

# Evidence, Compulsion, and Belief at Will\*

BLAKE ROEBER

*University of Notre Dame*

**Abstract:** You might think any number of things about your evidential situation with respect to some proposition  $p$ . You might think you have excellent evidence for  $p$ , terrible evidence for  $p$ , and so on. One thing you might think is that, while your total evidence rules out disbelief, it supports believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  equally well, so that both attitudes are rationally permissible responses to your evidence. And possibly, while thinking this, you might experience no compulsion to believe  $p$ , nor any compulsion to suspend on  $p$ . In this paper I argue that, if you find yourself in a situation like this, there is no reason why you couldn't believe  $p$  at will. In §1, I argue that these situations cause decisive problems for the best conceptual arguments for doxastic involuntarism. In §2, I argue that the best psychological arguments for doxastic involuntarism are toothless without successful conceptual arguments. And finally, in §3, I respond to the suggestion that epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible even if belief at will *is* possible.

You sit down to watch your favorite football team. At the start of the game, there's no telling who will win. By the fourth quarter, your team is ahead 10 to 0. With two minutes left, your team still leads 10 to 0. Your team ends up winning and you watch your quarterback dump a cooler of Gatorade on his coach. You're walking across a meadow. There's a brownish object in a distant tree. Your daughter says it's a hawk and your son says it's a big piece of trash—a plastic bag or something like that. This is New Jersey so there's a real question here. You walk toward the object to see who's right. As you get close it flies away. You're lost in my neighborhood. You see a street sign but you can't read it. Your eyes are terrible from years staring at your computer. As you get close it eventually becomes clear what it says: "Bixby Ln." You wake up at 4am. Your neighbours are throwing a party and there's an unfamiliar car near your house. It's dark so you can't tell whether it's blue or green. As the sun rises, it eventually becomes clear that it's green. You're trying to solve a murder. At the start of your investigation, there's no telling who did it. Over the years the evidence points increasingly toward Jones. Finally, Jones confesses and even hands over her GoPro footage showing how she did it.

In each of these cases, you go by gradual improvements in your evidence from a situation where you are rationally required to suspend judgment on the relevant proposition to a situation where (if skepticism is false) you are rationally required to believe that proposition. In each case, as your evidential situation improves, your evidence provides less and less support to suspension of judgment, and more and more

---

\* Draft of 4/03/17. Please do not cite or circulate without permission.

support to belief. According to a view suggested by Conee and Feldman (2004: 102), if your evidential situation improves sufficiently slowly in cases like these, there should be some point where your total evidence supports suspension and belief equally well while ruling out disbelief. Moreover, on this view, if your total evidence supports suspension and belief equally well while ruling out disbelief, suspension and belief will *both* be rationally permissible attitudes toward the relevant proposition. Call situations where your total evidence supports suspension and belief equally well (if there are any) ‘permissive situations.’ In this paper, I won’t argue that permissive situations are possible. I think they are, but I don’t have anything to add to the arguments of others. Instead, I will take it for granted that a person might *think* that permissive situations are possible, and even think she is in one. My assumption here isn’t about rational belief. I won’t assume that a person might *rationally* think that she’s in a permissive situation. (Though I think this is also possible.) Rather, I will assume just that it’s *psychologically* possible for a person to think that she’s in a permissive situation. I will assume that, as a matter of actual human psychology, a person might consider her evidence for and against some proposition (*e.g.*, the proposition that her favorite football team will win) and conclude that, because her total evidence supports believing this proposition and suspending judgment on this proposition equally well, she is rationally permitted to believe it and simultaneously rationally permitted to suspend judgment on it.

Permissive situations will be important to the arguments below, so let me pause to correct two mistakes. First, thinking that you’re in a permissive situation with respect to  $p$  doesn’t require thinking that your evidence for  $p$  isn’t very good. For example, you might agree with Williamson (2000), Sosa (2010), and especially McHugh (2011) that belief aims not just at truth but at *knowledge*. And if you do think this, you might also think that you’re not in a permissive situation with respect to  $p$  unless you have very *good* evidence for  $p$ . Second, cases where your evidence for  $p$  equals your evidence for  $\neg p$  are *not* (as many epistemologists mistakenly assume) the closest epistemological analogues of cases where  $\phi$ -ing and not  $\phi$ -ing are both rationally permissible.<sup>1</sup> Instead, permissive situations are the closest epistemological analogues of cases where  $\phi$ -ing and not  $\phi$ -ing are both rationally permissible. After all, suspending on  $p$  is a way of not believing  $p$ , and you are rationally required to suspend on  $p$  when your evidence for  $p$  equals your evidence for  $\neg p$ .

Now, presumably, whether you feel compelled to take some doxastic attitude toward a proposition will depend on your evidential situation with respect to that proposition. If you’re like me and you think that your total evidence doesn’t give you the slightest hint

---

<sup>1</sup> See Curley 1975 (p. 198), Alston 1989 (pp. 266-7), and Peels 2014 (p. 695), for example.

whether  $p$  is true, you'll find yourself compelled to suspend on  $p$ . And if you're like me, in a situation where your total evidence seems to establish without question that  $p$  is true, you'll find yourself compelled to believe  $p$ . But what if you think you're in a permissive situation with respect to  $p$ ? In this case, if you're like me, you won't find yourself compelled to believe  $p$ , and you won't find yourself compelled to suspend on  $p$  either. Instead, you'll simply find yourself unable to *dis*believe  $p$ . Of course, it's possible that you're not like me. But even so, this much seems uncontroversial: there are possible cases where a person thinks she's in a permissive situation with respect to  $p$  and she neither feels compelled to believe  $p$  nor feels compelled to suspend on  $p$ . Call these cases 'equipollent cases.' More specifically, let's stipulatively define 'equipollent cases' so that  $S$  is in one just in case (a) she thinks that she's in a permissive situation with respect to some proposition  $p$ , (b) she neither feels compelled to believe  $p$  nor feels compelled to suspend on  $p$ , and (c) she feels a stronger attraction toward each of believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  than she feels toward *dis*believing  $p$ . As I will argue throughout the remainder of this paper, equipollent cases cause trouble for doxastic involuntarism, since the strongest arguments for doxastic involuntarism gain no purchase in equipollent cases.

