CONTRA RELIABILISM

The reliability of a belief-producing process is a matter of how likely it is that the process will produce beliefs that are true. The term reliabilism may be used to refer to any position that makes this idea of reliability central to the explication of some important epistemic concept. I know of three such positions that appeal to some epistemologists: (1) a reliabilist account of what makes a belief justified, (2) a reliabilist account of what makes a true belief knowledge, and (3) a reliabilist answer to the question of the fourth condition, the question of what must be added to justified true belief to make knowledge. Obviously these are alternative positions rather than parts of a single coherent whole. I think of the first as reliabilism's boldest stand, the second as the position to which it may retreat when the first is found untenable, and the third as its last refuge. I will criticize only the first two positions.¹

1. Reliabilism as an account of justification.

Let us elaborate a little on what is meant by the reliability of a belief-producing process. A belief-producing process is a certain kind of process that produces beliefs having a certain kind of content. The kind of process is reliable just in case the beliefs of that kind that it produces are true a sufficiently high proportion of the time, or would be true a sufficiently high proportion of the time if the process were to occur frequently: it has a sufficiently strong propensity to produce true rather than false beliefs.

The boldest claim a reliabilist can make about the justification of belief is this: for a belief to be justified is for it to be produced by a reliable process. This simple statement needs some serious refining. For any particular belief, there will be some kind to which the producing process belongs and some kind to which the content belongs such that it will be of no significance at all that most (or all) or few (or none) of the beliefs of that kind that are (or would be) produced by processes of that kind are true. The kinds can, for example, be specified so narrowly that the production of the particular belief in question will be the only case in point that ever would occur. So the reliabilist must revise the claim to read: for a belief to be justified is for there to be a relevant kind to which the belief content belongs and a relevant kind of process by which it was produced such that that kind
of process reliably produces true beliefs of that kind. It will not be trivial to specify criteria of relevance that are both plausible and informative, but let us assume that it can be done.

However this refinement is worked out, it will be unable to avoid certain clear counterexamples to this boldest of the reliabilist claims, cases where it is clear that what justifies the belief is not what causes it (and also, though this is not essential to the counterexample, where it is unlikely that the belief is produced by any relevant kind of reliable process). Suppose, for example, that it is a mild day in Ithaca but the weather forecast I hear on the radio says that a mass of cold air will move into the region tomorrow. As soon as I hear that, I have, we may suppose, good reason to believe that it will be colder in Ithaca tomorrow; and if I were caused to believe it by having that reason then my belief would be produced by a (relevant) reliable process. But let us suppose that I irrationally refuse to believe it until my Aunt Hattie tells me that she feels in her joints that it will be colder tomorrow. She often makes that sort of prediction and I always believe her, even if I have no other supporting evidence. She is right about as often as she is wrong. So the (relevant) process by which my belief is actually caused is not reliable. Nevertheless my belief is justified. I do have justification for it, namely, my justified belief as to what the Weather Bureau said. Thus I am protected from reproof for holding the belief, though I may deserve reproof for something else, namely, being moved to hold it by Hattie’s prediction and not by the Weather Bureau’s. I could rebut any reproof for my holding the belief by pointing out that I do have justification for it. My recognizing the evidential value of the Weather Bureau’s forecast is quite compatible with my (irrationally) refusing to be moved to belief by that evidence.

It may help to see the matter right here to consider an analogous situation with respect to the justification of action. Suppose you and I are eating at a restaurant where the chocolate mousse is beyond compare. We both order it. After eating my portion I finish off the major part of your portion while you are away from the table. This is something I decided to do as soon as you announced your temporary departure. But as you stood up you said to me, “Please finish my mousse: I can’t possibly eat any more!” So I am perfectly justified in finishing your mousse. You have given me permission and I am aware of this fact and its moral relevance to my action. Still it is not because of this justification I have for it that I perform the action. I would have done it anyway. So there is something here for which I may be censured, namely, what I found to be sufficient reason to act: my glutinous craving would have led me to eat your mousse even without your permission. But something I should not be blamed for is: eating your mouse. Given that I am aware of your permission and its justifying force, that action is above reproach and it would be unjust to inflict on me any of the penalties that should attach to eating someone else’s chocolate mousse without their permission.

So the justification of an action or of a belief is not necessarily a matter of how it was actually caused. But the reliabilist can admit this and retreat to the claim that the justification of a belief is a matter either of how it is actually caused or of how it could have been caused in the circumstances actually present. The reliabilist can say that a belief is justified just in case either it is actually caused by a (relevant) reliable process or there are conditions present such that if they had caused the belief then it would have been caused by a reliable process. This is still too crude a formulation of the position but it is refined enough for my purposes. The criticisms I have to make are directed at the basic idea.

