

# Epistemic deontologism and the voluntarist strategy against doxastic involuntarism

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## Abstract

*According to the deontological conception of epistemic justification, a belief is justified when it is our obligation or duty as rational creatures to believe it. However, this view faces an important objection according to which we cannot have such epistemic obligations since our beliefs are never under our voluntary control. One possible strategy against this argument is to show that we do have voluntary control over some of our beliefs, and that we therefore have epistemic obligations. This is what I call the voluntarist strategy. I examine it and argue that it is not promising. I show how the voluntarist attempts of Carl Ginet and Brian Weatherson fail, and conclude that it would be more fruitful for deontologists to look for a different strategy.*

## 1. Epistemic Deontologism

It is commonly admitted that the concept of epistemic justification is a normative one. To say that a belief is justified is to appraise it. We make a favorable judgment towards it because it is a good means to the end of acquiring knowledge and seeking truth. Conversely, an unjustified belief is not a good belief since it is not likely to serve the goal of seeking truth.<sup>1</sup> Given that, some say we should define epistemic justification in *deontic* terms, i.e., in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of believing truly as our primary epistemic goal is itself a contested claim. See for example the exchange between Jonathan Kvanvig and Marian David in Steup and Sosa (2005). However, I shall leave this discussion aside and focus on another issue.

‘duty’, ‘obligation’, ‘permission’, ‘responsibility’, ‘praiseworthiness’, ‘requirement’, etc. Laurence BonJour for example writes:

the concept of epistemic justification is fundamentally a normative concept. It has to do with what one has a duty or obligation to do, from an epistemic or intellectual standpoint. As Chisholm suggests, one’s purely intellectual duty is to accept beliefs that are true, or likely to be true, and reject beliefs that are false, or likely to be false. To accept beliefs on some other basis is to violate one’s epistemic duty – to be, *epistemically irresponsible* – even though such acceptance might be desirable or even mandatory from some other, non-epistemic standpoint. (BonJour 1980, 55)

I shall call this view *deontologism* and its proponents *deontologists*. As Matthias Steup defines it, deontologism is the claim that, “S is justified in believing  $p$  if and only if S believes  $p$  and it is not S’s duty to refrain from believing  $p$ .” (Steup 1996, 74) In other words, when a belief is justified, it means that believing it is ‘responsible’, ‘praiseworthy’, ‘permitted’ and even ‘required’. It is an epistemic ‘duty’ or ‘obligation’ given our goal, as rational creatures, of seeking knowledge and truth.

BonJour’s case against externalism about justification (BonJour 1980) is a good example of a deontological use of the concept of epistemic justification. BonJour claims, roughly, that externalism violates a deep intuition that we have concerning justification, namely, that it does not seem possible for a person to accept a belief irrationally (irresponsibly), and still be epistemically justified. He gives a series of examples in which an agent believes  $p$  despite having far better reasons for believing  $\neg p$ . The thing is that in these examples,  $p$  is in fact true. The reasons available to the agents are simply misleading. But since they did not take their reasons into account, they ended up having true beliefs. BonJour’s claim is that, even if they are true, these beliefs are not justified since they were formed ‘irresponsibly’ or ‘irrationally’. Being epistemically responsible implies taking reasons into consideration. It is our duty to do so because it is the best way to achieve the goal of acquiring knowledge and truth.

This is not to say that our duty *consists* in acquiring true beliefs. Such beliefs are only our end from an intellectual standpoint. Our obligation consists rather in employing the best method for achieving that goal, and this method is to believe what we have most reasons to believe. This means that in some cases in which we only have access to very misleading evidence, it will be our duty to believe something false. This is the case of the protagonists in BonJour's cases. They are irresponsible and blameworthy because they fail to take their reasons into consideration.

Such a deontic construal of epistemic justification has a certain intuitive plausibility. As William P. Alston writes, it is reflected in our ordinary epistemic talk:

There are many locutions that encourage us to think of believing as subject to requirement, prohibition, and permission. We say "You shouldn't have supposed so readily that he wouldn't come through", "You have no right to assume that", "I had every right to think that she was honest", "I ought to have given him the benefit of the doubt", and "You shouldn't jump to conclusions". (Alston 1988, 260)

However, despite its intuitive appeal, deontology is not immune to objections. One of them is what I shall call the *argument from doxastic involuntarism*.