Before I present this argument, some further clarification of terminology will be helpful. Throughout, I will use the label 'belief at will' to name beliefs formed under our direct voluntary control, and I will use sentences of the form ' $S$  believed  $p$  at will' as shorthand for ' $S$  formed her belief in  $p$  at will' (Audi 2015: 27). On this usage, it's possible to form a belief at will just in case it's possible that someone has direct voluntary control over whether she forms a given belief. I will also assume that  $S$  has direct voluntary control over whether she forms a given belief only if she is neither compelled by her evidence or anything else to form that belief, nor compelled by her evidence or anything else to take some alternative doxastic attitude toward the relevant proposition, nor compelled by the evidence or anything else to take no doxastic attitude at all toward that proposition. As Friedman (2013), Cohen (2016), Sylvan (2016), and others point out, suspension of judgment isn't just the absence of belief; it's a doxastic attitude in its own right, and it's possible to have *no* doxastic attitude toward a proposition. Since my doxastic attitudes are often compelled, I will agree with Alston (1989) that I do not have direct voluntary control over many of my doxastic attitudes. For example, I will agree with Alston that I do not have direct voluntary control over my belief that I have hands, my belief that it's sunny outside, my belief that I had beer and Funyuns for breakfast this morning, and so on, since my evidence compels me to believe each of these things. Now, as Alston points out, I might rid myself of these beliefs by performing certain "gyrations." To rid myself of my belief that I have hands, for example, I might undergo hypnosis. Or I might cut off my hands. But of course, this kind of control is both *indirect*

and not fully *voluntary*. It's indirect because I must perform the requisite gyrations in order to change my mind. And it's not fully voluntary because performing these gyrations would just put me in a position where, instead of being compelled to believe that I have hands, I would either be compelled to suspend judgment on the proposition that I have hands or be compelled to believe that I don't have hands. In these cases, I might exercise direct voluntary control over some of the *causes* of my attitude toward the proposition that I have hands, but, downstream from these causes, I can't control whether I believe that I have hands. On Alston's view, *all* of my doxastic attitudes are like this, and they are like this even if many of my actions are not. On his view, even if it's possible to do other things at will—wink at will, for example—nobody can believe at will.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout, by 'doxastic involuntarism,' I will mean Alston's view. Thus, according to doxastic *voluntarism* (defined as the negation of his view), there's nothing *special* about belief in virtue of which it's impossible to believe at will. It's possible to believe at will if it's possible to do anything at will. So, below, when I ask whether it's possible to believe at will, I won't be asking a question that depends on whether determinism is true (Steup 2017, pp. 2-3). Instead, in effect, I will be assuming that libertarianism is true and asking whether, *given this assumption*, it's possible to believe at will. According to doxastic involuntarism, creatures like you and me can't believe at will *even if libertarianism is true*.<sup>3</sup>

As Steup (2000), Booth (2007), Hieronymi (2009), Peels (2015), and many others point out, doxastic involuntarism is the reigning view. In fact, it's so widely accepted that epistemologists often take it as a datum.<sup>4</sup> But this widespread acceptance of doxastic

---

<sup>2</sup> As we will see below, Alston thinks that compelled attitudes weren't formed at will because he thinks that compelled attitudes weren't caused by intentions to form those attitudes (1989: 125). While I agree with Alston that an attitude wasn't formed at will if it was compelled, I will remain neutral on the correct explanation of this fact.

<sup>3</sup> As I am using the label, 'doxastic voluntarism' names a view that is similar but not equivalent to what Robert Audi (2015) calls 'genetic doxastic voluntarism,' which conjoins the thesis that it's possible to form a belief in *p* at will with the thesis that forming a belief might be an action type (pp. 27-8). The view that I am calling 'doxastic voluntarism' is silent on the question whether forming a belief might be an action type. I am inclined to think that, on the correct theories of belief and action, your forming a specific belief might satisfy all of the necessary conditions for being an action. But since I'm agnostic about the correct theories of belief and action, I want to stay neutral on the question whether forming a belief might be an action type.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Catherine Elgin (2010) argues that much of the disagreement literature rests on a mistake because "[b]elief is not voluntary. ... My response [to an instance of disagreement] is not under my control. Debates about whether I should suspend belief in the face of peer disagreement are wrong headed. They are like debates about whether I should be less than six feet tall. I don't have any choice" (pp. 60-61). Or, to give another example, Anthony Booth (2015) argues that doxastic involuntarism is a contingent truth by asserting without argument that it's a *truth* and then arguing that it's not a conceptual truth. Obviously, if we're not already convinced that doxastic involuntarism is true, this argument won't convince us that it's contingently true.

involuntarism is a quirk of contemporary epistemology. Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, Descartes, Kierkegaard, James, and many others all thought they could believe at will (Alston 1989: 261), many of my undergraduates have told me they can do it (this happens nearly every semester when I discuss belief at will in my intro class), articles on doxastic voluntarism often start with examples of people who think they can believe at will (*e.g.*, Ginet 2001), and a recent study by Turri, Rose, and Buckwalter (forthcoming) shows that doxastic voluntarism is the common sense, folk-psychological view. Given that doxastic voluntarism is true if a single person can believe at will (Reisner 2013, Peels 2015, *etc.*), reasonably accepting doxastic *in*voluntarism would seem to require knock-down drag-out arguments for the view. But as I will argue in this paper, nothing in the literature even approximates a conclusive argument for doxastic involuntarism. It is, in Quine’s pejorative sense, a dogma of contemporary epistemology.

## 1. Against the Conceptual Argument

The literature contains two arguments for doxastic involuntarism: what I will call the ‘conceptual argument’ and the ‘psychological argument.’ The conceptual argument comes originally from Williams (1973), and its strongest version employs insights from Scott-Kakures (1994) and others. According to this version of the conceptual argument, when we fill out the details of any purported case of belief at will, we will get either a belief-like propositional attitude that isn’t a genuine belief or a genuine belief that wasn’t formed at will, since its formation wasn’t under the relevant person’s direct voluntary control. According to the psychological argument—developed by Alston (1989) and defended by many others—even if the conceptual argument fails and it *is* possible to believe at will, humans can’t do it. On this way of thinking, even if other creatures can believe at will, attention to our actual abilities reveals that we can’t. In this section, I will argue that the conceptual argument fails. Then, in §2, I will argue that the psychological argument is toothless without the conceptual argument.

