

ON TRANSPARENCY:  
A RESPONSE TO NISHI SHAH'S "HOW TRUTH GOVERNS BELIEF"

Emily Adams Given

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Philosophy.

Chapel Hill  
2007

Approved by:

Geoffrey Sayre-McCord

Ram Neta

Marc Lange

## ABSTRACT

Emily Adams Given

On Transparency: A Response to Nishi Shah's "How Truth Governs Belief"  
(Under the direction of Geoffrey Sayre-McCord)

In his 2003 paper "How Truth Governs Belief" Nishi Shah claims that within first personal doxastic deliberation, one cannot separate the questions *whether to believe some proposition p* and *whether p is true*; the questions must be viewed as answered by and answerable to the same set of considerations. He calls this phenomenon transparency, and argues that the only way to explain it is by understanding the concept of belief as being normatively tied to truth. In deliberating about *whether to believe* we exercise our concept of belief, appreciate its normative connection to truth, and so incite the collapse of these two questions.

By way of offering a response to Shah, I argue on behalf of teleological accounts of belief that there is a competing explanation of transparency. Despite Shah's dilemma, it seems to me that the teleologist, making metaphysical rather than conceptual claims, can recover an explanation of why truth is normative for belief in the way transparency reveals.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to several people for the help and support they provided throughout the execution of this project. Firstly, thank you to Geoff Sayre-McCord for the many careful and insightful conversations, for the coffee, for leading a department I am proud to work in, and for the support of me and this project without which it would have suffered greatly. Thank you to Ram Neta and Marc Lange for providing interesting and helpful comments, as is their standard. Lastly, thank you to my family and friends for all their love.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| I.   | Introduction.....                             | 1  |
| II.  | Transparency and Shah's Conceptual Truth..... | 8  |
| III. | Shah's Dilemma for the Teleologist.....       | 15 |
| IV.  | Dissolving the Dilemma.....                   | 22 |
| V.   | Conclusion.....                               | 40 |
|      | References.....                               | 42 |

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Some fairly ordinary observations seem to suggest that there is a relationship, perhaps even a strong and important one, between belief and truth. For example, to believe something seems to be to believe that it's true. Beliefs are a kind of propositional attitude, and what it is to take up a propositional attitude is to take up an attitude towards the truth of some proposition. When you believe, or imagine, or assume that  $p$ , what you're doing is believing, or imagining, or assuming that  $p$  is true. It seems, plainly put, that to believe some proposition  $p$  either just is or somehow involves believing the proposition  $p$  is true. If this is so, then adding the truth predicate to the content of your belief is redundant; you can't add to your belief that  $p$  the further belief that  $p$  is true, since  $p$  is true and  $p$  are, in terms of content, one and the same, or make the same assertion. This line of thought might be taken to reveal that belief and truth are connected as follows: believing that  $p$  is, or involves, believing that  $p$  is true.

This first thought ought to be enough to make plausible that beliefs and truth bear some relationship to one another, namely the relationship that truth bears to propositional attitudes in general. It does not as yet, however, make plausible that there is some relationship that truth bears to beliefs in particular. Again, the truth predicate is redundant not just in the case of beliefs but also with other propositional attitudes: to assume that  $p$  is to assume that  $p$  is true, and to imagine that  $p$  is to imagine that  $p$  is true. Is there some additional relationship, then, one that is distinctive of belief?

You might think that one difference between beliefs and other propositional attitudes is what we have reason to do with respect to them upon discovery of the truth of some proposition. Another natural thought to have about beliefs and truth that might make you think this is that in trying to figure out what we should believe, we should respond in certain ways to discoveries about truth. Put simply, a proposition's being true or false seems to have something important to do with whether we should believe it.

Consider, for example, the fact that we seem to modify or correct the beliefs of others by launching considerations about truth. A friend, espousing the plausibility and consequences of some belief she has, which you know to be a false belief<sup>1</sup>, is appropriately replied to in something like the following fashion: "Don't believe that; it isn't true." The naturalness of this reply, it seems to me, makes quite plausible the idea that belief and truth are deeply connected. After all, your claim about the falsity of your friend's belief is put forth not simply *alongside* your claim that she shouldn't believe it, but also as somehow *relevant to* your claim that she shouldn't. Your claim that her belief is false is presented as a reason for her to not believe it.

Notice that this consideration suggests that there's a relationship truth bears to beliefs that it does not similarly bear to other propositional attitudes. Investigations and claims about truth seem irrelevant to whether or not one should imagine or assume that something is so, whereas they seem directly relevant to whether or not one should believe it. One wouldn't normally reply to a friend who reported that she's imagining something

---

<sup>1</sup> I will be using the locutions of 'a false belief' and 'a true belief.' If we want to say that strictly speaking beliefs themselves aren't true or false but rather the contents of beliefs, or the propositions they take, are true or false, then it seems fine for the time being to read these locutions as synonymous with 'a belief the content of which is false' and 'a belief the content of which is true.'

by saying: “Don’t imagine that; it isn’t true.” Generally put, truth is somehow relevant to settling questions about what we should believe.

We need not, and perhaps ought not, focus on third-personal cases of belief evaluation or modification to see the point here. Consider what you do when you ask yourself the question *whether to believe some proposition  $p$* , and how it relates to the discovery of truth of  $p$ . If you are deliberating about the question of *whether to believe  $p$* , it seems that discovering the truth of  $p$  puts an end to the deliberation. When you discover that  $p$  is true, you settle the question of whether to believe it, and do so in the affirmative. Imagine, for instance, that you’re wondering if there’s a beer in the fridge, asking yourself whether to believe that there’s a beer in the fridge. In some fashion or other, you find out that it’s true that there is a beer in the fridge. Surely, this discovery conclusively settles that indeed, you should believe that there’s a beer in the fridge.

If the discovery of the truth of some proposition gives us reason, maybe even decisive reason, to believe it (and its falsity reason not to) as the above suggests, we might wonder what the question of *whether to believe  $p$*  has to do with truth in cases where we haven’t been so lucky as to discover the truth or falsity of  $p$ .

We might extend the previous thought and say the following: deliberating about *whether to believe  $p$*  simply collapses into deliberating about *whether  $p$  is true*. When we are trying to settle this first question, the considerations we take to be relevant are exactly those we take to be relevant to settling the second. This is an extension of the previous thought in the following sense: not only is the claim that truth is relevant to settling deliberative questions about whether to believe, but further that *only* truth is relevant. Whatever considerations we take to count in favor or against the truth of  $p$  we so take to

count in favor or against whether to believe  $p$ , and to the same extent. When deliberating, the questions *whether to believe  $p$*  and *whether  $p$  is true* are answered by and answerable to the same set of considerations. It seems to follow from such a thought that when we find ourselves in impoverished epistemic circumstances, unable for whatever reason to discern the truth or falsity of  $p$ , then the way we answer the deliberative question about whether to believe  $p$  follows suit: to whatever degree we are decided or undecided about one question, so too we are undecided about the other.

Perhaps an example will serve to make this idea a bit more vivid. Imagine that you're asking yourself whether to believe that your partner has lied to you. You think, 'Well, all the evidence shows that she has lied. But that makes me so sad to believe, so instead I should believe that she hasn't.' Your second thought seems to be at best a bit weird. What's relevant to settling the question about whether you should believe that she has lied is whether or not it's true that she has lied; your ensuing sadness isn't relevant and it seems that nothing but considerations relevant to truth could be. Your sadness might give you a *reason to get yourself to believe* that she hasn't lied, but it doesn't give you a *reason to believe* it; only evidence can do that. Similarly, if you had absolutely no evidence at all, no considerations which told in favor or against the truth of the claim that your partner has lied, you would have no proper reason to believe or disbelieve it.

