

Belief is contingently involuntary

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BELIEF IS CONTINGENTLY INVOLUNTARY

Anthony Robert Booth

Abstract

The debate between “Normativists” and “Teleologists” about the normativity of belief has been taken to hinge on the question of which of the two views best *explains* why it is that we cannot (non-contingently) believe at will. Of course, this presupposes that there is an explanation to be had. Here, I argue that this supposition is unwarranted, that Doxastic Involuntarism is merely contingently true. I argue that this is made apparent when we consider that suspended judgement must be involuntary if belief is, that suspended judgement is not a belief (or set of beliefs), and that the aim or norm of suspended judgement cannot be constitutive if suspended judgement is not a belief (or set of beliefs).

I Normativism & Teleologism

Let us assume that we have no voluntary control over our beliefs, that Doxastic Involuntarism is the case. For any S, S cannot believe any given proposition just by willing herself to do so. We might be able to *influence* what we believe, when, for instance, we decide to improve our knowledge of the Wars of the Roses by reading up on it, or when we decide to go to church on hearing Pascal’s Wager. In short, we can influence what we believe because we can, to some degree at least, influence what evidence we consider, and what evidence we possess. But we do not, it can plausibly be held, exercise doxastic *control* in doing these things, since we do not antecedently know what change (if any) in doxastic attitude will ensue once we have made a change to our evidential situation. The question I would like to address in this paper is whether Doxastic Involuntarism is contingently or necessarily true. The question is of broader relevance (not just of intrinsic interest) because the two currently most influential accounts as regards the normativity of belief rule out the claim that Doxastic Involuntarism is contingently true. In fact, the debate between proponents of those views is taken to turn on which of the two views best explains why we cannot (non-contingently) believe at will. So if we have reason to believe that Doxastic Involuntarism must be contingently true (that it is a contingent psychological fact about us), then that also gives us good reason to question the tenability of the two views in question, and the currently dominant dialectic about the normativity of belief.

The two views I am making reference to here are *Normativism* and *Teleologism*. According to the former, belief is governed by a constitutive *norm* for belief, such that if one acquires a belief as a result of deliberation then one takes one’s belief to be correct iff true (cf. Boghossian 2003, Engel 2013, Fassio 2011, Gibbard 2005, Nolfi forthcoming, Shah & Velleman 2005, Shah 2003); according to the latter, belief is governed by a constitutive *aim*, such that if one believes that p (as a result of deliberation), one does so with the aim of believing that p just in case it is true (cf. Steglich-Petersen 2006, 2009, McHugh 2012 (a),(b))¹. The relevant detail for my purposes is that both Normativism and Teleologism rule out the possibility that Doxastic Involuntarism is merely contingently the case. Both accounts make it a condition of our having a belief that p that we cannot take ourselves to believe that p for non-epistemic reasons. In other words, on both accounts, we cannot consider a ‘belief’ of ours to be a *belief* if we think it is held for reasons that are irrelevant to its truth. If we did, we could not be described as believing with the aim of believing that p iff p is true, or taking belief to be correct iff true. An important part of the story here is that according to the Teleologist, believing with the aim of believing that p iff p is true is *constitutive* of belief, and

¹ See McHugh & Whiting (forthcoming) for a good overview of the debate.

