

AGAINST THE NEW EVIDENTIALISTS

Susanna Rinard
Harvard University

Abstract

Evidentialists and Pragmatists about reasons for belief have long been in dialectical stalemate. However, recent times have seen a new wave of Evidentialists who claim to provide arguments for their view which should be persuasive even to someone initially inclined toward Pragmatism. This paper reveals a central flaw in this New Evidentialist project: their arguments rely on overly demanding necessary conditions for a consideration to count as a genuine reason. In particular, their conditions rule out the possibility of pragmatic reasons for action. Since the existence of genuine pragmatic reasons for action is common ground between the Evidentialist and the Pragmatist, this problem for the New Evidentialist arguments is fatal. The upshot is that the deadlock between these two positions is restored: neither side can claim to be in possession of an argument that could convince the other. As it happens, I myself favor Pragmatism about reasons for belief, and although I don't claim to be able to convince a committed Evidentialist, I do make a prima facie case for Pragmatism by describing particular scenarios in which it seems to be true. I then go on to develop my own preferred version of the view: Robust Pragmatism, according to which a consideration never constitutes a reason for believing a proposition purely in virtue of being evidence for it.

1. Introduction

Evidentialists hold that only evidential considerations count as reasons for belief. Pragmatists deny this, allowing that purely pragmatic considerations can constitute genuine reasons for believing. My primary aim in this paper is to make some defensive moves on behalf of the Pragmatist. First I make

a *prima facie* case for the view by describing particular scenarios in which it seems to be true. Next I critically discuss a common form of argument for Evidentialism. Finally I elaborate on my preferred form of Pragmatism: Robust Pragmatism, according to which a consideration *never* constitutes a genuine reason for believing P purely in virtue of its being evidence for P.

It is not among my aims to provide an argument for Pragmatism which could succeed in convincing even those initially inclined toward Evidentialism. Frankly, I doubt such an argument exists. As Nishi Shah (2011, 94) writes, “Evidentialists and pragmatists simply seem to have different philosophical conceptions of what could count as a legitimate reason for belief. . . . Consequently, most arguments for one particular side are dialectically ineffective because they start from assumptions that the other side does not accept.”

Despite this, recent times have seen a new wave of Evidentialists (including Shah) who endeavor to break this dialectical deadlock. Shah (2006), Thomas Kelly (2002), and others¹ give arguments that, if successful, should be capable of convincing even those initially inclined toward Pragmatism. For example, Shah claims that his argument rests on “uncontroversial psychological facts” that “provide the clue to the resolution of this long-standing debate” (Shah 2011, 94).

These New Evidentialist arguments all share the same basic strategy. First it is claimed that, in general, C is a reason to φ only if C is capable of playing a particular role in the regulation of one’s φ -ing. Then it is argued that, in the case of belief, only evidential considerations are capable of playing that role; purely pragmatic considerations are not.²

I will reveal a central flaw shared by the New Evidentialist arguments, namely, that the role they identify as necessary for a consideration to count as a reason is not played by many considerations that we ordinarily take to be reasons outside the doxastic realm. For example, it is not played by pragmatic considerations in favor of wearing wool socks, living in the country rather than the city, spending time in Costa Rica, etc. But surely there can be purely pragmatic reasons for wearing wool socks, living in the country, etc. At the very least, the Evidentialist cannot assume that a claim to the contrary would be dialectically effective in the context of a debate with the Pragmatist. So, I conclude, the New Evidentialist project fails.

I go on to consider a possible New Evidentialist reply according to which, although there are genuine purely pragmatic reasons in the non-doxastic realm, I have misidentified their bearers. On one version of this view, the bearers of purely pragmatic reasons are causally upstream of the wearing of wool socks but directly causally downstream of the intention to do so (for example, putting on wool socks). On the other version of the view, the bearers of purely pragmatic reasons are the intentions themselves. Neither version enables the New Evidentialist to resuscitate their argument against the Pragmatist.

One upshot is that those initially persuaded by the prima facie case for Pragmatism can rest easy: their view is not undermined by the New Evidentialists' attempts. However, nothing said here should convince those Evidentialists who are not persuaded by the prima facie case for Pragmatism. So a further upshot is that the dialectical stalemate between these two positions is restored: neither side can, at this point, claim to be in possession of an argument that should convince the other.

