

Do or Do Not, There is No Suspending

Why the Nonexistence of Practical Agnosticism Matters

ABSTRACT: There are three doxastic attitudes one may take towards some proposition, **P**: one may believe **P**, disbelieve **P**, or suspend **P**. Let us call the practical analogue of a doxastic attitude a *praxistic attitude*. I defend the claim that there is no praxistic attitude that (normatively speaking) stands to intending to do **X** and intending not to do **X** as suspending **P** stands to believing **P** and disbelieving **P**. In short, there is no practical analogue to suspending **P**. Call this the *suspension disanalogy thesis* (SDT). My aim in this paper is twofold. First, I limn, clarify, and defend SDT. Second, I show that SDT undermines strong cognitivism, the thesis that intentions are beliefs.

1. Introduction

It is widely held that there are three doxastic attitudes one may take towards some proposition, **P**: one may believe **P**, disbelieve **P**, or suspend **P**. If intending to do **X** is the practical analogue of believing **P**, and intending not to do **X** is the practical analogue of disbelieving **P**, then what attitude (if any) is the practical analogue of suspending **P**? Is there any attitude that (normatively speaking) stands to intending to do **X** and intending not to do **X** as suspending **P** stands to believing **P** and disbelieving **P**? This is the question the present investigation sets out to answer. The conclusion I reach is that there is no practical analogue to the doxastic attitude of suspending. Call this conclusion the *suspension disanalogy thesis* (henceforth, *SDT*).

One reason *SDT* is significant is because it represents a heretofore unrecognized challenge to *strong cognitivism*, the thesis that intentions are beliefs.¹ Strong cognitivists identify the intention to do **X** with the belief that one will (or will probably) do **X**. However, according to *SDT*, belief displays a tri-attitudinal structure consisting of believing **P**, disbelieving **P**, and suspending **P**, while intention displays a bi-attitudinal structure consisting of intending to do **X** and intending

¹ The thesis that intention is identical to belief is defended in Velleman (1985) and more recently in Marušić and Schwenkler (forthcoming). For a critical discussion of strong cognitivism, see Velleman (1989/2007, esp. ch. 4). A weaker version of cognitivism, according to which intention involves (but need not be identical with) belief, is advanced by Grice (1971), Harman (1976; 1986, ch.8), Davis (1984), Setiya (2003; 2007; 2008) and Ross (2009). The view defended in this paper is consistent with weaker versions of cognitivism that hold that intentions entail belief.

not to do **X**, but that does not include suspending doing **X**. Given this fundamental difference between the structure of the two attitudes, I maintain that intentions cannot be beliefs. This paper will defend SDT and demonstrate that it poses a substantive challenge to strong cognitivism. By so doing, I hope to show that SDT deserves greater attention than it has heretofore received.

2. Stage Setting

Let us begin our discussion by getting clear on a few key terms. The expression ‘doxastic attitude’ is sometimes used to pick out a wide range of belief-like attitudes, including accepting (e.g., Weintraub [1990: 165]), presuming (e.g., Kapitan [1986: 235]), hypothesizing (e.g., Williams [1989: 124]), and having a degree of confidence in (e.g., Kaplan [1981: 310]). However, it may be more narrowly used to refer to any member of the multi-attitudinal complex consisting in believing, disbelieving, and suspending.² This narrow usage offers the convenience of allowing us to refer to all three attitudes with a single term. It is in its narrow sense that I will be using the term in this paper.

The attitude of suspending **P** is sometimes referred to as withholding judgement or agnosticism. For the sake of simplicity, and in keeping with common (albeit not universal) practice, I will be using all three terms interchangeably.³ In addition to there being different terminology, there are also different conceptions of suspending. For example, there are some theorists who hold that suspending **P** is not an attitude towards **P**, but rather a higher order attitude towards believing **P** and disbelieving **P**. An alternative account of suspending is that offered by Jane Friedman, who conceives of suspending as an interrogative attitude.⁴ On this suggestion, the content of suspending that there is life on Mars is most accurately characterised as suspending whether there is life on Mars, where the ‘whether’ signals interrogative rather than indicative content. While these differences between the various accounts of suspending are

² Examples of the narrow usage of the term “doxastic attitude” include: Feldman and Conee (1985), Steup (1988), Chisholm (1989), Sosa (1991), Feldman (2003), and Steup (2008). For an argument that the attitudes of believing, disbelieving, and suspending are not reducible to degrees of belief, see Friedman (2013b).