If even some of these phenomena sound legitimate, then it suggests that there's a relationship between belief and truth. What about that relationship explains these phenomena? What can we say about beliefs to make sense of the fact that truth seems to have some particular kind of relevance to them?



The central claim of Nishi Shah's "How Truth Governs Belief"<sup>2</sup> is that the phenomenon described above can only be explained by understanding the relationship between belief and truth as being conceptual and normative. The reason we collapse our considerations of *whether to believe* and *whether true*, Shah's story goes, is that when we're deliberating about *whether to believe*, we exercise our concept of belief. In so doing, we recognize a conceptual truth about beliefs, namely that they're subject to a norm which prohibits believing that *p* unless *p* is true. So long as we're conceiving of what we're trying to form as being a belief, we have dispositions to be moved only by alethic considerations activated, since the norm for beliefs makes determining whether *p* imperative. Shah's claim, then, is that it's the concept of belief that explains our collapse of the questions *whether to believe p* and *whether p*, the phenomenon he calls transparency. We collapse considerations of *whether to believe* into considerations of *whether true* in all cases of deliberating about *whether to believe* since these are all cases where we exercise the concept of belief and in so doing, we appreciate that it's a concept normatively tied to truth in a way that requires the collapse. According to Shah, part of what it is to do anything that would count as deliberating about one's own beliefs requires and thereby explains the phenomenon in question.

Establishing Shah's claim that only a conceptual truth about beliefs could explain transparency of course requires rejecting the other putative explanation that Shah takes up, namely one generated by a teleologist about beliefs. One might think, after all, that what explains transparency is not something about the concept of belief, but rather something about what beliefs are supposed to do. A teleological account of beliefs, roughly, is one that claims that beliefs are aimed at truth, or have the *telos* or goal or

---

<sup>2</sup> Shah, Nishi. "How Truth Governs Belief." *The Philosophical Review*. 112:4. 447-82 (2003).

function of representing the world truly. If the aim of belief is truth, then some explanation of why it should be that we take only considerations of truth to be relevant to settling questions about whether to believe seems to be on the horizon: considerations about truth are those that I take to be relevant when deliberating about a belief because they're the ones that help my belief achieve it's aim or do what it's supposed to do. We can understand the teleologist's claim that beliefs aim at the truth as having the status of a metaphysical truth rather than a conceptual one: it's something made true by things we might have come to find out about beliefs, not something made true by our concept of belief. In this respect, her claim is quite different from Shah's.

Shah thinks that this difference renders the teleological explanation implausible: the teleologist, he thinks, will not be able to say what it is for a belief to be aimed at truth in such a way that allows her both to explain transparency and to say that there is such a thing as wishful believing. While significantly more attention will be paid to this below, Shah's dilemma for the teleologist is roughly the following: she can, on one hand, claim that what it is to be aimed at truth, or to have the belief-constituting disposition, is to be causally responsive to considerations about truth and only those, in which case she can explain transparency, but she is left with the implausible consequence that any belief which has been causally affected by a consideration other than those relevant to truth is not in fact a belief after all. On the other hand, the teleologist instead could weaken the belief-constituting disposition and claim that what it is to be aimed at truth is to be causally responsive to considerations about truth and perhaps other considerations as well; while this will allow her to call cases of wishful believing genuine beliefs, it will

leave her unable to explain transparency, a phenomenon in which *only* truth is taken to be relevant.

One of my central goals in this paper is to show that the teleologist about beliefs has better resources for explaining transparency than Shah recognizes. His challenge to the teleologist ultimately rests on the charge that she cannot adequately explain the normativity that truth exercises over belief with exclusively descriptive metaphysical claims. Why should truth always be exclusively relevant if my deliberating about *whether to believe* in no way requires my appreciation of the normativity of truth for belief (as it wouldn't if it were generated by the descriptive, metaphysical claims the teleologist is making)? My main claim will be that understanding belief as being conceptually tied to truth in the way Shah does offers no better an explanation of the normativity of truth for belief, once it's properly understood, than does the teleologists' explanation. Though Shah's explanation of why transparency obtains, or why we always *appreciate* the norm tying beliefs to truth, may still have virtues that the teleologist's explanation lacks, I will try to show that her situation is not as bleak as Shah makes it out to be.

In the next three sections, I will do the following: first, I will examine a bit more closely what the phenomenon of transparency is on Shah's view, and how his claim that there's a conceptual truth connecting belief and truth is supposed to explain it. Second, I will examine Shah's argument that the teleologist about belief cannot offer an adequate explanation of transparency, his so-called teleologist's dilemma. Third, I will offer a response on behalf of the teleologist by sketching an explanation of transparency that she might give, and will trace out what consequences this response has for Shah's view as it's presented in "How Truth Governs Belief."

## CHAPTER TWO: TRANSPARENCY AND SHAH'S CONCEPTUAL TRUTH

In the opening pages of “How Truth Governs Belief,” Nishi Shah describes the phenomenon that he, attributing the phrase to Richard Moran, calls transparency:

There is no inferential step involved in moving from “Should I believe that *p*?” to “Is *p* true?” Within the perspective of first-personal doxastic deliberation, that is, deliberation about what to believe, one cannot separate the two questions... One cannot settle on an answer to the question *whether to believe p* without taking oneself to have answered the question *whether p is true*... These two questions must be viewed as answered by, and answerable to, the same set of considerations. (447)

A first feature of this phenomenon we need to appreciate is its scope of application. Shah is making a claim only about what happens within one particular belief-formation process, namely “first-personal doxastic deliberation.” His initial characterization of what constitutes first-personal doxastic deliberation is that it’s deliberation about what to believe; as I initially discussed it, it’s what we do when we frame our reasoning with the question *whether to believe p*. Shah goes on to explain that what’s required for an instance of doxastic deliberation is something short of explicitly posing to oneself the question *whether to believe p*. He says,

Deliberation of any kind is framed by a question... This does not mean that an agent has to have the question at the forefront of his mind... but unless *his thinking manifests some recognition that this is the question he is trying to answer*, his stream of thought would lack the direction or purpose required for it to be an instance of deliberation about what to do or believe rather than, for example, a stretch of directionless cogitation. (466, my emphasis)

Shah wants to make clear that there may well be belief-formation processes which are non-deliberative, cases where we come to have some belief not on the basis of deliberating about it but by inadvertently assuming it, or having it entailed by our other beliefs, or otherwise. Also, there clearly are varieties of deliberation that are not doxastic, cases of deliberation framed by some question other than *whether to believe that p*. Shah, however, takes no position with regard to these cases: his claim that transparency obtains is only supposed to hold for cases in which our reasoning is framed, if not explicitly then implicitly<sup>3</sup>, by the question of *whether to believe that p*.

If cases of doxastic deliberation are the cases about which Shah is making a claim, what is it exactly that's being claimed about them? Recall Shah's claim above that there is a collapse of two questions: in cases of doxastic deliberation, the questions *whether to believe p* and *whether p is true* "must be viewed as answered by, and answerable to, the same set of considerations" (447). Another way Shah sometimes puts it is by saying that doxastic deliberation has an essentially alethic structure. Any consideration one takes to be relevant to the question of *whether p is true* must also be taken to be relevant to the question of *whether to believe p* and vice versa.

Shah seems to take it that the plausibility of the claim that this phenomenon occurs can be appreciated to at least some extent just by reflecting on one's own deliberation about some belief or other. Let's return to my lying partner example<sup>4</sup>: suppose that you want to figure out whether or not you should believe that your partner has lied to you. You explicitly pose to yourself the question *whether to believe it*. Several

---

<sup>3</sup> While it might be interesting to examine what constitutes the implicit framing of one's reasoning with some question, I take it that for the time being, the vague idea that it occurs whenever what we're guided by trying to answer this question will suffice.