## 2. The Argument from Doxastic Involuntarism

According to deontology, we have epistemic obligations. We have, as rational beings, the responsibility to believe certain things. If we fail to believe what we ought to, then we are blameworthy. The use of concepts such as obligations, blame and responsibility suggests a close connection between epistemology and ethics. Roderick Chisholm – a prominent contemporary deontologist – explicitly recognizes this connection. As Roderick Firth writes about Chisholm:

The chief problems of perception are conceived by Chisholm, in the traditional way, to be problems concerning the *justification* of perceptual judgments. [...] For Chisholm, however, all such questions are questions of ethics, for to ask whether a judgment is justified, or whether we have adequate evidence for it, is simply to ask whether it is worthy of our belief. Epistemology is thus to be construed, in large part, as the ethics of belief. (Firth 1959, 493-294)

This idea of a close relationship between ethics and epistemic justification is getting more and more attention on the ethics side as well. Terence Cuneo (Cuneo 2007) recently made a case for it in order to defend the existence of independent moral facts. According to him, moral and epistemic requirements are deeply similar. Some obligations – like that of treating the testimony of others with sufficient care and attention – even seem to be both moral and epistemic. (Cuneo 2007, 80) Thus according to him, “there are close parallels between moral and epistemic facts – so close in fact, that the moral and epistemic domains are helpfully viewed as overlapping and interpenetrating in various ways.” (Cuneo 2007, 88)

However, if we accept this similarity, then we have to accept another similarity that turns out to be problematic for deontology. Take a fairly uncontroversial moral obligation such as that of not hurting people for fun. Suppose I *voluntarily* step on the foot of an old lady for fun. I could refrain from doing it but I do it anyway. I just want to hurt her. Moral luck and free will considerations aside, it seems right in that context to blame me for that action because I was responsible for doing it. I could have done otherwise. Alternatively, suppose one of my friends pushes me and causes me to step on the old lady’s foot. I still hurt her. But this time, it was *involuntary*. I am clearly not responsible for what happened because I had no control over the event. For that reason, it does not seem right to blame me. It seems then that I cannot be blamed and held responsible for something I could not refrain from doing. This derives from Kant’s famous principle that ‘ought’ implies ‘can’ (OC). Sharon Ryan states the principle as follows: “If person *S* has an obligation to do *A* at time *t*, then *S* is able to do *A* voluntarily at *t*” (Ryan 2003, 49). In the

latter example, I did not violate the moral ought of refraining from hurting innocent people since I could not refrain from doing it at that time. My friend pushed me so I had no voluntary control over the event. Hence I cannot be blamed for it.

Back to epistemology, if we agree with deontology and define epistemic justification in terms of obligations and responsibility, then OC applies there too. Epistemic obligations are still obligations, viz., obligations to *believe* certain things. So following OC, if we have an epistemic obligation to believe  $p$  at time  $t$ , then we are able to believe  $p$  voluntarily at  $t$ . Therefore, just as I cannot be blamed for stepping on the lady's foot in the latter case, it seems that I cannot be blamed for believing something I could not refrain from believing. Steup labels this the *voluntariness principle*: "If my believing  $p$  is involuntary, then I can't have an epistemic duty to believe  $p$  nor an epistemic duty to refrain from believing  $p$ ." (Steup 1996, 75)