according to the Normativist, believing while taking belief to be correct iff true is *constitutive* of belief. Thus, according to both the Normativist and Teleologist, Doxastic Involuntarism is non-contingently true because the ability to believe for non-epistemic reasons is ruled out by the very nature of belief. According to both the Normativist and Teleologist, belief can be caused by non-epistemic factors outside of deliberation – we may inadvertently believe for non-epistemic reasons, or fail to believe what we think we ought to out of weakness of the will – but that hardly shows that we can believe at will, since we are doing that *inadvertently* or in a way that is not fully in our control. Moreover, when we are deliberating regarding as to *whether to believe that p* we must take it that only epistemic reasons can settle the matter, and thus that only epistemic reasons can sway us². For the Teleologist this is because only epistemic reasons can count towards the constitutive *aim* of believing that p iff p is true, and for the Normativist, this is because only epistemic reasons can count toward the constitutive *norm* of believing that p iff p is true. But one may wonder: could not S voluntarily (so for non-epistemic reasons) decide to have an *incorrect* belief that p, since this would be compatible with S’s taking the belief that p to be correct iff true. The Normativist’s answer is that ‘correct belief’ here just means that which answers the question *whether to believe that p*, and that since that question can only be answered by epistemic reasons, only epistemic reasons can sway S. That is, this rules out the possibility that S can decide to have an incorrect belief that p, because, say, it would be prudent for S to believe that p, since that would be to admit that non-epistemic reasons can answer the question *whether to believe that p*.

As I mentioned, according to both the Normativist and Teleologist, Doxastic Involuntarism is non-contingently true because of some constitutive fact about the nature of belief. Because of their similarity on this matter, I would like to treat Normativism and Teleologism together for the rest of this paper, as the following claim:

Doxastic Constitutivism: Belief is constituted by its having either a truth-norm of correctness, or by its having a truth-aim, and this explains Doxastic Involuntarism.³

I want to defend the view that it is a contingent, psychological fact about us that we cannot believe at will, and so that the Constitutivist explanation cannot be the right explanation for why we cannot believe at will. Let us call this the Contingent Psychological Fact View.

Contingent Psychological Fact View: The fact that we cannot believe at will is merely a contingent fact about our psychologies. Were our psychologies constituted in the appropriate way, we would be able to believe at will.

² For instance, Shah in articulating Normativism writes:

What I suggest is that by framing his deliberation as answering to the question *whether to believe that p*, a disposition to be moved by considerations that he regards as relevant to the truth of *p* and a disposition blocking considerations that he regards as irrelevant to the truth of *p* are activated. That is, part of possessing the concept of belief involves being disposed in this way when one applies the concept to frame one’s reasoning. But, on this view, when one doesn’t exercise the concept of belief, as in cases of nondeliberative belief-formation, there is no guarantee that one’s cognitive activity will be regulated by these dispositions (Shah 2003, p. 467).

³ I do not know of any philosopher who *explicitly* endorses what I am calling Constitutivism. However, at least most (and maybe all) working in this area agree to it implicitly, by working on the suppressed premise that if Teleologism is not the case, then Normativism must be, or vice-versa: cf. McHugh & Whiting (forthcoming) (a survey article) for an illustration of this.

Here are the bare bones of my argument:

- (1) If we cannot believe at will, we also cannot suspend judgement at will. [Premise]
- (2) Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will. [Premise].
- (3) X explains Doxastic Involuntarism only if X explains why we cannot suspend judgement at will. [Premise].
- (4) Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot believe at will. [From (1), (2), (3)]
- (5) If Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot believe at will, then the Contingent Psychological Fact View is true. [Premise].
- (6) The Contingent Psychological Fact View is true. [From (4), (5)].

I am by no means the first person to have defended the Contingent Psychological Fact View. Jonathan Bennett (1990) has formulated two arguments for it⁴. In the first, Bennett asks us to consider a possible world inhabited by “The Credamites” who always, systematically forget how it is they acquired a belief when they acquired it for non-epistemic (that is, non-truth-orientated) reasons. If the Credamites are conceivable, it seems that there being a conceptual connection between believing that p and the aim of believing that p and taking p to be true (as Williams argued, for instance) cannot explain why we cannot believe at will. The Credamites’ concept of belief might well respect that conceptual connection but the Credamites can nonetheless believe at will. In the second argument, Bennett claims that we ought to accept that we have *indirect* control over our beliefs. And since an appeal to a conceptual connection between belief and truth in order to explain Doxastic Involuntarism would rule out our having such indirect control, we should consider the explanation to be inadequate.

