

Forthcoming in *The Monist* (2002) Vol. 85, No. 3, pp. 381-97.

EPISTEMIC AKRASIA

One way of discerning what sort of control we have over our mental lives is to look at cases where that control is not exercised. This is one reason why philosophers have taken an interest in the phenomenon of akrasia, in an agent's ability to do, freely and deliberately, something that they judge they ought not to do. Akrasia constitutes a failure of control but not an absence of control. The akratic agent is not a compulsive; an akratic agent has the ability to control their action, to make it conform to their judgement, but they fail to exercise that ability. They freely and deliberately give in to temptation.

In the hope of getting clearer about the sort of control we have over belief, some philosophers have gone on to ask whether there is any phenomenon analogous to akrasia in the epistemic realm. Epistemic akrasia is possible only if (a) a person's (first-order) beliefs can diverge from their higher-order judgements about what it would be reasonable for them to believe and (b) these divergent (first-order) beliefs are freely and deliberately formed. Call (a) *the judgement condition* and (b) *the control condition*.

It has been argued that one can't possibly believe something one thinks one ought not to believe: the judgement condition cannot be satisfied. In the first half of the paper, I shall criticise these arguments. But even if we can believe what we think we ought not to believe, it still remains an open question whether this constitutes a failure to exercise control over belief, a control which we retain even whilst we fail to exercise it. Mere judgmental disapproval of some mental phenomenon does not make that mental phenomenon akratic unless it is the sort of thing we are expected to exercise judgmental control over. In the second half of the paper, I argue that it is the control condition which cannot be satisfied. So, in the end, I conclude that epistemic akrasia is impossible and that its impossibility casts a shadow over the whole idea of doxastic control.

The Judgement Condition: Moore's Paradox

The akratic does what he or she believes should not be done or fails to do what he or she believes should be done. If epistemic akrasia is possible, we must be capable of judging that our own beliefs are unreasonable: that we believe things we ought not to believe or that we fail to believe what we should.^[1]

Some writers argue that epistemic akrasia is impossible because this judgement condition cannot be met:

^[1]In this paper, I am concerned exclusively with judgements about what it would be reasonable for me to believe, not with judgements about which beliefs it would be reasonable for me to cause or induce in myself. For example, it might be reasonable of me or even morally required of me to cause myself to acquire a certain belief, a belief which is quite irrational because there is insufficient evidence for it. If I judge that this is so, I am judging that a certain action is required of me: namely the action of inducing an irrational belief. If, having made that judgement I then fail to perform such an action, this is an example of *practical*, not *epistemic* akrasia (Owens 2000: 25, 182)

Imagine that your beliefs run counter to what evidence and fact require. In such a case, your beliefs will not allow those requirements to remain visible because the offending beliefs themselves give you your sense of what is and your sense of what appears to be. You are therefore denied an experience whose content is that you are believing such and such in defiance of the requirements of fact and evidence. This is why, as G.E. Moore observed, you cannot simultaneously think that while you believe that p, yet it is not the case that p. (Pettit and Smith 1996: 448).

I doubt the possibility of epistemic akrasia can be dismissed so quickly.

Let's start by disentangling what fact requires from what evidence requires. One can judge that one is believing either against, or regardless of, the evidence without judging that one is believing against the facts. Someone who judges

(1) I believe Smith is innocent but this belief is based on insufficient evidence

isn't (yet) expressing any view about Smith's guilt or innocence. (1) is not equivalent to

(2) I believe Smith is innocent but he is guilty.

For instance, I might think (1) when despite having received information which undermines, in my own eyes, whatever evidence supported my belief in Smith's innocence, I find myself still convinced of his innocence. And I can have information which undercuts this evidence without having any indication as to whether Smith is, as (2) claims, guilty.

(2) is the sort of sentence which Moore found highly paradoxical: even though (2) might well be true, someone who asserts it appears to take back in the second part of the sentence the very thing that they asserted in the first. Many have assumed that (2) is paradoxical because the state of mind which it is naturally taken to express is impossible. Pettit and Smith appear to equate (2) with (1) and thence infer that the state of mind expressed by (1) must be impossible also. But if the state of mind expressed by (1) is impossible, it is not for this reason.

Would Pettit and Smith fare any better if they formulated Moore's paradox in a slightly different way? Compare

(3) The evidence is sufficient to establish Smith's guilt but I just can't believe that he is guilty.

with

(4) Smith is guilty but I don't believe it.