³ See and cf. Friedman (2013c: 166).

⁴ Friedman (2013a).

significant in their own right, they will not bear on the arguments to come. Whatever one's preferred account of suspending happens to be, if the account is to be adequate, it would need to accommodate the observation that when I am contemplating whether there is life on Mars, believing that there is life on Mars and disbelieving that there is life on Mars are not my only options as far as doxastic attitudes are concerned. Indeed, all of the aforementioned conceptions of suspending agree that suspending is one of at least three attitudes one may take when considering whether a proposition is true. How best to describe the content of this third attitude is a further question we need not concern ourselves with at the moment. Hence, while I will continue to employ the fairly standard 'suspending **P**' locution throughout this paper, it should be possible to reformulate the main argument of this paper, *mutatis mutandis*, in terms of one's preferred account of suspending.

In order to avoid confusion, I will refer to the doxastic attitude of suspending **P** as 'theoretical suspending' and its would-be practical analogue (i.e., suspending doing **X**) as 'practical suspending'. Since my argument will involve a comparison between believing **P**, disbelieving **P**, and suspending **P**, on the one hand, and intending to do **X**, intending not to do **X**, and suspending doing **X**, on the other, it would be handy to have a catchall term that can stand proxy for the latter three attitudes; one that corresponds with the narrow usage of 'doxastic attitude'. Exploiting the contrast between the Greek terms *doxa* and *praxis*, I will use the term *praxistic attitude* for this purpose.

Given the above terminology, we may restate SDT by saying that there is no praxistic attitude that (normatively speaking) corresponds with the attitude of suspending **P**. My argument in favour of SDT will run as follows: I begin by arguing that all doxastic attitudes, including suspending **P**, are governed by evidential norms. I then argue that although praxistic attitudes are also governed by evidential norms, there is no evidential norm that is the practical equivalent to the evidential norm for suspending **P**. I conclude that there is no praxistic attitude that (normatively speaking) corresponds with suspending **P**.

3. The Suspension Disanalogy Thesis

Establishing that there is no praxistic attitude that plays a normative role analogous to that played by suspending will require that we get clear on the normative role that suspending plays. There are two rational norms governing the attitude of suspending that are of particular interest: (i) the consistency norm, and (ii) the evidential norm.

3.1. The Consistency Norm

One of the defining features of doxastic attitudes is that they are subject to a consistency norm. The standard formulation of the consistency norm governing belief is as follows:

Definition 3.1.: *Belief Consistency (Standard)*

Rationality requires that [if one believes that **P**, then one does not believe \neg **P**].⁵

It is here assumed that the beliefs in question are all-out beliefs. It is plausible that partial beliefs (if they exist) are subject to different consistency norms.⁶

One limitation of the standard formulation of the consistency norm is that it omits the attitude of suspending. This means that Definition 3.1 permits an agent to believe **P** while also suspending **P**. However, it is certainly irrational for an agent to simultaneously believe **P** and suspend **P**. Hence, a more complete version of the consistency requirement governing belief may be put as follows:

Definition 3.2.: *Belief Consistency (Triad)*

Rationality requires that [if one believes **P**, then one does not suspend **P** or disbelieve **P**].⁷

⁵ For examples of the standard formulation, see: Broome (2007; 2009), Brunero (2009; 2014), and Lord (forthcoming).

⁶ See Holton (2008).

⁷ There is a potential ambiguity in scope of the negation in the consequent of the embedded conditional. The intended reading of the norm is as follows: If we let “Ought” stand for the modal operator “rationality requires that”, “Bel(**P**)” stand for “S believes **P**”, “Bel(\neg **P**)” for “S disbelieves **P**”, and “Sus(**P**)” for “S suspends **P**”, then the above consistency norm should be read: “Ought [Bel(**P**) \supset (\neg Bel(\neg **P**) & \neg Sus(**P**))]”.

We may also state the consistency norm for suspending as follows:

Definition 3.3.: *Suspending Consistency (Triad)*

Rationality requires that [if one suspends **P**, then one does not believe **P** or disbelieve **P**].

With Definition 3.3, we have arrived at the first norm governing suspending. If there is a praxistic attitude that plays an analogous normative role to that played by suspending, then it too should be governed by an analogous consistency norm.

