or broadly, as this best makes evidence-based beliefs the norm without ruling out all non-evidential reason based beliefs (Reisner 2008, 24-6).

3.3 Susan Haack and Non-Evidentialism

Just as Susan Haack (1997) criticizes the evidentialist position put forward by Clifford, some of her criticisms also apply to the non-evidentialist position. Specifically, she critiques the ideas in James's "The Will to Believe," and her arguments against what she calls the "special-case thesis" have some application to Heil's work as well.

3.3.1 Susan Haack and William James

Toward the end of her 1997 article, Haack switches from her critique of Clifford to one of James where she argues that James, like Clifford, never makes the distinction between epistemological and moral wrongs clear. Some of James's arguments, such as

comparing the value of knowing truth and avoiding error, are epistemological, while some of his other arguments, such as one argument he makes regarding respecting the freedom of others, are ethical. Haack claims that a quote at the end of James's paper suggests that it be read in both an ethical and epistemological light (Haack 1997, 137-138).

Haack argues that by equivocating moral and epistemological justification, James makes it so that we can only be morally tolerant of other people's epistemological failings by lowering our own epistemic standards to their level. This is unnecessary if the two issues are separate, which they should be (Haack 1997, 138).

She goes on to distinguish her own point of view from that of both Clifford and James. Unlike both Clifford and James, Haack distinguishes between moral and epistemological responsibilities and judgments. Like James, and unlike Clifford, Haack does not see it as always morally wrong to believe unjustifiedly. Like Clifford, and unlike James, Haack believes it is always epistemologically wrong to believe on poor epistemic justification. In the end, she says that Clifford demands too much, morally, and that James allows too much, epistemologically (Haack 1997, 138).

Some might argue that it is good, even epistemologically, to believe unjustifiedly in some cases, such as when a scientist forms a theory and this motivates him to deep inquiry about it. Haack argues that this is irrelevant to discussions about what is justified epistemologically and that this argument simply makes the case that it is not always harmful to believe without justification, a claim which Haack agrees with. She says that overbelieving is always epistemologically wrong in that it is unjustified and not ideal for

inquiry, but not in that it is actually damaging to inquiry. Her main issue with James is his apparent claim that it is not epistemologically wrong (Haack 1997, 138-9).

3.3.2 Susan Haack and John Heil

The standpoint which Haack calls the “special-case thesis” makes the claim that epistemic judgments are a subset of ethical judgments so that all epistemic judgments are simultaneously ethical ones (Haack 1997, 129). Heil’s claim that intellectual demands are a part of the larger set of practical demands (Haack 1983,753) is a modified version of the special-case thesis. Once Haack’s arguments against the special-case thesis have been presented, the question will become whether these arguments defeat the special-case thesis, and therefore defeat Heil’s modified version of that thesis as well.

Haack’s first argument, a kind of open-question argument like G.E. Moore’s famous argument in *Principia Ethica* (Moore 1903) for why goodness can’t be identified with any natural property like pleasure, is an appeal to the fact that it is not incoherent to say that believing without epistemic justification can be morally acceptable. The mere lack of incoherence in making this claim runs counter to the special-case thesis, and thus demonstrates the thesis as false. Haack’s reasoning is that the special-case thesis makes the claim that epistemic and moral appraisals must always be synchronized, and the lack of incoherence in the above statement shows that they need not. It would be expected that every epistemic judgment would also carry the weight of an ethical judgment, and therefore that every failure to believe with justification would be not only epistemically faulty but also morally faulty. One possible defence of the special-case thesis against this

argument is that believing unjustifiedly is always a moral failing, but one which may be outweighed by other moral considerations (Haack, 1997, 131).

However, there is a much more convincing argument against Haack's position. The argument that if two things are identical, it is incoherent to question whether they are identical or assert that they are different, is not a persuasive one. It is, for example, merely misinformed and not incoherent to question whether water and H₂O are the same substance. In addition, it is wrong, yet still fully coherent, to assert that they are different substances. So, if moral oughts and epistemic oughts are the same kind of ought, this does not imply that it would become nonsensical to question whether they are the same, or that it would be incoherent to assert that they are different. Although this response to Haack's argument is, in my view, a plausible one, it is just one of the common arguments found in the literature on open-question arguments.

