Belief, Voluntariness, and Intentionality
Matthias Steup

Abstract
In this paper, I examine Alston's arguments for doxastic involuntarism. Alston fails to distinguish (i) between volitional and executional lack of control, and (ii) between compatibilist and libertarian control. As a result, he fails to notice that, if one endorses a compatibilist notion of voluntary control, the outcome is a straightforward and compelling case for doxastic voluntarism. Advocates of involuntarism have recently argued that the compatibilist case for doxastic voluntarism can be blocked by pointing out that belief is never intentional. In response to this strategy, I distinguish between two types of intentionality and argue that belief is no less intentional than action is.

1. The Epistemological Significance of Doxastic Voluntarism
There is a long-standing epistemological tradition to think of justification as a deontological matter. I will refer to advocates of this tradition as 'deontologists' and to the tradition they represent as 'deontology'.¹ Deontologists disagree among themselves about various details of the view. As I will understand the view here, deontology is the claim that believing is no less an instance of agency than action is. Advocates of deontology thus understood would say that, just as we can distinguish between obligatory, permissible, and forbidden actions, we can distinguish between obligatory, permissible, and forbidden beliefs (or, more generally, doxastic attitudes).² As William Alston has pointed out, an action or a belief's being justified is most naturally construed as the action or the belief's being permissible, according to some standard of permissibility (see Alston 1989, 125f). As far as actions are concerned, the standard might be that of prudence or that of morality. In epistemology, the standard for judging a belief's permissibility is neither prudential

¹ Representatives of deontology belonging to the modern period are Descartes and Locke. Among 20th century philosophers, A. J. Ayer, Laurence BonJour, Roderick Chisholm, and Carl Ginet may be counted as deontologists. For an instructive reconstruction of the deontological approach in modern and 20th century epistemology, see Plantinga 2003, chapter 1.
² For ease of exposition, I will frequently use 'beliefs' to refer to doxastic attitudes in general.
nor moral but epistemic. So when deontologists judge a belief permissible, what they have in mind is that the belief is, relative to the agent’s evidence, likely to be true.³

It would be fair to say that Alston has been the most influential and effective critic of the deontological approach. In his seminal papers “Concepts of Epistemic Justification” and “The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification,” he has introduced the two primary objections to deontology (see Alston 1989, 81-114 and 115-152). According to the first, the well-known Argument from Doxastic Involuntarism, deontologists are mistaken when they view belief as being under our voluntary control. According to the second, the Argument from Lacking Truth-Conduciveness, deontological justification is irrelevant to epistemology because a belief can be an instance of deontological justification without being grounded in anything that confers likelihood on it. Having responded to the Argument from Lacking Truth-Conduciveness elsewhere, I will here focus on the Argument from Doxastic Involuntarism, which may be reconstructed as follows:⁴

(1) If belief is suitable for deontological evaluation, then belief is an instance of agency.
(2) If belief is an instance of agency, then what we believe is under our voluntary control.
(3) What we believe is not under our voluntary control.
So:
(4) Belief is not an instance of agency.
So:
(5) Belief is not suitable for deontological evaluation.⁵

I will refer to philosophers who take the third premise to be false as ‘voluntarists’, and to philosophers who take that premise to be true as ‘involuntarists’. I will refer to the views these philosophers advocate as ‘voluntarism’ and ‘involuntarism’

³ What differentiates epistemic from moral or prudential reasons is that, unlike the latter, the former confer likelihood on the beliefs they support. How the relevant notion of likelihood is to be understood is a matter of considerable controversy. See Alston 1989, pp. 83ff, Feldman 2003, pp. 41ff, and Fumerton 1995, pp. 190ff.
⁴ For a response to the Argument from Truth-Conduciveness, see Steup forthcoming.
⁵ Alston doesn’t offer one single, anti-voluntarist argument with clearly articulated premises. His attack on epistemic deontology proceeds through a series of arguments and sub-arguments which, on p. 136, culminate in the following summation: “Up to this point I have been examining the support for a deontological conception of epistemic justification provided by the treatment of propositional attitude formation on the model of intentional action . . . I conclude that we do not generally have the power to carry out an intention to take up a certain propositional attitude. Insofar as the conception of epistemic justification as believing as one is permitted to depends on that assumption, it must be rejected.”
respectively. And, for ease of exposition, I will call 'voluntary' what falls within the range of things over which we have voluntary control, and I will call 'involuntary' what falls outside of this range. In this paper, I will develop further and refine my earlier efforts (Steup 2000 and 2008) at rebutting the arguments that have been offered in support of the third premise.

Before proceeding, I need to add an important clarification. According to the kind of involuntarism under consideration here, actions (neglecting exceptions) are excluded from the range of involuntariness. Involuntarism, then, is a thesis of asymmetry between action and belief: While we lack voluntary control in the area of belief formation, we do enjoy voluntary control over our actions. According to the voluntarist position I defend in this paper, this thesis of asymmetry is mistaken.

2. The Case for Doxastic Involuntarism

In preparation for articulating his arguments against voluntarism, Alston distinguishes between two kinds of direct control over our beliefs.\(^6\) The first is basic control, which we enjoy when it comes to controlling the movements of our body and limbs. Exerting such control takes no more than making a decision. For example, you have direct control over whether or not to raise your arm. To raise your arm, no more is needed than just deciding to raise it. Alston considers it obvious that we cannot acquire or drop beliefs just by deciding to do so. He writes:

"My argument, if it can be called that, simply consists in asking you to consider whether you have any such powers. Can you, at this moment, start to believe that the United States is still a colony of Great Britain, just by deciding to do so?" (Alston 1989, 122)

The second kind of direct control is nonbasic immediate.\(^7\) To exert such control, one executes a series of bodily movements within one uninterrupted, intentional act. For example, we have nonbasic immediate control over turning on the light. This is not something you can accomplish just by exercising your will. Rather, you need to go to

---

\(^6\) Alston contrasts direct and indirect control. The latter divides into long range and indirect influence control. For his classification of different types of control, see Alston 1989, pp. 119 and 137.

