Preface

Traditionally, the primary question of the ethics of belief is "What ought one to believe?" Early on, I advance a view of how to answer this question. The question is to be answered conceptually, in accord with the concept of belief. If the question is to be answered conceptually, belief must be based only on that which can establish a belief as true, which, in the empirical realm, is largely evidence.

On this defense of *evidentialism,* the primary question should be not "what ought one to believe?" but "what *must* one believe?" or "what *cannot* one believe?" So, for example, you cannot now believe that Socrates laughed at noon on his thirteenth birthday because it is obvious that you do not have evidence for it.

In advancing this conceptual defense of evidentialism and drawing out consequences from it, I engaged my main research in epistemology. As the project developed, however, I was surprised to discover that I had to draw on related interests in pragmatics, the study of argument, the psychology of reasoning, and ethics.

The discovery was slow in coming as was the completion of this book. I want to especially thank five dear old friends not only for their comments, but also for their encouragement: L. Jonathan Cohen, Catherine Z. Elgin, Georges Rey, Michael Stocker, and Peter Unger.

L. Jonathan Cohen has been a major inspiration and influence on this book, especially in his account of inductive logic.

To my immense benefit, Catherine Elgin and I have been discussing epistemological issues for over twenty-five years. She has provided me with insightful comments on a hefty chunk of this work. Remarkably, even as our views have come to radically diverge, Kate is still able to tell me what is wrong with my arguments not only from her point of view, but from my own.

I expect that I speak for his many and widely dispersed philosophical pals and colleagues in saying that discussion with Georges Rey is one of our great pleasures. Georges sent me fifty pages of merciless and on-target comments, which we proceeded to argue through for hours upon hours. I am indebted to him for numerous improvements in the text.

Aside from many helpful conversations with Michael Stocker over the ethics of belief, two chapters were read and discussed with him, Jeffrey Blustein, and Christopher Gowans. The four of us have constituted a moral philosophy discussion group that has been meeting fairly regularly for over ten years. I benefited from their criticisms and suggestions, as I have from their good company.

Early on, Peter Unger made me appreciate that the position I defend depends on distinguishing a notion of belief as paradigmatic from various neighbors, which are only approximations to it.

The CUNY Graduate Center introduced me to three outstanding students: Bradley Armour-Garb, Jennifer Fisher, and Peter Ross. Ross gave me exacting comments on early versions of chapters 1 and 6. Fisher provided me with helpful, detailed criticisms on style and substance throughout the manuscript. I had the good fortune to have Armour-Garb, not only as a student, but as a colleague for around two years. In extensive discussion and written remarks he provided me with penetrating and subtle comments on virtually the entire manuscript.

At Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, I learned much on a number of the topics covered in this work from Arnold Koslow, Michael Levin, and especially, Julia Driver (now at Dartmouth).

Over the last four years I have engaged in regular phone-philosophy with Sidney Morgenbesser. As a philosopher's philosopher, it is expected that he would probe assumptions that we are inclined to take for granted. However, until you talk with Sidney frequently and at length, you could hardly imagine just how many assumptions those are.

Leigh Cauman edited the manuscript with her flair for language, clarity, and good sense.

I also extend thanks for the comments I received on various aspects of this work from: Horatio Alto-Costa, Kent Bach, Tyler Burge, Buzzy Chanowitz, John Deigh, Eugene Garver, Trudy Govier, Richard M. Hare, Christoph Jaeger, Jerrold Katz, Jim Landesman, Isaac Levi, Maureen Linker, Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Moran, David Owens, David Pitt,

Graham Priest, Paul Saka, Stephen Schiffer, Harvey Siegel, Michael Slote, Roy Sorensen, Ernest Sosa, and Jonathan Vogel. In two talks derived from this work, I received very thoughtful criticism by my respective commentators on those occasions, Gilbert Harman and Timothy Williamson. During the final stages of revision, I received trenchant criticisms from Mark Greenberg, demanding substantial changes. Chapter 1, section 7 attempts to answer a set of his objections.

My thanks to three editors at MIT for their good advice and suggestions: Margy Avery, Judy Feldmann, and Tom Stone.

My thanks to the Wolfe Institute and its director Robert Viscusi for a fellowship that gave me a year to work on the manuscript. Additional thanks to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Research Foundation of PSC-CUNY for fellowships and grants. A number of chapters draw on earlier articles, and I am grateful to the editors for allowing me do so: *The Journal of Philosophy, Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Mind, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* and *The Skeptical Inquirer*.

Aside from L. Jonathan Cohen's *The Probable and the Provable,* a number of contemporary works have influenced me in ways not well captured by endnotes. These include: Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit;* Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation;* Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification;* Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words;* Gilbert Harman, *Change in View;* Isaac Levi, *The Enterprise of Knowledge;* Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"; Peter Unger, *Ignorance;* Bernard Williams, "Deciding to Believe"; and Timothy Williamson, "Knowing and Asserting." (References to these works are found in the bibliography.)

Finally, I want to thank my family, to whom this work is dedicated, for making its completion impossible and necessary.