Both of Bennett’s arguments seem to have been ignored in the recent literature on the normativity of belief. It is unclear to me why this has been the case, since it is unclear that the Credamites *do not* respect the connection between believing that p and believing with the aim of believing that p iff p (or while taking the belief that p to be correct iff p)⁵. Perhaps people just do not find Bennett’s case convincing. Perhaps one could make trouble for it by questioning whether we really have control over whether we ϕ if we can only ϕ when we *systematically* forget how it is that we ϕ -ed. Or by questioning whether we really have direct *control* over our beliefs, and not just mere indirect doxastic *influence*. We can change what evidence is at our disposal, and perhaps even how we are going to receive evidence (through the use of drugs and brain-washing, for instance), but we still perhaps cannot antecedently say for sure what our ensuing doxastic attitude will turn out to be at the moment we make the change. I think there is something to be said for both of these objections, but I think that the best explanation for why Bennett’s case has been ignored is simply that there has been a slight change in the dialectic in tackling this issue. Bennett was asking: is Doxastic Involuntarism true out of psychological or conceptual necessity? And the current literature is about the question: what account of belief best explains the phenomena (i.e. Doxastic Involuntarisms)? In other words, it has just been taken for granted that it is conceptually

⁴ Steup (2008, 2012) has argued that free belief is compatible with belief’s not being voluntary, where ‘voluntary’ means ‘caused by an intention’ (see Booth 2009, 2014 for criticism, and Steup forthcoming for a rejoinder). Peels (forthcoming) argues that belief can sometimes (in this world) be acquired at will – but he accepts that *for the overwhelming most part* they cannot, and the explanation as to why this is seems to me compatible with Constitutivism.

⁵ The motivation for these views was seemingly not to circumvent Bennett’s objection, but rather to give an account of the *nature* of belief in such a way that, for instance, it made a sharp distinction between belief that p and imagining that p (cf. Shah & Velleman 2003).

necessary that we cannot believe at will. My aim here is to present a new argument for the Contingent Psychological Fact View that engages with the new dialectic.

The argument works on the assumption that Constitutivism is the only game in town, as it were [Premise 5]. I do not think that anyone should take that to be controversial, given how broadly I have defined Constitutivism – viz. as any view that has it that belief is necessarily involuntary via appeal to some aim or norm that is thought to constitute belief.

It is uncontroversial to claim that belief and disbelief do not exhaust the taxonomy of doxastic attitudes one can take toward *p*. One can also, perhaps when the evidence toward that *p* is inconclusive, suspend judgement on whether *p*. If this is true, then (1) follows without controversy too, I think. The attitude of suspended judgement can *replace* belief, as per: ‘I used to believe that *p*, but on re-considering the evidence, I no longer believe that *p*, but suspend judgement on whether *p*’. So if we could suspend judgement at will, then we would also be able to exercise doxastic control – we would be able to drop a belief that *p* at will. So if belief is under no voluntary control, suspended judgement is under no voluntary control either.

However, I have been taking the phrases ‘belief is under no voluntary control’ and ‘we cannot believe at will’ to be synonymous. That might not be correct. Perhaps we cannot acquire beliefs at will, but we are able to drop beliefs at will. If we had at least some voluntary control over whether we suspended judgement, we would have some voluntary control over whether we could drop beliefs at will. It does not follow that we would be able to believe at will, only that the claim that we have no doxastic control is false. Premise (1) is not strictly true then. But premise (1) is in my argument as a means to support (2). And since the Constitutivist is trying to explain why we have no doxastic voluntary control, we can merely re-formulate (1) as follows:

(1’) If belief is under no voluntary control, suspended judgement is under no voluntary control.

