

Will I get a job?

Contextualism, Belief, and Faith

ABSTRACT: Does faith require belief? “Belief-plus” accounts of faith say yes. “Non-doxastic” accounts say no but tend to place a “no-disbelief constraint” on faith. Both sides, I argue, are mistaken for making belief (or disbelief) explanatorily prior to faith. Indeed, both “faith” and “belief” have contextualist semantics, which leaves only a tenuous tie between the applications of the two words.

Introduction

This paper defends contextualism regarding belief-talk and faith-talk. I arrived at its central theses reflecting upon the relationship between faith, belief, and the sorry state of the academic job market.

Despite the inhospitable market, I have faith that eventually I’ll get a tenure-track position. As a family, we’ve travelled from country to country for various post-docs. With the upheaval of those relocations, we were acting on faith. Does my faith that I’ll get a tenure-track job entail that I *believe* it too?

Some say ‘yes’. On a ‘belief-plus account,’ faith is belief *plus* some other attitudes (see e.g., Scott & Malcolm, 2017).

Some say ‘no’. Most in this camp still require that, to have faith that *p*, I don’t *disbelieve* *p*. Call this the ‘no-disbelief-constraint.’ But, they argue, I *can* have faith that *p* without *believing* that *p* (so long as I don’t believe that *not-p*). Accounts of faith that don’t require belief (whether or not they adopt the no-disbelief-constraint) are called ‘non-doxastic theories’ (see e.g., Howard-Snyder, 2013; McKaughan, 2013; 2018).

The debate is important, impacting upon the following question: can it be epistemically rational to have faith that p in a situation in which it wouldn't be epistemically rational to *believe* that p ?¹

Both sides tend to make belief explanatorily prior to faith. The belief-plus theory analyses faith in terms of belief (in addition to other ingredients). The non-doxastic camp generally adopts the no-disbelief-constraint, sometimes including it in their very analysis of propositional faith (rather than as a corollary of their analysis).² Only once you have the notion of belief in your conceptual treasury can you define propositional faith, if propositional faith is defined, in part, by the no-disbelief-constraint.

I argue that neither belief *nor* faith can be explanatorily prior one to the other, and that the no-disbelief-constraint is false. I reach these conclusions via arguments for contextualism regarding 'belief' and 'faith'. We'll be left with an unconstrained, non-doxastic account of propositional faith. In short: my faith that I'll get a job entails very little about what I believe, and it *can* be epistemically rational to have faith in situations in which it isn't epistemically rational to believe.

Non-Doxastic Theories: The Argument From Doubt

I want a permanent position in my current department. I think my colleagues would like this too. I trust in their support. But I know that there are obstacles beyond their control, higher up in the university. Plagued by doubts, I plough onwards in the faith that a tenure-track

¹ I single out epistemic rationality here in deference to an anonymous reviewer who correctly observes that one can easily construct cases in which it is *practically* rational to have faith that p and not to believe that p (e.g. if I'll give you \$1,000,000 were you somehow to come to have faith that p against all the evidence).

² See footnotes 6 and 8 below for examples of analyses that include the no-disbelief-constraint.

position will come. This ability that faith has, to persist amidst doubt, is thought, by some, to entail a non-doxastic account of faith.³

The argument runs as follows:

1. If a person doubts that p , then she does not believe that p .
2. There *are* people that have faith that p whilst doubting that p .

3. Some people have faith that p without believing that p . (from 1 and 2)
4. Believing that p is not necessary for having faith that p . (from 3)

The argument is valid, the premises seemingly true, and so, seemingly, we have a sound argument for the non-doxastic camp.

The Belief-Plus Response

Finlay Malcolm and Michael Scott (2017, p. 260), drawing from Andrew Moon (2018), distinguish between three forms of doubt:

Doubt₁: To recognise that one has reasons for thinking p untrue is to have doubt₁ about p .

Doubt₂: To believe that not- p is to have doubt₂ about p .⁴

Doubt₃: To have neither belief nor disbelief regarding p is to have doubt₃ about p .⁵

³ For the notion that faith must be compatible with doubt, see Daniel McKaughan (2013, pp. 106-7).

⁴ I admit that it's odd to think that belief that not- p constitutes doubt that p . However, there *are* contexts in which we say, 'I doubt it', but really mean that we believe its negation. This might be a loose way of talking, but it might be that disbelief is a limiting-case of doubt.

⁵ An anonymous reviewer is right to point out that, for the purposes of this paper, it's important that this taxonomy of doubt is exhaustive. At first glance it may appear to be woefully *incomplete*. Surely, we *can* think of other forms of doubt! But, for the purposes of this paper, doubt₁ can stand for any form of doubt that is compatible with belief and disbelief, doubt₂ can stand for any form of doubt that *requires* disbelief, and doubt₃ can stand for any form of doubt that requires *neutrality* such that it rules out both belief and disbelief. Since it would be strange to think that there's a species of doubt that *requires* belief, the taxonomy is indeed exhaustive. Moreover, if we do need to add that strange species of doubt that *requires* belief, *doubt₄*, the argument of this paper won't be affected.

According to most scholars, you cannot have faith that p if you disbelieve p . Sometimes they write this into their very analysis of faith.⁶ Accordingly, we can disregard doubt₂ as a candidate for the sort of doubt appearing in the argument from doubt, since almost everyone in the literature (except for me, as we shall see) accepts that faith is *incompatible* with doubt₂. But doubt₁ and doubt₃ are still in play. Which of them is supposed to be relevant to the *argument* from doubt?

Doubt₁ regarding p is compatible with *belief* that p . Most theists, for example, accept – despite their theism – that the problem of evil is a profoundly good reason for thinking that theism is false. Accordingly, they recognise a reason to believe that theism is false, and so they harbour a doubt₁ regarding theism. As theists, of course – in the final analysis – they *believe* that God exists, perhaps in virtue of countervailing evidence that overwhelms putative reasons not to believe. They believe in the face of their doubt₁.

Since doubt₁ is compatible with belief, who's to say that the argument from doubt isn't guilty of the following equivocation?

1. If a person doubts₃ that p , then she does not believe that p .
2. There *are* people that have faith that p whilst doubting₁ that p .

3. Some people have faith that p without believing that p . (from 1 and 2)
4. Believing that p is not necessary for having faith that p . (from 3)

⁶ Daniel McKaughan (2013, pp. 112-113) writes, regarding the suggestion that propositional faith is a species of hope: "A plausible case could be made, for example, that the second condition for religiously significant hope should be that p is a live option for S or that S believes that the probability that p is true is not so small as to be negligible or that S does not believe not- p ." I take it that McKaughan offers the three disjuncts here as different ways of expressing one and the same condition. Not disbelieving p just *is* believing that p is (to some extent) a live option, which just *is* believing that the probability that p is true is not too small as to be negligible. Accordingly, McKaughan is committed to the no-disbelief constraint.

This argument is invalid. Lines 1 and 2 are true according to all sides of the debate, but line 3 *doesn't* follow from them without equivocation. To salvage the argument, the non-doxastic camp requires clear cases of people with faith in the face of doubts₃. Such cases would allow them to amend line 2, so as to rescue the argument, and have it exclusively concern doubt₃.

