

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BELIEF.

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Attention should first be called to the fact that anything presented to a mind is accepted as real without hesitation or questioning unless there is something in the experience or the organization of that mind which opposes it. There seems, however, to be one limiting condition. In order to make it clear what that is let us use one of Prof. James' illustrations. "Suppose," he says, "a new-born mind, entirely blank and waiting for experience to begin. Suppose that it begins in the form of a visual impression of a lighted candle against a dark background and nothing else so that whilst this image lasts it constitutes the entire universe known to the mind in question. Suppose, moreover, that the candle is only imaginary and that no 'original' of it is recognized by us Psychologists outside. * * * Will this hallucinatory candle be believed in, will it have a real existence for the mind?"*

He answers this question in the affirmative. But in this he is, it seems to me, manifestly mistaken. In the first place it involves an error to speak of the candle in such a case as "known." Knowledge involves consciousness of relation, and this implies the presence of two or more images in consciousness. The perception of any relations, any analysis of this total impression into its constituent elements, is not possible before there has been present to consciousness more than one presentation. Indeed, if we can legitimately speak of "consciousness" at all in such a hypothetical situation, we can only mean a primordial and undifferentiated psychical state which really precedes consciousness in any clearly defined sense of the word. Knowledge, in any accurate meaning of the term, is inapplicable here and so is belief.

* *Principles of Psychology.* Vol. II. p. 287.

The child would neither accept nor reject the presentation—it would be neither real nor unreal. To speak of the child's accepting it as real or rejecting it as unreal is to attribute to the child our own mental attitudes. To say that because the child does not reject the candle-impression as unreal it accepts it as real, is to assume that the logical category of contradiction applies to that primordial mental experience, that the child is conscious of the relation of images to one another, whereas by hypothesis this is the single and sole image that has entered into its experience. For the mental act or attitude of belief to occur it is necessary that there should have been more than one experience, more than one image, more than a simple and undifferentiated content of consciousness; and that a beginning at least should have been made in the organization or correlation of those contents—a process which goes on very rapidly in the life of the child.

Whenever, then, the mind's reaction to a stimulus is sufficiently definite to be called belief or unbelief it is conditioned by the present mental content and organization. "Possession is nine points of the law" is a saw which has as much validity in the psychological as in the economic realm. The mind reacts as a whole upon a new presentation. In more abstract phrase we may say that the appropriation of new mental material *is a function of the mind as organized in past experience*. After the new material has been incorporated into the mental system it then plays its part also in determining the mental attitude toward subsequent presentations.

There are as many as six distinguishable ways in which the mind may react to new presentations.

I. First it may feel itself compelled to accept the new presentation as real or true. It is helpless before the presentation; cannot resist it. There may be no perceived opposition between the presentation and the mental organization and consequently no impulse to reject it

and no hesitation in accepting it, and in such a situation, as we shall later more fully point out, the mind cannot reject what is presented to it. But it is not this negative inability of which I now speak. The characteristic note of the reaction now under consideration is that the presentation has a positive compelling character; it *must be received*; it not only bears credentials which entitle it to enter but it comes too strongly armed to be denied entrance. It may be in large measure inconsistent with the mental organization in both its affective and ideational elements, but so much the worse for the mental organization. The presentation in this case necessitates a reorganization, and that means, of course, that it is disagreeable and would be rejected if that were practicable. There may arise an impulse to reject it, but the sense of necessity overwhelms such an impulse at its very birth; the presentation asserts itself and enters, whether or no. In such situations the mind is dealing either with presentations of the sensory type, which come with the clear and emphatic testimony of the senses; or with those which bear the stamp of logical necessity, such as mathematical axioms and the demonstrations based upon them, or the principles of identity, contradiction, etc. We shall not enter here into the question raised in philosophy, whether or not these axiomatic principles themselves have in the last analysis an empirical origin. If their origin should be accounted for in that way, it seems evident that at any rate they do not originate in the experience of the present-day individual, though they doubtless are developed, brought into consciousness, through individual experience. Certain it is that when the mind is confronted by the clear testimony of the senses or by an axiom, it feels the necessity of accepting such a presentation as real, provided it occurs in harmony with the conditions under which our senses normally give us information or under which our minds normally act. The only hesitation or questioning which we feel to be

permissible is as to whether the conditions of perception are normal. If we are convinced that they are normal it puts an end to hesitation.