<sup>4</sup> I take it that my lying partner example is an analogue of Shah's cuckolded husband example (p.453-7, 465).

considerations come to your mind. One consideration is that you take yourself have overwhelming evidence that it's true that she's lied. Another consideration is that it will make you very sad to believe that she's lied. The phenomenon in question is as follows: you take the first consideration to be relevant to *whether to believe* it (you've taken it to be relevant to *whether it's true*), and take the second consideration to be irrelevant to *whether to believe* it (you take considerations about *whether it makes you sad* to be entirely irrelevant to *whether it's true*). There is no inferential step between your taking some consideration to be relevant to truth and your taking it to be relevant to whether to believe it.

It might be useful to make explicit the two ways Shah might respond to apparent counterexamples to the phenomenon in question. After all, it seems to me that it wouldn't be ridiculous to reply, "Sometimes, perhaps even quite frequently, I take considerations other than those I take to be relevant to truth to be relevant to questions about whether to believe something. My religious beliefs, for example, are essentially this way." Both ways Shah might respond to this kind of claim basically rest on reminding us of the limited scope of application transparency is supposed to have. If we want to maintain that transparency is a legitimate phenomenon, then either we can say that the kind of doxastic attitude this person is taking up is not in fact belief (but rather, perhaps, faith), or we can say that she hasn't brought the belief under the scope of doxastic deliberation (but rather arrived at her belief non-deliberatively). Indeed it seems plausible in this case to reply to such an interlocutor by saying, "Well, yes, but what you're doing there isn't really believing, strictly speaking. You're deliberating about *whether to have faith* rather than *whether to believe*." Whether or not these two strategies will suffice for all apparent

counterexamples is a question I will turn to in some more detail below, but I hope that briefly highlighting them is enough to make the phenomenon plausible in the face of some immediately obvious apparent counterexamples such as the case of religious belief.

The phenomenon that Shah claims occurs, then, might be summarized as follows: whenever we're genuinely engaging in doxastic deliberation, deliberation guided by the question of *whether to believe p*, we take all and only those considerations we take to be relevant to truth to be relevant in settling on an answer. We might think of this phenomenon as Shah's explanandum, that which he claims calls for explanation.

Shah's central claim is that transparency is to be explained by a particular conceptual truth about beliefs which connects them to truth. He first puts the claim as follows: "exercising the concept of belief involves accepting that in some sense one *ought* to believe that *p* only if *p* is true" (449). A condition on possession of the concept of belief, Shah thinks, is acceptance of a certain prescription as framing one's deliberation about whether to believe *p*, namely the prescription to believe *p* only if *p* is true. Shah introduces this claim as follows:

By framing [one's own] deliberation as answering to the question *whether to believe p*, a disposition to be moved by considerations that he regards as relevant to the truth of *p* and a disposition blocking considerations that he regards as irrelevant to the truth of *p* are activated. That is, part of possessing the concept of belief involves being disposed in this way when one applies the concept to frame one's reasoning. (467)

He says also,

My proposal is that the dispositions constitutive of possessing the concept of belief, and of seeking to answer a question framed with that concept, are responsible for the fact that only truth-regarding considerations move an agent in such deliberation. (468)

Shah's picture seems to be this: when we engage in doxastic deliberation, we exercise or apply our concept of belief to our reasoning, and our concept of belief is such that we recognize the force of a prescription to believe *p* only if it's true that *p* whenever we're deliberating about whether to believe it.

Transparency, we might say, is the consciously felt authority of this prescription over our deliberation, a prescription generated by the concept of belief and recognized in virtue of our inevitable exercise of this concept in doxastic deliberation. Shah describes how making a conceptual claim about belief explains transparency:

A competent user of the concept of belief must accept the prescription to believe that *p* only if *p* is true for any activity that he conceives of as belief-formation. Because one accepts this prescription insofar as one is deliberating about *whether to believe that p*, determining *whether p is true* will be immediately imperative, to the exclusion of any other question, for anyone who entertains the deliberative question *whether to believe that p*. (470)

What explains transparency is the concept of belief: accepting a prescription that in effect requires transparency, or makes it imperative, goes hand in hand with possessing the concept of belief and exercising it in our deliberation.

We might think about the features of transparency that Shah thinks need explanation in terms of its strength in two respects. Transparency evidences not a partial collapse of considerations taken to be relevant to two questions, but rather a *complete* collapse; and further, it occurs in not just some cases of doxastic deliberation, but in *all* of them. You might think, as Shah seems to, that making a conceptual claim about beliefs is well suited to explain these two respects in which transparency is a strong phenomenon. The inescapability of this collapse, the reason it occurs in *all* cases of doxastic deliberation, is the inescapability of conceptual necessity; nothing that worked otherwise



could count as doxastic deliberation. The completeness of the collapse, the reason we take truth to be exclusively relevant, is that possession of the concept of belief involves appreciating a norm that ties it exclusively to truth.

Shah claims that the “conceptual truth about belief [that explains transparency] is a normative truth” (469). In the above, I’ve already alluded to part of what this seems to mean. What we appreciate about the concept of belief when we apply it to our reasoning about whether to believe, and what thereby generates the phenomenon of transparency, is a particular prescription, or directive, or norm that applies to beliefs. More specifically, what we appreciate is that we, or our beliefs, are somehow subject to that norm. I take it that Shah is elaborating this point when he says the following:

The hypothesis that applying the concept of belief to one’s thinking involves an acceptance of truth as that to which one’s thinking must conform can account for the unique normative standing of evidence for belief. I suggest that we think of the prescription that one accepts in framing one’s deliberation about *whether to believe that p* in terms of an objective norm. The objective norm of belief prohibits believing that *p* unless *p* is true. But since we cannot directly check our representations against the truth, we need subjective norms by which to guide our doxastic activities. The role of the objective norm, whose acceptance is expressed in the phenomenon of transparency, is to provide a standard of success for subjective norms of good evidence that an agent can directly apply in his doxastic deliberation. (471)

Shah’s overall story, then, is that when engaging in doxastic deliberation, we frame our reasoning with the question of *whether to believe p*. This requires exercising the concept of belief, and if we have the concept of belief, we recognize that it’s a concept that involves an objective norm that prohibits believing *p* unless *p* is true. So long as we’re conceiving of that about which we’re deliberating as a putative belief, we accept this norm, and thereby intend to conform to the prescription to believe *p* only if *p* is true. This activates a disposition to be moved by alethic considerations and a disposition to be

unmoved by non-alethic considerations. These dispositions being activated, we get transparency: we take all and only those considerations we take to be relevant to truth to be those that are relevant to whether to believe.

I take myself to have described what the phenomenon of transparency is supposed to be according to Shah, and how his claim that there is a conceptual connection between belief and truth is supposed to explain it. While I haven't explicitly addressed Shah's argument that *only* a conceptual truth could explain transparency, it should be clear why he thinks a conceptual truth would be well-suited as an explanation, namely because it would tell us something about what it is to be a belief and thereby would explain why beliefs working in the way transparency reveals can't fail.

### CHAPTER THREE: SHAH'S DILEMMA FOR THE TELEOLOGIST

Shah sometimes describes his view as an elaboration on the insightful claim that truth is the standard of correctness for belief. According to Shah, the claim that truth is the standard of correctness for belief is best interpreted in the following fashion: the intentions of any agent who can be said to be engaging in deliberation about *whether to believe that p* must be informed by truth as a standard of correctness to which she subjects her reasoning. Such deliberation requires an appreciation of features of the concept of belief that require our intentions to be so informed, they require that we collapse our considerations in the manner described by transparency. Thus, it is these features of the concept of belief that explain transparency.