There *are* examples of people praying devotedly to their beloved God, for the *gift* of belief in the face of doubts, confessing, as they pray, their failure to believe. The diaries of Saint Teresa of Calcutta (2007), otherwise known as Mother Teresa, provide a stark example. At times she seems to lack belief completely, and yet she reaches out to God. She seems to have been an exemplar of deep faith even through her doubts₃. Consequently, the argument from doubt *needn't* equivocate.⁷

Cases like Saint Teresa's fail to move Malcolm and Scott (2017, p. 265). A person can say, 'The room fell silent,' without meaning that there was *absolute* silence in the room. So too, a person can say, 'even though I don't believe that *p*, I have faith that *p*', but they might be using the word 'faith' somewhat loosely, merely to indicate that they *want p* to be true, or that they're *enthusiastic* about it. These attitudes would no more be a case of faith than a quiet room would be a case of silence.

Are we to accept that Saint Teresa's attitudes towards Christianity could only *loosely* be called *faith*? If she isn't an exemplar of faith, then who is? A more promising route would appeal to loose-talk regarding 'belief' and 'disbelief'. Those who confess to God that they don't believe might be speaking loosely, really meaning to say that they lack *confidence*, and that they want God to give them the gift of *increased* confidence.

⁷ Indeed, it renders the argument from doubt redundant, since it gives us an immediate proof that faith is consistent with a lack of belief.

Loose-talk about faith and belief does seem prevalent. Even the non-doxastic camp has to accept as much if they want to present Saint Teresa as an exemplar of *faith*, since she wrote: 'In my heart there is no faith – no love – no trust' (Teresa, 2007, p. 193). McKaughan (2018, pp. 207, 210) is well aware that Saint Teresa sometimes denied that she had faith. And yet, he goes on to claim that hers is an idiosyncratic and altogether unhelpful use of the word. He writes that to use ““faith” in such a way ... might call into question its relevance for describing the sort of response that God is said to desire of humans” (Ibid., p. 211). In other words, Saint Teresa was using the word “faith” rather loosely.

So, either (a) she doesn't mean belief when she prays for 'belief', but she really means *confidence*, or (b) she doesn't really mean faith when she says she has no 'faith', or (c) her case is just no help to us at all.

The prevalence of loose-talk undermines the best argument for the non-doxastic camp. Presumably, these appeals to loose-talk would re-emerge in the case of any putative example in which it seems appropriate to describe a person as having faith without believing. That is to say, nothing much here hangs on the peculiarities of Saint Teresa's example. There seems to be little point in trying to find other examples like hers. Any time that a person claims to have faith without belief, the belief-plus side is going to appeal to looseness of language. There's no way through their road-block.

A Reductio of Beliefless Faith

Would I be demonstrating faith that my colleagues will find a way to make my position permanent if I merely *pretended* that I believed their reassurances? To distinguish between such fictional-faith and genuine-faith, Malcom and Scott (2017, p. 271) insist that we appeal

to *belief*. Non-doxastic accounts cannot take this route, and so *cannot* distinguish between fictional and genuine faith. Non-doxastic accounts are reduced to absurdity. But are they really?

Imagine a person who thinks atheism is true but isn't 100% convinced. Moreover, imagine that she *wants* to be wrong about this and harbours a powerful hope that her religion is true. Accordingly, she commits to living a religious life, on the off-chance that God really *does* exist. Isn't she taking a *leap* of faith, and acting on faith; isn't she a person of faith, even if she falls short of belief?

The sincerely committed non-believer, even if she thinks atheism very likely, is included among the faithful, because – despite falling short of *belief*, she is open to the possibility that she's wrong, and she has the pro-attitudes that matter. Indeed, she hopes that her religion is true. The dogmatically atheistic religious fictionalist, by contrast, is *excluded*, because she isn't even open to the *possibility* of theism. She *can't* have the right pro-attitudes. How can she harbour a sincere hope that her religion is true, if it isn't grounded in the confidence that it *might* be? It's the sincerity of my hope, rather than any *belief*, that makes my faith in my colleague's assurances genuine.

Scott and Malcolm won't be convinced. They will say that it's far from obvious that our religiously dedicated and open-minded non-believer has *faith*. If it feels natural to an English speaker to talk as if she *does* – describing her as 'making a leap of faith', or 'living a life of faith' – we would have to rule out the possibility that we're speaking loosely.

We've reached a stalemate. Neither side of this debate can convince the other.

An Argument (Putatively) Against Both Sides

Most of the protagonists in this debate declare: you cannot define faith without referring to belief – either because faith *includes* belief, or because the very definition of faith prohibits positive *disbelief*.⁸ If it can be shown that faith is explanatorily *prior* to belief, we'll have a good argument against *both* the belief-plus theory *and* the no-disbelief-constraint.

Here's a reason to put faith first: If you don't have faith in your own cognitive capacities, then you simply can't go about *forming* beliefs. Richard Foley (2004, p. 20) writes:

Significant inquiry requires an equally significant leap of intellectual faith. The faith need not, and should not, be unlimited; that is the path to dogmatism and irrationalism. But there does need to be such faith.

If you don't have faith that your cognitive faculties, when used diligently, are capable of discovering *truth*, then you can't get into the belief-formation game. Belief-formation requires this leap of faith, if you're going to trust any of the outputs of your cognitive machinery.

Admittedly, Foley is talking about a sort of *practical* priority. The requisite faith in our own cognitive capacities is practically necessary for human agents, wired as we are, if we are to form beliefs. But this might be nothing more than a practical necessity based upon the exigencies of our human make up. This practical necessity is no evidence for some sort of general explanatory priority of faith over belief.

⁸ Another example of this phenomenon can be found in McKaughan's later account of faith as a form of active commitment. He has clauses written into the analysis of faith about what would happen if the person of faith that *p* were to learn that not-*p*. He also argues that faith sometimes demands acting as if one strongly *believes* that *p* (McKaughan, 2016). Both clauses require that belief is explanatorily prior to faith.

Although it's practically required that we have brains before we form beliefs, this might not be true for every epistemic agent. If God exists, for example, we imagine that He would form beliefs *without* possessing a brain. Brains are not explanatorily prior to belief. Accordingly, shouldn't confuse practical and explanatory priority. But the relationship between faith and belief runs deeper than the relationship between brains and belief. Note: even *God* would be prevented from forming beliefs if He lacked faith in His cognitive capacities.

You might demur. Perhaps the fact that God knows that His cognitive capacities are perfectly reliable means that God needn't have *faith* in them.⁹ But why would God *trust* that He knows that His cognitive capacities are perfectly reliable? Perhaps He can trust this knowledge, and therefore allow Himself to form beliefs, because He *knows* that He knows that His cognitive faculties are perfectly reliable. But why would God trust *this* to be so, and therefore allow Himself to form beliefs, unless He knows that He knows that He knows that His cognitive faculties are perfectly reliable? We're tumbling into an infinite regress preventing God from allowing Himself to form beliefs. We block the regress if we simply say that God's capacity to form beliefs is underwritten by His having *faith* in His own cognitive capacities.

Once we've arrived at a practical necessity about belief that holds for any conceivable epistemic agent, even for God, it seems fair to say that the practical priority in question *can* be counted also as an *explanatory* priority. I'm not convinced that all such conceptual dependence reveals explanatory priority, but it is, in our case, at least *suggestive*. Accordingly, Foley's point *can* be marshalled into a suggestive (even if not decisive) argument that faith must be explanatorily prior to belief because the practical priority he isolates holds for any conceivable epistemic agent.

⁹ This concern was raised by an anonymous reviewer.

