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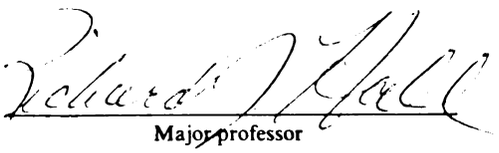

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DOXASTIC VOLUNTARISM AND EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY: THE ETHICS OF BELIEF REVISITED

By

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ABSTRACT

DOXASTIC VOLUNTARISM AND EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY:
THE ETHICS OF BELIEF REVISITED

By

Charles Roderick Johnson

At least since the time of the ancient Greeks the question of whether human beings have freewill has been debated in both religious and philosophical circles. During this time, though, it has been thought that this is primarily a debate about the possibility of moral or perhaps legal responsibility. That this debate might concern other "types" of responsibility, for instance epistemic responsibility, has not been thoroughly considered. In a recent article on this subject it has been lamented that the "ideals of free will and free thought are not usually connected" (see Pettit and Smith: "Freedom in Belief and Desire"). In fact, many theorists concerned with the idea of epistemic responsibility have argued that free thought or doxastic voluntarism (the thesis that belief is under voluntary control) is conceptually impossible and phenomenologically improbable. In my dissertation I challenge this separation of free thought and free will by employing a conceptual argument against doxastic non-voluntarism (the thesis that thought or belief is not free), an argument that was originally employed by Immanuel Kant as a proof for free moral agency. Hence I employ an argument that has been primarily relegated to the moral sphere, i.e., the sphere of freewill, in order to attempt to prove the conceptual necessity of freedom in the epistemic sphere, i.e., the sphere of free thought. In this way I hope to show the parallels between ethics and epistemology in terms of the positions that are maintained, and the commitments or assumptions that underlie

them. This I believe will help to inform normative theory or inquiry in general by showing that the two major foci of this inquiry, epistemology and ethics, conduct themselves along the same basic lines.

To Lauren,
my reason to believe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

We evaluate people's beliefs all the time. Teachers evaluate the cogency and reasonableness of their students' beliefs. Judges and juries evaluate the beliefs of the accused (e.g., in negligence cases where it is determined whether or not the defendant's beliefs were reasonable). This scrutiny can even be self-imposed, such as when judges and jurors are asked to apply the standard of reasonable doubt to their own beliefs. This evaluative process suggests that persons can be responsible for the beliefs that they hold. This in turn presupposes that persons have some control over their beliefs; for, following Kant's dictum that "ought" implies "can," persons cannot be responsible for something that falls outside their power.[1]

In many cases, though, it appears that persons do not have power over their beliefs. Many argue that perceptual beliefs, in particular, are involuntary -- that "seeing is believing." Similarly, early childhood beliefs may not be subject to self-control. Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* writes, "The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes after belief."[2] Lastly,

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[1] John Heil, Bernard Williams, H.H. Price, and Louis Pojman, among others, hold this view that in our ordinary talk about beliefs we often attribute responsibility to the believer and that this attribution implies beliefs are subject to conscious control.

[2] Wittgenstein is certainly not alone in holding this position. Locke in the *Essay* asserts that "There is nothing more ordinary than that children should receive into their minds propositions (especially about matters of religion) from their parents, nurses, or those about them" (Locke: 437). These propositions he argues insinuate themselves into the

many argue that evidence can compel belief, that the evidence for some propositions is so persuasive that they simply cannot be doubted.

Given this view of belief is the kind of freedom requisite for epistemic responsibility possible? This is the question I will address in this dissertation. I will examine what is termed in the literature "doxastic voluntarism," the thesis that beliefs are subject to our voluntary control. I will examine this thesis with an eye to epistemic obligations or responsibilities, obligations or responsibilities concerning what we should believe and how we should come to believe. The concept of rationality is intimately connected to this notion of epistemic responsibility. Rational believers are, at least in part, responsible believers, believers who fulfill their epistemic responsibilities. During this examination, then, I will invoke the concept of rational agency as a basis for discussing this issue. As such, the central question of this dissertation becomes: relative to our conception of ourselves as rational agents is the kind of freedom requisite for epistemic obligations possible, and if so, what must be the extent of this freedom?

In addressing this question the dissertation is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I explore the history of doxastic voluntarism by examining a specific evolution of thought on this topic. In the second chapter, I discuss non-voluntarism, and use a Kantian-style argument to show that voluntarism cannot be denied in that the attempt to do so is self-contradictory. In the next two chapters, I examine the remaining alternatives to non-voluntarism – indirect and direct doxastic voluntarism. In these chapters I argue that direct

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"unwary as well as unbiased understandings" of children (Locke: 437). In the *Principles*, William James likewise adheres to the position that "we begin by believing everything" (*Principles of Psychology Vol. II* hereafter PP: 319).

voluntarism is the more viable of the two alternatives. In the fifth chapter, a substantial appendix, I examine parallels between ethics and epistemology which illuminate certain issues and positions within these two disciplines. The remainder of this introduction will be devoted to laying the groundwork for the discussion that is to follow.

I. Epistemic Responsibilities

In this dissertation I work from the assumption that there are epistemic obligations, duties, or responsibilities. This assumption is certainly commonplace enough, at least in the history of western philosophy. Descartes clearly thought there were such duties or responsibilities. In the *Meditations*, he discusses how we may set about "behaving correctly and avoiding error" through carefully regulating belief (Descartes: 103). Locke, in the *Essay*, discusses the idea that a rational mind or person has an obligation to inquire. He states that "the mind, if it *will proceed rationally*, ought to examine all the grounds of probability" (Locke: 406). James, of course, is well known and cited for his formulation of our two "first and great commandments as would-be knowers" ("Will to Believe" hereafter WTB: 508). Lastly, in more recent years epistemologists such as Keith Lehrer and Roderick Chisholm have formulated accounts of our epistemic responsibilities, or what is worthy of our belief (see Chisholm's *Perceiving* and Lehrer's *Theory of Knowledge*). I wish to work from within this tradition, then, and assume that we are confronted with certain duties, obligations, or responsibilities concerning the formation of belief. This does not mean, though, that my work is done. I have instead assigned to myself the task of trying to make sense of these responsibilities. I examine whether it is conceptually plausible to assert that we have the kind

of doxastic control requisite for epistemic responsibility.

I am also assuming that these epistemic responsibilities are relevantly similar enough to moral or ethical responsibilities that our intuitions concerning the latter may be used to shed light on the nature of the former. In Chapter Five, I discuss in more detail this issue of the analogies and disanalogies between ethics and epistemology, but here let it suffice for me to say that I hold these domains to be using the notion of obligation or responsibility in the same way, though, ultimately these domains orient this notion in terms of different ends or goals. Thus, in epistemology the end or goal toward which our epistemic responsibilities aim is truth, whereas in ethics it is goodness or rightness. Given, then, that both domains make use of this notion of responsibility in the same way, comparisons between these two domains become possible.

II. What is Doxastic Voluntarism?

Doxastic voluntarism would seem to be, quite simply, the thesis that we have some amount of freedom or liberty in regards to our beliefs or belief states, i.e., that our beliefs are under our free or voluntary control. But this definition is incomplete, for we now need to know what we mean by the notion of freedom that we are employing. How we define this notion will in turn structure our entire outlook as to whether doxastic voluntarism is a tenable thesis. Throughout this discussion of freedom, I assume that belief is an action relevantly similar to physical actions, so that the views of freedom used in discussions of the latter can be correctly applied to the former. It may be the case that these species of "actions" are not relevantly similar, and that therefore the language of physical actions cannot be applied to

belief. This question, though, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.[3]

There are a number of rather standard or stock definitions of freedom. Let us call the first definition that we will look at the Desire Thesis. This position holds that we are free when we can do what we want. On this account, a belief would be free in so far as it was the product of the believer's wants or desires. Another standard definition of freedom, which opposes that of the Desire Thesis, is what we will term the Counterfactual Thesis. This thesis argues that one has acted freely only in so far as one could have done otherwise. Thus freedom on this view rests in the idea that one has the power or capacity to act in an alternative manner. According to this view, then, a given belief would be free or voluntary only if it were possible for the believer not to form the belief.

Proponents of the Desire Thesis often try to make their view consistent with that of the Counterfactual Thesis. The former attempt to do this by arguing that persons in their view fulfill the requirement of being able to do otherwise. Desire theorists argue that any person could have done otherwise if the desires of the person had been different. This, though, fails to meet the intention of the Counterfactual Thesis which is that the agent be able to do otherwise everything being the same. A person is free, in the Counterfactual view if

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[3] It may not be essential to this thesis, though, that this assumption be true, i.e., that belief is an act relevantly similar to physical acts. Both John Heil (1983) and H.H. Price argue that belief is not an action, and yet both conclude that epistemic agents can have responsibilities or duties in terms of belief. Thus, though they argue that belief is not an act, they do not from this conclude that we have no control over belief, and hence that it cannot be the proper subject of responsibility. The control or freedom that they attribute to belief is indirect. On their respective views, we control belief through engaging in certain "procedures" or "methods", and it is for our engagement in these methods that we are ultimately responsible. For more on this issue of belief and action see Price: 15, Heil (1983): 358, and Montmarquet: 79-82.

in the exact same situation, desires and all else being identical, the person could have done otherwise. The Desire Thesis cannot meet this requirement. In this latter view, if a person's desires remain the same (in conjunction with the surrounding circumstances), then so will their actions.

The view of freedom put forward by the Counterfactual Thesis is surely inadequate, however. It does not fit our intuitive notions of freedom and responsibility. Consider the following example: Jones is trying to decide whether or not to rob a convenience store. Unbeknownst to Jones, an Evil Genius has placed a small computer chip in his head. This mechanism will allow the Evil Genius to make Jones rob the store if Jones opts not to. Jones decides to rob the store and acts accordingly. Should we in this case claim that Jones was not free in his action, and hence not responsible? In this case, he could not have done otherwise. Given the Evil Genius's mechanism, there were no alternative actions open to Jones; if he had chosen otherwise the Genius would have made him rob the store. And yet, doesn't it seem that because Jones decided to rob the store, he was in fact free and responsible, even though he could not have done otherwise (I am indebted to Harry G. Frankfurt's "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" for this example).[4]

The Desire Thesis definition of freedom could account for this example. Jones's

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[4] If one finds this example too outlandish, simply imagine that the Evil Genius will control Jones' behavior not through a computer chip, but rather through his henchmen who will physically compel Jones to rob the store if he opts not to. I do not think that this modification will alter the conclusion of the example, which is simply that freedom does not require alternative possibilities in the sense outlined by the Counterfactual Thesis. Dennett concurs with this latter point. In *Elbow Room* he argues that the question of whether a person could have done otherwise is not our central concern in situations where we are assessing responsibility (Dennett 1984: 135-136). I am indebted to Prof. Richard Peterson for pointing out this possible difficulty.

action is free because he did what he wanted, and therefore he is responsible. There is another definition of freedom, though, that could equally well account for this example. Let us call this alternative the Will or Choice Thesis. According to this view, an act is free if it is the product of the will of the actor. It is free if the agent brings it about through his will, self, or faculty of choice. Acts would not be free on this account if they were the result of some kind of external cause or compulsion -- if the self or will of the agent was not the sole author of the action.[5] This view is able to explain our intuitions concerning the above case rather nicely. Jones is responsible because he decided to rob the store. This act was the result of his own will, and as such, it was free.

The Will Thesis is much like the view of C.A. Campbell. Though at times he talks as if he were an adherent of the view that freedom requires the capacity to *do* otherwise, in his more careful moments he states that what is actually requisite is that the agent be able to *choose* otherwise (Campbell: 393). Jones certainly meets this latter condition. Though he could not have done otherwise, he certainly could have chosen to do otherwise (such a choice then resulting in the Evil Genius compelling him to act against his will). Campbell, in agreement with this alternative view, states that free acts are those in which the self or will of the agent is the sole author of the action (Campbell: 393). Jones meets this condition as well. In choosing to rob the store he is the sole cause or author of his action (though if he

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[5] Sole cause is probably too strong. We could certainly weaken the requirement to that of sufficient cause, but this may be too strong as well. Issues of causation being too complex and far afield for this dissertation, let us consider an act on this view to be free when the will is at least a substantial cause, a substantial cause being one whose absence would significantly alter the causal picture of the event to which it is connected (I am indebted to Prof. Nicholas D. Smith for suggesting this definition)

had chosen otherwise another causal mechanism would have brought the action about).

I believe the Will Thesis is superior to the Desire Thesis for two reasons. First, even though the Desire Thesis does well in terms of the example we discussed, if we alter this example slightly we can see that this view has a serious shortcoming. What if Jones decided not to rob the store even though he wanted to? Perhaps he just lacked the courage necessary to act on his desire. The Evil Genius would then make Jones rob the store. Would Jones be responsible for this act? I believe that on the Desire Thesis he would be, for he would have acted as he desired or wanted to. Intuitively, though, I think we would not hold Jones responsible. We may think him reprehensible for wanting to rob the store, but not responsible for he did not choose to do so.

Secondly, the Desire Thesis has the difficulty that it does not completely agree with our phenomenology of action. As Campbell indicates, we often experience the effort of our will as it conflicts with desire (Campbell: 395). In such situations we frequently choose to act contrary to our desires. We none the less view these actions as free (in fact, Campbell views only such acts as free). According to the Desire Thesis, these acts would not be free. This is because free acts on this view are those done in accordance with our wants or desires. It could, of course, be argued that we only act contrary to our desires when we have a stronger or higher order, want, or desire that we wish to fulfill. As such, any conflict with desire is only superficial. If one probes deeper, a stronger desire can be found to explain the action. But I find this response unsatisfactory. It would seem that in our ordinary experience we often freely choose to do things that we do not want to do. I do not agree with Campbell, though, that freedom always requires us to act contrary to our desires. I think that we can

also freely choose to do what we want.

A belief will be free, or voluntary, according to the Will Thesis in so far as it is brought about by the will of the believer, in so far as the self or will of the believer is the substantial author or cause. Also requisite is the notion that the believer could have chosen to believe otherwise (this condition being fulfilled even when this contrary choice would not have been successful). Thus it is not requisite that the free believer be able to believe otherwise, any more than it is requisite that the free agent be able to do otherwise. What is requisite is that the free agent or believer be able to choose otherwise. Just as moral responsibility is not altered by moral luck -- situations where one's intended action has unintended morally significant results, epistemic responsibility is not mitigated by epistemic luck -- situations where an intended belief state does not come about. One may be subject to epistemic blame for choosing to believe a falsehood, even where this choice is unsuccessful.

This account of freedom is the one I employ in the examination of doxastic voluntarism that is to follow. A free or voluntary belief will be one that satisfies the two following conditions:

1) it is the result of the believer's choosing, deciding, or willing to believe it; and

2) the believer could have willed or chosen otherwise.

The question that will be addressed, then, is whether beliefs can be the product of the will of the believer, i.e., whether we can suitably choose or will to believe.

III. The Different Types of Voluntarist Positions

Control over belief would seem to admit of variation both in terms of the degree of the control, and the manner in which it is exercised. With this variation there are criteria by which voluntarist positions can be classified. Voluntarist positions can be distinguished by whether they assert this control to be direct or indirect, complete or incomplete, and negative or positive.

a. Direct and Indirect Voluntarism

A direct voluntarist maintains that it is possible to directly control or influence beliefs. James Montmarquet holds this position. He argues that through the exercise of certain epistemic virtues, such as conscientiousness, it is possible for one to directly influence one's belief states (whether Montmarquet is actually successful in showing that his position is one of direct voluntarism will be discussed in Chapter Three). In his work *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, Montmarquet states:

> the exercise of these qualities [the epistemic virtues] in belief formation or retention (e.g., by way of being "careful" or "conscientious" in what we believe) is not a mode of indirect, but a mode of direct influence over belief (Montmarquet: viii).

An indirect voluntarist asserts that it is not possible to influence or control beliefs directly. Beliefs, according to this view, can only be influenced through certain indirect means, such as gathering evidence or even hypnosis. One person who holds this position is John Heil. In his article "Doxastic Agency" he states:

> It is not that one has a choice in the beliefs that one forms, but that one has a say in the procedures one undertakes that lead to their formation. The notion of 'epistemic responsibility' attaches to the undertaking of appropriate procedures (Heil, 1983: 363).

These positions, though, need not be in complete opposition. Weaker versions of these positions would maintain only that some beliefs are, or are not, subject to direct control. Such weaker versions would be compatible. Thus one could maintain that some beliefs are subject to direct control, whereas others can only be influenced indirectly. On this reading, one would be a weak direct voluntarist concerning the former beliefs, and a weak indirect voluntarist concerning the latter. Descartes, in the *Discourse on Method*, seems to hold a position like this in regard to simple or self-evident propositions. Although Descartes is typically seen as asserting that we have some kind of direct control over all of our beliefs, in the *Discourse* he seems to argue that in terms of simple propositions all we can do is prepare the mind properly to receive them. Thus he states:

> As for simple propositions, the only rules we provide are those which prepare our cognitive powers for a more distinct intuition of any given object and for a more discerning examination of it. For these simple propositions must occur to us spontaneously; they cannot be sought out (Descartes: 17).

b. Complete and Incomplete Voluntarism

A complete voluntarist argues that the power of our will over belief is absolute, i.e., that there is no proposition such that we cannot choose or will to believe it, or not to believe it. An incomplete voluntarist holds that our control is limited, i.e., that there are certain propositions or subjects of belief that are outside the range of our will or choice.

c. Negative and Positive Voluntarism

A negative voluntarist maintains that one's control over belief consists in one's being able to withhold it. Though this is not his overall position, Descartes in the *Meditations* seems to describe what such a position would be like when he states:

> even if it is not in my power to know any truth, I shall at least do what is in my power, that is, resolutely guard against assenting to any falsehoods (Descartes: 79).

A positive voluntarist, on the other hand, maintains that our power over belief rests in our actually being able to produce beliefs.

These positions are quite compatible. One could hold limited versions of these two positions that would not be in conflict. Thus one could maintain that while our principal control over belief is negative, there are some beliefs that we can actually bring ourselves to have. One could even hold complete versions of these positions simultaneously and argue that on all occasions we have the power either to believe or suspend judgment at will.

Overall, these three distinctions concerning voluntarism can overlap. Thus one could be a complete, negative, direct voluntarist. A person holding this position would maintain that we have an absolute or unlimited power to withhold belief, and that this power is directly exercised (that it is not brought about by indirect means such as avoiding evidence, or avoiding the consideration of certain propositions).

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY

In this chapter I seek a better understanding of voluntarism by examining a particular progression of thought on this subject, a progression which involves many of the most prominent thinkers on this subject. I begin with the voluntarist positions of the Stoics and Skeptics. I then go on to the position of Descartes, who was influenced by these earlier thinkers. Next, I discuss the view of John Locke, since so much of his work in *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was a response to Descartes. Lastly, I examine the positions of W.K. Clifford and William James. Clifford puts forward a Cartesian account of the proper role of will in belief, and James (most famously) replies to it.

I. The Stoics

> *To these perceptions accepted by the senses*
> *Zeno joins the assent of the mind, which he*
> *considers to be placed in us and voluntary.*
>
> Cicero: *SVF* I, 61

> *To the mind all is indifferent except its own*
> *activities, and all its own activities are*
> *within its control.*
>
> Marcus Aurelius: *Meditations* BK 6, 32

The Stoics, like Plato and Aristotle before them, were concerned with the question of the good life -- namely, what living well consists of or what is the appropriate life for human beings. Though there was some disagreement about the answer to this question, the Stoics believed the general goal of life to be living in accordance, harmony, or agreement, with nature. This was sometimes called the smooth or virtuous life (Saunders: 113). Thus according to Diogenes, Zeno held that "the goal was to live in agreement with nature" (Gerson: 136). Likewise, Cicero states that:

> since the goal is to live consistently and in agreement with nature, it follows necessarily that all wise men always live happy, perfect, and fortunate lives, that they are impeded by nothing, hindered by nothing and in need of nothing (Gerson: 150).

Living in accordance with nature involves a submission to the universal rule of fate or natural events. Epictetus advises us to "Ask not that events should happen as you will, but let your will be that events should happen as they do" (Saunders: 135). Such a submission to, or acceptance of, natural events he argues will bring about peace or happiness. It will result in the smooth or virtuous life, life in agreement with nature (Saunders: 135, 113).

The Stoics often used analogies in order to help explain what the virtuous life was like. These analogies usually appealed to situations or circumstances where an agent is subject to forces outside of his control. Thus Zeno speaks of the dog and the wagon:

> Suppose a dog to be tied to a wagon. If he wishes to follow, the wagon pulls him and he follows, so that his power and necessity unite. But if he does not wish to follow, he will be compelled to anyhow. The same is the case with mankind also. Even if they do not wish to follow, they will be absolutely forced to enter into the fated event (Saunders: 109-110).

Marcus Aurelius speaks of the pig at sacrifice and the runaway slave:

> He who flees from his master is a runaway slave. The law is our master and he who

> transgresses against it is then such a runaway too. The man who is grieved or angry or afraid wishes that something had not happened, were not happening, or would not happen, of those things which were ordered by that which rules over all, that is, the law which gives to each man what befalls him (Grube: 104).
>
> Picture to yourself every man who is pained or dissatisfied with anything as being like a pig kicking and squealing when sacrificed; and so is the man who laments silently, alone in his bed, that we are bound by fate (Grube: 105).

Finally, Epictetus, like Shakespeare, speaks of life as being a stage:

> Remember that you are an actor in a play, and that the Playwright chooses the manner of it: if he wants it short, it is short; if long, it is long. If he wants you to act a poor man you must act the part with all your powers. . . For your business is to act the character that is given you and act it well; the choice of the cast is Another's (Saunders: 137).

