The Fragmented Mind

Edited by
CRISTINA BORGONI
DIRK KINDERMANN
and
ANDREA ONOFRI

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The Pragmatic Metaphysics of Belief

Eric Schwitzgebel

1. Introduction

If asked to list three beliefs that matter to me, I might offer the following:

1. that my children's happiness is far more important than their academic or financial success;
2. that women and men are equally moral and equally intelligent;
3. that most people are basically good at heart.

I care that I believe these things. I want to be the kind of person who believes such things. I feel as though if I didn't believe these things, it would be rather sad.

I also feel like I am saying something true when I assert these propositions. When I pause to reflect on the matter, I feel sincere inner assent. I feel confident that these claims are correct. I explicitly and consciously judge them to be so. In other words, I *intellectually endorse* these propositions.

On one view of belief, intellectual endorsement is sufficient for belief—or nearly sufficient, or sufficient in normal circumstances. If upon reflection I say, 'Most people are basically good at heart' with a feeling of confidence and sincerity, then that's what I believe. My beliefs are, so to speak, written on the face of my intellectual endorsements. Let's call this view *intellectualism* about belief.

On another view, intellectual endorsement isn't enough for belief. To determine whether I genuinely believe the propositions I sincerely affirm, we must inquire further. We must look at my overall pattern of actions and reactions, or at how I live my life generally. Do I in fact tend to treat my children's happiness as far more important than their academic success? For instance, am I generally more heartened by signs of their emotional health than by their good grades? Similarly, in my day-to-day interactions with women and men, do I tend to treat them as intellectually and morally equal? For instance, am I as ready to attribute academic brilliance to a woman as to a man? If I do not generally act and react in a way that reflects the wise, egalitarian, uncynical vision that I proudly endorse in affirming propositions 1–3, then, on this second type of view, it's not quite right to say that I really or fully have those beliefs. I might simply fail to have those beliefs. Alternatively, it might be best to describe me as being in a muddy, inconsistent,

indeterminate, or in-betweenish state (Schwitzgebel 2001, 2010). Let's call a view of belief *pragmatist* if it treats belief as behaviorally demanding in this way.[1]

In this chapter, I will argue for a pragmatic approach to belief and against an intellectualist approach. I will argue that the pragmatic approach is preferable because it better expresses our values, keeps our disciplinary focus on what is important, and encourages salutary self-examination. It directs our attention to what we ought to care about most in thinking about belief: our overall ways of acting in and reacting to the world.

The approach I favor is pragmatist in two distinct ways. First, it fits with the pragmatist tradition of Bain (1868/1973), Peirce (1877, 1878), James (1896/1912, 1907/2004), and Dewey (1920/1957, 1938)[2] in emphasizing behavioral patterns as central to belief. Second, it is metaphilosophically pragmatic in relying on pragmatic criteria to choose among competing metaphysical approaches, as I will now explain.[3]

2. Pragmatic Metaphysics Generally

Sometimes the world divides itself into neat types—neat enough that you can more or less just point your science at it and straightforwardly sort the *A*s from the *B*s. Other times, the world is fuzzy-bordered, full of intermediate cases and cases where plausible criteria conflict. When the world is the latter way, we sometimes face *antecedently open cases*. In antecedently open cases, the world does not force a classificational scheme upon us. You could classify the case as an *A* without doing too much violence to the phenomena, or you could classify it as a *B*, or you could just leave it indeterminate or intermediate.

Antecedently open cases are, or can be, decision points. If there's more than one way to build a legitimate metaphysics or classificational scheme, you have some options. You can consider whether you *want* to classify the thing in question as an *A*. Would there be some advantage to thinking of category 'A' so that it includes the case? Or is it better to think of 'A' in a way that excludes the case or leaves it intermediate? Such decisions can and often do reflect our interests and values, at least implicitly. Moreover, such decisions can and often do shape future choices

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[1] The 'phenomenal, dispositional account of belief' I articulate in other work (Schwitzgebel 2002, 2013) is behaviorally demanding in the relevant sense, since on that view behavioral dispositions are partly constitutive of believing. However, in this chapter I do not want to presuppose that the reader agrees with my dispositional approach. I hope that the view I defend in this chapter will be attractive to readers with a variety of views about the nature of belief.

[2] However, Dewey tended to prefer the terms 'judgment,' 'knowledge,' and 'assertability' to 'belief' (see 1938: 7; Brown 2015).

[3] For similar metaphilosophical pragmatism about belief, see Zimmerman (2018) and Poslajko (forthcoming).

and values, influencing both how we think about that particular type of case and how we think about category 'A' in general.

Pragmatic metaphysics is metaphysics done with these thoughts explicitly in mind. For instance: There are lots of ways of thinking about what a *person* is. Usually the cases are not antecedently open. You are a person; I am a person; this coffee mug is not a person. It wouldn't be reasonable to adopt a classificational scheme that yielded a different result than that. However, some interesting cases appear to be antecedently open, breaking in different directions depending on what criteria are emphasized: a fetus, a human without much cortex, a hypothetical conscious robot, a hypothetical enhanced dog. The world does not seem to force a classificational scheme that sorts all such cases neatly into persons and non-persons. We can choose to think of personhood in a way that includes various antecedently open cases, excludes them, or leaves them intermediate. In doing so, we both express and buttress certain values, for example about what sorts of beings deserve the highest level of moral consideration.

I am drawing here on three strands of thought in recent philosophy. One is the strand pursued by the self-avowed later pragmatists, such as Richard Rorty (1980/ 2010, 1993/2010) and Hilary Putnam (1990), who viewed all classificational decisions as pragmatically governed but who are also sometimes interpreted as embracing more radically open views about the classificational possibilities than the view I am endorsing here.[4] Another strand is the pragmatic approach in post-Kuhnian philosophy of science, especially among the 'Stanford School' thinkers, who see the world as sufficiently complex that it defies simple modeling. On this view, theory choice and model choice nearly always involve evaluating, on pragmatic grounds, tradeoffs among virtues such as simplicity, social utility, future research promise, and relative accuracy across ranges of phenomena of interest (Cartwright 1983, 1999; Dupré 1993; Horst 2016; and relatedly, Carnap's 1950 pragmatic approach to 'explication'). A third strand is the view in metaethics and meta-metaphysics that treats some of the debates in these areas as linguistic disputes but does not dismiss such disputes as trivial. Given how much can ride on choices of language, disputants in ethics and metaphysics can sometimes be interpreted as (implicitly or explicitly) disagreeing not primarily about non-normative facts but instead about the normative issue of how words such as 'race' or 'torture' *should* be used (Haslanger 2012; Plunkett and Sundell 2013; Plunkett 2015; Thomasson 2017; Novaes 2018; see also Cappelen 2018 and Poslajko forthcoming on 'conceptual engineering').

