

# IN DEFENSE OF NORMATIVISM ABOUT THE AIM OF BELIEF

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## *Summary*

I answer the objections which have been addressed to the normative account of the norm for belief – a belief is correct if and only if it is true. These objections are that the norm fails to motivate, or motivates too much, that it is trivial and that it is unfathomable and does not provide any regulation or actual guidance for our belief. But specifying what the correctness conditions of a mental state are is one thing, and giving an account of its regulation is another thing. If we respect this distinction, it becomes possible to envisage a separate account of the regulation of belief by a norm of truth, through the psychological feature of the transparency of belief, and to hold that the norm for belief is actually dependent upon the norm of knowledge.

## **Key words :**

Belief, normativity, correctness, truth, knowledge

## **1. Introduction**

Ever since it was introduced in the philosophical literature by Michael Dummett (1959) and Bernard Williams (1970), the idea that belief aims at truth in a constitutive or essential way has been considered alternatively as a platitude, as a deep fact, as a mere metaphor or as an obvious falsity. A platitude, because the attitude of belief is naturally assessed with respect to the criterion of truth: it seems to be a fatal objection to a belief to point out that it is false. A deep fact, because the claim that belief aims at truth seems to tell us something about the essence of belief and perhaps about the goal of knowledge and inquiry. A mere metaphor, because there is no reason to think that beliefs as mental states “aim at” or are “directed” towards truth as missiles towards their target or that believers themselves always have the conscious aim of forming only true beliefs. But it also seems to be an obvious falsity because a number of our beliefs are irrational or false and seem not be regulated by a norm of truth. Such is the fate of “platitudes” in philosophy: just as the platitudes about truth (Wright 1992) need to be interpreted, the platitudes about belief have to be interpreted too.

It seems indeed to be a platitude that belief is subject to a standard of correctness, well spelled out by Alan Gibbard:

« For belief, correctness is truth. Correct belief is true belief. My belief that snow is white is correct just in case the belief is true, just in cases snow is white. Correctness, now, seems normative ... The correct belief, if all this is right, seems to be the one [a subject] ought, in this sense, to have » (Gibbard 2005: 338–39)

Correctness, Gibbard adds, seems to be clearly a normative notion, involving an evaluative dimension or a standard against which beliefs are assessed. And this standard seems to be obviously truth. A number of writers<sup>1</sup> hold the view that there is a norm of truth for belief, which can be formulated, *prima facie*, in as a biconditional expressing a standard of correctness for belief:

(CT) For any P, a belief that P is correct iff P is true

The notion of correctness is normative in the following sense: it is not simply a fact, a regularity or a descriptive property of beliefs as intentional mental states, that their contents are either true or false, or, to take up the familiar phrase, that have a “mind to world direction of fit”. Indeed a belief that P is true if and only if P is the case, and false if and only if not P is not the case. But this, which we can call the satisfaction condition of a belief, is not the same as the correctness condition that a belief is correct if and only if it is true. The latter does not only tell us when a belief is true or false and it does not state simply a regularity: it tells us that it is *right* to believe what is true, and that to fail at having true belief is in some sense *wrong*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mayo 1964, Velleman 2000, Engel 2000, Boghossian 2003, Shah 2003, Shah and Velleman 2005 Wedgewood 2002, Gibbard 2003, 2005, Whiting 2010

<sup>2</sup> The writers who claim that there is nothing more in the correctness condition for belief than the direction of fit actually deny that the notion of correctness is normative. Others accept that it is normative, but claim that the normativity in question is a feature about the function of belief (Papineau 1999). For convincing criticisms of this deflationary conception of the correctness condition on belief according to which (CT) only amounts to the direction of fit of belief, see Velleman 2000. For the distinction between correctness conditions and satisfaction conditions, see in particular Mulligan (2007). The satisfaction condition of the belief that P is *that P*. The

The notion of correctness is in itself neutral between various interpretations of the evaluative dimension. According to what we can call the *normativist* view (Wedgwood 2002, 2007, Shah 2003, Shah and Velleman 2005, Engel 2005, 2008), the word “correct” in (NT) means “normatively correct” and the proper modality is deontic and involves an *ought* :

(NT) It is the *norm* of belief that one ought to believe that P if and only if P is true

According to the normative account, not only it is a norm, but it is also the *main*, or perhaps *the unique* norm for belief, and not one among others. In this sense the norm of belief is, for normativists, *constitutive* in the sense in which it is said that there is a constitutive norm of assertion<sup>3</sup>. On some versions of the normative view, the norm flows from the very nature of the *concept* of belief:

« I take it to be a conceptual truth that beliefs are correct when true and incorrect when false: false beliefs are necessarily faulty or mistaken. What’s more, I don’t think that the fault in false beliefs can consist in their tendency to misdirect our behavior, and even some false beliefs can direct us well enough. False beliefs are faulty in themselves, antecedently to and independently of any untoward practical consequences.” (Velleman 2000: 277-78, see also Boghossian 2007, Shah 2003)<sup>4</sup>

But such claims raise at least three kinds of concerns. In the first place we might wonder whether belief is governed by a constitutive norm of correctness or

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correctness condition is *that X correctly believes that P iff P*. Thus the correctness conditions for other epistemic attitudes than belief are :

x conjectures correctly that p	<i>iff</i> it is probable that p
x has a correct interrogative attitude towards p	<i>iff</i> it is questionable whether p
x doubts correctly whether p	<i>iff</i> it is doubtful whether p
x is correctly certain that p	<i>iff</i> it is certain that p

<sup>3</sup> Williamson 2000, ch. 11. There are indeed strong parallels between the discussions on the norm for belief and the discussions about the norm of assertion, but I shall leave them out here.

<sup>4</sup> «Normativity is essential and constitutive of the very concept of belief. It is part of the concept of belief that beliefs are correct if and only if they are true. [...] Unless one has grasped that truth bears this normative relation to belief, one will not have grasped the meaning of ‘belief’. Thus, because it is a conceptual matter that truth is a standard of correctness for belief, it is unnecessary to look for further facts to explain how truth is inescapably normative for belief. This inescapability is a *conceptual necessity*» (Shah 2003: 468).