Now, should this mental reaction be called belief? I think so. If I ask *why* I thus unhesitatingly accept the testimony of my senses or the truth of the mathematical axiom, the only answer that can be given is that I believe my senses give a correct report of reality or that I believe my mind is so constituted as to know truth. The fact that this belief is developed into full consciousness in philosophical meditation after the experience and is not a part of the conscious experience at the moment of perception makes no essential difference. It was implicit in the act. I accept and must accept the testimony of my senses or the truth of the axiom when such a presentation is made under normal conditions; but this necessity does not change its character as belief.

2. The mind may passively admit the presentation. In this case the new presentation, being not of the sensory or axiomatic order, does not call forth the sense of necessity. It does not in any positive or significant way agree with the already existing mental content or organization. It simply does not consciously conflict with any thing in the mental system. It is merely negative with respect to the present mental content. So far as what is already in consciousness is concerned there is no reason for accepting, and no reason for rejecting it. It is then passively admitted, taken for true. It finds ample room in the world of belief as constituted. The best examples of this kind of belief are found in children, though it is by no means limited to children. The child is told, for instance, the story of Santa Claus. Its limited experience contains nothing that is inconsistent with the story; it, therefore, accepts, believes it. At first this experience may seem to be identical in principle with that described in James' illustration; but this is a mistake. In the acceptance of Santa Claus as real, the child is acting with

an already organized consciousness, whereas in the very first presentation to the new-born babe there is no previous experience, no organized consciousness, no criteria of reality, no basis for the formation of a judgment as to the reality or unreality of any thing. When it believes in the existence of Santa Claus, the presentation bears some relation to the existing content of consciousness, a relation which may be described as negative agreement, and any presentation which bears this relation to its experience is accepted as true. But in James' illustration there is no relation of any kind whatsoever with any other content of the mind for the reason that there is no other content, and therefore no mental attitude of belief such as is here described. This type of belief may well be denominated primitive credulity. Many of the contents of the child's mental world are of this character. Indeed, to the end of its life, though it may grow to be a great philosopher with an extensive and critically constructed mental system, many of its beliefs will continue to be of this order, accepted simply because it is of the nature of the mind to accept what is presented to it, if there is no conscious conflict with the mental life as organized in experience. But the building up of an elaborate and reflective correlation of experience establishes a habit of critical examination, which takes the form of intellectual caution and which is applied, often with no conscious intention, to new presentations, especially in the sphere of one's principal activity and usually in matters of incidental interest; so that, as a general rule, with broadening experience credulity becomes a diminishing factor in determining beliefs. But it is an extremely important factor in the lives of children, of ignorant persons and of persons of limited experience.

3. The mind may positively receive the new presentation, may welcome it with more or less cordiality. As in the second case it is not of the sensory or axiomatic type. It does not come bearing credentials of inherent and irre-

sistible validity, like the clear testimony of the senses or the logical axiom. But though it is not in itself irresistible, it is at once felt to be in positive agreement with the existing mental content. It fits into the system. With more or less definiteness it is perceived to dove-tail into the mental structure so as to fill out in some measure the "noetic pattern," to use a phrase of Marshall's. It is an element which carries a step toward fulfillment the incomplete mental organization. When this peculiar experience is of a pronounced type, the presentation is felt to be not only a supplement to but a confirmation of the system of ideas, not only fitting in harmoniously with it but bringing to it an increment of stability; and is accompanied, therefore, by a distinctly pleasant feeling-tone. So to speak, the mind stretches out to it glad hands of welcome and ushers it into a room which seems prepared for it beforehand.