The conceptual argument starts with the assumption that belief at will is possible just in case some possible scenario satisfies the following description: (a) at some time  $t^1$  you do not believe  $p$  but you intend to form a belief in  $p$ , (b) at some later time  $t^2$  you form some affirmative attitude toward  $p$  and you form this attitude toward  $p$  at will, and (c) this attitude toward  $p$  satisfies every necessary condition for being a belief. Proponents of the conceptual argument then ask what you think about your epistemic position with respect to  $p$  at  $t^1$ . Presumably, if you intend to believe  $p$ , you have some take on your epistemic position with respect to  $p$ : either you think that you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$ , or you don’t think that you have sufficient

epistemic reason to believe  $p$ . If the former, then, at  $t^1$ , you presumably believe that your belief in  $p$  will be *true*, in which case you *already* believe  $p$ . So in this case, according to proponents of the conceptual argument, (a) is false.

Suppose you don't think that you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$  at  $t^1$ , then. In this case, proponents of the conceptual argument will ask what you think about your epistemic position at  $t^2$ . Are you still doubtful that you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$ , or have you changed your mind? If the former, proponents of the conceptual argument will say that, at  $t^2$ , your attitude toward  $p$  can't be a genuine belief. It must be an instance of mere acceptance, or something like that, since belief aims at truth and your attitude toward  $p$  must be based on pragmatic or other non-evidential reasons. Thus, according to proponents of the conceptual argument, (c) comes out false if, at  $t^2$ , you still doubt that you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$ . Suppose, then, that you *have* changed your mind between  $t^1$  and  $t^2$ . Suppose that, at  $t^2$ , you think you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$ . In this case, proponents of the conceptual argument will concede that your attitude toward  $p$  might be a genuine belief. But now they will deny that you formed it at will. You formed it at will only if its formation was under your direct voluntary control. But in the scenario we are now imagining, you doubted that you had sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$  when you formed the intention to believe  $p$ , and then somehow lost this doubt on the way to forming your belief in  $p$ . This change in your perspective entails that your intention to believe  $p$  wasn't causally involved (at least in the right sort of way) in the formation of your belief in  $p$ , and thus that the formation of your belief wasn't under your control. (At best, you're like Davidson's mountain climber who forms the intention to drop his partner, which makes him so nervous that his hands shake, which causes him to drop the rope.) The upshot, according to proponents of the conceptual argument, is that (b) is false if you doubt that you have sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$  at  $t^1$  but do not doubt this at  $t^2$ . Thus, according to proponents of the conceptual argument, any purported case of belief at will faces a trilemma. On the first and third horns we get a belief that wasn't formed at will, and on the second horn we get an attitude toward  $p$  that isn't a belief.

As this articulation of the conceptual argument illustrates, standard versions of the conceptual argument exploit the difficulty of imagining a perspective on your own epistemic position with respect to  $p$  from which you are neither compelled to believe  $p$  nor prevented from believing  $p$ . Reflecting on the scenarios in the opening paragraph of this paper, however, it's rather *easy* to imagine a perspective on your own epistemic position with respect to  $p$  from which you are neither compelled to believe  $p$  nor prevented from believing  $p$ . Let  $p$  be the proposition that our favorite team will win. We live in Buffalo so we root for the Bills. At the start of the game, we have no idea whether

they will win. By the fourth quarter, the Bills are ahead 10 to 0. With two minutes left, they still lead 10 to 0. At the end of the game, the Bills have won 10 to 0 and we watch the interviews where our favorite players stand around in their towels. In this case (we can assume), our perspective on our epistemic position with respect to  $p$  changes very gradually from the start of the game to the end of the game. At the start of the game, we both think we are rationally required to suspend on  $p$ . By the end of the game, we both think we are rationally required to believe  $p$ . So imagine some point in between—some point where, by our own lights, we are rationally permitted to continue suspending on  $p$  yet simultaneously rationally permitted to start believing  $p$  because our evidence supports believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  equally well. Suppose, for example, that there’s a commercial break near the end of the game, and suppose that, during this break, a friend asks who we think will win. You say the Bills and I say I’m going to wait and see. Suppose we explain our respective answers and eventually agree that, conditional on our total evidence, believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  are both rationally permissible. Suppose further that, as we sit there talking, I neither feel compelled to start believing  $p$  nor feel compelled to continue suspending on  $p$ . That is, suppose I’m in an equipollent case with respect to  $p$ . And finally, suppose I tell you that, after we concluded that believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  were both rationally permissible responses to our total evidence, I formed a belief in  $p$ . Of course, from the fact that I formed this belief, it doesn’t follow that I formed it at will. But suppose that, for whatever reason, I also tell you that I formed it at will. You’re probably annoyed at this point. Bills fans don’t talk this way. At least not during the game. But does the conceptual argument give you any reason to think I said something *false*?

Suppose I affirmed  $p$  in the sense familiar from Sosa’s account of judgmental belief (2015), and suppose I affirmed  $p$  in order to thereby affirm a *truth*.<sup>5</sup> Does the conceptual argument give you any reason to think that my affirmative attitude toward  $p$  couldn’t be a genuine belief, or any reason to think that, if it *is* a genuine belief, it couldn’t have been formed at will?

Clearly not. At  $t^1$ , I believed that my evidence for and against  $p$  supported believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  equally well. This doesn’t suggest that I *already* believed  $p$ , so we can ignore this horn of the trilemma. And at  $t^2$ , I *still* believed that my evidence for and against  $p$  supported believing  $p$  and suspending on  $p$  equally well, so there seems no reason to think that I changed my perspective on my epistemic position with respect to  $p$  between  $t^1$  and  $t^2$ . Thus, we can ignore the third horn of the trilemma. And since, at  $t^2$ , I

---

<sup>5</sup> Sosa calls this ‘alethic affirmation’ (p. 53), and, as he makes clear (pp. 180-82), alethic affirmation requires a moderately high credence in the relevant proposition, but it does not require that one already believes that this proposition is true.

didn't believe that I lacked sufficient epistemic reason to believe  $p$  (or hold any analogously dim view of my epistemic position with respect to  $p$ ), there seems no reason to suppose that the affirmative attitude I formed toward  $p$  at  $t^2$  must have been an instance of mere acceptance or something like that, and thus not a genuine belief. So we can ignore the second horn of the trilemma.<sup>6</sup> But this means that the conceptual argument gives you no reason to think that, when I affirmed  $p$ , I either failed to form a genuine belief or formed a genuine belief but not at will. The standard articulation of the conceptual argument gains no purchase in equipollent cases.

