

BELIEF VERSUS ACCEPTANCE

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I INTRODUCTION

Belief seems to be connected to truth and to the acceptance of the content of belief as true. If a person accepts as true that the cat is on the mat, then it might seem that he must also believe that the cat is on the mat, and conversely. However, the connections here should be investigated in terms that are more precise and should be properly argued for. This is my main aim in this paper. I will discuss these matters not only in the case of single agents but also, to some extent, in the collective case. Section I discusses other author's views and it also clarifies the notions of belief and acceptance as true of the present paper. Section II discusses the connection between these two notions, and Section III is concerned with the collective case.

Before starting my discussion, I wish to emphasize that while I will discuss what can be regarded as the standard notion of belief, the notion of acceptance as true or as correctly assertable to be concentrated upon below is to an extent a philosopher's technical notion. As we will see, acceptance can be intentionally performed action while belief cannot. This gives a reason to use the notion of acceptance as true to cover this kind of intentional cases that the truth-oriented notion of belief cannot encompass. There are other notions of acceptance such as the common-sense notion of acceptance which concerned with acceptance of something as good or as satisfactory. This notion will be called pragmatic (or wide) acceptance in this paper.

In the literature on belief and acceptance, several related notions and terms have been considered. Among them are acceptance of something as true, assenting to a sentence, holding a sentence true, holding a sentence as true, believing something to be the case (*cf.* Cohen, 1992, Ullmann-Margalit and Margalit, 1992, Tuomela, 1992, Bratman, 1993, Engel, 1998). Some of these notions explicitly involve linguistic items such as sentences while some do not. In this paper I will consider to some extent what other philosophers have said about the issues at hand. Especially I will focus on the paper by Engel (1998) and the book by Cohen (1992).

Engel (1998), largely following Bratman (1993), assumes the following about belief (pp. 143-144):

- 1) Beliefs are involuntary, and are not normally subject to direct voluntary control.
- 2) Beliefs aim at truth.

- 3) Beliefs are evidence-related in that they are shaped by evidence for what is believed.
- 4) Beliefs are subject to an ideal of integration or agglomeration.
- 5) Beliefs come in degrees.

(Engel also defends a thesis saying that beliefs are context independent. I will not consider this thesis in the present paper, because it seems not to distinguish between belief and acceptance as true. A defense of this thesis would require a clear distinction between contexts which are relevant here, for, *e.g.*, perceptual beliefs generally are in an obvious sense dependent on the context they are about.)

Let us consider the belief conditions 1)-5). I find 1) and 5) to be acceptable as such, except that the only sense I wish to give to 5) is degrees of conviction or of certainty (be the degrees probabilistic or something looser). As to 2), a vague preanalytic notion of truth is all that need to be involved here. There is a strain between belief as a causally induced, involuntary state meant in 1) and the more intellectual properties of evidence-relatedness 3) and normative integration 4). I would say that 3) and 4) are conceptual principles characterize belief. There are also corresponding rationality requirements, which can be stated in terms of ought-to-be rules: It ought to be the case that people's beliefs satisfy 3); and analogously for 4). These ought-to-be norms are relevant to language and concept teaching and learning. These principles are rationality principles concerned with the idea of being a rational person. As beliefs are involuntary, one cannot directly make one's beliefs more rational (or, for that matter, more irrational) and formulate ideals in terms of ought-to-do norms concerning the learners. Note, too, that 3) and 4) admit of degrees or at least allow for variation.

I offer the following analytical theses for the notion of belief:

B1) Beliefs are involuntary. (Conceptual principle)

B2) Beliefs are concerned with and "aim" at truth in the sense of being dispositional states disposing their holder to think thoughts relying on the truth or correct assertability of their contents, although the subject in question is not required to be a language-user. (Conceptual principle)

B3) a) Beliefs are normally shaped by adequate evidence for what is believed. (Conceptual principle)

b) It ought to be the case that beliefs are shaped by adequate evidence for what is believed. (Rationality principle)

B4) a) Language-involving beliefs (in the sense of beliefs with propositional content) are subject to integration or agglomeration (*e.g.* so that belief that p and belief that q entail belief that p and q). (Conceptual principle)

b) It ought to be the case that language-involving beliefs are subject to integration or agglomeration. (Rationality principle)

B5) Beliefs come in degrees. (Conceptual principle)

I will not in this paper discuss in detail what the contents of beliefs should be taken to be. For our present purposes we can simply say that they are propositions or meaningful sentences (sentences with certain uses) and leave further problems of belief identity to another context.