For inducing an act of belief like this it is, of course, only necessary that the new presentation should be in harmony with the content of consciousness at the time. There may be other elements of experience not at the time in consciousness with which the agreement would not be so entire; and later, when the effort is made to bring these elements into conscious relation with the new fact or idea, trouble may begin, a quarrel may arise between these elements and the new-comer so cordially welcomed at first. Again, there may be potential or implicit disharmony between the new presentation and the elements of the mental system that were in consciousness when it was accepted, and this disharmony may subsequently develop. The very host that welcomed the new inmate may discover on further acquaintance that there were deep-seated incompatibilities which were not apparent at the time. These may appear in subsequent reflection, as the mental system undergoes progressive reorganization, and thus an unexpected conflict may be precipitated. This, of course, is more likely to occur in

active and progressive, than static mental conditions. But whatever the subsequent fate of the new fact or idea may be it is believed, accepted as real or true, if it seems to be in harmony with the conscious mental system at the time of perception; and this acceptance is emphatic, *i. e.*, the belief is positive, in proportion as it is felt to confirm that system. If in the course of later reflection and mental reorganization that first "feeling" is justified, the positiveness of the belief will be increased. It will become deeply rooted in our mental world.

4. The mind may receive the presentation with more or less suspicion, as tentatively real or true. This species of reaction is determined by the fact that, while the new presentation seems to be in agreement with the mental system, there accompanies its acceptance a vague sense of uncertainty as to the reality or completeness of the agreement. This vague uncertainty may be due to a general attitude of caution induced by experience; or to the fact that the disagreeing factors are in the background, or perhaps below the threshold, of consciousness, and are indirectly projecting their influence into the conscious field. Every one has had experience colored in this way. For instance, a politician assures us of his devotion to the public welfare, but, while there is nothing known to us in his character or career to excite distrust and we therefore accept his assurance, we have been so often disappointed in men of this class that an almost inevitable shade of distrust goes with our acceptance. Or sometimes when a statement is made to us on good authority our minds are shadowed by a dim doubt of its correctness, the reason for which we cannot explicitly state. We believe the statement—it seems to be in agreement with our experience—and wonder that our belief of it is not more hearty. There is a semi-conscious impulse to question, but not of sufficient strength to cause a suspension of judgment. There is a merely nascent sense of the possibility of discord with parts of our ex-

perience which are not now in consciousness. Closely akin to this attitude, most probably identical with it in principle, is our acceptance of an hypothesis which seems to embody an illuminating principle, but which carries with it the possibility of failure in some as yet untried application. We believe it; but for a time, possibly forever, there accompanies it a shadow of uncertainty which is insignificant as compared with its convincing power, but which nevertheless enters into our mental attitude. With broadening experience that uncertainty may finally disappear and thus the mental attitude gradually change from a tentative to an unqualified belief.

5. The mind may keep the presentation standing at the door, awaiting investigation. This type of reaction is of great importance. It is the attitude of suspended judgment; it is a state of arrested belief. The presentation which is a candidate for incorporation in our mental system is held up for examination. This may be due, first, to its strangeness. The sense of possible conflict with our organized experience may be so pronounced that we cannot admit the new presentation as true until that question is at least tentatively settled. It is a situation similar to that described in the last paragraph; but with this important difference—the sense of uncertainty is relatively much greater, and the quantitative difference in the sense of uncertainty is so great as to result in a mental reaction qualitatively different. This may occur even in connection with the action of one of our senses. If the fact to which one sense testifies is an exceedingly strange one, we do not always accept it as a fact at once. We suspend judgment until we have assured ourselves that the sense is acting under normal conditions, and we commonly do this by trying the testimony of one sense against that of another. The eye, for instance, may testify to a ghostly apparition, and we test its truth by touch or some other sense. If the senses agree we accept their testimony as true. In principle the same course is

often followed when an hypothesis is proposed for the explanation of a problem and carries with it a sense of important disagreement with our system of ideas, although the disagreement may not be exactly obvious. We hold it in suspense and investigate, to see whether the suspected disagreement is actual. If we discover that the discord is not manifest but only more or less remotely possible, the suspension of judgment which arrested the acceptance of the hypothesis gives way to the qualified acceptance discussed above.