Are these equivalent? I think not. (4) is paradoxical because I appear to be asserting Smith's guilt and then taking my assertion back in the same breath. There is no such incoherence in (3). In (3) I am not both committing myself on the facts of the matter

and also evading this commitment; rather I am saying that a reasonable man would adopt a certain belief but that I am not, in this instance, being reasonable. (3) does indeed report an unhappy state of mind but not an impossible one. Most of us have had occasion to utter a sentence like (3) at some point in our lives.

We can get closer to the situation which Smith and Pettit might have in mind by combining (1) and (3) with a further judgement about the balance of evidence. Say I judge that the evidence points towards Smith's guilt: the testimony of the eyewitnesses to the crime is more plausible than that of those brought in to support his alibi. (3) allows that I may nevertheless fail to believe that he is guilty, even if I also judge that the eyewitness testimony is sufficiently plausible to establish his guilt. (1) allows that I may believe Smith to be innocent, even if I also judge that his alibi is not enough to establish Smith's innocence. Combining these possibilities, I end up in the situation of believing p even though I judge that a reasonable person would believe not- p .

Some writers take this sort of situation to be definitive of epistemic akrasia. I suggest that we employ a broader notion of 'epistemic akrasia', one on which either (1) or (3) would suffice on their own for epistemic akrasia: epistemic akrasia does not require that one believe "in the teeth of the evidence". In fact, I do think it possible to hold a belief in the teeth of the evidence in this sense (though, as we shall see, I don't think it possible to form such a belief freely and deliberately); I just don't think the possibility of epistemic akrasia depends on this being so.

The Judgement Condition: Transparency

Clearly Pettit and Smith won't establish that the judgement condition can't be met by simply equating (1) and (3) with (2) and (4). But there are other lines of thought which lead in the same direction. Moran tells us that

If my beliefs just are what I take to be true, then when I am asked what I believe about something I will answer this by directing my attention to the world independent of my mind. When asked whether one believes that Oswald acted alone, one normally responds by attending to facts about *Oswald* etc. and does not scan the interior of one's own consciousness. This feature is sometimes called the 'transparency' of one's own thinking in that, for me, a question about my belief is 'transparent' to a question which is not about me but about the world, and is answered in the same way. Thus, I can answer a question about my belief by directing my attention to what is independently the case, and not by considering evidence, behavioural or otherwise, about anyone's state of mind. (Moran 1997: 146)

Moran uses this transparency feature to account for the special epistemic authority we all appear to have in the matter of what we ourselves believe. But perhaps this transparency feature is also what Smith and Pettit have in mind when they write that one's beliefs must occlude any doubts one might have about the rationality of those very beliefs.

How might one move from the transparency of belief to the impossibility of thinking your own beliefs to be unreasonable?^{2[2]} One line of thought goes as follows: the way to form a belief on a given topic is to work out what the truth is and the way to do that is to look for evidence sufficient to establish the truth. But exactly the same method is used to work out whether a given belief would be reasonable. So the method you use to determine what is the case must deliver the same result as the method you use to discern what it would be reasonable for you to believe. How then can you end up with a belief which you yourself think to be unreasonable?^{3[3]}

We can see that there must be something wrong with this line of thought by applying it to our emotions. Take anger. Suppose I am angry with my friend because he can't fix my computer. I am angry at his apparent incompetence. This anger is unreasonable and I know it. I have insufficient expertise to determine whether his failure to fix my computer shows anything about his competence. Now how do I discover what I think of my friend's computing skills here? I don't need to visit an analyst or make inferences from observation of my own behaviour. Rather, I simply look at (or recall) the nonsense on the screen, my friend's ineffectual tappings etc. and am infuriated by the picture of ineptitude he presents.

This example shows that we can't move from the premise that which attitude I take is determined by my attending to (or recalling) the world, to the conclusion that it is impossible for me to regard this attitude as unreasonable. I don't scan the contents of my consciousness to assess my friend's competence; rather I glare at the pathetic figure he cuts. In so doing I discern some evidence as to his competence - after all he hasn't fixed my computer - but I put far too much weight on this meagre data and I know it. I am angered by his failure but I am also convinced that there isn't enough evidence to justify this anger.

To decide what I think of my friend's performance, I attend to the relevant bit of the world but to decide what I think of the normative quality of my anger, I attend to the strength of the evidence on which it is based. These are two different procedures which, in this case, deliver different results. I can't contemplate my friend's computing skills without recalling that exasperating experience but equally I can't reflect on the probative force of the experience without thinking I am putting too much weight on it.