\(^7\) Voluntary control of the direct kind, then, is either basic or nonbasic immediate. Indirect control divides into long range and indirect influence. While Alston does not think there is any realistic prospect for long range control over our beliefs, he allows for the possibility of exerting indirect influence over them. He does not think, therefore that the absence of direct belief control, by itself, suffices for a refutation of deontology, which is why he also advances the Argument from Lacking Truth Conduciveness.
the light switch and flip it. Alston thinks it is obvious that we do not enjoy such 'light switch' control over our beliefs either. Here is what he says on this point:

"With respect to almost all normal perceptual, introspective, and memory propositions, it is absurd to think that one has any such control over whether one accepts, rejects, or withholds the proposition. When I look out my window and see rain falling, water dripping off the leaves of trees, and cars passing by, I no more have immediate control over whether I accept those propositions than I have basic control. I form the belief that rain is falling willy-nilly. There is no way I can inhibit this belief." (Alston 1989, 129)

Alston’s examples can be generalized to belief formation in general. Nearly all of our beliefs 'stick': it is not within our power to get rid of them. The same applies to doxastic attitudes such as disbelief and suspension of judgment. It is not within our power to replace disbelief with belief. Nor is it within our power to believe or disbelieve a proposition when in fact we do neither. Consider the following propositions:

- H I have a head.
- T I have two heads.
- A There are more ants than spiders.

H is a proposition that is clearly true. I cannot refrain from believing it. T is a proposition that is clearly false. I cannot refrain from disbelieving it. Finally, A is a proposition that is neither clearly true nor clearly false. I can neither believe it nor disbelieve it. By far most of our doxastic attitudes fall into one of these three categories. Thus the phenomenon to which Alston appeals, the phenomenon of being unable to believe otherwise—I’ll refer to it as ‘Alston’s Datum’—provides seemingly decisive support to involuntarism. In light of it, the third premise of the Argument from Doxastic Involuntarism seems true.

3. An Initial Explanation of Alston’s Datum

It would be nice to have an explanation of Alston’s Datum. Why is it that we cannot believe otherwise? Why can you not believe that the US is still a colony of Great Britain, or that you have two heads, or that cats are insects? And why is it not within your power to refrain from believing that it is raining when you see that it is, or that you have a head, or that cats are mammals? And finally, why can you neither believe nor disbelieve that there are more ants than spiders, or that the
number of ducks is even? Note that the propositions in the first category are clearly false, the propositions in the second category clearly true, and the propositions in the third category neither clearly true nor clearly false. Note further that what confers upon a proposition the status of being clearly true or being clearly false is your evidence. Here we have, then, an initial explanation of Alston’s Datum: We cannot believe otherwise because our evidence makes it impossible for us to do so. This explanation has been suggested by H. H. Price:

If you are in a reasonable frame of mind, you cannot help preferring the proposition which the evidence favors, much as you may wish you could. (Price 1954, 16)

Alston concurs. Considering why we cannot either believe or disbelieve what is neither clearly true nor clearly false, he says the following:

How could I simply choose to believe [p] rather than [q] when they seem exactly on a par with respect to the likelihood of truth, especially when the subjective probability seems rather low? To do so would be to choose a belief in the face of the lack of any significant inclination to suppose it to be true. It seems clear to me that this is not within our power. (Alston 1989, 126)

Now, when two propositions—for example, the number of ducks is even and the number of ducks is odd—"seem exactly on a par with respect to the likelihood of truth", this is so because in light of our evidence neither one is more likely true (or false) than the other. It is, therefore, our evidence that prevents us from believing either one of these propositions. Alston’s point applies with equal force to what we cannot believe and what we cannot refrain from believing. When you cannot believe that the US is still a colony of Great Britain, it is your evidence that makes this impossible for you. And when you cannot refrain from believing that it is raining when you see that it is, it is again your evidence that is responsible for your inability. Alston’s Datum, then, may be restated as follows: Given our evidence, we cannot believe otherwise.

4. Two Ingredients of Voluntary Control
The initial explanation of Alston’s Datum remains incomplete. There is a further question we need to consider which clearly emerges once we come to see that a failure to have control over something can come about in two ways: either by being
unable to do what one has decided to do, or by being unable to control one’s decisions themselves. Voluntary control, then, has two ingredients:

**Executional control**: the ability to execute one’s decisions and choices.

**Volitional control**: the ability to control one’s own will.

Let us consider some examples to illustrate the distinction.

**Paralysis**: Peter wants to raise his arm to reach for his coffee. But he just had a stroke, and now his arm won’t move because it is paralyzed.

**Twitching Eye Lid**: Tom’s eye lid twitches. He tries to stop it from twitching, but to no avail.

**Icy Hill**: Ingrid is driving up a hill on an icy road. The wheels spin on the ice, and the car comes to a complete stop. She tries to continue driving, but with no success.

Each of these examples illustrates an executional control failure. Peter decided to pick up his coffee, but his arm won’t move. Tom is trying to make his eye lid stop twitching, but it continues twitching. Ingrid wants to drive up the hill but can’t because the wheels of her car have lost traction. Compare such inability to do what one wants to do with volitional control failure:

**Agoraphobia**: Al cannot take a walk in the park because he suffers from an irrational and excessive fear of wide open places.

**Mysophobia**: Mel washes and disinfects his hands up to one hundred times a day. He cannot help behaving in this way because he suffers from an irrational and excessive fear of germs and contamination.

The reason why Al cannot take a walk in the park is not that he cannot execute his decision to do so because of external obstacles such as civil unrest, torrential rainfall, or sudden paralysis. Rather, he cannot take a walk in the park because he cannot decide to do anything that would result in his being exposed to wide open places. In this regard, he is unable to control his own will. Likewise, when Mel engages in a particular episode of hand washing, the problem is not that this is happening against his will. Rather, he washes his hands because he wants to wash his hands. Due to his mental illness, he could not have decided otherwise. So when
it comes to keeping his hands clean, Mel suffers from a loss of control over his own will.

Voluntary control, then, involves two ingredients. Let us define the notion accordingly:

A subject, S, has voluntary control over \( \varphi \)-ing iff (i) S can decide to do \( \varphi \) and S can decide to refrain from \( \varphi \)-ing; (ii) if S decides to do \( \varphi \), S can \( \varphi \), and if S decides to refrain from \( \varphi \)-ing, S can refrain from \( \varphi \)-ing.

In light of the fact that control failure can come about in two ways, we must next turn to Alston's Datum and continue to refine our understanding of it. Why is it that our evidence prevents us from believing otherwise? Is it because our evidence prevents us from deciding to believe otherwise, or because our evidence prevents us from executing alternative doxastic decisions?

5. Why We Can't Believe Otherwise

Our question is whether the volitional or the executional explanation of the datum is correct. Consider your attitude of disbelieving that you have two heads. Given the excellent evidence you have in favor of believing that you have one head only, let us ask exactly what this evidence prevents you from doing. Does it prevent you

(a) from deciding to believe that you have two heads

or

(b) from executing your decision to believe that you have two heads?