Let us next consider acceptance. Ullmann-Margalit and Margalit (1992) discuss the (or a) notion of assenting to a sentence and use the term ‘holding true’ of it. In this sense one can accept or hold true the sentence “The carotenoids are isoprenoid polyenes“ without understanding it. The acceptance is supposed to be based on circumstantial evidence. In contrast, I will assume of acceptance that the acceptor understands the sentence accepted. That involves his being able to use the sentence correctly in his theoretical and practical inferences and to act correctly on the truth of the sentence. (This may not be possible in the case of the notion of holding true.) Accordingly, when I speak of acceptance of sentences below I mean sentences with a certain use, *viz.*, meaningful sentences. Such meaningful sentences, or perhaps rather their equivalence classes, can also be regarded as propositions. (I will not, and need not, in this paper discuss in more detail what the contents of beliefs and acceptances should be taken to be.)

I will below view acceptance as acceptance of a proposition as true or as correctly assertable. What Engel and others have called “holding a sentence, p, as true“ (not be confused with holding p true) is regarded by Engel as a policy of taking for granted that p (*cf.* Ullmann-Margalit and Margalit, 1992, Cohen, 1992, Bratman, 1993). If holding a sentence as true is understood so, it is different from my notion, as will soon be seen.

Engel (1998) analyzes the mentioned notion of a policy of taking for granted, which notion I would like to call *pragmatic* acceptance, by means of the following principles (pp. 146-147):

- 1*) Acceptance is voluntary or intentional, unlike belief.
- 2*) Acceptance aims not at truth but at utility or success. (One can accept things one believes to be false.)
- 3*) Acceptance need not be shaped by evidence or evidential reasons.
- 4*) Acceptance is not regulated by an ideal of rational integration in the same sense as belief.

5*) Unlike belief, acceptance is an all or nothing matter.

As I will in this paper be concerned with the notion of acceptance as true of a meaningful sentence, the above principles can be viewed from this perspective.

Property 1*) does not hold true of my notion of acceptance as true. We can speak of acceptance as a) the event of coming to accept or as b) the state of acceptance resulting from the event of acceptance having taken place. In case a) acceptance “typically“ is an intentional mental acceptance, but it need not always be. As to non-intentional acceptance, it clearly seems possible that a person comes to accept that there is a tree in front of him without doing this at will or on purpose. As a matter of psychological fact, if it indeed is one, this acceptance is normally based on the person’s causally induced belief that there is a tree in front of him. Given this, the acceptance involves reflection on one’s belief (or beliefs) without yet being a mental action performed on purpose. For instance, the person does not in this case decide that there is a tree (rather than something else) in front of him, but finds himself to have this information. While there is an active element here it falls short of being action on purpose in the present instance. (Here my view differs also from Cohen’s view.) As to case b), while perhaps the state of acceptance often is not intentional, in contrast to belief it clearly can be intentional. That is, it can be a state in which one is on purpose. A state of acceptance can be compared to holding an object, *e.g.* a book, in one’s hand. This can be the intentional action of keeping the relevant state of the world (in which the book stays in one’s hand) in existence.

As for the other properties, my intuitive notion (that I have called narrow acceptance or acceptance as true) does not satisfy Engel’s other principles except for 5*). As for 2*), it states a property of pragmatic acceptance, whereas acceptance as true of course must aim at truth. Let me emphasize that almost any proposition can be so accepted in the pragmatic sense, given a suitable context. In contrast, *rational* pragmatic acceptance, which seems to be Engel’s analysandum, can be based on the maximization of expected utility or something like that. Principles 3*) and 4*) may hold true of pragmatic acceptance, but need not hold true of truth-related acceptance and seem clearly false of rational acceptance as true. As to 5*), in my view acceptance equals “premissibility“ (employability as a premiss in inference and action). Thus acceptance is language-based. Accordingly, language being a discrete thing, it is easy to understand the all-or-nothing nature of acceptance, although mere language-basedness of course does not entail this all-or-nothing nature. Contrary to the case of belief, there are then no degrees of acceptance -- in analogy with the fact that there are no degrees of premissibility. Note, however, that there can be better or worse, and more or less, evidence and reasons for acceptance. Accordingly we may speak of degrees of

acceptance-worthiness. Furthermore, an agent can hold on to his acceptance more or less firmly, and thus we can speak of the firmness of “acceptance state“ in which the agent is.

Although in my view acceptance, contrary to belief, is language-based and concerned in part with reasoning, I will still only require evidential shapability and “integrability“ properties in terms of ought-to-be rules. Let me mention here that one of the logical principles that I find plausible for acceptance (though not, *e.g.*, for at least non-linguistic belief) is what Cohen (1992) calls the principle of subjective closure. It says that if a person accepts that some sentence *q* follows from his accepted premises, then he accepts *q* as true. While this is a viable rationality principle, it can still be violated without conceptual contradiction.