Another of Haack's arguments against the special-case thesis says that if epistemological oughts are a subspecies of moral oughts, then like moral oughts, epistemological oughts imply cans; and this means that agents should have voluntary control over their beliefs, which they don't. Haack, however, admits that this is not a conclusive argument. Being unable to fulfill obligations immediately does not imply that they cannot be fulfilled at all. Agents can bring beliefs about in due course by taking steps to induce the condition of believing, and thus it is possible for agents to fulfill their obligations to believe in certain ways (Haack 1997, 131). For example, an agent could alter their methods of inquiry, exposing themselves only to evidence that supports the belief they want to hold, even if there is a good deal more evidence that runs counter to what they want to believe.

Haack offers one more argument against the special-case thesis, claiming that under the special-case thesis if one's evidence is not good enough, one should not believe, and it is epistemically and therefore morally wrong to believe. Haack's problem with this argument is that it is meant to apply to every unjustified belief, even those which are formed unwillingly. What this comes down to is that the special-case thesis turns mere mistakes in inquiry into moral failings. Roderick Chisholm has attempted to save the special-case thesis by redefining ethical requirements as those requirements which are not overridden by other requirements (Chisholm 1991), but Haack argues that this ultimately fails the special-case thesis in that it only shows that some epistemological requirements are ethical duties. It also fails as a redefinition of ethics because it makes it the case that any kind of requirement such as prudence or aesthetics can become ethical so long as it is not overridden (Haack 1997, 132).

This final argument against the special-case thesis fails to hold against Heil's alternate special-case thesis. Heil's alternate special-case thesis does not deal with ethics, and therefore does not make the claim that an agent is morally wrong for believing contrary to their intellectual demands. It is fairly clear that it is true that believing contrary to one's intellectual demands is a failure to meet certain kinds of practical demands, even if the agent does not believe willingly. In that sense, then, it is obvious that a case of epistemic accidents can also be a case of certain kinds of practical accidents. Since, by this view, epistemic demands are captured as practical but not ethical demands, this conceptualization survives Haack's arguments.

4. Summary and Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I presented an overview of the topic at hand, the ethics of belief. I defined the terms of the debate, and presented a central question. I characterized the two sides of the debate with the labels “evidentialism” and “non-evidentialism,” and then explained each of these sides in terms of their historical roots and their more contemporary support. I have, I think, developed a clear and complete picture of what both evidentialism and non-evidentialism have to say, what each offers, and what the drawbacks of each side are.

This chapter will summarize much of the information found in the preceding chapters, and draw it all together in direct relation to the central question of this thesis. Once this information has been presented, I will move on to discuss it in detail, arguing for the position on the ethics of belief that I endorse. I will further support and refine my conclusion by presenting two case studies, one actual and one merely hypothetical. In the end, I will conclude that the arguments presented as well as these case studies offer more support for non-evidentialism than they do for evidentialism, and I will go on to use the case studies to attempt to outline one of the central conditions under which a non-evidential reason for belief can become normative.

4.1 Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented the central question of this thesis: Under what conditions, if any, do non-epistemic reasons for belief become normative reasons for belief? In order to better understand this question, I defined normative reasons for belief as those reasons which provide a good basis for believing, and non-normative reasons as

those which do not. In defining epistemic or evidential reasons, I borrowed from Reisner (2009) and presented them as facts which relate to a belief's contents evidentially. A non-epistemic or non-evidential reason is simply one which stands in a different relation to a belief.

Having presented and explained the central question, I broke the possible answers down into three groups. The first possible answer is that there are no conditions. This is the evidentialist view, and its claim is that no non-epistemic reason for belief can ever be normative. The second possible answer is that there is a limited set of conditions. This captures the (moderate) non-evidentialist view, and argues that it is possible in some circumstances for a non-epistemic belief to become normative and therefore assist in justifying a belief.

The third possible answer is that the set of conditions is not limited, or that non-epistemic reasons for belief are always normative. This answer—an immoderate or extreme sort of non-evidentialism—stands outside the debate, as it seems that it would be impossible to defend. In Chapter 1, I presented the case that if the third answer were accepted, we would be forced to accept the aesthetic appeal of a proposition as a fully normative reason for believing that proposition. The fact that this and other kinds of reasoning would acquire the same force as reasoning from evidence seems to write this answer out of the realm of possibility from the very start.

4.1.1 Evidentialism

Clifford used a series of cases and examples to make his point that in any given situation, if an agent believes without epistemic justification, then they are wrong to do

so. His examples also attempt to show that the truth of the matter and the outcome of any decisions made based on the belief in question are irrelevant. The only relevant factor, for Clifford, when deciding whether an agent believes rightly or wrongly, is how epistemically justified they are in their belief (Clifford 1877). Both Feldman (2000, 677) and Haack (1997, 136) point out that Clifford seems to be saying that not only is this an epistemic wrong, but also a moral failing.