3.2. The Evidential Norm

Recent discussions of rational requirements have tended to focus on consistency norms. Indeed, there are some theorists who hold that all of the demands of rationality may be understood in terms of the avoidance of inconsistent beliefs.⁸ However, it is plausible that rationality requires more from us than mere consistent beliefs. Consider an agent who perceives that **P** (and who lacks any defeaters suggesting that her perceptual evidence is unreliable), but who stubbornly continues to disbelieve **P** despite said evidence. It is plausible that such an agent would be rationally criticisable for failing to respond to her evidence in the right way. However, since perceiving **P** does not entail believing **P**, it is false that an agent in the above situation both believes **P** and disbelieves **P**. Hence, insofar as the agent who fails to respond appropriately to her perceptual evidence is irrational, it is not because of any inconsistencies among her belief. Instead, she is irrational because she did not respond appropriately to her evidence.

I take being subject to evidential norms to be a second definitive feature of doxastic attitudes. For example, if the evidence available to an agent conclusively favours **P**, then the only doxastic attitude that agent is permitted to take towards **P** is one of belief. More work will need to be done to specify what it means for an agent's total evidence to conclusively favour **P**. If one's body of evidence is sparse or ambiguous, then it will plausibly fail to provide conclusive evidence for **P**.

⁸ See, for example, Brunero (2008: 322). For discussion, see: Bridges (2009).

If there are defeaters in vicinity this may also be enough to prevent an agent's available evidence from providing conclusive evidence for **P**. Hence, a complete account of what it means for an agent's available evidence to provide conclusive support for **P** will need to exclude such cases. Moreover, it is plausible that a complete account of evidence offering conclusive support for **P** will need to appeal to an agent's evidential standards, and these may vary across time and agents. However, these are not details we need settle here. It is sufficient to note that there are times in which one's evidence for **P** may be so great that one would be irrational if one withheld **P** or disbelieved **P**. Indeed, to deny this would be to leave us without the resources necessary for holding that agents who stubbornly ignore perceptual evidence are rationally criticisable for so doing. Hence, I take belief to be subject to the following evidential norm:

Definition 3.4.: *Evidential Norm for Believing P*

If one's total evidence conclusively supports **P**, then one is rationally permitted to believe **P** and rationally prohibited from disbelieving **P** or suspending **P**.

Significantly, the above evidential norm does not entail that if an agent has conclusive evidence that **P**, the agent must believe that **P**. Perhaps the agent is indifferent towards **P**, and therefore cannot be bothered to form the belief that **P**, even though the agent has conclusive evidence that **P**. It is not obvious that such an agent would be rationally criticisable. (Perhaps **P** is some piece of idle gossip about the royal family that I cannot be bothered to think about, though conclusive evidence for **P** is already at hand if I would but take the time to reflect on it.) According to Definition 3.4, if an agent has conclusive evidence that **P**, then the only doxastic attitude they are allowed to take towards **P** is one of belief.⁹

We may represent the corresponding evidential norms for disbelieving and suspending as follows:

⁹ An important difference between the evidential and consistency norm is that the former is narrow in scope. This reflects the fact that while one may choose to give up a doxastic attitude, one cannot choose to stop having conclusive evidence in support of a proposition.

Definition 3.5.: *Evidential Norm for Disbelieving P*

If one's total evidence conclusively supports $\neg P$, then one is rationally permitted to disbelieve **P** and rationally prohibited from believing **P** or suspending **P**.

Definition 3.6.: *Evidential Norm for Suspending P*

If one's total evidence equally supports **P** and $\neg P$, then one is rationally permitted to suspend **P** and rationally prohibited from believing **P** or disbelieving **P**.

With Definition 3.6, we arrive at the second norm governing suspending. I take being governed by something along the lines of the above consistency and evidential norms to be a necessary condition for an attitude to play a normative role analogous to that played by suspending. Indeed, I take being governed by consistency and evidential norms to be a necessary condition for being a praxistic attitude at all. This expectation is rooted in the observations that (i) a praxistic attitude is supposed to be the practical analogue to a doxastic attitude, and (ii) doxastic attitudes are governed by the consistency and evidential norms.

One prediction of the present account of praxistic attitudes is that, insofar as intending is a praxistic attitude, it too should be governed by the consistency and evidential norms. This indeed seems to be the case. Specifically, intending seems to be governed by the following consistency norm:

Definition 3.7.: *Intention Consistency (Standard)*

Rationality requires that [if one intends to do **X**, then one does not intend not to do **X**].