It seems clear to me that (a) is the correct answer. Next, I will state three reasons in support of the volitional explanation of Alston's Datum.

1. It is not easy to get a grasp of what it would be like to decide to believe that you have two heads. Obviously, you remember always having had just one head. You don't remember growing a second head. You know that it is physiologically impossible for humans to grow a second head. You also know that it is surgically impossible to attach a second head to your body. Knowing all of this, it is mysterious how you could sincerely decide to believe—decide to take it to be true—that you have two heads.

2. A decision about what to believe, where the theater of execution is one's mind, is typically easy to execute. This makes the executional explanation implausible. For example, you might decide to think about where to go for tonight's dinner. Next you might decide to find out whether you remember how to get to the restaurant
upon which you have settled. After dinner, having received the check, you might decide to calculate the tip. In each case, executing your decision involves performing a certain mental operation. Performing mental operations tends to involve less opportunity to fail than performing physical activities. Having decided to drive to campus, you might run out of gas. Having decided to turn on the light, you might fall on the way to the light switch and break your leg. You don’t bear such risks when it comes to executing doxastic decisions. Setting aside the question of how you might pull it off to make such a crazy decision, suppose you somehow manage to decide to believe that you have two heads. Barring a Harry Frankfurt-type counterfactual intervener or an Alpha Centaurian with a ray gun, what should prevent you from executing your doxastic choice and acquire this belief?

Of course, we can easily imagine cases in which a doxastic decision is difficult to execute. Consider Cecil, who grew up in a devout Christian family. At college, he takes a class in the philosophy of religion. Particularly impressed by the problem from evil, he decides to believe that God does not exist. Alas, given his intense religious upbringing, Cecil is emotionally repulsed by the thought of God’s nonexistence and thus finds it difficult to make himself believe what, at a purely intellectual level, he considers to be true. Here we have a case where we can understand an agent’s inability to execute a doxastic decision by appeal to the feeling of being repulsed by the belief in question. However, when it comes to executing the decision to believe that you have two heads, religious commitment will not stand in the way of executing your decisions. It is not easy to see, then, what, in close possible worlds, should prevent you from executing crazy doxastic decisions.

It might be objected that it is your evidence that prevents you from executing the decision to believe that you have two heads. However, this objection would be implausible. If you did indeed succeed in deciding to believe, irrationally, that you have two heads, why should your evidence prevent you from executing this choice given that it didn’t prevent you from making such a crazy doxastic decision in the first place? Why think your evidence is causally inert at the level of decision making but mysteriously starts being effective when it comes to the task of executing your choice?

3. The most plausible explanation of why we can't decide to perform obviously irrational acts is that we can't make the requisite decisions. Consider an irrational act such as sticking a knife in your hand for a measly monetary reward of $5. Let’s
assume you couldn’t do an irrational thing like that. Would that be because, after deciding to reap the reward, you repeatedly aim the knife at your hand but keep missing? Or would it be because the expectation of seeing a bloody hand would make you faint? While such scenarios are conceivable, the most plausible explanation of why you couldn’t act in such a crazy manner is that, having excellent reasons to consider such an act highly irrational, you couldn’t decide to do this. In general terms, one’s inability to perform highly irrational acts is typically due to one’s inability to make the requisite decisions. This is evidence supporting the conclusion that, analogously, our inability to acquire irrational beliefs is typically due to our inability to decide to acquire such beliefs.

Based on these reasons, I conclude that the correct way to state Alston’s Datum goes like this: Given one’s evidence, one cannot decide in favor of alternate doxastic attitudes. So what’s responsible for our inability to acquire alternate doxastic attitudes is not executional but volitional control failure.

Against this conclusion, it could be argued that it does not connect with involuntarism as it is most charitably construed: as the view that we don’t have control over our doxastic attitudes because there is no such thing as making a doxastic decision to begin with. According to this objection, when I raise the question of whether the explanation of our inability to believe otherwise is volitional or executional and then argue in favor of the volitional explanation, I presuppose that doxastic attitude formation is an area where decisions have a role to play and thus presuppose precisely what involuntarists deny, thus begging the question against them.8

When in arguing against a view one begs the question against that view, one’s reasoning tacitly relies on a proposition—crucial to the issue at hand—that the attacked view rejects. In the present case, the proposition giving rise to the charge of question begging is that it is possible for agents to make doxastic decisions. If this were not possible, then the correct explanation of Alston’s Datum would still be volitional inability. But the inability to decide in favor of alternate beliefs would not be due to the possession of decisive evidence. Rather, it would be due to a general inability to make doxastic decisions at all. This inability would be a strong reason for endorsing involuntarism. My criticism of Alston’s argument must, therefore, be supplemented with an argument defending the claim that doxastic decision making is

8 This line of reasoning was suggested by an anonymous referee.
possible. Later in this paper, I will address this issue and advance an argument for the conclusion that we indeed can acquire a belief by way of making a doxastic decision, thus forming a belief intentionally. The charge of question begging, therefore, does not stick.

The question we need to consider next is whether Alston’s Datum does, as Alston claims, supply us with a good reason in support of doxastic involuntarism. To discuss this question, we need to consider the metaphysics of free will. Volitional control—control over one’s volitions—is a complicated affair. According to doxastic involuntarism, we lack control over our beliefs while we enjoy control over our actions. So involuntarists need a construal of volitional control that secures asymmetry between actions and beliefs. I am going to argue that such asymmetry proves to be elusive.

6. Hard Determinism, Libertarianism, and Compatibilism

When we consider the question of whether our will is free, the perhaps most central question is whether free will is compatible with determinism. Let us define determinism as follows:

**Determinism:** At any point in time, given past events and the laws of nature, only one unique future is possible.

Determinism implies that, if yesterday at 5:03 PM you decided to take a walk, then one second before 5:03 there was only one future open to you, namely the one in which you decide to take a walk. Given past events and the laws of nature, your decision to take a walk was necessitated. Next, suppose we conceive of volitional control (control over our decisions and choices) as follows:

**Volitional Control:** An agent A in circumstances C has volitional control over \( \varphi \)-ing iff in circumstances C, A can decide to \( \varphi \) and can decide to refrain from \( \varphi \)-ing.\(^9\)

With these definitions in place, let us consider the three basic options in the metaphysics of free will:

**Libertarianism:** Free action requires volitional control, which in turn requires the dual ability, in the very same situation, to decide in favor of \( \varphi \)-ing and to

---

\(^9\) Here, ‘circumstances C’ do not refer to a type, but rather to a token, of a situation. The claim is that in the very same specific situation, holding the laws of nature and all of the physical details of the situation constant, two futures are open to A: one in which A decides to \( \varphi \) and one in which A decides not to \( \varphi \).
decide against $\varphi$-ing. On at least some occasions, we have this ability. On such occasions, two distinct futures are open to us. Hence, while in fact many of our actions might be determined, not all of them are, which is to say that determinism is false.