It seems, phenomenologically, that we cannot drop beliefs at will, just like we cannot acquire beliefs at will. I cannot drop the belief that my dog died last year, for instance, even though I would really like to. What is the Constitutivist explanation for that inability? In broad brush-strokes, it will rely on something like synonymy between belief that *p* and belief that *p* is true. Once I believe that *p* is true (once I believe it is true that my dog died), I cannot but believe that *p* (I cannot but believe that my dog died). I defend premise (2) in the next section, and premise (3) in § III; in § IV, I argue that there cannot be a constitutive norm of suspended judgement if suspended judgement is a belief (this argument is motivated by a necessary reformulation of (3), as discussed in § III).

II Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will.

The reason I think that Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will is that the constitutive norm or aim of suspended judgement cannot be true belief or knowledge (or justified true belief, or something similar). A very quick argument for this claim is the following: when I suspend judgement on whether *p*, I simply do not believe that *p* (nor do I believe that not-*p*). If the aim (or constitutive norm) of suspended judgement is true belief, then suspended judgement would always fail to live up to its constitutive norm or aim. So there would be no such thing as suspended judgement. But there is such a thing as suspended judgement, so its constitutive aim or norm cannot be true belief (or knowledge, if knowledge entails true belief).

The obvious reply however is to claim that suspended judgement about whether *p* reduces to a belief or to a set of beliefs (perhaps about the probability of *p* given *e*) and that

these beliefs have truth as their constitutive aim or norm of correctness. So my rejoinder is to deny that suspended judgement is a belief, nor a set of beliefs. To see this, first of all consider whether suspended judgement is itself an attitude and not just the absence of a doxastic attitude. (My opponent here will have to concede, obviously enough, that suspension of judgment is an attitude if it is a belief)⁶. So what kind of an attitude is suspension of judgement? Linguistic considerations support the view that suspended judgement is what can be termed a “*wh*-attitude”; that is, an attitude that takes the grammar of who, what, whether, when, why locutions. This is because while it is infelicitous to say that ‘I suspend judgement that the dog ate my homework’, it is *not* infelicitous to say that ‘I suspend judgement on *whether* the dog ate my homework’. Correlatively, we do not say: ‘I believe who ate my homework’; but we do say: ‘I know who ate my homework’⁷. As Schaffer (2007) remarks, there might be an easy reduction strategy for Knowledge-*wh* locutions via appeal to the proposition that answers the embedded question denoted by the relevant *wh*-clause⁸. For instance, if I know who ate my homework, and the dog ate my homework, I know *that* the dog ate my homework (and so believe that the dog ate my homework). But such a reductive analysis cannot work on suspended judgement qua *wh*-attitude⁹, because when I suspend judgement on a question, I have no attitude toward a particular proposition (or set of propositions) *that answers the question*. If I did, I would not be suspending judgement! If I suspend judgement on whether the dog ate my homework, I do not believe that the dog ate my homework (if the answer to the embedded question is the dog); and I do not believe that the dog did not eat my homework (if the answer to the question is not the dog).

The obvious reply is to appeal to higher-order belief, about whether my evidence, say, settles the embedded question in the *wh*-clause, or the belief that whether *p* is not clear, or that I do not feel capable of determining what the evidence shows. This reply can be dealt with, however, simply by pointing out that we can suspend judgement without having any higher-order beliefs about the question denoted by the relevant *wh*-clause (just like we can believe that *p* without having any higher-order beliefs about our belief that *p*). There seems nothing odd about saying, for instance:

‘I suspend judgement on whether the dog ate my homework, but I have no beliefs about whether the evidence shows that the dog ate my homework.’

The above does not sound odd because the person making the locution might just have never considered what her evidence was, and just found herself suspending judgement. Similarly, we do not think it odd for someone to believe that *p*, without having ever considered whether *p* – she might just find herself believing it.

However, perhaps the problem arises because of the way in which we have characterised the truth-norm or aim for belief¹⁰. For instance, some philosophers take the constitutive aim of belief not to be to have true belief, but to avoid having false belief (cf.