If SDT is true, then there should be no triad formulation of the consistency norm for intention. Hence, one point of contrast between belief and intention only becomes apparent once we switch from the standard to the triad formulation of the consistency norm. Given the tendency of most theorists to employ the standard rather than triad formulation of the consistency norm for belief,

it is hardly surprising that this point of contrast between belief and intention often goes unnoticed.

In addition to the consistency norm, I take intending to also be subject to the following evidential norm:

Definition 3.8.: *Evidential Norm for Intending to do X*

If one's total evidence conclusively supports doing **X**, then one is rationally permitted to intend to do **X** and rationally prohibited from intending not to do **X** (or suspending doing **X**).

Definition 3.8 assumes that reasons for action take the form of evidence that supports doing **X**. This is merely for the sake of convenience. The arguments in this paper may be revised, *mutatis mutandis*, in order to accommodate most of the standard theories of practical reasons found in the literature. For example, instead of evidence that supports doing **X**, one may substitute evidence that one will perform a certain action (Velleman 1989). Moreover, if one prefers to conceive of reasons for action as explanations of why the action is worthwhile rather than evidence that the action is worthwhile, then one may restate the evidential norm in terms of explanations (Kearns and Star 2008: 37; 2009: 216-217). The arguments in this paper will tolerate all such reformulations so long as the following condition is met: it should be possible to have conclusive reasons for performing an action such that one would be irrational for failing to act in light of those reasons. What the preceding evidential norm claims is that given that one has conclusive reasons to do something, it would be irrational to adopt any praxistic attitude other than intending to do that which one has conclusive reasons to do.

We may also give the following evidential norm for intending not to do **X**:

Definition 3.9.: *Evidential Norm for Intending not to do X*

If one's total evidence conclusively supports not doing **X**, then one is rationally permitted to intend not to do **X** and rationally prohibited from intending to do **X** (or suspending doing **X**).

If there were a praxistic attitude that played the same normative role as suspending, then it too would be governed by an evidential norm. Hence, the existence of a practical analogue to suspending would involve something along the lines of the following evidential norm:

Definition 3.10.: *Evidential Norm for Suspending doing X*

If one's total evidence equally supports doing **X** and not doing **X**, then one is rationally permitted to practically suspend doing **X** and rationally prohibited from intending to do **X** or intending not to do **X**.

However, I maintain, and shall argue at present, that there is no evidential norm corresponding to that described in Definition 3.10. On the contrary, I claim that in cases in which all of an agent's available evidence equally supports doing **X** and not doing **X**, the agent is rationally permitted to either intend to do **X** or intend not to do **X**.

Suppose I am trying to decide whether or not to stop by the bookstore on my way home from work. Let us stipulate that the evidence I have in favour of stopping by the bookstore (e.g., I will be able to purchase a novel I have been meaning to read) is equal to the evidence in favour of not stopping by the bookstore (e.g., I will run into an unsavoury associate I have been actively trying to avoid), with the upshot being that my total evidence equally supports going to the bookstore and not going to the bookstore. According to the norm described in Definition 3.10, I am not rationally permitted to intend to go to the bookstore or intend not to go to the bookstore. But this is clearly false. When confronted with such choice situations, I am free (rationally speaking) to simply pick one of the options. It follows that the rational requirement described by Definition 3.10 is false. In other words, the would-be evidential norm for practically suspending simply does not exist.

To briefly recap, the lesson of the bookstore example is that picking is rationally permissible when confronted with the choice between intending to do **X** and intending not to do **X**. This means that in cases in which one's total evidence equally supports doing **X** and not doing **X**, one is not rationally required to refrain from intending to do **X** or intending not to do **X**. One is instead free to pick. It follows that the evidential norm described in Definition 3.10 does not exist and

there is therefore no praxistic attitude that is normatively analogous to suspending **P**. We therefore arrive at SDT.