And yet, we can engineer a similarly suggestive argument to show that belief is explanatorily prior to faith. For example: how can any epistemic agent have faith in her cognitive faculties if she doesn't already *believe* that she *has* cognitive faculties? And if she *can* have faith in them, without believing that they exist, can she have faith in them whilst believing that they *don't* exist? And if not, the no-disbelief-constraint seems to be written into our account of the faith that epistemic agents have to have in their own cognitive faculties.

We've found ourselves in sinking sand. Both sides of the faith-debate make belief explanatorily prior to faith. Both sides are wrong. Belief *cannot* be explanatorily prior to faith. But now our problem is this: faith can be neither prior *nor* anterior to belief. What are we to do? We seem to be on the precipice of an infinite regress. To believe that *p*, I need faith in my cognitive faculties, but to do that, I have to believe that I have them, and so on. Thankfully, contextualism will come to the rescue.

Contextualism about 'Belief'

We ascribe beliefs to people for a number of reasons. Dorit Ganson (2008, p. 441) isolates the 'two principal functions' of belief ascription: '[1] to characterize the agent's conception of how things are in the world, and [2] to account for her actions.' Call these two functions: (1) agent-*conception*-characterization (ACC) and (2) agent-*action*-characterization (AAC).¹⁰ To

¹⁰ These two functions, broadly, map onto those functions previously identified by Paul Boghossian, who says that we use belief-ascriptions "for two related purposes: on the one hand, to enable assessment of his rationality" – an assessment that looks to a person's *conception characterization* in order to assess it for coherence; "and, on the other, to explain his behavior" – which involves a characterisation of a person's dispositions to act in certain ways (Boghossian, 1994, p. 39). Boghossian himself (Ibid., p. 40) sees this distinction prefigured in the work of Tyler Burge (1982, p. 99).

the extent that a person's actions can be a poor reflection of how they actually view the world, these two functions can come apart so as to make room for a certain sort of ambiguity.

Eric Schwitzgebel (2010, p. 532) asks us to imagine a professor, Juliet, who sincerely judges that all races are equal. If you're ascribing beliefs to her in order to characterize her conception of how things are, you'd be wrong to ascribe racist beliefs to her. She would never consciously affirm a racist proposition. But her actions are often out of kilter with what she would be willing to affirm:

[S]he can't help but think that some students look brighter than others – and to her, the black students never look bright. When a black student makes an insightful comment or submits an excellent essay, she feels more surprise than she would were a white or Asian student to do so, even though her black students make insightful comments and submit excellent essays at the same rate as do the others. This bias affects her grading and the way she guides class discussion.

Does Juliet reject racist beliefs? Schwitzgebel says (*ibid.*, p. 537):

If we're just interested in what side Juliet will take in a debate, a simple 'yes, she believes that all the races are intellectually equal' seems the right thing to say; if one black student is advising another about whether to take her class a simple 'no, she doesn't believe that black people are as smart as white people' seems a fair assessment.¹¹

¹¹ Contextualism about 'belief' isn't the only way to explain the case in question. One could, instead, appeal to the notion of double-mindedness, or to a distinction between belief and alief (Gendler, 2008). But Schwitzgebel has strong arguments to favour his brand of contextualism over those other alternatives *op. cit.*

Schwitzgebel concludes that whether or not Juliet holds racist beliefs is vague: “She doesn't fit neatly into the yes or the no, so if we're concerned to describe her precisely, a yes or no won't do. It's an in-between case and a simple answer won't do...” (Schwitzgebel, 2010, p. 537). But, we needn't follow Schwitzgebel to this conclusion. In the two contexts he's described, matters don't seem to be vague at all. In the first context, we're making an ACC-belief ascription, and it would simply be *false* to describe her as a racist. In the second context, we're making an AAC-belief ascription, and it would be true.

According to Schwitzgebel (2002, p. 253), to believe that p “is nothing more than to match to an appropriate degree and in appropriate respects the dispositional stereotype for believing that p .” In essence, he wants to reduce all belief-ascription to the model of AAC. On this account, vagueness enters the picture when an agent matches the belief stereotype in some respects but not in others. Nevertheless, Schwitzgebel contends that context can sometimes make up for this vagueness, supplying us with a less exhaustive stereotype, or a more or less liberal degree of fit; and thus we can still say, in some contexts, that Juliet is racist, even though, in actual fact, her beliefs about racial equality are vague.

But, if we accept that belief-ascriptions have two functions, we can approach the same data without any need for admitting in-between cases. What we mean by ‘Juliet believes that p ’ depends upon the context of our conversation. When context determines that we're talking about ACC-belief, then it might be the case that Juliet doesn't believe that p , even though she *does* believe that p , in contexts that determine that we're talking about AAC-belief. Moreover, each of our two belief-ascription functions admit of further context sensitivities.

When we're trading in AAC-belief-ascription, it seems that what we're really picking out, with our ‘belief-talk’, is a *disposition* on the part of the ‘believer’ to act in certain ways. To say that

Juliet believes that the races are intellectually *unequal* is to describe Juliet as possessing a disposition to act in racist ways. But there are a number of different *sorts* of disposition that might interest us.

Are we interested, when we ascribe the belief that p to an agent, in a disposition to treat p as true in practical reasoning (as Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder (2014) might argue), or are we interested in how she acts *irrespective* of how she consciously reasons? Are we interested in a disposition to utter sentences that express p (irrespective of the agent's actual belief), or to vote only for candidates that endorse p , or to treat people in inter-personal interactions as if p were true?

Sometimes ACC and AAC ascriptions overlap. If, for example, you're interested in a person's disposition to *think* a certain way, then you're interested in how they (tend to) view the world – the truth-conditions of an ACC belief-ascription, in such a case, will be identical to the corresponding AAC belief-ascription. But sometimes, as we've seen, the two forms of ascription come apart, for example, when a person is disposed to act in ways that conflict with their views (which often occurs when a person's views are internally conflicted, or in cases of weakness of will).

Not only will the truth-conditions of an AAC-belief ascription be sensitive to the sort of disposition under discussion, it will also be sensitive to the sort of *situation* under discussion. For instance, are we interested in Juliet's dispositions to act in certain ways under exceptional pressure, or in day-to-day life, or in private, or in public, or what? Surely these variables will affect whether our AAC-belief ascriptions are true or false, but surely they can only be settled in the context of a conversation in which we can be clear which particular question is under discussion.

ACC-belief ascriptions are also context-sensitive. A person's picture of the world is constituted by convictions of various degrees of confidence. Once you allow that a person's picture of the world has all sorts of grey areas in it, a question emerges: how does the fine-grained notion of *degrees of confidence in a proposition* relate to the binary notion of outright belief and non-belief?¹² One popular line, among epistemologists, is that a person believes that *p* iff she has a certain degree of confidence that *p* is true. But, as we shall see, we have good reason to think that the requisite degree of confidence is calibrated differently in different contexts.

The paradox of the preface (Makinson, 1965) imagines a paradigmatically rational author who's written a meticulously researched book. We should say that she believes the conjunction of the assertions in her book since she believes every one of its well-researched conjuncts (call this the 'agglomeration principle'). Nevertheless, she knows that every book of similar length has contained at least one error. Accordingly, she forms the inductive inference that her book contains at least one error. This paradigmatically rational person believes the conjunction of the claims in her book, and yet she believes that at least one of the conjuncts is false. But how can a thoroughly rational person knowingly believe such an inconsistent set of propositions?