2. Motivating Pragmatism

Many people feel the pull of Pragmatism most strongly when contemplating particular cases in which it seems to be true. In this section I'll briefly sketch some such cases.

First, though, I'll acknowledge that, much of the time, when deliberating about what to believe, we focus on evidential considerations. Although this observation may seem to lend some support to Evidentialism, the Pragmatist can point out that, much of the time, it is in our own best interests to believe in accordance with the evidence. (I elaborate on this claim in section 6.) So even if Pragmatism is true, it need not be mysterious why we focus on evidential considerations much of the time.³ Moreover, there are a number of cases in which purely pragmatic, non-evidential considerations do seem to constitute good reasons for belief. I turn now to these.

First, imagine someone suffering from a potentially fatal illness who has learned that their chance of recovery, although low regardless, is significantly higher if they believe they'll survive (around 20%) than if they don't (around 5%). This, by itself, does not constitute evidence that they will survive. But it does seem to be a good reason for them to believe that they will.

Similarly, someone might know that their athletic performance is likely to be better if they believe they'll do exceptionally well. This, by itself, is not evidence that they *will* do exceptionally well; but it does seem to constitute a good reason for them to believe it.

Berislav Marusic (2012) argues that one cannot sincerely promise to φ unless one believes that one will φ . For example, one cannot sincerely promise to stay married, or to quit smoking, unless one believes that one will do so. Therefore, in some such cases, he argues, one can have good reason to believe the proposition in question, even if the evidence suggests otherwise (e.g. one knows the success rate for relevantly similar people is low).

Ryan Preston-Roedder (2013) argues that faith in humanity—a fundamental conviction in the goodness of others that may outstrip the evidence—is an important moral virtue exhibited by such moral exemplars as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. If so, there can be purely moral (and hence pragmatic) reasons for belief. (As noted in footnote 2, I include moral considerations under the category “pragmatic.”) Tamar Gendler (2011) argues

that anti-racism can sometimes require believing against the evidence (for example, in the face of certain correlations between race and other variables). Sarah Stroud (2006) and Simon Keller (2004) hold that the norms of friendship can ground reasons for belief that are not a matter of evidence.

3. New Evidentialist Arguments

Evidentialists hold that these apparent examples of non-evidential reasons for belief are merely apparent. They argue that, in general—in both the doxastic and non-doxastic realm—a consideration counts as a reason to φ only if it is capable of playing a certain role in the regulation of one's φ -ing. Moreover, they claim, only evidential considerations are capable of playing this role in the case of belief.⁴

For example, Shah (2006) holds that a consideration counts as a genuine reason to φ only if it is capable of disposing one to φ in the way “characteristic of a premise in deliberation” whether to φ . Furthermore, a consideration counts as disposing an agent in this way, he says, only if it is capable of leading the agent *directly* to φ -ing. But, he claims, only evidential considerations are capable of leading one *directly* to belief. He concludes that only evidential considerations constitute genuine reasons for belief.

Shah illustrates his claims by considering Blaise Pascal's (1670) wager argument. Pascal argued that it is in one's best interests to believe in God. This consideration is not, by itself, evidence that God exists. But many have agreed with Pascal that, if true, it would nonetheless constitute a good reason to believe in God.

Shah claims, however, that it cannot be a genuine reason for belief, because it is not capable of moving one to belief in the requisite way—that is, it is not capable of moving one *directly* to belief. Shah agrees that it may move one *indirectly* to belief. It may move one to an intention to take steps that will likely result in belief (for example, as recommended by Pascal, surrounding oneself with a community of believers, attending worship services, etc.; or, if such is available, to take a belief-inducing pill). But it cannot move one to belief in the way necessary, on Shah's view, to count as a genuine reason to believe.

Kelly (2002) gives a different argument in a similar vein. Whereas Shah focuses on the route from the putative reason to φ to the onset of an agent's actually φ -ing, Kelly focuses on the route from the loss of a putative reason to φ to the cessation of an agent's φ -ing. Kelly's argument is analogous to Shah's: he holds that non-evidential considerations cannot be genuine reasons for belief because the loss of the putative non-evidential reason does not lead *immediately* to the loss of the agent's belief.