Of course, this articulation of the conceptual argument doesn't capture the full range of conceptual objections to belief at will, so it's important to notice that the remaining conceptual objections either overlook equipollent cases or rely on clear mistakes. Notice first that, on any interpretation of the slogan 'belief aims at truth' where it's plausible that belief *does* aim at truth, there is no reason to deny that my affirmative attitude toward  $p$  aims at truth. Throughout the scenario that we are considering, I think that I have good evidence for  $p$  (evidence strong enough to put me in a position where I can rationally believe  $p$ ). I don't think that this evidence makes it absolutely certain that  $p$  is true, of course, or even that it rules out rationally suspending on  $p$ . But this is fine, since there's no way to articulate the idea that belief aims at truth where it's simultaneously plausible that belief *does* aim at truth and plausible that, because belief aims at truth, my attitude toward  $p$  couldn't be a genuine belief.<sup>7</sup> So even if Williams (1973), Buckaraff (2004), and others are right that belief aims at truth, this gives us no reason to think that my affirmative attitude toward  $p$  isn't a genuine belief.<sup>8</sup>

Second, there seems no reason to agree with Williams (*ibid*), Winters (1979), and many others that my belief in  $p$  couldn't have been formed at will unless it was formed without utilizing any considerations relevant to the truth of  $p$ .<sup>9</sup> Williams simply asserts that, in order to form a belief in  $p$  at will, one cannot utilize any considerations relevant to its truth (p. 148). Winters gives an argument for this claim, but her argument isn't convincing. On her view, my belief in  $p$  couldn't have been formed at will unless it was formed without utilizing any considerations relevant to the truth of  $p$  "because the philosophical controversy about belief at will concerns whether the model of free basic action can be applied to belief acquisition" (p. 244). Perhaps *one* philosophical controversy about belief at will concerns whether the model of free basic action can be

---

<sup>6</sup> For similar reasons, Margaret Schmitt's (2015: 37-40) argument that it's impossible to believe  $p$  while thinking that on balance your evidence supports  $\neg p$  doesn't apply to my affirmative attitude toward  $p$ .

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Chan 2013.

<sup>8</sup> See Booth 2015 for further discussion of related issues.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Nickel (2010) and Matthias Steup (2017) defend similar points.

applied to belief acquisition, but Hieronymi (2009) has given good reasons for doubting that *the* philosophical controversy about belief at will concerns whether the model of free basic action can be applied to belief acquisition. Moreover, even if Winters is right about the locus of the controversy, it's still unclear why we should agree with her that, in order to form a belief in  $p$  at will, one must form this belief without utilizing any considerations relevant to the truth of  $p$  (Peels 2015). Perhaps Winters thinks that, if a person *does* utilize any considerations relevant to its truth, then she will be either compelled to believe  $p$ , compelled to disbelieve  $p$ , or compelled to suspend on  $p$ . But if so, Winters seems wrong. If I think the considerations relevant to the truth of  $p$  rule out disbelief while leaving belief and suspension rationally permissible, I might be psychologically incapable of *disbelieving*  $p$ . But even so, it doesn't follow that I am either compelled to believe  $p$  or compelled to suspend on  $p$ , since it doesn't follow that my evidence either pulls me more strongly toward belief than suspension or pulls me more strongly toward suspension than belief. Since utilizing considerations relevant to the truth of  $p$  might take me out of position to disbelieve  $p$  without putting me in a position where I am either compelled to believe  $p$  or compelled to suspend on  $p$ , the core idea behind Winter's argument against doxastic voluntarism seems baseless.<sup>10</sup>

Third, the conclusion that I formed my belief in  $p$  at will is consistent with the idea endorsed by Alston (1989), Buckareff (2006), McHugh (2014), Booth (2015), and many others that belief at will requires forming an intention to believe and then forming a belief on the basis of this intention, in such a way that the intention causes the belief. If this idea is right, then most cases of belief are arguably not cases of belief at will, since there is rarely any intention detectable between considering the evidence for and against some proposition and forming a belief in that proposition.<sup>11</sup> But even if belief at will requires forming an intention to believe and then forming a belief on the basis of this intention, why think I couldn't have formed a belief in  $p$  on the basis of an intention to believe  $p$ ?<sup>12</sup> If I found my evidence for  $p$  compelling, it wouldn't be surprising if I went straight from considering the evidence to forming the belief, without ever forming any intention to believe. For in this case, says Buckareff, I wouldn't *need* to form the intention (2006: 108). But first, even if Buckareff is right, it doesn't follow that my belief wasn't based on any intention to believe. It only follows that my belief didn't *need* to be based

---

<sup>10</sup> Notice that, just as  $\Box(p \vee q)$  doesn't entail  $(\Box p \vee \Box q)$ , that I'm compelled to either believe  $p$  or suspend on  $p$  doesn't entail that either I'm compelled to believe  $p$  or I'm compelled to suspend on  $p$ . Thus, even if my psychological inability to disbelieve  $p$  entails that I'm compelled to either believe  $p$  or suspend on  $p$ , it doesn't follow that either I'm compelled to believe  $p$  or I'm compelled to suspend on  $p$ .

<sup>11</sup> Though see Steup 2017. More on this below.

<sup>12</sup> McHugh (2014) gives an inductive psychological argument for this claim similar to Alston's, which I will discuss at length below.

on an intention to believe. And second, we're talking about an equipollent case, and I *didn't* find my evidence compelling. My evidence didn't trigger whatever cognitive process automatically produces belief when I think the evidence is decisive, so perhaps, in this case, I *couldn't* have formed the belief without forming the intention. Either way, if I told you both that I formed an intention to believe  $p$  and that I believed  $p$  on the basis of this intention, nothing about the idea that belief at will requires forming a belief on the basis of an intention to believe would suggest that I must be mistaken.<sup>13</sup>

Fourth, Pamela Hieronymi's (2006) claim one can't form a belief in  $p$  on the basis of extrinsic reasons isn't relevant to my belief in  $p$ . By stipulative definition (p. 51),  $R$  is an extrinsic reason with respect to my belief in  $p$  just in case it bears on the question whether I should believe  $p$  without bearing on the question whether  $p$  is true. By hypothesis, I based my belief in  $p$  on the fact that the Bills were ahead 10 to 0 with only two minutes left to play, and this fact clearly bears on the question whether  $p$  is true. It's evidence that  $p$  is true. It's not overwhelming evidence, nor even (by my lights) evidence that makes belief rationally obligatory. But it's evidence nonetheless. So it's not an extrinsic reason for me to believe  $p$ , and Hieronymi's arguments don't apply.