Pragmatic metaphysics requires there to not always be a single best way of classifying things, independent of our projects and interests. It requires enough

[4] See Page (2006) in defense of a relatively moderate reading of Rorty and Putnam.

fuzziness or multivocality that we can legitimately appeal to our projects and interests in favoring one articulation of our metaphysical categories over another.

Pragmatic metaphysics, as I intend the label, does not require any radical anti-realist commitments—no commitment, for example, to a realm of value that transcends all facts. Nor does it require that all metaphysical theses be decided on pragmatic grounds. It requires only this: that metaphysical disputes often turn on conceptual or terminological choices that are, or should be, responsive to our projects, interests, or values. This view is, I hope, rather bland. Despite the blandness of this form of pragmatism, its denial is implicit in discourses that proceed as though legitimate metaphysical argumentation could only appeal to interest-invariant empirical facts and a priori truths.

The human mind is a complex, fuzzy-bordered thing, right at the center of our values. Because it is complex and fuzzy-bordered, tricky classificational questions will arise, along with many antecedently open cases—cases that are intermediate or where the usual classificational criteria point in different directions. And because the mind is at the center of our values, it often matters how we classify such cases. Does being happy require *feeling* happy? Does deep compassionate concern that doesn't privilege its object as special count as *love*? Answers to these classificational questions aren't compelled by the phenomena. Instead, we can decide. What ranges of phenomena deserve such culturally important labels as 'happiness' and 'love'? The answer depends partly on what we do, or should, value.

3. Intellectual Endorsement versus Spontaneous Lived Behavior: The Case of Daniel

Some classificational decisions about belief are straightforward. I believe that my car is parked in Lot 30. You believe that Confucius lived in ancient China. Neither of us believes that the moon is made of cheese. Other cases appear to be antecedently open: cases of marginal confidence, cases in which faith is coupled with serious doubt, certain sorts of conceptual confusion, certain sorts of instability or fragmentation or partial forgetting.[5]

The type of antecedently open case that interests me most is intellectual endorsement of a proposition coupled with widespread failure to act and react generally as though that proposition is true. If intellectualism is correct, as I defined it in Section 1, then we should generally classify these cases as cases in which the person believes the endorsed proposition. If pragmatism is correct, then we should not generally classify these as cases of straightforward belief—either

[5] For a range of such cases, see Stalnaker (1984); Dennett (1987); Schwitzgebel (2002); Sommers (2009); Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel (2013); Elga and Rayo (Chapter 1 in this volume).

classifying them as outright failures to believe or instead (as I prefer) treating them as intermediate and 'in-betweenish.'

In earlier work (Schwitzgebel 2010), I argued against intellectualism primarily on theoretical grounds. The in-betweenish approach, I argued, makes better psychological sense. Here, I set those arguments aside. Instead, I will argue as follows: It is practically worthwhile for philosophers to reject intellectualism and accept some sort of pragmatic view instead. It's like the cases in Section 2. In defining 'person' or 'torture' or 'happiness' in one way rather than another, we express and buttress a vision of the world. We thereby suggest that this case is importantly like that one; they deserve to be classed together. We also suggest that the case is importantly unlike this other one; they deserve to be classed differently. These differences matter more; those other differences matter less. Our classificational decisions highlight selected features of the cases, rendering certain phenomena more visible. Other phenomena become less visible. Some projects are implicitly encouraged, while others are implicitly discouraged. This is obvious with 'happiness' and 'torture.' It is less obvious but still true, I will argue, with 'belief.'

To see why, we need examples. I will develop one example in detail and then sketch a few others.

Daniel,[6] let's suppose, sincerely says that low-wage workers deserve as much respect as people who are paid handsomely; maybe even more respect. Politically, he tilts left. He's thirty years old and an advanced graduate student in philosophy. He votes liberal Democrat. When political candidates say that existing social structures give working-class people a raw deal, he cheers them on. He went to an elite undergraduate university, and he admires those of his classmates who chose personally meaningful careers over money-oriented paths. He makes it a policy to tip generously. He says to friends and family—especially in arguments with his right-leaning uncle Jordan—that undocumented farm laborers and hotel staff, people who work at the lowest level in food service and retail, day laborers, and custodians deserve as much respect as lawyers, engineers, and professors of philosophy. Maybe they deserve even more respect. Life is full of hard knocks for them, he says. They don't have the same safety net. It can be a struggle for them just to get by. Viewed properly, they are often more admirable, overall, than full professors cozily ensconced in tenure. He says this passionately (maybe too passionately). He feels immensely confident that he is right. He doesn't feel at all ambivalent about it. He even tries to be especially nice to these people.

Here's the twist. He *tries* to be nice. Usually, there is something ill-tuned in the way he goes about this. He doesn't find it natural to be nice to them, to think of

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[6] The names in all of my examples were selected randomly, after the examples had already been drafted, from lists of former lower-division students in my classes. To avoid confusion or offense, I have excluded 'Jesus,' 'Mohammed,' and very uncommon names.

them as equals. He has to work his way toward it. It's forced, sometimes even condescending. 'Oh, bussing tables at Denny's Diner is just as valuable as writing philosophy!' he says to a busser he has cornered. He's not intentionally lying or misrepresenting himself—he means it, in a way—but his words have an air of inauthenticity, and both he and the busser know it. He's trying to be respectful, but he's failing, and this failure is typical of him.

In a department store, it would usually not seem jarring to Daniel for a well-dressed man to interrupt a conversation between an employee and a poorly dressed customer, but if the poorly dressed customer were to interrupt the well-dressed man, that would typically strike him as rude. If someone who looked like a well-dressed engineer and someone who looked like a migrant laborer were both sitting in the coach section of an airplane, the laborer spread out comfortably in an exit row aisle seat with extra legroom, the engineer jammed into a tiny middle seat, Daniel might passingly think that something was wrong with that situation—but then maybe a moment later correct himself with the thought that it was fair turnabout.

The patterns are only statistical. Daniel spontaneously loathes some of the rich: the most vapidly ostentatious Maserati drivers and diamond-clad socialites. And sometimes, Daniel can authentically connect with poor people in an admiring and respectful way. Maybe he stops and listens, notices some common ground, hears a story about impressive obstacles they have overcome. His response patterns fluctuate somewhat with his mood, with how much he likes the other's hairstyle and clothing, with some good or bad memory that happens to bubble up—in no perfectly coherent pattern. Under rare conditions, he might even be inclined to wholeheartedly endorse classist thoughts. Few of us are entirely consistent.