The suspended judgment may be due, second, to the fact that two presentations which are clearly inconsistent with each other are offered to the mind at the same time; as, for instance, two mutually exclusive hypotheses which are proposed as alternative explanations of the same phenomenon. Each may have some points of agreement with the mental system, and neither may be in obvious discord with it. But while either hypothesis might, so far as its own credentials are concerned, be tentatively accepted, obvious conflict with one another will keep either from being adopted until investigation has determined which of them stands in the more obvious and general agreement with our organized experience.

Or, third, this attitude may be due to the fact that there is manifest disagreement between that which offers itself and the mental system in which it seeks incorporation. The opposition may be more or less radical; but in such a case the acceptance of the presentation will clearly necessitate a more or less profound reorganization of the mental life. The history of the conflict between science and theology is full of examples of this situation; indeed, it is a frequently recurring phenomenon in the progress of thought and in the development of each individual mind that rises above the level of simple traditionalism. But when this conflict takes place between a new idea and an old system of ideas and results in the specific mental attitude of doubt, it is evident that the disagreement is

not absolute; the new idea must find some point of attachment to the present mental organization, otherwise it would be instantly rejected and doubt, the attitude of suspended judgment, would not occur.

6. The mind may positively and unequivocally reject the new presentation—shut the door, so to speak, in its face. This is the attitude of the closed mind. The new idea is not given any showing at all. There is no suspension of judgment, no hanging fire, no investigation. Judgment is pronounced at once. The fact that its disagreement with the mental system is profound and that it would, if judged as real, necessitate a general reconstruction of the mental world makes the new idea too disturbing to minds that have reached a certain stage of crystallization. The whole mind as organized reacts against it and judges it as untrue. There is no doubt in the attitude of the closed mind. Its characteristic note is the immediate assertion of unconditional adherence to the existing system of beliefs and the simultaneous rejection of the presentation which conflicts with it. Of course, no mind becomes so completely crystallized as to resist unconditionally new ideas of every description; but it not unfrequently happens that one's system of ideas pertaining to some particular field of experience becomes so fixed as to exclude—automatically, so to speak—every suggestion which involves any change of importance. This is often noticeable in the domain of theology and politics. It is characteristic of the mental organization of those who have reached advanced age in a provincial environment.

Several important consequences may be deduced from the foregoing analysis of the mental functions, belief and doubt.

A. The specific character, the *quale*, of belief is *the acceptance of a presentation as true*. But what is meant by "true"? Without being led into a detailed discussion of this difficult question, an answer sufficient for our pres-

ent purpose is that the "truth" of a presentation means that it may be taken as a safe basis of action. Belief of a presentation means that one considers it safe to act upon it in appropriate circumstances. This is the true mark and measure of belief. All thinking has reference ultimately to action. One's mental system is his equipment for the direction and control of action, using the word in the general sense of conduct; and the reception of any new elements among his beliefs signifies the preparedness and purpose to act in accordance therewith when the occasion to do so arises. The function of mind is to receive impressions or presentations from the environment, treasure them, correlate them and translate them into suitable acts of adjustment. That which to a mind is suitable to be translated into action is to that mind the "true"; and is believed. That which the mind suspects is not suitable for action is doubted. The body of beliefs which one holds is his mental correlation with environment. By translating them into conduct as occasions arise he effects his adjustments to environment from moment to moment. There is, then, no fixed line of absolute demarcation between knowledge and belief. They overlap and shade into one another. Our knowledge consists of that body of beliefs that have been thoroughly tested and found by actual results to be sure and safe guides to action. Our belief which is not also knowledge consists of the body of judgments which have been incorporated in our mental systems but which have not as yet been sufficiently tested to stand within that narrower circle. Knowledge is thoroughly tested belief; and within this limit knowledge and belief are designations of the same mental content viewed from different angles.