Feldman takes Clifford's central thesis, and attempts to expand on it, strengthen it, and refine it. He drops the moral claims that Clifford makes and instead argues that norms related to belief are epistemic. He then describes the relevant oughts as reducing to a basic one: simply that one ought to follow their evidence. Should an agent entertain a proposition, their belief or disbelief in the proposition should depend on the totality of their evidence. Feldman defends this view in terms of value, claiming that epistemic value lies in maintaining a rational attitude toward propositions, and the only way to maintain a rational attitude is to follow one's evidence (Feldman, 2000).

Finally, Shah goes a different route from these other two evidentialist thinkers. Instead of focusing on what is wrong or what agents ought to do, he attempts to make non-evidentialism into an impossible thesis by demonstrating that it is impossible to believe for non-evidential reasons. Using both the psychological concept of transparency and his own philosophical argument for the deliberative constraint on reasons, Shah argues that it is impossible for anything that is not evidence to enter into doxastic deliberation and therefore it is impossible for anything that is not evidence to act as a reason for belief (Shah, 2006).

The evidentialists examined here, and, I think, evidentialists in general, can be divided into two rough categories: those whose arguments stem from normativity and those whose arguments stem from possibility. Clifford and Feldman are among the former. Their arguments focus on what is wrong or what ought to be believed. Shah, on the other hand, is among the latter. His arguments against the non-evidentialist position relate entirely to whether or not it is possible to believe on non-evidential grounds.

4.1.2 Non-Evidentialism

With the two main lines of argument employed by evidentialists thus made explicit, it becomes much easier to characterize the non-evidentialist arguments. Each non-evidentialist argument, if it is to be effective, must engage with one or both of the evidentialist arguments.

Historically, James was the most prominent non-evidentialist thinker, and his work in the ethics of belief was a direct response to that of Clifford. His arguments address both evidentialist lines of argument. James pointed out that the key difference between himself and Clifford was that he chose to believe in truths while Clifford chose to avoid errors. Under certain circumstances, James argued, it is permissible to believe for non-epistemic reasons. In such cases, the choice to believe or not believe must be forced, meaning that it cannot be avoided or put off, momentous, meaning that it has the potential of bringing great value or making some other dramatic change in the agent's life, and it must be a living proposition, meaning that the intellect has not already ruled it out as an impossible idea. James also argues for the role of the will in such intellectual

exercise, claiming that the will comes into effect when a proposition is initially considered and rendered dead by processes such as bias and prejudice (James 1896).

Haack criticizes James in a similar fashion to her criticism of Clifford. Where Clifford made the mistake of confusing what is epistemically wrong with what is morally wrong, James makes the mistake of confusing what is morally permissible with what is epistemically permissible, and therefore argues that not only is it morally permissible to believe on non-evidential grounds in these situations, but that it is also epistemically acceptable (Haack 1997, 137).

Heil is an interesting case, as he does, to some extent, admit to both evidentialist lines of argument without actually admitting to evidentialism. He admits that forming a belief might not be an action in itself, but that taking steps to acquire a belief is. After a long discussion involving the example of Sally and her evidence that her husband is unfaithful, he also determines that what Sally ought to believe is that her husband is unfaithful. However, Heil narrowly escapes being lumped in with the evidentialists by throwing non-evidential thought into the process of inquiry itself, the series of actions that result in the formation of belief. He argues that there are cases where practical rationality, that is, rationality that goes beyond what is merely epistemic, dictates that we scrutinize evidence more closely than we would in other situations. The case of Sally and her husband is one such case. Sally might be more practically rational to scrutinize the evidence against her husband and seek to find evidence that clears his name than she would be if the evidence were against somebody she hardly knew (Heil 1983). So even though Heil admits that doxastic deliberation is not a voluntary process, and also that when faced with evidential reason for a proposition and non-evidential reason against a

proposition agents should follow the evidence, the fact that he allows non-evidential reason to influence the process of inquiry still lands him on the side of non-evidentialism.

In both his 2009 and 2008 papers, Reisner argues very broadly in defence of the non-evidentialist thesis against the evidentialist argument against possibility. His 2009 work especially is a good attempt to show not only that the non-evidentialist point of view is a very possible one, but also that evidentialists have a lot of work to do in order to prove otherwise. He first examines the logical structure of a reason, and determines that the kind of action a reason supports, such as behaving in a certain way or believing a given proposition, is a separate issue from the grounds of the reason, which can be either evidential or non-evidential. Reisner also addresses the problems posed by involuntarism, and examines two different meanings of the word “possible” as it applies to belief: psychological and physical possibility. He examines each type of possibility, and determines in each case that arguments regarding possibility fail the evidentialist. Psychological possibility proves to be too strict for evidentialism to admit, and physical possibility proves to be too broad (Reisner 2009).