⁶ This should not be controversial. My seven year old niece does not have any beliefs about how convincing my argument for the claim that belief is contingently involuntary is, but it seems wrong to say that she suspends judgement about it; Cavemen had no beliefs about whether the Higgs Boson exists, but it seems wrong to say that they suspended judgement on whether the Higgs Boson exists. For further defence, see Friedman 2013(a); Sturgeon (2010) characterises suspension of judgement as “committed neutrality” [so an attitude, not the mere absence of an attitude].

⁷ Cf. Friedman 2013 (b), Booth 2014, Higginbotham & May 1981.

⁸ See also Stanley 2011, and Stanley & Williamson 2001.

⁹ There may be other problems with the reductive analysis just mentioned, see Schiffer 2002.

¹⁰ Thanks to Daniel Whiting and Rik Peels for raising this issue.

Whiting 2012). When one's evidence toward *p* is inconclusive (for instance), one suspends judgement about whether *p*, precisely in order not to violate this norm, which constitutively governs our doxastic attitudes. So one does not need to consider suspended judgement to be a *belief* if it is to be subject to the same constitutive aim/norm of belief. However, I do not think this norm ('avoid false belief') is fine-grained enough for suspended judgement if suspended judgement is not itself a belief but is, nonetheless, more than mere absence of doxastic attitude. According to the norm under consideration (the avoiding false belief norm) mere absence of doxastic attitude is as epistemically good as suspended judgement. I avoid having false belief just as well by not having any doxastic attitude at all than by suspending judgement. But surely there are times when suspending judgment is epistemically *better* than simply having no doxastic attitude on a particular matter. Surely, for instance, the physicist's suspension of judgment toward whether cold fusion is possible relative to evidence *e* is epistemically superior to the cave man's absence of any doxastic attitude toward that question. Or to make sure it is not the implied background knowledge about physics (the caveman, but not the physicist, lacks) that is doing the heavy-lifting: surely a jury member who makes up their mind, and suspends judgement with respect to inconclusive evidence put forward at a trial, is doing something *epistemically* better than the jury member who on hearing the evidence simply stops considering the matter, and forms no relevant doxastic attitude.

One might be tempted to remedy things here by making the application of the norm conditional on one's having some doxastic attitude or another, as per: if you are going to have a doxastic attitude at all toward *p*, avoid a false belief that *p*. However, I think there are two problems with this move. First, suspension of judgement is an attitude toward a question, not a proposition (if the linguistic data I briefly summarised earlier has any weight). The point of introducing this avoid-false-belief norm was to avoid having to claim that suspension of judgement is a belief in order to be subject to the same norm/aim of belief. But, nevertheless, if it is a *belief* then it must be a higher-order belief about the evidential status of *S*'s believing that *p* (or something in that ball park) – that is, *not* about the proposition (the having of a doxastic attitude about) is a conditional on being subject to the avoid-belief norm. Second, there surely are times when we *ought* to have a doxastic attitude toward a subject matter, such that it is better to suspend judgement than have no doxastic attitude. For instance, suppose that at the end of a trial by jury, a member of a jury is asked to give his or her verdict on whether the Colonel was the murderer. The jury member replies: 'I have no opinion on the matter'. The interlocutor probes: 'Do you mean to say that you suspend judgement on whether the Colonel committed the murder?' The jury member clarifies: 'No, I simply have no attitude at all toward the issue.' It looks as if the jury member has done something wrong in this instance. The problem is that in light of this data (that the jury member has violated a doxastic norm in the case above), we cannot re-formulate the hypothetical avoid-falsehoods norm to something like: if you *ought to* have a doxastic attitude toward that *p*, avoid a false belief that *p*. Or at least we cannot appeal to such a formulation without giving an account of what it is to be obliged to have a doxastic attitude toward that *p*, such that the mere norm "avoid believing falsehoods" could not – at least not on its own – explain why we cannot believe at will. Whatever norm it is that tells us when we ought to have doxastic attitudes at all toward a proposition would also have to play a role in that explanation. This latter norm would then have to be constitutive, in order for it to make Doxastic Involuntarism necessarily true [else we would have some degree of doxastic control, in our ability to choose which propositions we have doxastic attitudes about]. But it is extremely difficult to imagine what such a norm could be, and the Constitutivists have so far not offered us any account of such a

norm. Until such an account is forthcoming, we ought to rule that the Constitutivist cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will.