In describing the above example, I have remained neutral on the question of whether I *believe* my friend to be incompetent. Certainly being angry that p involves representing p to oneself as being true, which is why evidence as to p is relevant to the

^{2[2]}Moran himself does not seek to make this move. See (Moran 2001: 60-5).

^{3[3]}Someone convinced by this line of thought need not deny that we do sometimes attribute unreasonable beliefs to ourselves whilst trying to make sense of our behaviour etc. For example, my analyst might convince me that the best way of explaining various thoughts, feelings and actions of mine is by supposing I believe that my father was cruel to me. Here I accept the analyst's conclusion and so am prepared to *report* that I believe my father was cruel to me. But, as Moran observes, my acceptance of the analyst's conclusion does not make me inclined to *avow* this belief. In fact, when I recall my father, it seems to me that he was not cruel at all. It is hard to know exactly how to describe such cases but I don't think we need to resolve this matter here, for we shouldn't assume that anyone who finds their beliefs to be unreasonable can discover what they believe only by making inferences from their behaviour or by relying on the testimony of an expert.

rationality of my anger.^{4[4]} I used the verb 'think' to encompass both belief in p and the mode of representation of p which is involved in being angry that p, whatever that mode is. But whether or not 'thinking' that p implies believing that p, we have shown the argument from transparency is not, as it stands, cogent.

The transparency feature of belief can't be used to bolster Pettit and Smith's position. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the argument from transparency would make practical akrasia seem no less problematic than theoretical akrasia. And this is a consequence which Pettit and Smith would not welcome. As they observe

it is all too common an experience that your evaluative commitments lead you on one path but that you go nonetheless another; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Agents are aware in such an experience of what the right requires them to desire and do, at least in the light of their evaluative commitments, despite the fact that their actual desires and actions do not conform to that requirement. (Pettit and Smith 1996: 449)

Here, the agent's 'evaluative commitments' are expressed in their judgements as to what they ought to desire and do. Pettit and Smith want to allow that an agent's evaluative commitments and their actions can come apart.

How does one decide whether to holiday in France or South Africa? One looks at features of the two destinations in an effort to determine which is the more desirable. Having decided in favour of France, one forms an intention to go there and makes the necessary preparations. In forming that intention, one's gaze is directed outwards, at the world. Now suppose one is instead asked what decision one *ought* to make about one's holiday: ought one to form the intention to go to France or the intention to go to South Africa? Again the desirability of France and South Africa seem to be the only things relevant to this decision. So how, we might wonder, could one end up in the position of judging that one's holiday intentions (and the behaviour which implements them) are unreasonable?

Yet such a thing is perfectly possible. Suppose there is a slight risk of civil unrest in South Africa but you judge this risk insufficient to outweigh South Africa's many obvious advantages over France. This judgement notwithstanding, you just can't bring yourself to decide to holiday in South Africa because of a morbid fear of social disorder and the random violence it breeds. Slightly ashamed, you play safe and plan on taking the French option while maintaining until the day you leave that South Africa would have been better. In the view of Smith, Pettit and many others, there is nothing particularly paradoxical about the confession: 'South Africa was the right option but I couldn't persuade myself to take it'.^{5[5]}

^{4[4]}For further discussion of these issues, see (Greenspan 1988).

^{5[5]}Here it is important to distinguish practical akrasia - a clash between practical judgement on the one hand and intention or action on the other - from an unreasonable failure to implement an intention (Holton 1999). Both phenomena are often called 'weakness of will' but they are quite distinct and it is the former, not the latter, which concerns us. There is indeed something rather paradoxical about the sentence 'I intend to go to South Africa but I shan't', uttered by a person who has had all too much experience of their own backsliding. In what sense can this person seem to themselves to be set on going to South Africa if it also seems to them that they won't actually go? (Moran 1997: 148-50, 156-7) I shall not pursue this interesting thought here because it does not bear on the issue before us. You may

To sum up, we have seen no reason to think that the judgement condition for epistemic akrasia cannot be satisfied. Doubts about the possibility of epistemic akrasia should focus on the control condition.