There is, however, another way of interpreting the claim that truth is the standard of correctness for belief. The teleologist about beliefs might claim that truth is a standard of correctness for belief in the sense that beliefs have the aim or goal of getting at truth. I put forth this claim about the aim of belief not as a mere expression or rearticulation of the norm that beliefs must be true in order to be correct, but rather as a *fact* about beliefs which is supposed to generate and explain this norm. “One can explain how there exists a norm of correctness for belief by turning to *the fact that* belief aims at the truth” (459, my emphasis)<sup>5</sup>. The teleologist could account for the normative relationship between belief

---

<sup>5</sup> This is Shah's description of David Velleman's version of the teleological claim.

and truth that transparency seems to reveal, then, by elaborating on this claim that truth is the aim of belief, or its *telos*, purpose, or goal.

Entities can have goals generated for them in various ways; Shah lists what he takes to be the most obvious ways and includes “intentions, intelligent design (which may reduce to intention), and evolutionary selection” (459). A watch, for example, seems to have the goal of representing the time in virtue of some facts about its design and the intentions of those of us who create and use watches. A heart, for example, seems to have the goal of pumping blood in virtue of some facts about how they were selected for in the evolution of those creatures who have them. Analogously, beliefs, the teleologist wants to say, have the goal of truth, or representing the world truly and “just as a goal provides the one who has it with motivation to pursue means to its obtainment, so too on this view truth serves as a goal that motivates a believer to strive to attain it” (459).

The explanation of transparency that a teleologist about belief might give, then, would be something like the following: because as a matter of metaphysical fact, beliefs aim at the truth, there is a norm governing their behavior, a norm that governs their success with respect to this aim. This norm makes considerations that are relevant to truth relevant to deliberative questions about whether to believe some proposition in the way that transparency reveals. Shah explains that on the teleological view,

Belief’s standard of correctness expresses the measure of success that a belief must achieve in order to obtain its goal. This measure of success then determines which types of considerations constitute reasons for belief; they are whichever considerations lead one in the direction of success in obtaining the goal of belief, truth. Normally the way that considerations point one in the direction of truth is by being indications of truth, that is, by constituting *evidence* (of truth). (459)

Any explanation of transparency that the teleologist is going to give will involve the claim that beliefs aim at the truth, and will then tell a story about how this fact about beliefs generates a norm whose acceptance generates the particular fact about our deliberation about beliefs that transparency reveals. As I will try to show, the real challenge for the teleologist will be explaining how it is that the existence of some norm tying beliefs to truth comes to be accepted within doxastic deliberation in the sense that transparency reveals.

Let us try to get a bit more precise, then, about what it is that the teleologist means when she says that beliefs aim at the truth; what is it to “aim at truth” in the relevant sense? Early in his discussion of the teleologist, Shah says that “the teleologist interpreted the analogy [to other aim-constituted activities] as showing that belief is a state that is constitutively regulated by an intention to accept the truth, or some surrogate of such an intention” (465). Being regulated by such an intention, Shah seems to think, will be a matter of having some disposition to be causally influenced by truth. He attributes to the teleologist the “descriptive claim that belief is causally regulated by truth-regarding considerations” (448). This seems to be what the teleologist’s interpretation of the claim that truth is the standard of correctness for belief essentially amounts to. For Shah’s teleologist, aiming at the truth ultimately boils down being causally responsive to, or causally influenced by, truth-regarding considerations.

Shah understands the teleologist’s claim that beliefs aim at the truth as being appropriately cashed out in terms of being causally responsive to truth-regarding considerations; this understanding gives rise Shah’s dilemma for the teleologist. Shah wants to show that the teleologist about beliefs has no plausible explanation of

transparency. He argues that the teleologist cannot spell out exactly how strong this “belief-constituting disposition” to be causally responsive to truth is in such a way that both explains transparency and makes room for the existence of beliefs that are caused by non-alethic considerations. He initially describes the two horns of his dilemma as follows:

On one horn, the teleologist must allow the disposition that constitutes aiming at truth to be so weak as to allow paradigm cases in which beliefs are caused by such non-evidential processes as wishful thinking, in which case he cannot capture the exclusive role of evidence in one particular type of belief-forming process, reasoning. On the other horn, in order to account for the exclusive role of evidence in reasoning about what to believe, the teleologist must strengthen the disposition that constitutes aiming at truth so that it excludes the influence of non-truth-regarding considerations from such reasoning. However, by strengthening the truth-aimed disposition, the teleologist cannot accommodate the cases of wishful thinking, in which non-evidential factors clearly exercise influence over belief. (461)

The basic question that Shah’s dilemma centers on, then, is the question of how strong the belief-constituting disposition is according to the teleologist. The only way to avail herself of a plausible explanation of transparency, Shah argues, is for her to make the disposition so strong that it implausibly rules out cases of wishful thinking as beliefs.

Another way of thinking about Shah’s dilemma for the teleologist is to think of him as presenting the teleologist with two tasks he thinks she cannot jointly discharge: he wants the teleologist to explain first why transparency obtains, and second why sometimes beliefs are causally affected by things other than truth. Any plausible account of beliefs is going to have to leave room for the possibility of cases where our beliefs are causally influenced by non-alethic considerations. It seems all too obvious that all too often we are caused to have some belief because we engage in wishful thinking of one sort or another. With that said, Shah is right to claim that the teleologist about beliefs

cannot avail herself of one putative explanation of transparency. The teleologist ought not claim that the “belief-constituting disposition to be influenced by truth-regarding factors” is so strong such as to rule out the causal influence of any other factor; this would leave her forced to say implausibly that any cognitive state produced by non-alethic factors is not a belief. Even if such a claim would afford her an explanation of transparency, being forced to reject the platitude that sometimes beliefs are causally influenced by non-alethic considerations is too high a cost.<sup>6</sup>

To say that aiming at truth is constituted by a strong disposition of this kind will force the teleologist to call anything caused by non-alethic considerations something other than a belief, and indeed this is implausible. Shah thinks, then, that the teleologist must instead “weaken” the belief-constituting disposition in question and claim instead that in order to be a belief a cognitive state need not be causally responsive exclusively to alethic considerations, but rather at least somewhat responsive to alethic considerations and perhaps to some others as well. To weaken her claim in this way, Shah thinks, will allow the teleologist to call cases of wishful believing genuine beliefs, but will leave her unable to explain transparency. If being a belief fails to rule out the causal influence of non-alethic considerations, then why in one particular belief-forming process, namely

---

<sup>6</sup> It might be worth asking whether or not this strong claim really would afford an explanation of transparency. Shah accepts that it would, but this is less than obvious to me. Say the teleologist claimed that beliefs are those things that have a disposition to be influenced by truth-regarding factors, a disposition so strong such as to rule out the causal influence of any non-alethic consideration: how would she then explain transparency? One reason to think that she still couldn’t explain it is the following line of thought: even if it’s true that in order to be a belief a thing has to be causally influenced only by alethic considerations, what transparency seems to reveal is that *we take* only alethic considerations to be *relevant* to settling questions about whether to believe some *p*, which we might fail to do even if the “belief-constituting disposition” ruled out the causal influence of anything other than alethic considerations. It’s not clear, then, that the teleologist, as thus far construed, could explain transparency even by claiming that the belief-constituting disposition is “strong”.

doxastic deliberation, do we take alethic considerations as the *only* ones relevant? As

Shah puts it:

Because the teleologist allows that considerations other than evidence can influence belief, he has no explanation for why deliberation, being just one of many different belief-forming processes, couldn't be influenced by practical considerations through and through. (463)

If all the teleologist says about beliefs is that they aim at the truth in the sense that they have a disposition to be causally responsive to considerations about truth, but perhaps to all sorts of other considerations as well, then she can't explain why within doxastic deliberation those other sorts are never relevant.