at all. There are, after all, plenty of ways in which we can assess beliefs, besides their truth or falsity, and in a number of cases it can be beneficial to disregard or to ignore their alethic or their rational dimension (Papineau 1999). Why suppose that there is only one standard of evaluation? Why should we adopt the absolutist view that there is only one constitutive norm of belief rather than the relativist view that there is no particular criterion for assessing belief which enjoys a privileged status (Zalabardo 2010)? In the second place, it is not clear how the normativity involved in (NT) supposed to be part of the very concept of belief: is it a kind of analytic truth, and if so, in what sense can it have the power of a norm? In the third place, the nature of the normative condition can be challenged. Normativity in general, like correctness, is an ambiguous notion, which can be interpreted in various ways. The two most obvious interpretations are respectively the deontic one, which reads correctness, as in (NT), along with notions such as *right*, *wrong*, *ought*, *obligatory*, *permitted* or *forbidden*, and the axiological one, which reads correctness along with such notions as *good*, *bad*, *valuable*, or *disvaluable*. On the latter view the correctness condition for belief expresses literally the fact that belief is an aim or goal which is *prima facie* - and perhaps *ultima facie* - good, and the correctness condition (CT) has to be interpreted in a teleological way:

(T\*) A belief that p is correct if and only if p

*because*

only true beliefs achieve the aim involved in believing

David Velleman has proposed to read the constitutive norm for belief in this teleological sense: « To believe that p is to have the aim of regarding that proposition as true only if it in fact *is* true » (Velleman 2000) and other writers have defended this kind of reading ( Noordhof 2001, Steglich-Petersen 2006)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Later Velleman rejected this teleologist interpretation, and has espoused a non teleological view (Shah and Velleman 2005). But his 2000 formulation of the teleological view has been influential ( on the difference see Engel 2005)

Let us, for the moment, put aside the relativistic challenge, which is never far from the objections to normativism: if normativism cannot face these objections, relativism will be an option. Since most of these objections concern the formulation of the correctness condition, let us focus on it. If one accepts the idea that there is a constitutive correctness condition for belief, what is its best formulation? The normative version (NT) and the teleological version (TT) can be understood as alternative ways of cashing out the metaphor « beliefs aim at truth ». Both are meant to capture the notion of correctness, and its difference from the mere truth directedness of belief (along with the *direction of fit* metaphor), and to capture what is specific in belief with respect to other kinds of states (e.g. imagining of guessing). Both are meant to capture what is normative in the correctness condition, how it is supposed to guide a believer. But they are not equivalent.

In the first place, although they can both be understood as ways of cashing out the notion of reason for belief, they refer to two interpretations of the of reason for believing: on the one hand the normative version says there is a norm for belief, which grounds our reasons for believing, and such that the reasons always derive from this norm, and on the other hand the teleological version says there is a value (intrinsic or instrumental) which grounds our reasons for believing, which derive from this value.

In the second place, they presuppose different ontologies: on the one hand the normative account rests upon an ontology of norms, whether or not one conceives these norms as based on facts (along cognitivist lines) or not (along expressivist lines), on the other hand the teleological account presupposes an ontology of values (good, evaluations), which can here too be understood cognitively or expressivistically.

In the third place, the two views rest upon two kinds of conceptions of epistemic norms. Consider what is often considered as the evidential norm for belief: one ought to believe that P only on the basis of sufficient evidence. On the normative formulation (NT), the epistemic norms are categorically related to the

norm (they flow from it) deriving their normative status from the basic norm of truth. On the value formulation they are instrumental, getting their normative status from their ability to guide us to achieve our aims. This difference has an important consequence: if our reasons for beliefs and our adhesion to epistemic norms are explained through an aim- truth - we should be able to weight this aim against other aims or values. But we typically do not balance the aim of truth against other aims. The teleological account, on the contrary, seems to allow the possibility, at least in principle, of comparing the aim of having true beliefs with other aims (for instance practical ones).

In the fourth place, normative requirements upon beliefs are typically categorical, whereas aims are typically hypothetical. This seems to imply to different conceptions of epistemic rationality, a categorical one and an instrumental one (Kelly 2003).

The question naturally arises: which one is more fundamental? Which one accounts better for epistemic reasons, ontology, and role of epistemic norms? Which one accounts better for guidance and the regulation of believing? If correctness for belief is necessarily plural and relative to various standards of assessment or to different sorts of aims, the teleological account seems better, for there seems to be various kinds of goals that we can pursue. A teleologist can certainly hold the view that there is only one and unique epistemic goal, truth. Then the relativist just differs from the absolutist teleologist on the exclusive or unique character of the aim. But then the problem becomes more pressing for the teleologist: how is he to distinguish his view from the relativist one? For it seems clear that we do not always aim at truth in our beliefs, but at, say, comfort.

The normativist thesis is often discussed in relation to the thesis that there is an essential normativity of the mental, and it is often considered either to be a close ally to this thesis or an implication of it (Gibbard 2003, Boghossian 2003, Wedgwood 2007, Glüer and Wikforss 2009). Here I shall leave aside this issue, and shall deal only with the normativity which is attached to belief as an attitude,

without attempting to draw any consequence about meaning or thought content. I shall also leave aside the ontological issue about norms. My main objective is to defend the normative interpretation of the aim of belief against the main criticisms which have been levelled against it: that the norm of truth is trivial, that it is impossible to apply, that it fails to regulate belief. I shall confront the normative account with the view that the notion of an aim of belief is to be interpreted literally as a teleological goal, and shall show that it offers a better analysis of the regulation of belief. I shall also argue that the norm of truth is not incompatible with the norm which, in my view, ultimately governs belief – the norm of knowledge.

## ***2. The objection from normative impotence***

The normative account faces a number of difficulties. The focus on many criticisms is that the norm of truth which is supposed to govern belief is actually unable to govern and to guide our actual believings, since it is either empty and does not regulate any belief at all, or it gives us absurd or impossible prescriptions.

According to the *triviality* objection (NT) is not normative at all. Thus Fred Dretske says:

«I agree that beliefs are necessarily true or false. If I didn't understand what it was to *be* true or false, I could hardly understand what it was to be a belief. But I do not see that I need go further than this. This seems like enough to distinguish beliefs from other mental states like wishes, desires, hopes, doubts, and pains [...] Why, in order to understand what a belief is, do I also have to think of a belief as something that is *supposed to be* true? If I deliberately deceive you, is the resulting belief supposed to be true? » (Dretske 2001: 248)

According to Dretske (NT) is no norm at all. It is only a very general descriptive principle about what belief is, which carries no weight on what believers are supposed to do or to think. But the most intuitive answer, on the part of the normativist, to Dretske's question is: yes, belief is supposed to be true on the part of the deceived subject. The deceived subject is not simply holding the content of his belief true. He is also *committing* himself to the truth of his belief, and his belief is

valuable on the base of this commitment. But this will not convince the proponent of the triviality objection, whose question is: in what sense can a general *descriptive* principle about belief carry a *normative* force?

