

Beyond Believing Badly

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## **Beyond Believing Badly**

Sam Wilkinson

### RESUMEN

En este artículo examino el punto de vista propuesto por Gregory Currie y sus colaboradores de que las ilusiones engañosas no son creencias, puesto que sus objetos violan normas constitutivas del creer. Esta posición se sustenta en dos diferentes tipos de compromiso: uno sobre cómo son los que sufren ilusiones engañosas (qué conducta tienen, cómo razonan, etc.). Otro sobre las normas constitutivas de la creencia. Me concentro en el último de ellos y sugiero que algunas de las normas que Currie cita como constitutivas (a saber las que “van contracorriente”) no deberían ser consideradas como tales. Sólo las normas que van a favor de corriente deberían considerarse como constitutivas. Pero algunas personas que sufren ilusiones engañosas parecen romper también estas últimas, de modo que aún es sostenible una posición antidoxástica, si bien de una forma diferente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *creencia, ilusiones engañosas, normas, racionalidad, patología.*

### ABSTRACT

I examine the view, put forward by Gregory Currie and collaborators, that delusions are not beliefs because delusional subjects break constitutive norms of believing. This hinges on two different types of commitment: one about 'how delusional patients are (how they behave, reason etc.) and one about the constitutive norms of belief. I focus on the latter, and suggest that some of the norms that Currie cites as constitutive (namely “upstream” ones) should not be considered such. Only downstream norms should be taken to be constitutive. But some delusional patients appear to break these too, so an anti-doxastic position is still tenable, but of a different form.

KEY WORDS: *Belief, Delusion, Norms, Rationality, Pathology.*

### INTRODUCTION

In certain rare psychopathological contexts, patients appear to believe very strange things. Here is a short sample of the sorts of things they might say.

1. "The man who lives with me and who looks just like my father is not my father."
2. "I am being followed by an old friend in constantly changing disguises."
3. "The person I see in the mirror is not me."

These patients are suffering from delusions (in particular, delusions of misidentification). Delusions raise not only descriptive questions, but also normative ones. One can ask: what is going on in the delusional patient? How does the subject come to be delusional? But one can also ask: what norms are broken by delusional patients? One debate within the delusions literature that relies on answers to both questions concerns the doxastic status of delusions: are they beliefs, or are they not? Following Bayne and Pacherie (2005), call those who claim that they are beliefs "doxasticists", and those who deny that they are beliefs "anti-doxasticists".<sup>1</sup>

This debate raises a particular instance of a general problem, namely, the problem of distinguishing between *evaluative* and *constitutive* norms; in other words, distinguishing between doing  $\phi$  badly or well (evaluative) versus doing  $\phi$  and not doing  $\phi$  at all (constitutive). In this instance,  $\phi$ -ing is believing and the anti-doxasticist thinks that the delusional subject is breaking constitutive norms of belief. Unlike the doxasticist, who thinks that delusion is bad believing, the anti-doxasticist thinks that something has gone so badly wrong that the subject has gone *beyond* believing badly. In spite of her utterances, the delusional subject doesn't actually *believe* the content of her delusion.

In this paper, I hope to shed some light on the constitutive norms of belief, using the anti-doxasticist position as a springboard. I will not criticise the anti-doxasticist position *per se* but it will emerge that some of the norms that are taken by current anti-doxasticists to be constitutive are (merely) evaluative. In other words, some of the characteristics of delusions that anti-doxasticists take to tell against a doxastic position, do not in fact tell against it. However, there remain other norm-breaking characteristics that are highly problematic for the doxasticist.

I will proceed as follows. I will start by introducing the distinction between evaluative and constitutive norms, and explain why some theorists might be tempted to say that delusional subjects break constitutive norms. I will then examine belief, first drawing attention to observable features of belief, and then explain these features by appeal to an essential feature of belief called *transparency*. On one understanding of the oft-made claim that "belief aims at truth", it amounts to transparency. Finally, I introduce the distinction between upstream and downstream considerations, and claim that only downstream considerations are relevant to constitutive norms of believing. Since

some delusional patients exhibit downstream idiosyncrasies (as well as, perhaps by definition, upstream ones), a different form of anti-doxasticism is tenable.