The plausibility of this principle has led many philosophers such as William P. Alston (Alston 1985, 1988) and Alvin Plantinga (Plantinga 1993) to raise an important objection against deontology. As Richard Feldman writes: "A central problem that both Plantinga and Alston find with deontological judgments about beliefs is that they presuppose that we have voluntary control over what we believe. Yet reflection on our mental lives suggests that we have no such control." (Feldman 2001, 78) According to these authors, the voluntariness principle is true. But the problem is that our beliefs are never under our voluntary control. Believing something seems to be always involuntary. All cases of believing look analogous to the second old lady case. I shall refer to the thesis that we do not have voluntary control over any of our beliefs as *doxastic involuntarism*. But if doxastic involuntarism and the voluntariness principle are both true, then we do not have any epistemic obligations, and deontology is thus false. Here is a schematic formulation of this argument in the terms of Ryan's OC and Steup's voluntariness principle. I shall label it 'ADI', i.e., the *argument from doxastic involuntarism*:

- (1) If we have any epistemic duties, then our beliefs must sometimes be under our voluntary control.
- (2) Our beliefs are never under our voluntary control.
- (3) We do not have any epistemic duties.

Premise (1) is an epistemic version of OC, premise (2) is doxastic involuntarism, and (3) is the conclusion implying that deontologism is false. Thus stated, (2) is quite vague however. For one thing, what does it mean to say that something is not under our voluntary control? Because of its simplicity and its intuitive plausibility, I shall follow Steup's definition of involuntariness: "S believes  $p$  involuntarily if and only if  $S$  believes  $p$  and  $S$  cannot refrain from believing  $p$ " (Steup 1996, 74). That being said, a further clarification of (2) is needed. An important distinction has to be made concerning doxastic involuntarism, and it will turn out to be crucial.

### 3. Two Interpretations of Voluntarism and ADI

Although we know what 'being able to refrain from' means, it is not clear what it is that doxastic involuntarism says we cannot refrain from doing. Premise (2) of ADI denies *voluntarism* about beliefs, that is, the claim that our beliefs are sometimes under our voluntary control. But what does it mean to say that our beliefs are not 'under our voluntary control' or that we 'cannot refrain from believing  $p$ '? Voluntarism can be interpreted in two ways. It can mean either being able to refrain from (A) *causing* the forming of a belief, or (B) *forming* a belief. Of course, these two concepts are still very vague. So here is a paradigmatic example that will illustrate what I take them to mean and how they differ.

Suppose you enter a room where the lights are off and you want to believe that they are on. There are at least two conceivable ways in which you can achieve that goal. The first is simply to turn the lights on. The lights will thus be on and you will see it. Then as a result of seeing it, you will start believing that they are on. Your voluntary action of turning the lights on thus causes your forming the belief that they are on. That would be a case of what I called (A) 'voluntarily causing the forming of a belief'. In other words, a case of doing something that will make you believe what you want to believe. This is a possible understanding of voluntarism because it is a sense in which you can say that your belief is under your voluntary control. Had you decided to leave the lights off, you would not have believed that they are on. So since you could have decided to leave them off,

you could have refrained from causing you to believe that they are on. This is, in a way, to have control over your belief.

The second possible meaning of voluntarism, i.e., of exercising voluntary control over your belief, is more direct. Suppose you want to believe that the lights are on. But instead of turning the lights on again, you leave them off, and simply start believing that they are on, despite the evidence. Instead of merely doing something that will cause the forming of that belief, you directly and voluntarily *form* that belief. That would be a case of what I called (B) ‘voluntarily forming a belief’. This is another possible interpretation of voluntarism about belief. It is another conceivable sense in which you are exercising voluntary control over your belief. In the example, you could have refrained from forming the belief that the lights are on.

These two interpretations of voluntarism entail two different interpretations of ADI. In both cases, it is plausible to say that, in some sense, I *voluntarily* believe that the lights are on. But it is clear that these two types of voluntarism do not share the same intuitive plausibility. As the second part of the lights example shows, (B) (voluntarily forming a belief) is very hard to imagine. The situation described in the example is quite implausible. Intuitively, it does seem that as long as we see that the lights are off, we cannot help believing that they are off. Once we are aware of evidence showing that  $p$ , it seems beyond our capacity to sincerely believe  $\neg p$ . As Alvin Plantinga writes: “You offer me a million dollars to believe that the population of the United States exceeds that of China; I can try my hardest, strain to the uttermost; it will be in vain.” (Plantinga 1993, 24) In contrast, the triviality of the first lights example shows that (A) is obviously possible. There are many things I can voluntarily do that will make me believe something.