A variant of the triviality objection consists in accepting to call (NT) a norm, but only in a very “high profile” or shallow sense. There is a sense of “norm” in which this notion designates a very general descriptive principle. In this sense, one often speaks of the “norms of rationality” (such as the laws of logic or the principles of decision theory) as “normative”. But many object that one can talk of “norms” in this sense only by courtesy, since the norms in question are impotent and lack exactly what is required of norms: having a motivating power. Everyone agrees that a belief is correct if and only if it is true (CT). But this correctness condition, which is supposed to express the constitutive norm for beliefs, lacks normative force. It is only a general rational requirement on belief, but it does not give us any guidance when we figure out what to believe. As Kathrin Glüer and Asa Wikforss point out:

“If one takes seriously the idea that the “rules” of rationality are essential to belief, there is good reason not to regard them as norms that one can be motivated to follow. The “rules” of rationality, if constitutive of belief, cannot guide belief formation; this is a simple consequence of trying to conceive of these very rules as constitutive and as prescriptive at the same time. When it comes to the “rules” of rationality, these ideas simply do not go together. The essential link between rationality and belief cannot be used to defend the idea that the “rules” of rationality are rules in anything like these sense in which we are interested in: prescriptions capable of guiding an activity or a performance of any kind.” (Glüer and Wikforss 2009: 47-48)

Peter Railton (1997) has emphasised that, for a principle to be a norm, it has to have, in the first place, a normative *force*, in the sense that it should have a certain force to *move* us to something or to think something, and in the second place it must have a normative *freedom*: the norm must be such that it can be violated. But understood as a general requirement on belief, (CT) and (NT) cannot be violated. They tell us what a belief is, and when it is correct, but they do not tell us what



we are supposed to what we can do with out beliefs. In a similar vein, Timothy Schroeder (2003) distinguishes two notions of norms:

- a) norms as categorisation or classification schemes dividing actions or events in distinct  
(e.g norms of etiquette dividing actions into those which are polite and those which are not) or as general principles of description (e.g norms of rationality describing the beliefs or actions of ideal agents)
- (b) norms as force makers, that is as prescriptions or governance principles giving us aims to follow<sup>6</sup>.

Now it is perfectly possible that someone recognises the validity of a general principle - such as a principle of logic- but nevertheless fails – or refuse- to act upon it. The point is familiar from Lewis Carroll’s tale of Achilles and the Tortoise<sup>7</sup>. The Tortoise can perfectly understand that *modus ponens* is a basic rule – and in this sense a norm – of logical reasoning, and he can accept it as a true proposition and write it down in his notebook. But she is not moved at all by it, and does not infer accordingly: he accepts the general requirement, but does not grant it any guiding power (Blackburn 1995, Engel 2005 a). The Tortoise actually takes the logical norm as impotent and as only an ideal principle of type (a) with no normative force in the sense of (b). The latter also implies that we can also refrain from following the norm, and have the appropriate freedom not to be guided by it. But, the critics here argue, the norm (NT) is too trivial and general to be of any help. If it merely describes the conditions under which a belief is correct, it can be accepted by everyone. But it does not say anything about what we ought to believe and in what circumstances. Indeed the most general standard of acquisition of beliefs is truth, and the most general standard of rejection of beliefs is their falsity. But it does not tell us anything about *what we ought to believe and how*.

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<sup>6</sup> See also Glüer 2001, Engel 2008a

<sup>7</sup> Carroll 1895 ; Railton 1997

The normative impotence objection has bite. It can be resisted, though. In the first place, as we just saw, this objection rests upon a confusion between the correctness condition, which is stated in (CT) and the psychological trait which implements it in the behaviour of subjects. In every standard it is possible to distinguish correctness itself from the correct-making feature: the property the performance must manifest in order to count as correct. The correct-making feature need not be normative, but the claim of correctness does not predicate the correct making-feature. It is a higher-order claim to the effect that the performance possesses that feature that makes for correctness in acts of that kind. For example, to predicate correctness of an assertion is not to say that it is true. It is to say that it possesses the correct-making feature for assertions, whatever it may be. This feature happens to be truth. But it would be a mistake to identify correctness with truth, just as it would be a mistake to identify the standard with its regulation<sup>8</sup>.

In other words, it is one thing to say what the norm is, it is another thing to say how it is realised in the psychology of believers. So in a sense, I grant the objection from normative force. Simply stating a rational principle does not tell us how it is implemented. Still, there must be *some* relation between the principle and the regulation. Although the normative truth is necessarily independent from the way it is regulated, there has to be a connection between the two. But it is not as if we could *read off* the regulation from the normative truth.

In the second place, the requirement that norms necessarily motivate – if one judges that one ought to  $\phi$  one here hereby motivated to  $\phi$  - is what is otherwise known in moral psychology and meta-ethics as internalist requirement (Smith 1994). It seems presupposed by the normative impotence objection. An externalist about motivation – who accepts that one might judge that one ought to  $\phi$  and nevertheless not be motivated to  $\phi$ , in such situations as *akrasia* for instance –

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<sup>8</sup> In his response to Glüer and Wikforss 2009, Steglich Petersen argues, along similar lines as those defended here that one should not mistake the correctness condition in which the norm consists for the psychological state in which an agent must be in order to apply the norm. For a similar distinction see Engel 2007: 163-4

would not accept it. Actually the case of Carroll's tortoise seems to fall under this category. One might of course dispute the implicit parallel between moral motivation and epistemic motivation here and disagree over whether epistemic *akrasia* is a possibility. But given that internalism about moral motivation is a disputed doctrine, there is no reason to accept it without discussion in the epistemic case. Still we can at least accept a weak version of internalism: given that there is a norm for belief, we have at least some motivation to follow it, and there is at least a presumption that the norm can guide us as believers. The question, however, is whether this guidance or regulation is actually *explicit* in the formulation of the norm. And it is the point of the other objection which has been addressed to (NT).

### 3. *The unfathomable norm of truth*

A number of critics of the normative account have claimed that the problem with the norm of truth for belief is not that it is empty or shallow but that is impossible to satisfy, because any formulation of it leads to absurd prescriptions. In other words (NT) is *unfathomable*. This objection specifically addressed to the *ought* formulation of (NT)

(NTO) For any P, one ought to believe that P iff P

Following John Broome (2000), Krister Bykvist and Anandi Hattiangadi (2007) have pointed out that one can read (NTO) in different ways depending on the scope of the *ought* operator:

(i) Narrow (NTO<sub>n</sub>) For any S, P: S ought to (believe that P) if and only if *p* is true.

(ii) (NTO<sub>w</sub>) For any S, P: S ought to (believe that P if and only if P is true).