### I. EVALUATIVE AND CONSTITUTIVE NORMS

To get a grasp of the distinction between evaluative and constitutive norms, consider an analogy with chess (a real favourite among philosophers). If, during a game of chess, I move so that my queen can be captured by my opponent with impunity (and as a result she gains an enormous material advantage and goes on to win the game) that is a *bad* chess move. An evaluative norm (the norm of playing chess *well*) is broken. If I move my bishop like a rook, however, that's not a chess move at all, let alone a bad one. A constitutive norm (dictated by the rules of chess) is thereby broken. The doxasticist will say that delusion is like the former. The anti-doxasticist will say that it's like the latter.

This analogy with chess, however, has limited utility and it is crucial to locate exactly where the analogy breaks down. Belief is like chess in that it is subject to norms, some of the norms will be essential to what belief is, others will feature in evaluations of beliefs. In both cases, the constitutive norms being adhered to are a precondition of the evaluative norms coming into play. A move obviously can't be a bad chess move if it's not a chess move at all. And the same goes for belief. But the parallel stops there. Disanalogies, for example, include the fact that chess is a game, the playing of which is utterly deliberate. A move in chess is an *action*, rendered intelligible by beliefs and goals (by informational and motivational states). Given this fact about chess, you can deliberately play badly, if your goal is to do so. As we will see, it is not obvious that this can be said of belief (at least not directly).

### II. WHY MIGHT DELUSIONS NOT BE BELIEFS?

The main proponents of the anti-doxastic position are Gregory Currie and his collaborators [Currie (2000), Currie and Jureidini (2001), Currie and Ravenscroft (2002)]. Their view comprises of two claims: a negative and a positive claim. The negative claim tells us that delusions aren't beliefs (Anti-doxasticism). The positive claim tells us what delusions are, namely, they are imaginings that are mistaken for beliefs (what Bayne and Pacherie (2005) call "The Metacognitive View"). Here I will focus exclusively on the negative claim.

Currie thinks that delusions ought not to be counted as beliefs because, although they have the superficial trappings of belief, namely sincere asser-

tion (and perhaps some behaviour that is in keeping with the delusional assertion), they lack the right kind of functional role. Since, according to Currie, delusions

- (i) are not supported by evidence in their initial formation,
- (ii) do not fully guide action, reasoning, or elicit the appropriate emotional responses,
- (iii) are not open to review in the face of contrary evidence,

they should not be counted as beliefs at all, and, as mentioned, should be counted rather as imaginings that are mistaken for beliefs. As Currie and Jureidini put it:

Imaginings seem just the right things to play the role of delusional thoughts; it is of their nature to co-exist with the beliefs they contradict, to leave their possessors unwilling to resolve the inconsistency, and to be immune to conventional appeals to reason and evidence [Currie and Jureidini (2001), p. 160].

The claim that delusions aren't beliefs, can, in principle, be opposed on the basis of two different kinds of considerations:

- A. Conceptual – you can disagree with the constitutive norms of belief that are put forward by Currie and co.
- B. Empirical – you can disagree that, as a matter of fact, patients infringe these norms.

B-type considerations would ideally require a fully fleshed-out story concerning the aetiology of the delusion and the behavioural dispositions of the deluded subject. Note also that a critique could clearly make use of both A and B-type considerations, both disagreeing with the norms, and with the portrayal of the deluded subject.