We arrive at the following list of central properties for acceptance as true (recall B1-B5):

A1) Acceptance is typically voluntary or intentional, unlike belief. However, acceptance can also be non-intentional, *viz.*, it can be a process or state which is *not* arrived at or held fully *on purpose*. The mental state of acceptance based on one’s having accepted a proposition and in which one is when one continues to accept the proposition accordingly need not be an intentional “state-keeping“ action, although that seems often to be the case. (Conceptual principle)

A2) Acceptance concerns truth. While one can accept things one believes to be false, given a belief based on good enough evidence one cannot rationally reject its content. (Conceptual principle)

A3) a) Acceptance is normally shaped by adequate evidence for what is accepted. Note that even in the case of a non-intentional state of acceptance voluntary control can be exercised to shape what is accepted. (Conceptual principle)

b) It ought to be the case that acceptance is shaped by adequate evidence for what is accepted. (Rationality principle)

A4) a) Acceptance is subject to integration or agglomeration. (Conceptual principle)

b) It ought to be the case that acceptance is subject to integration or agglomeration. (Rationality principle)

A5) Unlike belief, acceptance is an all or nothing matter. (Conceptual principle)

A6) Acceptance is linguistic. (Conceptual principle)

Acceptance typically involves reflection of evidence and beliefs. Thus Lehrer somewhat technically defines acceptance as something based on a reflection of one’s beliefs (Lehrer, 1997, p. 3). I do not require that much, as it seems that acceptances can come about as first-order facts, as it

were, even without reflective thinking of one's evidence (*e.g.*, a person can thus accept, even without prior belief, that there is a tree in front of him). Let me say, however, that my view does not hang on this feature. If indeed all acceptance would require reflection my view is compatible with that at least as long as reflection is not action performed with the purpose of accepting the content in question (*e.g.*, that there is a tree in front of the person in question). Intentionality in the present context thus is concerned with whether an action is performed on purpose. (Acceptances and beliefs of course are always intentional in the weak aboutness sense of intentionality.)

Let me note that, in contrast, intentional acceptance involves consciousness - in the sense every intentional action involves consciousness. Thus one must be aware of what one intentionally accepts and of the fact that one has accepted it.

II ACCEPTANCE VERSUS BELIEF

Cohen (1992) gives an interesting analysis of the notions of acceptance and belief. I will indicate in terms of some citations that my view of acceptance, while in many respects similar, still differs from his account. Also my notion of belief is to some extent different despite the similarities. My main purpose in this section is to discuss the relationship between acceptance and belief in some more detail, but I will start by citing Cohen on these notions.

Early in his book Cohen gives the following basic characterization of the distinction at hand (p. 4):

“First then, and very briefly, belief that *p* is a disposition, when one is attending to issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition that *p*, normally to feel it true that *p* and false that not-*p*, whether or not one is willing to act, speak, or reason accordingly. But to accept the proposition or rule of inference that *p* is to treat it as given that *p*. More precisely, to accept that *p* is to have or adopt a policy of deeming, positing, or postulating that *p* - i.e. of including that proposition or rule among one's premises for deciding what to do or think in a particular context, whether or not one feels it to be true that *p*.“

Cohen emphasizes that belief is a disposition to feel, not an occurrent feeling. In contrast acceptance is a mental act or policy of mental action. Accordingly, ‘belief’ carries no conceptual implications about reasoning, and ‘acceptance’ carries none about feelings. Acceptance is not the same as supposition, assumption, presumption, or hypothesizing. Belief is normally a reason for acceptance, but not conversely. Furthermore, for Cohen acceptance is an intentional action whereas belief is an involuntary state. Although he explicitly says this, we note that in the above quotation he is rather speaking of the state of one's having accepted *p*. Furthermore, Cohen's notion of

acceptance is not restricted to acceptance as true but rather is acceptance encompassing also pragmatic acceptance (cf. Cohen, 1992, p. 37, Engel, 1998, p. 147).

Given this account of Cohen's view, I will continue to develop my own view. Let me start by considering whether acceptance entails believing. Acceptance of something *p*, as a happening or process, can trivially be divided into one's coming to accept *p* (often, but not necessarily, an intentional action) and the mental state of one's having accepted *p*. As noted, this mental state can be, but need not be, an intentional "state-keeping" action. We can ask whether there be a state of acceptance without belief, if we regard belief as dispositional state of taking or feeling something to be real or to be the case. We can, and need to, to ask also what the mental state of acceptance really is (especially when it is not an intentional state-keeping action). Is it a dispositional state, which is manifested, *e.g.*, when it is asked of the person what he thinks about *p*? If the person accepts that *p*, would he not then have to think - and say in response - that *p* is the case or is true and in this sense to assent to the content of the sentence '*p*'? We may think in somewhat metaphorical terms that the sentences or propositions our person has accepted are in his acceptance box. These sentences are for him "premissible" sentences, *viz.*, sentences that he can use as his premisses for inference and action. (Such sentences may be conditional and require contextual perceptual information to become categorical: *e.g.*, the sentence might be "If the street light is red, wait until it turns green, and then cross".)