III X explains Doxastic Involuntarism only if X explains why we cannot suspend judgement at will.

At first blush, premise (3) seems pretty benign, once we have premise (1) or (1'). Something like Ockham's razor recommends it: it would be odd, or overly fortuitous, if it turned out that we had no doxastic voluntary control out of conceptual necessity but that we had no voluntary control over suspended judgement out of mere psychological necessity, for instance. However, perhaps the Constitutivist can reply by claiming that the argument I am entitled to needs to be recast as follows:

(1') If belief is not under voluntary control, suspended judgement is not under voluntary control.

(2) Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will.

(3') An explanation of kind X explains Doxastic Involuntarism only if X explains why we cannot suspend judgement at will.

Therefore,

(4) Constitutivism cannot explain why we cannot believe at will.

The thought behind the idea that I must reformulate (3) to (3') might be that there is enough of a relevant difference between belief and suspended judgement to warrant a violation of the theoretical parsimony alluded to in (3). We can accept that it would seem overly fortuitous if it turned out that suspended judgement was contingently involuntary while belief not so. But it would *not* seem overly fortuitous if it turned out that belief is involuntary because of its constitutive link to a truth-aim or truth-norm, and that suspended judgement is involuntary because of a constitutive link to its own, different constitutive norm or aim. That is, there would be no violation of theoretical parsimony if the same *kind* of explanation showed us how both belief and suspended judgement are involuntary. Can there be a norm/aim for suspended judgement that can play the same role that the truth-norm or truth-aim does for belief? In the next section, I argue that there cannot.

IV Is there a Constitutive Aim or Norm of Suspended Judgement?

Assuming, then, that the constitutive aim or norm of suspended judgement is not truth, what else could it be? The trouble is that it is hard to think of a norm that can do the trick for suspended judgement that does not reduce suspended judgement to a belief or set of beliefs. For instance, perhaps the constitutive aim/norm of suspended judgement is not:

SJA₁: <Suspend judgment on whether p iff p is true>

Rather, it is such that you ought to:

SJA₂: <Suspend judgement on whether p iff you do not know whether p>

So you could not – in deliberation - suspend judgement as regards whether p if you did not take suspended judgement to be incorrect if you know that p, and correct if you do not know that p [or if you did not suspend with the aim of suspending iff you do not know whether p, on the Teleologist's account]. So you cannot take considerations that you do not take to be relevant to whether you know that p to settle for you whether to suspend judgement as regards whether p. As such, SJA₂ explains why you cannot suspend judgement at will – if it

is the constitutive norm/aim of suspended judgement, you cannot suspend judgement just because you want to, since only considerations relevant to whether you know that p will settle for you whether to suspend judgement. However, if SJA₂ is the constitutive aim of suspended judgement, then suspended judgment looks very much like it is a belief, namely the higher-order belief that you do not know whether p. From the first person point of view, in deliberation, believing that you do not know that p would be both necessary and sufficient for you to suspend judgement on whether p. But, as we have already mentioned, it looks like believing that you do not know that p is not necessary for you to suspend judgment on whether p. Suppose, for example, that it just seems to a caveman that the evidence as regards whether the buffalo is in the field opposite is inconclusive. He has never thought about knowledge, and has never considered that there is a connection between evidence and knowledge. So he does not take the fact that he has inconclusive evidence to be relevant as to whether he knows that p, but yet he suspends judgment as regards whether p. And it also looks like believing that you do not know that p is not sufficient for you to suspend judgment on whether p. Suppose that – wrongly, as I think some thought on the matter shows, but not unreasonably – a non-philosopher thinks that suspension of judgment is not itself an attitude, but the absence of a doxastic attitude toward whether p. That person believes that he does not know that p, but yet does not take himself to have the attitude of suspended judgment. If SJA₂ is true, this would be impossible. But it clearly is not.