**Hard Determinism:** Determinism is true. There are no occasions at all when two futures are open to us. Hence we have never, in the same situation, the dual ability to decide in favor of $\varphi$-ing and to decide against $\varphi$-ing. Free decision making, and thus free action, are impossible.

**Compatibilism:** Free decision making, and thus free action, are both possible even though determinism is true. The truth of determinism is not an obstacle to making free decisions because libertarians and hard determinists are both mistaken about what control over one’s decision, and thus one’s actions, requires. It does not require having the dual ability, in identical circumstances, to decide in favor of and to decide against an action. What it requires instead is a decision’s being caused in the right way: in a way that does not prevent but rather grounds control over the decision.

Considering the threefold choice between, libertarianism, hard determinism, and compatibilism, how should involuntarists position themselves? Hard determinism is clearly not an option. Involuntarists hold that there is asymmetry between actions and beliefs: we have control over our actions but not over our beliefs. Hard determinism says that we have control over neither.

What about libertarianism? In principle, involuntarists could endorse libertarianism. But libertarianism does not easily lend itself to deriving the asymmetry involuntarists wish to establish. Consider again the example in which, at 5:03 PM, you decide to take a walk. If libertarianism is true, then, under exactly the same circumstances, you could at 5:03 have decided not to take a walk. The decision you did in fact make was an indeterministic event, an event that, under the very same circumstances, might not have taken place. Let’s suppose such indeterministic decision-making events are possible. To secure the intended asymmetry, involuntarists would have to argue that indeterminacy of this kind is possible when it comes to making decisions about how to act, but is not possible when it comes to decisions about what to believe. On the face of it, this is an arbitrary and unstable position to take.
This leaves compatibilism as the sole remaining option. But, as I will argue next, for securing the intended asymmetry of action and belief, compatibilism does not hold much promise either.

7. The Compatibilist Case for Doxastic Voluntarism

According to contemporary compatibilism, we can distinguish between volitions that are under our control and those that are not.\footnote{Classic compatibilism (Hobbes, Locke, Hume) considers free will irrelevant. Being able to do what one wants is sufficient for freedom or having voluntary control over one’s actions. The problem with classic compatibilism is its counter-intuitive consequence that Agoraphobic Al or Mysophobic Mel have control over their actions and thus are free agents.} Libertarians claim that our volitions are under our control only if we can decide or choose otherwise under exactly the same circumstances. Compatibilists deny this. They claim that whether a volition is under one’s control depends, not on whether it was caused or not, but rather on how it was caused. There are good causes (those that enable control) and bad causes (those that prevent control). For this approach to be plausible, compatibilists need to develop a detailed and principled account telling us how to distinguish between good and bad causes. I will use as a template just one such account: Fischer and Ravizza’s theory of reasons responsiveness.\footnote{See Fischer and Ravizza 1986. According to McKenna 2009, “many working on the topics of free will and moral responsibility now regard Fischer’s developed account to be the gold standard for cutting edge defenses of compatibilism.”} The basic idea of reason responsiveness can be summed up as follows:

**Reason Responsiveness**

An agent’s decision or choice to \( \varphi \) is caused in a reason responsive way iff in nearby worlds the agent tends to decide or choose to \( \varphi \) if and only if the totality of the agent’s reasons supports \( \varphi \)-ing.\footnote{This construal of reason responsiveness is not intended to be an exact capture of what Fischer and Ravizza have in mind. Nor is it meant to be a complete account that withstands systematic testing against problem cases. Rather, the point is to articulate the basic idea. One difficulty theories of reason responsiveness face is that of avoiding the outcome that an action is voluntary if and only if it is rational. See Bayer forthcoming. To avoid this outcome, reason responsiveness, as I define the notion here, does not require that an agent’s action is supported by the totality of an agent’s reasons in all nearby worlds. To allow for the possibility that a reason responsive agent acts irrationally on occasion, it is merely required that, in nearby worlds, the agent tends to do what reason supports.}

Let’s apply compatibilism, construed in terms of reason responsiveness, to several examples. Consider Mysophobic Mel. He washes his hands even when the totality of his reasons fails to support hand washing. So his decisions to wash his hands are not reason responsive and thus not under his control. The same applies to...
Agoraphobic Al: Invariably, he decides not to leave his home even he has good reasons to do so. Rigidly caused by his mental illness, his decisions fail to be responsive to his reasons. Thus, when it comes to deciding whether to stay at home or leave his house, Al lacks control over his volitions.

Compare Al and Mel with Boris, who is patiently enduring a boring philosophy lecture at an annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Boris considers leaving but, for fear of insulting the speaker (with whom he is acquainted), he decides to stay. Boris's decision to stay is reason responsive because, in nearby possible worlds, whether Boris continues listening to a boring lecture or gets up and leaves tends to vary with what course of actions his reasons support. He is not the kind of person who either rigidly remains until the end of a lecture irrespective of what reason recommends. Nor is he the kind of person who, due to mental illness, is unable to remain seated for the duration of an entire lecture. Hence Boris's decision to continue listening to the boring lecture is one that is under his control.

Compatibilism—of the reason responsiveness kind—about voluntary control can be summed up as follows:

Reason responsiveness = good causes = voluntary control;

Lack of reason responsiveness = bad causes = lack of voluntary control.

What result do we get when we apply this conception of voluntary control to beliefs? Suppose we begin with a firm commitment to the claim that beliefs are involuntary. In that case, we would have to say that our beliefs are not produced by reason responsive processes. Instead, they would have to originate in bad causes such as mental illness, addiction, manipulation, hypnosis, or brain washing. Obviously, this outcome would amount to a reductio, for the majority of our beliefs, being rooted in perception, introspection, memory, or reasoning, come from good causes. The reductio is easily avoided if we begin with the plausible starting point that our beliefs are typically responsive to our reasons and thus caused in ways compatibilist must classify as control enabling.Compatibilism, then, yields the surprising result that our beliefs are typically under our control, and in fact are no less so than our actions are.