4. The Truth-Aim Disanalogy

Having established that SDT is true, I now wish to highlight one of its major consequences; namely, that intending does not aim at the truth in the same way that beliefs do. The claim that belief aims at truth has been understood in numerous ways. As such it behoves anyone making serious use of the 'aiming at the truth' locution to define what they mean by it. To this end, I distinguish between two different senses in which an attitude may be said to aim at truth: a negative sense and a positive sense. To say that an attitude towards **P** aims at truth in a negative sense means that evidence that $\neg\mathbf{P}$ exerts rational pressure on one to give up that attitude. Beliefs may be said to aim at truth in this sense. For example, if I believe the trains are running on time, and then I hear an announcement over the public address system saying that all trains are running 30 minutes behind schedule, this newly acquired evidence exerts rational pressure on me to give up my belief. It follows that beliefs aim at truth in a negative sense. Significantly, given our definition of what it means for an attitude to aim at truth in a negative sense, it is also true that intentions aim at truth in a negative sense. For example, if I intend to take the 12:30pm train to Albuquerque, and I learn from a nearby conductor that the 12:30pm train to Albuquerque has been cancelled, then the conductor's testimony exerts rational pressure on me to give up my intention. Hence, aiming at truth in a negative sense is something intentions share with beliefs.

There is also a positive sense in which an attitude may be said to aim at the truth. To say that an attitude towards **P** aims at truth in a positive sense means that one is rationally permitted to adopt that attitude only if one has a surplus of evidence in support of **P** being true. In cases in which one's evidence equally supports **P** and $\neg\mathbf{P}$, one is rationally required to suspend **P**. Moreover, the reason one is required to have a surplus of evidence in support of **P** in order for believing **P** to be rationally permissible is due to the evidential norm for suspending **P**. Hence, it is because of the existence of the doxastic attitude of suspending—i.e., an attitude that is governed by the norm described in Definition 3.6—that picking is not rationally permissible when it comes

to our beliefs. If this is right, then the fact that a belief displays a tri-attitudinal structure that includes suspending is a sufficient condition for belief to aim at truth in a positive sense.

In contradistinction to belief, intentions do not aim at truth in a positive sense. Let us suppose, as the cognitivist would have it, that intending to do **X** involved a representation of it being true that one will do **X**. It is common ground between both sides of the present debate that intending to do **X** does not require that one have a surplus of evidence that one will do **X** in order for the intention to be rationally permissible. (Indeed, as we shall soon see, the strong cognitivist insists that intending to do **X** is not based on reasons that indicate that it is true that one will do **X** but rather on reasons that indicate that doing **X** is good or worthwhile.) Hence, it follows that intentions do not aim at truth in a positive sense. Moreover, we may make sense of why intentions do not aim at truth in a positive sense by noting that intention lacks a tri-attitudinal structure that includes suspending. Let us call any attitude that displays a tri-attitudinal structure that includes suspending a *suspension-involving attitude*. In light of the preceding observations, one begins to suspect that whether or not an attitude aims at truth in a positive sense depends on whether or not it is a suspension-involving attitude.¹⁰

The preceding disanalogy between intention and belief is often overlooked by action theorists, sometimes resulting in erroneous assumptions about the parity between reasons for belief and reasons for intention. Consider, for example, the following claim made by Kieran Setiya (2014: 234):

Reasons for belief stand to degrees of belief as reasons for action stand to degrees of motivation: the kind of motivation which, when decisive, both occasions and informs intentional action.

¹⁰ The arguments in this paper fall just short of establishing this conclusion. What my arguments show is that displaying a tri-attitudinal structure (i.e., being a suspension-involving attitude) is sufficient for an attitude to aim at truth in a positive sense. Furthermore, we have observed that at least one attitude that fails to aim at truth in a positive sense—namely, an intention—also fails to display a tri-attitudinal structure that includes suspending. While this is consistent with the claim that being a suspension-involving attitude is a necessary condition for an attitude to aim at truth in a positive sense, it falls short of establishing that this is so. Hence, while I am inclined to accept the necessity claim as well, the arguments that follow will only presuppose the sufficiency claim.

Here, Setiya appears to be claiming that an agent's degree of motivation should mirror her practical reasons just as her degree of belief mirrors her theoretical reasons. This may initially appear to be an innocuous claim, but it runs afoul of the disanalogy between belief and intention highlighted above. To see why, we merely have to consider cases in which an agent recognizes that her theoretical reasons equally favour **P** and \neg **P**. In such cases, the agent is not rationally permitted to all-out believe **P**. However, in cases in which an agent recognizes that her practical reasons equally favour doing **X** and not doing **X**, she *is* rationally permitted to all-out intend to do **X**. It follows that there is no rational requirement that an agent's degree of motivation mirror her practical reasons in the way that an agent's degree of belief ought to mirror her theoretical reasons. The upshot is that as innocent as Setiya's pronouncement may initially seem, it turns out to be false, and SDT helps us to see why.