People with doxastic leanings often respond with B-type considerations. To (i) they respond that delusions may be based on evidence of a sort, namely on strange experiences (e.g. lack of affective response to familiar faces in the case of Capgras delusion, cf. Maher (1974), Ellis and Young (1990)).<sup>2</sup> In response to (ii) they claim that, although delusions often fail to generate the kinds of actions and emotional responses one might expect, the Capgras delusion (for example) leads to violence against the impostor in 18% of cases, and sometimes of a particularly gruesome sort.<sup>3</sup> Granted, it is much harder to explain away (iii) since the delusions are (and some, including the

DSM, say *by definition*) highly resistant to correction in the face of contrary evidence.<sup>4</sup> However, perhaps one can claim that the experiential evidence in favour of the delusion is so strong that this resistance to correction is not irrational since the experience trumps all possible testimony; we just don't know how weird these subjects' experiences are (see Reimer 2009). But in any case, these are all descriptive, B-type, issues about what these patients are actually like. Although towards the end we will be concerned with B-type considerations (focusing in particular on the Capgras delusion) we will focus mainly on A-type considerations, viz. on the constitutive norms of belief. Putting aside for the moment what these patients are like, what would *any* case have to be like in order to qualify, or fail to qualify, as a case of belief?

One philosopher, Lisa Bortolotti (2009), has recently devoted an entire book to defending doxasticism, and her argument has focused on the kinds of considerations that interest us, namely, A-type considerations. She claims that all of (i), (ii) and (iii) are too strict, and that many states that we are happy to call beliefs infringe them. Her tactic is to present the anti-doxasticist with a dilemma: if we are to deny belief-status to delusions, then we are going to have to do the same for many states that, intuitively, we are happy to call beliefs. Note that an implicit premise in this argument is that denying belief-status to these non-pathological states – states that we are, on an everyday basis, happy to call beliefs – is too great a theoretical cost. It is this implicit assumption, that rests on a conservatism with regard to the concept of belief, that I find unappealing in Bortolotti's approach.

When analyzing a concept, the use of a term, one can either look at current usage and try to stick to it (perhaps regimenting it slightly, e.g. for consistency), or one can be revisionist, claiming that this is strictly speaking how the term should be used regardless of what current everyday usage happens to be like. Now, when should one tend towards conservatism and when should one tend towards revisionism when analyzing the use of a term? Well, if the term is a natural-kind term, or of fundamental theoretical importance, there are very good reasons (and precedents) for revisionism. My view is that belief, in the most interesting philosophical sense, is something both theoretically interesting and fundamental. (It may also be a natural kind, but I don't want, or need, to get into that). As a result, we should be revisionists about belief. This means (and in direct opposition to Bortolotti's approach) that it may turn out that many of the times that we say that (perfectly healthy) people are believing they are not, strictly speaking, believing. For example, this may be the case in the relatively common instances when people fail to act in accordance with their professed beliefs. I think that this is a perfectly acceptable, or even attractive, consequence of a philosophical theory of belief. We may use the word "belief" in a rough-and-ready way (and indeed non-philosophers barely use "belief" at all, and when they do, they use it in a very

different way to the way we philosophers use it) but that doesn't mean that belief, in the philosophically interesting sense, is a rough-and-ready phenomenon.

So, which of (i), (ii) and (iii) would rule out *any* subject's being a believer? When I ask for the constitutive norms of chess, namely, the rules of chess, if you know them, you can just dive right in and tell them to me. The rules of chess are plain for all to see (if you can be bothered to learn them). You can't do the same with belief. If, for example, you tell me that a constitutive norm of belief is that it must be based on evidence, then that is not somehow self-evident or obvious: you need to explain *why*. Belief, whatever it may be, is a phenomenon that pre-exists our theorising about it. No-one invented it and wrote down the rules for all to see (and no-one subsequently *learnt* the rules). In this paper our primary aim is to examine what these rules might look like.

### III. INTRODUCING BELIEF

What is belief in its most basic form? What kinds of entities are at least candidates for being capable of believing? One intuitive response is to say that organisms are candidate believers. Not every organism is capable of believing, but the claim that organisms believe and, say, rocks don't is at least a start. Then we might want to narrow this down a bit further to organisms that autonomously move, namely to animals. We might want to narrow it down even further (for example, to animals with language, or those that are capable of commitments of various kinds) but let's reflect at this point. The autonomous motion of animals is goal-directed, and also navigates environmental features in the service of those goals. Ramsey (1931) put belief precisely in these terms. He called beliefs "the maps whereby we steer". This idea of beliefs as maps that help us through the world in the service of our goals is fundamental. In particular, it picks out an opposition between the phenomenon of belief (*viz.* the map) and the phenomenon of desire (*viz.* the goal). The former involves *taking* the world to be a certain way, whereas the latter involves *wanting* it to be a certain way.<sup>5</sup> This primitive notion of belief is implicated in all autonomous goal-directed behaviour. In other words, action presupposes a commitment to how the world is. Consider the fact that a being that is totally ignorant (*i.e.* that has no information, rather than false information) cannot be an agent.