The upshot is that, in the present model, coming to accept something (a sentence, proposition) is making it premissible. Contrary to the belief case, such acceptance can be, but need not be, performed as intentional action. If something is accepted, it is in the acceptance box, and the person is disposed to use it in relevant circumstances. Acceptance - regarded as a result of one's having accepted - is a dispositional state: the person is disposed actually to use one of the premisses in the acceptance box when the situation at hand so requires. Note that this dispositional state is to be distinguished from a person's disposition to accept. The latter means in our metaphorical model that he is disposed to put a sentence in his acceptance box.

How does a person's belief that *p* compare with his acceptance that *p*? Suppose he believes that the cat is on the mat. Would he not then have to be disposed to think that *p* is the case, that the cat indeed is on the mat? Let us first consider Cohen's view, which regards the state of believing that *p* to be the disposition to feel that *p* is the case, *e.g.*, that the cat is on the mat. When the disposition is realized (*e.g.*, when asked whether the cat is on the mat), our person is supposed to feel (to have the feeling) that the cat is on the mat. But what indeed is this feeling? On purely conceptual grounds it can be said that it must involve the person's thought that the cat is on the mat. This entails that acceptance and belief both involve the same thought in the linguistic case.

However, a non-linguistic animal such as a dog may perhaps also have a thought that we as external observers propositionally render more or less as the thought that the cat is on the mat, but cannot accept the sentence saying that the cat is on the mat. Belief can accordingly be non-linguistic while acceptance cannot.

Concentrating on linguistic belief, what, if any, are the qualitative phenomenal features that a belief – in contrast to acceptance - is required to have according to Cohen’s view? Perhaps being convinced about *p* can sometimes involve such a feature. What about weaker kinds of beliefs? We can actually ask whether there are any qualitative phenomenal features corresponding to all tokens of believing (or, *e.g.*, to believing as the state of being convinced). It is hard to see what “feeling something to be the case“ could amount to over and above having the mentioned thought about the content *p* (*e.g.*, that the cat is on the mat) and one’s being disposed to say such and such relevant things and one’s being disposed to act non-linguistically in such and such a sense. In the manner of Wittgenstein, one may ask if there is anything else in common to different cases of believing that *p*. As consideration of the phenomenal feelings related to believing seems to show and as philosophers often and perhaps typically argue these days, no such “qualia“ need to be there. I agree with this and do not require the presence of qualitative experiential features in the case of beliefs, although I cannot here discuss the matter in an argumentative fashion.

Cohen says that “all credal feelings, whether weak or strong, share the distinctive feature of constituting some kind of orientation on the ‘True or false?’ issue in relation to their propositional objects“ (p. 11). He also mentions credal feelings like surprise and doubt and sees a connection with belief. However, he does not show that the credal feeling of belief would consist in anything else than the thought that the content of the belief is true or something related (*cf.* the “orientation“ towards truth mentioned in the above citation). This is the same kind of thought that I take to be involved in acceptance. So the main difference between belief (in the credal feeling sense) and acceptance would seem to be the connection to language and reasoning which acceptance has and belief does not have. Furthermore, the “credal feeling“ view seems to be too restrictive and does not sufficiently take into account the action-guiding nature of belief. Suppose I believe that there is beer in the fridge and that I want to have a beer. The belief will guide my action towards the fridge rather than some other place, such as a supermarket, and it does it in part in view of my entertaining the thought that there is beer in the fridge. My action, however, requires that I have suitable beliefs about the best route from my sofa to the fridge, and I may not entertain thoughts and have credal feelings related to them at all when acting, because such ingrained beliefs - not to speak of my belief concerning how to move my knee when acting - seem to need no such mental accompaniments. Note that one may also act on subconscious beliefs in the sense of beliefs about

things totally outside those one is focusing on. No credal feelings can be connected to such beliefs, as feelings are conscious events.

Given our discussion, the following thesis can be proposed for the notion of a person's acceptance as true (in the full sense involving understanding of what is accepted):

1) If agent A whole-heartedly accepts as true that p and if this acceptance is not an intentionally performed action, then he believes that p at least to some non-negligible degree.

The antecedent of 1) assumes that A has not performed the intentional mental action of accepting the sentence (or proposition) p. In view of the fact that the mental action of acceptance is necessarily intentional, this entails that the acceptance in question is not an action but a state of acceptance, which is presumably causally induced. This state must be one in which the agent is disposed to think that p is true (or correctly assertable or something analogous). If there is a prior belief that p then at least typically the acceptance is due to a reflection of the belief content. If there is no such prior belief, thesis 1) says that the very non-intentional acceptance amounts to a belief (at least from a cognitive point of view, which I take to suffice here). To elaborate, non-intentional acceptance is assumed to be a state in which the agent continues to accept p, *viz.*, to be disposed to use p as a premiss, to think that p is the case, and to act on the truth of p. This complex disposition gives a minimal characterization of a belief. Thus I argue that 1) is true on conceptual grounds. Note that I am assuming here that the acceptance is "whole-hearted" (in a technical sense). This is taken to exclude insincere acceptance as well as acceptance motivated by something else than truth. As claimed, this state can be called a belief state.

