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I

Shah and Velleman (2005) make at least a couple of claims I aim to reject. They suggest that:

- (A) Beliefs share with other propositional attitudes the same *motivational role*; believing that P, assuming that P, supposing that P, and imagining that P ‘dispose the subject to behave as if P were true’ (p. 497).

I take this to be patently false, and devote part II to make my point.

In order to distinguish beliefs from other propositional attitudes, Shah and Velleman suggest that the following conceptual truth about belief must be appreciated:

- (B) It is a *conceptual, normative* truth about belief that ‘part of the concept [belief] is a standard of correctness. Classifying an attitude as a belief entails applying to it the standard of being correct if and only if it is true’ (p. 498).

I challenge (B) in part III. I will argue that there is no normative truth about belief in the sense Shah and Velleman suggest. I conclude that neither (A) nor (B) independently, nor the motivation for (B) given (A), are plausible.

II

In outline, the argument against (A) runs as follows:

Believing that the only means to P is Q and desiring P rationalizes (pro tanto) to intend to Q. In contrast, assuming, supposing, and imagining that the only means to P is Q and desiring P, does not rationalize (pro tanto) to intend to Q. The motivational role of non-belief cognitive propositional attitudes that P only if Q coupled with a desire that P is to rationalize, subjunctive, *as if*-behavior towards P and Q, but aren’t sufficient to rationalize Q-ing. An additional step is necessary for rationalizing Q-ing when the propositional attitude is not that of belief: to test the reliability of the contents subjunctively considered *as*

if true – for instance, to defer to experts, an encyclopedia, or simply to abstain from making the judgment that P until one is comfortable to *believe* that P.

Thus the motivational role of belief is that it rationalizes behavior and thought premised on the truth of the proposition believed (coupled with relevant desires), whereas assuming, supposing, imagining, etc., does not. The latter types of propositional attitudes may, though, rationalize behavior and thought aimed at ascertaining the content of the relevant proposition (again, coupled with relevant desires). Belief ‘bridges the gap’ of rationalizing behaving on P being true, the other cognitive attitudes don’t.

III

In outline, the arguments against (B), that beliefs are distinct in it being a conceptual, normative truth about beliefs that that they are correct (if and) only if true, runs as follows:

(1) The state of affairs consisting in $\sim P$ and my believing that P doesn’t, *per se* and as a matter of logic, tell us that I’m *normatively* wrong to believe that P. I have a false belief, and that’s about it (Dretske 2001). Of course, were I to find out that my belief that P is false or that my degree of credence in P is unwarrantedly high (low), then I ‘ought’ to discard the belief or update my credence in P. But the ‘ought’ here is utterly *idle* (Glüer and Wikforss 2009, 2013). For *in* finding out that $\sim P$ I *form* a belief that $\sim P$ irrespective of what I ‘ought (not)’ do. Similarly, *in* finding out that the case for P is quite weak my credence in P is quite weak. The ‘ought’ of the content normativist’s claim that I ‘ought’ believe P (if and) only if P or that I ‘ought’ have a certain degree of credence in P will always ‘come “too late”’ (Glüer and Wikforss In Press, p. 126). My belief in P is embedded already in my finding that P. That I ‘ought,’ *in addition*, believe that P is an idle ‘ought.’

(2) The attempt to understand norms, instead, as governing one’s attitudes towards some content, then it follows that the ‘oughts’ of such norms are utterly *empty*. As I’d put it, the ‘ought’ will always “come too early.” If what attitude I have towards P is determined independently and antecedently to what I take my attitude towards P to be, then there’s no ‘ought’ concerning attitudinizing P that I follow, or even *could* follow. The reason is that the fact that I *do* believe that P, rather than, e.g., imagine that P, is explained in terms of norms determining that it is a belief I have in P. Whatever attitude I *then* consider as normative to have towards P is *already* normatively settled. Indeed, whatever normativity

there is to my believing, assuming, supposing, etc. that P is conceptually disconnected from whatever conclusion I reach on the issue. Thus I *cannot but* be subject to the output of antecedent normative determination of the type of attitude I already have. Such rejection, like Jarvis' (2012, p. 17), of the 'ought-implies-can' principle results in empty 'oughts.' For satisfying 'oughts' on this account isn't something anyone *does* and often something that isn't even within the scope of what people *can* do. The normative question whether I ought to believe P boils down to the question whether I already believe P since it is norms for content that determine whether my attitude is that of belief, not the other way round – if it's a belief I have in P, then that's *because* I 'ought,' am obliged or permitted, to believe P.

IV

I conclude that neither (A) nor (B) are independently plausible. Much less is (B) a promising route to distinguish belief from other propositional attitude types *even if* (A) were true.

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