Kelly's argument begins with the claim that in general—in both the doxastic and non-doxastic realm—C is a reason to φ only if it could serve

as the *basis* for one's φ -ing.⁵ Kelly acknowledges that the basing relation is notoriously obscure, and offers the following test for whether or not a consideration is playing the basing role: If one's φ -ing continues even after one recognizes that C has gone away, then, *ceteris paribus*, C was not the basis for one's φ -ing.⁶ Kelly then claims that non-evidential considerations fail this test in the case of belief.

Like Shah, Kelly illustrates his claims by discussing Pascal's wager. He imagines someone who, convinced by Pascal, has assigned higher expected value to believing in God than not believing; has consequently taken up the project of acquiring belief in God by joining a community of believers, taking part in rituals, etc.; and has succeeded in that project: they now believe that God exists. Kelly then considers what would happen if such a person were to reconsider Pascal's claims and change their mind—they now assign *lower* expected value to believing in God than not believing. This would amount to losing the putative pragmatic reason for belief. But, claims Kelly, they would not immediately lose their belief in God. Kelly allows that they may immediately take up a project of belief eradication—perhaps by planning to join an atheist community—but, he emphasizes, the connection between the loss of the pragmatic consideration and the cessation of belief would be non-immediate and indirect. This, he claims, indicates that the pragmatic consideration was not the basis for one's belief in the first place, and so, it fails the general condition required for a consideration to count as a reason.

4. The Central Flaw in the New Evidentialist Arguments

We have just seen two instances of the New Evidentialist strategy: to argue that, in general, a reason for φ -ing must be capable of playing a certain regulatory role with respect to one's φ -ing; and that non-evidential considerations cannot play this role in the case of belief.⁷

But such arguments share a central flaw. They prove too much. There are many examples, in the non-doxastic realm, of considerations which we ordinarily take to be genuine pragmatic reasons, but which fail to play the particular regulatory role identified by the New Evidentialists. Thus, playing this role is not necessary for a consideration to constitute a genuine reason; and so, the fact that non-evidential considerations do not play this role in the case of belief does not, *pace* the New Evidentialists, show that they are not genuine reasons for belief.

For example, suppose you're getting ready to go snowshoeing, and you're trying to decide which socks to wear. Last time you wore cotton socks, and your feet were too cold. You know wool is warmer than cotton, and so you'll be more comfortable if you wear wool. Surely this constitutes a genuine pragmatic reason in favor of wearing wool socks. But note that appreciating this consideration does not lead you *directly* to wearing them; it leads you

directly only to an intention to take steps toward wearing them, such as opening your dresser drawer, finding and removing the wool socks, etc. So it fails Shah's requirement for a consideration to count as a genuine reason. But surely the fact that you'll be most comfortable if you wear wool socks *does* constitute a genuine reason for wearing them.

Suppose this consideration moves you, in the manner just described, to wear the wool socks. You are now out snowshoeing in your wool socks, and for a long time your feet are indeed a comfortable toasty temperature. Over time, though, given your high activity level, their temperature starts rising. Eventually your feet become uncomfortably hot. Now your putative pragmatic reason for wearing wool has gone away: comfort considerations now favor cotton. But note that it is not *immediately* the case that you are no longer wearing wool socks. In order for that to happen, you need to take up a project of sock-changing, which involves sitting down, taking off your snowshoes, etc. So, according to Kelly's test, that you'd be more comfortable wearing wool could not have been the basis for your doing so in the first place, because you continue wearing wool for a time even after that consideration goes away. But this is the wrong result; surely considerations of comfort *were* your original basis for wearing wool socks.

In sum: this consideration in favor of wearing wool socks—that you'd be most comfortable if you did so—is a paradigm case of a genuine pragmatic reason. But it does not regulate your wearing of wool socks in the particular way identified by the Evidentialists: it does not lead *directly* to your doing so, and its loss does not result *immediately* in your no longer doing so. The same is true of countless other considerations that we ordinarily take to be reasons. For example, that air pollution is worse in the city is a reason to live in the country; that it'll be easier for you to pay attention during a talk if you sit in the front row than the back is a reason to sit in the front; that doing so would be relaxing is a reason to spend some time in Costa Rica; etc. But none of these considerations plays the particular role in the regulation of one's φ -ing identified by the Evidentialists as necessary for it to count as a genuine reason.