The Stoic view, then, seems quite fatalistic, and yet within fate or nature there lies room for human freedom through our capacity for judgment. Chrysippus tries to explain this by likening us to a cylinder that is knocked down a hill. The initial blow that sets the cylinder moving is like the hand of fate or nature. It is outside the cylinder's control. It is an irresistible impulse that sets it in motion. But, once the cylinder is moving, it moves in accordance with its own nature. Its movement is no longer subject to fate (Saunders: 109, Gerson: 133). Likewise, we as human beings are subject to the impulses or impetuses of nature which come in the form of sense impressions or presentations. Our freedom lies in our capacity to judge these impressions. This capacity or faculty of judgment, assent, or belief, lies within our power. Assent may require external stimulation, but this faculty itself is still within our control. As Cicero states, recounting the argument of Chrysippus:

> an object strikes our sense and as it were stamps its image in the soul, but the assent is in our power, which, as has been said in the case of the cylinder, while put in motion from without, moves for the rest by its own force and nature (Saunders: 109).

The basic idea, then, is that life, nature, or fate, presents us with certain impressions

or impetuses for judgment. These are outside our control. What lies within our power is our judgment, assent, or belief, concerning them. For example, we cannot help the fact that we are being burned or hurt in some manner, but we can help our belief or judgment concerning this situation. Marcus Aurelius states:

> Whether a thing is bad for you does not depend upon another man's directing mind, nor upon any turn or change in your environment. Upon what then? Upon that part of you which judges what is bad. Let it make no such judgment and all is well. Even when that which is closest to it, your body, is cut, burnt, suppurating or festering, let the judging part of you keep calm. (Grube: 33)

To live in harmony with nature, then, is to accept or submit to the will of nature or fate. Marcus Aurelius tells us that this capacity to submit willingly distinguishes us as rational creatures. He states:

> Realize too that it is granted only to the rational creature to submit willingly to the course of events; merely to submit is inevitable for all creatures. (Grube: 105)

Living in harmony also requires good or true judgment. Disharmony and unhappiness, an unsmooth life, results from making false judgments. Thus Epictetus tells us that:

> 'If he threatens me with death,'one says, 'he compels me.' No, it is not what he threatens you with which compels you, but your decision that it is better to do what you are bidden than to die. Once again it is your own judgement which compels you - that is, will puts pressure on will. . . if you will, you are free: if you will, you will blame no one, you will accuse no one: everything shall be in accordance with your own mind and the mind of God (Oates: 255).

Marcus Aurelius likewise advises us to

> Remain then within the limits of your actual perceptions; do not add to them from within yourself, and you are not affected. (Grube: 83).[1]

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[1] This admonition is in some ways reminiscent of Descartes' theory of error in the *Rules for the Direction of our Native Intelligence* where he states that "we can go wrong only when we ourselves in some way compose the objects of our belief" (Descartes: 16).

For the Stoics, it is our capacity to control judgment that allows us to avoid error and live in harmony with nature.

Though there seem to be some exceptions, such as that persuasive propositions lead to assent or that some presentations come with a yielding or assent (Gerson: 86, 81), the Stoics on the whole appeared to maintain that our control over belief, judgment, or assent, is absolute. It is this faculty that serves as our only response to, and exception from, the rule of fate. But some seemed to believe that this control is only fully realized through the study of dialectic. Thus some Stoics argued that

> Without the study of dialectic the Wise Man cannot guard himself in argument so as never to waver, for it enables him to distinguish between truth and falsehood (Saunders: 74).

Dialectic, moreover,

> conveys a method that guards us from giving assent to any falsehood or ever being deceived by specious probability, and enables us to defend the truths that we have learned (Saunders: 123).

In terms of our earlier taxonomy, then, the Stoics could be classified as complete, positive and negative, direct voluntarists. Those who allow the exceptions cited above would be incomplete voluntarists. Lastly, if one considers the discussion of dialectic to imply that this discipline is a means or tool for controlling judgment or assent, they could be classified as indirect voluntarists. I am inclined to believe, however, that the Stoics were on the whole complete, positive and negative, direct voluntarists. They seemed to maintain that judgment was completely in our control, and that as such, in the words of Marcus Aurelius, "Everything is as you think it be, and the thinking is within your control" (Grube: 126).

II. The Skeptics

> *Skepticism is an ability, or mental attitude, which opposes appearances to judgments in any way whatsoever, with the result that, owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state of mental suspense and next to a state of "unperturbedness" or quietude.*
>
> Sextus Empiricus: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* BK I, IV, 8

The Skeptics viewed themselves as occupying a quasi-therapeutic role. They saw themselves as putting forward a cure for the illness of dogmatism. Sextus states that the Skeptic, "because he loves humanity, wishes to cure dogmatists of their opinions, and rashness with reasoning, so far as possible" (Gerson: 183). The goal of Skepticism was peace, quietude, or "unperturbedness." Dogmatism or dogmatizing (asserting the truth of that which is non-evident or non-apparent) counted as an "illness" in relation to this goal, because the Skeptic believed the concern to assent or judge truly, which accompanies dogmatism, to be the source of mental distress. Thus Sextus writes of "men of talent" who were "perturbed by the contradictions in things and in doubt as to which alternatives they ought to accept" (Bury: 19). The Skeptics sought to attain quietude, or find relief from the disquiet of dogmatism, through complete suspension of judgment. Freedom from anxiety would follow this suspension, the Skeptics claimed, like a shadow follows a body (Gerson: 189).

This suspension of judgment could be achieved through the opposing of arguments. Sextus argues that:

The main principle of the sceptical system is that for every argument another argument of

> equal [weight] is opposed. As a result of this we seem to arrive at a cessation of dogmatism (Gerson: 186).

At other places he writes that:

> The sceptical ability is the ability to set in opposition appearances and ideas in any manner whatsoever, the result of which is first that, because of the equal force of the opposed objects and arguments, final suspension of judgment is achieved, and then freedom from disturbance (Gerson: 185).

There were various ways or "modes" in which arguments, ideas, or presentations, could be opposed in order to bring about suspension of judgment. One mode, for example, centers on the differences among the senses. Through this mode one could achieve suspension of judgment on such matters as whether honey is pleasant. To the tongue honey appears pleasant in some instances, but unpleasant to the eye, and as such "it is impossible to say whether it is, all on its own, pleasant or unpleasant" (Gerson: 203). Through the opposition of arguments, or appearances in this case, one could come to suspend judgment regarding the "true" or "essential" nature of honey. This suspension of judgment is induced or compelled by the opposing of arguments or modes. Thus Sextus writes in regards to the seventh mode that "it is evident by this mode too we are compelled to suspend judgment about the nature of things" (Gerson: 206).

The range of this method of suspending judgment, however, was limited. The Skeptics argued that it could not extend to appearances which force our assent, or bring us to assent involuntarily. Sextus writes that Skeptics do not "overthrow the affective sense impressions which induce our assent involuntarily; and these impressions are 'the appearances' " (Bury: 21). It is argued that the Skeptic "assents to the states forced on him by presentation" (Gerson: 186). The Skeptic, then, would be willing to admit that honey

appeared sweet to him; he would suspend judgment though as to whether this was its actual nature. Hence Timon says, "That honey is sweet I do not posit; that it appears so I concede" (Gerson: 182).

In that assent to appearances was inevitable, these became the "criterion" for Skeptics in the sense that they became guides for living. Sextus argues that Skeptics

> follow a rational procedure based on appearances, this procedure indicating a life in accord with traditional customs and laws and practices and private states (Gerson: 187).

Adherence to Skepticism, then, did not mean inaction or even abstaining from the customs and traditions of the society in which one was situated.

The Skeptics were consistent in their approach. Their goal of suspension of judgment extended even to themselves or their own assertions. Thus, Sextus warns us not to mistake the statements of Skeptics as being dogmatic assertions. He tells us that the Skeptic, when he makes claims, merely states how things appear to himself. The Skeptic is not making a judgment or assertion concerning how things really are. Sextus maintains that:

> the sceptic offers his utterances as implicitly self-canceling, and so he should not be said to dogmatize in offering them. The most important point of all is that in making these utterances he expresses that which appears to himself and he reports the state he is in, but he does so undogmatically, and he commits himself to nothing about any underlying external things (Gerson: 187).

Even the Skeptical method itself is not exempt from this claim. It would seem that the method of opposing arguments involves the implicit assumption that there can be no valid demonstration, for every argument is said to have an opposing argument of equal weight. Yet this is not the case with the Skeptic. Sextus argues that the Skeptical method is like fire which, after destroying its fuel, ends by consuming or destroying itself. The Skeptical method

is not a demonstration against the validity of all demonstration; it is not given a privileged position. Sextus argues that "the argument against demonstration is able to wipe itself out after having destroyed all demonstration" (Gerson: 194). Still trying to make this point clear, Sextus employs an analogy that Wittgenstein would later use in the *Tractatus*. Sextus argues that the Skeptical argument against demonstration is like a ladder that, once it has been used to reach the height one wants to achieve, is kicked down (Gerson: 194).

There are several illuminating differences between the Stoics and the Skeptics. The Skeptics considered the Stoics to be dogmatists. Recall that the Stoics asserted such things as that the goal of life was to live in accordance with nature; the Skeptics would not assert any such universal goal (Gerson: 192). In addition, the Stoics believed that it was possible to judge correctly, so long as one did not insert oneself into one's judgment; the Skeptics believed that such insertion was unavoidable. Thus the fourth or circumstantial mode argues against the validity of judgments concerning the reality of external objects, on the grounds that such judgments will always have to occur while the judge is in some disposition, and hence "if he is going to judge the presentations while in some disposition, then he will be party to the disagreement" (Gerson: 204).

Moreover, the position of the Skeptics is clear on a number of issues where the Stoic position is difficult to discern. There was some doubt, for instance, as to whether the Stoics believed that at least some presentations or appearances compel assent (whether there were some exceptions to our control over belief or judgment). The Skeptics address this issue quite clearly: they argue that appearances do force assent and, as such, our control over belief, assent, or judgment, does not extend to them. For the Skeptics, we can then control

only our beliefs or judgments concerning our appearances. One cannot, for example, control the belief or judgment that "he is appeared to redly." One can, however, control any judgments or beliefs as to the validity or truth of this appearance.

It was also unclear as to what exactly was the role of Dialectic or argument in the Stoic view of belief formation. Thus it was shown that some Stoics maintained that training in Dialectic was necessary at least for one to have full control over belief. The Skeptics are once again clear on this issue. They argue that one's control over belief, one's capacity to suspend judgment, arises from the application of the modes (or opposing arguments) to the matter at hand. Our control over belief, according to their view, is indirect. It is through employing the method of opposing arguments that we are induced or compelled to suspend judgment.

Given these differences I classify the Skeptics as incomplete, indirect, negative voluntarists. They are incomplete voluntarists in that they claim appearances force belief. They are indirect voluntarists in that they maintain that our control over belief rests in the employment of the modes or opposing arguments. They do not hold that we can affect belief or judgment directly, independent of this method. Lastly, they are negative voluntarists in that their discussion of control always centers on the suspension of judgment. According to their account, our control over belief consists in our capacity to withhold it through the method of opposing arguments. This is yet another difference between the Skeptics and the Stoics, in that the latter maintained that we have some positive control over belief.

III. Descartes

I have already amply demonstrated that everything of which I am clearly aware is true. And even if I had not demonstrated this, the nature of my mind is such that I cannot but assent to these things.

Descartes: Fifth Meditation, Sec. 65

The goal of Descartes' philosophy was to find a secure or firm foundation on which to ground human knowledge. In the *Meditations* Descartes writes:

> I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was likely to last (Descartes: 76).

The primary duty that he identifies in relation to this goal is that of withholding assent from any proposition which is less than certain. In the *Discourse*, this duty is the first maxim by which he chooses to regulate his conduct during his quest for certainty. This maxim states that one is not to accept as true anything for which one does not have "evident knowledge of its truth" (Descartes: 29). In the *Meditations*, Descartes cites the same primary duty when he claims that:

> If, however, I simply refrain from making a judgment in cases where I do not perceive the truth with sufficient clarity and distinctness, then it is clear that I am behaving correctly and avoiding error (Descartes: 103).

Descartes acknowledges within his writings the influence that the Skeptics and Stoics had on his work. Descartes attempt to emulate the Stoics is evidenced by the third regulative maxim he cites in the *Discourse*. In this maxim he, like the Stoics, indicates that thought is completely within our control, and therefore that it is through thought that we can control our own happiness or peace of mind. Descartes writes that:

> My third maxim was to try always to master myself rather than fortune, and change my desires rather than the order of the world. In general I would become accustomed to believing that nothing lies entirely within our power except our thoughts. . . This alone, I thought, would be sufficient to prevent me from desiring in future something I could not get, and so to make me content (Descartes: 32-33).

The Skeptics, on the other hand, seemed to have had a negative influence in that Descartes sought to show how his philosophy substantially differed from theirs. Both Skeptical and Cartesian philosophy concentrate on inducing doubt, but Descartes argued that his philosophy stood apart in that doubt itself, or the suspension of judgment, was not the end goal of his work. In the *Discourse*, he writes that:

> I kept uprooting from my mind any errors that might previously have slipped into it. In doing this I was not copying the sceptics, who doubt only for the sake of doubting and pretend always to be undecided; on the contrary, my whole aim was to reach certainty (Descartes: 34).

In the *Meditations*, Descartes reconfirms this difference when he indicates that the usefulness of extensive or hyperbolic doubt lies in its eventual result which is to eliminate all doubt, "to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true" (Descartes: 73).[2]

Despite Descartes' own explicit assertions on this subject of influences, his position concerning the type of control we have over belief borrows almost equally from both the Skeptics and Stoics. From the Skeptics he seems to borrow the notion that suspension of

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[2] Perhaps this difference between Descartes and the Skeptics in terms of their use of doubt is indicative of a greater difference between them in terms of their respective goals. One could argue that the goal of the Skeptics, that of quietude or unperturbedness, is an ethical or practical goal, whereas Descartes' goal of certainty is epistemic. As such, not only do they differ in terms of their employment of doubt, but also in terms of the kind of goal this employment is meant to achieve. I am indebted to Prof. Richard Hall for pointing out this difference.

judgment, or the inducing of doubt, is brought about indirectly. Just as the Skeptics induced doubt through the various modes of opposing arguments, Descartes likewise contends that doubt requires reasons or grounds, and toward this end he seeks to employ the "suppositions" of the Skeptics.

In the *Discourse,* Descartes describes all the arguments he used to induce doubt, and we can see that they clearly resemble the modes employed by the skeptics (Descartes: 36). For instance, Descartes both here and in the *Meditations* seeks to induce doubt by questioning the reliability of the senses and the distinction between dreams and reality. These correspond to aspects of the third and fourth modes cited by Sextus (Gerson: 203). For Descartes, like the Skeptics, all that was requisite to reject a belief was to find "at least some reason for doubt" (Descartes: 76). Where he differs from the Skeptics is that he did not view the available modes as being sufficient for his task. Descartes believed that a new reason must be found to invoke the kind of hyperbolic doubt that he viewed as requisite for his foundationalist project. This new reason was provided by his assumption of the evil or malicious demon (Descartes: 79).

Also like the Skeptics, Descartes maintained that we cannot be mistaken about the way things appear to us and that, as such, appearances cannot be doubted (nor can they be subject to skeptical attack) -- we cannot doubt our appearances or impressions themselves, but only whether they are true. The Skeptics, as we saw, argued that appearances or impressions were not open to attack by the modes or opposing arguments. Descartes, in the *Meditations*, likewise states: "I certainly seem to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'having a sensory perception'" (Descartes: 83). Like the Skeptics,

Descartes distinguishes between impressions, or appearances, and judgments. It is in the latter that we err. In the *Meditations* he gives us the example of our perceiving 'men' clothed in coats and hats. He argues that in fact our perception is not of men. The notion of their being men is rather a judgment. Descartes states that:

> Yet do I see any more than hats and coats that could conceal automatons? I judge that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgment which is in my mind (Descartes: 85).

Like the Stoics, Descartes seems to maintain that we do have some direct control over belief as well. Descartes distinguishes between two faculties, that of the will and that of the understanding. The former faculty is that by which we judge or affirm things. He sometimes calls it the faculty of choice or freedom of the will. It is through the understanding or intellect that we intuit or know things (Descartes: 14, 101). Descartes maintains that although the understanding, when it clearly and distinctly perceives, can lead the will to affirm something, still the understanding is finite whereas the will is infinite (Descartes: 102-104). The fact that the will is infinite means that we can exceed the bounds of the understanding in making our judgments -- we can seek to affirm or deny things that we do not know or understand. Descartes argues that in such situations where we apply the will to a proposition that is not understood, we find that we are indifferent; our judgment or assent can go either way. In these situations, then, we seem to have a kind of direct control over our belief or judgment. We seem to be able to choose what we will believe. Descartes states that when the

> intellect has not yet come upon any persuasive reason in favor of one alternative rather than the other. This obviously implies that I am indifferent as to whether I should assert or deny either alternative, or indeed refrain from making any judgment on the matter (Descartes: 103).

Where exactly, then, does Descartes fit in terms of our earlier voluntarist taxonomy? Descartes' position is complicated. This is in part due to a visual analogy that to some extent seems to dominate his discussion of intuition, or the apprehension of ideas. Descartes likens mental intuition to vision or sight. He often speaks of the mind's eye or gaze when he is discussing intuition (Descartes: 106, 88, 10, 6). In the *Rules,* Descartes is quite explicit in maintaining that intuition can best be understood through analogy with sight. Thus, he states, "We can best learn how mental intuition is to be employed by comparing it with ordinary vision" (Descartes: 10). Descartes further believed that this mental vision or intuition can be strengthened through the cultivation of certain epistemic habits or virtues. This would make Descartes appear to be a kind of indirect voluntarist, who believes that control over belief can be indirectly gained or modified through one's engaging in certain practices or exercises. For Descartes, the practices or exercises consist of such things as studying mathematical and geometrical deductions and breaking problems down to their simplest components (Descartes: 10-11).[3] Further, Descartes believes the cultivating of these intellectual or epistemic habits allows us to combat the negative effects of unreliable epistemic habits or tendencies. Thus Descartes writes that:

> Admittedly, I am aware of a certain weakness in me, in that I am unable to keep my attention fixed on one and the same item of knowledge at all times; but by attentive and repeated meditation I am nevertheless able to make myself remember it as often as the

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[3] Descartes' position, though, may be like that of Montmarquet, a current direct voluntarist who maintains that we can directly control belief through the cultivation of such virtues as conscientiousness (Montmarquet: viii). Descartes similarly maintains that we can sharpen our mental gaze, and in doing so perhaps directly affect our judgments, through developing the habit or virtue of perspicacity (Descartes: 10, 30). This virtue Descartes believes to be analogous to the sharpening of the visual gaze that allows craftsmen to make perfect distinctions among minute things (Descartes: 10).

need arises, and thus get into the habit of avoiding error (Descartes: 104).

This visual analogy does help to explain one interesting feature of Descartes' view, namely, his claim that when we clearly and distinctly perceive or intuit something we cannot help but assent or believe. Thus, in the *Rules*, he argues that the conception of a clear and attentive mind is such "that there can be no room for doubt about what we are understanding" (Descartes: 3). In the *Meditations*, he says that the nature of his mind is such that he "cannot but assent to these things [clear and distinct ideas]" (Descartes: 106). In fact, the argument for the existence of a non-deceiving God is motivated by this aspect of our minds, for Descartes wants to show that our forced assent in these situations will not lead us into error (Descartes: 104-105).

Using the visual analogy this aspect of his view seems to make sense. Taking the intuition of an idea or proposition as a kind of seeing, we can view the Skeptical arguments as a way to poke holes in the perception so as to avoid a false judgment. With sight such arguments might attack the lighting, or the angle of vision, or the distance. But nonetheless, when we view something in perfect lighting, from a perfect angle, at the perfect distance, there can be no room left for doubt. When something is clearly and distinctly perceived in this way, seeing is believing. Thus Descartes states that when he turns to things that he perceives or intuits very clearly, he is convinced of them (Descartes: 88).

This aspect of our minds is not a limitation on our freedom for Descartes. According to his view, freedom involves the absence of external compulsion (Descartes: 102). In these cases, where our assent is determined by clear and distinct perception, there is no external force that compels our assent. Our assent is rather brought about by our own inclination

toward truth or goodness. Thus, in such situations we are in fact doing what we want or are inclined to do, in the absence of external compulsion and, hence, are free. In fact, Descartes believes that situations of indifference, where we are not inclined in one direction over another, are actually instances of imperfect freedom, because we are ignorant of the good or true alternative. This ignorance is what brings about our indifference. We are, according to Descartes' view, perfectly free when we are completely determined by inclination for in such situations we are completely knowledgeable (we clearly and distinctly perceive the truth or goodness of one of the alternatives). Descartes writes:

> I could not but judge that something which I understood so clearly was true; but this was not because I was compelled so to judge by any external force, but because a great light in the intellect was followed by a great inclination in the will, and thus the spontaneity and freedom of my belief was all the greater in proportion to my lack of indifference (Descartes: 102).

Of course, in the view of freedom that is being employed in this dissertation such belief would not be free, for one cannot choose or will to believe in a manner contrary to this inclination.

Where does Descartes' view fall? He may fill all the categories. Thus, in regard to the inducing of doubt, at least in some instances, he appears like the Skeptics to be an indirect, negative voluntarist. In regard to cases of indifference he appears to be a direct, positive and negative, voluntarist. Finally, in regard to clear and distinct ideas, he appears given our definition of freedom, to be a non-voluntarist.