Suppose we adopt the first reading (i), the one which takes narrow scope. It can be broken down into two conditionals

( $\text{NTO}_{n^*}$ ) For any P, if P is true then S ought to believe that P

( $\text{NTO}_{n^{**}}$ ) For any P, S ought to believe that P only if P

But narrow scope\* is unsatisfiable or useless. It leads to the absurd requirement that for any truth among an infinity of truths one has to believe it, or that for any trivial and useless truth, one ought to believe it (Sosa 2000, Boghossian 2003)

This thought leads one to prefer the ( $\text{NTO}_{n^{**}}$ ) formulation (Boghossian 2003):

( $\text{NTO}_{n^{**}}$ ) For any P, S ought to believe that P only if P

or ( $\text{NTO}_{n^{***}}$ ) For any P, if S ought to believe that P, then P is true

These seem more attractive because it just gives us the negative – and perfectly reasonable- prescription not to believe any falsehood. But it is not clear that these work either, the critics object. ( $\text{NTO}_{n^{**}}$ ) does not capture the thought that the truth is what you ought to believe, since is not normative in any interesting sense – it does not imply that a subject is under any obligation under any circumstances whatsoever. The principle that for any P, S ought to believe that P only if P yields, if  $p$  is false, that it is not the case that S ought to believe that  $p$ . But that merely says that S lacks an obligation to believe that P. It does not say that S has an obligation to believe that not P. The former is compatible with it being permissible for S to believe that  $p$ , while the latter is incompatible with its being permissible for S to believe that  $p$ . Hence, whether  $p$  is true or false, ( $\text{NTO}_{n^{**}}$ ) does not tell S what to believe” (Bykvist and Hattiangadi 2007).

Part of the problem with such objections is that they are indifferent to whether the prescription applies to any belief that the agent might have, whether he considers it or not. If we take them to involve prescriptions about what a potential

believer who asks herself *whether* to believe that P, (NTOn\*\*) seems correct. In such cases of belief deliberation (Shah and Velleman 2005) the point is that for any P, *if S considers whether p*, then S ought to (believe that p) if and only if p is true. To this Bykvist and Hattiangadi object that this can work only for those beliefs which can be evaluated for their truth, and that there are some “blindspot” sentences are not believable, such as :

*It is raining and nobody believes that it is raining*

*There are no believers*

In such cases, they argue, the normative requirement becomes trivial:

if P is true *and believable* you ought to believe that P.

A defender of the normative account could answer here that for such “blindspot” beliefs the question of truth does not arise, and that it is certainly a requirement on P is that S actually *understands* P. It is not clear that the blindspot sentences in question can be understood. But this answer actually, like the question raised by the nature of the belief which the agent must have in order to follow the norm, beside the point. The objection presupposes that, in order to be able to apply the norm (NT), one must believe that the proposition in consideration is apt for truth. But for it to be the case, as Glüer and Wikfoss remark (2009:44) one has to believe that P is true in order to follow the norm that one ought to believe that P. If this belief were part of the condition for the application of the norm (NT), it would be open to another charge of trivialisation or of circularity. If we suppose that (NT) or (NTO) are norms which actually give us guidance for our beliefs, and also suppose that a subject considers a belief for its truth, the norms just tell us: If you hold p true, then you ought to hold p true. But it is rather obvious that no guidance can be had from this. The trouble with NTO, therefore, is not that it is an objective norm,

but that it cannot guide our belief formation and hence is not a norm for belief. But this objection is an instance of the confusion between the correctness condition for belief and the psychological enabling condition in which the agents must be in order to follow the norm. The mistake here consists in presupposing that in order to apply the norm one must be in possession of a belief about its condition of application<sup>9</sup>.

Now what if we understand (NTO) with a wide scope reading? It would be:

(NTO $w$ ) For any  $S, P$ :  $S$  ought to (believe that  $P$  if and only if  $P$  is true)

Bykvist and Hattiangadi argue here two combinations satisfy the requirement: (a) either you believe that  $p$  and  $p$  is true, (b) or it is not the case that you believe that  $p$  and  $p$  is false. And two conditions which do not satisfy it: either you believe that  $p$  and  $p$  is false, or it's not the case that you believe that  $p$  and  $p$  is true. (NTO $w$ ) does not obviously encounter the same objections as (NTO $n$ ). For, (NTO $w$ ) cannot be broken down into the conditionals (NTO $n^*$ ) and (NTO $n^{**}$ ), for in those conditionals, the 'ought' took narrow scope. But it is a familiar point, again emphasised by Broome (2000), that such wide scope requirements do not detach. (NTO $w$ ) does not capture the intuition that the truth is what one ought to believe, or that a false belief is faulty or defective. The reason is that what (NTO $w$ ) enjoins are *combinations*: the combination of your believing that  $p$  with its being true that  $p$  and the combination of its being false that  $p$  and your not believing that  $p$ . Because the 'ought' takes wide scope, one cannot detach from (NTO $w$ ) that you ought to believe that  $p$ , even when  $p$  is true. Now one of the lessons of Broome's analysis was that requirements like (NTO $w$ ) are "rational requirements", which cannot lend themselves to detachment, are *not* normative in the sense which interests us here (Broome 2007). In so far as (NTO), in any of its forms, is a rational requirement, it

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<sup>9</sup> The situation here again closely parallels that of the Lewis Carroll's paradox. The Carroll regress arises because one supposes that, in order to apply the rule of modus ponens, one must have a belief to the effect that the rule is valid; but no such "linking belief" is actually needed. See the relevant remarks by Leite 2008.

does not give us any *reason* or specific motivation to think in a particular way. Actually Broome's notion of normativity here corresponds to the sense (a) of normativity of section 2 above. It is not the *motivating* or *force maker* sense. As Broome says

Rationality is a system of requirements or rules. It therefore sets up a notion of correctness: following the rules is correct according to the rules. That by itself makes it normative in one sense. The requirements of convention and of Catholicism are normative in this sense. Convention requires you to shake hands with your right hand, and Catholicism requires you to abstain from meat on Fridays. These are rules, and it is incorrect according to these rules to shake hands with your left hand or eat meat on Fridays. I do not use 'normative' in that sense. In my sense, it means to do with ought or reasons. Given a rule or a requirement, we can ask whether you ought to follow it, or whether you have a reason to do so... 'Requirement' is not a normative word in my sense. When I say rationality requires this or that of you, I do not mean anything normative in my sense ( Broome 2007: 162-163)

What the arguments of the critics of the constitutive norm for belief show is indeed correct if what they purport to show is that the norm of truth for belief is unfathomable if we understand it as a prescription, or a rule guiding or regulating our belief formation. They do no such thing because the norm is a rationality requirement in Broome's sense. It is not obvious that it is normative in the (b) sense. In the face of these difficulties, the normativist is invited to claim that it holds only *prima facie* :

(NT *pm*) For any P, one ought, *prima facie* to believe that P iff P

or to add a *ceteris paribus* clause in the style: unless P is trivial, unbelievable, etc. Norms, after all, are subject to exceptions. But the critics of the truth norm are wrong when they conclude that (NT) is not normative at all or when they suggest that it is too normatively constraining: the fact that most of its formulations are hard to interpret does not mean that there is no story to be told about the way a rationality requirement can regulate our actual believing. For we need to distinguish,

as we did above, the correct-making feature, or the truth that a belief is correct if and only if it is true, from the correctness condition or the normative-guiding condition. In other words, we must distinguish the norm itself as a rationality or ideal principle, from its regulation. For all that they have shown the critics of the constitutive account are right that the correct making feature or the truth (NT) does not wear its regulation on its sleeves.