The Pragmatist, then, has independently motivated grounds for rejecting this role as genuinely necessary for a consideration to count as a reason. The root of the problem for the Evidentialist is that pragmatic considerations in favor of believing some proposition P play precisely the same role in regulating the agent's believing P that pragmatic considerations in favor of wearing wool socks, or living in the country, or spending time in Costa Rica, play in the regulation of the agent's wool-sock-wearing, or country-living, or being in Costa Rica. In all of these (and many other) cases, the causal connection between the pragmatic consideration for φ -ing, and the agent's actually φ -ing, is complex and indirect. But this does not prevent the consideration from constituting a genuine reason for φ -ing.

The New Evidentialist may well be right that there is *some* regulatory role a genuine reason must be capable of playing.⁸ But, even if so, they are wrong

about the nature of that role. A genuine reason need not move the agent *directly* to φ -ing, and it need not be such that its loss results *immediately* in the cessation of the agent's φ -ing. A genuine reason can regulate the agent's φ -ing in a more indirect fashion, by disposing the agent to take steps toward φ -ing, and by its loss disposing the agent to take steps toward no longer φ -ing.

5. How Might the New Evidentialist Respond?

I have argued that the New Evidentialists' arguments are not persuasive because there are many cases outside the doxastic realm in which we ordinarily take pragmatic considerations in favor of φ -ing to constitute genuine reasons for doing so, but the Evidentialist principles cannot recognize them as such.

One way the Evidentialist might respond is by claiming that, although there are indeed non-doxastic φ -ing's such that pragmatic considerations in favor of φ -ing constitute genuine reasons for φ -ing, I have misidentified them. On this view there are not, *contra* my earlier claims, genuine pragmatic reasons for wearing wool socks, living in the country, and so forth. Rather, the true bearers of pragmatic reasons are located earlier in the causal chain, such as the bodily action that results in the wearing of wool socks (e.g. putting on wool socks) or, alternatively, the mental state of intending to wear wool socks.

First I'd like to emphasize the revisionary nature of this suggestion. The idea that there are pragmatic reasons for and against such things as wearing wool socks or living in the country is a pervasive feature of our ordinary thought and speech. One might even call it a Moorean fact, if one believes in such things. (As it happens, I do not (see Rinard 2013).) At the very least, the Pragmatist would surely be within their rights to presuppose this common sense view when articulating and defending their position. An anti-Pragmatist argument that relies on its rejection will not be dialectically effective unless a powerful argument for it is given.

However, I will not consider the prospects for such an argument here. Rather, I will argue that even if this revisionary claim were adopted, it would not enable the Evidentialist to revive their argument against the Pragmatist.

I'll consider two different versions of the claim, in turn. On the first, the bearers of pragmatic reasons are bodily actions immediately causally downstream of the intention to wear wool socks—but causally upstream of the wearing itself—such as putting on wool socks. On the second, the bearers of pragmatic reason are intentions, such as the intention to wear wool socks.

On the first version, then, a purely pragmatic consideration in favor of putting on wool socks—that is, a consideration which indicates that doing so would benefit oneself or others—constitutes a genuine reason for doing so. The crucial question is: does this pragmatic consideration regulate one's

putting on of wool socks in the way required for it to count as a genuine reason according to the Evidentialist principle? That is, does it move the agent *directly* to putting on wool socks, and would the agent *immediately* no longer be putting on wool socks upon its loss?

The answer to this question is *no*, for the simple reason that the only thing that *directly* regulates one's putting on of wool socks is the intention to do so. A consideration indicating that doing so would be in one's interests regulates one's putting on of wool socks not *directly*, but only via its effect on one's intending to do so.

In light of this fact, an Evidentialist who aims to defend this first version of the revisionary claim may attempt to modify their proposed necessary condition for a consideration to count as a reason. They may now require, not that a genuine reason be capable of moving the agent *directly* to φ -ing, but rather that it be capable of leading *directly* to an intention to φ , which in turn must be capable of moving the agent *directly* to φ -ing. This revised version of the principle is compatible with the claim that pragmatic considerations in favor of putting on wool socks constitute genuine reasons for doing so.