Shah presents this horn of his dilemma for the teleologist as a variant on G.E. Moore's famous open question argument, a variant he calls the closed question argument. Shah takes Moore to have shown that because conceptualizing some situation in purely descriptive terms will not settle the question of whether or not it's good, descriptive definitions of 'good' will fail, showing that the concept of good is a normative concept. Shah wants to use this general line of thought against the teleologist to show that she does not have an adequate definition of 'belief.' One of the things that transparency reveals, Shah thinks, is that "once one has discovered whether *p* is true, the question *whether to believe that p* is closed" (463). We can test the adequacy of any proposed analysis of 'belief' by asking whether this deliberative question remains closed once we conceptualize belief in the way proposed; if it doesn't, then the proposal fails to capture the concept of belief. And in the case of the teleologist, who proposes a descriptive claim about beliefs, the question fails to close according to Shah:

The teleological account before us falls prey to the closed question argument, because as we have seen, it is not a closed question whether, when asking oneself *whether to believe that p*, where belief is



conceptualized as being weakly responsive to evidence, the issue is resolved solely by thinking about *whether p is true*. (464)

So, while weakening her claim about the disposition that is constitutive of being aimed at truth is required in order for the teleologist to salvage the platitude that sometimes beliefs are causally influenced by non-alethic considerations, it leaves her subject to the closed question argument, unable to explain transparency.

Because he thinks that the teleologist has no adequate reply to this dilemma, Shah claims that she cannot adequately explain transparency. He diagnoses the overall problem with teleological accounts of belief as being that they are making descriptive, metaphysical claims rather than normative, conceptual ones. Because the teleologist is saying something that is meant to be true of beliefs, but not true of beliefs in virtue of the concept of belief, Shah thinks that she won't be able to explain why any possessor of the concept of belief cannot fail to appreciate this truth. He explains that

If this constitutive truth about belief were merely a metaphysical truth, then it would be possible for an agent to fail to appreciate it, and it would be possible for the truth about belief to fail to influence his deliberation. But transparency is the consciously felt authority of truth for belief in any deliberation that aims to settle belief, so transparency can't be the conscious face of a merely metaphysical truth about belief. Transparency thus must express a conceptual truth about belief; a truth that an agent grasps merely in virtue of treating his deliberation as answering to the question of *whether to believe that p*. (469)

Again, transparency is a strong phenomenon on Shah's view; he thinks it's a phenomenon that cannot fail to obtain in any case of genuine doxastic deliberation. Shah charges that the teleologist's merely metaphysical claims cannot explain this strength. An appreciation of the metaphysical truths about beliefs need not be had by all doxastic deliberators, and so cannot be that which explains why all doxastic deliberators behave in the way transparency reveals.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISSOLVING THE DILEMMA

The central problem that Shah thinks the teleologist about beliefs falls prey to is an inability to account for the normative status of truth for belief. She cannot explain, he thinks, why within doxastic deliberation we always completely collapse our considerations of *whether to believe* into considerations of *whether true*, since for all the teleologist can say about what it is to be a belief, answering the latter question need not be necessary or sufficient for answering the former. Recall that on Shah's reading, the teleologist's claim that beliefs aim at the truth is understood as meaning that beliefs are causally regulated by an intention to accept the truth, an intention had just in case one is disposed to be causally responsive to alethic considerations. Since this disposition cannot be so strong such as to rule out the causal influence of non-alethic considerations (since that would render wishful beliefs non-beliefs), the teleologist has no story about why the causal influence of non-alethic considerations is precluded within doxastic deliberation, or why truth has a unique normative status for beliefs. Why within doxastic deliberation is truth exclusively relevant in the way transparency reveals if nothing about beliefs can require that they only respond to alethic considerations?

The resource that the teleologist needs is one that allows her to claim both that sometimes beliefs are causally influenced by non-alethic considerations, and that there's something about beliefs that makes only alethic considerations relevant to settling

questions about *whether to believe* them, something we recognize when engaging in doxastic deliberation. The central claim I will make in this section is that in responding to a class of putative counterexamples to transparency, Shah himself needs to explain the difference between appreciating or applying a norm and constantly conforming to that norm, and that once he does so, he is forced to make use of a resource that the teleologist can exploit in order to explain the unique normative status of truth for belief.

Imagine the following case: I ask myself *whether to believe p*, where *p* is the proposition that my partner has lied to me. I take it that all and only those considerations which are relevant to the question *whether p is true* are those that are relevant to my current deliberative question. I appreciate, in other words, that no non-alethic consideration counts as a reason to believe *p*. I appreciate that all my evidence suggesting that indeed my partner has lied is relevant to settling my current question, and I appreciate that other considerations aren't.

By the description given so far, it seems that I'm experiencing the phenomenon of transparency. It seems, though, that all the above could be true of me, and yet nevertheless I may be causally influenced by non-alethic considerations in my settling the question of *whether to believe p*. Imagine, to continue with the lying partner example, that you appreciate all sorts of evidence for the claim that she has lied; recognizing it as evidence (as an alethic consideration), you recognize that it and only it is relevant to your question of *whether to believe p*. However, as a matter of fact, your belief fails to fall in line, so to speak, with your alethic considerations. The consideration that it will make you miserable to believe *p* causally affects your belief, preventing it from being formed; it does so, further, not because you consciously take this consideration to be relevant (you

recognize, in fact, that it's not). This is a case where despite your appreciation of the normativity for truth, you get blindsided by a non-alethic consideration in your belief formation.

Shah seems to think that the appreciation of the conceptual truth he is after cannot fail to move doxastic deliberators in the causal sense, or that those who appreciate the normativity of truth for belief cannot fail to be causally impacted by their alethic considerations (and cannot at all be causally impacted by non-alethic considerations), at least within doxastic deliberation. If this is so, then the case I just described is a violation of transparency. For Shah, it seems that there is no way that I can both appreciate that only alethic considerations are relevant to settling questions about *whether to believe p* and fail to be causally moved by this appreciation, so long as I stay within the perspective of doxastic deliberation. I imagine that what Shah would say about the case I've described above, then, is that your belief that your partner has not lied is a belief that you have formed non-deliberatively<sup>7</sup>. As long as you continue to be deliberating, you can be causally moved only by alethic considerations since you, being a possessor of the concept of belief, cannot fail to appreciate the norm of belief which makes imperative that you be so moved.

We might wonder, though, whether this understanding of transparency is the appropriate one. I want to distinguish at least two versions of transparency, one stronger than the other. On the first version of transparency, the one elaborated just above which Shah at least sometimes espouses, not only do we appreciate the feature of beliefs that normatively ties them to truth and intend to conform to the norm, but further we actually

---

<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, Shah could claim that the final doxastic state being deliberated about is not being conceived of as a belief. Either way, Shah has got to claim that since this is a case where transparency is violated, where non-alethic considerations causally influence belief, it cannot be a case of doxastic deliberation.

succeed in so conforming, we actually adjust our dispositions to respond to those considerations we take to be alethic successfully, or such that only they causally impact the belief in question. On the second and weaker version of transparency, this latter component is absent: transparency is a phenomenon that involves an appreciation of the normativity of truth for belief, even an intention to conform to the norm, but doesn't require success in so conforming. Some of the considerations I take to be non-alethic may have causal impact on my belief, despite my recognition that they are irrelevant to settling the question of *whether to believe*.