The same consideration can be adduced against a related objection to the truth norm: that if it prescriptive at all, it prescribes too much and is too demanding: why, if the requirement (NT) is understood as a prescription, should it apply in every circumstance to any believer? Aren't there cases – in particular those in which subjects are self deceived, wishful thinkers or otherwise irrational in some way – where the norm is, by definition, not followed (Steglich-Petersen 2006). Alternatively one can argue that (NT) has to be reformulated with a weaker deontic modality, such as permissibility (Whiting 2010):

(NTP) For any P, one *may* to believe that P iff P

I shall not consider here whether this allows an answer to the concerns raised by Bykvist and Hattiangadi. It seems, however, that such a weak form of (NT) although it respects the normative freedom, loses the normative force. But here too the attempted repair rests upon a confusion: the fact that a norm is in place does not mean that one has to be always motivated by it. Consider the discussions about the norm of assertion, which is often held to be the norm that one must assert that P if and only if one knows that P (Williamson 2000, ch.11). But if one were to assert only what one knows, one would make very few assertions, just as if one were to have only true belief, one would have rather few beliefs. The norm for assertion does not state that one makes only assertions about things that one knows, and the norm for belief does state that one believes only things that are true<sup>10</sup>. The

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this, Engel 2008



norms respectively state that one violates the norm for assertion if one asserts something that one does not know, and that one violates the norm for belief if one believes things that are false. It does not entail that one never has a false belief, but only that one is supposed not to have one, if one is a believer.

It is essential, therefore to distinguish the correctness condition for belief from the features of the psychology of agents which need to be present for the norm to be followed. So Judith Jarvis Thomson is right to point out, in her analysis of normativity that such rules as (NT) (or the norm that one ought to assert only what one knows) “impose no obligation of any kind . . . They don’t tell you what you must or even what you ought to do” (Thomson 2009). Indeed they do not tell us. But that is what is to be expected from a norm. What the objections considered in this section show is that the correct-making features need not be so specific that they give us the conditions of guidance. But that does not mean that there is no account that one can give about the guidance and regulation conditions. Below shall attempt to give one. But before that, we need to examine the alternative account of the constitutive norm, which rejects the very idea that the norm of truth for belief is a norm, in any prescriptive sense, and takes it instead as a goal or *telos* for belief.

#### ***4. The teleological account***

The “teleological” conception of the constitutive norm for belief accepts the correctness condition as a general constitutive principle for belief. But it explains it differently. For the teleologist the principle that a belief is correct if and only if it is true is such because only true beliefs achieve the aim of belief. There is a natural reading of the teleological proposal which I want to put aside here. This the familiar idea that truth is the ultimate epistemic value, and because of this we aim at attaining this goal as believers. But, as Hamid Vahid (2006) has correctly pointed out, it is one thing to say that beliefs, *qua* mental states, aim at truth, and another thing to say that we ought to aim at having many truth beliefs. The former is, on

the teleological view, our internal aim, whereas the latter is our epistemic goal. The teleological conception is here only relevant to the “internal” aim.

The teleological account (TT) says that a belief is correct if it is true *because only true beliefs achieve the aim involved in believing*. If the aim in question is understood as a *value* rather than a norm, it is unclear that it can be a more satisfactory account of the aim of belief that the normative account (NT) for faces similar problems. In particular if epistemic reasons for beliefs are reasons that obtain in virtue of the relevant beliefs having some property that is of value or promotes something of value, then *all* beliefs supported by epistemic reasons must be valuable or value promoting. But not all beliefs supported by epistemic reasons are valuable or value promoting. In fact, some beliefs are just the opposite, despite being supported by epistemic reasons. In other words, if we formulate the aim of belief as

(AB) It is valuable to believe that P if and only if P

and decompose it into two conditionals

(ABi) It is valuable that if P then one believes that P

(ABii) It is valuable that if one believes that P then P

and respect the scope differences as in (NTO) above, we shall presumably encounter difficulties similar to those that we have encountered with the normative account (David 2000, Piller 2008).

This, however, may be too quick. For the objection that (NT) runs the risk of making the norm impotent or unfathomable seems to be precisely the one that the teleological account is meant to avoid. For this account seems much more plausible and much better suited to provide a regulation for the constitutive aim. For it provides a natural way to connect this aim to the actual psychological state of believers : when an agent deliberates about whether to believe that P, he does so with the aim of having a true belief, and only a true belief. As Velleman (2000) construes it, the aim is a conscious aim, which is explicitly under the consideration of the believer, and which he construes as an explicit intention to form a belief

according to the aim<sup>11</sup>. The regulation of belief is directly associated to the evidence that the believer has for the belief:

“ A person intentionally aims a belief at truth, by forming an act of judgement. He entertains a question of the form “p or not p?” wanting to accept whichever disjunct is true; to that end he accepts one or the other proposition, as indicated by evidence or argument; and he continues to accept it so long as he receives no evidence or argument impugning its truth. the resulting cognition qualifies as a belief because of the intention with which it is formed and subsequently maintained by the believer, and because of the way in which that intention regulates its formation and maintenance.” (Velleman 2000: 252)

On the teleological account, the constitutive aim of belief regulates the formation of belief through the direct connection between the evidence that one has for the belief. Indeed we generally form belief on the basis of our evidence, not truth, for what we have access to is the evidence for our belief. Indeed our evidence is evidence *for* truth, and the truth standard of correctness for belief is clearly associated to a norm of *evidence*:

(NE) For any P, one ought to believe to believe that P iff one has sufficient evidence for P

It is not clear that this formulation avoids the obscurities which affect NT, but if we take the role of evidence as what regulates belief formation by associating belief to its internal aim, it become quite natural to understand how the aim of truth motivates our believing : what we take as good reasons or evidence for a belief offers us a motivation to entertain this belief . So the teleological account offers, apparently, a better explanation of this internal relation between evidence than the normative account, which is actually silent upon it. The teleological view, however, leads to at least two implausible consequences.