The context-sensitivity of ACC-belief ascription can come to the rescue. Asserting an isolated thesis, and asserting that same thesis as part of a massive conjunction of all of the theses that you assert in your book, 'in one fell swoop', generate very different contexts of assertion (Leitgeb, 2014a, p. 13). And, since "belief is relative to context" (Ibid.), in one context we can truly say that she *believes* any given conjunct without being forced to concede, in a *different*

¹² I tacitly distinguish here between non-belief and disbelief. Non-belief that *p* is simply not to believe that *p*. Disbelief regarding *p* is, by contrast, to believe that not-*p*.

context, that she believes their conjunction. This is a particularly elegant solution to the paradox, because – unlike other solutions (e.g., Christensen, 2004; Sturgeon, 2008; Backes, 2019) – it allows that, so long as we retain a constant context of assertion, the agglomeration principle is true.

The other epistemic paradox that evaporates on this conception of belief is the paradox of the lottery (Kyburg, 1961). Consider a fair 1000-ticket lottery with exactly one winning ticket. For any given ticket, you should only have 0.1% confidence that *it* will win; surely not enough confidence to constitute belief (in *any* context). Accordingly, you should believe of each ticket that it *won't* win, and yet you should believe with certainty that one ticket *will* win.

The paradox evaporates once we recognise that, to be asked of a specific ticket, whether *it* will win a lottery, creates a different context, which suggests a different partition of the space of possibilities, to the context that emerges when you're asked whether *some ticket or other* will win (Leitgeb, 2014b, pp. 160-163).

If we're interested in whether ticket 1 is going to win, then we have to partition all of the possible worlds into two cells: the cell with worlds in which ticket 1 *will* win and the cell with worlds in which ticket 1 will *not* win. We have two cells because there are only two possible answers to the question "Will ticket 1 win?". But, if we're not interested in ticket 1, *per se*, but merely interested in which ticket will win, we'll have to partition the worlds differently. Now we'll need as many partition cells as there are tickets in the lottery, since that's how many possible answers there are to the question "which ticket will win?"¹³

¹³ Thanks to Hannes Leitgeb for taking the time to explain the mechanics of his position to me in correspondence.

Leitgeb's suggestion is that the word 'belief' picks out different minimum degrees of confidence in contexts that impose different partitions upon the space of possibilities. As Roger Clark summarises the suggestion: "more coarse-grained partitions... make full belief easier to come by; more fine-grained partitions... make it harder" (Clarke, 2017, p. 403). Accordingly, questions about a particular ticket create a context with one minimum threshold for belief, while questions about the lottery as a whole will create a different context, with a different minimum threshold for belief. Once again, this is a particularly elegant solution because it doesn't require – as do solutions which reject the agglomeration principle – that, holding context in place, a person can believe, of every ticket, that *it* won't win, whilst believing that one of the tickets *will* win.

In addition to its unravelling epistemic paradoxes,¹⁴ the context sensitivity of ACC-belief ascription also accounts for cases, popularised by Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (2002), in which the pragmatic environment of an agent *seems* to influence whether or not she has a justified belief. For example:

There are two kinds of trains that run from the city to the suburbs: the local, which stops at all stations, and the express, which skips the first eight stations. Harry and Louise want to go to the fifth station, so they shouldn't catch the Express. Though if they do it isn't too hard to catch a local back the other way, so it isn't usually a large cost. Unfortunately, the trains are not always clearly labelled. They see a

¹⁴ Roger Clarke (2013) argues that we can achieve these results whilst holding a stable threshold for belief, the threshold being 1, or certainty. I don't have space to engage with Clark's arguments, but it's important to note that his account also introduces context-sensitivity into our belief-ascriptions. The context doesn't calibrate a minimum threshold, an agent's *credences* are calibrated differently from context to context. This context-sensitivity regarding ACC-belief ascriptions might be enough to substantiate *my* claims about the relationship between faith and belief, even if we were to adopt Clarke's account. Sadly, it is beyond the scope of this paper to work out the details of such an extension of my argument.

particular train about to leave. If it's a local they are better off catching it, if it is an express they should wait for the next local, which they can see is already boarding passengers and will leave in a few minutes. While running towards the train, they hear a fellow passenger say "It's a local." This gives them good, but far from overwhelming, reason to believe that the train is a local. Passengers get this kind of thing wrong fairly frequently, but they don't have time to get more information... If the train is a local, they will get home a few minutes early. If it is an express they will get home a few minutes later. For Louise, this is a low stakes gamble, as nothing much turns on whether she is a few minutes early or late, but she does have a weak preference for arriving earlier... But for Harry it is a high stakes gamble, because if he is late he won't make the start of his daughter's soccer game, which will highly upset her.¹⁵

Intuitively, Louise has a justified belief that the train is a local, but Harry doesn't. Fantl and McGrath (2002) argue that pragmatic considerations encroach upon epistemic notions, such as *justification*. They see it as a strength of their view that they can preserve our intuitions in examples like that of Harry and Louise.

It would go beyond the scope of this paper to explore Fantl and McGrath's arguments for pragmatic encroachment. But I can at least demonstrate that the context sensitivity of ACC-belief ascription preserves our intuitions equally well in cases like that of Harry and Louise.

Assuming that 'belief' picks out a different threshold of confidence in different contexts, we can say that *belief*, rather than epistemic justification, is the notion that's sensitive to

¹⁵ This is quoted from Brian Weatherson (2005, pp. 434-435) who adapts the original examples to sit better in his own framework – a framework I (partially) adopt.

pragmatic encroachment. Louise's pragmatic environment makes it such that she *can* believe that the train is a local. Harry, by contrast, is in a different pragmatic environment; an environment that calibrates the minimum threshold for belief so highly that we cannot truly say that he believes. In other words, Harry doesn't have a justified belief – not because his environment removes his *justification* – but because he doesn't have a belief at all. In Brian Weatherson's words (2005, pp. 435-436):

In cases like this, [pragmatic] interests matter not because they affect the degree of confidence that an agent can *reasonably* have in a proposition's truth. (That is, not because they matter to epistemology.) Rather, interests matter because they affect whether those reasonable degrees of confidence *amount to belief*. (That is, because they matter to philosophy of mind.) There is no reason here to let pragmatic concerns into epistemology.¹⁶ [Italics added]

Accordingly, allowing that the minimum confidence threshold for belief varies from context to context preserves the intuitive result that Harry *can't* form a justified belief whilst Louise can. Unlike Fantl and McGrath, however, we can preserve this intuition without rejecting the equally powerful intuition that they feel compelled to reject; *viz.* the intuition that pragmatic considerations are evidentially (and therefore epistemically) inert.

In the examples I've given, what fixes the ambiguity of AAC-belief ascriptions is nothing more than the question under discussion, at a given point in the conversation. For example, are we – the interlocutors – interested in what Juliet will *say*, what she'll do in public, how she'll act

¹⁶ Fantl and McGrath concede to Weatherson that one's pragmatic environment helps to calibrate the minimum threshold for belief, but they also maintain that it calibrates *justification* too (Fantl & McGrath, 2009, pp. 155-162).

under pressure, or how she'll grade her students? These considerations help us to disambiguate the sort of dispositions that we might be trying to track with our belief-talk.