The believing agent need not be convinced that p is the case. He may only take it to be likely or perhaps only to some extent probable but still sufficiently probable for being regarded as true in the circumstances. Think of a person who learns that he is essentially a bunch of leptons and hadrons. He comes to accept this as true, but may consistently lack the belief or may believe it only to some degree. Thus doubt that p is rationally possible. (This is compatible with requiring that the believer should be disposed to acquire a flat-out belief, the circumstances permitting; *cf.* Audi, 1994.)

Note, however, that if one accepts something p as true but has the flat-out belief p is false then one is irrational, for the belief that p also entails endorsing the thought that p. To illustrate this kind of conflict between reason and belief, consider the a case where initially a boy and a girl were in love with each other but where the boy later on ceased to love the girl. The girl may still continue to believe that a boy loves her while having good reasons to accept and while accordingly accepting that the boy does not any more love her. As a second example consider the lines in Mueller-Lyer's paradoxical figures to have an example where rational acceptance and belief may at least initially

differ. The lines here seem to be of unequal length and are accordingly believed -- at least by uneducated subjects -- to be of unequal length. Such subjects may later rationally accept that the lines have the same length. If they remain with their old belief, they are irrational. However, the belief may of course change and come to have the same content as the acceptance, once suitable psychological processing takes place.

Why do I not regard intentionally accepted and held contents as entailing to belief? The precise claim says that there is no conceptual guarantee for this. This is because intentional acceptance is an action and there remains the conceptual possibility that no acceptance state involving the disposition to think that *p* is the case arises. To be sure, this is a typical causal consequence of an acceptance action, but the thesis that acceptance always leads to, or entails, belief of some kind is not a purely conceptual truth, if it is a truth at all. It may be conjectured that the matter depends on the psychology of the person in question. In general, a belief cannot be *directly* intentionally acquired. Thus I cannot acquire the belief that, say, the cat is on the mat, purely at will, except possibly in an indirect sense. As seen, a belief involves being in a mental state involving the thought that something is the case or is real, and in general an agent cannot arrive at that state directly simply by exercising his will.

I have elsewhere called the beliefs arising from acceptance (in the sense of the antecedent of 1) or from acceptance as intentional action) "acceptance-beliefs"; cf. Tuomela, (1992). In other words, an acceptance-belief is a belief (at least in a minimal sense) which obtains by virtue of the acceptance as true of the content proposition. A *belief* is in question precisely because we are dealing with a mental state that disposes the agent to think that *p* is the case or is the case at least with some likelihood. The upshot related to the problem discussed dealt with by 1) is that acceptance does not on merely on *conceptual* grounds lead to the corresponding belief state involving the agent's endorsingly thinking that *p*. However, on *causal* grounds this may well happen. It can be noted that thesis 1) is in the kind of conflict with Cohen's account that, acceptance being intentional for him, the antecedent of 1) cannot be fulfilled on his view.

Let me emphasize that the notion of acceptance under discussion is the notion of sincerely accepting something as true. This is to be distinguished from acceptance of a sentence in the sense of the acceptor's inferring and acting *as if* the sentence were true (this kind of acceptance is "wide" acceptance in the sense of Tuomela, 1992). Such "pretend-acceptance" of course does not entail belief, as, indeed, it is compatible with the acceptor's believing just the opposite to be the case. Such acceptance is a species of pragmatic acceptance in something like the sense of Engel's notion of acceptance satisfying 1*)-5*). More generally, acceptance is concerned with regarding the content of what is accepted as good or satisfactory (as something which "will do") relative to the

situation at hand or relative to the standards at hand. Acceptance as true or as correctly assertable takes the standard to be truth or correct assertability, whereas, for instance, the taste of a soup can be evaluated on hedonistic grounds and perhaps accepted as good enough for eating it. One's acceptance as correctly assertable of, *e.g.*, a plan to do X, means accepting a conative sentence of the form "I will do X" as correctly assertable by oneself. And this again entails that in suitable circumstances one ought to use this sentence as one's premise and act on the premise – and indeed do X or at least try to.

Let us next consider the converse claim, *viz.*,

2) If agent A believes that p, then he accepts that p.

In the case of linguistic beliefs I find the thesis to be plausible at least in the case of flat-out beliefs. This is because of the mentioned fact that believing that p involves the disposition to have thoughts that p and to act on those thoughts, and such acting must amount to the acceptance of p, although this acceptance need not be intentional acceptance. (Clearly, believing does not conceptually entail *intentional* acceptance of the belief content but of course allows such acceptance as a matter of psychological fact.) However, thesis 2) seems false when the belief in question is a non-linguistic belief. Such beliefs seem factually possible, for it seems that (non-linguistic) animals and prelinguistic children can have beliefs (*cf.* Cohen, 1992, Chapter 1). These beliefs cannot be acceptance beliefs, as acceptance involves language.