The Control Condition: Evidential Akrasia

Both belief and intention can fail to correspond to our judgement of what they ought to be. Yet akrasia involves more than such a failure. At the outset, I said that the akratic agent does *freely and deliberately* something that they judge they ought not to do. That is why akrasia constitutes a failure to exercise control over one's action rather than an absence of such control. Is there an analog of control in the case of belief? Where your beliefs diverge from your views about what you ought to believe, can this constitute a failure to exercise a power of doxastic control which you nonetheless possess?

Many philosophers think it obvious that we don't control our beliefs, that we don't form beliefs freely and deliberately, whether contingently or not. According to these philosophers, control is a matter of being subject to the will: belief is not subject to the will, therefore it is not under our control. In their view, practical akrasia occurs when our will diverges from our practical judgement, when we intentionally act in a way which we judge not to be best. Since there can be no analog of this for belief, there is no such thing as epistemic akrasia.

I agree that belief is not subject to the will but I deny that subjection to the will is the only notion of control available to us. Elsewhere I have argued that we control our practical decisions even though they are not subject to the will (Owens 2000: 81-2 and 104-8). And this fact is crucial to the possibility of practical akrasia since one can be akratic in forming intentions as much as in carrying them out (as when I judged that I ought to decide to holiday in South Africa and yet formed the intention to holiday in France instead). Here I shall describe another model of control which clearly does apply to both actions and intentions. We shall then consider whether it can be applied to belief in such a way as to underwrite the possibility of epistemic akrasia.

Actions are our paradigm of the free and deliberate and in action we pursue desirable goals. Action is purposive. Now at any moment it is open to agents to pursue all sorts of goals, to set themselves a variety of ends. Someone deciding on what to do has to make a choice as to which of these many desirable objectives they should aim for: should they enjoy the taste of the chocolates now or should they ensure an indigestion-free future? Both courses of action have something to be said for them and the points in their favour may be registered in judgement. To resolve the matter, the agent must form a view about which course of action is best all things considered. Yet such an 'all things considered' judgement allows that rejected alternatives may have their value: if I judge that I ought not to eat these chocolates because of the

have little doubt that you will end up in France on holiday. You may be as certain that you will execute that intention as you are of carrying out various other intentions which you think to be perfectly reasonable. After all, the political climate in South Africa is unlikely to change in the immediate future. Nevertheless, you might still think that a different decision would have been more reasonable, precisely because you think you shouldn't be putting so much weight on that single consideration.

indigestion they will cause and on this occasion I heed my judgement, I may still reasonably regret missing out on the indulgence which would have preceded the indigestion. (Williams 1973: 170)

This suggests a model of control on which practical judgement (rather than the will) is the instrument by which we control our agency. Specifically we exercise control over our agency by forming a view of the merits of the proposed course of action. I can judge that, all things considered, it would be best if I didn't eat the chocolates. But I also judge that the pleasure of eating the chocolates counts in favour of eating them: indigestion notwithstanding, there remains some reason to eat the chocolates. What happens in a case of akratic action is that I act on the latter judgement rather than the former.^{6[6]}

On this judgement-based model of control, it is clear why the akratic action is performed freely and deliberately. When I don't heed my judgement and do eat the chocolates, my action is still motivated by a goal whose value is acknowledged in judgement (though outweighed, in the eyes of judgement, by another incompatible objective).^{7[7]} In this respect, my akratically eating the chocolates is on a par with all the other purposive activities I engage in. The fact that this action conflicts with my 'all things considered' practical judgement need not render it unfree. And much the same can be said of an akratic intention.

To apply all this to yield an account of epistemic akrasia, two things are required. First believing must be purposive; belief must be aimed at a goal. It has been suggested that belief is indeed purposive, for a belief is necessarily adopted with the goal of having the belief only if it is true (e.g. Velleman 2000: 244-55). This hypothesis is meant to explain why I can't believe some absurdity merely because I have been offered \$1m, unless that \$1m provides some (apparent) evidence for the truth of the belief. For, given the purpose which is constitutive of believing, I need evidence that the proposition to be believed is true before I can adopt the belief.

For believing to fall under the judgement-based model of control, it isn't enough that believing be purposive. A second condition must be satisfied: believing must, like action, serve a variety of goals. Hurley argues that belief fails this second condition: belief has truth as its only goal and so we haven't got the plurality of goals necessary to apply the judgement-based model of akrasia. I think a case can be made along these lines against the possibility of what I shall call 'evidential akrasia' but evidential akrasia is only one form of epistemic akrasia.