Careless errors like the one just highlighted underscores just one of the ways SDT is overlooked by theorists and hence the need for the arguments limned in this paper. However, not all of the errors associated with a failure to adequately appreciate SDT may be chalked up to carelessness. The strong cognitivist thesis defended by Marušić and Schwenkler is an example of the kind of substantive and systematic theoretical error that can result from a failure to take SDT seriously.

5. SDT and Strong Cognitivism

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to showing that the truth of SDT implies the falsity of the strong cognitivist thesis defended by Marušić and Schwenkler. According to Marušić and Schwenkler (forthcoming), "to intend to do something is neither more nor less than to believe, on the basis of one's practical reasoning, that one will do it." (1) Practical reasoning stands in contrast to theoretical reasoning. *Theoretical reasoning* is reasoning that aims to answer the question whether **P** is true. *Practical reasoning* is reasoning that aims to answer the question whether doing **X** is good or worthwhile. According to Marušić and Schwenkler, intentions are merely beliefs that are based on practical reasoning. One upshot of their view is that, in the context of practical

reasoning, it may be rationally permissible to believe that one will do **X** even though one lacks evidence that it is true that one will do **X**. Hence, Marušić and Schwenkler conceive of believing **P** as an attitude that may sometimes be rationally held sans a surplus of evidence in support of **P** being true.

In the previous section, we noted that the fact that an attitude towards **P** is suspension-involving is sufficient for that attitude to be rationally permissible only if there is a surplus of evidence for the truth of **P**. Hence, the “belief” that Marušić and Schwenkler claim to be identical to an intention cannot be a suspension-involving attitude. This is a consequence of their view that Marušić and Schwenkler never acknowledge and of which they appear to be entirely unaware. Furthermore, it puts their view in the crosshairs of SDT. According to SDT, one of the fundamental ways in which a belief differs from an intention is that the former is a suspension-involving attitude while the latter is not. It follows that the variety of “belief” that Marušić and Schwenkler seek to identify with an intention is no belief at all.

At this point, there may be a worry that the disagreement between the strong cognitivist and I is merely terminological. By my lights, the term ‘belief’ should only be applied to a suspension-involving attitude. The strong cognitivist, by contrast, is more promiscuous in their use of the term, applying it both to suspension-involving attitudes and attitudes that are not. Granted, my use of the term ‘belief’ turns out to be closer to the standard philosophical usage than that of Marušić and Schwenkler since it is widely held that beliefs display a tri-attitudinal structure that includes suspending. But one may still wonder what is the big deal? Does anything philosophically substantive turn on this difference in terminology?

The answer to the immediately preceding question is a resounding yes. Take for example the claim that intentions may feature in knowledge of one’s own actions. Strong cognitivist, like Marušić and Schwenkler, are at least open to such a possibility. Indeed, providing an explanation of how intentions may feature in an agent’s knowledge of her own actions is a major motivation for holding that intentions are beliefs. Given the assumption that belief is a component of knowledge, the strong cognitivist is well positioned to argue that intentions (which are themselves beliefs) constitute the doxastic component of our knowledge of our own actions. However, my claim that beliefs are fundamentally suspension-involving attitudes threatens this

line of reasoning. Suppose that one held that only a suspension-involving attitude could constitute the doxastic component of knowledge of external world happenings. On this view, it is the fact that knowledge of external world happenings implicates a suspension-involving attitude that explains why having equal amounts of evidence for and against an external world happening is incompatible with such knowledge. It would follow that an intention, which is not a suspension-involving attitude, could not be the doxastic component of knowledge of external world happenings. Given that an action is an external world happening, it would follow that an intention could not constitute the doxastic component of our knowledge of our own actions.

My aim, at present, is not to establish that only suspension-involving attitudes can constitute the doxastic component of knowledge of external world happenings. Rather, it is to underscore that it is a substantive philosophical question whether an attitude that is not suspension-involving could constitute the doxastic component of knowledge of external world happenings. Hence, even if we decided to apply the term belief to both attitudes that are suspension-involving and attitudes that are not, we would still need to address the question of whether only the former could feature in knowledge of external world happenings. Simply pointing out that one is using the term 'belief' differently will not settle the matter. This suggests that, terminological differences aside, things are more complicated than the strong cognitivist appears to envision. If one wishes to establish that intentions may constitute the doxastic component in our knowledge of our own actions, it is not enough to claim that intentions are "beliefs", given one's preferred definition of the term. One would also need to show that attitudes that are not suspension-involving (i.e., attitudes that fail to aim at truth in the positive sense) may constitute the doxastic component of knowledge of external world happenings.