Haack’s (1997) work focuses on which kinds of belief justification are permissible and which kind are not permissible, and in what sense each is permissible. Her criticisms of Clifford, James, and the special-case thesis show that she does not find what is epistemically wrong to always be morally wrong. Nor is what is ethically permissible always epistemically permissible. She argues that genuine errors in judgment are not moral failings, and that beliefs that we should not fault agents for on a moral basis are nonetheless still epistemic errors (Haack 1997).

Finally, Yamada directly addresses Shah's arguments for transparency and the deliberative constraint on reasons. What he finds is that Shah's arguments for evidentialism ultimately rely on certain evidentialist assumptions. These are assumptions that anyone who wants to deny evidentialism can also deny. Therefore, Shah's arguments are question begging, and they only hold for those who assume evidentialism at the outset (Yamada 2009).

4.2 Discussion

With the scale of things thus presented, I do not see a truly compelling reason to endorse evidentialism. Non-evidentialists like Haack, James, and to a lesser extent Heil, seem to present good arguments for an ethically or practically permissible view of belief, that allow for some epistemic failures not to fall into the category of overall failures, or failures of other sorts. In other words, Haack, James, and Heil seem capable of emphasizing that there is more than one way to evaluate a belief, and that the epistemic evaluation does not determine the overall value. If the reasons for belief are normative in a non-epistemic sense, Haack and Heil both seem capable of permitting this belief.

In addition, Reisner, Yamada, and James offer persuasive arguments for the possibility of such beliefs and justification occurring. James argues that when people claim that we cannot simply believe something at will, that they are likely thinking of propositions which are dead to them, rather than living (James 1896, 122). Yamada effectively counters an extremely detailed and rigorous argument against this possibility, and Reisner puts it to the evidentialist to support their thesis by a means other than the general ones he addresses.

Through their combined efforts, the non-evidentialists discussed in this thesis demonstrate that there is currently no reason to buy into the idea that there can be no normative non-evidential reasons for belief. What this means is that the evidentialist position is inadequate as an overall assessment of one's belief. It fails as a thesis regarding the ethics of belief. However, those like Feldman, who argue for more of an epistemological endorsement of evidentialism, are still doing important work. It is only when the evidential norms in epistemology are proposed as norms for belief in general that this kind of thinking becomes so overtly problematic. Cases where agents believe on non-epistemic grounds are, no doubt, cases of bad inquiry, but the quality of an agent's inquiry is not everything.

Based on the arguments presented, there is no reason to endorse evidentialism as the means by which we make overall evaluations of belief. By default, this conclusion can support either of the other two answers to the second question, and the third possible answer has been ruled out already. This leaves us with only the second answer, non-evidentialism (in the modest sense), as a compelling possibility, but the work of the non-evidentialist does not end with this conclusion.

Since the second answer to the central question is that non-epistemic reasons for belief can become normative reasons for belief under specific conditions, it is important to work towards a grasp of what these conditions might be. Reisner describes this in terms of how they weigh against epistemic reasons, and how they measure against certain thresholds, but the conditions offered by James are, I think, more specific and more helpful. James's three basic criteria are simply that one has to be capable of seriously entertaining a proposition, the belief or disbelief in the proposition has to have some sort

of consequence for the agent, and the decision to believe or not believe must be forced and inescapable (James 1896, 120). On the surface, these do appear to be useful and informative conditions. They certainly restrict the scope of normative non-evidential reasons for belief, and make it such that most nonsensical reasons for belief would be ruled out.

However, this debate does not exist in a vacuum. Theory is only as good as its practical implications. In what follows, I will present two cases that capture non-epistemic reasons for belief. The first of these cases is a factual one, the second is a hypothetical case found commonly in the literature on this topic. Following the presentation of these two cases, I will carefully examine them, and show how they support the non-evidentialist position. I will then reason from these cases to re-evaluate James's criteria, and present my conclusions regarding at least one of the relevant conditions under which non-epistemic reasons may be normative.