Fifth, Kieran Setiya's (2008) argument against belief at will *does* apply to my belief in  $p$ , but in the only passage relevant to equipollent cases, Setiya doesn't address the question whether belief at will is *possible*. Instead, he only addresses the question whether it might be epistemically *rational*.<sup>14</sup> Here is the relevant passage.

What about the other possibility, in which we are so far unconvinced by evidence we take to permit but not require the belief that  $p$ ? Here it would be an epistemic error to form the belief that  $p$  intentionally, even if we could. To do so is to let our intention to form the belief that  $p$  tip the epistemic balance, even when it is quite irrelevant to the truth of that belief. Conceived as intentional action, the exercise of judgment in cases of mere permission would be epistemically irrational. (p. 49)

I confess, I don't know what Setiya means when he says "tip the epistemic balance," unless he means that I couldn't have formed a belief in  $p$  without counting my intention to form this belief as evidence that  $p$  is true. But if this is what he means, I see literally no

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Buckareff, "at least in my own case, I am never aware of an intention formed on the basis of my deliberations about what to believe. I just form a doxastic attitude in response to the epistemic reasons (*i.e.* alethic considerations). If this is the case, then coming to believe is not an action. If it is not an action, then it fails to be under the direct voluntary control of any agent" (p. 108). This argument is clearly invalid. That Buckareff forms his doxastic attitudes some way doesn't entail that belief at will is impossible. It doesn't even entail that *Buckareff* can't do it. At most, it only entails that Buckareff *doesn't* do it. (This point will be relevant in §2, where I discuss psychological arguments against belief at will.)

<sup>14</sup> What I'm calling 'belief at will' is close to what Setiya calls 'believing intentionally.' What Setiya calls 'belief at will' is very different than what I'm calling 'belief at will,' since the thing he calls 'belief at will' requires that I believe  $p$  and simultaneously believe that I am epistemically unjustified or irrational in believing  $p$ .

reason to agree with him. More important, even if this *is* how I must have formed my belief, it only follows that my belief is epistemically defective in some way. Perhaps it's epistemically irrational, as Setiya says. Or perhaps it's epistemically rational but doxastically unjustified (which seems more plausible). Whatever the verdict, that my belief is epistemically defective in some way doesn't suggest that I couldn't have formed it at will. So Setiya's argument gives us little reason to deny that I formed my belief in  $p$  at will.

Sixth, the claim that I formed my belief in  $p$  at will isn't threatened by Rik Peels' (2014) idea that, if I really did form my belief in  $p$  at will, then I could have formed my belief in  $p$  at a much later time than the time at which I formed my intention to believe  $p$ . On Peels' view (p. 699), being able to  $\phi$  at will entails that, even after I form an intention to  $\phi$ , I can still control *when* I  $\phi$ . But first, this isn't obvious. As Steup points out (2017: 20), it seems doubtful that it's an *essential* feature of my being able to  $\phi$  at will that, after I form an intention to  $\phi$ , I can still control when I  $\phi$ . Second, even if my believing  $p$  at will does entail that, after I form an intention to believe  $p$ , I can still control when I form my belief in  $p$ , it's unclear why we should think that, as soon as I form my intention to believe  $p$ , I lose control of when I form my belief in  $p$ . Suppose I form an intention to finish my beer and *then* believe  $p$ . This intention would be weird, perhaps even inexplicable. But I've had a lot of beer, so I'm probably forming many strange intentions. And since I don't find my evidence for  $p$  compelling, it's unclear why I couldn't do exactly what I intend to do: believe  $p$  *after* I've finished my beer. In any case, Peels' timing objection isn't persuasive.

Seventh, the considerations that Robert Audi (2015) successfully leverages against many purported cases of belief at will are largely irrelevant to my belief in  $p$ , and where these considerations *are* relevant, they are consistent with the conclusion that I formed my belief at will.<sup>15</sup> On Audi's view (p. 29), if I form a belief in  $p$  by actively suppressing my inclination to believe  $p$  and then relaxing so that this inclination takes over and belief comes rushing in, my resulting belief will not be an instance of belief at will, since it will just be an instance of compelled belief. I'm happy to agree with Audi on this point. But of course, this is not how I formed my belief in  $p$ . Audi also notes that, if a person causes herself to form a belief in  $p$  in a way analogous to the way I might cause myself to blush (*e.g.*, by thinking about the time my friends caught me driving a Prius, which then causes me to blush), then she didn't exercise *direct* voluntary control over the formation of her

---

<sup>15</sup> To my mind, Audi successfully undermines the arguments for doxastic voluntarism given by Steup (2000), Ginet (2001), Shah (2002), Ryan (2003), Weatherson (2008), and others. (Though plausibly, some of these authors aren't defending exactly the view that I'm calling 'doxastic voluntarism.')

belief (p. 30). But again, there seems no reason to think that this is how I formed my belief.<sup>16</sup> Granted, it's possible to *accept*  $p$  without forming a belief in  $p$ , as Audi points out (p. 32). But again, this isn't relevant to the case we are considering. Nobody is claiming that, because it's *not* possible to accept  $p$  without believing  $p$ , I must have formed my belief in  $p$  at will.

The same point holds for Audi's comment that, if your forming a belief in  $p$  just amounts to that belief's being formed in you—the way a cold beer's forming a damp ring on a table just amounts to a damp ring's being formed on that table—then your belief wasn't formed at will (p. 39). Again, Audi seems right. But again, the comment needn't apply. In the case we are considering, there is no reason to suppose that this is how I formed my belief. If I found the evidence compelling, it might be plausible that this is how I formed it. But again, I didn't find the evidence compelling. By my lights, it supported belief and suspension equally well, and I didn't feel pulled toward one any more than I felt pulled toward the other. According to another passage from Audi (pp. 39-40), there can be practical reasons for *causing* oneself to form a belief, but there cannot be practical reasons for *forming* a belief. If Audi is right, then he has identified an important difference between belief and action.<sup>17</sup> But even so, this remark needn't bear on the case we are considering. My reason for forming my belief in  $p$  might just be that the Bills were ahead 10 to 0 with only two minutes left to play, and this is clearly an epistemic reason for forming my belief in  $p$ , since (again) it's evidence that  $p$  is true. The case we are considering seems to skirt Audi's worries.<sup>18</sup>

There are other contributors to the literature who argue that belief at will is conceptually impossible, but the above authors give us a representative sample, and it should be clear enough at this point why the concept of belief doesn't rule out belief at will. The basic problem is this: if I'm in an equipollent case with respect to some proposition  $p$ , intend to form a belief in  $p$ , and consequently affirm  $p$  in the sense familiar from Sosa (2015), there seems no reason why I must have been compelled (by my evidence or anything else) to form this affirmative attitude toward  $p$ , there seems no

---

<sup>16</sup> The same point applies to the idea—defended by Peels (2014: 693) and others—that I don't exercise direct voluntary control over my belief in  $p$  if I cause myself to believe  $p$  by influencing my higher order beliefs.