However, in accordance with what was just said, the following thesis seems true:

2*) If agent A has the flat-out belief that p in a language-involving sense, then he accepts that p.

It can be said, however, that there is a trivial, behavioral and non-linguistic sense of 'acceptance' in which 2) can be regarded as generally true at least if the beliefs are flat-out beliefs (which non-linguistic beliefs would seem to have to be). For example, a cat can behaviorally (by its stalking behavior and eventual attack) "accept" that a rat is on the mat. This kind of acceptance just is viewing or taking it to be the case that p (a rat is on the mat), and that does not require language - one can see the cat attacking the rat, etc. Also in the case of a human agent we can speak of his accepting a sentence 'p' as true or to take what 'p' expresses to be the case when he acts in the a sense relying on the truth of 'p'. This needs only be acceptance in a weak behavioral sense, which does not involve the "use" of language even in one's thoughts.

There is the considerably weaker true thesis resembling 2) and 2*) to some extent (*cf.* the defense in Cohen, 1992, Chapter 1):

3) If agent A has the flat-out belief that p, then he has a *prima facie* reason to accept that p.

I will not here discuss 3) here. Let me just note that having a reason to accept may still not make it rational to accept. A scientist might firmly believe in his hypothesis but lacking hard evidence it might not be rational for him to accept his hypothesis as true, although he may be taken to have a *prima facie* reason to accept it.

Let me end by a summary statement about how my account differs from Cohen's. For Cohen "acceptance" is just acceptance *simpliciter* whereas for me acceptance here is acceptance *as true* of a proposition or sentence. While my view is relatively close to Cohen's, my notion of acceptance is, nevertheless, both broader and narrower than his. My view is broader in the sense that while for Cohen acceptance is intentional mental action for me it can in addition include cases of non-intentional (and hence "non-actional") acceptance. My view is narrower than Cohen's in the aforementioned sense that I in the present context concentrate on acceptance *as true* of the content in question. As to belief, I have required that belief be regarded in part as the disposition to endorsingly think that p (at least in the case of language-involving beliefs) and to be disposed to act accordingly. On some occasions this disposition will be realized as a categorical mental state or event. While one then must be aware of the content of the belief one need not yet be aware that one has the belief (the mode of thought).

Non-intentional acceptance and linguistic belief are seen to be closely connected, as clarified more precisely by my theses 1) and 2*) and the discussion related to them. The kind of acceptance belief dealt with by 1) is a minimal kind of belief, but I have not found it imperative to require more of beliefs in general. What Cohen's beliefs in the sense of dispositions to credal feelings amounts to is not so clear, and I cannot say if it surely goes beyond my above characterization of an acceptance belief. In any case, belief and acceptance seem closer in my account - mainly due to the possibility nonintentional acceptance - than in Cohen's account.

III COLLECTIVE ACCEPTANCE AND COLLECTIVE BELIEF

What is the case with collective acceptance, group belief, and related things? Do the distinctions made earlier in this paper concerning acceptance and belief help in an analysis of related collective and group notions? Let us consider the matter briefly. I have elsewhere (in Tuomela, 1992, 1995) discussed group beliefs and made a distinction between acceptance in the "narrow" and in the "wide" sense. Narrow acceptance is acceptance of something as true or correctly assertable. I suggest that this notion can be modeled along the lines of the ideas and analyses so far of the present paper (recall especially A1) - A6) and the discussion related to thesis 1) in Section II). Collective acceptance is also to be analyzed in terms of acceptance as true for the group, and this amounts to wide acceptance.

There is a central distinction to be made between properly collective and merely aggregative social beliefs. I have elsewhere dealt with this in terms of the “we-mode“ (“group mode“) and “I-mode“ (“individual mode“) distinction (see Tuomela, 1997, 1999a,b). The basic idea is that a token attitude such as a token belief is in the we-mode if the persons having the attitude have collectively accepted that the attitude is one for the “use“ of the group. This kind of collective availability means that the group members are permitted to use the attitude content in their group-related activities as a kind of premiss. For instance, the proposition accepted might be that squirrel furs are money in a social collective. In the case of we-mode acceptance and resulting acceptance belief (which is in the present case is assumed generated) they will share the content, *e.g.*, in the sense that for them it is correct to assert that p and to act on p in group-related activities. They are also entitled to assert “We believe that p“. In the case of a we-mode attitude the agents must, furthermore, be collectively committed to the content of the attitude and accordingly to be prepared to sanction each other and to be sanctioned by the others. We-mode acceptance and we-mode belief concern truth or correct assertability in group contexts, *viz.*, in contexts where the group members act as group members rather than as private persons. Truth for the group thus is not to be confused with “objective“ truth or truth *simpliciter*. Accordingly the notion of collective acceptance involved here is acceptance in the wide sense. Acceptance in the wide sense seems to be analyzable, at least more or less, in terms of the conditions 1*) - 5*), which Engel (1998) presented in his analysis and which were commented on in Section I.