4.3 Case Studies

My addressing two different case studies in this thesis has three motivating purposes. The first purpose is to show that the debate in question is not of limited consequence. There are, in fact, life or death matters in which our judgments hinge on whether we endorse evidentialism or non-evidentialism, and what the conditions found in non-evidentialism are. I also intend to use these examples to show that there are cases in which non-evidentialism succeeds and evidentialism fails. Since the evidentialist position makes a sweeping statement of what is impermissible in all cases, even one case where this proves to be false is enough to invalidate it. Finally, examining case studies

and examples will allow the non-evidentialist to differentiate between cases where believing for non-evidential reasons is unacceptable and cases where it is acceptable. After such differentiations are made, non-evidentialists can develop a firmer grasp on the conditions which render non-evidential reasons for belief normative.

4.3.1 Hypothetical Case: Belief in Survival

This first example is a hypothetical case that is often cited in discussions of the ethics of belief (e.g. Haack 1997, 132; Reisner 2008, 12). In this case, an agent is diagnosed with a serious illness. Her chances of survival are very low, even with medical intervention. All of her epistemic reasons, her reasons based on evidence, would indicate that she should accept that she is most likely going to die soon.

However, the agent instead chooses to believe contrary to her evidence, and adopts the belief that she is going to survive. This belief bolsters her spirits and makes her life happier. In the end, it turns out that the agent does end up overcoming the illness, and surviving the ordeal. That it would ease her mind and possibly increase her chances of survival to believe that she will live is, no doubt, a non-evidential reason to believe. However, its normativity is still in question.

4.3.2 Real Case: Denying Medical Treatment

The second case comes from a 2008 news story by Rachel Balik, about a teenage boy who belonged to a group that favoured the use of prayer over medical treatment in curing illness. The boy, who was old enough to make his own medical decisions, chose to do as he was raised to do, and denied himself medical treatment. As a result, he died a

slow and painful death caused by a condition which could have been easily treatable with medical intervention (Balik 2008). The belief in question in this case, is the proposition that prayer is superior to medical treatment when dealing with illness.

In this case, as in the previous one, it appears that there was a choice between non-epistemic and epistemic reasons for belief. The non-epistemic reason for belief was the boy siding with his religious group, and his faith in general. The epistemic reason for belief would be the weight of medical and other scientific evidence that the boy's condition could have been better treated through medical intervention than prayer.

4.3.3 Who Do These Cases Support?

If intuitions are to be trusted in cases like this, it seems clear that the first case supports the non-evidentialist position, while the second case supports the evidentialist. It is difficult to see why, in the first case, we would want to say that the agent is more than epistemically wrong in their belief. If we were to judge them on the grounds of their inquiry, we would no doubt say that they failed to do what was most rational or logical, but it is difficult to see why there would be any reason to draw this criticism beyond the realm of the epistemic. The belief truly makes them happy, improves their quality of life, and eventually, aids them in improving their health. It is difficult to see what would prevent these reasons from being normative reasons for belief, non-epistemic though they may be.

The second case, on the other hand, clearly shows bad judgment all around. It is very easy to see that this is not only a case of bad inquiry, but a case where the agent's faults go beyond the epistemic. The boy believed for reasons that are quite obviously

non-epistemic in nature, but these reasons also fail to be normative. The reasons for which he chose the belief that he did are not good reasons on which to base a belief. The belief that prayer is superior to medicine is not normatively supported by the non-epistemic reasons present in this case.

Since the evidentialist position is undermined by even a single case that contradicts its central thesis, and the non-evidentialist position does not share this weakness, the totality of these cases clearly supports non-evidentialism. Non-evidentialism says only that there are cases where non-evidential reasons for belief can be normative, not that this occurs in all cases. So, even though each case supports one side of the debate, the evidentialist cannot abide by such a contradiction, while the non-evidentialist can.

4.3.4 Differentiating Between the Cases

Ultimately, examining cases like this will be of great benefit to non-evidentialist thinkers. It seems that comparing cases where agents have normative non-epistemic reasons for belief against similar cases where agents' non-epistemic reasons for belief fail to be normative is an effective means for drawing attention to what differentiates between non-normative non-epistemic reasons for belief and their normative counterparts. In the end, what the methodology I am recommending will yield is a clear set of conditions and criteria that can be used in cases that are more complex than those presented here, cases where intuitions are not as clear and not as easily determined. Having such criteria and conditions available will lend strength and clarity to the non-evidentialist position.