<sup>17</sup> Though see Rinard (2015).

<sup>18</sup> At one point Audi says that freedom to chose between two actions (say, studying at the library or studying at home) is a broadly causal matter whereas the freedom I have to chose between forming a belief in  $p$  and continuing to suspend on  $p$  is a normative matter (p. 40). Granted, if my total evidence really does support belief and suspension equally well, then I *am* free in this normative sense. But it doesn't follow that I'm *not* free in the causal sense. More important, even if I'm not free in the normative sense (because, for example, I'm wrong and permissive situations aren't possible), I might still be free in the causal sense. If, by my lights, the evidence supports belief and suspension equally well, there is no reason short of determinism why I couldn't be free in the causal sense, even if I'm not free in the normative sense. (More on this in §3.)

reason why this affirmative attitude toward  $p$  couldn't have been caused by my intention to believe  $p$ , and there seems no reason why this affirmative attitude toward  $p$  couldn't satisfy all of the necessary conditions for being a belief in  $p$ .<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Against the Psychological Argument

So the best conceptual arguments in the literature fall well short of showing that belief at will isn't possible. Even if belief at will is conceptually possible, however, it doesn't follow that we can actually do it. Perhaps, as Curley (1975), Alston (1989), Nottelmann (2006), Booth (2015), and many others think, something about the specific psychological limitations of our species prevents us from forming beliefs at will.

According to all these authors, even if belief at will is conceptually possible, when we try to form beliefs at will, we see that we lack the ability. Curley thinks that, if we had this capacity, then we would be able to form beliefs at will whenever "we literally have no evidence at all one way or the other" (p. 178). To make his point, Curley asks us to consider the proposition that it rained on Jupiter three hours ago, and then says this: "[B]elieve it. Or, if you prefer, disbelieve it. Or do both, in turn. Did anything happen? Unless your experience is very unlike mine, I suspect not. Indeed, I fear that if my salvation depended on my either believing or disbelieving this proposition, I should be damned" (ibid). For my own part, I have excellent evidence that it *didn't* rain on Jupiter three hours ago. I know that Jupiter's average surface temperature is 234 degrees below zero, and I also know that that's too cold for rain. But no matter; Curley could have used a different proposition. He could have used the proposition that the number of mice is even, for example. And with respect to *this* proposition, I'm just like Curley. Try as I might, I can't form the belief that the number of mice is even, or form the belief that the number of mice isn't even, since I have no idea how many mice there are. I'm compelled to suspend. In fact, like Curley, every time I consider any proposition and realize that I literally have no evidence one way or another, I find that I'm compelled to suspend.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Objection: My forming a belief in  $p$  was a *consequence* of my forming this affirmative attitude toward  $p$ , and thus, by forming this affirmative attitude toward  $p$ , I merely *caused* myself to believe  $p$ . Reply: Since there seems no reason why my affirmative attitude toward  $p$  couldn't satisfy all of the necessary conditions for being a belief, this objection is even less plausible than the already implausible claim that, by signing the declaration of war, the president didn't start the war, but instead merely caused herself to start the war (cf. Davidson 2002, pp. 57-8 and Nottelmann 2006, p. 566).

<sup>20</sup> On Steup's view (2017: 12-13), even though I'm compelled to suspend on the proposition that the number of mice is even, I'm still suspending intentionally. This is because (a) my suspension on this proposition enjoys my endorsement, and (b) if I decided to stop suspending on this proposition, I could. Now, as I've noted, I *can't* stop suspending on this proposition. But on Steup's view (ibid), this is because I can't *decide* to stop suspending. On his view, there's no relevant difference between my current inability to stop suspending and my

But of course, this is all beside the point, since in the case we have been considering I think that my evidence is quite good. So nothing relevant to the main argument of this paper follows from Curley's examples. Similar points apply to Alston's examples where the proposition in question is obviously false (p. 264), his examples where the proposition in question is obviously true (*ibid*), and his examples where the proposition in question is (by one's own lights) exactly as probable as its negation (pp. 266-7). These examples are all irrelevant, since, by my lights, the proposition that the Bills will win isn't obviously false, obviously true, or exactly as probable as its negation.

Now, Alston *does* consider propositions that aren't obviously false, obviously true, or exactly as probable as their negations, but his comments about these propositions seem susceptible to straightforward empirical refutation. After asking us to consider cases where some philosophical or religious view seems more plausible than all of its competitors, Alston says this.

The most obvious suggestion is that although in these cases the supporting considerations are seen as less conclusive, here too the belief follows automatically, without intervention by the will, from the way things seem at the moment to the subject. In the cases of (subjective) certainty belief is determined by that sense of certainty, or, alternatively, by what leads to it, the sensory experience or whatever; in the cases of (subjective) uncertainty belief is still determined by what plays an analogous role, the sense that one alternative is more likely than the others, or by what leads to that. Thus when our philosopher or religious seeker "decides" to embrace theism or the identity theory, what has happened is that at that moment this position seems more likely to be true, seems to have weightier considerations in its favor, than any envisaged alternative. Hence *S* is, at that moment, no more able to accept atheism or epiphenomenalism instead, than he would be if theism or the identity theory seemed obviously and indubitably true. (p. 266)

The central idea in this argument—that belief always follows automatically when someone finds a philosophical or religious view more likely to be true than its

---

current inability to plunge my pencil into my hand (p. 7). In both cases, I can't  $\phi$  because I can't decide to  $\phi$ , and I can't decide to  $\phi$  because I don't have any reason to  $\phi$ —yet it's still true that, *if* I decided to  $\phi$ , I could do it.