Let us note, first, that there are cases that show that the reliabilist condition fails to be sufficient for justified belief. A leading reliabilist has himself described such a case. Alvin Goldman, in his paper, “What Is Justified Belief?”, 1 says (p. 6):

Suppose that p is the proposition expressed by the sentence ‘I am in brain-state B’, where B is shorthand for a certain highly specific neural state-description. Further suppose it is a nomological truth that anyone in brain-state B will ipso facto believe he is in brain-state B.

The reliabilist position would appear to dictate that any such belief is justified, for the process producing it could not be more reliable: it is a causal law about the kind of brain-state that it always produces in its subject a belief that he or she is in a brain-state of that kind. But as Goldman himself goes on to say (p. 6), the claim that any such belief is justified

is clearly false. We can readily imagine circumstances in which a person goes into brain-state B and therefore has the belief in question, though this belief is by no means justified. For example, we can imagine that a brain-surgeon operating on S artificially induces brain-state B. This results . . . in S’s suddenly believing . . . that he is in brain-state B, without any relevant antecedent beliefs [my emphasis]. We would hardly say, in such a case, that S’s belief that he is in brain-state B is justified.

Consider another example. Suppose some film-makers have made a film that has a happy ending although things look very bad for the protagonists most of the way through. These same film-makers had earlier put out a tragic film that had greatly upset many viewers. They want viewers of the new film not to suffer undue anxiety and so they introduce into the film the subliminal message, “Don’t worry! Everything turns out all right.”
That is, this message appears on the screen at frequent intervals but for such a short period each time that it can be perceived only subliminally: the viewers see it but do not know they are seeing it. Their seeing it causes them to have the belief that things will turn out all right, without their knowing how they are caused to have it. It is clear that, in these circumstances, this belief is not justified. Yet the process that produced it may be extremely reliable.

Surprisingly, none of Goldman’s refinements on his reliabilist condition for justified belief (in “What Is Justified Belief?”) rules out these counter examples to its sufficiency. The reliabilist might hope that a plausible account of what makes a kind of process relevant, if and when such an account is achieved, will rule that the reliable processes in these examples are not of relevant kinds. But it is hard to see how any non-ad-hoc account could do this without also ruling out kinds that should be ruled in. It would not do, for example, to say that the reliable belief-producing process must be some sort of inference from other beliefs, since there are justified beliefs that are not arrived at by inference. There is, then, reason to suspect that the reliabilist condition cannot be made both plausible and sufficient for justified belief.

As far as being necessary is concerned, the reliabilist condition fails no matter how relevance of the kind of process is defined. Consider, for instance, the possibility of a world run by a Cartesian demon who causes its other inhabitants to have sets of perceptual and personal-memory impressions that, though as rich and coherent as yours and mine, are all illusory. The perceptual beliefs and personal-memory beliefs that these hapless subjects are led to have are as justified as any of our current perceptual or memory beliefs. Yet the sort of process by which they are caused has no tendency to cause true beliefs. (It is the case even in this demon-world, however, that the processes producing perceptual and personal-memory beliefs seem reliable to the inhabitants of that world, as gauged by the purported beliefs and justified inferences therefrom. The principles of belief-justification should be such that in any possible world the beliefs they justify support the thesis that following the principles generally leads to true beliefs—even in possible worlds where that thesis is false).

Goldman does not appear to consider just this sort of counter-example but in another connection he makes a move that may seem to help here. He says that the reliability of a kind of belief producing process is to be gauged in the actual world: if the perceptual and memory processes that cause beliefs in the demon-world are reliable in our world then the beliefs they produce in the demon-world are justified even though those same processes are not reliable in that world. Well, let us allow reliabilism to make this ruling in its account of justification: we should assess reliability, and hence justifiedness, by actual-world standards even when considering non-actual worlds. But now, what about the inhabitants of non-actual worlds? How should they assess justifiedness of beliefs? By the same lights, their standards cannot be those of any world but their own. If ours must be actual-world standards then theirs must be their-world standards. Yet it seems quite clear that the inhabitants of the demon-world should regard their perceptual and memory beliefs as justified—just as much so as we should—even though they are not produced by processes that are reliable in their world. If our world is run by a Cartesian demon, we are still justified in our present perceptual and memory beliefs (or the coherent majority of them, at any rate).