The argument I am advancing here does not depend on choosing reason responsiveness as the criterion by which to distinguish between good and bad causal processes. Again, the central compatibilist idea is that whether a decision or choice is under one's control (and thus free) depends on whether the causal process in
which the decision or choice originated is good or bad. No matter how the distinction between good and bad causal processes is cashed out, surely we should agree, to begin with, that the standard origins of our beliefs—perception, introspection, memory, reasoning—are paradigmatically good causes. A version of compatibilism that classifies our standard belief-forming process as bad, thus equating them with mental illness and the like, would be unacceptable. It would appear, therefore, that on any version of compatibilism, we get a strong prima facie case in support of doxastic voluntarism. In what follows, I will, focusing on the reason responsiveness version of compatibilism, examine several attempts to block the outcome that advocates of compatibilism cannot consistently reject doxastic voluntarism.

8. The Argument from Intentionality

According to a frequently encountered argument, beliefs, not being intentional, fail to be voluntary because intentionality is a necessary condition of voluntariness. Next, I will discuss various versions of this argument. It will turn out that all of them fail. Let us begin by considering what we might call explicit intentionality: the kind of intentionality involved in carrying out an antecedently formed, conscious intention to do a certain thing. The notion may be defined as follows:

Explicit Intentionality

A’s ϕ-ing is explicitly intentional if and only if (i) A ϕ-s; (ii) by A ϕ-ing, the agent carries out an antecedently formed, conscious intention to ϕ.

Making explicit intentionality a necessary condition of voluntariness, involuntarists might argue as follows:

The Argument from Explicit Intentionality

1. A’s ϕ-ing is voluntary → A’s ϕ-ing is explicitly intentional.
2. Belief is never explicitly intentional.
3. Belief is never voluntary.

This argument fails. Since there are voluntary actions that are not explicitly intentional, the first premise is false. Examples come instantly to mind when we

13 Obviously, to substantiate this result, a review of a wide variety of different versions of compatibilist theories is required. For initial attempts at this aim, see Steup 2000 and 2008.

14 Arguments of this kind are employed in Feldman 2001 and Nottelmann 2006. For a helpful introduction to the literature on intentionality, see Setiya 2010.
consider what it is like to drive a car. Consider gear shifting, accelerating, braking, signaling, or turning the steering wheel. Experienced drivers perform these actions automatically, without carrying out antecedently formed intentions. Other examples can easily be found. Throughout an ordinary day, we perform countless automatic actions such as pressing down a door handle, opening and closing drawers, picking up one’s coffee and moving the cup to one’s mouth, or unscrewing the toothpaste cap before brushing one’s teeth. While all of these actions are such that one could of course do them by way of carrying out conscious intentions, typically they are performed without having formed such intentions antecedently. Surely, though, we wouldn’t want to classify any of the actions I mentioned as involuntary. The first premise of the Argument from Explicit Intentionality, therefore, must be rejected.

Involuntarists could reply that, while the examples I have mentioned fail to be instances of explicit intentionality, they are nevertheless examples of implicit intentionality. They are not unintentional in the way the behavior of a twitching eye lid is unintentional, or in the way one might unintentionally spill one’s beer. Clearly, there is a difference between the behavior of a twitching eye lid and gear shifting. Whereas the former is unintentional, the later falls, in some way to be spelled out, under the category of intentional action. Involuntarists could argue that, unlike beliefs, automatic actions are instances of an implicit intentionality—a kind of intentionality that does not involve the formation of antecedent, conscious decisions—and advance the following argument:

**The Argument From Implicit Intentionality**

1. A’s ϕ-ing is voluntarily → A’s ϕ-ing is either explicitly or implicitly intentional.
2. Belief is neither explicitly nor implicitly intentional.

So:

3. Belief is not voluntary.

For this argument to succeed, it must be supplemented with a definition of implicit intentionality that allows involuntarists to classify gear shifting and the like as intentional while denying the intentionality of belief. As a first try, let’s consider the following definition:

**Implicit Intentionality (I)**

A’s ϕ-ing is implicitly intentional iff (i) A ϕ-s; (ii) if after ϕ-ing A were to consider the question of whether A meant to ϕ, A would answer affirmatively.
The concept of implicit intentionality thus understood fails to be of use to the involuntarist. It is easy to see that twitching eyelids and spilled beers unproblematically fail to satisfy clause (ii). It is not easy to see why beliefs should fail to satisfy clause (ii) (see Ryan 2003, p. 74). There are not many people of who, upon considering their belief that they have hands, would say that they did not mean to have this belief, but that, somehow, they ended up having it without meaning to.

Admitting that the first definition yields no dialectical advantage to their position, involuntarists might choose an alternate way of defining implicit intentionality. Helping themselves to a distinction due to John Searle, they might distinguish between prior intention and intention in action (see Searle 1983, 84f). When you go to buy a cup of coffee, you typically carry out a prior intention to do so, an intention which might be conscious but needn’t be. But when you turn a door knob or step on the brakes, typically you do not carry out any prior intention. Involuntarists could argue, first, that automatic actions exemplify implicit intentionality because they are instances of intention in action without prior intention, and second, that beliefs do not exemplify the implicit intentionality we find in automatic actions.

For this argument to carry weight, we need an account of what an intention in action is. Searle defines intention in action by appeal to the experience of acting (see Searle 1983, 88f) and elucidates what he has in mind by comparing two cases of arm raising. In the first case, a subject responds to the request to raise her arm by intentionally raising her arm. In the case instance, the experimenter stimulates a subject’s muscles so as to make her arm go up. When the subject in the second case is asked “Who raised your arm?” she answers “I did.” However, when the same question is asked of the subject in the second case, the subject answers “I didn’t; you did.” So what Searle has in mind, speaking of the experience of acting, is the experience of being the author of one’s behavior, or the experience of one’s behavior originating within oneself and not from an external source. Let us thus refer to the two cases Searle compares as internally and externally caused arm raising. Searle observes that the experience of acting is present in the case of internally caused arm raising but not in the case of externally caused arm raising. Next, note that the experience of acting is also present when we perform automatic actions such as shifting gears or stepping on the brakes. Hence Searle concludes that intentionality in action—the kind of intentionality not accompanied by any
antecedently formed intentions, conscious or not—must be identified with the experience of acting.

Searle’s definition is too narrow for our purposes here. What is at issue is whether the awareness of being in control that is constitutive of the experience of acting is also present when one considers one’s beliefs. Defining implicit intentionality as the experience of acting would preclude this possibility by definition (since believing is not a way of acting—assuming acting involves bodily movement—and thus is unlikely to involve an experience of acting). Let us, therefore, define the experiential quality Searle has in mind as the experience of agent control, and let us use this notion for articulating a second account of implicit intentionality:

Implicit Intentionality (II)

A’s ϕ-ing is implicitly intentional iff (i) A ϕ-s; (ii) A’s ϕ-ing involves the experience of agent control.