However, the New Evidentialist cannot endorse this revised criterion, because it does not recognize evidential considerations as genuine reasons for belief. As we have seen, a key aspect of the New Evidentialist's picture is that evidential considerations regulate belief *directly*, without any causal intermediaries—in particular, without the intermediary of an intention to believe. So evidential considerations fail the modified requirement just given, which would require them to first move the agent to an intention to so believe, which then must be capable of leading directly to the belief itself. But this is not how evidential considerations regulate belief, according to New Evidentialists like Shah and Kelly.

So the Evidentialist cannot resuscitate their argument by claiming that the bearers of pragmatic reasons are bodily actions like putting on wool socks, rather than wearing wool socks. This move requires them to modify their original necessary condition for a consideration to count as a genuine reason. But this modified criterion rules out evidential considerations as genuine reason for belief.

So the Evidentialist must stick with their original criterion, namely, that genuine reasons for φ -ing must be capable of leading the agent *directly* to φ -ing, with no causal intermediaries. But, as we have seen, this rules out the possibility of purely pragmatic reasons for putting on wool socks (and, as we saw earlier, it rules out the possibility of purely pragmatic reasons for wearing wool socks). The New Evidentialist who seeks to allow for genuine pragmatic reasons outside the doxastic realm now has only one option left: to hold that there are genuine pragmatic reasons for the mental state of *intending* to φ .

On this view, a purely pragmatic consideration in favor of intending to φ counts as a genuine reason for so intending. I will now argue that this, too, is incompatible with the Evidentialist's necessary condition for a consideration to count as a genuine reason.⁹

This incompatibility is revealed by Gregory Kavka's (1983) toxin puzzle. In this scenario, an agent learns that she will be given an enormous sum of money if, today, she has the intention to drink a mug of toxin tomorrow. If she succeeds in so intending today, then she will get the money, even if tomorrow she does not, in fact, drink the toxin.

The toxin is not fatal, but drinking it would result in an unpleasant couple of hours. Now, the agent knows that once tomorrow rolls around, there will be no point to actually drinking the toxin. By then, either she will have managed to intend, the previous day, to drink it, in which case she'll get the money regardless of whether or not she actually does; or she won't have managed, the previous day, to have the intention, in which case she won't get the money even if she does drink it now. So she knows the day in advance that tomorrow there will be no point in drinking the toxin. Given that she knows this, how can she now intend to do so? There is a strong pragmatic consideration in favor of so intending—namely, that if she does, she'll receive a large sum of money—but this consideration *by itself* seems powerless to move her directly to so intending.

What the toxin puzzle illustrates is that, in general, it's not the case that one can be moved *directly* to an intention to φ by a purely pragmatic consideration in favor of intending to φ . So the Evidentialist's principle entails that purely pragmatic considerations in favor of intending to φ —such as the consideration that intending to φ would be in one's interests—are not genuine reasons for intending to φ .^{10,11}

The previous section revealed that the New Evidentialist principles are incompatible with the claim that pragmatic considerations in favor of wearing wool socks are genuine reasons to wear wool socks. In this section I argued that they are also incompatible with the idea that pragmatic considerations in favor of bodily actions (such as putting on wool socks) are genuine reasons for those actions; and they are incompatible as well with the idea that pragmatic considerations in favor of intentions are genuine reasons for those intentions. In the next section I explain what this means for the New Evidentialist project.

6. The New Evidentialist Project Fails

Recent times have seen a new wave of arguments for Evidentialism, which, if successful, would be persuasive even to those initially inclined toward Pragmatism. However, such attempts fail. They rely on strict necessary conditions for a consideration to count as a genuine reason that are much

too demanding. There are many cases, outside the doxastic realm, in which we ordinarily take pragmatic considerations to constitute genuine reasons, but the Evidentialist principles cannot recognize them as such. For example, the Evidentialist principles are incompatible with the existence of genuine pragmatic reasons for wearing wool socks, living in the country, spending time in Costa Rica, and so on.

Moreover, not only are such principles incompatible with our ordinary judgments about pragmatic reasons in the non-doxastic realm; they are incompatible with there being *any purely pragmatic reasons whatsoever*. That is, they entail that there are no φ -ing's, of any kind, such that pragmatic considerations in favor of φ -ing—considerations indicating that doing so would benefit oneself (or others)—count as genuine reasons for φ -ing. This is because any plausible candidate bearer of pragmatic reasons would fall into one of the following two categories: either it is causally downstream of phenomena in the mental realm (e.g. wearing wool socks, or putting on wool socks); or it is itself a part of the mental realm (e.g. the intention to wear wool socks). We have seen that, for each category, the Evidentialist principles rule out the possibility of there being genuine pragmatic reasons for a member of that category; so, they rule out the possibility of there being any genuine pragmatic reasons at all. The arguments of the New Evidentialists prove too much.¹²

The upshot is that Pragmatists and Evidentialists remain in dialectical impasse. Each side can point to some observations that may seem to be suggestive in favor of their position. But neither side can, at present, claim to be in possession of an argument that should convince someone who is initially drawn to the other.