Despite its resistance to classification, Descartes' view departs from that of his influences, the Stoics and Skeptics, in that he does not view either direct or indirect control as being even close to absolute or complete. Both types of control are, for Descartes, limited, direct control being restricted to cases of indifference, while indirect negative control finds

its limit in the case of clear and distinct ideas. Given these limitations on control, Descartes' primary epistemic duty or maxim to 'refrain from assenting in cases where one does not clearly and distinctly perceive' could be rephrased as a duty to 'withhold assent in all cases where this is possible,' or 'to believe or assent only in those cases where one cannot help but do so.'[4]

IV. Locke

> *When the agreement of any two ideas appears to our minds, whether immediately or by the assistance of reason, I can no more refuse to perceive, no more avoid knowing it, than I can avoid seeing those objects which I turn my eyes to, and look on in daylight; and what upon full examination I find the most probable I cannot deny my assent to.*
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> Locke: *Essay* BK IV, XX, 16

Though Locke's *Essay* is in many ways a critical response to Cartesian philosophy (with its emphasis on innate ideas), Locke's own view on belief and voluntarism bears much similarity to that of Descartes. First, both Locke and Descartes believe that custom or habit is a major source of cognitive error. As we saw earlier, Descartes viewed his own method (regarding the development of certain intellectual virtues) as a way to counteract certain negative epistemic habits which lead us into error. Locke likewise believes that custom, habit, or what he terms the association of ideas, is an aspect of our intellectual lives that must be closely checked. In fact, both Descartes and Locke use much the same language in discussing

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[4] I am indebted to Prof. Charles McCracken for this observation.

the nature of habit and its potentially damaging effects. Thus they both liken habit to a path worn smooth by continuous travel. In regards to the attractiveness of customs Descartes writes:

> it is almost always easier to put up with their imperfections than to change them, just as it is better to follow the main roads which wind through mountains, which have gradually become smooth and convenient through frequent use (Descartes: 27).

Although Descartes may seem to place habit or custom in a positive light here, he states elsewhere that:

> My habitual opinions keep coming back, and, despite my wishes, they capture my belief, which is at it were bound over to them as a result of long occupation and the law of custom. . . I think it will be a good plan to turn my will in completely the opposite direction. . . until the weight of preconceived opinion is counterbalanced and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents my judgment from conceiving things correctly (Descartes: 79).

In the *Essay*, Locke writes the following concerning habit:

> Custom settles habits of thinking in the understanding, as well as of determining in the will, and of motions in the body; all which seem to be but trains of motions in the animal spirits, which, once set a-going, continue in the same steps they have been used to, which, by often treading, are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy (Locke: 251).

Locke goes on to say of habit that:

> This wrong connexion in our minds of ideas. . . has such an influence, and is of so great force to set us awry in our actions. . . that perhaps there is not any one thing that deserves more to be looked after (Locke: 252).

Descartes and Locke also believe that truth, self-evidence, or clearness and distinctness, in some way compels us to believe or assent. As we saw earlier, Descartes maintains that when an idea is clearly and distinctly perceived we cannot help but assent to it. Locke's position on this matter seems quite similar to that of Descartes. Locke makes a

distinction between belief or judgment, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other. Both of these cognitive attitudes, for Locke, deal with assenting or dissenting to the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas. The difference between them is that with knowledge this perception is clear or certain, whereas with judgment it is merely probable (Locke: 402-403).

Regarding knowledge, Locke maintains that the clearness or distinctness of the perception involved not only confers certainty, but also compels one to assent to the perception. Locke argues that the ideas involved are known or perceived so distinctly and unconfusedly that:

> all such affirmations and negations are made without any possibility of doubt, uncertainty, or hesitation, and must necessarily be assented to as understood (Locke: 366).

Locke maintains that with knowledge there exists "intuitive evidence which infallibly determines the understanding" (Locke: 406). With regard to judgment or belief, Locke argues that we have the duty to apportion the degree of our assent to the evidence, and to withhold assent until this apportionment can be properly determined. Thus, Locke states:

> if it will proceed rationally, [the mind] ought to examine all the grounds of probability and see how they make more or less for or against any probable proposition, before it assents to or dissents from it; and, upon a due balancing the whole, reject or receive it, with a more or less firm assent, proportional to the preponderancy of the greater grounds of probability (Locke: 406).

This would suggest that the degree of evidence in cases of judgment, as it falls below certainty, is such that it does not determine assent, and this is the reason that we can properly be obligated to regulate our assent in such cases. Locke, however, does not hold this position in regard to instances of judgment. Unlike Descartes, who believed that the pull of the merely

probable could be resisted, Locke argues that probability can compel assent. Thus, whereas Descartes writes in regards to the probable that:

> although probable conjectures may pull me in one direction, the mere knowledge that they are simply conjectures, and not certain and indubitable reasons, is itself quite enough to push my assent the other way (Descartes: 103),

Locke writes that:

> where the proofs are such as make it highly probable, and there is not sufficient ground to suspect. . . there, I think, a man who has weighed them can scarcely refuse his assent to the side on which the greater probability appears. . . I think, assent [judgment] is no more in our power than knowledge...what upon full examination I find the most probable I cannot deny my assent to (Locke: 439-440).

Given this position, how can Locke maintain that we have any obligations concerning how we apportion our assent to the evidence? It would seem that if the preponderancy of the evidence always determines assent there cannot be the freedom or control requisite for obligation or duty. Locke, however, is not a non-voluntarist - he does not maintain that we have no control over belief. Rather, he argues that given the way in which evidence determines assent, our control over belief is almost exclusively indirect: we can control belief through our control over inquiry or the gathering of evidence. Locke, in fact, believes that it is only by virtue of this power over belief via inquiry that any praise or blame in regard to cognitive error is possible. Thus, he states that:

> though we cannot hinder our knowledge where the agreement is once perceived, nor our assent, where the probability manifestly appears upon due consideration of all the measures of it; yet we can hinder both knowledge and assent, by stopping our inquiry, and not employing our faculties in the search of any truth. If it were not so, ignorance, error, or infidelity, could not in any case be a fault (Locke: 440).

For Locke, our control over belief is almost exclusively indirect, in that he concedes that there are situations which afford greater control. Like Descartes, Locke holds that in

cases of indifference, where the evidence is uncompelling on both sides (or insufficient to determine assent), we possess more liberty in regards to belief. Thus, Locke states that:

> [In] less clear cases I think it is in a man's power to suspend his assent, and perhaps content himself with the proofs he has, if they favor the opinion which suits his inclination or interest (Locke: 439-440).

Like Descartes, Locke admits some direct control (albeit negative) in cases of indifference, He contends that in such cases suspension of judgment is within our power. But unlike Descartes, Locke believes that our negative control over belief is limited not only by certainty, but by probability as well.

We saw earlier that Descartes' view of freedom was such that the compelling nature of clear and distinct, or certain, propositions, did not constitute a limitation on our freedom or liberty. This is because Descartes accepts the Desire Thesis under which we are free in so far as we can do what we want, and for Descartes we want to believe what is clear and distinct. Locke, on the other hand, holds the view of freedom I earlier identified as the Will Thesis: Locke believes we are free in so far as we are acting under our own control or choice. Liberty or Freedom for Locke thus involves "the person having the power of doing, or forebearing to do, according as the mind shall choose or direct" (Locke: 167). For Locke, then, the compelling nature of certainty and probability (of evidence in general) does entail a real limitation on our freedom.

Given this, the attempt to impose our taxonomy of voluntarism on Locke's view has at least the possibility of being in agreement with the language of his own theory. In cases of indifference, Locke would seem to be a direct negative voluntarist. Regarding all other cases, he would seem to be an indirect, negative and positive, voluntarist. In both cases,

however, Locke, like Descartes, is certainly an incomplete voluntarist. He limits direct control to cases of indifference, and he limits our indirect control by our perception of the evidence. Our indirect control seems is limited by our perception of both probability and certainty in that both of these compel assent. Thus, Locke argues that we cannot hinder knowledge or judgment once the evidence has been perceived (Locke: 440).

We can see now that the epistemic positions of Locke and Descartes bear a striking disanalogy to most contemporary ethical theories. This is because, in their view, the major epistemic goal (truth) compels epistemic action (belief or assent). This is in contrast to most ethical theories where the ethical goal (goodness or rightness) does not compel ethical action or conduct (physical action). Locke himself may have been aware of this difference for in regards to physical conduct he writes that we always have the power to suspend action or suspend the satisfaction of any desire (Locke: 175), but as we have seen, he certainly does not argue that we have a similar power in regards to assent. In this regard, in Locke's view, our physical liberty or freedom exceeds our epistemic freedom. In fact, our physical freedom serves as the primary basis for what indirect control he admits.

V. Clifford

> *he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him. He had acquired his belief not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts...[and] inasmuch as he had knowingly and willingly worked himself into that state of mind, he must be held responsible for it.*
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> Clifford: *The Ethics of Belief*

Like Descartes and Locke before him, Clifford holds that we have certain duties or obligations pertaining to belief. The principal duty that he recognizes is that of ensuring that one's belief is based upon sufficient evidence. Clifford sums up this duty in the following way: "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (Clifford: 505).

Also like Descartes and Locke, Clifford views one motivation for this duty as being the avoidance of bad epistemic habits. Thus, the observance of this duty will ensure that we protect ourselves from habits which may lead us into error, and which may undermine our control over belief. Accordingly, Clifford states that:

> Every time we let ourselves believe for unworthy reasons, we weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, of judicially and fairly weighting evidence. . . [and] a habit of believing for unworthy reasons is fostered and made permanent (Clifford: 504).

Clifford's position is especially close to that of Descartes in that, like the latter, Clifford views his epistemic duty as entailing a correlative duty to question what one believes. Recall that, for Descartes, our primary duty is to avoid error, to believe only what is clearly and distinctly perceived. This, in turn, leads him to employ skeptical arguments against what he had previously assented to, seeking not merely to induce doubt but rather to achieve certainty. Likewise, Clifford maintains that his duty to believe only on the basis of sufficient evidence leads to the "universal duty of questioning all that we believe" (Clifford: 504).[5]

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[5] Descartes' position, though, may not be quite as strong as that of Clifford in this regard. Thus Descartes does seem to admit that certain practical necessities may require us to believe, or at least act *as if* we believed, in the absence of certainty. In the *Discourse on Method* Descartes states that "since in everyday life we must often act without delay, it is a most certain truth that when it is not in our power to discern the truest opinions, we must follow the most probable" (Descartes: 32). He goes on to assert that "in practical life it is sometimes necessary to act on opinions as if they were indubitable, even when one

Lastly, like Descartes, Clifford seems to maintain that we have an almost complete or absolute negative control over belief. This assumption of near absolute control in Clifford's position is implied by the exceptionless nature of the duties or obligations that he discusses. Thus, in terms of the duty of questioning all that we believe, Clifford argues that "No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station," can permit one to escape this universal duty (Clifford: 504). In terms of the duty to believe only on sufficient evidence, he argues that its violation is "wrong always, everywhere, and for everyone" (Clifford: 505). This latter duty seems to imply a powerful negative control over belief (the power to withhold belief in the face of insufficient evidence). Without such a strong negative power, the universal duty to believe only when the evidence is sufficient would be nonsensical. Without such a power we could not avoid believing in the face of insufficient evidence. This negative control is perhaps exercised indirectly through our power to test statements, which is in turn implied by our universal duty to question. This would also bring Clifford's position closer to that of Descartes, for the latter believed that doubt or suspension of belief is primarily induced indirectly, through skeptical arguments or questioning.

There is in fact some evidence within Clifford's writing which suggests that he viewed our control over belief as being primarily indirect. In the examples of wrong belief that he discusses, the belief is usually the product of the agent intentionally ignoring relevant and undermining evidence. Thus he discusses the following case:

> If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids

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knows they are quite uncertain" (Descartes: 35). In this respect Descartes' position is similar to that of James in "The Will to Believe".

> the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot be easily asked without disturbing it - the life of that man is one long sin against mankind (Clifford: 505).

For Clifford, it is through our examination of evidence, investigating and questioning what we believe, that we exercise our doxastic control. This control is therefore indirect, and can be both positive and negative. By carefully regulating evidence, either seeking it out or avoiding it, we can both bring about and suspend belief. As such, I would argue that Clifford's position is that of an indirect, negative and positive voluntarist. In addition, like Descartes and Locke, he is probably not a complete voluntarist, at least in terms of negative control. Where doubt cannot be induced through questioning or skeptical argument, where our belief is certain or unshakable, we cannot suspend our belief. For Clifford, it is only in the absence of doubt (brought about either by suppression or the conclusive of the evidence) that belief can be wrongfully, or rightfully, maintained.

VI. James

> *Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds.*

James: "The Will to Believe" CH IV

James' position, at least in "The Will to Believe," is a response to the epistemic view of Clifford which he sees as emphasizing the avoidance of error at the expense of truth.[6] Of

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[6] In Chapter Five (Sec. IId) the disagreement between Clifford and James will be discussed in more detail. It will be shown that James' response to Clifford is motivated by

Clifford, James writes that he exhorts us to

> Believe nothing...keep your mind in suspense forever, rather than by closing it on insufficient evidence incur the awful risk of believing lies (WTB: 510).

James puts forward two epistemic duties which he believes are independent, and to some extent in conflict. These duties are to "know the truth" and to "avoid error," these are "our first and great commandments as would-be knowers" (WTB: 509). James argues that the intellect or reason does not dictate which of these duties is primary. He argues that emphasis of one over another is merely an expression of our passional nature. As such, it is possible for one to choose which is primary. One can decide whether to be guided by the "horror of being duped" or the "chase of truth" (WTB: 509-510). Rather than follow the example of Clifford, who he views as emphasizing the second of these duties, James wishes to argue for an epistemic position which privileges the first. James wants to defend a position which emphasizes the pursuit of truth, and which will allow us under some circumstances to risk error in its name. James writes that:

> Clifford's exhortation has to my ears a thoroughly fantastic sound. It is like a general informing his soldiers that it is better to keep out of battle forever than to risk a single wound. Not so are victories either over enemies or over nature gained (WTB: 510).

Like Descartes and Locke, James pays special attention to cases of indifference, instances where our intellect or reason is unable to determine belief due to insufficient evidence, or where the arguments or evidence on both sides are about equally strong. As

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misunderstanding. James mistakenly views Clifford as an epistemic consequentialist, i.e., as weighting the avoidance of error more heavily than the attainment of truth. It will be argued, though, that Clifford is an epistemic deontologist. That his view arises not from the assessment of epistemic consequences, the weighting of the benefit of true belief against the detriment of false belief, but rather from strict adherence to duty.

with his two predecessors, James recognizes that in such cases the will has a powerful and perhaps direct influence over belief. In fact, in other cases James seems to deny any doxastic power or potency to the will. He writes:

> Can we, just by willing it, believe that Abraham Lincoln's existence is a myth...Can we, by any effort of our will, or by any strength of wish that it were true, believe ourselves well when we are roaring with rheumatism in bed. . . We can say any of these things, but we are absolutely impotent to believe them; and of just such things is the whole fabric of the truths that we do believe made up (WTB: 507).

James argues that from one point of view "believing by our volition seems...simply silly" (WTB: 508).

But some qualifications need to be made here. In the "Will to Believe" James is arguing against the commandment of agnosticism, or the scientific credo, which he contends is represented by the position of Clifford. This Credo maintains that one "shall not believe without coercive sensible evidence" (*Essays on Faith and Morals* hereafter EFM: 25). Given the promptings of this commandment, suspension of belief, or neutrality, is required in cases where this evidence is lacking. James wants to show that neutrality in every such situation is unattainable, that under certain circumstances inaction is a form of action (EFM: 24). He thus focuses on cases where the credo would advise us to suspend judgment, cases of indifference where the evidence is inconclusive, and attempts to show that certain situations which meet this description do not admit of neutrality - that neutrality would amount to a choice of one of the alternatives, and that as such we are permitted to "will to believe" (to choose actively rather than by default). In these cases of indifference, then (which I will go on to define very specifically in a moment), James seems to contend that we do have a kind of direct control over belief, that we can will or choose to believe. In the *Principles*,

concerning the choice between belief in either determinism or freewill, James writes:

> But when scientific and moral postulates war thus with each other and objective proof is not to be had, the only course is voluntary choice (PP: 573).

Outside of such cases where we are faced with warring alternatives and lack any objective means to decide between them, James seems to maintain that we have a kind of indirect control over belief. He argues that we may not be able to believe abruptly, but that we can employ methods by which we may gradually be led to belief (PP: 321). One such method is to is to act "as if the thing in question were real," to act as if we believed (PP: 321). Another method by which we can indirectly control belief involves our attention to evidence. In a conversation with Chauncey Wright, James is said to have argued that:

> Belief is only a matter of choice, and therefore a moral duty, so far as attending to evidence is a volitional act...and attention to all accessible evidence [is] the only duty involved in belief (*The Thought and Character of William James* hereafter TC: 531).

But there are forces to be battled against in this regard. As such, our indirect control, like our direct control, is limited. These forces consist of such things as emotions (PP: 308, 562) as well as custom or habit (PP: 568). For James, then, both our indirect and direct control are incomplete. The former is limited by certain forces that oppose the will, and the latter to specific circumstances of indifference.

James' position, then, concerning our control over belief is not as strong as it may appear in "The Will to Believe." Though his position is at times unclear, James seems to maintain that an indirect control over belief exists outside of cases of indifference. It is, none the less, only in cases of indifference, where the intellect cannot determine belief, that the will has direct influence. Given his emphasis on the pursuit of truth, James wishes to argue for

the position that in cases of indifference, the will not only has the capacity to determine belief, but the right to do so (WTB: 509). In these such cases we have permission to "will to believe."

James is more specific than either Locke or Descartes are in defining the cases or instances of indifference in which the will has direct power over belief. He begins by arguing that the choice between the hypotheses, or candidates of belief, in these cases must not only be undetermined by the intellect or evidence, but that the choice must also be living, momentous, and forced (WTB: 510, 513). By a living choice or option, James means that the possible candidates for belief, or hypotheses, are both living. This in turn means that they both appeal as a real possibility to the person to whom they are proposed. As such, liveness or deadness is not an intrinsic property of an hypothesis, but is rather relative to the agent who is confronted by it (WTB: 506). To illustrate through example, for most persons today, the notion of a geocentric universe would not be a living hypothesis, because it would not present itself as a real possibility. A forced option or choice is one that is unavoidable, one about which we cannot remain neutral (WTB: 507). For instance, if I tell you to "either leave the room or stay within it" your choice or option is forced, you cannot avoid choosing one of the alternatives. Finally, a momentous option or choice is one in which the opportunity is unique, the stakes are great, and the decision is irreversible (WTB: 507). A momentous option would fall under what we commonly call today "a once in a lifetime chance."

From the standpoint of the "right to believe" that James is attempting to establish, the forced and momentous nature of the option or choice is perhaps most important. The option must be forced, for if it is not, we can, and perhaps should, suspend judgment until our

intellect can decide the matter - until, for example, more evidence can be gained (WTB: 510). And if the option is not momentous, we will not suffer an irreversible loss through such a suspension of judgment; we will not miss "a once in a lifetime chance."[7] From the standpoint of voluntarism, though, the living nature of the option or choice is essential, for in the case of dead hypotheses our will is impotent. Our will cannot bring them to life again (WTB: 509).

For James, then, at least our direct control over belief extends to very specific circumstances. The situation must not only be one of indifference. The option or choice involved must also be living. We must regard the candidates for belief involved as being real possibilities. In this regard, perhaps James is merely refining the insight of Descartes and Locke from the vantage point of his pragmatism. The phenomenology of Descartes' and Locke's position seems essentially correct. We do appear to experience a greater degree of control over our belief in cases where the evidence on both sides is essentially even. In such instances, we do feel as if we could choose or will to believe either way, or perhaps even

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[7] James is not alone in asserting that in certain circumstances, given the importance of the matter at hand or the need for decisiveness, we must, and hence are permitted to believe, regardless of the insufficiency of the evidence. As we saw earlier (footnote 6), Descartes seems to hold a position quite like this. Locke as well discusses the "necessity of believing without knowledge, nay often upon very slight grounds, in this fleeting state of action and blindness we are in" (Locke: 409). But unlike Locke and Descartes, James puts forward epistemic as well as practical justification for this. Thus in addition to discussing the forced and momentous nature of the options involved, he discusses examples where belief in such instances will in essence create its own justification after the fact (where justification was in some sense lacking prior to belief). He tries to show us that in some cases the truth is nicely adjusted to our needs and powers (WTB: 511). Thus he discusses cases where belief will give the agent access to evidence that will confirm the belief and which would be inaccessible without it (WTB: 512-513), and cases where belief will actually create or bring about the fact believed (WTB: 511).

choose to remain neutral. For some of us, one or perhaps more of these choices may be more painful than the other(s), but we do none the less feel as if the choice is in our power. James, however, goes on to point out that mere indifference is not enough. The cases in which we feel we can choose, the cases of indifference with which we actually concern ourselves, are those in which the candidates are living or real possibilities.

I am indifferent about whether Buddha is a real deity; I cannot, however, apply my will to this case and chose to believe one way or the other. This is because the candidates involved are not living; neither is a real possibility for me. Because they are not living options for me, each seems "absurd" (WTB: 513). As a pragmatist, James goes beyond the account of Descartes and Locke to examine in greater detail when we actually can and do apply our will to belief. From the standpoint of our taxonomy, James' position is that of an incomplete, positive and negative, direct voluntarist, as well as an incomplete, positive, indirect voluntarist. On his account we can directly apply our will in specific conditions of indifference and "will to believe" even when the option is unforced or unmomentous. We can also choose to follow the scientific credo and suspend judgment, or exercise direct negative control, when we lack coercive evidence. James, in fact, argues that where the choice is not momentous or forced we ought to follow the scientific credo (WTB: 511). Thus, our direct control seems limited by the evidence. It seems to be restricted to cases where the evidence, or our intellect, does not determine belief. James also holds that we can indirectly influence belief in some instances by either acting as if we believed, or through our attention to evidence.