So on the one hand we have (A) which is obviously possible, and on the other we have (B) which, on the face of it, looks impossible. Therefore, I claim that if the argument from doxastic involuntarism (ADI) is to have any strength whatsoever, it cannot understand (2) in terms of (A). More schematically, the argument is toothless if it means what I shall call ADI\*:

(1\*) If we have epistemic duties, then we must sometimes be able to voluntarily *cause the forming* of our beliefs, i.e., to do (A).

(2\*) We are never able to voluntarily cause the forming of our beliefs.

(3) We do not have any epistemic duties.

As I said, (2\*) is obviously false. It is shown by the first part of the lights example. Hence if ADI means ADI\*, then ADI is obviously unsound. The only way ADI will have any force then is if it understands (2) in terms of (B) instead. More schematically, the argument is toothless *unless* it means what I shall call ADI\*\*:

(1\*\*) If we have any epistemic duties, then we must sometimes be able to voluntarily *form* our beliefs, i.e., to do (B)

(2\*\*) We are never able to voluntarily *form* our beliefs.

(3) We do not have any epistemic duties.

As I said, the falsity of (2\*\*) is not obvious at all. ADI\*\* thus seems a lot more convincing than ADI\*. Therefore, if we apply some sort of principle of charity in our interpretation of ADI, then ADI\*\* is a much better candidate than ADI\* for being what ADI means. To put it another way, attacking ADI by refuting only ADI\* would be a straw man fallacy. If this is true, then we have a criterion for a good objection against ADI: *any good objection against ADI will have to be an objection against ADI\*\* and not merely against ADI\**.

#### 4. The Voluntarist Strategy: Two Attempts

Deontologists then have the choice between at least two strategies against ADI\*\*. First they can reject premise (1\*\*) and claim that we have epistemic obligations despite not being able to voluntarily form our beliefs. Or they can reject premise (2\*\*) instead and claim that we are sometimes able to voluntarily form our beliefs. I shall call the latter option the *voluntarist* strategy. There are at least two major examples of voluntarist replies in the recent literature: the one proposed by Carl Ginet (2001) and the one from Brian Weatherson (2008). My general claim in this section is that in light of the criterion that I just introduced, none of these two attempts succeeds in



refuting ADI\*\*. Both proceed by giving a series of hypothetical cases that are supposed to show that premise (2) is false. Given the distinction between (A) causing the forming of a belief, and (B) forming a belief, I want to show that these alleged counter-examples can all be described as mere cases of (A). However, according to my criterion, it is examples of (B) that are required. Only they can falsify (2\*\*) and hence refute ADI\*\* (which is the criterion for being a good objection against ADI). My argument is that if an alleged counter-example to (2) can be convincingly described as a mere case of (A), then it is not really a counter-example to (2) since it is not a counter-example to (2\*\*). But as a matter of fact, all of them can be thus described. Therefore I conclude that none of the cases succeeds in refuting ADI.

The first two cases are from Ginet (2001). According to him, we can clearly observe people “coming to believe something just by deciding to do so” (Ginet 2001, 63). Despite what the involuntarists say, our everyday experience is full of situations where we seem to be displaying this ability. Therefore it is false to say that our beliefs are never under our voluntary control. To show this, Ginet starts by giving two examples of people deliberating over believing  $p$  or  $\neg p$ , and then deciding to believe one rather than the other.

*Case #1:* Sam is on the jury of a trial. He has to decide whether the accused is guilty or not. He hears the testimony of a witness and realizes that if what the witness says is true, then the defendant cannot be guilty. Therefore, Sam has to decide whether he should believe the witness or not. After deliberation, he decides to believe that what the witness said was true. Thus he claims that the accused is not guilty. (Ginet 2001, 64)