2. Reliabilism as a non-justificationist account of knowledge.

Here the suggestion is that for a true belief to be knowledge it is not required that the subject have justification for the belief. It is necessary only that the belief be produced by a sufficiently reliable process. I shall not argue directly for my contrary view, that no unjustified belief can be knowledge however reliable the process by which it was produced. Rather I will rebut the various arguments I know of for the reliabilist position and against the requirement of justification.

It is difficult to find cases in the real world in which a person lacks justification for a belief that has been produced by a reliable process (Why is this?) but it is not hard to imagine them. We described two such cases in the preceding section (pp. 176–77) and here is another. Suppose that S, residing in Finland, is frequently caused to have accurate beliefs as to the current temperature in degrees Celsius in Sydney, Australia. But S herself does not know how this happens: she just suddenly finds herself with the conviction, for example, that it is now plus five degrees Celsius in Sydney. She knows nothing of the process by which these beliefs are produced and can offer no reasons for holding them, no evidence in favor of them. But, we may suppose, the process actually producing these beliefs is quite reliable. (It is unimportant exactly what this process is, but we might imagine some sort of electronic link between a thermometer in Sydney and S’s brain.) My intuition is that, when S is caused in this way to have a true belief that the temperature in Sydney is +5°C, S does not know this if she herself has no good reason for believing it. The reliabilist position says to the contrary that, since S’s belief is produced by a process that can be counted on always to produce true beliefs, S does know what the temperature is in Sydney.

The reliabilist might be tempted to try to get us to see S’s belief as a case of knowledge by suggesting that the case is analogous to ordinary
perceptual knowledge of the proximate environment. If we allow that I
know that there is a light before me when I am caused via my organs of sight
to believe that there is a light before me then, the reliabilist might say, why
not allow that S knows in an analogous way that the temperature in Sydney
is +5°C when S is caused, via the Sydney-temperature-detecting-apparatus
attached to her brain, to have that belief? Why not see her as having a
special sort of perceptual or quasi-perceptual knowledge?

Well, in perceptual knowledge—properly so called—there are facts
directly accessible to the knower that justify the perceptual belief (without
entailing its truth or that it was produced by a reliable process): facts about
S’s sense experience and how the perceptual belief it prompts coheres with
those prompted by the rest of S’s current and remembered sense experience.
(The justification need not be by inference from these facts.) S’s belief
about the temperature in Sydney would need to be made similar in this
respect in order to be a candidate for quasi-perceptual knowledge. But then,
even if it could thereby be made a successful candidate, it would no longer
support the reliabilist position now under consideration. For then S’s true
belief is a candidate for knowledge, not merely because of its being reliably
produced, but also because of the directly accessible facts constituting S’s
quasi-perceptual justification for the belief.4

An argument that does try to support the position that S’s reliably pro-
duced beliefs are knowledge even if they lack justification (whether quasi-
perceptual or other) is the following. Even if S does not know that her
beliefs have been reliably produced, someone else who does know this can
rely on S’s beliefs as a guide to the facts about the current temperature in
Sydney: she can use S’s beliefs as detectors of those facts. S’s beliefs con-
vey information to her and that is enough to make those beliefs knowledge.
If a person’s beliefs reliably convey information, in the way that a properly
functioning thermometer conveys information, if they are capable of giving
us knowledge, then they should be counted as knowledge.

I cannot see this. I cannot see how the fact that a person’s beliefs
enable others to have knowledge, through being reliable indicators of
something, can make those beliefs themselves knowledge. All sort of things
other than true beliefs can be reliable indicators and therefore bases or
enablers of knowledge; and being a basis or enabler of knowledge must be
distinguished from being knowledge, in true beliefs as in all other things.
A certain category of a person’s sheer guesses, or a certain category of her
false beliefs, might be reliable indicators of a certain category of facts, but
those guesses, or false beliefs, would not thereby be knowledge. I do not see
why true beliefs should be any different in this respect.

Another argument I have encountered points to the beliefs of animals
and very young children, many of which count as knowledge even though
none of them is either justified or unjustified (because animals and very
young children lack the very notion of justification). If justification is ir-
relevant to distinguishing their true beliefs that are knowledge from those
that are not, then, so the argument goes, it is generally irrelevant (and
something else is needed, viz., being produced by a reliable process). But
this does not follow. It must be admitted that animals and children do
counter the claim that no belief is knowledge unless it is justified. But they
do not counter the claim I subscribed to above, that no unjustified belief
can be knowledge, nor the claim that the concept of knowledge does require
justification in its primary application, namely to those of us who do have
the notion of a belief’s being justified or not. In the natural extension of the
concept to others who have beliefs this requirement must of course be
dropped.