Daniel, let's suppose, knows all this about himself, or at least suspects it. Let's also suppose that he has all of these tendencies at once and can manifest different ones simultaneously, for example by pontificating against classism in a way that manifests disrespectful classism toward the housekeeper to whom he is speaking.

I like Daniel. I don't mean to be harsh. I see a lot of myself in him, though how much of myself, exactly, I'm not in a great position to judge.

So here's the question: Does Daniel believe that the working poor deserve at least as much respect as those of higher social status?

We can imagine similarly convoluted cases on a range of topics: Duy-Anh sincerely says that God sees all and damns the wicked to Hell, but he does not tend to act and react in the way we would expect of someone who believes that to be true. Alejandro sincerely says that befriending people in wheelchairs is just as rewarding as befriending those who can walk easily without aid, but in fact he tends to act and react in ways that are more consistent with the assumption that people in wheelchairs are not worth his time. Kennedy sincerely says that money doesn't matter much, really, above a certain basic income, but her choices and emotional reactions tell a different story. Nancy sincerely says that her

underachieving adult son will soon become one of the top salespeople in his company, but much of her other behavior seems more realistically pessimistic.

How should we think about such cases?

4. Situating Intellectualism

Intellectualism, as I've characterized it, is the view that we should think of Daniel and the others as genuinely and unambiguously believing the propositions that they intellectually endorse. I've labeled the alternative view 'pragmatism.' According to this alternative view, how you live your life, how you move through the world, the choices you make, the spontaneous reactions you have, and what you unreflectively take for granted—such things are sufficiently central to belief that Daniel and the others don't deserve to be called straight-up, unambiguous believers, despite what they would sincerely say about the topics in question. On the intellectualist approach, intellectually endorsing a proposition is sufficient, or nearly sufficient, for believing it. On a pragmatic approach, intellectual endorsement is not enough. To qualify as someone who fully or truly believes, you must also live that way. (A certain type of pragmatist about belief might hold that we should believe what it is useful to believe. The present argument does not rely on that species of pragmatism.)

It's possible that the majority of philosophers who have written extensively about belief would reject intellectualism. Daniel Dennett (1978) is clear about it, contrasting belief with the more intellectual 'opinion.' Brian Loar (1981), John Searle (1983), Donald Davidson (1984), Ruth Millikan (1984), Robert Stalnaker (1984), Jerry Fodor (1987), Fred Dretske (1988), Lynne Rudder Baker (1995), Robert Cummins (1996), Robert Matthews (2007), and Peter Carruthers (2015) all characterize belief in ways that suggest that its manifestation in choice and action is at least as important as its relation to sincere assertion. Still, it's not always clear how these philosophers would handle cases like Daniel's. One complication derives from the commonly accepted notion of 'occurrent belief.' In the mainstream literature, intellectual endorsement is typically assumed to be sufficient for 'occurrent belief,' which is in turn assumed to be sufficient for belief.[7]

Some philosophers are explicitly committed to intellectualism about belief or to principles from which intellectualism appears to follow. For example, Saul Kripke recommends a 'disquotational principle' according to which '[i]f a normal English speaker, on reflection, sincerely assents to "p", then he believes that p' (1979/1988: 112–113). L. Jonathan Cohen writes:

[7]   For example, de Sousa (1971); Fodor (1987); Audi (1994); Huddleston (2012).

belief that p is a disposition, when one is attending to the issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition p, normally to feel it true that p and false that not-p, whether or not one is willing to act, speak, or reason accordingly.   (1992: 4)

Matthew Boyle argues that 'the very existence of [a rational subject's] belief that P is constituted by her persisting assent to P' (2009: 143). Tamar Gendler (2008a, 2008b), Cristina Borgoni (2016), and Eric Mandelbaum (2016) consider 'implicit bias' cases similar to Daniel's and defend views on which their Daniel-like characters are properly described as 'believing' what they explicitly endorse. On Gendler's view, the behavior at odds with the person's endorsements is best explained by appeal to habit, association, emotional reaction, or 'alief.' Borgoni and Mandelbaum attribute this to contradictory beliefs: both the belief that P (e.g. 'The working poor deserve as much respect as the handsomely paid') and the belief that not-P ('The working poor do not deserve as much respect'), which is intellectualist in one way (sincere assertion is approximately sufficient for belief) but closer to being pragmatist in another way.[8]

Intellectualism also fits nicely with optimism about self-knowledge or 'first-person authority.' Daniel would probably say, 'I believe that the working poor deserve equal respect.' Nancy would probably say, 'I believe that my son will soon be a top salesperson.' If knowledge of one's own beliefs is sufficiently easy that Daniel and Nancy easily have it, presumably what they know about their beliefs is that they have the ones that they intellectually endorse.

That we have privileged self-knowledge of our beliefs is widely accepted among philosophers. Sydney Shoemaker (2009) argues that second-order beliefs contain the first-order beliefs that they self-ascribe as parts and that therefore, necessarily, if a person genuinely believes that they believe something, they do in fact believe that thing. Alex Byrne (2018) describes a 'transparency' procedure of answering questions about what one believes by investigating the outside world, arriving at conclusions, and then self-attributing belief in those conclusions. Self-attributions that arise in this way, Byrne argues, are 'self-verifying' in the sense that if the procedure is followed, the resulting second-order belief must be true. Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich characterize self-knowledge of belief as a 'trivial' matter of detecting representations in the Belief Box, appending 'I believe that ____' to them, and placing them back in the Belief Box (2003: 161). Dorit Bar-On (2004) argues that when we speak our minds or express our opinions, these avowals have

[8]   See Brownstein and Madva (2012) and Marley-Payne (2015) for problems with the division between the rational and the arational that Gendler's view appears to require. Zimmerman (2018) embraces a view that bears some similarity to Gendler's, but which is more pragmatist in spirit (and inspired by the historical pragmatists). Zimmerman's 'intellectualist'/'pragmatist' distinction does not map neatly onto my own, and his position is probably more intellectualist than mine while being less intellectualist than the position I am critiquing in this chapter. I regret not having the space here to do justice to his intermediate view.

a special epistemic security. In general, the more a philosopher emphasizes the ease, simplicity, or near-infallibility of self-knowledge of belief, the more they invite us to treat intellectual endorsement as nearly sufficient for belief. Knowing what you believe is much more challenging if it requires knowing not only what you intellectually endorse but also how you act and react in general.