In order to show this process's effectiveness, as well as get the process underway, I will perform one such differentiation with the cases presented above. First, however, it is important to note that these cases are similar in a few ways. This will enable us to recognize the potential importance of each difference as it crops up. The first significant similarity is that, obviously, the agent in question chooses to believe contrary to the evidence, a kind of faith. The agent in each case is also going through a medical illness. We can draw nothing new from the first similarity, it simply restates the original point of these cases, that some form of non-evidentialism is correct. The second point, however, allows us to draw at least one, albeit minor, conclusion. The key difference in these cases does not lie in the fact that either concerns a medical case. We can therefore rule out a case's concerning medical illnesses as either support or contradiction for the normativity of non-epistemic beliefs.

The differences between the cases should prove to be much more helpful. At first glance, it is easy to highlight some key differences. The first difference is the outcome of the belief, and therefore of the agent's choosing to believe for non-epistemic reasons. In the first case, as a direct result of what she believes, the agent not only feels better and happier, and appreciates the time she has, she ultimately survives. In the second case, the opposite occurs. The agent suffers for a period of time and then dies, as a direct result of what he chose to believe.

The second significant difference between these cases is the belief's impact on important decisions made by the agent. In the first case, it is apparent that the agent did not make any significant decisions based on her choice to believe. She still sought medical treatment. She did not further choose to believe that she was not ill, and allow

that to become a reason for believing that she would live. She simply chose to believe that with medical intervention, she would survive her illness. Its impact on what she chose to do is virtually nil. In the second case, on the other hand, the belief resulted in a radically different decision than would otherwise have been made. The agent's choice to believe in the power of prayer over that of medicine had direct consequences on what he chose to do, and it caused his belief to have a high chance of significantly impacting his future life.

The first difference is an inadequate candidate for the basis of a condition of normativity. If we were to draw from it a condition which could render non-epistemic reasons normative, it would be something along the lines of allowing normativity in non-epistemic reasons if the outcome of the belief will be positive, and denying normativity in cases where the outcome will be negative. This is immediately problematic, given our definition of non-epistemic reasons for belief.

The present problem is easily detectible in a simple cause-and-effect analysis. If we were to invoke the consequences of a specific belief as a condition of a reason's normativity, we would be asking the impossible. Whether or not to accept non-epistemic reasons for belief as normative would hinge entirely upon an unknowable future outcome. The problem with this is that it seems irrational to say that the normative value of a reason for belief is not determined until after all is said and done.

This should become clear in the above examples. In the first example, for the sake of her own comfort, the comfort of her friends and family, and the increased possibility of her survival, the agent chooses to believe that she will survive her serious illness. These are her non-epistemic reasons to believe. It seems perfectly plausible to

accept these as normative reasons to believe even without knowing what the outcome will be. Regardless of whether she and her loved ones are comforted, and of whether she does survive the illness, these non-epistemic reasons for belief are normative before the consequences obtain, and regardless of whether they obtain.

In the second case, the agent believes based on the consequences of being accepted by the group, and being healed through the power of prayer. These are his non-epistemic reasons for belief. Even if we knew nothing of the actual consequences of his belief, these seem to be immediately problematic and shaky grounds for believing. Their lack of normativity is not a result of his death at a later time, or any other upcoming negative consequence. They lack normativity, not retroactively, but during the process of doxastic deliberation. Even if he did somehow survive, this would not turn his non-epistemic reasons for belief into normative ones. Regardless of whether and which consequences obtain, he did not have good non-epistemic reasons to believe. What all of this shows is that the consequences of a belief, and whether or not the non-epistemic reasons which support it are normative are entirely distinct issues.

So, the consequences of the belief in question should not be taken as a condition for allowing non-epistemic reasons for belief to become normative. What about the second difference that can be distilled from these cases? Could the belief's potential impact on decision-making processes form the relevant condition?

It can, and it does. Such a condition could be captured roughly as allowing a non-epistemic reason for belief to become normative only in cases where the likelihood of the belief altering any potentially significant action is low. This does not contradict the definitions of non-epistemic reasons for belief, as a belief does not need potentially to

alter one's actions in any significant way in order to have potentially good consequences. In the first example the agent manages to have a happier life and even overcome her illness on the basis of belief alone. These potentially good consequences are found in the things that happen to her as a result of her belief rather than any potentially good actions she takes as a result of her belief.

We can also see in the second case, that the potential for acting based on his belief was exactly where the agent went wrong. The boy allowed his non-epistemic reasons for belief to determine not just what it was he actually believed but further action and decision based on this belief, resulting in his suffering and death. This chain of reasons and consequences illustrates the fault in his non-epistemic reason for belief: it was a non-epistemic reason for belief that carried a significant potential for action, and hence was not a normative non-epistemic reason for belief.