Does the Argument from Implicit Intentionality succeed when based on this second definition of implicit intentionality? If it were sound, it would be true that beliefs are never instances of implicit intentionality. But this claim seems highly doubtful. When we consider our beliefs, do we experience them as solely externally caused just like the subject in the second arm raising case experienced the behavior of her arm as being externally caused? To me, it seems the answer is clearly ‘no’. Suppose you are going to buy a new car and carefully deliberate whether to by a brand A or brand B sedan. You conclude your deliberation arriving at the belief that a brand A sedan better suits your purposes than a brand B sedan. When considering what forming this belief feels like, would you expect your experience to be comparable to the subject in the case of internally caused arm raising or to the subject in the case of externally caused arm raising? I see no reason to assume the experience would be of the latter type. You know that your belief is a response to your reasons. You also know that, were you to acquire new reasons about the matter, you might change your belief. Awareness of such reason responsiveness, I suggest, comes along with the experience of agent control. I conclude, therefore, that, when based on the second notion of implicit intentionality, the second premise of the Argument from Implicit Intentionality is not plausible.

A third way of capturing the intentionality associated with automatic actions has been suggested by Anthony Booth (Booth 2009). Evaluating his suggestion requires a bit of stage setting. In earlier work in defense of doxastic voluntarism I responded to
the Argument from Explicit Intentionality by pointing out that automatic actions provide us with counterexamples to the claim that voluntary control requires antecedently formed intentions, and I considered and discussed the objection that automatic actions are intentional because they are caused by overarching intentions (see Steup 2008). It might be argued, for example, that the tasks you perform automatically while driving to work—accelerating, breaking, signaling—are caused by the overarching intention to go to your office on campus. Likewise, your automatically unscrewing the toothpaste might be caused by the overarching intention to brush your teeth. My reply to this argument was that, while such causation is of course possible, it is implausible to assume that we will find it for every single example of an automatic action. Consider a particular episode of breaking while driving to campus. Typically, it would be caused because the car in front of you is slowing down, or because you are approaching a red traffic light. I find it rather implausible to claim that, in addition to these causes, we need to introduce your intention to get to campus as an additional cause. Booth agrees with this response but argues that the relation between automatic actions and overarching intentions need not be construed as a causal relation. Rather, it can be a counterfactual relation. Had you not had the prior intention to drive to campus, you would not have performed all of the automatic actions you performed while driving to campus. Had I not had the prior intention to brush my teeth, I would not have unscrewed the toothpaste cap. Let us define implicit intentionality accordingly.

**Implicit Intentionality (II)**

A’s \( \phi \)-ing is implicitly intentional iff (i) A \( \phi \)-s; (ii) A would not have \( \phi \)-ed if A had not had the prior intention to \( \psi \).

The question now is whether belief is intentional in this sense. Booth argues that it is not. He writes: “The counterfactual (for instance): I would not have . . . believed that the earth was round had I not intended to, seems absurd. So doxastic attitudes cannot be free [voluntary], since they resist intentional explanation (causal or otherwise), i.e., they are not intentional.” (Booth 2009, 4)

Booth’s reasoning suffers from instability at two important points. First, note that the counterfactual in the passage I just cited does not quite match the counterfactual expressed by clause (ii). The latter counterfactual explains the intentionality of \( \phi \)-ing automatically in terms of the prior intention to \( \psi \). But the counterfactual in the cited passage is of the form “I would not have \( \phi \)-ed had I not
had the prior intention to $\psi$. So what Booth really has in mind is a disjunctive counterfactual:

$$A \text{ would not have } \psi\text{-ed if } A \text{ had not had the prior intention to } \psi \text{ or the prior intention to } \psi.$$  

However, there are voluntary actions for which a true counterfactual of this kind does not exist. There is further category of actions we need to consider: things we do for no particular reason, such as fiddling with one’s pen, whistling a song, kicking a stone. It is implausible to argue that every single time someone performs an action of this kind, there is a true counterfactual of the sort Booth has in mind. So Booth’s counterfactual approach to explaining intentionality doesn’t work.

Next, let us consider the second point where Booth’s reasoning suffers from instability. Booth argues that, as far beliefs are concerned, the intentionality indicating counterfactuals are absurd. Now, we just saw that the counterfactuals Booth employs to capture the intentionality of automatic actions doesn’t work. We can, however, find suitable counterfactuals by appealing to mental states other than prior intentions. For example, we might use as a test of intentionality the following counterfactual:

**Implicit Intentionality (IV)**

A’s $\phi$-ing is implicitly intentional iff (i) A $\phi$-s; (ii) A would not be $\phi$-ing if A did not want to $\phi$.

This account allows us to discriminate between intentional/voluntary and unintentional/involuntary actions in the right way. The movements of Tom’s twitching eye lid are involuntary. Condition (ii) does not apply, so we get the right result. Automatic actions, as well as absent-minded spontaneous actions, are intentional and voluntary. Condition (ii) applies to such actions, so once again we get the right result. However, what about belief? Let’s apply the relevant counterfactual to Booth’s example of believing that the earth is round:

---

15 Cf. Anscombe 1957, p. 89. Anscombe views fiddling as a kind of behavior that is voluntary but not intentional. Two points are in order in response to Anscombe’s position. First, fiddling seems to exemplify the weak kind of intentionality that Searle classifies as intention in action. Second, if Anscombe were right, so much the worse for the attempt to undermine doxastic voluntariness by making intentionality a necessary condition of voluntary control. For if fiddling is indeed voluntary without instantiating any kind of intentionality, then there is voluntariness without intentionality. In that case, doxastic voluntarism could be defended by arguing that belief is like fiddling: a kind of (mental) behavior that is voluntary without being intentional. Involuntarists might respond that, while typically one does not, one could of course fiddle intentionally, whereas one could not acquire a belief intentionally. In the next section, I will argue that the latter claim is false.
I would not believe that the earth is round if I didn’t want to. This counterfactual is not absurd. In fact, it is true. If I came across legitimate scientific evidence contradicting my belief that the earth is round, I would not longer want to believe that the earth is round. And since I am not compulsively attached to the belief that the earth is round, I would, in that case, no longer believe that the earth is round. Put differently, in close worlds in which I do not want to believe that the earth is round, I do not believe it.