The following set of cases seem to show that the appropriate understanding of transparency is the weaker one. The later cases are designed to be examples of genuine doxastic deliberation where the strong understanding of transparency fails; cases where the agent's reasoning is indeed answerable to considerations taken to be relevant to truth, but are in fact answered by (or causally impacted by) considerations taken to be not relevant to truth. I will claim that Shah's forced response to these cases, namely that they are non-deliberative belief formation or deliberation about a non-belief, is implausible. If this is so and only the weaker version of transparency is what genuinely requires explaining, then we will need to revisit the teleologist's putative explanation and reassess it alongside Shah's.

First of all, it seems clear that there are beliefs of the sort that one suddenly, by accident, or unintentionally finds herself with. I might find myself believing, for example, that my partner hasn't lied to me, because having this belief makes me feel good. Many of our beliefs don't ever come under the scope of deliberation about the question *whether to believe* them; I have many beliefs, for example, that I have only in the sense that

they're entailed by my other beliefs. I have other beliefs that I simply find myself with, ones I acquired in an entirely unconscious fashion, through processes I would be hard pressed to identify. In many of these cases it seems that considerations about what's useful, or prudent, or ethically appropriate to believe may have causal influence on my resulting beliefs. While it may sound weird when described first personally, it seems that we observe these kinds of beliefs in others all the time; when asked why the person holds the belief, the reasonable answer is that her desire to believe it, or her prudential need to believe it, has caused her to do so.

Shah certainly wants to maintain that there are cases of this kind, and that they are compatible with his claim that transparency obtains in all cases of doxastic deliberation. He must, then, claim that these are cases of beliefs formed non-deliberatively, or deliberation about non-beliefs. And indeed, since these are cases where it's not at all clear that the individual has set out to frame a stretch of her reasoning with the question *whether to believe*, or that what she has is best described as a belief rather than a working assumption, Shah's response seems appropriate. He is making no claim about those beliefs that fail to come under the scope of doxastic deliberation, so these first cases are no counterexample to either version of transparency.

Secondly, though, there also seem to be cases of wishful believing where the individual in question *does* frame a stretch of her reasoning with the question *whether to believe*. Imagine, for example, that somebody asks you whether you believe that your partner has lied. Having never really entertained the question, you set about to form a belief, you deliberate about *whether to believe* that she's lied. The only considerations you take to count in favor of your answering this question in the affirmative are those you

take to count in favor of the truth of the claim that she's lied. You recognize considerations that favor of the truth of the claim that she's lied, and thereby take them to be relevant to your belief formation. Nevertheless, at the end of this process, the belief you come to simply isn't the appropriate one; instead, you end up holding the belief that your partner has told the truth, or at least are precluded from the belief that she's lied. You might do all the weighing of evidence appropriately, but nevertheless fail to come to the appropriate belief.

This case is less plausibly responded to as being either non-deliberative or non-belief, it seems to me. Shah's response will have to amount to the following: this is a case where, if the agent is a possessor of the concept of belief, then perhaps doxastic deliberation was going on for some time, where the agent was framing her reasoning with the question of *whether to believe*, but that at some point along the way, she stopped deliberating and began engaging in some other belief formation process or began deliberating about some other question. While this response would indeed allow Shah to make these cases compatible with his claim that transparency obtains within doxastic deliberation, it seems to need some independent motivation. It's not clear, in other words, that the agent in this case has stopped engaging in doxastic deliberation: she continues to be conceiving of herself as deliberating about a belief, and continues to take the right kinds of consideration to be relevant; it's just that she does a bad job of it.

It seems perfectly possible that the sense in which the agent does a bad job is not that which Shah's story has to say it is. Shah could make room for this case and preserve a strong understanding of transparency if he could make plausible that what's going on in this case is not that the agent is being causally impacted by some consideration she takes

to be non-alethic, but rather that she improperly identifies which considerations are alethic. Because she (mistakenly) takes the consideration that it will make her sad to believe that her partner has lied to be relevant to the truth of the claim that her partner has lied, the fact that this consideration comes to have causal impact on the belief is no threat to strong transparency since she's moved only by those considerations she takes to be alethic. However, this description of the case is disingenuous; it seems perfectly possible that the agent fully realize that the consideration about her sadness is irrelevant, but that despite this recognition it causally impacts the belief in question, perhaps preventing its formation. The agent does all the weighing of alethic considerations appropriately, but at the last minute has her belief knocked off course, so to speak.

The following is another example where the appropriate description seems to be that an agent is framing her reasoning with the question of whether to believe and appreciating that only those considerations relevant to the truth of the belief are relevant to answering it, but nevertheless has her belief causally impacted by something non-alethic. Experiments by Kahneman and Tversky<sup>8</sup> have shown that many people, including those who are familiar with statistics, are likely to assign a higher probability to the claim that some person is a feminist banker, than to the claim that she is a banker, given that the subjects are primed by an appropriate story about said person's character. Since it's impossible for it to be more likely that someone is a feminist banker than that she is a banker, something has clearly gone wrong with these people's beliefs; the question is what exactly.

---

<sup>8</sup> Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. The simulation heuristic, In D. Kahneman, P. Slovic and A. Tversky (eds.) *Judgement under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases* (pp. 201-208). New York: Cambridge University Press. (1982)



The interpretation of this case that I want to make plausible is that it's genuine doxastic deliberation engaged in by a possessor of the concept of belief, where she recognizes the normativity of truth for belief, intends to conform to it, and just plain does a bad job. While arguing explicitly for this would require an analysis of the particular study, it seems plausible that the subjects in this study were directed to form, and then report, a belief. It seems likely, further, that in so doing they took those considerations they took to be alethic as those that were relevant; they understood that the belief they were forming was subject to the normativity of truth. However, despite their intention to allow only alethic considerations to move them (and even perhaps their taking themselves to have succeeded in being so moved) they are nevertheless causally impacted by something that they realize, or would realize, is non-alethic.

It may be difficult, in this case, to specify what exactly the non-alethic consideration that causally impacts the belief is. Nevertheless, it seems that some sort of heuristic is plausibly at work; rather than weighing what the agent herself takes to be the alethic considerations in the fashion the agent herself would endorse (namely by being causally impacted only by them), she instead, unbeknownst to her, weighs the considerations according to some heuristic that assigns higher relevance to certain considerations (plausibly those that are present to her mind) than is appropriate. She does this not because she takes this heuristic to be truth-conducive, but rather by mistake.

Again, Shah does have several possible responses to this case at his disposal. He may claim that what's going on is no violation even of strong transparency: what's going on is that the subjects are mistaking considerations that are in fact non-alethic for alethic ones. It's not that something they take to be non-alethic causally impacts them but rather

that at least one of the considerations they take to be alethic is not in fact alethic at all. Given that the subjects of the study are familiar with probabilities and statistics, and given that it seems likely that if we asked them what kinds of considerations they were attending to in forming their beliefs they would answer that it's those that are relevant to the truth of their belief, this response seems implausible. Shah might instead claim that the subjects of the study are not deliberating about *whether to believe* the relevant propositions but rather about *whether to answer* the question they've been asked in some particular fashion; it's not a case of deliberation about whether to believe and so transparency was never supposed to apply. Again, this seems implausible; it seems perfectly possible that the subjects of the study are following their instructions and trying to come to a *belief* which they'll then report, and even that they appreciate the exclusive relevance of alethic considerations in doing so; it's just that this appreciation fails to result in the belief's being causally influenced only by them.

The later lying partner case and the Kahneman and Tversky subjects cases are ones whose natural description reveals that they violate the strong version of transparency. While I recognize that Shah does have resources for responding to these cases, all of them seem to stand in need of independent motivation.