By contrast, what fixes the ambiguity with ACC-belief ascriptions is sometimes the interests of the *interlocutors*, for instance, how many partitions of the possible worlds are salient, given the question under discussion, but sometimes the ambiguity is fixed by features of the pragmatic environment of the *subject of the belief-attribution*.¹⁷ I would therefore suggest the following sort of threshold view for ACC-belief ascription. I call it the Salient Threshold View:

STV: To say, in a given context c_1 , that 'S believes that P in c_2 ' (where c_1 and c_2 may or may not be the same context) is to say something true iff S 's confidence in P in c_2 , measured in numbers between 0 and 1, is greater than some salient number r , such that $r \leq 1$ and $r > 0$, where r is made salient in c_1 *either* by the kinematics of conversational scorekeeping in c_1 , or – given the question under discussion in c_1 – by the pragmatic environment of S in c_2 .

To be clear: STV is intended only as an idealisation of how the verb 'to believe' behaves. Real interlocutors are not measuring people's credences with a degree of accuracy that can be modelled with an exact measure between 0 and 1, but the idealisation helps us to see clearly what we're doing much more roughly in our day to day conversations.

¹⁷ Had my account of the context sensitivity of ACC-belief ascriptions *only* taken into consideration the environment of the subject of the belief-attribution, my view would have amounted to a subject sensitive invariantism regarding ACC-belief. It's only because my account *sometimes* renders ACC-belief ascriptions sensitive *only* to the context of utterance that my account of ACC-belief ascriptions develops into a full blown contextualism. But in fact, as Roger Clarke argues, "a situation-sensitive view of belief [*i.e.*, a view of belief that is sensitive to the context of the believer] lends itself naturally to a contextualist view of belief ascriptions. This," he rightly points out, "contrasts with the analogous view about knowledge: pragmatic encroachment on knowledge is usually set up as an alternative to k[nowledge]-contextualism" (Clarke, 2017, p. 406).

My defence of STV for ACC-belief ascriptions invokes David Lewis. He describes a somewhat frustrating Peter Unger, forcing us to agree that hardly anything is flat (Lewis, 1979, p. 353):

Take something you claim is flat; he will find something else and get you to agree that it is even flatter. You think the pavement is flat – but how can you deny that your desk is flatter? But “flat” is an *absolute term*: it is inconsistent to say that something is flatter than something that is flat. Having agreed that your desk is flatter than the pavement, you must concede that the pavement is not flat after all. Perhaps you now claim that your desk is flat; but doubtless Unger can think of something that you will agree is even flatter than your desk. And so it goes.

Lewis’s response to Unger recognises that the word ‘flat’ is vague. It allows, in different contexts, for different precisifications. Given the ‘kinematics of conversational scorekeeping’, an interlocutor can raise certain semantic standards mid-conversation. All that Unger did, when he got you to accept that the desk is flatter than the pavement, and then to accept that the pavement isn’t flat, was to raise the ‘standards of precision’ for the word ‘flat’. Lewis writes (Ibid.):

Since what he says requires raised standards, the standards accommodatingly rise. Then it is no longer true ... that the pavement is flat. That does not alter the fact that it *was* true enough *in its original context*. “The desk is flatter than the pavement” said under raised standards does not contradict “The pavement is flat” said under unraised standards, any more than “It is morning” said in the morning contradicts “It is afternoon” said in the afternoon. Nor has Unger shown in any way that the new context is more legitimate than the old one. He can indeed create an unusual context in which hardly anything can acceptably be called

“flat”, but he has not thereby cast any discredit on the more usual contexts in which lower standards of precision are in force.

Lewis is right. Terms that admit of precisification, as ‘belief’ surely does if its use supervenes upon a more fine-grained array of degrees of confidence, are relatively easy to raise the standards for – so long as you’re cunning enough to engineer the right sort of ‘unusual context’. If we have a subject, *M*, who has 0.66 confidence that *p* is true, we’ll be able to engineer conversational contexts in which it will be appropriate to say that *M* believes that *p*, and then we can raise the relevant standards mid-conversation – *a la* Unger – and thereby create a new context in which it will be *inappropriate* to say that *M* believes that *p*; all of this without any consideration of the pragmatic environment in which *M* finds herself.

Golda wants to marry a nice Jewish boy, but she wants to marry someone tall. For an Ashkenazi Jew, Yanky is tall. He’s 6’0”. Yanky is also a professional basketball player in the NBA. The average height of NBA players is currently 6’7”. For a professional basketball player, Yanky isn’t tall at all; he is positively short. What should we tell Golda? Is Yanky tall or short?

What stays (relatively) constant is how many inches high the top of Yanky’s head is off the ground when he’s standing up straight. What changes, from context to context, is whether that height is rightly described as tall. In the case of *M*, what stays constant is how confident she is that *p*. What changes, from context to context, is whether that degree of confidence is rightly described as belief.

Scott Sturgeon (2008, p. 142) writes:

To be tall is to be sufficiently large in one’s specific height; but what counts as sufficient is both vague and contextually variable ... [L]ikewise, to believe is to have

sufficient confidence; but what counts as sufficient is both vague and contextually variable.

Defending Threshold-Contextualism about 'Belief'

So far, I've laid out a pretty standard sounding form of contextualism regarding belief-talk. But the account has to be defended against Ross and Schroeder (2014), who argue that any context-sensitive threshold view will be unable to accommodate two truisms about belief.¹⁸ In this section, I seek to undermine their argument.

The first truism to conflict with a context-sensitive threshold theory of 'belief', they call *Correctness* (Ibid., p. 275):

Believing that p when p is true constitutes being right about whether p , whereas believing that p when p is false constitutes being wrong about whether p .

On a threshold view (so long as the threshold is lower than 1), to believe that p is consistent with having some degree of confidence that not- p . For example, if the threshold is calibrated at 0.9, and you qualify as believing, then you could have 0.1 degree of confidence that not- p . If it turns out that p is false, we can't say that you were completely wrong. By contrast, if belief is a zero-sum game, then *Correctness* can be maintained.

I respond: if the threshold for belief is 0.9 in context C , and you meet that threshold vis-à-vis p , then, in context C , we truly say that you were *correct* to have met that threshold if p is true,

¹⁸ They actually put forward four truisms, but the last two only generate a worry for views that calibrate the minimum threshold exclusively in relation to the pragmatic environment of the agent. Since STV sometimes calibrates the minimum threshold in terms of a value made salient by the context of the *conversation*, rather than the pragmatic context of the *agent*, I take it that Ross and Schroeder would accept that STV is off the hook regarding their final two truisms. Accordingly, I present the two that might be thought to challenge STV.

and that you were *incorrect* to have met that threshold if p is false. Of course, you may have been *justified* or *warranted* when you incorrectly met that threshold; but you were still *incorrect*. The spirit of the truism is thereby preserved. It merely turns out that being right and being wrong is about apportioning credences correctly. That will still be a zero-sum game even if belief isn't.

The second truism, they call *Stability* (Ibid., p. 277):

A fully rational agent does not change her beliefs purely in virtue of an evidentially irrelevant change in her credences or preferences.

At t_1 , Gaby believes that the birthday cake contains no trace of nuts. At t_2 , a child with an acute and life-threatening nut allergy arrives, unexpectedly, at the party. The presence of this child raises the stakes. Ross and Schroeder's worry is this: on a variable threshold view, we'll have to say that, at t_2 Gaby *doesn't* believe that the cake contains no trace of nuts, even though she did believe it at t_1 . But the presence of this child is not evidentially relevant to whether or not a particular cake contains nuts. It shouldn't make the difference that it seems to make. Accordingly, they argue, variable threshold views are incompatible with the truism of *Stability*.