In the rest of the paper, I shall proceed as follows. First, I shall distinguish evidential from epistemic akrasia. Then I shall construct an argument for the impossibility of

^{6[6]}There are many parallels between this judgement-based model of akrasia and that described in (Davidson 1980: 21-42). The main difference is that, for Davidson, the essence of akrasia lies in the divergence between the agent's 'all things considered' practical judgement and his 'all-out' or 'unconditional' judgement about what it would be best to do. Since Davidson allows that the latter 'all out' judgement is based on a conditional judgement about the (weaker) reasons in favour of that course of action, this difference may not be significant.

^{7[7]}For the purposes of my discussion of epistemic akrasia, it does not matter whether this is a sufficient condition for non-compulsive, free and deliberate action; it might be only a necessary condition.

evidential akrasia along the lines Hurley suggests. Finally, I shall give a rather different argument of my own against the possibility of epistemic akrasia, one which rejects some of the assumptions of the earlier argument against evidential akrasia.

Evidential akrasia is what I earlier called 'believing in the teeth of the evidence'; it occurs when I believe that p even though I judge that there is sufficient evidence to establish the truth of not- p , that is to make a failure to believe not- p unreasonable.^{8[8]} Hurley argues that this sort of thing is impossible because

in the case of what should be done there may be conflict within an agent, there may be conflicting reasons competing for authority. But in the case of what should be believed, truth alone governs and it can't be divided against itself or harbour conflicts. It makes sense to suppose that something is, ultimately, good in some respects but not in others ... in a way it does not even make sense to suppose that something is, ultimately, true in some respects but not in others (1993: 133).

By applying the judgement-based model of akrasia to belief, I think we can use Hurley's observation to construct an argument against the possibility of evidential akrasia.

First note that simply believing p when there is no evidence for p (which I allow to be possible) does not in itself constitute akratic believing. Why not? If a belief that p is caused by the desire that p be true without the presence of any evidence for p , why isn't that a case of akrasia? The answer is that beliefs which are the product of such purely wishful thinking are not formed freely and deliberately: they are not produced by a judgement that there is some reason for the belief in question. Such a judgement is possible only when there is at least some (apparent) evidence in favour of the proposition to be believed and here there is none. So on the judgement-based model of control, the control condition cannot here be satisfied.

Is there any difficulty about akratically believing a proposition with at least some (apparent) evidence in its favour? I suggest that this too is impossible on the judgement-based model of control. For such a belief to be formed freely and deliberately, the agent must be in a position to *judge* that a certain bit of evidence provides some reason for the belief, whilst also judging that this evidence is decisively outweighed by other evidence. But no one can freely and deliberately form the belief that p when they think the evidence sufficient to establish its falsehood because no one can judge that there is *any* reason to believe p in such a situation.

Scanlon objects that outweighed evidence can still *appear* to support the proposition in question. Even if I think the evidence shows John to be untrustworthy, his charming behaviour in my presence may strike me as a reason to believe that he is trustworthy and that appearance might be sufficient to motivate the belief that he is (Scanlon 1998: 36). But this does not bear on the point at issue unless John's charming behaviour really does constitute a reason in my eyes to think him honest,

^{8[8]}Note that Hurley defines 'evidential akrasia' rather differently, so she may or not may be interested in the possibility of evidential akrasia in my sense. Nevertheless, her argument inspired the one I consider here.

my overall judgement of the evidence notwithstanding. On a judgement-based model, my belief in him is adopted freely and deliberately only if I can *judge* that John's charming behaviour is a good, though overridden, reason to think him trustworthy. And can I really judge this whilst also judging that there is sufficient evidence to show that he isn't really trustworthy at all?

Several authors have argued that in judging *e* sufficient to *establish* *p*, one must also be judging that any evidence *e'* which appears to favour not-*p* is misleading, is not a good indication of how things are and therefore provides no reason for belief (Dretske 1971: 216-7 and Harman 1980: 168-70). I agree (Owens 2000: 142-5). If one thinks the evidence establishes *p*, one must think that apparently countervailing evidence *e'* can be explained on the hypothesis that *p* and so provides no grounds for thinking not-*p* to be true. Should one nevertheless be swayed by the appearance of *e'*, one is being swayed by a consideration whose probative force one can't acknowledge in judgement. Therefore this can't happen freely and deliberately.