William Alston gives an example that he claims shows the possibility of
knowledge without justification.4 S has “friends” who

convince him that for about half the time his sense experience is a radically
unreliable guide to his current situation, and that he cannot tell when this is the
case. They produce very impressive evidence. The totality of the evidence
available to S strongly supports their story. S . . . justifiably believes that his
senses are not to be trusted.

But there comes an occasion when S

is about to cross a street and seems to see a truck coming down the street. In fact
his perceptual belief-forming apparatus is working normally and a truck is com-
ing down the street. Forgetting his skepticism for a moment he waits for the
truck to pass before venturing into the street. He acquired a momentary perceptual
belief that a truck was coming down the street. . . . it seems clear that he did
acquire knowledge, . . . given the fact that his senses were functioning in a
perfectly reliable and normal fashion, and given the fact that he thereby felt cer-
tain that a truck was coming down the street, . . . is it not clear that S learned (ascer-
tain, found out) that a truck was coming, that he was cognizant of the
truck, that he received information about the state of affairs in the street?

Perhaps there is a sense in which S received the information that a
truck was coming down the street (roughly the same sense in which a video
recorder might receive that information), but it seems clear to me that S did
not learn, ascertain, find out, or come to know that truck. And this is
because S did lack adequate justification for believing it. Suppose we make
the example clearer in this respect. Suppose that the story S’s “friends” tell
him is true and that S even has memories of many similar sense-experiences
that his later experience gave him reason to think were illusory (or at least to mistrust). Now it is quite clear that S's total evidence does not make it likely that his visual experience of the truck is veridical, and it is quite clear to me that S therefore does not know that it is veridical or that he sees a truck bearing down on him.

Of course, if S could not help believing it then he cannot be reproached for doing so and is, in a sense, justified in doing so, though not rationally justified. And, whether or not S could help believing it, he was rationally justified in not taking any chances, in acting as if there were a truck bearing down on him. It may be easy here to fail to distinguish the truth that S is justified in the belief because he could not help it or is rationally justified in acting as if it were true from the falsehood that S knows what he believes. Consider an example in which such distracting truths are not present. Suppose that what S saw was something whose existence had no relevance for S's action (as far as S had any reason to believe)—say, a large blinking blue light way down the street—and suppose the sight of this neither justified nor compelled S's belief in its existence (supposing S had the same reasons as before for not trusting the general reliability of his senses) but S carelessly believed in it anyway. Does S know that he sees the blinking light?

3. How voluntary is belief?

The final argument I will discuss also tries to bolster the reliabilist position we are considering by undermining that of the justificationalist. It seeks to discredit the very notion of justification of belief. The argument fastens on the fact that the notion of a belief's being justified or not requires a voluntaristic conception of belief and it contends that this conception is inappropriate.\footnote{Be that as it may, in explaining how a belief can be well founded, one must consider how it was formed.}

Being justified in believing something is possible only if it is also possible for one to be unjustified in believing something. To be unjustified in believing something means that one ought not to believe it. And this can be true only if one can refrain from believing it, only if one has a choice between believing and not believing and makes the wrong choice. But, this argument claims, we never do have any such direct voluntary control over whether or not we believe something. It is conceptually impossible. Believing is just not the sort of thing that involves the will in the direct way that action does. One cannot just decide to believe or not to believe something and forthwith do so, in the way that one can just decide to act or not to act and forthwith do so. Thus, the argument concludes, the notion of a belief's being justified or unjustified is confused and illegitimate, implying that belief is more voluntary than it could conceivably be. Justification should be replaced in the analysis of knowledge with a reliability condition.

It seems to me that, on the contrary, belief is as voluntary as the notion of its being justified or unjustified requires. All that is needed is that direct voluntary control of one's belief should be possible, at least sometimes. If that is so, then we can interpret an ascription of unjustifiedness to a belief that the subject cannot help having as saying that, if the subject were able to help it, she ought not to hold the belief. And we do seem to think that cases of direct voluntary control of belief do actually occur. For we do sometimes reproach people for believing as they do and act as if we think that they should, and could, just stop doing so, and we swallow the voluntaristic implications with equanimity.