*Case #2:* Sue is in a poker game and she is the only one besides Hank who has not folded. She has a very good hand and she is convinced she will win. But then, Hank raises by a large sum, even though it is almost impossible that he has better cards. Now she has to choose between believing that Hank is bluffing and believing that he is not. On the one hand, he seems very nervous so he could very well be bluffing. But on the other, he could be faking it in order to make Sue believe that he is bluffing, and thus make her bet more. However, this possibility is quite implausible since Hank has never

done such a thing, Sue knows him to be a very bad liar. Therefore, she decides to believe that he is in fact bluffing, and that he is just nervous about bluffing, so she meets his raise. (Ginet 2001, 64)

*Reply to cases #1 and #2:* According to Ginet, Sam and Sue voluntarily decide to believe one thing rather than another. But in what sense? Do they form a belief directly or do they merely cause the forming of a certain belief? The latter description is more appropriate. What they do voluntarily (and hence what they could have refrained from doing) is the deliberation. They decide to examine the evidence to which they have access, and they come to see which option is the most consistent with the evidence. Then, the outcome of this deliberation causes the forming of a certain belief. Sam voluntarily compares the reasons there are to believe that the witness is telling the truth, with the reasons to believe that he is lying. Sue voluntarily compares the reasons to believe that Hank is bluffing, with the reasons to believe that he is not. When it becomes clear what the pros and cons are, one option turns out to have more reasons on its side than the other. *As a consequence* of realizing that there are more reasons to believe  $p$  rather than  $\neg p$ , they come to believe  $p$ . As soon as they see that the evidence obviously points toward  $p$ , they cannot help believing  $p$ . The only way they could believe  $\neg p$  would be to reexamine the evidence more carefully. Maybe then  $\neg p$  would appear more plausible after all. In that case, they would come to believe  $\neg p$ , not because they decided to form the belief that  $\neg p$ , but because they decided to reexamine the evidence. If we go back to the example of the lights, the outcome of your (voluntarily) turning the lights on is the lights being on. As soon as you become aware of that outcome, you cannot help believing that the lights are on. The same happens to Sam and Sue. The outcome of their voluntarily examining the evidence is that one option appears to be more convincing than the other. As soon as they become aware of that outcome, they cannot help believing that option rather than the other. Cases 1 and 2 are thus examples of voluntarily causing the forming of a belief rather than examples of voluntarily forming a belief. They falsify (2\*) but not (2\*\*). Therefore, contrary to what Ginet claims, they do not refute ADI.

The next two cases are also from Ginet but they are slightly different. They are examples of people deciding to believe certain

things for practical or pragmatic considerations, i.e., because it is more convenient or because it serves their personal interest. That shows, according to Ginet, that we have voluntary control over our beliefs.

*Case #3:* Earlier today, Sue asked Sam to bring her a book from his office. She absolutely needs that book. But now she is worried because Sam has often forgotten such things in the past and she wonders if he will remember this time. However, Sue thinks that it would cause too much inconvenience to get in touch with him, and interrupt his work. Furthermore, spending all day wondering whether he'll remember will make her too anxious. For all these reasons, she decides to stop worrying, and believe that he will remember to bring the book. (Ginet 2001, 64)

*Case #4:* Carl and his wife leave for a road trip. They are 50 miles from home when Carl's wife asks him if he locked the front door. At first he thinks that he did but he starts to doubt. He realizes that his memory of his locking the door is not clear at all. He might have forgotten. However, it would be a great inconvenience to turn back and verify. It would also be an inconvenience to keep worrying about it. For these reasons, he decides to believe that he locked it. (Ginet 2001, 64)

*Reply to cases #3 and #4:* There seems to be two possible interpretations of 3 and 4. The first is to see them as the opposite of 1 and 2. That is, instead of deciding to examine carefully the evidence and deliberate, Sue and Carl voluntarily refrain from deliberating. For pragmatic reasons, they decide to be epistemically irresponsible. They decide to refrain from examining carefully the evidence that they have. They avoid reflection and stick with the reasons that support the most convenient belief  $p$ . Instead of seeking truth, they seek the satisfaction of their own interest. They choose to pay attention only to the reasons that support  $p$ , or at least they give an unfair consideration to the reasons that support  $\neg p$ . The outcome of that phony deliberation is obviously that  $p$  seems much more plausible than  $\neg p$ . So, recalling the lights example, the outcome of your (voluntarily) turning the lights on is the lights being on. As soon as you become aware of that outcome, you cannot help believing that the lights are on. In the same way, as soon as Sue and Carl become