I respond: there are two different precisifications of 'belief' – call them belief_1 and belief_2 . Belief_1 is the salient precisification at t_1 , and belief_2 is the salient precisification at t_2 . Both notions – belief_1 and belief_2 – satisfy *Stability*. Gaby still has belief_1 when the allergic child arrives. The arrival of the child is evidentially irrelevant. It does nothing to her stable belief_1 . All that happens is that belief_1 loses its salience, and belief_2 becomes salient instead. Gaby never had belief_2 – since belief_2 is calibrated to a much higher minimum threshold – consequently, when belief_2 becomes salient, it will no longer be appropriate to describe Gaby

as believing the cake to contain no trace of nuts. Every precisification of 'belief' respects the truism of *Stability*, and so the worry evaporates.¹⁹

Ross and Schroeder's arguments miss the mark.²⁰

Perhaps we should actually adopt a belief-eliminativism – a theory according to which we can effectively eliminate *belief* from our taxonomy altogether, since talk of *degrees of confidence* or *credence* can do all of the work that was ever required from belief-talk.²¹

True, STV *will* allow belief-ascriptions to be re-described simply in terms of degrees of confidence. But don't forget that STV is only supposed to govern ACC-belief ascriptions. There are also AAC-belief ascriptions; ascriptions which pick out dispositions rather than degrees of confidence; and, as we've seen, sometimes, the truth-conditions for these two sorts of belief-ascriptions will come apart – so long as they *do* come apart, STV *will not* govern the truth conditions for *all* belief-ascriptions.

Moreover, Lara Buchak (2014) argues that certain reactive attitudes – such as blame – 'are partially constituted [by] representing the world as being such that their targets are culpable'

¹⁹ Ran Lanzet, in correspondence, worries that I've really rejected *Stability* and replaced it with the following precisification-based principle:

Stability*: For every precisification belief_n of 'belief', a fully rational agent does not change her belief_n s purely in virtue of an evidentially irrelevant change in her credences or preferences.

Perhaps this is a better way of putting my view. Accordingly, Lanzet worries: 'don't you owe the reader an explanation of why the original *Stability* seemed true while in fact it wasn't?' I think the explanation is straightforward. If *Stability** is true, then the original version, *Stability*, is super-true (i.e., true on every precisification of 'belief').

²⁰ Another source of concern for contextualist accounts of belief comes from Tadeusz Ciecierski (2017). Considerations of space leave me unable to address his distinctive worry. But this much, I will say. Ciecierski concedes that his argument against contextualism only goes through if 'belief' is, in Carnap's sense of the word, a 'theoretical term.' Since I'm not convinced that it is, I leave his argument to one side. There are also important considerations to bear against the situation-sensitivity at the heart of STV, which considerations of space also leave me unable to address, but see (Stalnaker, 1984, pp. 80-81; Maher, 1986, p. 383; Foley, 1993, p. 199; Kaplan, 1996, p. 101).

²¹ For a defence of such eliminativism see Jeffrey (1992) and Christensen (2004).

(*ibid.*, p. 308), and she argues that these beliefs, in order to play the role that they play in our reactive attitudes, cannot be reduced to credences. Perhaps these beliefs are a different species from both the dispositions and the degrees of confidence that I've been discussing until this point.

I'm happy to admit a wide array of interesting notions, attitudes, concepts, and/or properties that may be picked out by our belief-talk in different contexts. Rather than belief-eliminativism, I would endorse belief-pluralism. There exist all sorts of interesting epistemic and mental states with all sorts of interesting metaphysical properties; all of which we sometimes call 'belief'. The problem is that our natural language belief-talk doesn't perspicuously reflect this underlying diversity.

To summarise: I have argued for a semantic contextualism regarding the word 'belief' and its cognates. Belief-ascription divides into (at least) two practices – AAC-belief ascription and ACC-belief ascription.²² Both are context sensitive. AAC-belief ascription picks out certain dispositions, but the sort of disposition it picks out depends upon the question under discussion. ACC-belief ascription (at least generally) picks out a minimum degree of confidence that a proposition is true, and that threshold is calibrated in accordance with STV.²³ Moreover, I have defended STV against Ross and Schroeder. Given this understanding of belief-talk, we should reassess the relationship between belief and faith.

²² I'm open to the existence of further distinctions. Perhaps our practices of evaluative-belief-ascription – which is to say, beliefs that interact with reactive attitudes in a specific way – pick out a different sort of mental state; given the arguments of Buchak (2014).

²³ I say 'at least generally' to make room for a possible class of exceptions regarding evaluative-beliefs, as I sketched in the previous footnote.

Faith and Belief

Mother Teresa (2007, p. 193) wrote: ‘I long with a deep longing to believe.’ If we take her at her word, then the belief-plus account of faith entails that she had no faith, at those times. But she clearly had *some* degree of confidence in the existence of God, even as she confessed her longing to believe. She wasn’t being disingenuous when she prayed. She wasn’t *pretending* to pray. Certainly, there are some contexts in which that sort of mental state, with that degree of confidence, can be called belief, and in which we could make a true ACC-belief ascription about her, saying that, ‘Mother Teresa believed that God exists, even if *she* – in her own context – was unwilling or unable to describe herself in this way.’

Moreover, Mother Teresa maintained the disposition to act in distinctively Christian ways. Accordingly, in the context of a discussion about her religious life, an AAC-belief ascription would appropriately describe her as believing that God exists, even though she said of *herself* that she *lacked* belief. What *she* said, in *her* context, could equally well have been accurate, leaving us no need to appeal to loose talk. Rather, what she said was accurate because she had played an Unger-like game with herself, in her own context, such that the minimum threshold for ACC-belief ascription was higher than in other contexts.

The word ‘faith’ isn’t any better off than ‘belief’. Mother Teresa said that she had no belief *and* that she had no faith, but ‘belief’ and ‘faith’ are slippery words. McKaughan, in *his* context, can appropriately describe her as a person of faith, even as she, in her own context, cannot so describe herself. Why? Malcolm and Scott would say that we use the word ‘faith’ too loosely. But why put it down to loose-talk when in the case of ‘belief’, it isn’t loose-talk but context-sensitive talk that’s generating the confusion. Perhaps ‘faith’ is likewise calibrated differently in different contexts.

Indeed, as we shall explore more thoroughly in the final section of this paper, faith that p requires *some* confidence that p is true. But how much confidence? It seems that the minimal threshold shifts from context to context.

Since 'belief' *can* mean 'confidence above 0.99', or it *can* mean 'confidence above 0.8', and so on, and likewise for 'faith', there's just no single answer to the question of whether faith requires belief, or vice versa. For all we know: on some sharpenings of 'belief' and 'faith', faith will require belief, and on others, it will not. There's nothing further to dispute here. The debate between the belief-plus and the non-doxastic camps is rendered strangely empty.²⁴

The No-Disbelief-Constraint

The context sensitivity of 'belief' and 'faith' doesn't entail anything about the no-disbelief-constraint. 'Tall' and 'short' are both context-sensitive. But there are penumbral connections between these context-sensitive words such that, in a given context, nobody who is tall is short. Perhaps, in a given context, nobody who has faith that p disbelieves that p .²⁵ In this section, I offer some preliminary reasons for thinking that there are no hard and fast penumbral connections between 'belief' and 'faith', and that the no-disbelief-constraint is false.