Of course we must recognize that many beliefs we have we could not just stop having forthwith and many we do not have we could not just adopt forthwith. I could not, for instance, just for the fun of it simply give up forthwith my belief that the earth has existed for many years past, or that I am married and a father, or that there is a chair in the room where I now sit. I could not simply adopt forthwith a belief in the contradictory of one of these propositions, or a belief that it is at this moment raining (not raining) in Sydney, or that there are (are not) at least thirty-five planets in our galaxy that have life on them. I cannot seriously raise the question of whether or not to do one of these things.

But just the same is true concerning many intentions for future action I have and many others I lack. I could not simply give up forthwith my intention to eat tomorrow or to teach my courses next semester or to have clothes on whenever I appear in public. I could not simply adopt forthwith an intention with content contradictory to one of these, or the intention to jump off a tall building tomorrow or to scream loudly the next time I am in a department meeting. And no one (I hope) is going to claim that intending future action is not a voluntary matter evaluable as justified or unjustified.

And no one should have trouble in recognizing that sometimes one does have a choice as to whether or not forthwith to adopt (or give up) a certain intention about one's future action. No one will see any absurdity in supposing that each of the following three alternatives is now in my power to embrace forthwith: decide to take the car to the office this afternoon, decide to walk to the office this afternoon, make no decision either way for the time being. But equally there is no absurdity in supposing that each of the following alternatives is now in my power to embrace forthwith: believe what Sally's confident memory says is the population of Syracuse, believe that her memory must be mistaken (for I seem to remember a much higher figure), believe nothing either way on the matter for the time being. In fact I frequently confront situations where conflicting evidence, or my own uncer-
tain memory, make both my believing something and my not believing it quite five options for me and where which I do certainly seems to me to be a matter of my simply deciding (perhaps after some deliberation) which to do.

I have heard it argued that belief is necessarily not a voluntary matter on the ground that it is impossible to believe something for the sake of an extrinsic reward. If someone were to convince you that he would give you a million dollars if only you start believing within the next ten minutes, and without any investigation, that exactly eight females were born in Tompkins County Hospital in the last 100 hours, you could not do it. But, the argument goes, it should be possible for you to do this if belief could be a voluntary sort of thing.

There are two serious problems with this argument. In the first place, it is far from clear that it is always impossible to believe something for the sake of an extrinsic reward. Suppose that, as I am deliberating whether to trust Sally’s memory or mine or neither regarding the population of Syracuse, she offers to bring me breakfast in bed if I decide to trust her memory. (She offers this out of an unselfish desire that I not miss out on a opportunity to believe a truth.) Might that not help me to decide to believe the figure she remembers? To be sure, if I did not already have a fairly strong evidential reason to believe it—her sincere testimony as to what she clearly remembers—if she had admittedly just guessed at the figure, then this sort of incentive (even one much greater) could not lead me to believe it. I do not think I could ever believe any such thing without some non-negligible evidential reason for doing so, and perhaps this is true of most people. But this may, for all I know, be only a contingent fact about us. I have yet to see a convincing argument that it is conceptually impossible that someone should manage to believe such a thing without having any evidence for it for the sake of an extrinsic reward. I think I can imagine observations that would be good evidence that such a thing had happened, at least as far as observations of another person can ever furnish good evidence as to what they believe. It would be amazingly irrational, but, as we all know, people do some amazingly irrational things.

But even if it is a conceptual necessity that we can believe something only when we have evidential reason to do so, this is quite compatible with my deciding to believe for the sake of an extrinsic reward. It means only that a situation in which my decision to believe is motivated in that way must be prepared by my already having some evidential reason which has not yet led me to believe.

Moreover, even if it were true that an extrinsic reward could never be even part of one’s motive for believing something, it would not follow that one can never be in a position where one can simply choose which of two or more incompatible alternative options to adopt in one’s belief. Compare the following two bits of inner monologue:

Should I give up my intention to refuse all invitations for the rest of the week, in light of how much I have accomplished in the last two days?

Should I give up my belief that Rex was lying, in light of Lois’s corroboration of his testimony?

In both cases I am deliberating a decision as to what my attitude will be towards a certain proposition and I expect my decision to determine my attitude equally directly in both cases.