9. The Potential Intentionality Argument

Some involuntarists argue that belief is not voluntary because we cannot acquire or drop beliefs in response to a monetary reward (see Bennett 1990 and Chrisman 2008). For example, I cannot bring myself to believe that Napoleon is still alive no matter how much money you offer me for the successful acquisition of this belief. This argument is based on the following premise:

A $\varphi$-s voluntarily only if A can refrain from $\varphi$-ing in response to a monetary reward, and A voluntarily refrains from $\varphi$-ing only if A can $\varphi$ in response to a monetary reward.

This premise is not plausible. Consider GI Jones who, during the Ardennes Offensive, shoots and kills a German soldier whose name is Schmidt. GI Jones is a good man. While he can shoot to kill while fighting Hitler’s army, he would be utterly incapable of killing Schmidt just to secure a monetary reward. Killing someone for money is something that, given his moral character, he simply cannot do. The premise stated above implies what is obviously false: that Jones killed Schmidt involuntarily. The Argument From Monetary Incentives, then, is easily disposed.

Nevertheless, there is I offer additional objections to the monetary incentive argument in Steup forthcoming. An anonymous referee objected that it’s not plausible to describe GI Jones as an agent who cannot kill for a monetary reward. Rather, GI Jones should be described as someone who will not kill for a reward. And, as Brian Weatherson as pointed out, it’s a serious mistake to argue from ‘will not’ to ‘cannot’. (See Weatherson 2008.) Therefore, the case of GI Jones fails as a counterexample to premise (1) of the Argument from Potential Intentionality. This objection is an example of how not to respond to a proposed counterexample. To respond properly to a counterexample, the objector should not transform the example into a different case. Rather, the objector should deal with the example exactly as it is intended. As an alternative to the case I have described, we can of course think of a solider who can but will not kill for a monetary reward. Alas, that is not the kind of case I have in mind. Rather, the case as I intend it to be understood is one in which an agent’s truly cannot kill for money due to the agent’s psychological make-up. The question at hand, therefore, is this one: Is it plausible to think that there are agents like GI Jones who cannot kill for money? The answer to this question is obviously ‘yes’. While it is indeed a mistake to infer ‘cannot $\varphi$’ from ‘will not $\varphi$’, it
an underlying motivation behind it that deserves to be addressed. The thought underlying the Monetary Incentive Argument is that it is impossible to acquire alternate beliefs by way of carrying out a decision or intention to believe otherwise. The mistake of the Monetary Incentive Argument is to make it necessary that the intention to believe otherwise be acquired in response to a monetary incentive. Avoiding this superfluous and misleading restriction, involuntarists could argue that for an agent’s ϕ-ing to be voluntary, it need not be preceded by the intention to ϕ, but it must be such that the agent can, by ϕ-ing, carrying out a prior intention to ϕ (where the intention to ϕ might but need not be a response to a monetary incentive). Thus we arrive at the final argument I will discuss:

The Argument from Potential Intentionality

(1) A’s ϕ-ing is voluntarily → A can ϕ in such a way that, by ϕ-ing, A carries out an antecedently formed decision or intention to ϕ.

(2) No agent can ϕ in such a way that, by ϕ-ing, she carries out an antecedently formed decision or intention to ϕ.

So:

(3) Belief is never voluntary.

The basic thought fueling this argument is that, if belief is voluntary, it must be possible to acquire beliefs intentionally, that is, by way of making doxastic decisions. But that, according to the argument, just isn’t possible. Beliefs are automatic responses to our evidence. Given the evidence we have, we believe accordingly. When I try to intentionally believe what conflicts with my evidence, my attempt is doomed to fail. And if I try to intentionally believe what my evidence supports, my attempt is thwarted by the fact that I find myself already believing it. For example, given the perceptual evidence of having hands, I cannot succeed in intentionally believing that I do not have hands. And regarding the belief that I do have hands, an intention to acquire this belief does not, so to speak, engage any gears because I already find myself believing it. At long last, then, we seem to have before us an argument that succeeds in presenting us with a strong prima facie case for the

is an equally serious mistake to assume ‘can ϕ’ for every case of ‘will not ϕ’. Nor should one dogmatically insist that agents who simply cannot kill for money do not exist. Surely it is much safer to claim “Some people cannot kill for money” than to assert “Everybody can kill for money.” While the latter, on the face of it a preposterous claim, can hardly be backed up with evidence available from the philosopher’s armchair, the former claim can easily be supported by pointing to the intense training professional soldiers undergo before they become useful in the battlefield. The very point of such training is to overturn an ordinary person’s psychological inability to kill another human being.
asymmetry between action and belief that involuntarists have in mind. Actions, while not always preceded by a prior intention, are always such that they could be performed by way of carrying out an intention. That’s what makes it plausible to say we control over them. Beliefs, on the other hand, can never by acquired by way of carrying out an intention. This is what precludes beliefs from the realm of agency.

Alas, while the second premise enjoys a fair amount of initial plausibility, I will now argue that is in fact false. Here is a little story in which I acquire a belief intentionally:

**Car Theft**

My wife and I have dinner downtown Lafayette at Bistro 501. We leave the restaurant and return to the spot where I parked the car. Alas, my car is gone. I wonder whether I really parked the car where I thought I did. I ask my wife “Are you sure this is where we parked?” She answers affirmatively. Considering the possibility that, foolishly, I parked in a tow zone, we survey the sidewalk for signs indicating that I parked the car illegally. No such signs can be found. Considering the low rate of car theft in Lafayette, I am initially reluctant to conclude that my car was stolen. Alas, not having available any alternative explanation of why my car isn’t there, I decide to believe that, surprisingly, my car was stolen.

Is it plausible to claim that this is a case in which I intentionally acquire a belief? I think it is. Consider the salient features of the case (‘S’ stand for the proposition that my car was stolen):

**Intentional Belief**

(i) Wondering whether S is true, I suspend judgment about S.

(ii) I consider my reasons for and against S.

(iii) I concluding that I have good reasons for taking S to be true and decide to believe S.

(iv) My attitude of suspending judgment about S is replaced by that of believing S.

(v) I believe S because I decided to believe S, and the causal relation between my decision and my belief is non-deviant.

---

17 The second conjunct is necessary because it’s possible to conclude one has good reasons for ϕ-ing without actually deciding to ϕ.