When faced with dissonant cases where intellectual endorsement and practical lived behavior diverge, I favor an in-betweenish approach over views on which we must flatly deny belief in the endorsed proposition. Since the intellectual side of ourselves matters, we have a mixed case of conflicting criteria, defying a simple yes-or-no answer, if we wish to be careful. (Compare: Is a person who is very courageous in some ways and cowardly in others really courageous?) In the arguments to follow, I will sometimes rely on this in-betweenish view, but I am unconcerned about defending myself from those with even more behaviorally demanding views than my own, who prefer to flatly deny belief if one does not walk the walk. Both types of view count as 'pragmatist' in my intended sense. I also favor a 'dispositional' approach to belief over a representational realist approach (see Schwitzgebel 2006/2019 for a taxonomy), and I will sometimes express my position in dispositional language, although I hope that my arguments here can be readily adapted to fit with a broad range of representational realist views.

5. The Trunk-and-Branch Argument against Intellectualism

We have a metaphysical choice. 'Belief' is in part a technical term in philosophy. 'Belief' is a mushy, multi-valenced term in ordinary use.[9] We can adopt and cheer for relatively intellectualist conceptual and linguistic practice, or we can adopt and cheer for relatively less intellectualist conceptual and linguistic practice. Even if we aren't aware of choosing, we implicitly favor one approach over another when we use the term 'belief,' or decline to do so, in disputable cases.

I will now argue that a relatively less intellectualist approach to belief better serves our interests. My argument has a trunk and three branches.

The Trunk: Belief is one of the most central and important concepts in all of philosophy. It is central to philosophy of mind: It's the most commonly discussed of the propositional attitudes. It is central to philosophy of action: It's standard to view actions as arising from the interaction of beliefs, desires, and intentions. It is central to epistemology: Much of epistemology concerns the conditions under which beliefs are justified or count as knowledge. Religious belief is a central topic in philosophy of religion. 'Belief reports' is a central topic in philosophy of language.

A concept this important to philosophical thinking should be reserved for the most important thing in the vicinity that can plausibly answer to it, unless there is some exceptional reason to do otherwise. Central terms should track matters of central importance. In general, attaching central terms to phenomena of secondary importance risks misdirecting disciplinary attention, risks signaling to outsiders and new participants that the secondary phenomenon is more important than it is, and risks failing to make important patterns as salient as they should be.

The most important thing in the vicinity of 'belief'—the most important target phenomenon that could plausibly answer to the term without seriously distorting existing practice—is not our patterns of intellectual endorsement and our most thoughtful, attentive behavior. It is our *overall* patterns of action and reaction. Since the general pattern matters more than the pattern of intellectual endorsement, we should attach the powerful word 'belief' to this general pattern, barring some compelling reason to do otherwise.

No such compelling reason exists. On the contrary, there is good reason to prefer pragmatist usage, as I will elaborate in three 'branch arguments.' Because it attaches 'belief' to the more general and important cognitive pattern, the pragmatic approach to belief (a) better expresses our values, (b) keeps our disciplinary focus in the right place, and (c) discourages noxiously comfortable self-opinions by forcing us to examine our behavior and implicit assumptions in thinking about our most cherished attitudes. By collectively choosing to conceptualize 'belief' in a behaviorally demanding way, we will better advance projects that should be central to the discipline than if we conceptualize belief as primarily a matter of intellectual endorsement. That is the pragmatic metaphilosophical argument that justifies thinking of 'belief' as the historical pragmatists did, as the attitude one takes in walking the walk.

We can use a different word to capture our intellectual endorsements. I recommend 'judgment.' We can say that Daniel *judges* and is *disposed to judge* that the working poor deserve equal respect. 'Judgment' is also an important term in philosophy, even if not as important as 'belief.'[10] And 'judgment' sounds somewhat conscious and intellectual, well suited to capture Daniel's explicitly thoughtful side.

The argument of this section is trunk and branch in the following sense: The trunk argument—attach the most important term ('belief') to the most important phenomenon (the general pattern)—creates only a default supposition, barring countervailing considerations. The branches add more specific reasons to match important to important in the particular case of 'belief.'

Branch 1. A pragmatic approach to belief better expresses our values. As I argued in Section 2, our terminological choices express our values. In classifying an antecedently open case as an A rather than leaving it intermediate or classifying it as a B, we implicitly suggest that the case is more like the other As than the Bs, at least with respect to the classificational task at hand. In classifying a fetus as a 'person,' we implicitly suggest that a fetus is importantly like a normal human infant or adult with respect to what matters in thinking about personhood. In classifying someone with mixed ancestry as 'Black' or a particular type of act as 'torture,' we similarly express a set of values: With respect to what matters most in classifying races or rights violations, these cases are similar enough to the canonical As that they deserve to be called As.

An intellectualist approach, then, implicitly commits us to the following valuation, unless we make sufficient effort to disown that valuation: With respect to what matters most in thinking about belief, cases like Daniel's are similar enough to canonical cases of belief that they deserve to be classified as belief. We treat intellectual endorsement as the central feature of importance that philosophers' usage should track. How people live in general, their patterns of thinking in general, including their implicit assumptions, lived choices, and emotional reactions, we treat as secondary.

Since belief is the most important propositional attitude term and one of the most important terms in all of philosophy, this implicitly expressed valuation is not as innocent as it might be for a less central term like 'judgment.' Here's one way to think of the situation: Suppose we have two sets of phenomena we want to label. Phenomenon X is the phenomenon of generally acting and reacting, reasoning and feeling, as though P is true, implicitly as well as explicitly, spontaneously as well as in thoughtful moments. Phenomenon Y is the phenomenon of being disposed, upon reflection, to intellectually endorse P. Now here we have two labels which might plausibly apply to either phenomenon without too much violence to our conflicting and unstable patterns of ordinary and philosophical usage: the disciplinarily central term 'belief' and the disciplinarily secondary term 'judgment.' To which phenomenon shall we affix which label? Absent a compelling reason to do otherwise, to affix the more important word 'belief' to the intellectual phenomenon overemphasizes the importance of our endorsements.

It is as though we were to say to Daniel, Kennedy, Duy-Anh, and the rest: You have what matters most in thinking about belief and in thinking about attitudes in general, according to us philosophers. Your intellectual endorsements are what should carry the classificational weight. How you act otherwise is secondary.