We have spoken of doubt as a state or attitude of arrested belief, and this exactly indicates its true character. It has been said, and truly, that it is doubt which requires explanation, not belief.* It is natural, normal to believe.

* Pillsbury's *Psychology of Reasoning*. P. 25.

It is the primary function of the mind to receive impressions from the environment and translate them into adjustments. In other words it is its function to believe and govern action accordingly. Doubt arises in the arrest of this primary function through a conflict between the practical tendencies of these impressions. Out of this state of things issues the secondary function of mind, *thinking*, i. e., comparison, deliberation, the effort to bring these conflicting tendencies into harmony, to correlate them in a higher unity; and as the environment to which adjustment must be made by the highly developed person becomes exceedingly complex and changeful, this function comes to be so important that we ordinarily think of it as primary rather than secondary.

B. Doubt, then, in its very nature *is a temporary function*. Chronic doubt is hurtful, and ultimately ruinous. If it becomes permanent, it means the partial or complete suspension of the life-process in the sphere in which it obtains. Life is a process of adjustment, and doubt is an arrest of this process, and can be justified only as a step toward a more adequate adjustment, a wider and completer correlation with environment. It is like a surgical operation, which is intended to relieve a mal-adjustment of some sort; but a surgery which would keep a man's body perpetually on the operating table under the dissecting knife would be criminal. And doubt which keeps the mind in perpetual suspense would certainly result in the permanent maiming of the life in some of its functions, and if it became universal would destroy the personality. It would mean the abdication of both the primary and secondary functions of the mind. *Doubt is justifiable when, and only when, it is a temporary stage in the organization of a larger and more adequate belief*. As we climb up the mountain side to the higher altitudes whence we may have a wider outlook upon the universe of reality, it is often necessary that we

pass through belts of cloud; and that which justifies and rewards us for climbing through the choking mists is the grander prospect which opens out above them.

C. The closed mind, on the other hand, is equally fatal. It avoids the dangers of chronic doubt, but has dangers of its own that are just as great. It leads one by a different route to a different destination, but one that is as far removed from the true ends of life. The closed mind has a belief and is active, therefore; whereas the mind suspended in chronic doubt is paralyzed. But the closed mind directs its activity more and more *against* reality. The beliefs of such a mind represent a certain correlation with a certain order of enviroing conditions. But this attitude of mind could be justified only on two grounds—(1) that those beliefs represent a perfect correlation with those conditions, (2) that those conditions undergo no change. We know as a matter of fact that neither of these assumptions is ever realized in the experience of finite minds. The correlation is never perfect and the enviroing conditions are always changing. The closed mind, therefore, falls into an increasingly serious mal-adjustment to the actual conditions of life, which is only another way of saying into increasingly hurtful error and opposition to truth; and this means that its activities are ever increasingly destructive to itself and others. To assume this attitude is to abdicate both the primary and secondary functions of mind; for its primary function is to *receive* impressions from the environment, organize them into systems of beliefs and direct conduct according to them, and if all presentations not in agreement with the existing mental system are to be on that ground rejected this function is no longer performed so far as its most important value for life is concerned. It also means the discontinuance of the function of thinking, for the characteristic mark of thought is the comparison of ideas with one another and with one's system of ideas, and its positive value for

life is the resolution of conflicts between them, the elimination of the totally false and the correlation of those which are in any measure true into a higher unity, a larger truth. For the closed mind the thinking process does not pass beyond the primary stage of perceiving the disagreement with the present mental system, whereupon the new idea is instantly judged as false.