I agree with a lot in Steup's paper—we're defending complementary views—but I side with Curley and other involuntarists on this point. As it happens, I actually have very good reason to stop suspending on the proposition that the number of mice is even: namely, Steup thinks that I can stop suspending if I decide to stop suspending, and I want to know whether he's right. Indeed, to test Steup's view, I *did* decide to stop suspending, but nothing happened. In contrast, when I decided to give myself a hard pinch a moment ago—just to test the hypothesis that I could do it if I decided to do it—something *did* happen: I gave myself a hard pinch. It hurt but it was worth it, since I really wanted to know whether I could do it. This suggests that my suspending on the proposition that the number of mice is even is relevantly analogous to my digesting the food in my stomach (to use Alston's example), and not relevantly analogous to my automatically applying the brakes when I see a red light (to use Steup's example). So Curley seems right about cases where I literally have no evidence one way or another.

competitors—might accurately describe Alston’s mental life, but it misdescribes my own. I find virtue epistemology more plausible than its competitors, for example, but I don’t believe it or any of its competitors. I’m agnostic about the correct theory of knowledge. In fact, because there are many competing theories of knowledge, and because virtue epistemology only strikes me as *slightly* more plausible than all of its competitors, my credence distribution over the various theories of knowledge is relatively flat, and the probability that I assign to *every* theory of knowledge is below 0.5. So, even though I find virtue epistemology more plausible than its competitors, my credence in virtue epistemology is still below 0.5, and I do not believe that virtue epistemology is true.<sup>21</sup> Now perhaps I’m missing Alston’s point. Perhaps he just means that, if someone finds a philosophical or religious view more plausible than its *negation* (rather than its competitors), then belief follows automatically. But even this is false. I am agnostic about the pragmatic encroachment debate, for example, even though I find interest-relativism slightly more plausible than its negation.

Of course, in these kinds of cases, Alston might say that I’m compelled to *suspend judgment*, and thus that I’m agreeing with the spirit of his view if not its letter. But even if I can’t help but suspend judgment in these cases, there is still an important difference between these cases and equipollent cases. Again, in the main case that we have been considering, I don’t just find *p* more plausible than its negation; I find *p* considerably more plausible than its negation. I find *p* so plausible that I think I’m rationally permitted to believe it. Of course, I don’t find *p* so much more plausible than its negation that I find myself compelled to believe it. But I also don’t find myself compelled to suspend. So none of Alston’s arguments explicitly addresses this case.<sup>22</sup>

Since analogous considerations apply to the rest of the psychological arguments in the literature, I see insufficient empirical evidence that, even though it’s conceptually possible to believe at will, humans can’t do it. Now of course, Curley, Alston, and others might be right that *they* can’t do it. Any number of things might prevent an individual from forming beliefs at will. But even if they can’t do it, there’s a glaring asymmetry between arguments that say *I can believe at will, so somebody can*, and arguments that say *I can’t believe at will, so nobody can*. Given this asymmetry and the failure of *conceptual*

---

<sup>21</sup> I believe it’s more likely to be true than any of its competitors, but of course this isn’t the same thing as believing that it *is* true.

<sup>22</sup> Objection: From the fact that I don’t *find* myself either compelled to suspend or compelled to believe, it doesn’t follow that I’m *not* either compelled to suspend or compelled to believe. After all, I might be mistaken about whether I’m compelled. Reply: Right. I might be mistaken about whether I’m compelled. After all, for all I’ve said, determinism is true and unbeknownst to me *everything* I do is compelled. But my goal in this paper isn’t to eliminate every possibility in which I didn’t form my belief at will. Instead, it’s simply to demonstrate that the arguments for doxastic involuntarism are much weaker than most epistemologists believe.

arguments against belief at will, the claim that it's still *psychologically* impossible to believe at will seems unmotivated.

### 3. *Rational* Belief at Will?

If the arguments in the previous sections succeed, then doxastic involuntarism isn't nearly as plausible as its current widespread acceptance suggests. Even if these arguments do succeed, however, we might wonder whether belief at will could ever be *epistemically rational*. According to Kurt Sylvan (2016), belief at will is possible, but epistemically rational belief at will isn't. On his view, we can believe at will when we think that we're in a permissive situation with respect to the relevant proposition; because permissive situations aren't possible, however, we'll always be *wrong* when we think that we're in one; as a consequence, epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible (p. 1659). Moreover, according to Sylvan, because epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible, our ability to believe at will wouldn't "constitute a significant form of doxastic control" (ibid). If Sylvan is right, then the upshot is presumably that the arguments in §§1-2 don't establish anything interesting, even if they work, since they don't lend any credibility to rational belief at will.

I find Sylvan's arguments against permissive situations unconvincing, but for present purposes I will assume that they work. Given this assumption, is Sylvan correct that belief at will can't be epistemically rational, or correct that, because belief at will can't be epistemically rational, our ability to believe at will wouldn't constitute a significant form of doxastic control? I want to say 'no.' Perhaps our ability to believe at will would be *more* significant if exercising it didn't require being epistemically irrational, but this doesn't entail that it's *not* significant. And in any case, the nature of belief is interesting in its own right. Even if epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible, and even if this entails that our ability to believe at will doesn't constitute a significant form of doxastic control, we learn something interesting relevant to the nature of belief by learning that the best arguments for doxastic involuntarism all fail. So, even if epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible, it doesn't follow *just from this* that the arguments in §§1-2 don't establish anything interesting.

This is the first thing to say in response to Sylvan's conclusion. The more important point, however, is that it's hard to see why Sylvan thinks that a belief formed at will must be epistemically irrational. In the situation we have been considering, I think that I am rationally permitted suspend on  $p$  and simultaneously rationally permitted believe  $p$ . On Sylvan's view, I'm wrong about this; permissive situations aren't possible, so either I'm not rationally permitted to suspend on  $p$  or I'm not rationally permitted to believe  $p$ . It's

consistent with Sylvan's view that I am rationally required to believe  $p$ , so assume that this is true. Then it follows that, if I form a belief in  $p$  at will, I form at will exactly the doxastic attitude that epistemic rationality requires that I form. So why does Sylvan think that, because permissive situations aren't possible, epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible either?