Not only do I find it implausible to call these cases non-deliberative belief-formation, or deliberation about a non-belief, it's difficult to see why we should be forced to given Shah's own explanation of transparency. It seems to me that Shah is wrong to think that appreciation of the conceptual truth about beliefs that he puts forth could explain our constant conformity to this norm within doxastic deliberation. It seems to me, in other words, that Shah's own explanation of transparency is weaker than he thinks if

the phenomenon is indeed supposed to require that no non-alethic consideration has causal impact on a belief under the scope of doxastic deliberation.

We might appreciate the norm that governs beliefs and their relation to truth, and even have the intention of conforming to the norm, and yet nevertheless fail to do so, namely when a non-alethic consideration causally interferes. It seems to be generally true of norms that I can appreciate that I'm subject to a norm and be applying that norm to my deliberation without always succeeding in conforming to the norm. Even if Shah is right that in doxastic deliberation I exercise my concept of belief which is a normative concept, a concept of a thing to be had only if true (roughly), and in so doing I intend to conform to the prescription to believe  $p$  only if  $p$  is true, I may nevertheless fail to conform and be causally thwarted by a rogue non-alethic consideration in my belief-formation. It's not clear, then, if transparency is to be explained as Shah thinks, why we should be forced to diagnose such a case as non-deliberative belief formation or deliberation about a question other than *whether to believe*.

There are at least two reasons, then, to think that the weaker version of transparency is the plausible one, the one that genuinely stands in need of explanation. Again, the weak version of transparency amounts to appreciating the normativity of truth for belief while perhaps succeeding, or perhaps failing, to conform to the norm in such a way as to preclude the causal influence of non-alethic considerations recognized as such. The first reason is that there seem to be cases where non-alethic considerations have causal impact on a belief that nevertheless seems to be under the scope of doxastic deliberation performed by a possessor of the concept of belief; we have plausible counterexamples, in other words, to strong transparency. The second reason is that if

transparency is to be explained as Shah thinks it is, we should expect only the weak phenomenon anyway.

Shah could, of course, concede this point.<sup>9</sup> He might agree that what the phenomenon of transparency truly reveals is that within doxastic deliberation we always appreciate the normativity of truth for belief (we appreciate that beliefs are such that all and only those considerations we take to be alethic are relevant to settling questions about *whether to believe*) and that this need not involve always conforming to the norm, in the sense of being causally influenced only by alethic considerations.

Even conceding this revision of transparency, though, Shah might still claim that only a conceptual connection between truth and beliefs conceived along his lines can explain it. Since the phenomenon still generalizes over all cases of doxastic deliberation (what's true in all of them is an appreciation of the relevant norm), claiming that there's a conceptual normative connection between belief and truth is still well-suited as an explanation given our inevitable exercise of the concept of belief in this context. Recall that Shah's charge for the teleologist was in part to account for the normativity of truth for belief (in light of her essentially descriptive claims), and in part to account for the appreciation of this normativity in all cases of doxastic deliberation (in light of her essentially metaphysical claims which, as opposed to Shah's own conceptual claim, need not be appreciated in all these cases). Both of these challenges remain live even once we weaken the phenomenon of transparency in the way I've suggested; however, at least the first of them becomes easier to meet.

---

<sup>9</sup> Shah sometimes seems to appreciate the point and agree that the weaker version of transparency is the appropriate one. But because he sometimes talks as though appreciation of the norm he has in mind cannot possibly fail to "move" doxastic deliberators (see p. 463, 468), it seems important to make explicit that this cannot mean that genuine doxastic deliberation precludes the causal impact of some consideration the agent takes to be non-alethic on her belief.

The phenomenon of transparency that requires explaining should be understood to allow the *causal influence* of some consideration the agent herself takes to be non-alethic but requires an appreciation of the exclusive *relevance* of alethic considerations in settling questions about *whether to believe*. To begin offering an explanation of this phenomenon on behalf of the teleologist about beliefs, recall the teleologist's central claim that beliefs aim at the truth. Again, this claim is supposed to have the status of a metaphysical truth: something that is true of all beliefs, not in virtue of the concept of belief, but in virtue of facts about those things the concept picks out. Beliefs, on this account, have the goal of truth in the same way that hearts have the goal of pumping blood. While I don't want to commit to the particulars of any one view of what it is to have a goal of this kind, Ruth Millikan's theory of proper functions is one teleological view according to which what makes it the case that beliefs aim at the truth is roughly that beliefs are created and sustained by mechanisms that were selected for in the evolutionary history of believers *because* they actually performed the function of representing the truth. Because of this history, beliefs are the kind of thing that have the goal or aim of representing truth. Abstracting from this particular view of what it is to have a goal or function of this kind, the general idea that a teleological view will involve is that there are some descriptive facts about beliefs that generate the goal or aim of belief.

Shah understood the teleologist's claim that beliefs aim at the truth as getting ultimately cashed out in descriptive terms: the "belief-constituting disposition" for the teleologist is a matter of being causally regulated by alethic considerations. Shah argued that whatever this causal regulation was supposed to be, the teleologist couldn't give an

account of it that's weak enough to allow cases where beliefs are causally impacted by non-alethic considerations but strong enough to explain transparency, the unique normative status of truth for belief within doxastic deliberation. The root of the problem, Shah claimed, was that the teleologist was making essentially descriptive claims. If the belief-constituting disposition is a matter of being causally regulated by alethic considerations, and there's no way to distinguish in descriptive terms the causal roles that alethic and non-alethic considerations play with respect to beliefs, then there's no way to claim that truth is exclusively tied to belief in the way transparency requires us to explain.

However, while Shah is right that the teleologist is making essentially descriptive claims, they are descriptive claims that are explicitly designed to make sense of normativity. Shah has given short shrift to the teleologist by conflating what it is to be causally regulated in the requisite sense and what it is to be causally impacted or influenced; the teleologist needs to say that belief is causally regulated only by truth, even if it's sometimes causally influenced or impacted by something non-alethic. Recall Millikan: beliefs aiming at the truth is a matter of their being produced by mechanisms that were selected for because they managed to produce states that represent the world truly. The belief-constituting disposition, then, can indeed be conceived of as a matter of causal regulation by truth, but not in the way Shah seems to understand it. The sense in which the teleologist is claiming beliefs are regulated by truth is not that they are causally impacted only by truth-relevant considerations. (Shah was right to recognize that this claim would force the teleologist to call wishful beliefs non-beliefs.) Rather, causal regulation of belief by truth of the kind the teleologist needs to appeal to, while it will

involve some degree of causal influence by alethic considerations, will be a matter of the unique role that truth has played in the history of beliefs.

One criterion of adequacy for a teleological account of anything, it seems, is that it make possible cases where the entity in question has the function or goal in question but fails to perform or live up to it. There are hearts whose goals are to pump blood that nevertheless fail to work in such a way as to allow the meeting of this goal. There are beliefs, similarly, whose goals are to represent truly, that nevertheless fail to be causally impacted in a way that would secure the meeting of this goal. Simply because non-alethic considerations can causally influence beliefs, then, does not mean that there isn't some unique role that truth is playing with respect to them. The teleologist can make sense of both of the normativity of truth for belief and the existence of cases where non-alethic considerations causally impact beliefs, then, just as long as she can cash out the unique role that truth has played in the history of beliefs that gives it a unique normative status.

To cash out this response in more detail, the teleologist would have to make plausible that only truth has played this causal regulation role, however exactly it's going to be specified. If it's understood as ultimately being about what the mechanisms that produce beliefs were selected *for*, then the teleologist would need to make plausible that indeed beliefs are had because the mechanisms that produce them were selected for because they give rise to beliefs that represent truly, rather than being selected for for some other reason. I won't argue for this claim, but what I want to make clear is that given her essentially descriptive claims about belief, the teleologist *does* have resources to make sense of the unique normativity of truth for belief, without requiring that only alethic considerations have causal impact on beliefs. The unique normativity of truth for

belief is generated by unique role that truth has played in the history of beliefs; that they represent truly is the very reason that we have the mechanisms that produce beliefs, so beliefs have only truth as their goal.