So, belief involves taking the world to be a certain way. What are the observable features of this phenomenon? First we will look at the observable features of belief, and then we will see what it is about the nature of belief that explains these features. I will, in particular, claim that the striking features of belief are explained by its essential "transparency". This is some-

times expressed as the claim that belief essentially “aims at truth”, but as we shall see, it is crucial to understand this claim properly.

#### IV. BELIEF’S OBSERVABLE FEATURES: INVOLUNTARY, PASSIVE AND SCENARIO-INDEPENDENT

A commonly (if not universally) accepted feature of belief is that it is involuntary. Beliefs and their formation (namely, judgments) are not responsive to practical reasons. If I offer you a million pounds to believe or judge that I am ten feet tall, it is clearly very much in your interest to have a million pounds, and yet you cannot bring yourself to believe that I am ten feet tall. This is sometimes called the “no rewards principle”. Voluntary behaviour (viz. action) on the other hand is paradigmatically (even trivially) responsive to such practical reasons, such motivations and rewards. Judging is not; therefore it is plausibly not voluntary.

One may wonder about the modal strength of this involuntariness. Does it just *happen* that we humans aren’t capable of believing at will? Is judging like sneezing in this respect? We can imagine a world where we can sneeze at will; can we do the same for belief? Or is believing at will something that is not possible for *any* subject in *any* possible world? Is it, in other words, ruled out by the very concept of belief? I would say that the answer to this is a resounding *yes*; belief is *necessarily* involuntary. The only way of making a belief or judgement that *p* voluntarily occur, is to make *p* true (to make the state of affairs obtain). I can voluntarily bring about the belief that my left hand is raised, but only by raising my left hand. This is illustrative precisely because we are now in the realm of *action* and not belief. The belief itself wasn’t voluntary: the action was. Even a deity who could make any state of affairs obtain at will cannot *believe* at will: her making things happen at will are instances of action and not belief (albeit not bodily action, but a mysterious willful agency nonetheless).

Another closely related feature of belief is *passivity*. Belief is something that happens to you. It is not something that you *do*.<sup>6</sup> Although essentially a passive process, you can influence the focus of this process. In the perceptual case, you can close your eyes or look away (as when your football team has conceded a penalty). Similarly, in the non-perceptual case, you can direct your epistemic efforts (or simply your attention) elsewhere. You can also do so in such a way that various deontic norms are infringed (as in the case of scientific misconduct). In a similar way, there can be motivated biases, active effects on ways of interpreting evidence, but belief *itself* is a passive phenomenon.

Contrast these two cases:

- (a) Mrs. White has strong evidence that her son is guilty of murder. But she knows that she'll be happy if he's not guilty. And so she resolves to believe that her son is not guilty, with the result that she believes that he is not guilty.
- (b) Mrs. White has strong evidence that her son is guilty of murder. But she very much wants her son to not be guilty, and this desire causes her to interpret the evidence in a biased way ("That knife must have been planted by someone else. He is not capable of murder."), with the result that she believes that her son is not guilty.

Whereas (a) doesn't seem possible, (b) seems not only possible, but commonplace.

A third important feature of belief is that it is scenario-independent. It is crucial to see what I mean by scenario. Beliefs can and should (but don't always) change when relevant evidence comes to light, and this is not what I mean by "scenario". By "scenario" I mean the practical life-setting, where one can stipulate that there is no change in evidence (as far as the subject is concerned). For example, one scenario might be when a lawyer is at home talking to her husband, and another might be when she is in the law court defending her client.