VII. Conclusion

What can we learn from this examination of voluntarist positions? One conclusion that can be drawn concerns the relationship between evidence and belief. Almost all of the voluntarist thinkers we examined contend that once evidence reaches a certain degree or level it compels or coerces belief. For the Skeptics, the only evidence seen as reaching this degree was our sensory evidence, in that they argued appearances cannot be made subject to doubt. For Descartes, appearances as well as clear and distinct ideas were able to reach this level. Locke added probability to this list.[8] He contended that even merely probable evidence compels belief. Both Clifford and James also seemed to recognize the existence of coercive evidence. The question for them was whether it is permissible to believe in the absence of such evidence. The question we need to address in the chapters to come is whether this acknowledged relationship between evidence and belief is causal or normative. Is our feeling that we are somehow constrained or compelled to believe once the evidence reaches a certain degree the result of evidence having a causal influence on belief, or is it rather due to our adherence to certain norms which prescribe belief in such instances?

Another conclusion concerns the plausibility of direct voluntarism. For Locke, Descartes, and James, the feeling of control that we have in cases of indifference seems to be the principal ground for their contention that we have some direct control over belief. James

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[8] Heil argues that voluntarists focus primarily on perceptual beliefs. That it "is with respect to beliefs of this sort that voluntarists seem most inclined to offer prescriptions and advice" (Heil, 1983: 360). Our historical examination of voluntarism suggests, though, that Heil is incorrect. Of the voluntarists we examined, almost all were willing to concede that perceptions or appearances compel belief or assent. In Heil's terms, almost all would seem to agree that "seeing is believing."

is the most clear in terms of specifying the conditions that must be present for the exercise of this direct control. He argues that it must not only be the case that the evidence is inconclusive, or does not sufficiently favor one side over the other; the options or hypotheses entertained must also be live or real possibilities for the agent who is confronted by them. James, then, seems to go further than Locke and Descartes by specifying the actual practical circumstances under which we feel we can will to believe. This intuition that we are capable of direct doxastic control, which arises from our experience of belief in instances of indifference, would seem to be a powerful one. Given that it was able to convince these thinkers of the possibility of direct voluntarism, perhaps we too should remain open to this possibility and not allow the current authority of determinism to overwhelm our judgment.

CHAPTER TWO

NON-VOLUNTARISM

It is none of the naturalized epistemologist's business to assess whether, and to what degree, the input "justifies" the output, how a given irradiation of the subject's retinas makes it "reasonable" or "rational" for the subject to emit certain representational output. His interest is strictly causal and nomological: he wants us to look for patterns of lawlike dependencies characterizing the input-output relations for this particular organism and others of a like physical structure.

Jaegwon Kim: "What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'?"

Mechanism...presents a harsh, and perhaps insoluble, antimony to human thought.

Norman Malcolm: "The Conceivability of Mechanism"

The goal of naturalized epistemology is to trace out the relationship between what Quine called the "meager input" of experience and the "torrential output" of theory or science (Quine: 83). This relationship between experience and theory, or the world and belief, is seen in causal terms. Surely Quine saw it this way, for he wished to replace questions of epistemic priority with those of causal priority (Quine: 85). More recent naturalizing epistemologists, such as Alvin Goldman, view this relationship in causal terms as well. Goldman in much of his work attempts to trace out the kind of "appropriate" causal networks

that could produce justified true belief, or knowledge (see "A Causal Theory of Knowledge"). It is not by looking at belief in strict causal terms that Quine differs from someone like Goldman. It is, rather, in abandoning the project of justification, which Goldman does not do. Quine wishes to put aside questions *Quid Juris* in favor of those *Quid Facti*: the role of epistemology is no longer to show in what manner justification can be conferred, but rather to show how theory, or belief, actually arises from sensory experience (Quine: 75-76).

With its emphasis on placing belief within a completely deterministic or causal framework, resulting in the abandonment of justification, strong or Quinean naturalized epistemology can be seen as the paradigm of a current non-voluntarist position. As Louis Pojman argues, this view's stance in regards to justification entails a particular view on the subject of doxastic voluntarism, and hence on whether we can be responsible for our beliefs.[1] Pojman writes that naturalists such as Quine reject the notion of justification in that, for them,

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[1] Richard Feldman disagrees with this assumption that some degree of voluntarism is requisite for responsibility or obligation. Feldman argues that there can be "obligations concerning involuntary behavior", or rather "obligations and requirements that obtain in the absence of our ability to fulfill them" (Feldman: 547). As examples Feldman puts forward the notion that teachers hold students responsible for the work assigned in class even if it becomes apparent that they lack the ability to complete or master it, as well as the notion that one may be held responsible for paying a mortgage even if one lacks the capacity to pay (Feldman: 547-548). These examples, though, do not seem to be instances of obligation without voluntarism. The reason that we hold persons responsible in these cases is that they voluntary entered into these relationships, e.g., that of a student or a debtor. Thus even though the persons in these cases lack the power to fulfill the obligations imposed by these relationships, it was nonetheless a voluntary decision at the outset to enter into them. In this way these cases are much like those of strict liability as found in legal theory. In such strict liability cases we hold persons legally responsible for certain events, even if these events were outside their control, simply because they voluntarily entered into a certain relationship or profession, e.g., milk distributors may be held legally responsible for tainted milk even if the contamination is not the result of any action or negligence on their part.

knowledge

> is a matter of having beliefs caused in the proper way. The idea of justification implies normativity, but we are not responsible for our beliefs; so the idea of evaluation is misplaced (Pojman, *A Theory of Knowledge*: 290).

Jaegwon Kim has already put forward a powerful objection against this view of naturalized epistemology. He argues that epistemology is an inherently normative endeavor, and thus he questions whether Quinean naturalized epistemology, with its abandonment of normative questions, is epistemology at all. Kim maintains that the agenda of epistemology, at least in the Western tradition, has been to establish the criteria by which one can discern what propositions are "worthy of belief" (Kim, 1988: 329). Hence, the central goal of Western epistemology has been to uncover the conditions under which belief is justified. Kim argues that this notion of justification is inherently normative. Like the idea of justification in normative ethics, the idea of justification in epistemology deals with the notion of what is permissible, reasonable, or responsible, conduct (Kim, 1988: 330). Kim states that "if a belief is justified for us, then it is *permissible* and *reasonable*...for us to hold it, and it would be *epistemically irresponsible* to hold beliefs that contradict it" (Kim, 1988: 330).

Kim believes, however, that Quine is calling for us to abandon this notion of justification and to replace it with a "purely descriptive," causal model of belief acquisition. Quine, he believes, "is urging us to replace a normative theory of cognition with a descriptive science"; epistemology is "to go out of the business of justification" and is rather to become "a chapter of psychology" (Kim, 1988: 333). For Kim, this rejection of normativity is especially troubling in that it not only results in a rejection of the Western epistemic tradition, but also undermines the very idea of belief itself. Kim argues that the notion of belief is

intimately connected to certain norms of rationality, and that, as such, the concept of belief is itself normative (Kim, 1988: 335). He states that unless the output of a given cognizer "is subject to evaluation in accordance with norms of rationality, that output cannot be considered as consisting of beliefs" (Kim, 1988: 336); (see footnote 5, Chapter Four). Kim questions, then, the status of the Quinean project on two grounds, which both center on its rejection of normative inquiry: first, that this rejection entails an abandonment of the tradition which informs the very idea of Western epistemology, and second, that it rules out the central epistemic concept of belief.

In this chapter, I examine a different criticism of naturalized epistemology which focuses more directly on the non-voluntarism of this position. This criticism questions the coherency of naturalized epistemology. I shall ask whether naturalized epistemology, due to its adherence to doxastic non-voluntarism, is compatible with our conception of ourselves as rational beings.

I. The Inconceivability of Non-Voluntarism

At least as early as Kant we see traces of an argument that attacks the conceivability of determinism or mechanism, and hence by implication, that of non-voluntarism[2] - an argument which, at heart, attempts to show that mechanism is inconsistent with our conception of ourselves as rational beings, beings capable of deliberation or judgment (capable of assessing, judging, evaluating, believing, and finally asserting, reasons and

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[2] For the purposes of this dissertation I will be using the terms "mechanism" and "determinism" interchangeably.

doctrines). Kant argued for the impossibility of our conceiving of our reason as being directed from outside, as being directed by what he called alien causes or influences. For if this were the case, we could no longer consider our judgments to be those of reason, they would rather be the product of impulse. As such, according to Kant, we can never rationally assent to mechanism, in that this view divorces our judgments from reason. Kant concludes, then, that as rational beings we must consider ourselves free, we must operate under the Idea of freedom. He states:

> But we cannot possibly conceive of a reason as being consciously directed from outside in regard to its judgments; for in that case the subject would attribute the determination of his power of judgment not to his reason, but to an impulsion. Reason must look upon itself as the author of its own principles independently of alien influences. Therefore as practical reason, or as the will of a rational being, it must be regarded by itself as free (Kant:116).

It is not just acts of judging, believing, and asserting that require freedom. Even acts of doubting do. To doubt is to give reasons. One cannot doubt without reasons or grounds (Brett: 189). As Wittgenstein indicates, in *On Certainty*, rational suspicion must have grounds; doubt must find a "foothold" in reasons (Wittgenstein: 41e, 46e).

Given this connection of doubt to reasons, it can then be argued that the activity of doubt necessitates epistemic freedom. This is because the giving of reasons is an evaluative enterprise. One must be able to select reasons on the basis of their cogency, and for this selection to be valid it cannot be externally determined.

> Doubt is possible only where some sort of reasons can be given for not committing oneself to the claim in question. Now, an assumption of the whole enterprise of reasoning is that claims can (and should) be selected on the basis of their coherency, their compatibility with other accepted claims and considerations which provide evidence for or against them. Any thesis which implies that we cannot make such selections or that the arrival at these selections does not have its real basis in the deliberations involved, is thus

> at odds with the possibility of doubt...But the exercise of the capacity for rational selection among alternative claims about the world is the exercise of epistemic freedom. One cannot argue that this supposed rational selection is rigged or an illusion without engaging in a process of rational selection which he takes to be neither rigged nor spurious (Brett: 193-194).

Thus, one cannot attack or doubt one's own epistemic or doxastic freedom, in that the activity of doubting itself implies this freedom. Such an attack would amount to an attempt to doubt one's capacity for doubt.

Norman Malcolm puts forward a somewhat similar argument attempting to show the inconceivability of determinism or mechanism and, hence, non-voluntarism. Malcolm argues that mechanism denies the very existence of intentional states (e.g., wants, desires, beliefs) in that it severs the necessary connection between such states and action or behavior. Malcolm claims that the connection between intentional states and behavior is *a priori*. He maintains that intentional states are conceptually connected to behavior or action (Malcolm: 142). Malcolm believes that mechanism severs this connection between intentional states and behavior, by rendering such states irrelevant to the explanation of behavior. He argues that a comprehensive mechanistic theory concerning human behavior or bodily movements (e.g., a comprehensive neurophysiological theory), would seek to provide complete causal explanations of behavior in terms of external and internal physical forces. In such a theory, then,

> in no cases would desires, intentions, purposes be necessary conditions of any human movements. It would never be true that a man would *not* have moved as he did if he had *not* had such and such an intention (Malcolm: 136).

Through breaking the *a priori* connection between intentional states and behavior by rendering the former explanatorily irrelevant to the latter, Malcolm argues that mechanism

eliminates the very idea of intentional states. He states:

> Purposes and intentions are, in concept, so closely tied to behavioral effects that the total absence of behavioral effects would mean the total absence of purposes and intentions (Malcolm: 142).

In denying the existence of intentional states, according to Malcolm, mechanism renders itself incoherent. This is because the assertion of a doctrine is itself intentional and, hence, the assertion of mechanism becomes self-contradictory. Malcolm states:

> In particular, stating, asserting, or saying that so-and-so is true requires the intentional uttering of some sentence. If mechanism is true, therefore, no one can state or assert anything...Specifically, no one can assert or state that mechanism is true. If anyone were to assert this, the occurrence of his intentional 'speech act' would imply that mechanism is false (Malcolm: 145).

From this, he concludes that mechanism is in this sense inconceivable "in that no one can consistently assert (or state, or say) that mechanism is, or may be, true" (Malcolm: 146).

Finally, even proponents of mechanism seem to accept the idea that there is some sort of difficulty in the conceivability of this doctrine. John Watling, in a critique of Hampshire's view of freedom, concedes that belief must be the product of inquiry (Watling: 27). He concedes that "a person cannot hold a belief for reasons other than reasons for the truth of the proposition in which it is a belief" (Watling: 28). In the mechanist view, however, belief is the product of causes, and not reasons which proclaim truth or could serve as the basis for the justification of the belief. Likewise, Daniel Dennett, in an early article on this subject, argues that "we, *as persons*, cannot *adopt* exclusive mechanism" (Dennett, 1974: 181), meaning that we cannot completely abandon a picture of ourselves in which we explain our behavior on the basis of reasons rather than external causes (Dennett, 1974: 181). In a later work, Dennett continues in this vein, arguing that:

> still there is a feeling that there must be something absurd about soldiering on with one's deliberating after reaching the opinion that that very deliberating is determined...There is a feeling that anyone who happened to continue deliberating under such circumstances would have to be deluded about something (Dennett, 1984: 107).

He goes on to conclude that we "cannot help acting under the idea of freedom, it seems; we are *stuck* deliberating as if our futures were open" (Dennett, 1984: 108). In fact, as we will see, Dennett maintains that belief in determinism must involve a kind of schizophrenia (or irrationality?) in which we move between two incompatible images of ourselves (Dennett, 1984: 115).

We see, then, in the positions of both opponents and defenders of mechanism, or non-voluntarism, the notion that there is something paradoxical about this doctrine. The paradox arises in the attempt to believe, judge, assert, or even doubt this doctrine, in that to do so appears to presuppose the very freedom that mechanism denies. As such, mechanism comes into conflict with our conception of ourselves as rational beings - beings capable of engaging in these activities of belief, judgment and assertion.

It is important to note, however, that none of these arguments are attempting to attack directly the rationality or justification of particular propositions believed but, rather, the justification or rationality of the epistemic agents who believe, assert, argue for, or doubt these propositions. When we discuss the rationality of belief we may be concerned with the rationality of one or all of the following: (1) the propositional content of the belief, (2) the act of believing that content (that is, we may be concerned with whether belief in that proposition is rational), or (3) the believer. It may be that the first of these concerns is parasitic on the second. To discuss the rationality of a given proposition it may be the case that we must

place it within the context of its actually being believed by some epistemic agent. We may have to ask the question, "would it be rational for someone to believe this?" None the less, this first concern is not being attacked directly by these arguments against determinism. If it is being attacked, it is only via the second and third concerns which are the primary focus of these arguments. The principal claim is that the *act of belief* in determinism cannot be rational or that belief in determinism conflicts with *the idea of a rational believer*, but this does not contest directly the rationality of the propositional content of this belief.

This distinction can perhaps be best brought out through analogy with ethics. Thus in ethics, we might, even in reference to an agent whose act was completely determined, evaluate the rightness or wrongness of his act in an "objective" sense. Let us assume that the completely determined agent performs an act of a type that is morally wrong. We may quite consistently judge that acts of this type are wrong, though we may not judge that it was wrong of him to do the act -- that he is morally responsible or blameworthy for his particular token of the act in question. This latter attribution of responsibility is ruled out by the determined or involuntary nature of the act.[3] Similarly, we may say of a completely determined believer that a "belief" or proposition he holds is justified, that there is sufficient evidence in favor of this belief considered as a type, though we may not say of the believer that he himself is justified or rational in holding this "belief," that he is a rational believer or

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[3] Thomas Nagel argues for this position when he states: "we feel that the appropriateness of moral assessment is easily undermined by the discovery that the act or attribute, no matter how good or bad, is not under the person's control. While other evaluations remain, this one seems to lose its footing" (Nagel: 280). These other evaluations include the "evaluation of something as a good or bad thing, or state of affairs" (Nagel: 280).

that his particular instance or token of believing is justified.[4] This is because this latter judgment, like its moral cousin, implies responsibility. It implies responsibility on behalf of the believer, which is ruled out by the determined or involuntary nature of the "belief."

In these arguments above and in those that follow, then, when it is said that one cannot rationally accept, believe, judge, or assert a given doctrine, I do not mean to draw a direct conclusion concerning whether the proposition believed, asserted, etc., can be justified in itself (objectively or as a type); rather I mean only that the epistemic agent cannot perform these activities in a rational or justified manner.

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[4] My main concern is with the connection of rationality and rational belief to voluntary or non-determined cognitive activity. There is this other notion of rational belief, though, which hinges on the evidential relationship. Roderick Firth holds a position which explicates this evidential view of rational belief. He distinguishes between what he terms propositional warrant and doxastic warrant. Firth argues for the separation of "the 'logical content' of a belief from the psychological state of believing" (Firth, 1978: 218). For Firth the "assessment of propositional warrant is a judgment about the evidential relationship between certain psychological states and the proposition" (Firth, 1978: 218). These psychological states consist of the recognition of evidence, perhaps not by the believer but by others in the community to which the believer belongs, which supports the proposition in question (Firth, 1978: 219). In this way the notion of propositional warrant, justification, or rationality, can be seen in terms much like Putnam's division of linguistic labor. Putnam argues that the reference of terms can be fixed by experts within a linguistic community, and as such, all individuals within the community can employ terms properly even in cases where they are not aware of the information or "criteria" by which reference is fixed (Putnam, 1973: 126-128). Similarly, we may argue that propositions of a given type, of which a token is believed by an individual, can be justified or rational by virtue of there being experts within the individual's community who possess evidence which confers justification on this type. This could be a way of making sense of the idea of "there being evidence out there which supports the proposition". This does not mean, though, that the individual possesses doxastic warrant for his particular token of the proposition, or is rational in believing it. Thus the individual may not possess this evidence which the "experts" hold, or he may not recognize it as evidence (e.g., those persons who did not recognize the axioms of mathematics as supporting Fermat's last theorem).

II. A Defense of Non-Voluntarism

Most theorists recognize this apparent conflict or tension between non-voluntarism and rational belief and deliberation (and hence rationality), and in doing so attempt to ease or eliminate it in some way (for example, through the strategy of multiple explanations which will be discussed below). Bernard Williams, like some naturalizing epistemologists such as Alvin Goldman, does not employ this defensive strategy -- he does not recognize any inherent conflict or tension between rationality and determinism. Instead, Williams attempts to define rational or justified belief in terms of causality or external and internal causal processes. He discusses "rational" creatures as having beliefs that are causally produced, and he argues that "if the causal connections broke down, they would cease to be rational creatures" (Williams: 143). Williams argues that when we view a person's belief as being rational *because* he holds certain evidence, "because" is generally used in such situations to indicate a causal connection (Williams: 142). Thus according to Williams', account rational belief is typically the result of there being a causal connection between the belief in question and the evidence for that belief. In regard to this reliance on causality in defining rational or justified belief, Williams' view is much like that of Goldman's. Goldman argues that "correct principles of justified belief must be principles that make causal requirements" (Goldman, 1979: 297). Goldman argues, however, that it is the conditional reliability of the causal process, the tendency of the process to produce true rather than false outputs or beliefs (when given true inputs), and not mere causal connection to evidence, which confers justification (Goldman, 1979: 300). Goldman prefers reliability as the criterion of justification in that he is concerned about cases where belief is causally connected to proper evidence but only accidentally. He

maintains that the causal connection which confers justification should not be the result of chance or accident but, rather, the result of a process which reliably connects belief to confirming evidence or states of affairs (Goldman, 1979: 297). Where Goldman and Williams most sharply part ways, however, is on the notion of whether rational belief should involve the believer having some awareness of the causal process which produced his belief. Williams argues that such awareness is necessary for rational belief. He argues that belief produced by a "pure causal connection" - one in which the believer has no such awareness - is not rational. Even though the person may have the belief *because* of proper evidence, in that he cannot recount this, the belief is irrational (Williams: 141). Goldman, on the other hand, argues that no such awareness is requisite for rational or justified belief. He argues that one "can have justified belief without knowing that it is justified (or believing justifiably that it is justified)" (Goldman, 1979: 301). Ironically, Williams' view is quite similar to that of an earlier work of Goldman's on knowledge. In this work, Goldman argues for a causal theory of knowledge which requires that the knower be able to reconstruct the causal process which leads to the belief in question (Goldman, 1967: 144).

Goldman and Williams in their respective views can, on the face of it, come up with an account of both rational and irrational acts of belief, as well as rational believers. Thus, a rational act of belief, according to their accounts, would be one that is caused in the appropriate manner, and a rational believer would be one who arrived at beliefs in this manner the majority of the time. Their use of the idea of rational belief, I contend, does not accord with our common understanding. Thus, as argued above, our conception of rational beliefs and believers seems to involve the notions of assessment and deliberation which presuppose

doxastic freedom. Their causal theory of belief would seem to run counter to this notion of freedom, and thus conflict with our conception of rationality to which it is attached.

a. Multiple Explanations

Dennett, among others (e.g., Watling), attempts to resolve this conflict by distinguishing between two different kinds of explanation - causal, and purposive or rationalizing explanations. The former kind of explanation is, of course, mechanistic, whereas the latter is intentional and provides the basis of reasons for belief that our conception of rationality requires. This strategy, to some extent, amounts to having one's cake and eating it too. According to this view belief, assent, etc., can be explained on both levels and, hence, a given belief can be shown to be both causally determined and rational or based in reasons.[5]

Watling argues that the rationalizing explanation or reasons a person may have *for* holding a given belief can be separated from an explanation of *why* he actually holds the belief, the latter being expressed in causal terms. Remember that Watling conceded that rational belief must be based in reasons, or be the product of enquiry. In the face of this admission he attempts to defend mechanism through the above distinction, arguing that the reasons for holding a belief can be separated from the causal explanation of its occurrence. Watling

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[5] Some proponents of this dual explanation view may wish to argue that the same "thing" is not being explained in the two explanations. When this view is related to action theory, it is often argued that the causal or mechanistic explanation deals with bodily movements, whereas the purposive, intentional, or rationalizing explanation deals with actions. This attempt, though, to distinguish the objects of the two kinds of explanation seems artificial. It would seem more plausible to assert not that we have two different objects or events being explained, but rather one event being explained under two different descriptions. Thus both explanations seek to explain the same "thing", albeit under different descriptions.

states:

> Since the explanation involves only that belief is the outcome of enquiry and that enquiry is an attempt to arrive at the truth, it has implications only concerning the reasons a person may have for holding his beliefs and none concerning the explanation of his holding the beliefs he does in terms of causal factors (Watling: 28).