To appreciate the plausibility of this view recall Smith's trial. I am weighing the testimony of the eyewitnesses to the crime against that of the eyewitnesses to Smith's alibi. So long as I am still deliberating, both sorts of evidence appear to have some probative force, even if one seems to have more force than the other. But to think the evidence sufficient to establish Smith's guilt, I must also think it sufficient to establish that the alibi witnesses are either lying, or honestly mistaken, or that their testimony, though correct, doesn't really provide an alibi And to establish this is to establish that their testimony gives us no reason to believe in Smith's innocence.

As Williams urged, the practical case is altogether different. When refusing the chocolates, you judge that it would be best not to eat them whilst also judging that the pleasure of eating them still tells in favour of eating them. The pleasures of eating them is a real, not merely an apparent reason: that's why regret at having forgone the chocolates may, without irrationality, be combined with the judgement that you had to forgo them. Should you flout your judgement and eat, you are being moved by something you judge to be a genuine reason; therefore this action may be performed freely and deliberately. Practical akrasia is perfectly possible.

Have we finally located the crucial difference between theoretical and practical reason, the difference which rule out epistemic akrasia as such? I think not. We may well have shown that a subject can't judge that they have any reason to believe the opposite of what they take the evidence to establish. Given the correctness of the judgement-based model of akrasia, this establishes that they can't freely and deliberately form a belief in the teeth of the evidence, even though they may *find themselves* believing in the teeth of the evidence. And since the subject can judge that they have some reason do the opposite of what they judge they ought to do, there is a clear disanalogy here between belief and action.

But to establish that epistemic akrasia as such is impossible, we must do more than rule out evidential akrasia. We must demonstrate that a subject can't freely and deliberately believe something on evidence which they take to be insufficient, and that they can't freely and deliberately remain agnostic when they think they ought to believe. Neither of these situations need involve basing a belief on evidence which you judge to be decisively outweighed by other evidence and therefore neither of

them is ruled out by the above argumentation. Someone who finds themselves convinced of Smith's innocence when they judge the evidence insufficient to establish Smith's innocence is a good candidate for epistemic akrasia, whether or not they also judge that the evidence demonstrates Smith's guilt.

The Control Condition: Epistemic Akrasia

In the last section, we operated on the assumption that believing is purposive and that the purpose of belief is to have only true beliefs. We also assumed that a belief is formed freely and deliberately when it is formed because the subject judges that they have some reason to form it. So to believe freely and deliberately, we must believe because we judge that this belief would serve the goal constitutive of believing, that it would be true. This seems to rule out not only free and deliberate believing based on no evidence at all but also free and deliberate believing in the teeth of the evidence. Yet, even granting these assumptions, we have yet to rule out all forms of epistemic akrasia.

This can be shown by applying the judgement-based model of akrasia to a phenomenon which certainly does aim at the truth, namely guessing. Akratic guessing is perfectly possible, even though akratically guessing in the teeth of the evidence is not. If believing were like guessing, similar forms of akratic belief would also be possible. But in fact they are not possible. This is because belief formation is not purposive in the way that guessing is.

Guessing aims at the truth. A guesser guesses with the purpose of guessing correctly: you can't guess that p (freely and deliberately) when you think that there is evidence sufficient to establish not- p . Someone who does this is not really intending to guess correctly and so is not really guessing. You can *say* 'I guess that I am 8 ft. tall' simply because you have been offered some reward for saying these words but you can't *sincerely* guess that you are 8 ft. tall simply because you judge that making the guess is desirable.^{9[9]}

Yet akratic guessing is easy to imagine. Suppose the following quiz. In a given round I have a minute to answer as many questions as I can. I am not expected to know the answer to many of these questions straight off, so the question master gives me a series of clues which are designed to help me guess the answer. I must decide how many clues I shall listen to before making a stab at it. Clearly, at any given point, I should weigh the likelihood of getting this particular question right if I wait for another clue against the likelihood of getting it right now and moving onto the next question, or at least of getting it wrong and perhaps moving onto a more tractable question. Here even if I never guess regardless of, or in the teeth of, the evidence, the situation is rich in akratic possibility.

What makes room for akrasia is the fact that even though, in making an individual guess, I am trying to get that particular matter right, the correctness of this particular guess is not the only goal I am pursuing. My judgements about when to guess, about how many clues I ought to wait for before hazarding an opinion, will be informed by

^{9[9]}For more on the evidential norms governing guessing, see my 'Does Belief Have An Aim?'.

the need to win as many points as I can. Now it might well happen that I judge that I ought to guess now because of this wider objective, yet I refrain from guessing because of my adherence to the goal of getting this particular guess right. Conversely, it may happen that I judge that I should wait for another clue and yet the wider objective of getting other guesses right moves me to make a guess now anyway.