The only mental attitude, therefore, which is consistent with the maintenance and development of life is that of the open mind, which is exposed, indeed, to the dangers of doubt but which is also accessible to larger truth, whose shadow doubt so often is. In this attitude we may move forever upward toward the infinitely distant goal of absolute truth, the perfect mental correlation with the universe of reality. The open mind is as far removed from the paralysis of chronic doubt as it is from the dead crystallization of the mind which never doubts, because it refuses to think. The open mind is not at all inconsistent with positive conviction and constructive activity; rather the contrary. It has convictions that have been so thoroughly tested in the crucible of thought that opposing ideas can be met without awakening disturbing fears; and its activities are constructive, because the true definition of construction is the more perfect correlation of life with the environment.

D. If we compare the conditions under which belief and doubt occur and the conditions under which feeling arises, the intimate connection between them becomes apparent.

In the first place, it is evident that the act of belief, considered in and by itself alone, is always pleasantly toned, because it is an experience which falls in with and quickens the mental process actually going on. This, however, is often obscured by the fact that the content of the belief, the fact or statement believed, imposes a decided check upon the deeper instinctive tendencies and processes of life. The pleasure which the mere act of be-

lieving causes is thus submerged and lost in the stronger tide of unpleasantness caused by the disagreeable idea or fact believed. Likewise the suspense of doubt, in and by itself, is always unpleasant; except, perhaps, in the experience of the chronic doubter, who has formed the habit of doubt which each suspension of judgment coincides with and strengthens. And even then, as in the case of every bad habit, the experience is not one of pure or unmixed pleasure but is shot through with a vague unpleasantness due to the fact that the habit is in opposition to fundamental vital processes.

In the second place, it is apparent, not only that belief and doubt are accompanied by feeling-tones, but that these reactions are in some measure determined by feeling. Differences of opinion will exist as to the emphasis which should be put upon feeling as a factor in determining these attitudes, and perhaps it does not play an equally important role in their determination in all minds, because minds are very unequal in their capacity for feeling. Minds vary in sensibility; vary not only as to the keenness of the feeling awakened by the same stimulus but as to the strength of their feeling responses to stimuli in general. And, other things being equal, the mind of keen and delicate sensibility may possibly be more influenced by feeling in the acceptance of presentations than the mind of dull sensibility. At any rate, in minds of unusual sensibility the influence of the feelings in this respect is more apparent; though, perhaps, if we could lay bare the inner life of all minds we should discover that they differ from one another in this matter not as to the extent to which feeling influences the acceptance of new facts or ideas, but as to the intensity or positiveness of the beliefs so determined. The mind of extreme sensibility holds its beliefs more passionately, more dogmatically, than the mind of dull sensibility. Its beliefs have for it a value, a preciousness, which they do not

have for a mind of the opposite type; though probably feeling is equally potent in each in determining the content of belief.

But how does feeling operate in the determination of belief? Manifestly it is not the sole factor. It does not operate apart from one's organized experience as represented in his system of ideas. Belief is the acceptance of a presentation and its installment in this system of ideas based upon the perception of agreement between the two. Feeling, then, must become influential in determining belief by exercising some measure of control over the action of consciousness as organized in this system. It operates as a power behind the throne.

(1). It influences the direction of the attention. Feeling is the peculiar emphasis of meaning for the self with which each presentation is clothed as consciousness is directed upon it. It is obvious, then, that the specific feeling which accompanies the focalizing of consciousness upon a given object does not determine this act; but the mood, or the course of feeling, or the general emotional situation which is the resultant of the preceding mental activity will unquestionably influence the direction of the attention. Among the presentations filing in a continuous series across the threshold of the mind, some are singled out and given consideration; others pass on, receiving scant attention. The mind is interested in some of them and not in others, and towards the latter it assumes no definite conscious attitude. Towards the former it assumes a definite attitude, which as it develops must resolve itself into belief—acceptance as real; or doubt—hesitation to accept as real; or rejection—judgment as unreal. Feeling, therefore, has much to do in the direction of this selective process which singles out the presentation upon which consciousness is concentrated; and this surely is a most important function.