He then goes on to argue that the attempt to use the requirement that belief be based on reasons as an argument for voluntarism, and against determinism, arises from a failure to distinguish these two types or modes of explanation, a failure

> to separate the explanation a person gives of his beliefs when he gives his reasons for them and the explanation which can be given of them in terms of causes. Those observations [concerning the relationship between belief and reasons] do set limits to the reasons a person can have, but not on the type, or existence, of explanation (Watling: 29).

Dennett similarly argues that what he terms the intentional stance, or rationalizing explanation, is just one mode of explanation that we may apply to beings or systems. We may also take what he terms a physical stance. Such a stance would amount to a mechanistic explanation of the behavior of the system (Dennett, 1974: 162-164). He further argues that these two stances, or modes of explanation, are not incompatible, that the mechanistic or physical stance does not preclude the rational or intentional (Dennett, 1974: 173). For Dennett, we need not interpret the system that we are attempting to explain as being perfectly rational, that is, as being explainable strictly in terms of the intentional stance. We may find that on particular occasions the physical stance is more appropriate or fruitful in terms of explaining the system's behavior. These modes of explanation are compatible, then, in that they may be alternatively applied to a given system depending upon the circumstances of the explanation. Just because a system admits of rationalistic or intentional explanation, this does not mean that we cannot, at times, seek to explain its behavior in physical or mechanistic

terms (Dennett, 1974: 173). According to Dennett, the primary motivation that we have for moving from the intentional to the physical stance is a breakdown or failure in terms of the rationality of the system, resulting in a failure of intentional explanation (Dennett, 1974: 170). The intentional stance is usually assumed when the complexity of the system examined precludes physicalistic explanation (Dennett, 1974: 166).

Jaegwon Kim has already argued against this strategy of multiple explanations (Kim, 1989). I will argue against this strategy as well, but for reasons that go beyond those Kim puts forward. Kim is concerned, as I am, with whether a single instance of behavior can be given both a mechanistic and a purposive or rational explanation, but for Kim this issue of compatibility leads to more general questions about the possibility of rendering multiple explanations for a single explanandum (Kim, 1989: 77). As we saw earlier, Norman Malcolm argues against the possibility of multiple explanations (both rational and mechanistic) for the same behavioral event. Kim wishes to side with Malcolm, but given his more general concerns about multiple explanations, he takes a different route. The difference between Kim and Malcolm becomes most clear in discussing instances of behavior. Malcolm, as we have seen, wishes to argue that explanations involving beliefs or intentional states cannot be causal; this is his primary argument against multiple explanations. Kim, on the other hand, wants to construe such rational explanations causally in that he believes doing so will more clearly bring out the difficulties he finds inherent in cases of multiple explanations (Kim, 1989: 80). Thus, Kim is more concerned with the possibility of multiple causal explanations, and not just multiple explanations simpliciter.

Kim argues that when we are confronted with an instance of multiple explanations,

each apparently complete and independent of the other, we find ourselves faced with an epistemic instability which compels us to resolve the situation by either reducing or eliminating one of the explanations, or by showing the explanations to be incomplete (Kim, 1989:86). Thus we may, for example, attempt to identify the two causes involved and hence construct a single explanation. In the case of rational and mechanistic explanations one might do this by identifying beliefs with certain brain or physical states. One might also attempt to reduce one of the causes to the other, thus showing one of the explanations to be more basic. In the case of mechanistic and rational explanations, this is often done by attempting to reduce the latter to mechanistic explanations in neurophysics and then physics. Quite simply, Kim argues that when confronted with multiple explanations we must ask the question: would the event have occurred if one of the competing causes were absent? If the answer is "no" then we do not have two independent explanations; if the answer is "yes" then they are not both complete (contra Hempel, Kim maintains that in cases of over-determination all the causes are necessary to form a complete causal explanation or picture); (Kim, 1989: 90, 92). Kim argues for an epistemic principle of explanatory exclusion. He states that "No one may accept both explanations unless one has an appropriate account of how they are related to each other" (Kim, 1989: 95). Kim holds that multiple explanations bring a sort of incoherence into our belief system for they defeat the goal of explanation which is simplification and unification (Kim, 1989: 96-97). It is an incoherence which, he believes, must ultimately be resolved.

It may indeed be the case, as Kim suggests, that multiple explanations for a single event present an instability or epistemic tension that must be resolved by the elimination or reduction of the excess explanations so that only one "true" explanation remains (Kim, 1989:

86-87, 92). In the present case, however, there is a conceptual incompatibility between mechanistic and intentional explanations that renders dual explanation impossible. This is because the mechanistic explanation undermines the rational or intentional, and for this reason they cannot co-exist as explanations of the same event. That mechanistic explanations undermine rationalizing explanations we saw earlier. The rationalizing explanation seeks to show the basis of belief in terms of reasons, whereas the mechanistic looks to explain the event in terms of external or foreign causes. These explanations cannot co-exist. Once belief is explained in terms of external causes and neurophysical events, it can no longer be shown to be the product of reasons. As such the belief is no longer rational, and the rationalizing explanation must be abandoned.[6]

This does not mean that one cannot move between the two modes of explanation as Dennett suggests (using the mechanistic mode in cases where the intentional fails or the intentional when the physical is too complex). What it does mean is that these two modes cannot be employed simultaneously to explain the same doxastic event. Accordingly, one cannot coherently put forward a rational argument for a completely causal account of belief,

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[6] It would seem that one could avoid the undermining of rational explanations by mechanistic explanations simply by identifying the reasons for a belief with the neurophysical events that are called upon in mechanistic explanation. As such, it would appear that the mechanistic explanation would not be inconsistent with belief being based on reasons. The mechanistic explanation would rather discuss these reasons under a different description. This strategy, of course, would no longer be a multiple explanations strategy. Identifying the reasons with neurophysical events undermines the assertion that there are really two distinct explanations being put forward. It would rather appear that a reduction of the explanations could take place, due to the identity of the events involved, leaving us with only one "true" explanation. Kim argues that this is one of the approaches that we find ourselves taking when we seek to relieve the epistemic tension resulting from multiple explanations (Kim, 1989: 89-91). The trouble with this strategy is that it confuses reasons with causes. This particular distinction I will discuss in Chapter Four.

a completely non-voluntarist view. The rational acceptance of, or belief in, such an account would require that at least one intentional or rationalistic explanation be the sole explanation of one doxastic event, namely, the belief in determinism. The non-voluntarist or mechanistic account would have to exempt the belief in, assertion of, itself from the causal picture. As such, multiple explanations cannot be a defense of complete determinism or non-voluntarism.

b. Metaphysics Vs. Epistemology

In a later work, *Elbow Room*, Dennett puts forward a different defense of mechanism in light of its apparent incoherency with our conception of rationality. This defense argues that the claim of conflict between mechanism and rationality is an epistemic claim, and as such it cannot be used to establish the metaphysical claim that mechanism is false. Dennett is willing to admit that the notion of deliberation is in some sense incompatible with mechanism in that it requires open or multiple possibilities (Dennett, 1984: 103). He admits that "our capacity to engage in real time deliberation - including the deliberation required to engage in scientific research - depends on our manifest image," an image of ourselves as outside the causal framework established by mechanism (Dennett, 1984: 114). Dennett argues, however, that this reliance on the manifest image, on a rationalistic or intentional explanation of our own behavior, is "a sort of illusion born of cognitive miserliness" (Dennett, 1984: 114). What Dennett attempts to show, then, is that "elbow room" for deliberation exists within mechanism due to our own ignorance or lack of information (the fact that our cognitive systems are limited); (Dennett, 1984: 112-113). It is the unpredictability of our own decisions and most external events which provides room for the "illusion" of ourselves as rational

deliberators. Thus Dennett attempts to resolve this epistemic tension within mechanism epistemically, he attempts to show how the limitations of our own cognitive faculties allow us to act under the idea of freedom, and thus fulfill our conception of rationality or deliberation, even though the universe is mechanistic or determined. For Dennett, it is our lack of knowledge about ourselves and the world that renders determinism coherent.[7]

Dennett seems to view arguments which attempt to show that determinism conflicts with our conception of rationality, as attempting to show the falsity of determinism itself. Even proponents of doxastic freedom, though, recognize that the freedom we feel we must possess to be rational may be just an illusion. Thus, Malcolm admits that the inconceivability of mechanism "does not establish that mechanism is false" (Malcolm: 149). Even within Kant's view, the presupposition of our freedom may just be an "unavoidable illusion" (Sullivan: 83). As such, this defense by Dennett misses the point. The thrust of these anti-mechanistic arguments is not to show that determinism is false. The idea is to show that mechanism or non-voluntarism violates our conception of ourselves as rational beings or believers and, as such, it cannot be rationally defended. Dennett himself seems to admit this point when he argues that adherence to mechanism necessitates a kind of schizophrenia where we move between two incompatible images of ourselves, a rational and a mechanistic (Dennett, 1984: 111, 113-114). He goes so far as to argue that the very image of the world that we employ in science, that of mechanism, must be abandoned by those who engage in this

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[7] Paul d'Holbach makes this point in his *System of Nature* (1770). He states that "It is, then, for want of recurring to the causes that move him; for want of being able to analyze, from not being competent to decompose the complicated motion of his machine, that man believes himself a free agent: it is only upon his own ignorance that he founds the profound yet deceitful notion he has of his free agency" (d'Holbach: 367).

research -- that they as researchers or rational beings cannot consider themselves to be a part of the causal picture that they impress on their subject(s) (Dennett, 1984: 114).

III. Conclusion

The major concern of this dissertation is to establish the possibility or conceivability, relative to our conception of ourselves as rational agents, of the kind of doxastic freedom requisite for epistemic obligations or responsibilities. In this chapter, I have argued that doxastic freedom is not only conceivable given the assumption that we are rational beings, it is conceptually necessary. Now it remains to be seen whether there are any conceptual constraints or limitations on the scope of this freedom consonant with our conception of ourselves as rational beings and the notion of epistemic responsibility. This is the task of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIRECT VOLUNTARISM

though we cannot hinder our knowledge where the agreement is once perceived, nor our assent, where the probability manifestly appears upon due consideration of all the measures of it; yet we can hinder both knowledge and assent, by stopping our inquiry, and not employing our faculties in the search of any truth. If it were not so, ignorance, error, or infidelity, could not in any case be a fault.

Locke: *Essay* BK IV, XX, 16

It is not that one has a choice in the beliefs that one forms, but that one has a say in the procedures one undertakes that lead to their formation. The notion of 'epistemic responsibility' attaches to the undertaking of appropriate procedures.

John Heil: "Doxastic Agency"

Now that we have established that some form of doxastic voluntarism is necessary relative to our conception of ourselves as rational agents, it remains to be seen what is the most viable of the voluntarist positions that are open to us, and whether there are any conceptual constraints or limitations on voluntarism.

I. The Basis for Indirect Voluntarism

As we saw earlier, Locke was, for the most part, an indirect voluntarist. Like Descartes, Locke held that clear and distinct ideas, or self-evident truths, compel assent. He argued that "all such affirmations and negations are made without any possibility of doubt, uncertainty, or hesitation, and must necessarily be assented to as understood" (Locke: 366). But unlike Descartes, Locke held that mere probability compels assent as well. He argued that one "can scarcely refuse his assent to the side on which the greater probability appears" (Locke: 439-440). As such, Locke was left with the view that we see quoted above, namely that the source of epistemic blameworthiness, the source of our responsibility for belief, lies in the procedures or methods that we can employ to help bring it about - that responsibility lies in the indirect control that we have over belief (our control via inquiry).

More recently, John Heil argues that the phenomenology of belief suggests that it is not under our direct control. He states:

> How often do we *decide* to adopt a certain belief? To what extent are our beliefs under our direct control *at all*? In contrast to the picture painted by the voluntarist, our beliefs seem mostly *forced* on us. Or, if that is too strong, they come to us unanticipated and unbidden...The *phenomenology* of belief, then, as distinct from its epistemological conceptualization, looks distinctly non-voluntary (Heil, 1983: 357).

Heil contends that this fact about the relationship between our will and belief is contingent. He argues that the "there seems to be no *a priori* reason why a belief could not be created by 'directly' willing it" (Heil, 1983: 358). Focusing on the example of perceptual beliefs, Heil simply maintains that belief is the product of, or caused by, the interaction between external stimulation and background beliefs or theory, and that within this interaction there is no room for "an additional act of will" (Heil, 1983: 361). Heil, none the less, does not wish to deny

the notion of epistemic responsibility. He argues that although we may not be able to control belief directly, there are certain activities that we can perform, such as information-gathering, and these activities can promote or inhibit the formation of belief (Heil, 1983: 359). These activities, in turn, may be carried out in an appropriate or inappropriate manner, and it is here that responsibility attaches itself. Heil argues that "the 'responsible' epistemic agent is, roughly, one who goes about the activity of information gathering in a *suitable* fashion" (Heil, 1983: 362). The notion of what is suitable he believes is dependent on a variety of factors such as the subject matter and the circumstances surrounding the investigation (Heil, 1983: 362). For Heil, it is our control over the "business" of belief gathering that makes us responsible, albeit indirectly, for the beliefs we have.

Other recent writers, though sharing Heil's conclusion that belief is subject only to indirect control, dispute his claim that this is merely a contingent fact. Bernard Williams argues that our lack of direct control over belief constitutes an *a priori* truth; it is not a contingent fact about us. Williams puts forward, like Heil, a causal account of belief that could motivate a contingent phenomenological argument against direct voluntarism (Williams: 141-143), but none the less his major argument against such control is conceptual or *a priori*. Williams contends that the idea of direct control over belief conflicts with the very concept of belief itself. He maintains that such direct control conflicts with the truth-oriented nature of belief, which is an essential aspect of it (Williams: 136, 148). Williams states that

> it is not a contingent fact that I cannot bring it [belief] about, just like that...Why is this? One reason is connected with the character of beliefs that they aim at truth. If I could acquire a belief at will, I could acquire it whether it was true or not; moreover I would know that I could acquire it whether it was true or not (Williams: 148).

Thus, for Williams, direct control over belief is a conceptual impossibility, because he views such control as severing the necessary connection between belief and truth.

Another recent writer, Louis Pojman, agrees with Heil that direct control over belief seems phenomenologically unlikely, but like Williams he argues in addition that such direct control is also conceptually or logically impossible. Thus Pojman, like Heil, argues that "phenomenologically speaking, acquiring a belief is a happening in which the world forces itself on a subject" (Pojman, 1985: 528). Pojman also holds a causal view of belief, like Heil, which helps in part to motivate this phenomenological account. Pojman claims that "in a sense, belief that *p* seems to imply the thought of a causal chain stretching back from the belief to a primary relationship with the world and so faithfully representing the world" (Pojman, 1985: 534). Phenomenologically speaking, Pojman maintains that direct control over belief is "abnormal and bizarre" (Pojman, 1985: 531). But he admits that this bizarreness does not rule out the possibility of direct voluntarism. This is where the conceptual argument comes in for Pojman. Like Williams, Pojman contends that direct voluntarism conflicts with the truth-oriented nature of belief. This truth-oriented nature of belief is spelled out, in part, in the evidential requirement that Pojman views belief as possessing. Thus he argues that "Believing is evidential, in that to believe *p* is to presuppose that I have evidence for *p* or that *p* is self-evident or evident to the senses" (Pojman, 1985: 534). Direct voluntarism then conflicts with this view of belief in that it is said to involve believing for non-evidential reasons. Thus Pojman states that:

> volitional believing involves a conceptual confusion; it is broadly speaking a logical mistake. There is something incoherent in stating that one can obtain or sustain a belief in full consciousness *simply* by a basic act of the will, that is, purposefully disregarding

the evidence connection (Pojman, 1994: 275).

Thus like Williams, Pojman argues that direct control over belief is conceptually or logically impossible because it violates the truth or evidential aspect of belief - direct voluntarism, it is argued, must arrive at belief "independently of evidential or truth considerations" (Pojman, 1985: 533).[1]

Like Heil, Williams and Pojman do not conclude from their arguments against direct voluntarism that epistemic responsibility is impossible. Both are adherents to indirect voluntarism as a way to salvage some notion of responsibility in terms of belief. Thus Williams allows that "there may be room for the application of decision to belief by more roundabout routes" (Williams: 149). These methods or routes include such things as hypnosis and drugs. Williams focuses on such methods because he discusses indirect voluntarism chiefly within the context of self-deception (Williams: 149). He also believes, however, that evidence is a causal factor in the production of belief (Williams: 141-143). Given this, there would seem to be room within his account for rational, or epistemically responsible, indirect control over belief through the conscientious pursuit of evidence. Pojman argues that "It is primarily because we judge that our beliefs are to some significant degree the indirect results of our actions that we speak of being responsible for them" (Pojman, 1985: 535). The chief

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[1] It is interesting to note that Pojman, like Locke, seems to primarily rule out only *positive* direct voluntarism. Thus Pojman allows for the possibility that we may have *negative* direct control, or some sort of "veto" power over belief. He admits that the will may have "a negative role to play in the preventing of beliefs from fixing themselves in us" (Pojman, 1985: 532). Locke, as we saw in Chapter One, held that the will may have such a "veto" power. Thus Locke argues that in less clear cases "it is in a man's power to suspend assent" (Locke: 35). Pojman in fact attributes his view, in part, to Locke. This point will be discussed further in the next chapter.

manner in which we exercise this indirect control, according to Pojman, is through the exercise of attention (Pojman, 1985: 536).

Lastly, H.H. Price argues against direct control over belief on the grounds that belief is a disposition and not an act. Thus Price argues that:

> It is true that we do sometimes use volitional words in describing the acquisition of beliefs ("I decided that p", "I made up my mind that p"). But we must not allow ourselves to be confused by the fact that something rather like preferring or choosing does quite often occur as a stage in the process by which a belief is formed, especially when we acquire our belief in a reasonable manner, after careful consideration of the evidence *pro* and *con*. Believing a proposition is, I think, a disposition and not an occurrence or "mental act", though the disposition is not necessarily a very long-lived one and may only last a few seconds (Williams: 15).

This dispositional view of belief is much like the account of belief put forward by William James. Thus James argues that "there is some believing tendency wherever there is willingness to act at all" (WTB: 506). And like James, Price maintains that "Beliefs can be gradually cultivated, though they cannot be instantaneously produced, or abolished, at will (Price: 16-17, 21). The primary means that he recognizes for exercising this indirect control are attention, as well as focusing on propositions, and acting *as if* one believed (Price: 17-20). For Price, as with the other indirect voluntarists that we have discussed, belief can be influenced by "a longish course of voluntary effort, though not by a mere *fiat* of the will here and now" (Price: 21-22).[2]

We are now in a position to see about Montmarquet's view that, contrary to his assertions, his position seems to be that of an indirect rather than direct voluntarist. As we

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[2] These phenomenological, conceptual, and definitional arguments against direct voluntarism will be critically examined in Chapter Four. They are discussed in this chapter uncritically in keeping with the goal of illustrating some possible reasons motivating the adherence to indirect voluntarism.

briefly saw in the introduction, Montmarquet maintains that we can control belief by cultivating certain epistemic habits or virtues, and that the exercise of these virtues in relation to belief is a form of direct control (Montmarquet: viii). Montmarquet states that to be good or virtuous epistemic agents the epistemic virtues, habits, or dispositions we cultivate should be conducive to the epistemic goal of truth. Such virtues would include conscientiousness, intellectual sobriety, etc. (Montmarquet: 20). To cultivate these virtues would seem, to borrow Heil's language, to be roughly equivalent to going about the business of information gathering in a suitable or responsible manner. But unlike Heil, Montmarquet argues that the exercise of this control over belief is direct. This is because he views the exercise of these virtues as a "modality of the belief-forming process" and not a way of indirectly "causing oneself to have or not have a certain belief" (Montmarquet: 45). In an analogy with carving, Montmarquet argues that the exercise of care is not an indirect way of controlling the outcome, "it is not a separable action by means of which one brings about careful movements of one's limbs," it is rather something that is expressed in the work of carving, it is a modality of this activity (Montmarquet: 46). Similarly, he wants to argue that the exercise of the virtue of conscientiousness, for instance, is not separable from the act of believing, but is rather a mode of believing, and hence that it constitutes direct rather than indirect control (Montmarquet: 46).

His argument, however, is unconvincing. It would seem that we can distinguish the exercise of these dispositions or virtues from belief. Thus the exercise of epistemic conscientiousness, the careful investigation of a matter with attention payed to all relevant information, would not seem to be a kind or mode of believing, but rather a way of going

about arriving at certain beliefs. These activities are not a way of believing, but rather a way of "causing" or "producing" certain beliefs, or perhaps a certain kind of belief (e.g., justified or true belief). As we will see in the next chapter, if Montmarquet maintained like Price that beliefs were dispositions, then the cultivation of certain virtues or dispositions might be a form of direct control. This is because on such an account there would no longer be a distinction between the cultivation and exercise of virtue and certain beliefs; they would both be identified with the same dispositions.