Arguably, I have made a rather large leap of logic. I have, essentially, determined that the potential for action taken by the agent in the second case render not his belief, but his very reason for believing, faulty. There is a good reason for this, though. It is difficult to make a case for faulting an agent simply for acting on a belief which he genuinely holds. If an agent truly believes that he is holding a mere false replica of a firearm rather than an actual firearm, then, intuitively speaking, his shooting somebody with it can be taken as a terrible accident, rather than an act of malice or something that he is morally blameworthy for. The same goes for the agent in the second case. If he genuinely and honestly believes that he is better helped by prayer than by medicine, then it is difficult on that basis alone to criticize him for potential action that might follow from that belief.

In exactly the same manner, we cannot fault agents for holding beliefs that they are fully justified in believing. If the agent holding a gun has a lot of good evidence for the idea that what he is holding is not a gun but a harmless replica, such as being told it is harmless by the owner of the firearm, who has actually gotten it mixed up with a replica, then it is clear that there is nothing wrong with the agent's inquiry. He is believing as he should believe given the reasons and evidence that he has been offered. This too, can be extracted to the second case. In saying that we should fault not the belief but the reason for belief, what we are essentially saying is that the reason for belief was not a normative one. If it was not normative, then we can fault the agent for holding the belief *for that reason*; and if it was normative, we cannot fault the agent for holding the belief *for that reason*.

Therefore, if we want to find fault with the agent's performance, we should find it in the reasons that he allowed into his doxastic deliberation. He allowed a non-normative non-epistemic reason for belief to affect what it was he would believe. The reason he could not justifiably base that belief on that non-epistemic reason for belief is simply that there is too great a potential for acting on the belief, and therefore too great a potential for acting on misinformation.

The contents of the beliefs in question offer further support for the view I have just outlined. A thorough examination and comparison of the specific beliefs in question will reveal that the central difference between the beliefs themselves is, in fact, the degree to which they are likely to impact each agent's action. This supports my position that the more likely an agent is to act on their belief, the less normative their non-epistemic reasons for belief become.

In the first case, the content—what is believed—is, more or less, “I will survive this illness.” In the second case, it can probably be characterized as something like “Prayer is superior to medical intervention.” In their current forms, it is difficult to compare these beliefs and examine them for differences that might form the basis of conditions for non-epistemic normativity, so they need to be rephrased in such a way that they will be comparable. Given the other factors in each case, I think it is safe to phrase the first belief as “I will survive this illness with medical assistance” and the second belief as “I will survive this illness through prayer rather than medical assistance.”

In examining these restatements of the contents of belief, we can plainly see that there is a relevant difference in the intent to act on the belief. In the first case, the agent ends up doing what most agents would do regardless of their belief in their chances of survival: they seek medical assistance to help them deal with their illness. In the case of the second belief, on the other hand, it is clear that the belief itself does affect what the agent would choose to do. If the boy did not hold the belief that prayer would assist his survival better than medicine, he would likely have chosen medicine, whereas since he held said belief he chose prayer.

Even though I have highlighted the relevant difference between these cases, something still needs to be said about what makes this difference relevant. Why is it the case that the potential for or likelihood of altering potentially significant actions based on one’s belief should determine whether a non-epistemic reason for belief is normative? The reason is simple. When an agent acts, it is best for her to be able to predict the outcome of her actions as realistically as possible. Obviously, such predictions will rest on her beliefs about the world, her actions, and the interaction between the two. If an

agent's actions are not in line with the fact of the matter, then she will be hindered when it comes to acting in ways that will achieve her desired outcome. A non-epistemic reason for belief is less likely to reflect the fact of the matter than an epistemic reason. So, while it is harmless to hold non-epistemically justified beliefs that one intends to never (or minimally) act on, it becomes much more risky to hold such beliefs when one does intend to act on them, and therefore less easy to justify the use of non-epistemic reasons in doxastic deliberations regarding such a belief.

At this point, an objection to this point of view could arise. This is simply the argument that the condition I have explained concerns not the non-epistemic reasons for belief, but the belief itself. In each of the above examples, for instance, I have levied a ruling on the reasons for belief based on what the belief in question is. I can see why this might concern some: ideally the conditions for non-epistemic reasons will apply to those reasons. My proposed condition does just that, but it does so by making reference to the belief in question. The condition can be formulated quite simply: *If a non-epistemic reason for belief is normative, then the belief carries low potential for significant action.* This conditional statement makes clear that it applies to the reasons for belief based on properties of the belief it supports, and there is nothing counter-intuitive or implausible about this claim.

