§ Sufficient Conditions for Entering Self-deception in Belief Acquisition

1. The belief that \( p \) which \( S \) acquires is false.
2. \( S \) treats data relevant, or at least seemingly relevant, to the truth value of \( p \) in a motivationally biased way.
3. This biased treatment is a non-deviant cause of \( S \)’s acquiring the belief that \( p \).
4. The body of data possessed by \( S \) at the time provides greater warrant for \( \neg p \) than for \( p \).

Q: Are these conditions sufficient? Are they necessary?

* In comparison, Davidson’s conditions for self-deception are as follows:

An agent \( A \) is self-deceived with respect to a proposition \( p \) under the following conditions:

1. \( A \) has evidence on the basis of which he believes that \( p \) is more apt to be true than its negation;
2. The thought that \( p \), or the thought that he ought rationally to believe \( p \), motivates \( A \) to act in such a way as to cause himself to believe the negation of \( p \).
3. The action involved may be no more than an intentional directing of attention away from the evidence in favor of \( p \); or it may involve the active search for evidence against \( p \).
4. All that self-deception demands of the action is that the motive originates in a belief that \( p \) is true (or recognition that the evidence makes it more likely to be true than not), and that the action be done with the intention of producing a belief in the negation of \( p \).
5. The state that motivates self-deception and the state it produces coexist; in the strongest case, the belief that \( p \) not only causes a belief in the negation of \( p \), but also sustains it.

Q: How are the two views different?

§ Other factors at Work:

* selective evidence gathering process
Even though there is great evidence in favor of $\sim p$ readily available to the agents, owing to the selectivity of evidence gathering process, the evidence they actually possess at the time favor $p$ over $\sim p$.

* biased cognition

A person’s desire may play a role in producing the pertinent motivationally biased treatment of data.

§ **Self-Deception in Belief Retention**

Garden-variety self-deception is explicable independently of the assumption that self-deceivers manipulate data in an attempt to deceive themselves, or in an effort to protect or produce a favored belief. Nor is there an explanatory need to suppose that at some point Sam both believes that $p$ and believes that $\sim p$.

* Mele’s claim:

There is no static puzzle (that the agent both believes that $p$ and believes that $\sim p$).

* Mele on intention:

1. An agent can intentionally do something, $A$, without intentionally bringing it about some result that $A$ has.
2. Sam’s aim may simply be to put off for a while the painful process of reflecting on evidence for a painful prospect.
3. There is no evidence that he is trying to protect himself by inducing an opposite belief in himself.

§ **Two Strategies of Self-deception (in Dynamic Puzzle)**

*[Internal-biasing strategies]*

feature the manipulation of data that one already has.

Positive and negative misinterpretation are strategies of this kind.

*[Input-control strategies]*

feature one’s controlling (to some degree) which data one acquires.

Selective evidence-gathering is a prime example.

There are also *mixed* strategies, involving both internal biasing and input control.

§ **Mele’s Anti-intentionalist Account of self-deception:**
1. The sophisticated behavior in garden-variety examples of self-deception may be accounted for on a less demanding hypothesis that does not require the agents to possess relevant intentions; for example, intentions to deceive themselves into believing that $p$, or to cause themselves to believe that $p$, or to make it easier for themselves to believe that $p$.

2. Motivational states can prompt and sustain biased cognition of the sorts common in self-deception without the assistance of such intentions.

3. The biased treatment of data is often a result of the various costs involved in falsely believing in $p$ or falsely believing in $\sim p$.

4. The cost affects the agent’s “confidence threshold” in accepting or rejecting a hypothesis.

5. Therefore, not all people will take all available relevant evidence at face value.

6. People with a lower threshold will demand less evidence than what is available, but this is not because they intentionally try to generate a particular belief in themselves.

7. Finally, a person’s intelligence and intellectual training also are relevant.

**Mele’s conclusion:**

Some theorists have made self-deception more theoretically perplexing than it actually is by imposing on the phenomena a problematic conception of self-deception.