II. The Question of Viability

It now remains to be shown whether indirect voluntarism is actually an attractive or tenable position. Some philosophers, as we have seen, accept this view in order to avoid certain perceived conceptual and phenomenological difficulties with direct voluntarism, but does indirect voluntarism in turn create new difficulties of its own? There does seem to be a regress problem with indirect voluntarism that is potentially vicious if one wishes to hold a substantive account of epistemic responsibility. This regress problem arises from the indirect voluntarist assertion that belief is not subject to direct control, but only indirect control (that our control over belief consists of our ability to do things like pay attention, or employ certain other belief-acquisition methods such as gathering evidence). Our selection of these methods, though, is directed and motivated by our background beliefs. For example, one chooses the method of the double blind test for forming beliefs about the efficacy of a certain drug, because one has certain background beliefs about how one should arrive at

conclusions about empirical matters. Investigation, like observation, is theory-laden.[3]

How then can we be responsible for the beliefs that arise from our paying attention, or our employment of other acquisition methods, if we are not responsible for, or cannot control, the background beliefs that direct and motivate this indirect control? Even if some of these background beliefs themselves are the result of earlier employment or exercise of indirect control, at some point early on there must have been some beliefs that started off our indirect control which we were not responsible for (remember the claims of Wittgenstein, James, and Locke, that the child begins by believing). This is where the regress begins. Either we are responsible for the background beliefs which determined a particular method by being responsible for employing some earlier method, and are then responsible for that earlier method by being responsible for some still earlier method which determined the later one's background beliefs, ad infinitum, or there are some beliefs which are forced upon us, some volitionally foundational or basic beliefs, outside our control and hence responsibility, which break the regress, but in doing so undermine or mitigate our responsibility for the methods we employ, and hence the beliefs that result.

James Montmarquet clearly recognizes this problem.[4] He discusses how indirect

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[3] Clifford seems to recognize this effect that background beliefs can have on judgments, especially judgments concerning what to believe. Thus Clifford argues that "No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which resembled it before, and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts" (Clifford: 503).

[4] Another thinker who seems to clearly recognize this regress problem is Thomas Nagel. In discussing the issue of epistemological skepticism he states that one source of this skepticism is the "consideration of the respects in which our beliefs and their relation to reality depend on factors beyond our control. External and internal causes produce our beliefs. We may subject these processes to scrutiny in an effort to avoid error, but our

voluntarists wish to argue that our responsibility for belief resides in certain acts or omissions on our part that inhibit or produce belief. The problem with this view, Montmarquet claims, is that our omissions or actions are often the result of certain background beliefs that we have. He takes the example of a person whom we wish to hold culpable, on an indirect voluntarist account, for not gathering more evidence:

> Notice that typically in such an instance she will *believe* that no more evidence is required. Thus...if we are to hold her culpable for omitting to look for more evidence, we must hold her culpable for believing that she needn't so look. Moreover, if the latter culpability is to be made out in terms of some *further* action or omission - she failed to check to see whether her belief that further checks were unnecessary was really justified - I will argue that we are on the road to regress (Montmarquet: viii).

This difficulty is also apparent in Pojman's account. He argues that "evidence is always relative to a person's individuating background beliefs, capacities to interpret data, and expectations" (Pojman, 1985: 537). Pojman goes so far as to argue that this in turn relativizes the notion of justification for belief. He maintains that justification has to do with what it is reasonable for a person to believe given such factors as their noetic structure and background beliefs (Pojman, 1985: 538). These ideas Pojman employs primarily to motivate his arguments against direct voluntarism. He asserts that background beliefs can compel assent, thus eliminating the possibility of direct control. He argues that "Given a whole network of background beliefs, some views or theories are simply going to win out in our noetic structure over others" (Pojman, 1985: 529). But though he may put these claims

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conclusions at this next level also result, in part, from influences which we do not control directly. The same will be true no matter how far we carry the investigation. Our beliefs are always, ultimately, due to factors outside our control, and the impossibility of encompassing those factors without being at the mercy of others leads us to doubt whether we know anything. It looks as though, if any of our beliefs are true, it is pure biological luck rather than knowledge" (Nagel: 281).

forward to argue against direct voluntarism, they have ramifications for the possibility of attributing responsibility to our exercise of indirect control.

The case is roughly analogous to that of mitigated responsibility in ethical situations. When assessing ethical or moral responsibility we will often take into account the background beliefs of an agent. In situations where an agent performs a wrong act, we may still not hold the agent responsible if the act was motivated by false beliefs which were none the less reasonable for him to hold. I would claim similarly, that we may not hold an agent responsible for a false belief, even if this belief is the result of indirect control that he exercised, if this indirect control was motivated and directed by beliefs over which the agent had no control - beliefs for which the agent is not properly responsible.

To draw another parallel with ethics, this problem is like that faced by Aristotle's account of moral responsibility or voluntary action. Aristotle allows that the perception of the goodness or badness of a course of action may be relative to the constitution or character of the perceiver (Aristotle: 30). This being allowed, he recognizes it has the consequence that one may choose what is bad simply because, given a defect in one's character, one perceived the thing in question to be good. It would seem, then, that responsibility is completely relative to one's character or perception. One is only responsible for choosing what is bad if one actually perceives it that way. Aristotle, however, disagrees. He argues that we are in fact responsible for these misperceptions that arise from our character in that we are responsible for the formation of our character in the first place. He argues that our character is the result of our prior voluntary choices, and that as such we are responsible for it, and therefore for the misperceptions it generates and the wrong conduct that then results

(Aristotle: 32).

Character plays the same role in Aristotle's account of moral responsibility as background beliefs do in the indirect voluntarist's account of epistemic responsibility. For both positions, responsibility stands or falls with whether we have control over these background motivators or guides. Aristotle fully acknowledges this fact. He states that "if each man is somehow responsible for his state of mind, he will also be himself somehow responsible for the appearance; but if not, no one is responsible for his own evildoing" (Aristotle: 32-33). Some argue that given the effects of one's community and family on the formation of character it is perhaps hasty to say that we are responsible for it (see Martha Nussbaum's discussion of "Luck and Ethics" in her work *The Fragility of Goodness*). Similarly, given the largely forced nature of our background beliefs (as Pojman and others maintain), it seems unlikely that we are responsible for all or even most of these beliefs. As such, the argument for responsibility fails.[5]

III. Conclusion

Indirect voluntarism attempts to offer us an account of our control over belief that allows for epistemic responsibility. It would seem, however, that responsibility on this account is non-existent. On this account, whether an epistemic duty or responsibility has been violated will always have to be determined relative to the agent's background beliefs which motivate and direct this control. But given the limited picture of voluntarism that this view

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[5] I am indebted to Prof. Richard Hall for pointing out this similarity between Aristotle's view of moral responsibility and the indirect voluntarist account of epistemic responsibility.

presents, these background beliefs will be outside the agent's control. As such, we will not be able to argue that an epistemic agent should have performed differently, should have exacted his indirect control in a different manner, due to his lack of control over the background beliefs that directed his activity. We will not be able to say that the agent should have seen or believed certain evidence to be relevant, or should not have believed some method to be reliable, for he will not be responsible for the background beliefs concerning the evidence or the method.

With this in mind it may be questioned whether indirect voluntarism is even voluntarism at all. It would seem to be like the case with soft determinism where the attempt is made to define freedom in such a way that it is consistent with causality. This attempt often resulted in a definition of "freedom" that was out of touch with how we ordinarily use or apply this term, and which subsequently did not agree with our concept of responsibility (as I argued with respect to the Desire Thesis in the Introduction). Similarly, the indirect voluntarists have so limited our "voluntary" control over belief in order to make it consistent with their view of the causation of belief, that they have rendered it non-existent, and hence incapable of supporting any substantive notion of epistemic responsibility.

Hence indirect voluntarism like non-voluntarism conflicts with our concept of a rational agent. As we saw earlier, essential to this concept is that the agent be able to engage in the activities of deliberation, reflection, assessment, etc., and these activities imply freedom. These activities also imply responsibility for they can be done better or worse, responsibly or casually. Because indirect voluntarism rules out such epistemic responsibility, it conflicts with our concept of rational agency. As such, our concept of rational agency would seem to

demand some direct control over belief so as to allow for epistemic responsibility. This notion of direct voluntarism we will examine next.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIRECT VOLUNTARISM

It is only the will, or freedom of choice,
which I experience within me to be so great
that the idea of any greater faculty is beyond
my grasp;

Descartes: Fourth Meditation, Sec 57

the capacity so to govern himself, in thinking
and believing, and in the doing which is consequent
upon it, is the distinctive capacity of the human
animal.

C.I. Lewis: "The Philosopher Replies"

In the previous chapter I examined several arguments against direct doxastic voluntarism which were meant to motivate adherence to indirect voluntarism. I showed that indirect voluntarism falls short of advancing a robust account of our epistemic responsibilities. I argued that some form of direct voluntarism is necessary in order to remedy this problem. But in order to put forward such an account of direct voluntarism, it now becomes necessary to reply to the definitional, conceptual, and phenomenological arguments raised against this view by adherents to indirect voluntarism. This is the major task of this chapter. In this chapter, I begin with a response to the definitional argument of H.H. Price, which argues

against direct voluntarism on the grounds that belief is a disposition and not an act. I begin with this argument because it is the easiest to counter. Next, the conceptual or logical argument of Pojman and Williams will be examined. This argument is the most formidable as it attempts to show the inconceivability of direct voluntarism. The phenomenological argument will be addressed last.

I. The Definitional Argument

There are presently in circulation many different views or definitions of belief, including representational, propositional, behavioral, and other accounts. What is the correct view? Price argues that belief is a disposition (Price: 15), most likely a disposition to act or behave in certain ways. This argument is probably motivated by the desire to define belief in terms of some externally identifiable or testable criterion, such as a disposition to act, while avoiding the difficulties associated with crude behaviorism which directly defines belief or other mental states in terms of certain overt behaviors or actions.[1] This attempt to define belief in terms of certain dispositions creates new difficulties, however, in that it renders the content of belief states indefinable. This is because the disposition that a particular belief state is to be identified with could have an infinite number of manifestations given the peculiarities of the circumstances one finds oneself in. As such, each belief state in this view would stand

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[1] For instance, crude behaviorism has the difficulty that persons incapable of bodily movement (e.g., those who are completely paralyzed) are excluded from having a wide range of mental states associated with such movements, for in this view to have these mental states *just is* to behave or act in certain ways. A dispositional view like that of Price, though, avoids this problem in that it argues such persons still have the *disposition* to behave in the appropriate ways, and thus meet the conditions requisite for having these mental states.

for an infinite number of manifestations, and hence could not be completely understood to the extent that our understanding depends on definition. This problem is similar to that faced by those logical positivists who attempted to define empirical statements in terms of their experiential ramifications. Every empirical statement was seen to entail an infinite number of experiential statements, and as such became indefinable. This view also suffers from the odd consequence that it renders beliefs unknowable via introspection. Given that belief is a disposition, one would have to discern one's beliefs by examining the ways in which one is disposed to behave. One would thus discern one's own beliefs in much the same way that one would discern the beliefs of others; namely, by examining behavior. Doing this may indeed be necessary at times when we are uncertain what we believe, but it does not seem to be required at all times. It does seem that in general we can have an immediate introspective awareness of our beliefs. Given these difficulties there would not seem to be much favoring acceptance of Price's view over the competition.

In addition, contrary to Price's argument, a dispositional view of belief need not be inconsistent with direct voluntarism. As we saw in the previous chapter, at the heart of the distinction between direct and indirect voluntarism is the notion of methods, procedures, or activities, that are distinct from belief. Indirect voluntarists maintain that such methods are requisite to control belief and direct voluntarists maintain that belief can be directly willed independent of such methods. The distinction between these positions depends, then, on there being a distinction or difference between willing a belief and willing something other than a belief (e.g., some physical action that will result in belief). If belief is propositional, then there certainly is a difference between believing and willing certain physical actions. If

belief is dispositional, however, this is no longer clearly the case. If belief is a disposition to act, the way that one would will oneself to believe is by cultivating the relevant disposition. In this case one is not cultivating the disposition in order to arrive at some belief, rather the disposition *just is* the belief, and hence its cultivation is the only way that one could will the belief. For example, the only way that I could will belief in God on this account is by cultivating in me the disposition that this belief is identified with. This disposition would not then be a means to believing in God, such as with Pascal where cultivating the disposition to pray or attend church is a means to belief; rather the disposition would be the belief (belief in God would just be the disposition to pray, etc.). As such, even if we accept Price's dispositional account of belief, this would not force us to abandon direct voluntarism. If anything, such a view of belief would seem to render direct voluntarism more plausible, for most of us at one time or another have cultivated or willed a disposition.[2]

II. The Conceptual Argument

As we saw in Chapter Three, the conceptual argument is based on the idea that direct voluntarism involves the severing of the necessary or conceptual connection between belief, on the one hand, and truth or evidence, on the other, and in doing so renders itself incoherent. Pojman states that direct voluntarism "is conceptually confused because it neglects the evidential aspect of conscious belief acquisition and sustainment" (Pojman, 1985: 535). Williams in turn states that, because of the truth-oriented nature of belief, "With regard to

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[2] I am indebted to Prof. Richard Hall for pointing out this way of reconciling Price's view and direct voluntarism.

no belief could I know - or, if all this is to be done in full consciousness, even suspect - that I had acquired a belief at will" (Williams: 148). In the discussion to follow, I will focus primarily on Pojman's argument for this claim, as his is the most detailed.

Pojman repeatedly argues that direct voluntarism requires that beliefs be formed "without regard to truth considerations," that the believer must purposely disregard the evidence (Pojman, 1985: 533, 535). He argues that the notion of choosing or willing to believe would have to involve the confusion that "willing makes it so," for such voluntary control over belief would amount to believing something true simply on the basis of its being willed (Pojman, 1985: 533, 534). Finally, he argues that in a direct voluntarist account, because of the disregard for the evidence or truth that it involves, belief would not be about states of affairs but about our desires (Pojman, 1985: 534). Pojman's view of direct voluntarism is dominated by one particular image, that of a mental finger being placed on the epistemic scales. He sees direct voluntarism as having to involve the altering of evidence to produce the *desired* belief, and as such it must involve a disregard for evidence, or more specifically, a disregard for the *actual* evidence (Pojman, 1985: 526-527). He states that

> In the standard model of belief acquisition, the judgment is not a separate act but simply the result of the weighing process. It is as though the weighing process exhibited the state of evidence, and then the mind simply registered the state of the scales. In the volitional model, the judgment is a special action over and above the weighing process. It is as though the mind recognized the state of the scales but were allowed to choose whether to accept that state or influence it by putting a mental finger on one side or the other, depending on desire (Pojman, 1985: 526-527).

Pojman's position is puzzling. His discussion of the epistemic scales and mental finger makes it seem as if he is describing a kind of indirect voluntarist position in that the will does not seem to be able to effect belief directly, but rather can effect it only by altering the evidence.

It is the evidence that seems to produce the desired belief. But this confusion aside, let us look more closely at Pojman's claim that direct voluntarism must in some sense involve a disregard for truth or evidential considerations.

Why must direct voluntarism involve the will producing belief independently of evidence? I think that this position is the result of conflating reasons and causes. Pojman's (as well as Williams') causal account of belief views evidence or reasons as a causal factor in belief production (Williams: 141-143/Pojman, 1985: 530, 534). One then need only go on to consider what are the two general possibilities concerning the relationship between the will and evidence in this production - either the will regards evidence in the production of belief or it doesn't. If the will fails to regard the evidence then we arrive at the conceptual confusion discussed above. But if the will regards evidence in the production of belief, then it would be considering a causal factor. Through this consideration, the belief produced would then become susceptible to the causal influence of this factor, and hence, the belief would be the product of multiple causes. The will, then, could no longer be considered the sole cause in the production of belief. Thus, at most, the will could be counted as a contributing causal influence. This might be enough for responsibility except that Pojman views the causal role of evidence as being decisive (Pojman, 1985: 534). As such, any direct influence of the will becomes unnecessary. He states that the "rational believer, in full consciousness, would see that there must be a truth connection between states of affairs and the belief by virtue of which the belief is true, so the will is essentially unnecessary for the belief" (Pojman, 1985: 534). On this causal model, then, if the will regarded evidence we could no longer speak meaningfully about direct voluntarism. We could no longer speak

about the will as having a significant direct causal role in the production of belief, a role such that the absence of its direct influence would significantly alter the causal picture.

But isn't this confusion of reasons and causes misguided? I would like to argue, as does Jaegwon Kim, that reasons qua reasons do not have a role in causal explanations. Reasons are justifiers, they are not causes (Kim, 1984: 314). Reasons serve a role in normative explanations, not causal explanations. Thus, just as explanations involving reasons in ethics do not purport to describe existing states of affairs and a nomological or causal connection between them, but rather attempt to show how a given action is justified in light of the beliefs and desires of the agent and the rules or norms of morality, similarly, reasons in epistemology do not serve a causal role, but rather serve the role of showing how beliefs (or perhaps even actions) are justified given certain norms of rationality (Kim, 1984: 314).[3] In so far as a causal view of reasons conflicts with our conception of rationality, it would seem that this non-causal or normative view should be favored. If one does reject the causal view in favor of the normative or non-causal, as I do, then the notion that direct voluntarism must involve a disregard for evidence falls away.

III. The Phenomenological Argument

The phenomenological argument is perhaps the least formidable in that it hinges on the question of what is an appropriate interpretation of our subjective experience of belief

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[3] Richard Taylor puts forward such a non-causal view of reasons when he states that "In the case of an action that is both free and rational, it must be such that the agent who performed it did so for some reason, but this reason cannot have been the cause of it" (Taylor: 384).

formation. First, this weakens the argument because there seems to be no unanimous agreement as to the exact nature of this experience. If the thinkers we examined in the earlier historical overview of voluntarism can be seen as drawing their positions from a certain perspective on the phenomenology of belief acquisition, then we can see from this overview that there is much disagreement as to the exact extent of our control over belief. Even persons who hold the same type of position disagree. Thus Locke, Heil, Price, Williams, and Pojman, are all indirect voluntarists, and yet they disagree as to the nature of our control over belief. Pojman and Locke, as we saw in Chapter Three, argue that our control is primarily indirect, but that we also experience a kind of direct negative control, or "veto power," over belief. Heil, Price, and Williams, on the other hand, contend that no such negative control is present. What is interesting to note is that the participants in this disagreement even share many of the same premises. Thus as we saw in this chapter, Williams and Pojman both adhere to the notion that evidence is a causal factor in the production of belief, and that because of this direct voluntarism must involve a disregard for evidential considerations.

Secondly, the phenomenological argument is weakened by its reliance on subjective experience in that this forces its proponents to claim that any experience which may suggest some direct influence of the will on belief must involve some confusion, illusion, or mistake on the part of the believer. Thus Pojman, in discussing cases of indifference, where we feel that we may actively choose what to believe, wishes to explain this experience by appealing to unconscious processes "which play a decisive role in belief formation, but... are not things we have direct control over" (Pojman, 1985: 530). This call for re-interpretation is similar to that made by determinists concerned with action, such as d'Holbach, who likewise suggest

that the "feeling" of free will is based on some confusion or ignorance. D'Holbach states that:

> As the mechanism of these sensations, of these perceptions, and the manner they engrave ideas on the brain of man, are not known to him; because he is unable to unravel all these motions; because he cannot perceive the chain of operations in his soul, or the motive principle that acts within him, he supposes himself a free agent; which literally translated, signifies, that he moves himself by himself; that he determines himself without cause; when he rather ought to say, that he is ignorant how or why he acts in the manner he does (Holbach: 366).

Just as there are many experiences which suggest freedom of action, there are many doxastic experiences which seem to suggest direct control of belief. Certainly in the case of many of our theoretical beliefs, where these beliefs are the product of deliberation or reflection, we often feel that we have, on the basis of the evidence, chosen or decided what to believe. Even in the case of perception we often feel that we can directly control belief, or at least the suspension of belief. Thus when we encounter perceptions that appear odd or incoherent, we can, through the exercise of our will, override belief. An example of this would be the water mirages that one often encounters while driving along a paved road on a sunny day. When the conditions are totally unsuitable for such large puddles to be in the road, one can decide in these circumstances not to believe one's eyes.[4] Given the lack of unanimity in terms

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[4] Lawrence Bonjour may provide a framework that can make sense of this voluntarist aspect of perception, along with our experience that most of the time seeing does just seem to be believing [e.g., Berkeley: "whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will" (Berkeley: 99-100)]. Bonjour appears to suggest that as rational believers we accept a kind of meta-belief which attributes a high degree of reliability to our perceptual beliefs under specified conditions. This meta-belief, then, renders even perceptual beliefs inferential in that they are in part justified or warranted by virtue of their being subsumed under this meta-belief (Bonjour: 233). Given this meta-belief, perceptual beliefs which fall under it are accepted unproblematically unless they come into conflict with other beliefs that we hold, i.e., unless the perceptual beliefs are incoherent with our background beliefs. Such an instance of incoherency would be like that discussed above -- a puddle appearing on a flat road on a dry day. In such situations we must then decide whether to

of the nature of our experience as believers, given the fact that we often do feel as if we have direct doxastic control, and given the conceptual argument against direct voluntarism can be shown to be invalid (i.e., if one accepts a normative rather than causal account of reasons or evidence), what motivation do we have to re-interpret our experience as the phenomenological argument suggests? With the failure of the conceptual argument one can no longer claim that such re-interpretation is requisite in order to render our experience coherent.