(2). Feeling not only has much to do in controlling the direction of the attention, but is also very influential

in determining the attitude which the mind takes toward the new object. Not only the general mood or state of feeling, but the specific feeling which accompanies the concentration of consciousness upon the object determines to a large extent how the mind will treat it. If the feeling excited by the presentation is distinctly unpleasant, it inevitably tends to induce hesitation, and this is practically another name for doubt. This is especially true if the feeling is one that arises out of the deep instinctive stratum of our mental life. The fact or idea against which a strong feeling raises this initial protest is not likely to be accepted until it has shown clear credentials, even though there may be no apparent intellectual inconsistency, no disagreement with the system of ideas. It will be required to give positive and convincing evidence of its right to stand in the circle of beliefs. The merely negative evidence of the absence of perceived disagreement will not suffice. If it runs counter to our desires, our inclinations, our hopes, it will be held up for further investigation or be instantly rejected. Moreover, while the investigation is going on its points of agreement with our mental system will be minimized and its points of disagreement magnified; points of disagreement will be diligently sought for and points of agreement will not be sought for. Throughout the whole process, therefore, feeling is active and powerfully influences the action of the mind. When the feeling aroused by the presentation is emphatically unpleasant it is rarely possible to keep the balances of the judgment even. The unpleasant feeling excites suspicion against the object, to begin with; acts as the sheriff to arrest the suspect; then assumes the role of detective to search out damaging evidence; plays attorney for the prosecution; undertakes to weigh the evidence as a juror, and even seeks to interpret the law as judge. It is omnipresent, urgent, subtly influencing the proceedings at every stage. Perhaps it becomes too busy and domineering and

in the highly organized person may cause a reaction by awakening some counter feeling, such as mental self-respect, or the love of truth for truth's sake, or the sense of justice; and in this way only can the original feeling of displeasure evoked by the disagreeable idea or fact be checked and held within proper limits. But in persons whose mental development is not high the feeling, pleasant or unpleasant, called forth by a presentation generally secures a verdict for or against it unless the evidence the other way is overwhelming. The speaker who wishes to secure assent to a proposition will always find himself rowing against a powerful current if it excites decidedly disagreeable feeling. If, on the other hand, the feeling aroused is a distinctly pleasant one, he finds himself sailing with both wind and current in his favor. If no disagreement with the system is apparent the presentation meets with no opposition; unless, as previously indicated, its appearance is so strange as by itself to excite suspicion of its truth; and even this constitutes no real exception, because when the strangeness is so striking it indicates a certain lack of harmony with the mental system and it prevents the full development of the pleasant feeling-tone. When the feeling is decidedly agreeable the desire awakened directs attention to the points of agreement with the mental system, and diverts attention from the disagreements; underscores the former and leaves the latter unemphasized even when they are too obvious to be wholly overlooked; searches for agreements, which it is likely to find because it seeks for them; and, unless by its excesses it starts into activity some counter-feeling which enters the game, or unless the disagreements with one's systematized experience are so numerous, distinct and obtrusive as to render reconciliation impossible, it will probably secure the mind's assent to the new presentation.

Now, when we reflect that the majority of the contents of our intellectual system have secured their intro-

duction into it through these processes, it is apparent that, while feeling does not exercise an absolute control—since many unpleasant things have to be accepted—it has been a most potent factor in the organization of our whole system of belief; and, through its extensive control over the activity of the system which it has been so potent in forming, is constantly influencing the incorporation of new materials in it.