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<sup>11</sup> Velleman in his initial view, allowed unconscious intentions and cognitions directed at truth which could operate at a subpersonal level ( 2000 :253 ). He later renounced this claim ( Shah and Velleman 2005: )

In the first place, this account fits only those beliefs which are consciously entertained and reflexive, and does not account for those which are not directed at truth, but at other aims, such as comforting the believer (for instance as a result of cognitive dissonance, wishful thinking or self deception). There is no reason to suppose that non conscious beliefs are governed by a truth aim. In the second place, the teleological account represents believing as directed – consciously or not – towards a goal, truth. But we have seen that this idea, which goes along with the analysis of the norm of truth in terms of desire, misrepresents the regulation of belief. As a result of these tensions, the teleological account is caught into what Shah (2003: 461) calls the “teleological dilemma”: either the teleological account allows truth regulation to be present in the cases of irrational or unconscious beliefs which are not truth directed, and this has the effect of weakening the standard of correctness for belief to such an extent that it is hard to understand how it can be a standard at all. Or it restricts unduly the scope of the correctness condition for belief so that it cannot apply to other contexts than those of intentional belief formation<sup>12</sup>.

In the second place, if truth is an internal aim of our believing, in what sense is it guaranteed that it is our *only* aim? Beliefs, unlike actions, are not governed by a variety of reasons. In considering whether to take a certain course of action, say talking walk, I can balance that aim against others (say going to the Museum or reading a book) and for a variety of reasons, or for no reasons at all. This is not true of beliefs, which are governed, normally, by only one kind of reasons, namely those which are epistemic- truth and evidence (Millar 2005) Belief is not balanced against other aims in the way other mental states can be so balanced, *e.g* guessing

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed the implausibility of this restriction is made clear by the interpretation of the teleological view given by Noordhof (2001), who takes the norm of truth not only to be applicable to intentional belief formation but also argues that it allows a quasi voluntaristic conception of belief formation as a kind of action governed by a “practical norm”: “One reason for thinking that the norm of truth is a practical norm is that both intending to judge that *p* and judging that *p* are actions. The norm of truth provides considerations for acting in these ways. Broadly conceived, practical norms are precisely those which provide considerations for action. A second reason is that agents act so as to satisfy their desires. An agent’s desires are only satisfied as a result of the agent’s action if the beliefs and judgements upon which the agent acts are true. Therefore is part of *practical reason* that beliefs be true.” (Noordhof 2001: 263). As I argued in Engel (2005), this intentionalist conception of belief formation seems to me to be a *reductio* of teleological view, if interpreted in this sense.

(Owens 2003): when I guess that P I can balance my aim of believing the truth with other aims (answering quickly in order to get the prize), but believing does not have this feature. So how can the truth aim be exclusive? The teleologist's account is here threatened by a second dilemma: either he accepts the idea that the aim of truth can be balanced against other aims or reasons( for instance prudential ones) , and hence subscribes to a form of pragmatism about belief which denies , or he must accept that the truth aim is the exclusive one. If he takes the first horn, he has to accept a principle about the rationality of belief similar to the one put forward by Richard Foley:

“All things considered it can be rational for an individual to believe what is not epistemically rational for him to believe (Foley 1993: 214)

In other words, the teleologist needs to accept the idea that there is a form of commensurability of reasons to believe and reasons for wanting to believe, hence of distinct aims (Kelly 2003). In cases in which what is epistemically rational to believe clearly diverges from what it is practically advantageous to believe, there is simply no genuine question about what one should believe. Although we can ask what one should believe from the epistemic perspective, and we can ask what one should believe from the practical perspective, there is no third question: what one should believe, all things considered. In any case in which epistemic and practical considerations pull in opposite directions, there is simply nothing to be said about what one should believe all things considered. (see also Reisner 2008)

Certainly the teleologist need not deny the familiar asymmetries between practical and epistemic reasons. But if he takes seriously the idea that belief can be directed towards other aims than truth he *does* deny the exclusivity of epistemic reasons. He admits that there can be weighing of the aims of belief. Hence there can be a deliberation to the effect that one has one aim of the other. But if there is such a deliberation, how can the aim of truth be exclusive? It is only exclusive relative to our *decision* to take the truth aim. Actually the idea that we could weight the aim of belief against other aims does not make sense. I may decide to drop the

attitude of belief and not to form a belief on a subject matter (for instance I may decide that my attitude is one of pragmatic acceptance rather than belief (in the sense of Cohen 1992). But that does not entail that I suspend the application of the norm of truth for belief, where I to decide to form a belief.

The correctness norm is, on the face of it, a categorical one. It does not make sense to say that in some circumstances, the correctness of a belief is truth, and in others, depending on the aim, it is not truth, but, say, comfort. If you want to convince someone that he ought to believe P, you do not first convince him that he should have an aim which is best served by believing P (Kelly 2003). The teleological account implies an hypothetical and instrumental construal of the aim of belief, which does not seem to fit our actual belief regulation. But why not?, will ask a philosopher who is not convinced that there is a unique constitutive norm for belief. Why could we not accept that in some cases we might form other attitudes than belief – call them *schmeliefs* – governed by other aims, such as comfort or pleasantness?<sup>13</sup> Indeed we can, but by hypothesis it would not be the attitude of *belief*. The argument here has to be parallel to the one which is given by Williams (1970) against the possibility of believing at will: someone who would decide to form a belief for reasons which fall short of being epistemic or truth-aimed could not at the same time consider the doxastic state at which he would thus arrive as a *belief*.<sup>14</sup>

Now if the teleologist takes the second horn of the dilemma, and is not a pragmatist about reasons, he has to reject Foley's principle of the commensurability of reasons to believe and reasons to desire to believe. Thus the teleologist can be as puritanical about belief as the normativist and accept that truth is the only possible aim of belief, and the unique standard of correctness. Since he does not deny that reasons to believe are evidential, that truth is the aim in deliberative contexts about what to believe, it is not clear why he does not accept to call the aim in question a

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<sup>13</sup> This is the kind of question which Papineau (1999) and Zalabardo 2010 raise.

<sup>14</sup> This is indeed the gist of Shah 2003 's argument from the transparency of belief. See below § 5

norm. He does not detract from the normativist stance, contrary to what he says<sup>15</sup>. So either the teleological account is implausible, or it is hard to distinguish from the normative account. Actually there is no reason to object to the idea that the two views are actually compatible, if the teleological account is understood in this constitutive sense.