The distinction between the stronger and weaker versions of transparency showed us that what really requires explaining is not that alethic considerations have exclusive causal influence on the settling of the question *whether to believe*, even within doxastic deliberation. Rather, what requires explaining is why alethic considerations are taken to be exclusively *relevant* in all these cases. If the teleologist can cash out her account of what it is for beliefs to be aimed at truth in the ways I've suggested, then it seems that she can account for the unique normative status of beliefs for truth, or why only evidence is relevant.

This task is only part, though, of what Shah charged the teleologist to explain about the phenomenon of transparency. What the teleologist needs to explain is both why alethic considerations are the *only* ones we take to be relevant in settling questions about *whether to believe* (why truth is uniquely normative) and also why we possessors of the concept of belief *always* recognize this relevance when engaging in doxastic deliberation (why we appreciate this unique normativity of truth). The teleologist's story, as I've offered it so far, can account for only truth being relevant for beliefs, since only truth is the goal of beliefs; what will be harder for her to account for, though, is why we should always appreciate this relevance or normativity within doxastic deliberation. It might well be true that beliefs are tied uniquely and normatively to truth, but because this is a matter of metaphysics according to the teleologist, we wouldn't expect to always appreciate this simply in virtue of engaging in doxastic deliberation.



Even if the teleologist can make sense of the fact that truth is uniquely normative for belief, then, it's not clear that she can make sense of why it is that we *always* seem to *appreciate* this in cases of doxastic deliberation in the way Shah takes transparency to reveal. Let us get clearer, though, about what, according to Shah's own view, actually constitutes appreciation of the norm in question. In arguing for the idea that transparency should be understood in the weaker of the two senses discussed, I explained that whatever it is to appreciate the normativity of truth for belief within doxastic deliberation, it doesn't exclude the causal influence of something non-alethic on the belief. Appreciation of the norm, as I put it, need not involve constant conformity to it; rather it has to be some kind of recognition that the norm makes only truth relevant.

Further, it seems plausible to say that whatever this recognition of the norm in question is, it need not happen on any conscious or articulate level. According to at least some theories of concept possession, having some concept is a matter of being able to sort instances of the concept from non-instances, or having one's concept tokened in an appropriate set of the cases where it's instantiated. It would be bizarre for a theory of concept possession to require a conscious appreciation of all the conceptual truths for a given concept. I may well have the concept of triangles, for example, without ever entertaining the particular conceptual truth that triangles are three-sided polygons. (I take it that this is true of most five-year-olds, given that they lack the concept of polygons.) If concept possession can't require conscious consideration of the various conceptual truths about some concept, then it must be something less than this.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to try to say exactly what constitutes the awareness of the conceptual truths that comes along with possession of a concept.

What I mean to be showing, though, is that it's something shy of conscious or explicit consideration of the truths in question. Recall that Shah's explanation of transparency was roughly that in all cases of doxastic deliberation we exercise our concept of belief, and if we have the concept, we appreciate the conceptual truth about beliefs that requires the collapse that is transparency. This appreciation, we now see, will have to be constituted by something short of explicitly saying to oneself 'beliefs are subject to a norm that prohibits believing propositions unless they're true'. There's no reason that my possessing and exercising the concept of belief should be taken to require this. If my possessing and exercising the concept of belief is to explain transparency, though, then it must come along with *some* kind of appreciation of this conceptual truth.

Since the appreciation of the normativity of truth for belief that comes along with possession of the concept need not be the explicit saying to oneself 'truth is normative for belief', or the constant conformity to the norm, it must instead be something that we make manifest in the management of our beliefs. Once we notice that appreciation of the normativity of truth for belief requires as little as it does, though, we can see that while Shah's conceptual claim about belief would indeed be one way to explain it, the teleologist's claims might suffice after all.

Again, the resource that the teleologist needs here is an explanation of why in all cases of doxastic deliberation we appreciate the normativity of truth for belief, where appreciation of the norm is a matter of somehow making manifest an acceptance of it. She has given a story about why it's the case that truth is exclusively normative for belief, and now needs a story about why we appreciate this in doxastic deliberation.

The explanation that the teleologist seems capable of offering is an explanation in the style of ‘it was to be expected’. If truth is normative for belief in the sense that the teleologist claims it is, then the very dispositions that Shah is going to say constitute the appreciation of the norm (the making manifest our acceptance of it) would be likely to show up in those folks who are forming beliefs, or at least in those of them who are experienced believers. Given that beliefs have the *telos* that they do, it’s reasonable to expect those who are forming and maintaining and modifying their beliefs to somehow pick up on this over time. Doing so is not a condition on possession of the concept of belief for the teleologist, but rather something that we would expect from relective, experienced believers. Doxastic deliberators appreciate the normativity of truth for belief, the teleologist will say then, because they exercise their concept of belief and recognize that those things their concept picks out tend to go well when they’re responsive to truth.

Shah would no doubt reply here that because transparency is the appreciation of the normativity of truth for belief in *all* cases of doxastic deliberation, this explanation will not suffice since there’s nothing that *requires* doxastic deliberators to have picked up on this norm given that it’s grounded in the metaphysics of belief rather than the concept of belief. Transparency obtains in *all* cases of doxastic deliberation and nothing in the teleologist’s essentially metaphysical story can account for why in all these cases we would appreciate the unique normativity of truth for belief.

While it’s not at all clear to me that the teleologist about beliefs has an adequate reply here short of offering some conceptual claim of her own, it does seem that the less Shah can require as coming along with the appreciation of the norm, the better the position the teleologist is in.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

At the start of this paper, I set out to examine the phenomenon of transparency and to ask how it's best explained. The first important claim I made was that the phenomenon of transparency ought to be understood in the weaker of the senses I distinguished: it can only be taken to reveal that we appreciate the normativity of truth for belief. In all cases of doxastic deliberation, we take only alethic considerations to be *relevant* in settling questions about *whether to believe*, but this need not involve only those considerations I take to be alethic actually influencing my belief causally. My lying partner example and the Kahneman and Tversky example were cases designed to show that this is so.

The next claim I made was that in light of this understanding of transparency (the explanandum in question) the teleologist has at least somewhat of a reply to Shah's charge. By examining what it is on a teleological account for beliefs to be aimed at the truth, I tried to show that the teleologist has resources to make room for the fact that truth is uniquely normative for belief: truth is the unique aim of belief and that's why only they are relevant in settling questions about *whether to believe*. The phenomenon of transparency does not tell in favor of Shah's claims over the teleologist's, then, simply because the teleologist delivers her normativity from a set of descriptive claims. Both

Shah and the teleologist can explain why it's the case that truth is uniquely normative for beliefs.

If there's anything that gives Shah's explanation of transparency a leg up on the teleologist's, then, it's the fact that his explanation is conceptual rather than metaphysical. While I've started sketching a way that the teleologist might respond to this charge, I realize that filling it out convincingly would require me to say more. At the end of the day, then, my claims are relatively modest: I hope to have made explicit some features of the phenomenon of transparency that Shah fails to elucidate clearly in "How Truth Governs Belief", and show that the teleologist's competing explanation of the phenomenon is better than Shah seems to think, even if the claim he is perhaps most interested in, namely that there's a conceptual connection between belief and truth, remains well motivated.

## REFERENCES

Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. "The Simulation Heuristic," In D. Kahneman, P. Slovic and A. Tversky (eds.) Judgement under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. 201-208. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1982.

Shah, N. "How Truth Governs Belief." *The Philosophical Review*. 112:4. 447-82. 2003.