IV. Direct Voluntarism and the Norms of Rationality

Let us examine, then, a different picture or image of the role of the will in belief, a picture which is far different than that of Pojman's mental fingers and epistemic scales. We might argue that the human mind finds itself endowed with certain norms of rationality. These norms we might say constitute its epistemic conscience, the analogue of the moral conscience which consists in certain norms of morality. These epistemic norms may be the result of socialization, or they may be hardwired. The question of the origin of these norms would be almost exactly analogous to the question concerning the origin of moral norms, e.g.,

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reject enough of our background beliefs to resolve the incoherency or to reject the perception; we must in such instances decide what to believe. This model would seem to imply a great deal of voluntarism in regard to perceptual beliefs. Perceptual beliefs are evaluated in light of this meta-belief as well as background beliefs, and are either accepted or rejected on the basis of them. This model seems to explain the notion of seeing being believing as well. Given the meta-belief concerning the reliability of perception, in the absence of incoherency, perceptual beliefs are readily accepted. Roderick Chisholm attributes such an inferential view of perception to C.I. Lewis, where this inferential nature of perception surfaces in the defense of challenged perceptual beliefs (see Chisholm's "Lewis' Ethics of Belief"). I am indebted to Prof. Nicholas D. Smith for this connection to Bonjour, and to Prof. Richard Hall for the Berkeley reference.

whether these norms are in some sense innate or socially produced. I believe that an account similar to that which Kant puts forward concerning our relationship to the moral law would provide an interpretation of our relationship to these epistemic norms that would be most consistent with doxastic voluntarism. This is the avenue that I will now explore.

Kant wishes to reconcile freedom or autonomy with the idea of being governed by law. In doing so he settles on an account of freedom which involves agents operating under laws that are self-imposed. Consequently, when Kant discusses the freedom or autonomy of the will in the *Groundwork* he describes it as "the property the will has of being a law to itself" (Kant: 108). Later in the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that the freedom which reason necessarily attributes to itself involves the notion that it "must look upon itself as the author of its own principles independently of alien influences" (Kant: 116). As one commentator on Kant's position has suggested:

> to say that a moral agent acts freely does not mean that such an agent acts lawlessly. In a lawless (i.e., completely ruleless) world, anything would follow from anything, and that would make the notions of causality in general and of free, moral agency in particular totally meaningless...To say that a moral agent is one who acts freely must therefore mean that such an agent can exercise causal power on the basis of a law or laws given by his own reason alone" (Sullivan: 47-48).

Applied to the norms of rationality this view takes the following form: these norms are self-imposed in that we freely accept them as constraints on our epistemic agency. As we have just seen this is much the same with moral norms. No matter what psychologists or sociologists tell us about the origin of these norms (i.e., how they have come to find their way into our consciousness), as moral agents we must view ourselves as freely submitting to their constraint. As moral agents we must view ourselves as capable of rejecting the norms which

govern us, and not as being strictly determined to hold them. The process of moral reflection often consists in an evaluation and selection of these norms. Similarly, as epistemic agents much of our reflection is devoted to trying to discern what rationality requires of us. Our reflection here centers on the question of what rational norms we should submit to. It may be that our conception of rationality limits our possible choices of rational norms, just as our concept of morality limits our possible choices concerning moral norms. We are limited by these concepts in that they do, to some extent, dictate exactly what we can recognize as being a moral or rational norm. Thus, our concepts of morality and rationality are not without their bounds beyond which "norms" become unrecognizable as moral or epistemic. This does not mean, though, that we cannot still freely impose these concepts and norms on ourselves. As we saw earlier, freedom does not necessitate multiple alternatives; one can freely choose a given course of action even if it is the only one open. It may, after all, be the thing one wishes to do. Though space prohibits me from discussing this here, I do believe that there is within these concepts much room for alternatives. In the epistemic case alone there is much discussion over whether our norms are all synchronic or whether some are diachronic or future oriented.[5]

In discussing how we hold these norms, however, one must not lose sight of their function which is to constrain the will normatively in its choice or production of belief. These norms serve to attune the will to evidential or truth factors in this choice.[6] The will, then, in

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[5] See Hall and Johnson: "The Epistemic Duty to Seek More Evidence".

[6] Kim argues that a rational being is one "whose cognitive 'output' is regulated and constrained by norms of rationality" (Kim, 1988: 335). Kim views this constraint as evidential. He argues that beliefs are constrained in terms of their contents, and that a

its deliberation and choice of belief does not ignore evidence; it in fact employs evidence as a way to justify this choice, as a way to fit its influence within the norms of rationality that in a sense regulate it.

As with the norms of morality, one may feel a conflict between the norms of rationality, on the one hand, and desire on the other. We may feel a conflict between what we want to be believe and what we ought to believe, given our rational norms, just as we may feel a conflict between what we want to do and what we ought to do, given our moral norms. The latter conflict is often discussed. Kant, in the *Groundwork*, states that: "Man feels a powerful counterweight to all commands of duty presented to him by reason as so worthy of esteem - the counterweight of his needs and inclinations" (Kant: 73). Similarly, Campbell discusses situations where "desire and duty are at odds" (Campbell: 398). In the epistemic case, this conflict is perhaps less often discussed, but it is discussed none the less. Clifford, in his "Ethics of Belief," examines at length the danger of giving into to desire and believing something simply because one wants to (see Clifford's discussion of the shipowner, Clifford: 502). Richard Feldman, in his article "Epistemic Obligations," likewise discusses how what

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belief "has the content it has in part because of its location in a network of other beliefs and propositional attitudes; and what at bottom grounds this network is the evidential relation, a relation that regulates what is reasonable to believe given other beliefs one holds" (Kim, 1988: 335). He goes on to maintain that without this constraint we cannot intelligibly interpret a cognizer's outputs as beliefs. He states that "there is a sense of 'rational' in which the expression 'rational belief' is redundant; every belief must be rational in certain minimal ways" (Kim, 1988: 335-336). He states that "unless the output of our cognizer is subject to evaluation in accordance with norms of rationality, that output cannot be considered as consisting of beliefs" (Kim, 1988: 336). C.I. Lewis seems to have held a similar view. Roderick Chisholm argues that in Lewis' view the rationality of belief arises from it conformity with the norms of the "ethics of belief." He states that in Lewis' account, "when a man fails to conform to the ethics of belief he is, *ipso facto*, behaving irrationally" (Chisholm, 1968: 227).

we ought to believe from a prudential standpoint may conflict with what we ought to believe from the standpoint of epistemology (Feldman: 545). Examples also abound in our everyday experience. We have probably all encountered persons, perhaps even ourselves at times, who believe against the evidence because it conflicts with what they want to believe -- for example, persons who contrary to strong evidence that they are ill none the less choose to believe that they are fine, persons who persist in believing their spouse to be faithful even in the presence of damning evidence, persons who choose to believe one side of an issue simply because they cannot bear to sit on the fence.

The will, then, must struggle against desire in order to will belief in accordance with these norms of rationality, just as it must struggle in order to will actions in accordance with the norms of morality. In the moral case, Campbell discusses the freedom of the will in regards to such effort. He states:

> There is X, the course which we believe we ought to follow, and Y, the course toward which we feel our desire the strongest. The freedom which we ascribe to the agent is the freedom to put forth or refrain from putting forth the moral effort required to resist the pressure of desire and do what he thinks he ought to do (Campbell: 397).

Similarly, in the epistemic case, the will must exert a degree of force. However, in this case the force exerted is to some extent the product of the resistance, if any, presented by the norms of rationality or epistemic conscience, and the temptation or pull of desire. Thus, where the evidence is clear or evident, there is no resistance from the norms of rationality, belief is easily justified, and in the absence of desires to the contrary, belief can be easily willed. It is probably cases like these that make us view clear or "compelling" evidence as simply producing belief, because so little effort of the will is required. But where desire is

strong, and the evidence less clear, we find ourselves struggling with belief. As with the analogous case in ethics, we find ourselves struggling with what we ought and what we want to believe. It may, in these cases, take great effort to believe, or suspend belief, as rationality requires. In cases of indifference we may feel the power of our will more clearly in that we are able to put forward equally strong reasons on either side; as such, neither side requires a greater effort of will to be believed (assuming of course an absence of desires favoring one side over the other). This equality of effort in turn makes us feel that belief is up to us. The fact that neither choice is more difficult truly places our will at center stage.

These norms may also have a greater or lesser hold on us, thus resulting in differences in terms of the amount of effort required to will belief. A person who is a devout scientist, a person whom we might think strongly adheres to these norms, might require little effort to combat desire. Such a person would be analogous to an extremely moral person for whom doing the right thing comes almost naturally. Conversely such an epistemically "good" person would need to exert a great deal of effort to believe contrary to the dictates of rationality. This would be like their moral counterpart, who might need to exert a tremendous effort to do something that is morally wrong (e.g., such a person may find it very difficult to lie even when doing so may help someone they care about). Of course, the looser the grip these norms of rationality have on a person, the more irrational the beliefs of this person will be. Such an irrational person would be like Pojman's description of the direct voluntarist: they would believe simply on the basis of desire with a total disregard for truth considerations. A person on whom these norms have some hold, however, does not disregard evidence in the production of belief. Such a person uses evidence to provide reasons in order to ground,

justify, or fit his choice of belief within the norms of rationality. For such a person Pojman would be right in asserting that the will alone cannot cause belief (Pojman, 1985: 534), for such a person will find themselves constrained as rational agents to provide reasons to justify their choice of belief.[7]

V. Conclusion

The position outlined above may seem too fantastic. It may be argued that direct voluntary control over belief suggests a kind of mind/body dualism that has long been abandoned. Here, it may seem, is presented an image of the epistemic agent as completely outside the causal order, as having a free will in the sense that it is able to act independently of any external causes. The ramifications of this would seem to be serious indeed: the violation of causal closure, the ruling out of any possibility of constructing a neuro-physiological theory of mind or of reducing mental phenomenon to physics, and so on.

I wish now to allay these fears. My arguments are not aimed at making any metaphysical assertions. They are rather aimed at mapping out the implications of our concept of rational agency for doxastic voluntarism and epistemic responsibility. I leave open the question of whether we are in fact subject to and determined by causal laws. What I wish to argue is that given our concept of ourselves as rational agents, we cannot coherently assert or believe that all belief is determined by causal laws. As rational agents we must conceive

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[7] Matthias Steup seems to concur with this intuition concerning rationality, evidence, and voluntarism. Steup argues that "No matter how grim the circumstances are, if an agent holds a belief contrary to the evidence, it is within his power, given that he is a *rational* agent, to *reflect* upon his belief and thereby find out that he had better withhold it, or even assent to its negation" (Steup: 78).

of ourselves as outside the causal order, we must conceive of ourselves as capable of complete, direct doxastic voluntarism.

In some respects my position is like that of Kant, or even, for that matter, like Dennett in his later work (see Chapter Two, Sec. IIb). Both argue that we hold two incompatible views of ourselves that we move between at different times.[8] For Dennett, these views are the manifest and the scientific, and for Kant, they are the intelligible and the sensible. I would term them "the normative" and "the causal." In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that depending on which view we take, we will see ourselves as being subject to different laws. When we view ourselves as sensible beings we see ourselves as subject to natural or causal laws, as subject to the same concept of causality as all other appearances or members of the sensible realm (Kant: 120). But when we view ourselves as intelligible beings this changes. Now we must view ourselves as free, as not governed by the causal laws of the sensible realm. Kant argues that

> As a rational being, and consequently as belonging to the intelligible world, man can never conceive the causality of his own will except under the Idea of freedom; for to be independent of determination by causes in the sensible world (and this is what reason must always attribute to itself) is to be free (Kant: 120).

Similarly, Dennett discusses how we waver "back and forth between a practical - even, perhaps, optimally practical - way of thinking of the world, and an impractical but still rationally endorsed vision" (Dennett, 1984: 114). The former is the scientific image in which

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[8] Campbell also seems to hold this view that we are subject to two incompatible images of ourselves. For Campbell they are the practical and the theoretical. He discusses the notion that there is "a radical conflict between the theoretical and practical sides of man's nature" -- the theoretical side being that which adheres to determinism, and the practical being that which asserts man's freedom (Campbell: 396).

we view the world in causal terms, the latter, the manifest image in which we view ourselves as rational beings capable of deliberation, and hence as free or outside the causal order. As rational beings, Dennett argues, we must conceive of determinism as being false, we must "act *as if* the world really does have an open future" (Dennett, 1984: 115). This, of course, does not mean that determinism actually is false. The question of the truth of determinism is left open. All that this means is that as rational beings we must conceive of ourselves as free.

We employ these different views of ourselves in the explanation of our beliefs. Sometimes we explain our beliefs rationally and other times causally. We can see the employment of both of these views in the explanation of religious belief. Thus some persons' religious beliefs are seen by both themselves and others as the product of inquiry or reflection. These persons examined different religions and then eventually decided which to believe. Others' religious beliefs, however, are seen as the product of their upbringing, and so the beliefs were never chosen. The explanation of religious belief in these two cases would correspond to the two views discussed. In the first case, religious belief would be explained rationally. The person would discuss how, given their view of the world, they chose to believe a certain religion because it made sense or because it "revealed" certain truths to them. In the second case, the person would indicate that the religious beliefs in question were the product of their childhood, that they were not chosen, but rather caused by their socialization. The person would not consider these beliefs to be rationally held. The beliefs would be seen as forced, as the remnants of their upbringing. As Dennett suggests, then, we recognize ourselves as not being perfectly rational agents. We recognize that some of our beliefs are better explained causally. These causally explained beliefs, however, we do not consider to

be rationally held, for to be rationally held, our beliefs must be the product of deliberation and choice.

We are subject to a kind of schizophrenia. We employ two incompatible images of ourselves and the world at different times. When viewing the world through our normative lens, we see ourselves as self-determining, as having the kind of freedom that is requisite for legal, moral, and epistemic responsibility. When viewing the world through our causal lens, we see ourselves as subject to the same causal laws as the rest of the universe, and seek to explain our behavior in terms of antecedent conditions or causes. In this latter image, we are no longer rational or moral agents; we are no longer free. The irony is that, as such, we cannot coherently assert the position that this image maintains. By being removed from the normative sphere we no longer possess the kind of freedom that such an assertion would require. As members of the normative realm we cannot assert the position of the causal view without undermining the very freedom that is the ground for such an assertion. These views must remain separate. The incompatibility of these views is established, their truth remains a different issue, an issue which I will leave for others.

CHAPTER FIVE

EPISTEMOLOGY AND ETHICS

*The principles of right believing are like the principles of ethics - or, rather, like the **other** principles of ethics.*

Roderick Chisholm: "Lewis' Ethics of Belief"

Throughout this dissertation I have drawn examples from ethics in order to illuminate certain epistemic positions and problems. I did this because, I believe that for the most part, our intuitions in ethics are much stronger than those in epistemology. This would seem to be especially true with the concepts of responsibility and obligation. Our sense of these concepts is mostly the product of our ethical or moral experience, and hence it is no surprise that it should be strongest in this domain. This does not mean, however, that the study of epistemology has nothing to offer to the clarification of certain issues in ethics. In this chapter, I would like to examine the ways in which ethics and epistemology can be used to illuminate one another. I will do this by exploring parallels in the terrains of these two disciplines.

I. Naturalism

One important parallel between ethics and epistemology is the application of naturalism to these realms. Naturalists hold that the furniture of the world is made up of only those things recognized within physical or natural science, and that as such this furniture can be properly described using only "natural" or "factual" terminology. Hence, naturalists strive to define normative terms without recourse to normative language. In ethics, a prime example of this position would be classical utilitarianism where goodness is defined in terms of pleasure or happiness. Here, then, the normative term "good" is defined without the use of other normative terms. It is defined using only non-normative or natural terms - terms which designate certain factual or natural states of affairs, such as "pleasure" or "happiness." Another example of this approach would be Gilbert Harman's identification of statements employing the normative term "ought" with factual statements concerning motivational attitudes. Harman argues that to make a person the subject of an "ought" statement or judgment is to ascribe certain motivational attitudes to him. Thus to say the "X ought to do Y", is to say that "X has motivation or reason to do the prescribed action" (Harman, 1975: 34-35).

With G.E. Moore's attack on ethical naturalism, or what he termed the naturalistic fallacy, naturalism in ethics lost much of its popular appeal (although not all, as the Harman example illustrates). Moore showed the inadequacy of attempts to define the normative or ethical term "good" in naturalistic language. In the many variations of his "open question argument," Moore showed that such naturalistic definitions failed to capture the complete meaning of the normative terms which constituted their definiendum. He asked in one

variation: if we were confronted with the definition "the good is pleasure," would we consider the following proposition "pleasure is not good" to be a contradiction like the proposition "the good is not good"? If the answer is no, and Moore certainly thought it was, then the naturalistic definition failed. It did not produce a synonym or capture the complete meaning of the normative term involved. Moore thought that all such naturalistic definitions would fail this test. He believed that the ethical concept "good" was simple or unanalyzable, and hence indefinable with any terms. Moore states:

> The most important sense of 'definition' is that in which a definition states what are the parts which invariably compose a certain whole; and in this sense 'good' has no definition because it is simple and has no parts" (Moore: 360).

The difficulty with the naturalistic endeavor, as Moore saw it, was that it attempted to discover what 'good' *means*, to state its essence or necessary and sufficient part(s), which is impossible given its simple nature. Moore states that "no difficulty need be found in my saying that 'pleasure is good' and yet not meaning that 'pleasure' is the same as 'good', that pleasure *means* good" (Moore: 362). With the emergence of this view in ethics, two principal responses arose. Ethical theorists either came to doubt whether ethical statements had any factual or cognitive content (developing non-cognitivism as a response to Moore's non-naturalism), or they came to see questions concerning the definition of ethical terms as concerning the notion of priority within the circle of normative or ethical terminology. With the latter response, the principal question became whether "the right" is prior to "the good" -- whether it would be defined in terms of "the good" or vice versa. For example, Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* argues that the priority or primacy of the right over the good is a central feature of his conception (Rawls: 32). In general, attempts to define normative terms in

naturalistic or non-normative language were all but abandoned in ethics.

If naturalism came to wilt in ethics, it has come to flourish in epistemology. Here, the post-Moore naturalistic enterprise, however, has taken a new tack. There is, in a sense, an admission of the success of Moore's challenge to naturalism -- naturalistic analysis would no longer attempt to capture the essence or complete meaning of normative terms, but would rather work to clarify our understanding of the very properties, or in some cases processes, that these terms were meant to refer to. The attempt to capture meaning completely, to analyze normative concepts into their necessary and sufficient part(s), no longer takes center stage. Goldman's preface to his own attempt to put forward a naturalistic analysis of "justified belief" illustrates well this shift in emphasis. Rather than attempting to analyze the concept of epistemic justification, to define this notion using only naturalistic terms, Goldman opts for what he calls an "explanatory theory"of epistemic justification (Goldman, 1979: 292-293). Such a theory would not seek to produce a synonym, or capture the complete meaning of the concept of epistemic justification, but would instead attempt to specify the natural or physical conditions that must obtain for a given belief to be justified. He states:

> The term "justified"...is an evaluative term, a term of appraisal. Any correct definition or synonym of it would also feature evaluative terms. I assume that such definitions or synonyms might be given, but I am not interested in them. I want a set of substantive conditions that specify when a belief is justified (Goldman, 1979: 293).

The naturalist's goal, then, is not to analyze the meaning of a given term, but rather to investigate empirically the actual nature of the property or process to which the term purports to refer. This constitutes a departure from the idea of capturing essences or complete

meanings, as Moore saw the naturalistic endeavor to be.[1]

This shift in emphasis does seem to protect naturalism in epistemology from the brunt of Moore's challenge. This does not mean, however, that epistemological naturalism can be carried out unimpeded. The position suffers from its point of focus -- epistemological naturalism is agent-focused unlike ethical naturalism. By first examining ethical naturalism, this difference in focus becomes clear.

The focus of ethical naturalism is not on ethical or moral agents, but on the analysis of certain moral properties. The main question is whether these properties are capable of naturalistic definition, that is, whether they can be properly identified with certain natural or (in the weaker version) non-moral properties. In this respect moral properties are treated much like physical properties -- as entities which exist independently of agents. Along these lines, Moore even draws a comparison between the moral property of goodness and the physical property of yellowness. He argues that good is a property like yellow, in that both are indefinable, the difference between them being that the latter is a physical or natural property unlike the former (Moore: 362).

This focus on ethical properties, and the treatment of these properties as existing independently of agents, has led to problems for ethical non-naturalism, the major problem

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[1] Hilary Putnam, in his article "Psychological Predicates," nicely characterizes this shift in emphasis that post-Moore naturalism involves. Putnam argues, contrary to those who would adhere to a Moorean style position (where the analysis of psychological predicates aims at the production of synonyms), that we should "allow statements of the form "pain is A," where 'pain' and 'A' are in no sense synonyms. . . to see whether any such statement can be found which might be acceptable on empirical and methodological grounds" (Putnam, 1967: 226). The shift, then, is away from the analysis of meaning, toward empirical analysis or investigation.

in this regard is that of interaction. David Brink discusses this problem in his "Argument from Queerness." Brink argues that if moral properties or facts are non-natural "entities" which exist independently of us, it becomes difficult to discern how we as physical or natural beings can interact with these non-natural properties so as to gain knowledge of them, and be properly motivated by them (Brink: 425-428). Thus if ethical naturalism is plagued by Moore's open question, ethical non-naturalism suffers from problems with interaction that are reminiscent of Cartesianism.