It is vitally important to distinguish when a belief *ought not* to change, from when it *cannot* change. The scenario-independence constraint is of the latter, stronger, kind. A lawyer can behave as if she thinks her defendant is innocent (her job demands that she does so), but could express to her husband her belief that he is guilty. It is not just that her belief ought not to change from scenario to scenario, it's rather that it *can't*. If it seems like it is, what we are talking about here is not belief, but rather something like "acceptance". She believes that her defendant is guilty, even when she is in court, trying to defend him. But as part of her job, she must "accept" (viz. deliberately treat as true) the proposition that her defendant is innocent. (see Cohen (1992) for a thorough treatment of acceptance). Unlike belief, acceptance can be voluntary and deliberate, and therefore can be mustered up when the practical setting (viz. "scenario") demands it.

However, this does not mean that beliefs *can't* change, or arise, as a result of non-evidential considerations. They certainly can, as we saw with the example of the mother and her accused son, and in many circumstances it is plausible to say that, epistemically at least, they *ought not* to. Rather the point is that when there is behaviour that betrays something belief-like (accepting, hypothesizing, supposing), but it is smoothly and voluntarily turned on or off independently of evidence (like the lawyer's defence), what we are talking about is something other than belief.

So, to sum up, belief/judgment is involuntary, passive and scenario-independent. But *why* is it thus?

#### V. BELIEF'S TRANSPARENT NATURE

Belief has these features, but in virtue of what does it have them? One rather platitudinous answer is: in virtue of its nature. Fleshing out this nature, however, is not platitudinous at all. Two ways of expressing more or less the same things are to say i) that belief is transparent, ii) that it aims at truth. I prefer the first way of speaking because I find it less ambiguous, and less metaphorical. However, when the ambiguities are ironed out, and the metaphor is properly understood, the second way of speaking (*viz.* aiming at truth) is perfectly correct. I will put the nature of belief in terms of transparency first, and then warn against various erroneous ways of understanding the "truth-aim" claim. The sense in which the truth-aim claim is true falls out as an obvious consequence of transparency.

Beliefs and judgements are transparent. They are, by their nature, tied to how the world is as far as the organism is concerned. As Gareth Evans pointed out: "I get myself in a position to answer the question whether I believe that *p* by putting into operation whatever procedure I have for answering the question whether *p*" [Evans (1982), p. 225]. If you discover that *p* isn't the case, you *ipso facto* cannot believe that *p*. As Evans puts it, belief is "directed outwards". This is obvious for perceptual beliefs, but it also extends to non-perceptual beliefs. If you ask me whether I believe that Paris is the capital of France, I ask myself whether Paris is the capital of France, not whether I believe it.<sup>7</sup> I examine the world, not myself. Belief is directed outwards, namely at the state of affairs that would make it true or accurate (this can obviously include propositions about one's body, and one's "self").

So, in what sense does this amount to the claim that belief, by its nature, aims at truth? Well, let's start by highlighting what *cannot* be meant by this.

What cannot be meant by this is that the believer, in believing, literally, directly, tries to have beliefs that are true. This can't be true because, as we saw, belief is involuntary and passive. The believer can't aim at anything in believing, or at least not *directly*. Perhaps what is meant is something more *regulative*. So, to use an analogy, I can't directly control my cholesterol, but I can aim at lowering my cholesterol indirectly by observing a cholesterol-lowering diet. Similarly, with belief, I can't directly try to believe things that are true, but I can aim at truth indirectly by observing good epistemic practice, by not, for example, interpreting evidence in a biased way etc. However, although this is now a coherent way of understanding the truth-aim claim as something that the *subject* aims for, namely, she aims for it in a regulative way, we now lose the *constitutive* force of the claim. And the claim is sup-

posed to tell us what is constitutive of belief. What we now have is rather an evaluative, rather than constitutive norm. Biased evidence gathering, failure to “regulate” for truth, leads to *bad* believing, but not to failure to believe altogether. (This regulative truth-aiming may, however, be a constitutive norm for a more active evidence-gathering process, like “inquiry”. In a strong, but not outlandish, sense of “inquiry”, somebody who treats evidence in a biased way may not be inquiring badly, but failing to inquire at all.)