It is interesting to note that the condition I have outlined and argued for is arguably in tension with one of James's conditions: momentousness. While James argues that a potential belief must be able to have a profound impact on a person's life in order to be accepted for non-epistemic reasons, I seem to be arguing the opposite. I am arguing that the greater the impact, the more we should shy away from non-epistemic

reasons. I seem to be saying that the belief in question needs to be trivial rather than momentous in one respect. While it may still have a valuable impact on the agent's life in other ways, its impact as a basis for action precludes it from being accepted on non-epistemic grounds.

The reason for this is, I think, a rather simple one. James's view rests, to some extent, on his prioritization of two commandments regarding belief. He argues that evidentialists like Clifford prefer to avoid falsehoods than embrace truths, whereas he endorses the opposite (1896, 113-4). James seems to be thinking of the act of believing as occurring on its own, in a vacuum. He thinks of no greater consequence than simply being in error. The cases outlined above, however, show that there are far more serious consequences that can be quite costly if an agent believes in error. For this reason, I think, I differ from James in saying that it is trivial beliefs (in the relevant action potential sense), not momentous ones, which are more permissible when based on non-epistemic reasons for belief.

Another interesting note is how well this view coincides with Heil's initial concept of practical rationality. According to this view, epistemic rationality is taken as a subset of practical rationality (Heil 1983, 753-4). In this view, what one should believe is reduced to a practical or, as Heil puts it, consequentialist matter (Heil 1983, 754). This is not the same kind of consequentialist view considered above, but simply a view under which epistemic concerns are a special variety of practical concerns.

Since our actions are determined by our beliefs about the world, but the consequences of our actions are determined by what is true about the world, it is clear that when we act based on beliefs, we should be acting based on beliefs that reflect what

is true about the world. This is what is most practical. When it comes to acting rather than merely believing, it is more practical to have our beliefs and expectations accurately match what is true about the world.

This means that when it comes to forming a belief, non-evidential reasons should be tempered by how much this belief will be called upon to help decide on courses of action. Those beliefs that are fundamental to action, such as beliefs regarding causes and their subsequent effects, should be based on as much epistemic reason as possible, while beliefs that are less consequential can afford to be more non-epistemically based. In the end, it is less practically rational to act on a non-epistemically based belief than an epistemically based belief. Therefore it is less practically rational to count non-epistemic reasons during doxastic deliberations that will decide a belief that will be acted on.

4.4 Conclusion

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explained exactly what it was I was setting out to do. I laid out my central question, and I clarified the terms involved in answering it. I determined the three potential answers to this question, and found that only the first two seemed plausible. From this point, I highlighted the difference between these answers, and then I set out to find which answer was correct in its approach.

In the following two chapters, I provided a detailed though not exhaustive discussion of both evidentialism and non-evidentialism, the positions relevant to my central question. I explained their historical roots in the works of Clifford and James, and followed them to their more contemporary, refined versions in the works of Feldman,

Haack, Heil, Reisner, Shah, and Yamada. With the debate so captured, I moved on to my final discussion of the two positions.

What I ultimately determined was that non-evidentialism seemed to be the way to go, and that the arguments of evidentialists like Clifford, Feldman, and Shah did not stack up against arguments from James, Haack, Heil, Reisner, and Yamada. I backed this conclusion up with the use of examples, which also served the purpose of showing that this debate is an important one, and also helped refine the non-evidentialist position I chose to endorse.

Reasoning from these examples, I was able to determine not only that there are conditions under which a non-epistemic reason for belief can become normative, but also what one of these conditions is. Ultimately, while I sided with a Jamesian position in a broad sense, I determined that the Jamesian side of things is not flawless, and that he came to the wrong conclusion regarding the momentousness or triviality of a belief and its bearing on non-epistemic reasons. Further investigations could, perhaps, begin with cases that examine other criteria given by James.

In the end, I think this thesis's importance goes beyond its conclusions regarding the ethics of belief. I recommend that those working this field not just adopt my conclusions, but also my methodology. Reasoning from these basic, intuitive cases proved to be very helpful in identifying why the agent in the first case I described in this chapter was non-epistemically justified and why the agent in the second case was not. More cases like this could potentially yield more helpful conclusions, and it is my hope that these will eventually provide those working in this field with a very strong, very

rational set of conditions under which non-epistemic reasons for belief can become normative.

In reading the ideas I have put forward here, some might claim that I am more of an evidentialist than a non-evidentialist, when it comes to practical matters, at least. While I do consider myself more lenient than most of the evidentialists discussed here, I can see why some might make this claim. In the end, I am comfortable with being classified as an evidentialist in some kinds of cases.

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