aware that  $p$  is plausible (this being the outcome of the phony deliberation), they consequently form the belief that  $p$ . They cannot avoid forming it. What they could have avoided (hence what is voluntary) is the partial examination of reasons. The formation of the belief that  $p$  is the consequence, while the phony deliberation is the cause. On this first interpretation, cases 3 and 4 are therefore cases of (A) voluntarily causing the forming of a belief rather than examples of (B) voluntarily forming a belief. Hence they do not falsify (2\*\*), and do not count against ADI.

The second possible interpretation of 3 and 4 is more straightforward and even more threatening to the relevance of those examples for deontologism. It is to say that Sue and Carl do not actually believe what Ginet claims they decided to believe. On this alternative interpretation, even though Sue says she believes that Sam will remember to bring her book, this is not what she actually believes. In the same way, even though Carl says he believes that he locked his door, this is not what he actually believes. They may believe that they believe the convenient belief  $p$  but this is unjustified and false. After all, what reasons do they have to believe that they believe  $p$ ? They have much more reasons to believe that they believe  $\neg p$ ; namely that they are aware of good reasons to believe  $\neg p$ . If this is right, then not only cases 3 and 4 are not cases of (B), but they are not even cases of (A). Since Sue and Carl do not really believe  $p$ , they are not even causing the forming of a belief. Hence 3 and 4 falsify neither (2\*) nor (2\*\*). This interpretation therefore makes these cases even more useless for defending deontologism. No matter which of the two interpretations is right, they both conclude that 3 and 4 do not falsify (2\*\*). Hence it seems fair to conclude that they do not count against ADI.

The next two cases from Brian Weatherson (Weatherson 2008) display a different feature. We often make mistakes and form false beliefs. In many of these cases, there is nothing we could have done to avoid the error. In some other situations however, we could have avoided the mistake by being more epistemically careful. For Weatherson, there are skills at being a believer, and we can use those skills voluntarily through self-control. He gives two examples in which a lack of such skills is involved. In the first example, the agent fails to consider carefully a realistic hypothesis, and in the second, the

agent takes an unrealistic hypothesis too seriously. In both cases, Weatherson claims, the agent could have done otherwise: he could have formed his beliefs in a more skillful way. Since he could have done otherwise, he does have voluntary control over some of his beliefs. Hence we do have epistemic obligations.

*Case #5:* Mark has to get the groceries this week for him and his roommates. He looks in the fridge and sees a carton of orange juice. Consequently, he forms the belief that there is still orange juice left and he infers that he does not have to buy any. So he gets the groceries and does not buy any orange juice. But as a matter of fact, his belief is false. There is no orange juice left. There is indeed a carton in the fridge, but it is empty. It was put there by one of his roommates. When Mark finds that out, not only is he angry with his roommate, but he is also angry with himself. Inferring the presence of orange juice from the sole presence of a carton was epistemically careless. Given the character of his roommates, the possibility of the carton being empty in the fridge was a live one. Forming the belief that there was orange juice left on the sole basis of the presence of a carton in the fridge was hasty. But he could have avoided forming that false belief. How? By considering all of the live possibilities given the evidence. Since the carton being empty in the fridge was among the live possibilities, he could have avoided forming his false belief if he had exercised self-control, and considered all the realistic possibilities. This is something he could have done voluntarily. But if Mark could have avoided forming the belief that there was orange juice left, then he had voluntary control over this belief. (Weatherson 2008, 552-554)

*Case #6:* Mark is watching his favorite football team and they are losing by a very large margin. His team is very bad and there is not much time left in the game. His roommates are going to watch a movie but Mark does not want to come with them. He wants to keep watching the game because he believes his team might come back. However one of his friends shows him that his belief is ridiculous. Even if a comeback is possible in principle, it is highly implausible. That convinces Mark who then changes his mind and forms the belief that his team will lose. (Weatherson 2008, 552-554)

*Reply to cases #5 and #6:* Weatherson claims that in both cases, Mark could have exercised self-control in order to be more epistemically responsible and skillful. It was within reach. If he had done that, he would have had better beliefs. Hence in a sense, he could have refrained from believing falsely. Therefore, our beliefs are sometimes under our voluntary control. However, as with the previous cases, 5 and 6 look more like situations where the agent is voluntarily causing the forming of a belief than situations where he voluntarily forms one.