Sylvan doesn't say, but perhaps he's thinking something like this: *If my total evidence makes belief in  $p$  rationally obligatory and I don't find myself compelled to believe  $p$ , then there's something wrong with me cognitively, and I'm epistemically irrational in something like Plantinga's proper functionalist sense (1993: 136-7). On the other hand, if my total evidence makes belief in  $p$  rationally obligatory and I **do** find myself compelled to believe  $p$ , then I can't form a belief in  $p$  at will. So, either way, we don't have a case of epistemically rational belief at will.* So far as I can tell, something like this is the best reason for agreeing with Sylvan that, if permissive situations aren't possible, then epistemically rational belief at will isn't possible either. But the first premise of this argument seems mistaken. If my being rationally required to believe  $p$  were *luminous*, in Williamson's (2000) sense, then it might be plausible that I'm not functioning properly if my total evidence makes belief in  $p$  rationally obligatory and I don't feel compelled to believe  $p$ . But it's doubtful that my being rationally required to believe  $p$  is luminous (ibid: ch. 4), and I see no other reason to accept the first premise of this argument.

As a consequence, I see no reason why we should agree with Sylvan that, because permissive situations aren't possible, any belief formed at will would be epistemically irrational.<sup>23</sup> And of course, if Sylvan is wrong and permissive situations *are* possible, then it's even more plausible that believing  $p$  at will might be epistemically rational. Either way, I see no way to argue that, while belief at will is possible when the relevant person thinks she's in a permissive situation, *epistemically rational* belief at will is still impossible. The upshot is that, if belief at will is possible, there seems no reason why it couldn't be epistemically rational. And even if it couldn't be epistemically rational, it seems dogmatic to continue insisting that it's impossible. Either way, doxastic involuntarism should lose its grip on contemporary epistemology.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Sylvan only means to suggest that, because permissive situations aren't possible, in any situation where belief at will is epistemically rational, suspension of judgment at will would be epistemically irrational. If so, then I agree with him. But of course, it doesn't follow from *this* that the ability to believe at will doesn't "constitute a significant form of doxastic control" (p. 1659). Whether you have direct voluntary control over forming the doxastic attitude required by your evidence seems clearly significant.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks to audiences at Pepperdine University and the University of Colorado, and especially to Robert Audi, Tomas Bogardus, Matthias Steup, and Robert Pasnau for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

## References

- Alston, William (1989), "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 2: pp. 257-99.
- Audi, Robert (2015), "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief," in *Rational Belief: Structure, Grounds, and Intellectual Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Booth, Anthony Robert (2007), "Doxastic Voluntarism and Self-Deception," *Disputatio*, Vol. 2, No. 22: pp. 115-30.
- (2015), "Belief is Contingently Involuntary," *Ratio*, DOI: 10.1111/rati.12126.
- Buckareff, Andrei (2004), "Acceptance and Deciding to Believe," *Journal of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 29: pp. 173-90.
- (2006), "Doxastic Decisions and Controlling Belief," *Acta Analytica*, Vol. 21, No. 1: pp. 102-114.
- Chan, Timothy (2013), *The Aim of Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Cohen, Stewart (2016), "Reasons to Believe and Reasons to Act," *Episteme*, Vol. 13, No. 4: pp. 427-38.
- Conee, Earl and Richard Feldman (2004), *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Curley, Edmond (1975), "Descartes, Spinoza, and the Ethics of Belief," in *Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation*, M. Mandelbaum and E. Freeman eds. (LaSalle: Open Court).
- Davidson, Donald (2002), *Essays on Actions and Events: Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Elgin, Catherine (2010), "Persistent Disagreement," in *Disagreement*, R. Feldman and T. Warfield eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Friedman, Jane (2013), "Suspended Judgment," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 162: pp. 165-81.
- Ginet, Carl (2001), "Deciding to Believe," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty*, M. Steup ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Hieronymi, Pamela (2006), "Controlling Attitudes," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 87: pp. 45-74.
- (2009), "Believing at Will," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 35: pp. 149-87.
- McHugh, Conor (2011), "What Do We Aim at When We Believe?," *Dialectica*, Vol. 65, No. 3: pp. 369-92.
- (2014), "Exercising Doxastic Freedom," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 88, No. 1: pp. 1-37.
- Nickel, Philip (2010), "Voluntary Belief on a Reasonable Basis," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 81, No. 2: pp. 312-34.
- Nottelmann, Nikolaj (2006), "The Analogy Argument for Doxastic Involuntarism," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 131: pp. 559-82.
- Reisner, Andrew (2013), "Leaps of Knowledge," in *The Aim of Belief*, ed. T. Chan (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Rinard, Susanna (2015), "Against the New Evidentialists," *Philosophical Issues*, Vol. 25: pp. 208-223.
- Ryan, Sharon (2003), "Doxastic Compatibilism and the Ethics of Belief," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 114: pp. 47-79.
- Peels, Rik (2014), "Against Doxastic Compatibilism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 89, No. 3: pp. 679-702.
- (2015), "Believing at Will is Possible," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 93, No. 3: pp. 524-41.
- Plantinga, Alvin (1993), *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Schmitt, Margaret (2015), "Freedom and (Theoretical) Reason," *Synthese*, Vol. 192, No. 1: pp. 25-41.
- Scott-Kakures, Dion (1994), "On Belief and the Captivity of the Will," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 54, No. 1: pp. 77-103.

- Setiya, Kieran (2008), "Believing at Will," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 32: pp. 36-52.
- Shah, Nishi (2002), "Clearing Space for Doxastic Voluntarism," *The Monist*, Vol. 85, No. 3: pp. 436-45.
- Sosa, Ernest (2010), "Value Matters in Epistemology," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 107, No. 4: pp. 167-90.
- (2015), *Judgment and Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Steup, Matthias (2000), "Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology," *Acta Analytica*, Vol. 15, No. 1: pp. 25-56.
- (2017), "Believing Intentionally," *Synthese*, DOI: 10.1007/s11229-015-0780-7.
- Sylvan, Kurt (2016), "The Illusion of Discretion," *Synthese*, Vol. 193: pp. 1635-65.
- Turri, John, David Rose, and Wesley Buckwalter (forthcoming), "Choosing and Refusing: Doxastic Voluntarism and Folk Psychology."
- Weatherson, Brian (2008), "Deontology and Descartes's Demon," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 105, No. 9: pp. 540-69.
- Williams, Bernard (1973), *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Williamson, Timothy (2000), *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Winters, Barbara (1979), "Believing at Will," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 76, No. 5: pp. 243-56.