7. Robust Pragmatism

Although I don't claim to be able to convince Evidentialists, I myself endorse Pragmatism about reasons for belief. In this section I elaborate on my own preferred version of the view. Recall that Pragmatism, as I've formulated it in this paper, says that there are some cases in which non-evidential considerations constitute genuine reasons for belief. But this leaves some important questions unanswered. For example, is it *always* the case that a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P constitutes a genuine reason for believing P? Also, do evidential considerations *ever* constitute genuine reasons for belief?

I endorse Robust Pragmatism, according to which (1) a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing some proposition always counts as a genuine reason to believe it; and, (2) the *only* genuine reasons for believing a proposition are pragmatic considerations in favor of so believing. (Recall that I include moral considerations under the heading "pragmatic.") In other words,

C is a reason to believe P if and only if C is a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P. (Note: for simplicity, I set aside the possibility that there might be genuine non-evidential reasons for belief that are not pragmatic considerations in favor of believing.)

Although this may be in some respects a surprising view, it is not as revisionary as it may sound. Robust Pragmatism does not entail that evidential considerations are never reasons for belief. On the contrary, as we will see, it is *typically* the case, on Robust Pragmatism, that evidence for P is a reason to believe P. This is because it is typically the case that evidence for P is a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P.

First I will show how a Pragmatist could be lead to accept the first half of Robust Pragmatism, which says that it is *always* the case that a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P constitutes a genuine reason to believe P. I'll call someone with this view a Partially Robust Pragmatist. Then I'll show how a Partially Robust Pragmatist could be lead to accept the other half of Robust Pragmatism, which says that *only* pragmatic considerations constitute genuine reasons for belief. So, I conclude, Pragmatism leads quite naturally to Robust Pragmatism.

The first step is quite simple. The Pragmatist is already convinced that there are *some* cases in which purely pragmatic considerations constitute reasons for belief. For example, according to the Pragmatist, one has a good reason to believe that one will survive a potentially fatal illness simply in virtue of the fact that this belief is likely to make one's life go better. But it would be ad hoc to hold this view about this case while denying that a pragmatic consideration in some other case constitutes a genuine reason for belief. For example, it would be ad hoc for the Pragmatist to deny that the fact that my life will likely go better if I believe that I can jump over this stream is a reason to believe that I can. So the Pragmatist should also be a Partially Robust Pragmatist. (Of course, the pragmatic consideration may not be a decisive reason; here I am concerned only with pro tanto reasons.)

Before moving on to the second step, I will note that this first step rules out a version of Pragmatism that some have attributed to William James. Some take James (1979) to have held that a pragmatic consideration is a reason for belief *only* when the evidential considerations do not tell strongly in favor of or against the proposition in question. So, for example, James (on this interpretation) holds that if the evidence leaves it quite open whether God exists, but I know that believing that God exists would make my life go better, then that's a reason for me to believe it. But if the evidence tells quite strongly against God's existence, then the fact that believing it would make my life go better does not constitute a reason for me to believe it. The Partially Robust Pragmatist would object that this view is unacceptably ad hoc. Whether or not a pragmatic consideration constitutes a genuine reason should not depend on the strength of the evidence for or against the proposition.

I will now show how a Partially Robust Pragmatist could be lead to accept the other half of Robust Pragmatism: that *only* pragmatic considerations are genuine reasons for belief. That is, *purely* evidential considerations—evidential considerations that are not also pragmatic reasons—do not constitute reasons for belief.

I'll start by focusing on the most typical ordinary cases in which we think that evidence provides a reason for belief. Let's suppose, for example, that you're having a discussion with a friend of yours who will be picking you up at the airport. Your friend—whom you know to be highly reliable about such matters—tells you that he'll be driving a white Toyota Camry. Your friend's utterance, given his known reliability, is strong evidence for the proposition that he will, in fact, be driving a white Toyota Camry. Moreover, it is highly plausible that his utterance gives you a reason to believe this proposition.