Granted: on most sharpenings and in most contexts, you *can't* say that a person has faith that p whilst maintaining that they believe that not- p . But given the ways in which speakers can raise standards within the course of one conversation, we're not in a position to make any sort of cast-iron generalisation.

²⁴ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting the need for this paragraph.

²⁵ Thanks to Ran Lanzet for raising penumbral connections with me.

We're easily moved by evidentialist rhetoric. Hume (2007, p. 80) tells us that the "wise man... proportions his belief to the evidence"; Clifford (2011, p. 186) that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence"; and Russell (2009, p. 349) adds that "Perfect rationality consists... in attaching to every proposition a degree of belief corresponding to its degree of credibility." These words resonate with our intuitions. But along with Patrick Maher (1993, p. 152), we know that "there is very little we can be rationally certain of, but that we can nevertheless rationally hold beliefs on a wide range of topics" – despite our lack of certainty.

In the context of these considerations, with those quotes echoing in your ears, consider the following case:

A woman, who we'll call *M*, is a wise and rational person. She has considered as much of the available evidence as she can reasonably be expected to consider for the existence of God. Her considered conclusion, on the basis of the evidence, is that the likelihood of God existing is somewhere close to 0. Accordingly, she recognises that, given the evidence she has, the likelihood of God's *not* existing is close to certain.

And now, consider the following question:

Q1: Does *M* believe that God *doesn't* exist?

Having been primed with quotes in favour of evidentialism, but against the notion that rational beliefs require *certainty*, it seems eminently reasonable – in such a conversational context – to declare that *M* believes that God *doesn't* exist. Now ask yourself:

Q2: Even though *M* believes that God doesn't exist, does she acknowledge that she might be wrong?

Again, given the evidentialist context of the conversation I've been constructing, with all those quotes echoing in our ears, it seems reasonable to say, 'yes'. But let me reveal some new information about *M*:

Despite believing that theism is only a remote possibility, *M* has good reason to *want* theism to be true. Accordingly, she has good reason to *hope* that she's wrong about God. So invested is *M*, emotionally, and practically, in what she thinks to be the remote possibility that God exists, that she has structured her entire life around that possibility. She has joined a religious community and strives to live her life according to its teachings. Her prayers reach out to God on the off-chance that He's listening. She knows that she isn't, strictly speaking, a theist, but she hopes very much to be wrong.

With this new information in place, how would you answer the following question?

Q3: Given the extent to which *M* is willing to structure her life around her hope that God exists, would it be appropriate to say that *M* has *faith* that God exists, or that she lives *a life of faith in God*?

I think it would be hard-hearted to say that this person doesn't live a life of faith in God.

Accordingly, I should ask:

Q4: In light of this new information, do you want to revise your answer to Q1, or – are you willing to say that *M* believes that God *doesn't* exist whilst having *faith* that he does?

David Lewis points out that once the standards for a word – be it ‘flat’ or ‘certain’ or ‘believes’ – have been raised, within the context of a conversation, it’s a difficult task to lower them again. Standards are easy to raise and difficult to lower (Lewis, 1979, pp. 352-353). It’s going to be difficult, in this conversation – with evidentialist rhetoric still echoing in our ears – to get the bar so low for belief that *M* could qualify as a *believer*. That’s why, in the sort of context I’ve been trying to construct in this section of the paper, many people will be willing to say, ‘yes – indeed – *M* believes that God doesn’t exist whilst having faith that He does’. Such an utterance is certainly unnatural, but so is the context of the conversation.

If you’re still not convinced, here’s a follow up question:

Q5: Even though, given her faith in theism, you don’t *want* to say that *M* believes that God doesn’t exist; even though it sounds unnatural, would you, at least, accept that there’s some *strict* or *technical* sense of the word ‘belief’ according to which it *would* be appropriate to say that *M believes* that God doesn’t exist whilst having *faith* that he does?²⁶

I think that, in this context, it’s hard to answer Q5 negatively. If I’m right, then it follows that the no-disbelief-constraint admits of counter-examples.

²⁶ I am no experimentalist, but for what it’s worth, I can offer the following anecdotal evidence that this section of the paper has things right. I set up an online survey of 100 participants. I gave them the four quotes to read (Hume, Clifford, Russell, and Maher) before asking them the series of questions (Q1)-(Q5), presented as they were in this paper. Only 58% of participants were willing to violate the no-disbelief-constraint at Q4. This is, I concede, a slim majority. A significant minority resisted. But Q5 changed a lot of people’s minds. Only 23% of the participants held out. Therefore, 77% were willing to accept that in some ‘strict’ sense, *M does* believe that not-*p* whilst having faith that *p*. Just over half of the 100 participants were philosophers. When you filter *them* out, the results were even more impressive. Only 19% of the non-philosophers resisted. That’s to say, 81% of the non-philosophers were willing (under pressure) to violate the no-disbelief-constraint. Perhaps the unusual context led the 81% astray. But why should we draw such conclusions since we have a well-motivated contextualism about ‘belief’ and ‘faith’ that can easily explain the survey’s result. Moreover, Q5 refers to an unusually *strict* rather than a *loose* sense of the word ‘belief.’

A Non-Doxastic Account without Constraints

In the light of the foregoing discussion, we should ditch the belief-plus account of faith. It makes no sense to define ‘belief’ or ‘faith’ in terms of one another. We should also reject the no-disbelief-constraint (admittedly, the constraint will be true in many (if not most) conversational contexts, but not in *all* contexts). This will leave us with an unconstrained, non-doxastic account of faith.

According to Howard-Snyder (2013), faith that p (i.e., propositional faith) has four ingredients:

- (i) A positive evaluation of p
- (ii) A positive conative orientation towards p
- (iii) A positive cognitive attitude towards p
- (iv) Resilience to counter-evidence for p

To ‘afford p a positive evaluation’ is Howard-Snyder’s way of saying that you think that p is the sort of thing that people should want to be true. In his second ingredient, Howard-Snyder gestures towards the difference between wanting something intrinsically and wanting something instrumentally. The mother in the midst of an agonising cancer treatment may no longer care, in and of herself, whether she lives or dies, but she must at least have some *relevant* desire, perhaps the desire to be there for her children as they grow up, if we’re to make sense of the claim that she has *faith* that she’ll survive (Howard-Snyder, 2013, p. 363). And thus, to have a positive conative orientation towards p is either to want p to be true, intrinsically, or, as in the case of the suffering mother, to want its truth indirectly, or *instrumentally*. I defend these first two ingredients against possible counter-examples elsewhere (Lebens, 2020, pp. 276-277; Forthcoming, ft. 15).

On to the third ingredient. A positive-cognitive attitude is some non-0 credence. But how much credence do you need? Howard-Snyder (2013, p. 361) sometimes talks as if the no-disbelief-constraint has to be invoked at this point. You only have faith that p if you have sufficient confidence in p not to be called a disbeliever. Given the foregoing discussion, we should know better than to invoke this faulty constraint. At other times, Howard-Snyder makes it sound as if you have a positive cognitive attitude toward p even if you only think that p is the least unlikely of the relevant options (pp. 364-365). That seems like a better suggestion.

Apparently, T. S. Eliot's Christian faith was underwritten by his belief that it was the "least false of the options open to him" (ibid.). If that really was sufficient for faith, then it seems plausible that the likelihood of the other options available to an agent plays a role in calibrating how much confidence one needs in order to have faith that p .