But how you act is not secondary. It's easy to talk; it's hard to change your life. I don't want to say to Daniel that he believes what he says he believes—that he has the attitude that seems to matter most to us philosophers—just because he feels sincere when he says certain pleasant-sounding things. I don't want to let him off the hook that easily. And I don't want to let myself off the hook. I don't want to say that I really believe all the lovely truths I tell myself I believe if I don't live accordingly. My unlovely habits and reactions partly constitute my basic attitudes toward the world. They speak to who I am just as much as my lovely intellectual endorsements do, if not more.[11] (And the same is true in Huck Finn cases, where the intellectual endorsement is ugly but the emotional reactions and practical choices admirable.) If I don't walk the walk, then I don't want to be able to say that I really, or fully, or unambiguously have the attitude that philosophy treats as so central: belief. If I don't treat women as well as I treat men in my practical choices and implicit assumptions, then I don't think I've earned the right to say that I really or fully or unambiguously believe in their equality. If my pattern of living doesn't reveal more concern for my children's emotional well-being than for their grades, I don't think I've earned the right to say that I really or fully or unambiguously believe that their emotional well-being is more important.

Branch 2. A pragmatic approach to belief keeps our disciplinary focus in the right place. One might react to Branch 1 with the following thought: Even if people's overall patterns of action and reaction are generally more important than their patterns of intellectual endorsement, philosophy as a discipline works better if it focuses on intellectual endorsement—or at least philosophy of mind works better, and philosophy of action, and epistemology. For this reason, the argument continues, it's practically desirable to dedicate our disciplinarily central term 'belief' to our intellectual endorsements.

I would argue, on the contrary, that philosophy of mind, philosophy of action, and epistemology ought to focus on the big picture rather than privileging what we would explicitly endorse.

Why should philosophers of mind and action, for example, be so interested in belief that we place the concept near the center of the discipline? Is it because we want to theorize about our intellectual endorsements? In part, yes, but that is not primarily what animated Davidson, Searle, Millikan, Fodor, Dennett, and most of the others who set the agenda for recent mainstream Anglophone philosophy of mind and action. They aimed higher. They wanted to theorize cognition and action generally, and they used the term 'belief' to capture a general attitude ranging widely across our thought and behavior. Why should epistemologists care about the justification of belief and its relation to knowledge? Is it because they care whether our intellectual endorsements are justified or qualify as knowledge?

[11] See Nietzsche (1886/1966) and Freud (1923/1960, 1933) historically, and Arpaly (2002) and Smith (2005, 2008) more recently.

In part, yes. But epistemology should be, and I believe is, animated by the larger goal of theorizing more general facts about our cognition: the whole pattern of our knowledge in action, our background assumptions, what we take for granted and implicitly rely on, as well as what we would explicitly endorse upon reflection. If we treat 'belief' fundamentally as a matter of intellectual endorsement, then we do a disservice to those who have worked to centralize the concept of belief in the field with the aim of theorizing something more important and central to our cognitive structure than our patterns of intellectual endorsement.

Even philosophy of language and logic need not focus primarily on what we would say or endorse on reflection. As important, maybe more important, to those subfields is (or should be) what we implicitly accept and respond to, the prefer-ences and assumptions that underlie our words and choices, the worldviews we enact and unwittingly spread.

If philosophy would make better progress by temporarily setting aside larger issues in favor of smaller, more tractable ones, that too might justify focusing on the small. Maybe patterns of intellectual endorsement are relatively tractable, so that focusing on them enhances disciplinary progress, at least in some areas of philosophy. If so, however, this is not generally the case across the discipline. Debates about functionalism, consciousness, and representational architecture, for example, don't primarily concern intellectual endorsement. Indeed, much recently influential work in philosophy of mind requires that we notice, rather than deprioritize, aspects of mentality that don't manifest themselves in explicit endorsement: in implicit and embodied cognition; in delusion, self-deception, confabulation, irrationality, and self-ignorance; and in the recent emphasis on 'System 1' over 'System 2' processes.[12] We ought to cast our eyes widely across the psychological landscape. Any practical advantages of a more limited focus on intellectual endorsement apply, at best, to smallish sub-debates.

My point here can partly be made in terms of the intrinsic value of philosophy. What is it that makes philosophy a great discipline? I submit that it is this: Philosophy encourages us to explore the most fundamental questions there are, questions about life, value, meaning, mind, society, causation, knowledge, time, beauty, and the nature of the universe. Exploring these fundamental questions is an intrinsically worthwhile thing to do. Part of human flourishing, indeed part of the awesomeness of life on Earth, is that there are moments when complex bags of mostly water can step back and reflect seriously about the big picture. It is simply great, without need of further justification, that our world hosts a thriving academic discipline that encourages us to devote our minds to thumpingly hard questions of fundamental importance. Philosophy surrenders some of this

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[12] On dual-process models of cognition, see Evans (2008); Evans and Frankish (2009); Kahneman (2011). Admittedly, some contributors to these debates favor views that I regard as too intellectualist, e.g. Zimmerman (2018); Gendler (2008a, 2008b); Bortolotti (2010).

greatness if we philosophers focus too much, without good reason, on matters of secondary importance. This is one reason to insist that our central disciplinary terms must prioritize what is important.

Consider making a case for the philosophical centrality of our concept of 'belief' to a non-philosopher—your cousin Alfredo the firefighter, perhaps. Would you rather tell him that this concept, belief, around which so much of our discipline is structured, is primarily about what one would intellectually endorse upon reflection? Or would you rather tell him that this central concept of ours, belief, is as much about whether you walk the walk as whether you talk the talk? That we philosophers, in thinking about what people's attitudes are, are interested in people's general postures toward the world, what they implicitly accept and rely on, how they act when it matters, as much as what they would sincerely assent to when questioned? I know which vision of the discipline makes me prouder. Maybe Alfredo is particularly interested in religious belief, or belief in the goodness of humanity, or the belief that all people are created equal. I want to tell him that, according to us philosophers, to believe these things is not just to be ready to endorse them upon reflection but to live them.

Branch 3. A pragmatic approach to belief discourages noxiously comfortable self-opinions by forcing us to examine our behavior and implicit assumptions in thinking about our most cherished attitudes. People care immensely about what they believe. Our beliefs—especially our big-picture beliefs—are crucial to our sense of who we are.[13] The pragmatic account encourages those of us who care about our beliefs to take a salutary hard look at our practical behavior. The intellectualist account, by contrast, risks flattering us and encouraging us toward noxiously comfortable self-assessments.

In Section 4, I mentioned the natural fit between intellectualism and privileged self-knowledge. If self-knowledge of our beliefs is easy, presumably what we know about our beliefs is that we have the beliefs we intellectually endorse. It's much harder to know how you comport yourself toward the world generally. Intellectualism encourages Daniel, for example, to assess his belief about the working poor as follows: He should determine what he is inclined to intellectually endorse ('The working poor deserve at least as much respect as the handsomely paid') and then conclude that, since intellectual endorsement is approximately sufficient for belief, he must have that appealing belief.