On the judgement-based model of akrasia, we can see how these akratic guesses can be made freely and deliberately. Even though I judge that, all things considered, I ought to wait for another clue, I also judge that there is some reason to terminate consideration of this question and move onto the next. And if I do guess before I judge that I ought to because I judge that moving onto the next question has some value, I do so freely and deliberately. *Mutatis mutandis* for the case where I wait for the next clue even though I judge that I ought not to.

In the previous section, we assumed that each belief must be formed with the purpose of having a true belief. But even if someone who believes must do so with the purpose of only believing what is true, their belief will still be influenced by their pursuit of goals other than the truth of that particular belief. In particular, they will be moved by the need to have true beliefs on other matters. Indeed, anyone whose *sole* purpose in forming the belief that p were to form it only if p is true would have to insist on conclusive evidence for p. But, of course, people form beliefs on the basis of inconclusive evidence all the time because they want to have a view of the world and not just of the matter before them. So mustn't believing (like guessing) be motivated by a variety of other goals which guide and constrain our pursuit of the truth?

These considerations encourage us to look for an epistemic analog of akratic guessing. If we can freely and deliberately guess when we think we ought not to because there is a clash between the goal of getting this individual guess right and the wider goals which make us guess at all, why can't we freely and deliberately believe when we think we ought not to? Suppose I feel the time has come to make up my mind about whether my old friend Smith is guilty: the evidence favours his guilt and I need to resolve the matter. The need for peace of mind, to be free to think about other things etc. might motivate me to form a view on what I judge to be insufficient evidence. And if I form this belief because I judge that I need peace of mind, why doesn't that count as freely and deliberately forming that belief, and thus as an instance of epistemic akrasia?

Nothing said so far about belief rules this out. But, I take it, believing differs from guessing; the possibility of akratic guessing does not make epistemic akrasia possible and that is because guessing is purposive and believing is not. In querying the purposiveness of belief, I don't mean to deny that true beliefs are correct and false beliefs incorrect. There is more to purposiveness than that. Purposiveness implies that a subject forms beliefs in pursuance of a certain goal, that they control their beliefs by aiming them at that goal.

On this teleological model of belief formation, the believer makes judgements about how likely they are to achieve various goals if that belief is formed. The truth of this particular belief will be one such goal but, as we have seen, wider goals are needed if we are ever to make up our minds given that we could always wait for more evidence to come in on this particular matter. So if belief were purposive, the rational subject

would be in a position to get themselves to believe that p simply by judging whether they have sufficient evidence for the truth of p, given their wider purposes in believing. That is what made it so natural to apply the judgement-based model of akratic action to belief formation, once we had ascribed such a purpose to each believer.

Needless to say, this is not what happens. A rational believer does not get themselves to believe that p by judging that they have sufficient evidence for the truth of p to form a view about it, given their purposes in forming that belief. Third parties might make judgements of this sort; they might think that given the constraints on our subject's deliberations and the relative importance of the issue before them, that subject has sufficient evidence to form a view about p. But if our subject finds themselves reluctant to form a belief on the basis of such evidence, rationality alone won't guarantee that they can get themselves to form a view simply by judging that the time has come to make up their mind (Owens 2000: 32-4).

In this, believing is very different from guessing. A rational guesser can overcome a reluctance to chance their arm by judging that they have heard enough clues to make a guess given their wider goals; and in so far as they are rational, they can resist the temptation to plump for a certain answer before they have sufficient evidence by reminding themselves of the need to get it right. In sum, the guesser can exercise control over their guesses by reflecting on how best to strike a balance between the goal of truth and the other goals their guessing serves; the believer cannot.

It should now be clear why the judgement-based model of akrasia cannot be applied to belief. We can't control our beliefs by making judgements about how well they achieve certain goals. We simply lack that sort of control over belief. So, at least on the model of control under discussion, there is no question of forming beliefs freely and deliberately, either in accordance with our judgement about what we should believe or against those judgements. Other models of control might be suggested which allow for akrasia in some other way but until they are produced, we should conclude that epistemic akrasia is not possible.^{10[10]}

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^{10[10]}I thank Robert Hopkins, Richard Moran and especially Ward Jones for their help with this paper.

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