### ***5. Regulation through transparency***

Once we agree that one has to distinguish the correctness making feature of the norm of truth from its regulation, the normativist account is bound to answer the regulation problem: how does the norm regulate our actual believings? How can it answer it? It not enough to make a distinction between the objective norm (it is constitutive of belief that it is regulated by a subjective norm, which would tell us how to obey it, for the nature of this subjective norm is precisely what the objections from impotence and from the unfathomable amount to. We can here follow Shah's suggestion (Shah 2003, Shah and Velleman 2005): sometimes beliefs are formed through intentional processes of deliberation. Transparency (Evans 1982, Moran 2001) is a phenomenon occurring in such processes, namely, the fact that whenever one asks oneself whether to believe that  $p$ , one must immediately recognize that this question is settled by, and only by, answering the seemingly different question whether  $p$  is true. How could a normative truth about belief, to the effect that believing  $p$  is correct if and only if  $p$  is true, *explain* transparency in doxastic deliberation? In asking oneself *whether to believe that  $p$* , one is applying the concept of belief, and this concept thus comes to frame the deliberative question. If (NT) is a conceptual truth about belief, then it is a constitutive feature of the concept of belief that the correctness of believing  $p$  is settled by, and only by, settling the question whether  $p$  is true. So applying and fully understanding the concept of belief in forming a belief thus involves applying the correctness norm to one's own belief-formation. This in turn disposes one to be moved when forming a

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<sup>15</sup> In many respects this seems to me to be the view defended by Steglich-Petersen (2006).

belief about  $p$  only by considerations taken to be relevant to the truth of  $p$ . The step is immediate and not inferential (Shah 2003). Transparency also accounts for the difference between reasons to believe and reasons for wanting to believe : one can want to believe that P without considering (indeed trying to bracket) whether P is true, but one cannot believe that P in the deliberative sense of considering whether P without asking oneself whether P is true.

Now this “transparency account” has been challenged (Steglich-Petersen 2006) along the following lines:

“The motivation stemming from the thought that true beliefs are correct has to be so strong, if it is to do the desired explanatory work, that it is implausible to regard it as motivation stemming from acceptance of a norm at all. Transparency thus cannot be explained as the result of adherence to a norm. While it is plausible to suppose that there are certain concepts that one cannot apply without accepting certain evaluations, it is not plausible that such evaluations can necessarily motivate us to act in accordance with them” ( Steglich-Petersen 2006: 507)<sup>16</sup>

Steglich-Petersen here objects that a norm which *necessarily* motivates does not motivate at all. This is a version of the normative force objection examined above.

The objection from unnecessarily strong motivation rests up the idea that there should be a motivation to follow the norm. But why should there be a motivation to follow the norm? The truth norm is not like the other norms (such as social ones). We do not need motivation to follow it, unlike other norms. I may need a motivation to follow, say, certain rules of etiquette (such as wearing a tie on the day of a thesis viva). But do I need to be *motivated* to follow the norm of truth for belief? The link between the norm and the concept of belief seems to be much more internal and constitutive. And why should the consideration *necessarily* move us? We could recognise it , and fail to conform to the norm. What is necessary is not the

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<sup>16</sup> “If transparency is produced by the norm of belief, this norm motivates one necessarily and inescapably to act in accordance with it. The transparency is immediate, and does not involve an intermediary question about whether to conform to the norm for belief; the norm is thus unlike norms such as the one governing promising. It is thus doubtful whether a consideration which necessitates motivation should be considered a normative consideration at all. “ ( ivid508)



motivation but the recognition of the norm in conscious deliberation about belief formation. What about non conscious belief formation? Animals, children do not have the norm of truth. They certainly cannot be regulated by it in the conscious sense. But they can certainly be weakly regulated by it. How ?

Transparency is a fact about our reasons to believe that P: that P is the best reason we can have for believing that P. Of course here “that P” is elliptic for “that P is true”, and the transparency of belief is the direct counterpart, in the psychological mode, of the transparency of truth itself: to say that P is true is just to say that P. There is a direct connection between the transparency of belief and the norm of truth: if the fact that P is our best reason to believe that P, it is because belief is the only attitude whose correctness condition is truth. The very fact that belief is in this sense “transparent” seems to account for the way in which the norm of truth regulates belief: when, in the context of asking ourselves whether P is true, we determine the answer by thinking or asserting that P, we implicitly follow the norm. In doing so, we need not ascent to a second-order judgement “Do I believe that P?” and even less ask ourselves “What are my best reasons to believe that P?”. Our recognition of this standard of correctness for belief is tacit, not explicit. There are indeed thinkers who are so unreflective that they might even not have this tacit recognition. Perhaps those who are in the grip of wishful thinking, or self delusive subjects in the grip of Capgras’s delusion, do not have this understanding of their own beliefs. But even deeply delusive believers have at least a partial understanding of this condition <sup>17</sup>.

The fact that the norm of truth enters as a reason for our believing that P in the kind of conscious reasoning in which we engaged when we ask ourselves whether P is true constitutes the best way of understanding how this norm can regulate – or guide, or govern – our doxastic behaviour. Of course we cannot always - and indeed

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<sup>17</sup> Thus Tim Bayne says : “Do delusion and self-deception involve departures from the operating norms of belief formation? Self-deception—at least, everyday self-deception—need involve no departure from the operating norms of belief-formation. “ Delusion and self deception: mapping the terrain” in Bayne and Fernandez 2008). For an account of the role of transparency in self knowledge, see Huemer 2007, Engel 2010.

in most cases we don't - reach truth for our beliefs: sometimes we have only strong evidence, or perhaps only a certain degree of subjective probability for a given belief. For instance on asking myself whether it will rain tomorrow, I may not come with the answer "Yes", or "No", but only with a "maybe". But it does not show that the norm of truth does not operate here. For even if I cannot, in such cases, determine whether my belief that it will rain is true, I need to recognize the condition that it would be correct only if it were true.

Now what about the troublesome cases where we do not deliberate explicitly and consciously about whether to believe that P, such as wishful thinking, self-deception and other kinds of irrational beliefs? Should we say that transparency does not apply and that these are not regulated by the norm of truth? Certainly the wishful thinker, for instance the man who believes that he is going to pass his driver's licence by reading the Coran, does not care for the norm of truth and does not consider it. Neither does the man who is under the delusion that his wife has been replaced by an impostor, or that he is dead. Certainly there can be exceptions to the norm. But does it mean that these people do not have the concept of belief and that they are unable to recognize the norm? Hardly. Even though these people obviously do not reason consciously with and from their beliefs, and do not consider norms of evidence, it is less clear that they have no understanding at all of what a proper belief should be. The wishful thinker is wrong when he believes that reading the Coran will help in hispassign his driver's licence. But he is at least conscious of the fact that he needs a reason to believe that he will pass his exam, and even if he is wrong on the reason, he has some dim idea of what it might be. There are degrees here, obviously. The self-deceived wife may forget, or pass under silence for herself the evidence that she has that her husband trumps her. But the very fact that she reasons to the contrary shows that she is aware of some evidence that her husband is unfaithful, and that attending to evidence is relevant to her believing. So it is not clear that the norm of truth does not in such cases regulate thinking tacitly.