What we might say, however, is that it is *constitutive* of belief to have certain *evaluative* norms. This seems undeniable. But then it is not constitutive that the believer aim at truth, but rather that she *ought* to. We can see it all the more clearly when we compare it to other cognitive mental states (by “cognitive” I mean as opposed to “conative”: the world is represented as being a certain way rather than to be made that way). Consider Currie’s own contrasting cognitive state of choice, viz. imagining. An imagining that misrepresents the world, or is not grounded in evidence, is not “bad” in any way. One can say that this is because imagining is under no obligation to “aim at truth”. I prefer to say that it is because it is not transparent, it is not “directed outwards.” As Velleman (2000) puts it, unlike imagining, “belief is the state that goes right or wrong by being true or false”. What this seems to suggest is that it is not the believer who aims at truth, but in some metaphorical sense, the *state itself*, which by its very nature “aims at truth” (and that in turn constitutively entails an evaluative norm on the part of the believer). All this simply amounts to claiming that belief is transparent.

One final ambiguity that needs ironing out, which is present, both in talk of “transparency” and “aiming at the truth”, is whether we are talking about objective, *de facto* transparency or truth-aiming, or merely *as far as the subject is concerned*. I think it is fairly obvious that we mean the latter. If we meant the former, we would have to deny belief-status to mistakes (faultless, unlucky, mistakes as well as biases). And yet, mistakes get all their import from being doxastic, from being beliefs, from guiding actions (which amounts to them being transparent). False beliefs are still beliefs. Irrational beliefs are still beliefs. So, to clarify, when we say that belief aims at truth, we mean truth as far as the subject is concerned. When we say that it is transparent, directed at the world, at reality, we mean the world, reality, as far as the subject is concerned. To use Ramsey’s metaphor, we want to know what the subject’s map is like. An inaccurate map, even a systematically inaccurate one, may spell bad news for the individual who uses it, but it is still a map.

## VI. UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM CONSIDERATIONS

Let us return to the functional idiosyncracies (viz. i-iii above) that Currie pointed out. These divide into “upstream” and “downstream” issues. That

delusions are not supported by evidence in their initial formation, and not responsive to review in the face of contrary evidence, are upstream issues (in the sense that in attempting to correct the delusion, you are providing *input* for judgement). That they don't guide action or subsequent reasoning, or elicit emotional responses, is a downstream issue (they are consequences of the subject's beliefs).

Given what we have said about belief, that it is involuntary and transparent, we might well question whether any upstream issues constitute belief-precluding norm-breaking. Although it seems plausible that upstream issues answer questions about whether something is good or bad believing, e.g. questions of epistemic rationality regarding whether it is rational or justified, it is less clear whether they are relevant to whether it is to qualify as belief at all. In other words, these upstream issues about sensitivity to evidence describe the functional role of *good* belief, not belief *tout court*. Interestingly, the two different ways of understanding the truth-aim claim, namely, whether it is the believer or the state that aims at truth, divide into upstream and downstream considerations (and, as we saw, the former is only evaluative, whereas the latter is constitutive). If, by aiming at truth, we mean that the believer, in believing, aims at truth in a regulative way (e.g. by observing good epistemic practice) then this is clearly an upstream consideration insofar as it tells us about the process that leads to the belief. As we'd expect, this would tell us if the belief is a good or bad one, but a belief that is poorly regulated for truth may be unjustified, have a higher likelihood of being false, but it is still a belief. If, on the other hand, we mean that the state aims at truth, although this sounds like an upstream consideration, it is actually a downstream consideration, since, once the mental state is formed, it (the state, not the subject) "aims at truth" insofar as it represents what the subject takes to be the case, how the subject takes things to stand in the world. This will mean that the subject is disposed to use the belief, to trade on the world being the way it is represented as being, in going about her actions (i.e. is disposed to use it as a "map"). If the subject weren't disposed to act as if a certain proposition were true (or state of affairs obtained), then, whatever mental state had that content, it would not be transparent or truth-aiming. That's why imaginings aren't transparent and don't aim at truth. I can imagine something without taking it to be the case. The same, obviously, cannot be said of belief.