A pragmatic approach requires Daniel to cast his eye more widely in thinking about what he believes. It requires him to consider not only his intellectual endorsements but also his patterns of spontaneous behavior, his emotional reac-tions, and his unreflective assumptions about individual people. This is a more difficult, less comfortable, and more revealing exercise. On an intellectualist view,

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[13] See Heiphetz, Strohminger, and Young (2017) for one recent piece of empirical evidence in support of this claim.

we might happen to notice the stark conflict, when it exists, between what we intellectually endorse (or 'believe') and how we act in the world, but we are not forced to notice this conflict in order to assess whether we believe in the first place. The very heart of the pragmatic view, by contrast, consists in a commitment to be attuned to such possible conflicts.

From the first-person perspective, our intellectual endorsements are obvious: They spring into view as soon as we consciously reflect, and with them we seem to give voice to our genuine attitudes. Normally, we *want* our endorsements to reflect our genuine attitudes, and we assume they do. That we live according to our sincere affirmations is an attractive inferential leap. The pragmatic approach to belief is useful in part because it demands caution about this appealing inference. The pragmatic approach highlights what is not immediately visible and what we typically find less appealing about ourselves. Self-knowledge of one's attitudes becomes an appropriately intimidating project, starting with philosophers' favorite and paradigmatic attitude, belief. The pragmatic approach demands that we replace lazy self-flattery with difficult self-critique.

People do not reliably live according to the opinions and values they intellectually endorse in the matters they care about most. Indeed, it is this very caring about what our attitudes are that tempts us into self-deception and wishful thinking and that makes frank self-examination so unpleasant. I am stunned by the breadth and diversity of our failures. How do we really treat our family, our colleagues, our students, strangers in the world around us? What do we really prioritize in our choices? What we sincerely say we believe about ourselves and about those around us, what we sincerely say we find valuable, and how we actually steer ourselves through the world are often badly misaligned. I see no better way to highlight this important and disappointing fact than to refuse to privilege intellectual endorsement in our discussion of attitudes.

6. Two Roles for Belief Attribution

Another way to think about the fundamental issue at stake is this: Belief attribution, both in philosophy and in ordinary language, normally serves two different types of role. One is predicting, tracking, or reporting what a person would verbally endorse. When we attribute belief to someone, we are doing something like indirect quotation, speaking for them, expressing what we think they would say (e.g. in the simple versions of the 'myths' in Sellars 1956/2000, 1969 and Wettstein 2004). The other role is predicting and explaining non-linguistic behavior (e.g. Dennett 1987; Fodor 1987; Andrews 2012). We might call the first role *testimonial*, the second *predictive-explanatory*. In adult human beings, when all goes well, the two coincide. You attribute to me the belief that class starts at 2 p.m. It is true both that I would say, 'Class starts at 2 p.m.' and that I would try to show

up for class at 2 p.m. (assuming I want to attend class). But what happens when these two roles for belief attribution come apart, as with Daniel, Alejandro, and the others?

Typically, self-attributions of belief are testimonial. If we were to ask Daniel whether he believes that the working poor deserve equal respect, he would presumably answer with an unqualified *yes*. Any other answer would be misleading. If he were to say 'kind of' or 'it's complex,' he would probably give his conversational partner the wrong idea. If he were to go into detail about his spontaneous reactions to people, he would probably be missing the point of the question. Rejecting intellectualism thus risks complicating testimonial practice. Daniel might have to switch to talking about his 'judgments' rather than his 'beliefs,' or at least we might have to reinterpret him in that way if we want to be careful. This is a potential pragmatic cost of my proposal.

On the other hand, consider Daniel's grandmother. She scolds him: 'Do you *really* believe that the working poor deserve equal respect? You sure don't act that way, for all your fine talk.' Or consider a couple of custodians gossiping about Daniel behind his back. They say, with some justice, that he doesn't think that people like them deserve much respect. Or consider Daniel at age sixty, after a miserable experience in academia as a long-term adjunct, followed by a series of disappointing jobs working under horrible bosses as a bartender and a low-level librarian. His visceral respect for the elite is long gone. He can say, looking back: When I was thirty, I didn't deep-down believe that the working poor deserved equal respect. Now I do. Not all folk attribution is testimonial.

It is a simplifying assumption in our talk of 'belief' that these two roles of belief attribution—the testimonial and the predictive-explanatory—converge upon a single thing: what one *believes*. When that simplifying assumption breaks down, something has to give, and not all of our practices can be preserved without reinterpretation.

7. Is This Too Harsh?

Here's a worry. Daniel might react negatively to being spoken of, or spoken to, in the way I recommend. He might react defensively, angrily. He might feel that we have undercut his authority to speak for himself about what he believes. We might do better, if our aim is to help him to see and change his behavior, if we use a lighter touch; if we instead say something like 'Of course you *believe* that the working poor deserve equal respect, but look at all these reactions you have that don't fit with that belief.'[14]

[14] Tamar Gendler, Karen Jones, and Aaron Zimmerman have all pressed this point in conversation. See also Saul (2013: sec. 4.3).

This is an open empirical question. Some evidence suggests that it can be helpful to ascribe traits or virtues to people aspirationally, even if they don't entirely live up to those traits (Alfano 2013). However, other evidence suggests that frank confrontation can be more effective than too soft a touch, and it remains unclear what level of aggression or assertiveness is most effective in dealing with prejudice (Czopp et al. 2006; Becker and Barreto 2014; Scaife et al. 2020). The empirical case is not currently clear enough either way, I think, to overcome the considerations I've advanced concerning the costs of subscribing to an overly intellectualist conceptualization of a term that is so central to philosophy as currently practiced.

Also note that it is not a commitment of the pragmatic view that we must *simply* say that Daniel doesn't believe what he is saying, much less that he believes the opposite of what he says. We can instead, as I would recommend, decline to give a simple answer and attribute to Daniel a complex, mixed-up state that is not helpfully summarized by saying either that 'he believes' or that 'he fails to believe.' This might be easier for him to hear than a flat denial that he believes.

Another softening move takes the following form. Once we recognize how pervasive cases like Daniel's are, the negativity we feel toward Daniel ought to lose some of its sting. If *all* we care about is classism, and if we see ourselves as non-classist, then in not taking Daniel's testimony about his beliefs at face value, we raise ourselves above Daniel and distance ourselves. But if we see Daniel's condition simply as the normal human condition, including in ourselves, our feelings toward him are likely to be different. Few of us are immune to Daniel-like manifestations of sexism, racism, ageism, and the many forms of ableism. Do you think that you respond to people you regard as physically beautiful in the same way that you respond to people you regard as unattractive, in matters on which physical appearance should have no bearing?[15] Consider other idealistic attitudes you endorse. Maybe, like me, you're a professor. You probably endorse a generous attitude toward the welfare of your students, a generous attitude toward other members of the department, a positive attitude toward balancing work and home life, and so forth. But do your spontaneous reactions and actual lived choices consistently reflect these aspirational attitudes, which are so pleasant to express and roll so easily off the tongue?