18 The nondeviant causation condition is needed because it’s possible for an agent to ϕ unintentionally while, surprisingly, the agent’s ϕ-ing is caused by the agent’s intention to ϕ.
Compare the (i)-(v) progression with an analogous episode that concludes with an intentionally performed action. Suppose that, after considering the pros and cons, I decide to get a cup of coffee. The salient features of this case are as follows:

**Intentional Action**

(i) I wonder whether I should get a cup of coffee.
(ii) I consider my reasons for and against getting a cup of coffee.
(iii) I conclude that my reasons for getting a cup of coffee outweigh my reasons against getting a cup of coffee and decide to get a cup of coffee.19
(iv) I go and get a cup of coffee.
(v) I get a cup of coffee because I decided to get a cup of coffee, and the causal link between my getting a cup of coffee and my decision is non-deviant.20

The analogy between the two episodes is tight and striking. In the first case I arrive at a decision about what to believe on the basis of considering and responding to epistemic reasons. In the second case I arrive at a decision about what to do on the basis of considering and responding to practical reasons. The second case is, un-controversially, an example of intentional action. One is left wondering, therefore, why the first case should not count as an example of intentional belief: as a case where I believe a certain proposition because I intended to believe that proposition.

We can subsume the two cases under a general principle about ϕ-ing by way of carrying out the intention to ϕ:

Searle describes the following example: Bill intends to kill his uncle. While driving his car, Bill ruminates about how to get the job done. This makes him nervous. As a result of his nervousness, he loses control over his car and hits and kills a pedestrian who happens to be his uncle. In this case, Bill does not intentionally kill his uncle, but his killing his uncle was caused by his intention to kill his uncle. See Searle 1983, p. 82. For an earlier article introducing this type of example, see Chisholm 1966, p. 37. The threat of deviant causation extends to the doxastic domain. It’s possible that S’s belief that p is caused by S’s intention to believe p without S’s intentionally believing that p. Suppose a Harry Frankfurt-type counterfactual intervener is set upon preventing me from acquiring a belief by way of carrying out a prior intention. He monitors my mental processes, waiting for an episode where, upon reviewing a body of conflicting evidence, I am about to decide to believe that p. At that moment, the intervener blocks whatever causal efficacy attaches to my intention to believe p and, at the same time, causes me independently to believe that p. This is why clause (v) is necessary.

19 The second conjunct is necessary because I can conclude that my reasons for getting a cup of coffee outweigh my reasons against getting a cup of coffee without deciding to get a cup of coffee.
20 See the note 18.
A ϕ-s by way of carrying out the intention to ϕ iff (i) A ϕ-s; (ii) prior to ϕ-ing, A decided to ϕ; (iii) A ϕ-s because A decided to ϕ; (iv) the causal relation between A’s ϕ-ing in non-deviant.

To secure the desired asymmetry between action and belief, involuntarists would have to argue that conditions (i)-(iv) are sufficient for intentional ϕ-ing when the agent’s ϕ-ing is an action, but are not sufficient when the agent’s ϕ-ing is an instance of believing. The challenge for involuntarists is to supply a good argument in support of this claim. In the absence of such an argument, I see no reason to treat the belief case different from the action case. Hence I consider the car theft example to show two things: (i) we can make and execute doxastic decisions; (ii) just as in acting in a certain way we can carry out the intention to act in that way, we can in believing a certain proposition carry out the intention to believe that proposition.

10. Two Kinds of Intentionality

One might wonder why involuntarists tend to be utterly convinced that one cannot intentionally acquire a belief. Here are several passages expressing this view:

William Alston: I conclude that we do not generally have the power to carry out an intention to take up a certain propositional attitude . . . The inauguration of propositional attitudes simply does not work like intentional action. (Alston 1989, p. 136f )

Richard Feldman: “What is involved in genuine and paradigmatic decision making is the formation of an intention . . . We typically don’t form intentions to form beliefs and form them as a result.” (Feldman 2001, 85)

Nikolaj Nottelmann: “In normal agents intentions to form, prevent, suspend, or sustain a belief are causally inert even under the most favorable circumstances. It is simply not the case that a normal agent may take up an alternative doxastic attitude simply by intending to do so.” (Nottelmann 2006, p. 574)

Anthony Booth: “My intending to believe that p seems to be causally impotent in bringing it about that I believe that p.” (Booth 2009, 1)
Why are these philosophers adamant about the causal inertness of intentions to believe \( p \) when it seems perfectly obvious that, neglecting unusual cases, an intention to believe something is causally just as effective, as illustrated by the example described above, as an intention to do something, such as getting a cup of coffee or taking a walk? The answer, I think, is that these philosophers are prisoners of a deeply entrenched conception of intentions as responses to practical reasons only. Conceiving of intentions in this way, they note that we cannot acquire doxastic attitudes in response to practical reasons and thus conclude that we cannot acquire beliefs intentionally at all. This line of reasoning involves two mistakes.

The first mistake is to restrict intentionality to responsiveness to practical reasons only. Responding to practical reasons, we make decisions and form intentions about what to do. Responding to epistemic reasons, we make decisions and form intentions about what to believe. There are, then, two modes of intentionality: practical and epistemic intentionality. So the first mistake is the undefended and arbitrary exclusion of the second, epistemic mode of intentionality.

The other mistake is to overlook the distinction between an inability to form a certain intention and an inability to carry out an intention one has formed. Noting that we cannot acquire alternate doxastic attitudes in response for a monetary reward or other practical incentives, involuntarists conclude that intentions to believe otherwise are causally inert. But surely, from the fact that we cannot intend to believe otherwise in response to practical reasons, it doesn’t follow that we are unable to form intentions about what to believe on the basis of other kinds of reasons or that such intentions are causally inert. In response to epistemic reasons, we can and frequently do form intentions to believe otherwise. Neglecting rare exceptions due to deep religious or political commitments, such intentions are not causally inert but are as efficacious as intentions to act.

I conclude that the philosophers I cited above are mistaken, due to their failure to distinguish (i) between practical and epistemic intentionality and (ii) between the inability to form an intention and the inability to carry out an intention. Contrary to what these philosophers claim, belief is no less intentional than action. The appeal

---

21 My argument here is a repeat of the line of thought employed in section five.
to intentionality does not lend credibility to the mistaken thesis of doxastic involuntarism.\textsuperscript{22}

References


Bayer, B. Forthcoming, “The Elusiveness of Doxastic Compatibilism.”


\textsuperscript{22} An earlier version of this paper was presented at the \textit{Justification Revisited} Conference at the University of Geneva, March 25-27, 2010, organized by Pascal Engel and Anne Meylan. I wish to thank the conference participants for helpful discussion and conversations, particularly Richard Fumerton and Adam Leite. I also wish to thank two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.