Attitudes in the individual mode do not have the mentioned features - *viz.*, they need not be based on collective acceptance or be for the use of the group or involve collective commitment to their contents.¹ Aggregated I-mode acceptances can accordingly be acceptances as true (narrow acceptances).

Let me now elaborate some of the ideas just presented. Collective acceptance basically is coming to hold and holding a relevant we-attitude. The we-attitudes (social reasons) that are needed for collective acceptance basically belong either to the intention-family or to the belief-family of attitudes. While collective acceptance typically is intentional action, it must be remembered that neither coming to hold a we-attitude nor holding a we-attitude need be intentional actions. Even if the individual component actions were intentional acceptances, collective acceptance need not be collectively intentional in the strong sense of being based on a joint intention to accept. The participants may instead be connected in terms of their mutual beliefs (typically involving loop beliefs, *e.g.*, I believe that you believe that I believe and accept that squirrel fur is money).

Acceptances as states (*viz.*, as states normally resulting from acceptance action) are basically dispositions to act in accordance with the contents of those states, these contents serving as reasons

for those actions. Whatever else those reasons may include, intentions and beliefs of a relevant kind must always be involved (this is a generally accepted fact about reasons of action). Thus the account of acceptance in the sense of holding a we-attitude of a relevant kind can concentrate on intentions and beliefs: intentions and beliefs must accompany wants, wishes, fears, and whatever can motivate action, simply because the concept of action is based on the idea of doing something at will under the guidance of beliefs. In general, I argue that the question of how much intentionality and of which kind (*cf.* I-mode versus we-mode intentionality, correctness versus falsity of relevant beliefs) there must be in each particular case is to be decided largely on the basis of the collective outcome -- what kinds of activities result from collective acceptance and the maintenance of what has thus been accepted. Trivially, people must be able to do with money what we generally do with it and the same goes for schools, churches, governments and so on.

The weakest kind of collective acceptance that can be considered here is acceptance as mutual belief. In the case of full-blown collective belief the mutual belief must be in the we-mode. This means that the mutual belief (*viz.*, its content) is meant for the use of the group members and the group members are collectively committed to uphold the content of the belief. The individuals' beliefs here must be acceptances or, in my earlier terminology, acceptance beliefs. The participants must collectively see to it that the belief content is held true.

Consider an example. The participants may collectively accept that there are angels (black holes, or whatever you prefer to use as an example). This belief may be based on mutual belief or on something stronger such as group discussion followed by a joint decision to take this as the group view. Suppose that it is based only on mutual belief. Then this collective acceptance basically amounts to we-acceptance in the sense that each member believes (*viz.*, acceptance-believes) that there are angels and there is (acceptance) belief that the others also believe so and, in the fullest case, that there is a mutual (acceptance) belief in the group about their so believing. This kind of collective acceptance may still be only in the individual mode rather than in the we-mode.

However, in both cases acceptance involves reflective awareness not only concerning what one oneself accepts but also what the others accept. In the latter, we-mode case also a collective commitment to the accepted proposition, *p*, must be involved, and we get the minimal sense of accepting *for the group* (and the involved we-mode togetherness which intersubjectively involves the group). Furthermore, without the we-mode mutual belief there is not enough intersubjectivity and collective commitment for the application of the phrase 'for the group' and for saying that the participants are attempting to see to it collectively that the accepted content will become satisfied or - as the case may be - remain satisfied. Acceptance "for the group" with collective commitment can be viewed in this context as coextensive with acceptance in the we-mode. Thus, "We accept that *p* is

correctly assertable for us in our group-related activities“ is truth-equivalent with “We accept p in the we-mode“. We can also say that we-mode acceptance consists of collective acceptance for the group with collective commitment concerning what has been accepted. When accepting something for the group the participants are collectively committed to a system of norms, which in general *requires* that the members perform certain actions (*e.g.*, inferences) and *permits* the performance of some other actions. In general there will be social sanctions -- approval, disapproval -- to control the group members activities supposedly governed by their normative collective commitment.

Stronger forms of collective acceptance “for the group“ that may be mentioned here are norm-based, institutional acceptance and plan-based or agreement-based collective acceptance. An example of the former is the collective acceptance that drunk driving is wrong and punishable, that anniversaries in a marriage ought to be celebrated, and perhaps also in some collective that squirrel fur counts as money. The last example is based on the social norm that everyone in the collective ought to treat squirrel fur as money. An example of plan-based or agreement-based collective acceptance, is the group members’ joint decision to elect a certain person as their leader. In general, acceptance for a group entails mutual belief in the acceptance, at least in “egalitarian“ groups and in groups in which the normative structure of the group does not affect collective acceptance.