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[15] On the relationship between judgments of beauty and other traits such as academic intelligence, see Langlois et al. (2000); Talavas et al. (2016). From Langlois et al.: 'Contrary to conventional wisdom, there is strong agreement both within and across cultures about who is and who is not attractive. Furthermore, attractiveness is a significant advantage for both children and adults in almost every domain of judgment, treatment, and behavior we examined. The magnitude of attractiveness effects is roughly the same as or larger than that of other important variables in the social sciences. In most cases, the benefits of attractiveness are large enough to be "visible to the naked eye" and are of considerable practical significance' (p. 404, with inline citations removed).

Looking at myself, I sympathize with Daniel. I still want to say that his beliefs aren't as egalitarian as he probably thinks they are. But I have no desire to say this in a stinging way. After all, what kind of example am I?

8. Two Kinds of Fragmentation

Daniel, we might say, is a *fragmented believer*. Some of his behavior and reasoning seems to be responsive to, or to reflect, the information or proposition that the working poor deserve as much respect as those who are well paid; some of his other behavior and reasoning seems not to reflect or be responsive to that information or proposition. In some sense, on this issue, his mind is fragmented, splintered, or disunified. Call this bare statement the *minimalist fragmentation* thesis. Fragmentation of at least this minimal sort is probably the normal human condition for beliefs that are complex, difficult to remember, or relevant to a wide range of habitual behavior (Schwitzgebel 2001, 2002; Gendler 2008a, 2008b; Elga and Rayo, Chapter 1 in this volume).

The minimalist fragmentation thesis should not be confused with a stronger thesis, which I will call *system fragmentation*, defended by Borgoni (2015, 2016) and Mandelbaum (2016). Consider some proposition P, such as 'The working poor deserve as much respect as those who are well paid.' According to system fragmentation, what explains fragmentation in cases like Daniel's is that the mind is divided into subsystems, some of which operate as if P is true (for example, drawing relevant inferences from P) and others of which do not. When the subject acts P-ishly (e.g. Daniel affirms egalitarianism), their behavior is being driven primarily by cognitive subsystems that operate as if P is true. When the subject acts non-P-ishly (e.g. Daniel assumes that his housekeeper is politically naive), their behavior is being driven primarily by cognitive subsystems that do not operate as if P is true.[16]

If system fragmentation is correct, it would explain the condition described by the minimalist fragmentation thesis. By contrast, unless it is supplemented in some way, the minimalist fragmentation thesis does not pretend to explain the fragmented behavior, noting only the superficial patterns. This might seem to be a disadvantage of the minimalist view (as suggested by Borgoni 2016 and Quilty-Dunn and Mandelbaum 2018). Indeed, the minimalists' lack of explanatory ambition would be a disadvantage if the system fragmentation story provided a *good* explanation of behavior like Daniel's. But the system fragmentation story

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[16] Borgoni and Mandelbaum both further commit to the view that in implicit bias cases resembling Daniel's, the subject believes both P and not-P, though this further commitment is not essential to the view I am calling system fragmentation. Frankish (2004) and Gendler (2008a, 2008b) could embrace system fragmentation without taking this further step.

does not provide a good explanation. Rather, it is an empirically unjustified speculative model that oversimplifies the phenomena.

Consider personality traits, which I have argued are structurally similar to attitudes (Schwitzgebel 2002, 2013). People are often fragmented extraverts. They are extraverted in some ways but not in others, extraverted in some situations but not in others. A minimalist fragmentation thesis about extraversion would simply note this fact, perhaps along with certain patterns of coherence and incoherence. A system fragmentation thesis about personality might, by contrast, aim to explain this behavior by means of subsystems, some of which explain the extraverted behavior and others of which explain the introverted behavior. Extraverted behavior would then arise when the former subsystems are dominant. While system fragmentation concerning extraversion *might* be true, there is no good reason to think that it is true, and any philosopher who feels the need to endorse system fragmentation about extraversion on pain of lacking an explanation of fragmented extraversion should reconsider their haste. Extraverted and introverted behaviors probably arise from a wide variety of processes in complicated coordination and competition rather than from a mix of specifically extraverted and non-extraverted systems.

Concerning belief, the situation is not entirely dissimilar. In a limited range of cases, system fragmentation may have substantial merit and empirical support. For physiologically distinct types of memory, empirical facts about conditions of retrieval and non-retrieval might support something in the direction of a subsystem picture (Squire 2004). Perhaps there is similar fragmentation in early sensory processing. Partly to avoid such cases, in this chapter I have featured attitudes that don't fit neatly into empirically well-founded varieties of system fragmentation: implicit bias, wishful thinking, idealism. I see no good empirical reason to think it likely that we can divide Daniel's, Nancy's, and the others' cognitive subsystems neatly into those that operate as if *P* is true and those that do not. Human cognition about matters such as egalitarianism and one's children's prospects is too mixed and inconstant, too influenced by situation, mood, habit, and salience, and probably, at root, too complex to be divided neatly into systemic silos of *P*-assuming and non-*P*-assuming cognitive systems (at least for any *P* that can be briefly stated in ordinary language). At best, this sort of neat siloing is a speculative model that reaches beyond the empirical evidence. We can accept disunity without embracing the dubious architectural commitments of system fragmentation.

9. Five Objections

Objection 1. Is this an unrepresentative selection of beliefs? You might ask: What about mathematical beliefs? The belief that snow is white? The belief that there's a pen in my hand? Have I cherry-picked a few weird beliefs?

Reply. I have focused on beliefs that we care about having (beyond our general desire to believe what's true). These are often beliefs about norms and values, but they don't have to be. Some are closer to being purely factual in content (e.g. the belief that women and men are equally intelligent and Nancy's belief that her son will soon become one of the top salespeople). Intellectualist and pragmatist approaches tend to diverge mostly regarding big-picture beliefs that are important to people's self-conceptions. In principle, however, they might diverge even for mathematical beliefs. Consider the belief that the number of points on a line segment has the same cardinality as the number of points in all of space. If someone assented to that proposition upon reflection and yet regularly drew mathematical inferences that depended on its falsity, that might be a straight-up belief on an intellectualist view but a non-belief or an in-between belief on a pragmatic view.