In both cases, Mark could have avoided being epistemically irresponsible. He could have examined the evidence in a more skillful way. In 5, he could have decided to consider what was in fact a plausible possibility. In 6, he could have refrained from taking seriously an implausible possibility. What would have happened if he had done that? In 5, he would have seen that there was no juice left. In 6, he would have realized the implausibility of his team coming back. As a consequence of realizing those two states of affairs, no doubt Mark would have formed the belief that there was no more juice in 5, and that his team would loose in 6. So in this description, Mark could have done something voluntarily that would have caused himself to form certain beliefs. If he had (voluntarily) chosen to be more careful, different beliefs would have followed (involuntarily). Just like you can cause yourself to form the belief that the lights are on by turning them on, Mark could have caused himself to believe that there is no more juice, and that his team will loose if he had been more skilful at considering his evidence. Therefore, both 5 and 6 appear to be cases of (A), and none of them falsifies (2\*\*).

Since all six cases can plausibly be described as cases of causing the forming of a belief, it follows that they are all merely refuting (2\*), and not (2\*\*). Therefore, neither Ginet's nor Weatherson's examples refute ADI\*\*. Given my claim that being an objection against ADI\*\* is the criterion for being a good objection against ADI, they also fail to refute ADI.

## 5. Conclusion

In the preceding section, I examined the voluntarist arguments of two authors, which consisted in the presentation of putative counter-examples to (2). I claimed that these attempts failed because they did not meet the criterion for a good objection against ADI. Of course, I am not claiming that the failure of Ginet's and Weatherson's counter-examples entails that the voluntarist strategy could not possibly work. However, I want to make the weaker claim that the voluntarist strategy does not seem promising. If we accept what I said so far, voluntarism appears to be very hard to vindicate, and is therefore not showing any sign of future success.

As I mentioned earlier, given the distinction I introduced between (A) and (B), the voluntarist strategy against ADI can be interpreted as the rejection of either (2\*) or (2\*\*). I argued that the former interpretation cannot be right because it would merely refute ADI\*, and ADI\* is too trivially false to be what ADI means. Therefore, I concluded that the voluntarist strategy could only be successful in refuting ADI if it falsified (2\*\*). So either (2\*\*) is false, or voluntarism is false. Either we show that (B) – voluntarily forming beliefs – is possible, or we give up voluntarism. But given what I said so far, voluntarism seems to be very hard to defend. The deeply counter-intuitive character of cases like the second lights example is compelling. It shows in a clear way the intuitive plausibility of (2\*\*). Moreover, the failure of the examples of Ginet and Weatherson illustrates how difficult it is to come up with a convincing example showing that it is possible to (B) voluntarily *form* a belief. Falsifying (2\*\*) thus appears to be a very difficult task. From all that, it is hard not to infer that (2\*\*) simply is what ADI is right about. But it would be rash to conclude that providing an example of (B) could never be done, and that voluntarism could not possibly be true. I do not have an argument supporting that strong claim.

However, I think the moral of my story is that deontologists should look elsewhere for an answer to ADI. My analysis of premise (2) shows that doxastic involuntarism is much harder to falsify than it first seems. It turns out to require a very strong form of voluntarism about beliefs, one whose truth seems highly dubious. Maybe

examples of (B) could be found, but it seems unlikely. Given the plausibility of (2\*\*) and the failure of the two voluntarist attempts, voluntarism does not seem promising. Therefore, it would be more fruitful for deontologists to look for a different strategy against ADI instead of persisting in searching for examples of (B), and in defending voluntarism.

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