The crucial question for the Partially Robust Pragmatist is how best to explain this fact. One option would be to endorse the claim that your friend's utterance gives you a reason simply in virtue of the fact that it's evidence. But I will argue that the Partially Robust Pragmatist has no need to complicate their view with this additional claim. This is because they already have theoretical resources sufficient to handle this explanatory task.

Your life (and the life of your friend) will go better if you can identify the car that he is driving. You'll be best able to identify it if you have true beliefs about its color, make, and model. So any evidence in favor of some particular proposition about the color, make, and model of the car gives you a pragmatic reason to believe that proposition.

This case is not exceptional in this regard. In most ordinary cases, evidence in favor of P constitutes a pragmatic reason to believe it. Typically, evidence that the store is closed now is a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing it, as one would (typically) be inconvenienced by having false beliefs about the store's hours. Evidence that one's spouse has pneumonia is (typically) a pragmatic reason to believe it, as one will (ordinarily) be better suited to care for them if one has true beliefs about the nature of their illness.

Now, there certainly are perfectly ordinary cases in which my having true beliefs about a particular matter wouldn't be of any obvious material benefit to me or anyone else. Suppose, for example, that an ornithologist tells me that there are black swans in Australia. We can imagine that I know I'll never visit Australia, and that what I believe about the colors of distant birds is extremely unlikely to have any direct material effect on my own life or the lives of those I influence. It won't help cure anyone's illness, or make anyone's daily life more convenient, etc. However, the Partially Robust Pragmatist can explain why, nonetheless, the ornithologist's utterance gives me a reason to believe it. She can do so by appealing to my own natural curiosity about such matters. I have some interest in the colors of birds, even those I know I'll never see; and I *want*, other things equal, to have true beliefs about them. Given this contingent fact about my psychology, evidence about the colors

of birds gives me a pragmatic reason to believe the proposition the evidence favors.

I have argued that the Partially Robust Pragmatist can appeal to theoretical resources she already has to explain why, in most ordinary cases, evidence for P gives one a reason to believe it. Given this, it is far simpler for her to deny the explanatorily unnecessary additional postulate that evidence gives you a reason to believe *just* in virtue of its being evidence. So a Partially Robust Pragmatist should endorse full-on Robust Pragmatism: a consideration C constitutes a genuine reason to believe P if and only if it is a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P.

Now, there are of course *some* metaphysically possible scenarios in which evidence for P would not constitute a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P. Such cases are rarer than one might think, however. What we have to imagine is a case in which believing the truth with respect to P does not make it even a tad bit more likely that your life—or the lives of others—will go well. We have to imagine that you have no curiosity whatsoever concerning P; you're completely indifferent to whether or not you believe the truth about whether P. Although such cases are certainly metaphysically possible, I suspect that the actual world contains few—if any—of them. Insofar as I have intuitions about such cases, it seems to me that the verdict of Robust Pragmatism is exactly right. If it really is the case that true beliefs concerning P would not make it even the slightest bit more likely that my life, or that of others, will go well; and I am genuinely completely indifferent to whether or not I believe the truth with respect to P; then, in my view, evidence in favor of P does not give me any reason whatsoever to believe it.

My aim in this section has been to argue that, once one endorses Pragmatism, the road to Robust Pragmatism is quite short. First I argued that it would be ad hoc to hold that pragmatic considerations are genuine reasons in some cases but not others. Then I argued that it would complicate the view unnecessarily to adopt the claim that evidence for P is a reason to believe P just in virtue of its being evidence. The Robust Pragmatist has no problem explaining why it is that evidence for P typically gives us a reason to believe P: this is because evidence for P is typically also a pragmatic consideration in favor of believing P. In *recherché* metaphysically possible scenarios in which this isn't true, the Robust Pragmatist can simply say that, although the agent does have evidence for P, this doesn't give her any reason whatsoever to believe it.

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Jonathan Way, an audience at the 2014 Midwest Epistemology Workshop at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, an audience at MIT's Epistemology Reading Group, and participants in a fall 2014 graduate seminar at Harvard on the ethics of belief.