Objection 2. Couldn't we just advocate giving more attention to behavior, implicit assumptions, and spontaneous emotional reactions while favoring the intellectualist use of 'belief'? This is probably Gendler's (2008a, 2008b) intended strategy in highlighting the importance of her new concept of 'alief.'

Reply. I have no objection to this strategy in principle. Still, my best guess about the sociology of the discipline is that change can be more swiftly and thoroughly achieved by emphasizing and reinforcing the non-intellectualist strands that the term 'belief' already contains than by reinforcing the intellectualist strands while also saying, 'Look over here at this other important stuff!'

Objection 3. Could we decide to say that there are two types of belief, one for which intellectual endorsement is sufficient and one that requires more? We might call the first 'thin belief' and the second 'thick belief' (Buckwalter et al. 2015); we might call the first 'superbelief' and the second 'basic belief' (Frankish 2004); or we might call the first 'belief de dicto' and the second 'belief de mundo' (Sommers 2009).

Reply. I doubt that cases like Daniel's splinter as cleanly as a simple two-types-of-belief model appears to suggest (Schwitzgebel 2002, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, it's confusing to attribute two different belief attitudes with different adjectival modifiers. Since we don't normally use adjectival modifiers in belief attribution, the practice risks making unmarked uses of 'belief' ambiguous.

Objection 4. An intellectualist approach to belief, when coupled with attention to behavior, might more effectively motivate us to match our behavior to our intellectual judgments than a pragmatic approach does. If Daniel can say, based on a pragmatic view, that he doesn't fully or completely believe that the working poor deserve equal respect, then maybe his disrespectful behavior will seem less jarring to him, since he can acknowledge that it's not entirely discordant with his beliefs.

Reply. I'm disinclined to think that most Daniel-like implicit classists would, upon endorsing a pragmatic view of belief, decide that their biased behavior doesn't need changing, since, after all, it partly reflects their beliefs. But even if

that were so, the objection goes astray in other cases where the spontaneous reactions have more merit. Kennedy might be naive in her intellectual judgments about money; Duy-Anh might be wiser in his atheistic behavior than in his religious assertions; Nancy might do well to be emotionally cautious about her son's prospects. If thinking of their belief states as conflicted, mixed, or in-betweenish permits them more happily to act at variance with their explicitly endorsed judgments, so much the better.

Objection 5. I fully and genuinely believe that it's unhealthy to sit on my couch eating junk food rather than eating kale and exercising and that I really should prioritize my long-term health. And yet here I am, kicking back with a bag of CheezOs again. I fully believe that I should prioritize eating better, yet I don't act accordingly.

Reply. We can develop this case in a couple of different ways. First, imagine that our junk-food eater regularly makes sincere and serious plans to stop eating junk food, tries to avoid situations of temptation (e.g. by keeping junk food out of the house), feels genuine guilt or regret when she lapses, tries to recruit others to help her improve her lifestyle, etc. In this case, she would in fact have many of the reactions and behaviors constitutive of believing that it's unhealthy to eat junk food and that she should thus avoid it. If that's what's going on, it's plausible either that she does avoid junk food for the most part or that there's some partly excusing factor at play, such as high levels of stress. Alternatively, imagine that our junk-food eater makes no serious plans to improve her diet, doesn't feel regret after bingeing, doesn't really feel motivated to do anything much to improve her habits, is typically happy to load her grocery cart with candy, and laughs at her kale-eating friends—it's just that on the rare occasion that she stops to reflect explicitly, she recognizes that she probably should ease up on the CheezOs. In this case, it's not so unreasonable to say that, taking a bird's-eye view of her enduring attitudes, she is not entirely accurately describable as unambiguously believing that she ought to prioritize eating better.

10. Conclusion

Condensed to a motto: What you believe is not what you say you believe; it's how you live.

We have a choice when constructing a metaphysics of belief. We can emphasize our patterns of intellectual endorsement, our most thoughtful responses, and what we would say or judge upon reflection. Alternatively, we can emphasize our overall patterns of lived behavior, reaction, and thought, spontaneous as well as reflective, implicit as well as explicit. The latter pattern, the bigger pattern, being the more important, is the better choice as a referent for the word 'belief,' which is so central to our discipline.

I am especially concerned about our tendency to endorse appealing attitudes—egalitarianism of various sorts, the unimportance of money and prestige, our concern for the welfare of those around us—while behaving in ways that align poorly with those attitudes. My empirical, pragmatic conjecture is that it better helps us to frankly confront our frequent failure to live up to our ideals if we refuse to place intellectual endorsement at the center of philosophy; that is, if our basic philosophical terminology does not treat intellectual endorsement as decisive.

Wang Yangming, the sixteenth-century neo-Confucian philosopher, argued for the unity of knowledge and action: To know a truth, especially a moral truth, is to act accordingly. If you claim to know but do not act, you do not really know (Wang Yangming, c. 1500/2009). There is a type of moral excuse-making that Wang Yangming regarded as common: the excuse of saying that although you know what you ought to do, you are having trouble putting that knowledge into action. To make such an excuse is to claim a kind of moral half-credit. Your heart is in the right place, but you are just a bit weak or need some practice. Wang Yangming did not want to give people that half-credit. To know the Confucian way to treat your parents is just to treat your parents that way. Your lived choices' express your knowledge. If you really know it is wrong to neglect your parents, you will not neglect them.

I'm not sure I would go all the way with Wang Yangming here. Our affirmations, avowals, and heartfelt judgments in our most reflective moments matter. Maybe they *are* worth half- or quarter-credit—especially if we feel genuine guilt, shame, and regret when we act contrary to these expressed opinions.[17] But if our affirmations and avowals are important, it's not because of anything about them that makes them especially central to who we are or what we believe. Rather, they matter because they are a part of what it is to live a rich human life, nothing more and nothing less.[18]

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[17] In addition to the qualification highlighted in this paragraph, I would add two others. First, Wang Yangming is discussing *knowledge* rather than belief, and knowledge attribution might work differently than belief attribution. In fact, I favor a 'capacity-tendency' account on which one can sometimes be described as knowing that P (because one has the capacity to act accordingly) without fully or determinately believing that P (because one lacks the tendency to act accordingly) (Ryle 1949; Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013; contra standard JTB and JTB+ theories of knowledge). On my view, Daniel is just such a case. Second, we can rationally aim at moral mediocrity (Schwitzgebel 2019). Our practical tendencies thus normally reflect and partly constitute our all-things-considered values, which might differ from our purely moral values. Consequently, one might know, endorse, and believe in the moral correctness of the Confucian way while failing to act on it because one doesn't sufficiently care about morality.

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