Epistemological naturalists, on the other hand, have the agent as their primary focus. In epistemological naturalism it is the epistemic agent and his relationship with the world that is at center stage. This position seeks to identify the relationships between agent and world that will result in justified belief and knowledge. As we saw earlier, this relationship is seen in causal terms. Naturalistic epistemologists attempt to identify justified belief and knowledge with the causal processes or mechanisms in the agent that produce belief. This is a logical step. As Quine admonishes us, wouldn't it be best to examine how belief actually comes about? -- "why not just see how this construction really proceeds?" (Quine: 75). Similarly, Goldman in his pursuit of an explanatory theory of justified belief wants to explore the question of why a given belief is justified (Goldman, 1979: 293). For him, this necessitates inquiry into why a given belief is actually held, and this means an examination of what causally initiates and sustains belief (Goldman, 1979: 297).

Now we are in a position to see why this difference in focus poses difficulties for epistemological naturalism. As was discussed in the previous chapter, this emphasis on a causal account of belief is in conflict with our concept of rational agency. Rational agents are

agents who are capable of fulfilling certain epistemic responsibilities in regards to belief. The deterministic nature of naturalistic explanation in epistemology renders this impossible. Thus epistemological naturalism, like determinism, becomes a position that cannot be rationally asserted or held. Epistemological naturalism, then, suffers not from Moorean open questions, but rather from what it holds at center stage. By attempting to view the relationship between epistemic agents and the world in terms of natural or causal processes, naturalistic epistemology renders itself incoherent in the sense that it cannot be rationally asserted or held.

II. Teleology and Deontology: Virtue, Consequences, and Duty

Though there is currently a great deal of variety in terms of ethical positions, the majority of these positions are still classifiable as either consequentialist, deontological, or virtue based. Positions in epistemology are usually not classified in this manner, but there are none the less epistemic positions that would correspond to this taxonomy, and classifying these positions in this way could shed light on old conflicts.

a. Virtues

Virtue based ethical theorists hold that the rightness or moral appropriateness of actions is a function of their being the result of the proper exercise of certain moral virtues or habits. In this view, one might say that the act of giving to charity is morally appropriate if it arises out of the proper exercise of the moral virtue of benevolence, rather than the exercise of the vice of greed (e.g., to get a tax write off). Virtue-based ethical theories are usually teleological in that something is commonly identified as being a virtue by its being

conducive to a certain end, *telos*, or good, that is deemed to be ethically or morally valuable. In Aristotle's view of the moral virtues, for example, the virtues are identified in relation to the end or good of human flourishing or happiness (Aristotle: 29).

Montmarquet is an example of a virtue-based epistemologist. As we saw earlier, Montmarquet maintains that we can control belief by cultivating certain epistemic habits or virtues (Montmarquet: viii). Montmarquet identifies three general classes of epistemic virtues, or "*ways of being conscientious,*" that we as responsible epistemic agents should strive to cultivate. These are the virtues of impartiality (e.g. openness to ideas and the willingness to exchange them), intellectual sobriety (e.g., the restraint to not embrace what is unwarranted simply because it is new and exciting), and intellectual courage (e.g., the willingness to conceive and examine new alternatives) (Montmarquet: 23). These, Montmarquet claims, are the qualities that are necessary to guarantee that one has

> a proper orientation toward one's own or other's beliefs, and this is why the qualities...seem so necessary to intellectual inquiry (and integral to our notion of a virtuous inquirer) (Montmarquet: 25-26).

In keeping with the teleological bent of virtue-based theories, Montmarquet shows how these virtues can be identified through their conduciveness to what he takes to be our primary epistemic goal - namely that of gaining truth while avoiding error. Montmarquet argues that what any "contemporary account of epistemic virtue can and should take from Aristotle, at least as its starting point, is his association of the epistemic virtues with *truth*" (Montmarquet: 20). He goes on to state more specifically that the "epistemic virtues are those personal qualities (or qualities of character) that are conducive to the discovery of truth and the avoidance of error" (Montmarquet: 20).

b. Consequences

Consequentialists in ethics believe that the rightness or wrongness of an act is strictly a product of the goodness or badness of its consequences. As such, consequentialist theories in ethics are teleological, for the moral appropriateness of actions is identified through their conduciveness to a certain end or good, namely, the end or good in relation to which "good consequences" are identified. Where consequentialists in ethics differ is typically in terms of what they take this end or good to be, and in terms of who they believe must be considered in the examination of consequences. Egoistic hedonists identify the good as pleasure, and maintain that only the agent need be considered in the examination of consequences. Persons holding this view maintain that good actions are those that produce the most pleasure for the agent of any alternative action open. Most contemporary utilitarians, on the other hand, identify the good as happiness or self-actualization, and not mere pleasure. In addition, they maintain that all those affected by the act in question must be considered in the examination of its consequences. Someone holding this position, then, believes that good actions are those, of any alternative action open, that produce the most happiness for all concerned, not just the agent.

It is interesting that in epistemology there is no analogue to this dispute in ethics over the nature of the ethical goal or *telos*. In epistemology, the goal or *telos* in relation to which epistemic consequences are assessed is truth, and this goal does not allow for variation in terms of the scope of one's consideration (it does not allow for egoistic vs. more altruistic interpretations). Whereas in ethics it makes sense to distinguish between what is pleasurable for me and what is pleasurable for others, thereby raising the question of whose pleasure or

happiness should be considered in deciding on a course of action, in epistemology there is no such distinction. The truth of statements (excepting those involving indexicals) does not vary in this way. Truth is independent of agents in a way that happiness or pleasure is not.

One more distinction remains within consequentialism: one can be a positive or negative consequentialist. Where persons holding these positions differ is in terms of the weight that they give to good consequences as opposed to bad. A negative consequentialist places more weight on the avoidance of bad consequences than the attainment of good. In ethics, a person holding this position might be an egoist of an Epicurean stripe. Such a person would argue that one should concentrate on the avoidance of pain or negative consequences, rather than on the attainment of pleasure or positive consequences. It is argued that in this way one will attain a higher overall net balance of pleasure over pain. A positive consequentialist, on the other hand, weights the attainment of good consequences more heavily. In ethics, such a person could be a utilitarian theorist who emphasized our positive duty to help others over our negative duty to avoid doing harm. Such a theorist would be emphasizing the attainment of good consequences over the mere avoidance of bad.

I would argue that William James is an example of an epistemological consequentialist. This is because James attempts to justify the choice of believing in the face of insufficient evidence (where the option is genuine, forced, and momentous -- see Chapter One, Sec. VI), by appealing to the goodness of the consequences of doing so. For James, the principal epistemic goals of attaining truth and avoiding error would seem to provide a criterion by which to evaluate the goodness or badness of epistemic consequences. Accordingly, belief in the face of insufficient evidence is justified for James, under specific

conditions, on the basis of its likelihood to result in good epistemic consequences, or true belief. James discusses the risk of such belief, and how its permissibility depends on how one weighs the consequences. He states:

> You, on the other hand, may think that the risk of being in error is a very small matter when compared with the blessings of real knowledge, and be ready to be duped many times in your investigation rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of guessing true (WTB: 510).

In terms of how he weighs consequences James appears to be a positive consequentialist. He does not seem to weigh the avoidance of error more heavily than the attainment of truth. James writes that

> our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf (WTB: 510).

Descartes, given his preoccupation with avoiding error, might be characterized as a negative epistemic consequentialist. Such a characterization would seem to be consistent with his position in the *Discourse on Method*, where the first law that Descartes cites for the direction of his epistemic conduct, is that he include nothing in his judgments that is not presented to his mind so clearly and distinctly that no reason or occasion could be found to call it into doubt (Cottingham: 29).

Clifford, with his contention that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (Clifford: 505), might likewise seem to be a negative epistemic consequentialist. We will now see, though, that such an interpretation of Clifford's position is quite inaccurate. Clifford is, instead, an epistemic deontologist.

c. Duty

Deontological ethical theories do not hold that the rightness or wrongness of actions is a product of their being conducive to some end or good. In more direct contrast to ethical consequentialism, as opposed to other teleological theories, deontological theories in ethics do not view the consequences of actions as being relevant to the assessment of their moral worth. A prime example of a deontological view in ethics would be the duty-based theory of Kant. Kant argues that the rightness or wrongness of an act is not determined by an examination of its natural or empirical contingencies or accidents, such as its consequences, but rather by the motive of the agent who performs the action. Kant states:

> in morals the proper worth of an absolutely good will, a worth elevated above all price, lies precisely in this - that the principle of action is free from all influence by contingent grounds, the only kind that experience can supply (Kant: 93).

The criterion of rightness or wrongness is whether the agent performs the act out of a sense of duty, and not whether it produces more pleasure than pain.

A prime example of a deontological position in epistemology would be that of C.K. Clifford. Clifford, much like Kant, argues that when "an action is once done, it is right or wrong forever; no accidental failure of its good or evil fruits can possibly alter that" (Clifford: 502). In discussing a particular example of belief he states that

> The question of right or wrong has to do with the origin of his belief, not the matter of it; not what it was, but how he got it; not whether it turned out to be true or false, but whether he had a right to believe on such evidence as was before him (Clifford: 502).

Clifford, then, in contrast to the consequentialism of James, argues that the likelihood of the belief being true can in no way justify believing in the face of insufficient evidence. In his eyes the goodness of the consequences, or the truth of the resultant belief, cannot render an

epistemic "act" permissible.

d. Clifford vs. James

Applying this taxonomy of ethical positions to epistemology sheds light on the debate between James and Clifford. It can now be seen as another instance of the general debate between consequentialists and deontologists -- as another instance of the debate over the relevance of consequences in determining the appropriateness of certain "actions" or "conduct." James wishes to argue that consequences, at least in some instances, matter. Clifford argues that consequences are irrelevant. What is important is the way in which the belief is arrived at. The central question for Clifford is whether the agent violated his duty by believing in a situation where he knew that he shouldn't: did the agent believe in a situation where he knew, or should have known, that he had "acquired and nourished a belief, when he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him?" (Clifford: 503).

It is interesting to note that James did not see the disagreement between himself and Clifford as one of deontology vs. consequentialism. Rather, James viewed Clifford as a fellow consequentialist. The source of their disagreement, in his eyes, concerned the evaluation of consequences -- a debate between positive and negative consequentialism. James saw Clifford as emphasizing the avoidance of error over the gaining of truth, as emphasizing the avoidance of negative consequences over the reaping of good ones. James states that one may "treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance" and that "Clifford...exhorts us to the latter course" (WTB: 510). Given Clifford's assertion, though, that in discerning the permissibility of belief it only matters how one got it and "not whether

it turned out to be true or false" (Clifford: 502), James' characterization of their disagreement seems to miss the mark.

III. Normative Goals and Conduct

There are strong parallels between ethics and epistemology in terms of the role that goals play in the evaluation of conduct. In both ethics and epistemology, what might be termed "ideal goals" are put forward as the end toward which responsible conduct aims. In ethics, the ideal goal is rightness or goodness. The responsible ethical or moral agent strives to conduct himself in such a way that his actions are right, or maximize the good. In epistemology, the ideal goal is truth. The responsible epistemic agent conducts himself in such a way that he believes only those things that are true. An interesting dissimilarity between these domains, however, is that in epistemology the ideal goal of true belief can be plausibly interpreted as the goal to have *all and only* true beliefs.[2] In ethics, the ideal goal cannot be analogously interpreted as the goal to perform all and only good or right actions. In ethics the "all" falls out. The goal is rather to perform *only* right or good actions. Evidently, the notion of believing all truths can be entertained unlike the obviously overwhelming task of performing all good or right actions.[3]

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[2] As we saw earlier (Sec. IIa), Montmarquet adheres to such a formulation of our epistemic goal in relation to which he identifies the epistemic virtues. James as well seems to adhere to such a formulation, though by presenting it as two competing goals he makes explicit our need to weight the desire for truth against the dread of falsehood. Others who put forward such a formulation of our epistemic goal include Alston (1988), Steup, Feldman, and Foley (1987), as well as Johnson and Hall in "The Epistemic Duty to Seek More Evidence."

[3] I am indebted to Professor Richard Hall for pointing out this difference.

In both epistemology and ethics, practical or intermediate goals are postulated to help us both regulate our own conduct, and evaluate the conduct of others. These practical goals are parasitic on the ideal. They represent our limited capacity to discern when the ideal goal has been reached. Thus in epistemology, it may be argued that while the attainment of truth is our ideal goal, given that it may be difficult to discern when truth has been reached, we should strive always to have at least justified or rational beliefs. This goal of justified belief, then, becomes the standard for blameworthiness. One is always blameworthy for having unjustified beliefs, though one may not always be blameworthy for having false ones (when, for example, they are nonetheless justified). But this practical goal is not separate from the ideal goal; it has its status as a regulative goal by virtue of its relationship to the ideal. It is because rational or justified belief is conducive to true belief that it can be an epistemic goal. Similarly in ethics, the practical or intermediate goal is morally justified action. It can, just as with truth, be difficult to discern if our actions are morally right or good in the ideal sense. Thus, as agents, the standard of blameworthiness is whether our actions are morally justified. One is always blameworthy for performing an action that is morally unjustified, though one may not be blameworthy for performing an act that is morally wrong in the ideal or objective sense if the action is none the less morally justified. And, just as with the practical epistemic goal of rational belief, the practical or intermediate ethical goal of justified action is parasitic on the ideal goal of right or good conduct. It is because it is conducive to good or right action, that morally justified action can be a regulative ethical goal.

IV. Determinism and Responsibility

In terms of the epistemic debate over freedom we have examined three major positions: non-voluntarism, indirect voluntarism, and direct voluntarism. This taxonomy can be applied to ethics, and, when it is, the landscapes of these two domains can be made clearer.

a. Non-Voluntarism

Epistemological non-voluntarists hold that belief is completely determined -- that there is no sense in which we can control, and hence be responsible for, belief. As we saw in Chapter One, Quine is an excellent example of someone who holds this position. Quine argues that the application of normative concepts to belief is misguided in that this application implies a sense of responsibility, and hence control in regards to belief, which is completely absent. Quine rather opts for a naturalized view of belief where normativity completely falls out. Belief is no longer the subject of responsibility.

Paul d'Holbach is an example of an ethical non-voluntarist. He argues that man "is good or bad, happy or miserable, wise or foolish, reasonable or irrational, without his will being for anything in these various states" (d'Holbach: 363). Man, he argues, "always acts according to necessary laws from which he has no means of emancipating himself" (d'Holbach: 363). As such, there is no sense of responsibility for one's conduct. D'Holbach states that "crimes are witnessed on the earth only because everything conspires to render man vicious and criminal" (d'Holbach: 365).

b. Indirect Voluntarism

Epistemological indirect voluntarists maintain that belief can be controlled only through indirect means, namely through the performance of various actions such as the gathering of more evidence. As we saw earlier, Locke and Heil are good examples of this position. Both hold that our responsibility for belief arises from our capacity to control it through indirect means - through the implementation of certain procedures or methods.

As we saw in the critique of this position, indirect voluntarism is based on the idea of there being different "layers" to human action, the first layer - background beliefs - being completely determined, the second layer - procedures for influencing belief - being one of "free" action. But since this second layer is guided by the first, it was argued that indirect voluntarism in the epistemic case leads to a vicious regress of responsibility. Epistemic indirect voluntarists argue belief is controllable only via indirect means, and yet these indirect means will be ultimately guided by background beliefs that are themselves determined. If the layer of background beliefs is determined, and hence is not the subject of responsibility, then the second layer of free action, in being guided by this determined layer, must not be the proper subject of responsibility as well (for a more detailed discussion of this regress see Chapter Three, Sec. II).

This regress of responsibility is much clearer in the epistemic case than in ethics. In epistemology it is very difficult to understand how one could have free choice with determined beliefs. In ethics, on the other hand, where the influence of desire on action is the primary focus, it seems more plausible that one could have determined desires and yet still have free choice, for it would seem that one could choose not to fulfill or act on one's desires.

This difference is due to the different degrees of control that belief and desire have over action or choice. It would seem that belief determines epistemic choice much more readily than desire determines ethical choice.[4] What is necessary, then, to close the gap between ethical and epistemological indirect voluntarism, and thus produce an analogous regress in ethics, is to maintain that desire is a determiner of action - that one must always act on one's strongest desire. Such an ethical position would be like that of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes is a soft-determinist, or ethical indirect voluntarist, who adheres to a position much like what we earlier called the Desire Thesis. He argues that one possesses freedom in so far as one is able to do what one wants or wills (Hobbes: 171). Freedom is just the freedom from external constraints on one's actions. Hobbes goes on to discuss, however, how this "layer" of freedom is guided by an initial layer that is wholly determined - he goes on to discuss how liberty and necessity are consistent.[5] Hobbes argues that

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[4] Ultimately, it may be that it is the combination of background beliefs and desires that determines our conduct in most situations. It may be that desire and belief almost always work in concert. It would seem, though, that in epistemology consideration is primarily given to the influence of belief on choice, and in ethics the influence of desire. Thus one of the primary concerns in ethics is the apparent conflict between the demands of morality and those of self-interest -- or the conflict between moral responsibility and inclination or desire. In epistemology, though the conflict between what one rationally ought to believe and what one wants to believe is not completely absent, the role of desire in epistemic misconduct and mistake does not seem to be at center stage. Rather, more attention seems to be payed to explaining false or unjustified belief in terms of cognitive defect, problems with the evidence, or the presence of false background beliefs which are viewed as corrupting the system.

[5] In this respect the view of Bernard Williams concerning rational belief may be an analogue to an ethical soft determinist position like that of Hobbes. For, just as Hobbes attempts to reconcile freedom and necessity, Williams tries to reconcile rationality and necessity. Both attempt to do so by distinguishing between different types of causal chains. Thus for Williams, certain types of causal chains are viewed as producing rational beliefs, while others are viewed as producing beliefs that are not rational. Similarly, for

> the actions which men do. . . because they proceed from their will, proceed from *liberty*, and yet - because every act of man's will and every desire and inclination proceeds from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continual chain whose first link is in the hand of God, the first of all causes - proceed from necessity (Hobbes: 171-172).

c. Direct Voluntarism

The final position is that of direct voluntarism. The epistemological direct voluntarist holds that one can control belief directly through an act of will. The Stoics are perhaps the strongest adherents to this position. As was seen in Chapter One, they seemed to maintain that belief is almost entirely within the realm of direct willing or choice. C.A. Campbell is probably closest to an ethical direct voluntarist. Campbell argues that the will is capable of directly controlling action. In contrast to the ethical indirect voluntarist, he maintains that it is possible for one to will or choose actions in opposition to one's desires or inclinations - that freedom extends beyond doing what one wants, and is in fact exclusively illustrated by those cases where the will struggles against the pull of desire. Thus Campbell states that

> Here, and here alone, so far as I can see, in the act of deciding whether to put forward or withhold the moral effort required to resist temptation and rise to duty, is to be found an act which is free in the sense required for moral responsibility (Campbell: 395); (for a more detailed discussion of Campbell see Introduction, Sec. II).

Hobbes certain types of causal chains, those progressing through the desires of the agent, are considered as producing free actions, while others, those circumventing the agent's desires, are considered to produce actions that are not free. I am indebted to Prof. Richard Hall for pointing out this similarity.

d. Determinism In Ethics and Epistemology

I have examined the relationship between determinism and responsibility in both epistemology and in ethics. In epistemology, I showed indirect voluntarism to be inadequate in that it was shown to be incapable of supporting a robust account of epistemic responsibility. In the ethical case I have argued that ethical indirect voluntarism, or soft determinism, fails to give a satisfactory account of responsibility as well. There is, however, another important similarity between ethics and epistemology in terms of determinism - specifically, the response that is raised in these two domains to the notion of complete determinism or non-voluntarism.

I have spent much time trying to show the incoherency of any attempt to rationally assert non-voluntarism or determinism. It have argued that any such attempt is incoherent because it presupposes the very freedom or control over belief that determinism denies. To be a rational agent is, at least in part, to be an agent who is capable of evaluating or weighing evidence and then choosing on the basis of this evaluative process what to believe or assert. Determinism denies the control over evaluation, and the capacity for free choice, that this aspect of rational agency implies.

In that my discussion of the coherency of asserting determinism has centered on our conception of ourselves as rational agents, it should perhaps be construed as epistemic given the central place of this conception in epistemology. In ethics, however, theorists have also discussed the incoherency of asserting or holding the position of determinism. Certainly Kant is one such ethical theorist. But Kant's discussion of the possibility of coherently asserting determinism seems to be primarily epistemic as well, for it focuses on the entailments of our

conception of ourselves as rational agents. He uses this conception of rational agency, with the freedom or voluntarism that it presupposes, as a basis for refuting determinism in the moral sphere so as to establish the possibility of free moral agency.

C.A. Campbell, another ethical thinker, views the question of the coherency of asserting determinism as an ethical question - as one centering not on our conception of ourselves as rational agents, but rather on our conception of ourselves as practical or moral agents. Campbell seems to argue that determinism departs so strongly from our phenomenology of moral experience, a phenomenology which he sees as establishing freedom and hence responsibility, that to hold or assert determinism is more than merely counter-intuitive. Campbell discusses the awkward predicament that arises from the theoretical arguments raised in favor of determinism. He contends that if these arguments are found convincing, one may have "to deny as a theoretical being what he has to assert as a practical being" (Campbell: 396). This arises from the fact that Campbell believes "no one while functioning as a moral agent can help believing that he enjoys free will":

> Theoretically he may be completely convinced by Deterministic arguments, but when actually confronted with a personal situation of conflict between duty and desire he is quite certain that it lies with him here and now whether or not he will rise to duty" (Campbell: 396).

From this, Campbell concludes that the position of determinism illustrates "a radical conflict between the theoretical and practical sides of man's nature, an antinomy at the very heart of the self" (Campbell: 396). Campbell's position nicely illustrates, then, that in ethics, just as in epistemology, the notion that it is somehow incoherent or self-refuting to assert determinism can emerge.

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