The transparency analysis of regulation is not without problems, however. It is not clear that we can directly access what we believe by considering the question whether P for any kind of belief. For perceptual beliefs such as: “Do I believe that it rains?” the answer is immediate and indeed, as Evans says “our eyes are directed outwards” (Evans 1982: 225). But it is less clear with other examples such as “Do I believe that there will be a third world war?”. I do answer that question by considering whether there will be a third world war, but by attending my *other* beliefs. In most cases I do attend the truth of the belief considered, but the *evidence* that I have for it. As Baron Reed remarks there are a number of beliefs—particularly those that are nuanced responses to complex bodies of evidence—that a rational agent may be able to rationally self-ascribe only by failing to meet the transparency condition, for in such cases an agent is rationally required not to respond immediately to the reflective pressures she feels at the moment (Reed 2010: 170). For instance if I ask myself what I believe on a certain subject – say what kind of politic position to take on a given issue - and realise that I have actually changed my mind on this subject, I do not directly self-ascribe to me the belief in the transparent way, for I must in some sense, work out my belief through a complex pattern of other beliefs. And can the transparency feature help us when we consider belief for which we cannot give our assent of the basis of the evidence at our disposal, such as, for instance, the belief that my lottery ticket (out of a fair 1000 tickets lottery) will not win? I cannot ask myself whether I believe that my ticket will not win because I simply do not *know* that my ticket will not win. We come back again to a salient feature of belief regulation – that we do not attend to whether our beliefs are true, but to whether they are *justified* or amount to *knowledge*. At this point we have to come back, finally, to the relationship that the norm of truth for belief entertains with knowledge.

### ***6. The norm of truth and the norm of knowledge***

The difficulty that many writers have expressed about the standard of correctness (NT) for belief is in a sense much simpler than the objections that I have considered in this article. As Wedgwood remarks (2002: 270): “It seems implausible that this fundamental epistemic norm can explain the norms of rational belief, for after all, according to this principle, any belief in a true proposition is correct -even if the belief in question is grossly irrational; so how can this principle explain the norms of rational belief?” As we just saw, even in the case of self-deceptive or irrational belief the norm operates. But this is because it is regulated through the *evidence* that one has about one’s beliefs, and this evidence can vary largely from thinker to thinker, and from circumstance to circumstance. We are back to the objection that the truth norm is in itself empty or silent about one’s actual believing. In contrast the norm of evidence (NE), that one ought to believe only on the basis of sufficient evidence, seems much more effective. We can also understand it as the requirement that a belief be *justified*, or based on appropriate *reasons*. And if justified believing is knowledge, why not say that the fundamental epistemic norm is the norm of *knowledge*? (NT) fails to explain the sense in which it is defective to believe a proposition when one is not in a position to *know* that it is true. So why not simply accept that the constitutive norm for belief is rather:

(NK) It is the *norm* of belief that one ought to believe that P if and only if one knows that P<sup>18</sup> ?

If the norm of belief is (NK), it becomes easy to understand why the transparency test does not work for our beliefs in propositions such as those about lotteries, which we do not know: I cannot ask myself whether I believe that my ticket will not win and simply answer by attending at my belief because I simply do not *know* that my ticket will not win. But the transparency feature also works when one asks oneself whether one knows: the question whether one believes that

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<sup>18</sup> This view has been suggested, in various forms, by Peacocke 1999:34, Williamson 2000: 47, Engel 2005, Smythies 2011

P is immediately answered by considering whether one knows that P; The lottery proposition is not transparent because one does not know whether one's ticket will not win.

The proposal has also the advantage of explaining why we can say that "Belief aims at knowledge" in Williamson's sense:

Knowing sets the standard of appropriateness for belief . . . Knowing is in that sense the best kind of believing. Mere believing is a kind of botched knowing. In short, belief aims at knowledge (not just truth)." (2000: 47)

But if what I have said above about the relationship between the norm of belief and the aim of belief is correct, we do not need actually to say that knowledge is the aim of belief, or we can say this only in the derivative sense that the aim depends upon the norm.

Given that knowledge is factive and entails truth, it seems easy to derive the norm (NT) from this one. It also can explain why the norm of evidence (NE) is in place, for evidence, as much as truth, leads to knowledge (even more so, when one holds, as Williamson, that evidence *is* knowledge, but one need not defend this strong version in order to accept (NK)).

But doesn't the proposal to make (NK) the fundamental norm for belief encounter the same kind of difficulties as (NT). (NK) does not seem to help us if what we expect from it is a regulation of our beliefs, since, just as we do not know when a belief is true, we do not know that we know it. At best we can only understand (NK) as requiring that we *believe* that we know, or are in a position to know. And even if we suppose that we so believe, what amount of evidence is sufficient for knowledge? (NK) does not tell us any more than (NT). But if the distinction that I have proposed between the correct-making features of the norm and its regulation is correct, we do not need more than (NK) as our fundamental epistemic norm. Ralph Wedgwood, when he considers the relationship between the

norm (NT) and the norm (NK), actually seems to have in mind the objection that (NK) does not regulate belief:

“My account of knowledge supports this account of the connection between “aiming at the truth” and “aiming to know”. As I have already argued, a rational thinker cannot pursue the aim of believing the truth and nothing but the truth, without using means that it is rational for her to regard as reliable means to that aim. But if these means result in her believing the truth precisely because they “worked just as they were supposed to”, then (according to my account of knowledge) the belief produced by these means counts as knowledge. So there is no way for a rational thinker to pursue the truth except in a way that, if it succeeds, will result in knowledge. If this is right, then we should disagree with those philosophers, such as Christopher Peacocke (1999: 34) and Timothy Williamson (2000: 208), who suggest that belief has knowledge as one of its ultimate aims. Knowledge is not an ultimate aim of belief. Belief’s only ultimate aim is truth. Belief aims at knowledge only in the sense that every rational believer aims at the truth by using means that, if successful, will result in knowledge.”

But if the preceding is correct, to say that belief aims at knowledge only in the sense that every rational believer aims at the truth by using means that, if successful, will result in knowledge just *is* the same thing as saying that the norm for belief is the norm of knowledge. The norm does not need to tell us when we know or why.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This article has undergone a number of modifications since its presentation in Oslo in June 2009. I thank Timothy Chan for his invitation and his angelic patience, Olav Gjelsvik and he participants to the conference for their remarks. Versions of this article have been read in Edinburgh in March 2009, and in Leuven in March 2010. I thank Duncan Prichard, Igor Douven, Filip Buekens, Chris Kelp, Kathrin Schaubroeck, Asbjorn Steglich-Pedersen, Kathrin Glüer, Asa Wikforss and Davide Fassio for helpful discussions.

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