Let me still comment on collective beliefs in the I-mode sense. There are what I have called “statistical“ group beliefs, which are basically shared “we-beliefs“ in the I-mode (or sometimes in the we-mode). In other words, they are shared beliefs of which there is mutual awareness in the group (*e.g.*, the Finns believe that having sauna is health-conferring activity). Such beliefs need not involve acceptances. The statistical aspect about them is the following. A we-belief is a belief that a single individual has. Roughly, an agent has the we-belief that p if and only if he believes that p and also believes that it is mutually believed in the group or, perhaps, in such and such subgroup that p. Thus we may count which percentage of a population shares the we-belief in question

There are also beliefs attributed to group as a collective, *viz.*, “group beliefs proper“. Group beliefs proper are to be analyzed in terms of wide acceptance, *viz.*, acceptance which need not be acceptance as true. I have accordingly argued that groups do not have genuine beliefs but only acceptance beliefs, *viz.*, groups only accept propositions in the wide sense and the results are called “group beliefs“ (see Tuomela, 1992, 1995). I have called this the “positional“ account of group beliefs, emphasizing by this that the group members must in this context generally act *qua* group members and thus in their right group positions.²

The upshot of our discussion of collective beliefs and acceptances is this. We-mode collective beliefs are collective acceptances in the wide sense (more or less in the sense of Engel’s properties 1*) - 5*) of Section I). Also beliefs that groups can have are acceptances in the wide sense, thus not

genuine beliefs. Only in the I-mode case can there be proper beliefs and acceptances in the narrow sense. Thus the considerations of Section II only apply to this kind of case.

IV CONCLUSION

In this paper I have discussed the problem of the relation between belief and acceptance in view of recent literature on the topic. In Section I belief was preliminarily characterized in terms of the properties B1) - B5) and acceptance in terms of A1) - A6). Later discussion, especially theses 1), 2), and 2*) in Section II, showed that belief and acceptance are closely related but differ in some respects. As acceptance need not be intentional action, the differences between belief and acceptance do not boil down to the simple view that acceptance, contrary to belief, is based on the agent's direct exercise of his will. Acceptance which is not based on intentional action was shown to be especially closely related to belief, especially to linguistic belief. Thus a person is in a non-intentionally acquired and held state of acceptance that something p, he also believes that p. Another general difference is that acceptance is language-dependent while there can be non-linguistic belief. Collective beliefs and acceptances were also briefly discussed in Section III of the paper. Among other things, it was noted that the notion of wide as contrasted with truth-oriented, narrow acceptance is central in the collective case.*

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Notes

1) Let us consider some aspects of collective acceptance in terms of the items in a group's intentional horizon (IH) from the point of view of collective acceptance (CA), forgroupness (FG), collective commitment (CoCom), and we-modeness (WM). The following can be taken to be a conceptually valid truth about we-modeness (see Tuomela, 1999a,b, for discussion):

i) $WM(CA(G,s)) \leftrightarrow CA(G,s) \ \& \ FG(CA(g,s)) \ \& \ CoCom(G,s)$

Clause i) claims that collective acceptance in the we-mode is collective acceptance for the group with collective commitment. The following claim also seems defensible:

ii) $CoCom(G,s) \rightarrow FG(CA(G,s))$

Verbally, ii) says that collective commitment in the context of collective acceptance entails collective acceptance for the group.

More generally, using obvious short-hand terminology, we may consider the following combinations of features within IH:

(+)-CA & (+)-FG & (+)-Cocom.

Of the 8 possible combinations the first one, *viz.*, CA & FG & CoCom is equivalent to WM and is the combination our Collective Acceptance account requires. Of the other combinatory possibilities only CA&-FG&Cocom, -CA & FG & CoCom, and -CA & -FG & CoCom are not possible, if we take collective acceptance (CA) to be collective social action or disposition to collective social action in the discussed, relatively precise sense of Tuomela and Bonnevier-Tuomela, 1997. (For further discussion of collective acceptance see Tuomela and Balzer (1999) and Tuomela (1999b).Tuomela, 1999a,b.)

2) Without discussing the matter more deeply here it may still be useful to give a feel of how such group beliefs can be analyzed in detail. The basic idea is that group acceptance is based on relevant group members' (the "operative" members') acceptance in the right group context. Let me therefore reproduce a summary of my earlier account of group beliefs (from Chapter 7 of Tuomela, 1995) but speak of group acceptance rather than belief:

(BC) Group G *accepts* that p in the social and normative circumstances C if and only if in C there are operative members A_1, \dots, A_m of G in respective positions P_1, \dots, P_m such that

1) the agents A_1, \dots, A_m , when they are performing their social tasks in their positions P_1, \dots, P_m and due to their exercising the relevant authority system of G, (intentionally) jointly accept p as the view of G, and because of this exercise of the authority system they ought to continue to positionally accept it;

2) there is a mutual belief among the operative members A_1, \dots, A_m to the effect that 1);

3) because of 1), the (full-fledged and adequately informed) nonoperative members of G tend to tacitly accept - or at least ought to accept - p, as members of G;

4) there is a mutual belief in G to the effect that 3).

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