Notes

1. Including Niko Kolodny (2005), Joseph Raz (2011), and Ingmar Persson (2007).
2. Participants in this debate typically do not attempt to define what it is for a consideration to be evidential or pragmatic and I also will not make such an attempt here. Very roughly, we might think of evidential considerations as those indicating that P is true and pragmatic considerations as those indicating that φ -ing would benefit oneself or others. (I include *moral* considerations under the category "pragmatic.") Note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, the same consideration might, given one's background information, be taken to indicate both that P is true and that believing P would benefit oneself (or others).
3. A similar point is made by Richard Foley (1987).
4. A common claim in this vicinity is that pragmatic considerations cannot be reasons *for which* one believes. The Pragmatist has a simple response to this claim: they can point to particular cases in which pragmatic considerations are, indeed, the reasons for which one believes (see Worsnip (ms) for some examples). If the Evidentialist is going to put forward a more promising argument, they need some more specific claim about what it is that pragmatic considerations can't do with respect to belief. Shah and Kelly make such claims; I argue in this paper that they do not enable successful arguments against Pragmatism. In his contribution to this volume, Juan Comesana makes a related claim. He claims that, in general, if one takes C to not be evidence for P, then, C cannot be the basis for one's belief that P. This is because, very roughly, on his view, in most cases, *what it is* to take something to be evidence for P is to be disposed to exhibit a certain behavior, namely, the doxastic behavior of believing P. I disagree with Comesana's account of taking. On my view, to take something to be a certain way just is to believe it to be that way. So there is no in-principle barrier to basing one's belief on a consideration which one takes (i.e. believes) to not be evidence for P.
5. In fact, Kelly states his claim using somewhat different terminology: he says that a consideration can *affect the rationality of* one's φ -ing only if it could be the basis for one's φ -ing. On the assumption that a consideration can count as a genuine reason to φ only if it can affect the rationality of one's φ -ing, the claim that I attribute to Kelly in the text follows. Without this assumption, Kelly's argument does not undermine the Pragmatist's claim that purely pragmatic considerations can constitute genuine reasons for belief.
6. Kelly's test may face difficulties independent of the ones I raise in the next section. I remain neutral on whether this is so; my focus will be on problems with relying on his claim in the context of arguing for Evidentialism.
7. I chose these two New Evidentialist arguments because they are the ones developed in the most detail. Jonathan Way (ms) also develops a detailed argument

for Evidentialism, intended as an improvement on the Shah/Kelly strategy. However, his approach is similar enough to theirs that it faces the same problems (see footnote 10).

8. Those sympathetic with Bernard Williams' (1979) internalism about reasons will likely think so.
9. Shah (2008) gives a line of argument very similar to the one given here for this incompatibility. Since Shah endorses the principle that a consideration is a reason to φ only if it can lead one directly to φ -ing, he concludes that pragmatic considerations in favor of intending to φ are not genuine reasons to intend to φ .
10. At this point, the Evidentialist might consider trying to argue that one *can* be moved directly to an intention to drink the toxin just by the pragmatic consideration in favor of so intending. But if so, then it's unclear why the Evidentialist is entitled to the assumption that one *cannot* be moved directly to belief just by a pragmatic consideration in favor of so believing. And without this assumption, their attempted argument against the Pragmatist falls apart.
11. Jonathan Way (ms) defends the claim that it is possible for purely pragmatic considerations to lead directly to belief—but only via bad reasoning. Someone might, for example, reason from the claim that it is in their interests to believe in God to the conclusion that God exists. Way takes this fact to undermine the Shah/Kelly strategy, but he proposes an alternative route to Evidentialism, which relies instead on the claim that a consideration in favor of φ -ing constitutes a genuine reason to φ only if it is capable of leading one directly, via *good* reasoning, to φ -ing. However, this proposed necessary condition faces the same problems that undermine requirements of the Shah/Kelly variety. Pragmatic considerations cannot lead one directly to wearing wool socks, or to putting on wool socks, by reasoning of any kind, good or bad. The same is true of pragmatic considerations in favor of intention (as in the toxin puzzle).
12. Of course, an individual Evidentialist may react by endorsing the claim that there are no pragmatic reasons whatsoever. What I want to emphasize here is simply that an argument for Evidentialism that takes this claim as a premise would not be persuasive to a Pragmatist.

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