Perhaps we can fix this by formulating the relevant norm/aim as follows:

SJA₃: <Suspend judgement on whether p iff your evidence regarding whether p is inconclusive>

So you could not – in deliberation - suspend judgement as regards whether p if you did not take suspended judgement to be incorrect if your evidence as regards p is conclusive, and correct if your evidence regarding p is inconclusive. So you cannot – in deliberation - take considerations that you do not take to be relevant to whether your evidence regarding p is conclusive to settle for you whether to suspend judgement as regards whether p. But what notion of evidence are we working with here? If it is *subjective* evidence we get the same problem as with SJA₂, namely that suspended judgement will come out looking like higher-order belief about one's evidence. If we mean *objective* evidence here, SJA₃ may not entail that suspended judgement is higher-order belief, but at the expense of the idea that SJA₃ is a *constitutive* norm for suspended judgement, since it is clear that we can suspend judgement when our evidence is objectively conclusive – we sometimes mistakenly take it to be inconclusive and suspend judgement. As such, SJA₃ cannot explain why we cannot suspend judgement at will¹¹.

To diagnose the problem in broader brush-strokes: for the Constitutivist, what explains DIV is that belief is governed by a constitutive norm or aim that rules out the possibility of our acquiring beliefs – in deliberation - that we believe bear certain properties. For instance, in deliberation, we cannot acquire a belief that we believe only has the property of making us happy, since only considerations relevant to the belief's truth will settle for us

¹¹ This does not overgeneralize as a problem for Constitutivism about *belief*, since the claim here is that Constitutivism cannot respect the fact that suspension of judgement is not a belief or set of beliefs. Taking a similar Constitutivist line about belief, and claiming that the relevant evidence is subjective doesn't threaten belief's being reducible to belief, in the sense that it's no threat at all. That is, it is not a problem for Constitutivism solely about belief. But as I have been trying to show, Constitutivism cannot explain Doxastic Involuntarism if it is solely about belief.

whether to acquire the belief. But this means that – again, in deliberation – our having certain higher-order beliefs will be sufficient for our acquiring a given belief: believing that a belief that p is true is sufficient for believing that p (and it will be necessary *in deliberation* too, though the necessary belief could be implicit or tacit so as to avoid an infinite regress). Now, if suspension of judgement has a constitutive aim or norm, then it must be the case that having certain higher-order beliefs about whether or not that norm has been met will be *in deliberation* both necessary and sufficient for suspending judgement. If the aim or norm of suspended judgement makes it both necessary and sufficient that one has a higher-order belief in order to suspend judgement, then suspended judgement just is higher-order belief. But, as we saw in our defence of premise (2), suspension of judgement is not just higher-order belief.

V Conclusion

As I have argued, it looks like there is no aim or norm that is constitutive of suspended judgement that does not make suspended judgement a species of belief. If we have reason to believe that suspended judgement is not a species of belief, this means that the Constitutivist cannot easily explain why suspended judgement is involuntary. This is problematic for the Constitutivist account of why *belief* is involuntary, since an account which entails that belief is necessarily involuntary but suspended judgement only contingently so, is theoretically extravagant and inelegant. The Constitutivist, at the very least, has some further explanatory work to do. This is especially so because an attitude of suspended judgement toward whether p can replace or debunk a belief that p. The success of my argument depends on whether a truth-norm or truth-aim of suspended judgement has been properly ruled out, and so on whether suspended judgement can be held to reduce to belief or to a set of beliefs. However, this means that at least I have shown that the Constitutivist must be committed to the success of this reduction. This, it seems to me, is an expensive price for the Constitutivist to pay.¹²

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