Just as 'belief', when intended to track confidence, requires a minimum degree of confidence, and just as that degree of confidence is calibrated differently in different contexts, depending, in part, upon the options on offer, I would urge that 'faith' requires a minimum degree of confidence, and that the degree of confidence will be calibrated differently in different contexts. We can model this upon STV:

STV (for faith): To say in context c_1 that 'S has faith that P in c_2 ' (where c_1 and c_2 may or may not be the same context) is to say something true only if S 's confidence in P at c_2 , measured in numbers between 0 and 1, is greater than some salient number r , such that $r \leq 1$ and $r > 0$, where r is made salient at c_1 either by the kinematics of conversational scorekeeping in c_1 , or – given the question under discussion at c_1 – by the pragmatic environment of S in c_2 .

Faith is resilient *because*, in many (if not most) contexts, it will be appropriate to attribute 'faith that *p*' to a person even when, in the very same context, it will be *inappropriate* to attribute 'belief that *p*' to the same person. Why? Because, in a given context, faith will often demand a lower degree of confidence than belief. Faith-talk tends to render salient lower degrees of confidence than belief-talk. All of this can be acknowledged without the strictures of the no-disbelief-constraint.

Moreover, cases like that of Saint Teresa show us that the distinction between ACC and AAC-belief ascriptions might need to be replicated for faith-ascriptions. How so? In the case of belief-ascriptions, the distinction emerges because a person's *actions* are not always a fair reflection of their underlying attitudes and views. We likewise see that, in contexts in which STV for faith-ascriptions determines that Saint Teresa had no faith that God exists, she was still *acting* faithfully; her actions never seem to have come *into* kilter with the lack of faith that she self-ascribed. She continued to pray and to act in complete fidelity to the oaths she had sworn to uphold. And thus, if your focus, in ascribing faith, is to capture something of a subject's inside state, you might come up with a different result to the person who is ascribing faith in order to predict church attendance.

I'm not certain that I'll *ever* get a tenure-track position; such is the state of the job market. But I've got enough confidence in myself and my colleagues, in combination with the pro-attitudes required, and the dispositions to act in certain ways, so as to make it true, in most contexts, to say that I have *faith* (most of the time). What's more, getting this paper published in *Synthese* would certainly be a step in the right direction!

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Jonathan Berg, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Arnon Keren, Iddo Landau, Ran Lanzet, Hannes Leitgeb, Daniel McKaughan, Ariel Meirav, Michael Scott, Saul Smilansky, and Danny Statman for helpful suggestions and discussion. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers provided by *Synthese*. I am happy to note that since I authored this paper, the University of Haifa has indeed offered me a tenure track appointment to begin in October 2021. I owe a debt of gratitude to all of those in my department who toiled to make that happen. I thank them for their faith in me, and for translating my own faith into belief.

Bibliography

- Backes, M., 2019. A Bitter Pill for Closure. *Synthese*, Volume 196, p. 3773–3787.
- Boghossian, P., 1994. The Transparency of Mental Content. *Philosophical Perspectives*, Volume 8, pp. 33-50.
- Buchak, L., 2014. Belief, credence, and norms. *Philosophical Studies*, 169(2), pp. 285-311.
- Burge, T., 1982. Other Bodies. In: A. Woodfield, ed. *Thought and Content: Essays on Intentionality*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 97-121.
- Christensen, D., 2004. *Putting logic in its place: Formal constraints on rational belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ciecierski, T., 2017. A Note on Belief Reports and Context Dependence. *Acta Analytica*, Volume 32, pp. 447-464.
- Clarke, R., 2013. Belief is Credence One (in Context). *Philosophers' Imprint*, 13(11), pp. 1-18.
- Clarke, R., 2017. Contextualism about Belief Ascriptions. In: J. J. Ichikawa, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Contextualism*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 400-410.
- Clifford, W. K., 2011. The Ethics of Belief. In: *Lectures and Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 177-211.
- DeRose, K., 2009. *The Case for Contextualist: Knowledge, Skepticism, and Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fantl, J. & McGrath, M., 2002. Evidence, Pragmatics and Justification. *Philosophical Review*, 111(1), pp. 67-94.
- Fantl, J. & McGrath, M., 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Foley, R., 1993. *Working Without a Net: A Study of Egocentric Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foley, R., 2004. *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ganson, D., 2008. Evidentialism and Pragmatic Constraints on Outright Belief. *Philosophical Studies*, Volume 3, pp. 441-458.
- Gendler, T. S., 2008. Alief and Belief. *Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 105, p. 634–63..
- Howard-Snyder, D., 2013. Propositional Faith: What it is and what it is not. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 50(4), pp. 357-372.
- Hume, D., 2007. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jeffrey, R., 1992. *Probability and the Art of Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, M., 1996. *Decision Theory as Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kyburg, H. E., 1961. *Probability and the Logic of Rational Belief*. Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press.
- Lebens, S., 2020. *The Principles of Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lebens, S., Forthcoming. Defining Religion. *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*.
- Leitgeb, H., 2014a. A Way out of the Preface Paradox. *Analysis*, 75(1), pp. 11-5.
- Leitgeb, H., 2014b. The Stability Theory of Belief. *Philosophical Review*, 123(2), pp. 131-171.
- Lewis, D., 1979. Scorekeeping in a Language Game. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, Volume 8, pp. 339-359.
- Maher, P., 1986. The Irrelevance of Belief to Rational Action. *Erkenntnis*, 24(3), pp. 364-384.
- Maher, P., 1993. *Betting on Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Makinson, D. C., 1965. The Paradox of the Preface. *Analysis*, Volume 25, p. 205–207.
- McKaughan, D., 2016. Action-Centered Faith, Doubt, and Rationality. *Journal of Philosophical Research: Special Commemorative Supplement, Selected Papers in Honor of William P. Alston*, Volume 41, pp. 71-90.
- McKaughan, D. J., 2013. Authentic Faith and Acknowledged Risk: Dissolving the Problem of Faith and Reason. *Religious Studies*, 49(1), pp. 101-124..
- McKaughan, D. J., 2018. Faith through the dark of night: What perseverance amidst doubt can teach us about the nature and value of religious faith. *Faith and Philosophy*, 35(2), pp. 195-218.
- Moon, A., 2018. The nature of doubt and a new puzzle about belief, doubt, and confidence. *Synthese*, 195(4), pp. 1827-1848.
- Ross, J. & Schroeder, M., 2014. Belief, Credence, and Pragmatic Encroachment. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 88(2), pp. 259-288.
- Russell, B., 2009. *Human Knowledge : Its Scope and Limits*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge.

- Schwitzgebel, E., 2002. A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief. *Nous*, 36(2), pp. 249-275.
- Schwitzgebel, E., 2010. Acting Contrary to our Professed Beliefs or The Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume 91, p. 531–553.
- Scott, M. & Malcolm, F., 2017. Faith, Belief and Fictionalism. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 98(S1), p. 257–274.
- Stalnaker, R., 1984. *Inquiry*. Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press.
- Sturgeon, S., 2008. Reason and the Grain of Belief. *Noûs*, 42(1), pp. 139-165.
- Teresa, 2007. *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*. New York: Doubleday.
- Weatherson, B., 2005. Can We Do without Pragmatic Encroachment?. *Philosophical Perspectives*, Volume 19, pp. 417-443.