It does seem clear that no option—whether it is for acting or intending or believing—can be live for me unless I have some reason to choose it. And certain sorts of things that can be reasons for adopting the attitude of believing cannot be reasons for adopting the attitude of intending, and vice versa. Possessing evidence that p is reason to believe that p but not reason to intend that p. Possessing evidence that if I act in such-and-such a way then certain results I desire will come about is reason to intend that I so act but not reason to believe that I will so act—except insofar as it is reason for intending it and intending it implies believing it: it is not reason for believing it independently of being reason for intending it. But this difference should not obscure from us the fundamental similarity in their relation to the will that there is between believing and intending: that an unchosen option is live for me only if I have some reason to choose it goes for intending as well as for believing; that conflicting options can all be live for me if I have reason to choose each of them and that when this happens (barring rather special circumstances) I can simply choose which option to adopt and forthwith do so: this goes for believing as well as for intending.

I conclude that belief is as voluntary as it needs to be for the concept of justification to apply (if intention is) and that there is no basis in the consideration of voluntariness for the suggestion that in the analysis of knowledge the notion of a belief’s being justified should give way to the notion of its being produced by a reliable process.

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NOTES

1. The third position is probably a successful refuge. A reliability account of the fourth condition seems to me as likely to work as any, although I think that an ac-
count in terms of a certain notion of undefeated justification is equally adequate. But that is a topic for another paper.

2. In the new second disjunct, something should be said about what it is for the conditions to be present and capable of causing the belief (without actually doing so). Alvin Goldman, in his paper, "The Internalist Conception of Justification," in French, Uehling, and Wettstein, eds., Studies in Epistemology, Midwest Studies in Philosophy V (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), pp. 27–51 (which is the best-developed reliabilist account of justification I know of), allows that the conditions by which a person is justified in changing his or her beliefs should be immediately accessible to the person, a point that seems clearly right to me. He suggests further, however, (and here is the reliabilism) that what makes a complete set of justification principles (which dictate what sorts of immediately accessible facts justify what sorts of beliefs) a correct complete set is just the fact that if one always followed those principles in forming one’s beliefs then (given the way the world is) one’s beliefs would be mostly correct. He argues that there is no other way that the principles of justification can be validated. For an argument in a contrary vein, that some complete set of principles of justification must be such that one needs only to understand them in order to be justified in accepting them (that is, they must be evident a priori), see my "The Justification of Belief: A Primer", in Ginet and Shoemaker eds., Knowledge and Mind (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 36.


4. I doubt that anything we should count as a perceptual or quasi-perceptual justification could be built into the example, given the content of S’s belief, which refers to a location specified by proper name rather than in terms of S’s point of view and to the Centigrade measure of temperature. A better example of a possible but non-actual kind of perceptual or quasi-perceptual justification would be the following: S is caused by varying intensities of magnetic field around her to have varying intensities of a special sort of sensation and is prompted by that sensation to believe that she feels varying intensities of some sort of force impinging on her. If the content of her sensation-prompted beliefs were, however, that there were various intense fields of magnetic force occurring somewhere in the basement of Goldwin Smith Hall, then her justification for them could not be purely perceptual, any more than my justification for believing that the white grains I see before me are salt obtained from beneath Cayuga Lake can be purely perceptual.

5. In, for example, William Alston’s "What’s Wrong with Immediate Knowledge?", Synthese 55 (April 1983), pp. 73–96.

6. In "Justification and Knowledge," presented at a Special Session on Knowledge and Justification at the World Congress of Philosophy, Montreal, August 1983.

7. This argument too is suggested in Alston’s paper mentioned in n5, above.

8. I would not deny that the very idea of someone’s even offering a reward for just believing something is strikingly odd, in a way that offering a reward for acting as if one believed it would not be so odd. But consider the idea of someone’s offering a reward for just intending a certain future action (not caring whether or not one carries out the intention when the time comes). That too would be very odd. The oddity in either case can be explained, I think, by two considerations. In the first place, it would be unusual that, and hard to see why, someone would desire one to intend or believe in a particular way without this desire deriving from a desire as to how one

should act (a desire whose object at least includes that one should act in the way that the belief and intention would normally lead to). And if it is one’s action that is really wanted (or part of what is really wanted), then it would be more sensible to attach the reward to the action (or the whole of which it is part), for then the chances of getting what is really wanted could not be lessened and would most likely be increased.

In the second place, there is the difficulty of confirming that one has met the condition for the reward by really believing or intending as required, rather than merely pretending to do so. The fact that one’s motive is the reward makes confirming one’s true propositional attitude more difficult than it would ordinarily be, because one might reasonably think that one could gain the reward by acting as if one believed or intended in the required way, without actually troubling to believe or intend.

9. An earlier version of this paper was read at a session of the World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal in August, 1983. The revision has benefitted from comments made in the discussion on that occasion.