One can coherently suggest that what interests us in determining whether something is a case of believing is whether an organism takes the world to be a certain way, and if it does, what that way is and how best to characterize it. It is not strictly relevant (although it is clearly an interesting question) how it is that the organism came to have this belief. Indeed the idea of a mad scientist manipulating your brain so as to "implant" a certain belief is not *prima facie* ruled out by our concept of belief. This would be a prime case of irrational (or perhaps non-rational, depending on how you cash out

epistemic irrationality) belief, but nonetheless it would count as belief, for example, if it were acted upon in the right way. One might think that one doesn't need farfetched thought experiments to illustrate this point: the brain-washing of extremist cults, for example, is behavior-driving in the worst ways (e.g. suicide bombing) and gives rise to strongly held beliefs, but the belief-formation process is far from rational.

The consequence that this has for the question of whether delusions are beliefs is clear. If we want to claim that delusional patients don't really believe what they assert, it is not to resistance in the face of contradictory evidence, or to lack of supporting evidence during formation, that we should turn. This tells us whether they are believing *badly* (and actually presupposes that they are *believing*). Rather, we need to show that the deluded patient is, all things considered, failing to act or reason in accordance with her professed beliefs. Only then should we say that she doesn't truly believe what she appears to. The deluded patient would then be (but for very different reasons) like a boss who claims that he believes in the equality of the sexes, but then goes on to employ a demonstrably sexist hiring policy. In short, we need to find downstream idiosyncrasies, such as a disparity between action and utterance. The fact that delusions are unsupported (viz. i) and are resistant to counter-evidence (viz. iii) cannot serve to rob them of belief-status.

However, one might protest that verbal action is action nonetheless. Asserting that *p* is one way of manifesting one's belief that *p*, one way of acting as if *p* were true. To this a plausible response is to say, as the saying goes, that "actions speak louder than words". Physical actions trump verbal actions because they are more of a commitment, and hence more revealing of how the subject takes things to stand in the world. If I merely *say*, "The bridge over the ravine is safe", I don't personally risk anything if I am wrong (although I may be misinforming somebody else). If I manifest that belief by crossing the bridge, I am risking rather a lot. In a related manner, verbal action is a symbolic proxy, casting distance between the asserter and the fact asserted. I can say one thing and physically act contrary to what I have said. I can claim the bridge is safe, but refuse to use it (even though, we may suppose, it is much in my interest to get across it). But I cannot physically act in two opposing ways; I cannot perform an action whose success depends on one and the same state of affairs both obtaining and not obtaining.<sup>8</sup> To put it another way, when people act in ways that conflict with their professed beliefs, we take their actions to betray what they "really" believe.

Of course, extracting belief attributions in any given situation, according to the view that actions betray what is believed, requires us to have a good, clear, theory of what action is. Most relevantly, we need to distinguish action from *mere behavior* (e.g. heartbeats, reflexes, autonomic responses, and the like). This is a notoriously tricky task, but it is important to see that we don't need to settle this here. All we need to note is that it seems clear that

the perplexing features of the delusional patient aren't behavioral: they are *agentive*. What is perplexing is not that the patient is somehow prevented from calling the police to look for her real parents, it's that she doesn't *want* to, displays a lack of *concern*, and so on. In other words, borderline cases can be tricky [cf. Gendler on "alief" and belief (2008)], but this is not a borderline case.