Another philosophically substantive point of disagreement between the strong cognitivist and I is that strong cognitivism is consistent with a certain extreme form of epistemic conservatism with respect to beliefs that are based on practical reasons. According to what I shall call *radical epistemic conservatism*, if you already believe **P**, and you discover that your total evidence equally supports **P** and $\neg\mathbf{P}$, then you may continue believing **P**. Radical epistemic conservatism differs from more conventional versions of epistemic conservatism, which claim "that believing that **P** is a reason for belief or continued belief that **P**" (Adler 1996: 80). According

to conventional epistemic conservatism, the fact that one believes **P** provides one with a pro tanto reason to continue believing **P**.¹¹ Since having a pro tanto reason to believe **P** falls short of having *sufficient* reason to believe **P**, conventional epistemic conservatism stops short of outright claiming that an agent is rationally permitted to continue believing **P** when their total evidence equally supports **P** and \neg **P**.

Radical epistemic conservatism is clearly inconsistent with SDT. Specifically, it rejects the evidential norm for suspending presented in Definition 3.6. By rejecting this norm, radical epistemic conservatism also rejects the existence of an attitude with the normative profile of suspending. Hence, radical epistemic conservatism is at odds with the claim that beliefs are suspension-involving attitudes. By contrast, the strong cognitivism advocated by Marušić and Schwenkler is consistent with radical epistemic conservatism, at least with respect to beliefs based on practical reasoning. By their lights, if one acquires the belief that one will do **X** via practical reasoning, and one's evidence offers equal support for the truth of the proposition "I will do **X**" and its negation, one may continue to believe that one will do **X**. Hence, by the lights of Marušić and Schwenkler, radical epistemic conservatism is at least true of some beliefs. The fact that SDT is inconsistent with radical epistemic conservatism while the strong cognitivism defended by Marušić and Schwenkler is not further illustrates that the difference between the two approaches is not merely terminological.

6. Conclusion

This paper calls attention to a disanalogy between belief and intention that is largely ignored by action theorists; namely, that beliefs are suspension-involving attitudes while intentions are not. The defence of SDT offered in this paper attempts to address this omission. One important upshot of SDT is that while beliefs may be said to aim at truth in both a negative and positive sense,

¹¹ This is also reflected in Chisholm's (1980: 551-552) claim that "anything we find ourselves believing may be said to have *some* presumption in its favour" (Italics mine). Other theorists who have defended a version of epistemic conservatism include: Sklar (1975), Foley (1983), Harman (1986), Lycan (1988), Adler (1996), McGarth (2007), Fumerton (2008), McCain (2008), and Poston (2012). For criticisms of the view, see: Vahid (2004).

intentions only aim at truth in a negative sense. The implications of this disanalogy between belief and intention are yet to be fully explored. However, that they are worth exploring is suggested by some common errors in the action theory literature, three of which have been highlighted above. First, it is common for action theorists to offer a univocal formulation of the consistency norms governing belief and intention. However, according to SDT, the consistency norm governing intention actually has a slightly different structure to that governing belief. Second, it is common for theorists to hold that the strength of our intentions should mirror the strength of our practical reasons just as our degrees of belief should mirror the strength of our theoretical reasons. However, SDT helps to shed light on why this assumption is mistaken. Third, strong cognitivists, like Marušić and Schwenkler, hold that intentions are beliefs based on practical reasoning. While this account already implicitly recognizes that intentions and beliefs are governed by different evidential norms, it fails to consider what explains this fact. According to SDT, intentions and beliefs are governed by different evidential norms because they display fundamentally different attitudinal structures. Moreover, it would only be a recipe for confusion and misunderstanding to insist that a pair of attitudes with fundamentally different structures and that are governed by different norms are nevertheless the same attitude. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find a better criterion for saying that two attitudes are not identical to each other. Thus, SDT represents an important (yet heretofore overlooked) challenge to strong cognitivism. In light of the above considerations, I conclude that SDT deserves greater attention than it has heretofore received.

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