## VII. TOWARDS A DIFFERENT ANTI-DOXASTICISM

So, even if one has worries about whether the upstream functional idiosyncrasies (i) and (iii) rule out belief, the anti-doxastic challenge is still on strong footing with (ii) because Capgras patients never worry about the welfare or whereabouts of the replaced loved one(s) (see Davies and Coltheart (2000) for review). Just as it is partly constitutive, for example, of your believing that something is deadly poisonous that you should refrain from eating it if you want to stay alive, so it seems to be partly constitutive of your believing that a loved one has been replaced by an impostor that you should be concerned for the welfare or whereabouts of the loved one in question. One might say that if you are not concerned then it either can't be a "loved one" that you believe is missing (and here there are two possibilities: either you don't really believe that it is *that person* that's missing, or you can't have *loved* them very much), or you can't really *believe* that they are missing (i.e. it is some other attitude that falls short of belief, like imagining). In other words, you can locate the deviance at the level either of content or of attitude. Currie does the latter and that is why he proposes that delusions are actually imaginings mistaken by the subject for beliefs (his "metacognitive view").<sup>9</sup> It would be nice to see attempts made at the former strategy. The debate has traditionally asked: "Are delusions beliefs?" By asking this there have been a number of implicit assumptions, the clearest of these being that there is a discrete, belief-like state that has the same content as the patient's delusional assertions (which is also taken to match up with the standard clinical characterization of the delusion: "that a loved one has been replaced by an identical-looking impostor"). The challenge is then to ascertain whether the state in question has the right functional role to qualify as belief.

However, if instead of asking, "Is this state a belief?", we ask "What is believed?", "How does the patient take things to stand in the world?" (or in Lewis/Stalnaker terminology, "What possible world does that delusional subject take herself to be inhabiting?"), we get to the heart of the problem without implicitly subscribing to any presuppositions about what believing is and what underpins it. The problem with delusional patients is not only that we find it hard to understand how it is that they come to make the claims that they do (these upstream considerations are what make us call them delu-

sional) we find it hard to grasp how they actually take the world to be. They claim one thing, and act in a way that is not consistent with what they claim. The question of whether a fixed representational state, “the delusion”, is a belief or not is secondary, and comes with a great deal of theoretical baggage.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Obviously there is a huge range of delusions that occur in different contexts, have different contents and different aetiologies, so it is *prima facie* perfectly plausible to be a doxasticist about one kind of delusion and an anti-doxasticist about another.

<sup>2</sup> Maher hypothesizes that “delusional belief is not being held “in the face of evidence strong enough to destroy it,” but is being held because evidence is strong enough to support it.” [Maher (1974), p.99].

<sup>3</sup> De Pauw and Szulecka (1988) tell of a young man who decapitated his stepfather, taking him to be a robot, in order to look for batteries and microfilm inside his head.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed this feature of Capgras, has prompted a so-called “two-factor” treatment that appeals to a reasoning bias in addition to the anomalous experience [Davies, Coltheart, Langdon and Breen (2001)].

<sup>5</sup> This opposition between belief and desire has sometimes been put in terms of direction of fit: belief has a mind-to-world direction of fit, whereas desire has a world-to-mind direction of fit. It is in the nature of belief to fit with how things stand in the world, and it is in the nature of desire to motivate one to behave in such a way that will make the world fit with it.

<sup>6</sup> By passive, I mean non-agentive, I don’t mean that there is no contribution from the organism, nor even that there is no contribution from motoric parts of the organism. This is not intended to be, for example, remotely incompatible with so-called enactivism.

<sup>7</sup> Although in everyday speech, people talk about “beliefs” as the inconclusively supported commitments that help to define them as a person: e.g. “I stand by my beliefs”. This is clearly not what I mean. People may well be asking questions about themselves when asked what they “believe” in these cases.

<sup>8</sup> I can be hesitant, but here I unambiguously manifest the belief that the bridge might break. Whether epistemic modals are built into the content or the attitude is a contentious issue that I won’t get into here. For a neat and plausible treatment of epistemic modals within the possible worlds framework that I favor, see Yalcin (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Egan (2009) recently takes a similar approach, claiming that the delusional patient is in an in-between state of bimagining. I find this general approach, by both Egan and Currie, to be categorically confused. Imagination and belief aren’t even the

same kind of thing. For a start, belief seems to be a dispositional state, whereas imagination is episodic. Thereby the question “is this belief or imagining?” is ill-posed. I can come to believe things, update my belief-set, on the basis of imaginative episodes.

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