If we look back over the foregoing analysis of mental attitudes, we perceive that there are three general classes of beliefs—those which have their basis in the natural credulity of the mind, those which rest principally upon positive agreement with the intellectual system, and those which derive their certification chiefly from powerful feelings that spring from our instinctive organization. The first can be referred to the suggestibility of the mind; the second to its rationality; the third, if I may coin a word, to its affectability, i. e., to its capacity for suffering and enjoyment. We are beings who have conscious needs and desires, who must live or die and who crave life. Out of this deep instinctive substratum of our nature rise longings for certain kinds of satisfactions, and these longings generate belief in the reality of those objects which are necessary to their satisfaction.

We may distinguish, then, primitive credulity, rational belief and vital conviction. Credulity believes things because it is told that they are true. It is natural and beautiful in the child, because the child has had but little experience and has, therefore, no well established positive standard of critical judgment. In credulity its mental life normally begins. But it does not by any means excite our admiration when we observe it in the grown person, because the grown person has had experience and opportunity to organize his intellectual life, and thus should be equipped to weigh and consider all presentations that seek admittance to his mind. We consider it, therefore, abnormal and reprehensible for him,

in matters of important concern, to accept what he is told without the exercise of his own reason. In no matter of great practical importance should his belief rest blindly upon authority, the subjective correlate of which is suggestibility, but should have its roots in himself, should be tested in the crucible of his own intellect. If he believes the statements of others it should be not the mere acquiescence of credulity but the assent of a rationally acting mind. Vital conviction also stands in antithesis to credulous belief, but not to rational belief. It is not inconsistent with the latter but is distinct from it in principle. By its very nature its content is often not subject to final ratification by the logical faculty. That content, however, should not be inconsistent with the rational conclusions of the mind; and if such an inconsistency appears the strength of the vital faith is weakened in proportion to the depth of that antagonism. There should be agreement between the two in order to secure inward peace and unity and a high degree of practical efficiency. And on the whole there is a tendency for the two types of belief to coincide. Sometimes it happens that a man builds up a belief on what seems to him a rational basis, and subsequently, when a powerful stimulation of the instinctive nature occurs, finds that this belief denies satisfaction to some of his most vital longings. Then he suffers distress of mind, and in the long run the more frail structure of the belief which is mainly logical in character will usually give way and he will build a structure of belief that is consistent with the central cravings of his nature; though such a fortunate adjustment does not always take place, and the person is then left with a permanent and more or less painful discord in his mental life. Such situations have been frequent in the history of religion. It often happens that a man will entertain a belief of the credulous or rational type, which has comparatively little influence upon his life until some powerful stimulation of his instinctive nature vivifies it and

converts it into a vital conviction. Many a man accepts the existence of God through social suggestion, or as a result of reasoning; but the belief remains to a large extent formal and inoperative until in some great crisis his vital longing for divine fellowship and support is awakened and the realization of God becomes the source of his deepest satisfaction and the controlling influence in his conduct.

The distinction between these types of belief must not be understood to imply that feeling is not operative in the formation of all of them. The distinction lies, first, in the different degrees and modes of influence exerted by the intellect and the feelings in their formation; and, second, in the operation of a special class of feelings in building up vital conviction. Feeling has comparatively little to do with what is accepted by the credulous mind under the influence of suggestion; although it is far from being an insignificant factor. In rational belief the intellect plays a far more positive role than in credulity and a far more dominant role than in vital belief; though feeling has a more definite and important part in it than in credulity. In vital faith, as already indicated, a special class of feelings which spring from the deepest depths of our nature are the controlling factor. The sponsor, the guarantor of vital faith is neither external authority nor the intellectual system, but the fundamental needs of human nature voicing themselves in powerful emotions when deep instincts are excited.

One's real religious faith, stripped of all the remnants or accretions of credulity, belongs to the class of vital beliefs. It is the affirmation of the reality of the supersensible objects and relations which are felt to be necessary for the satisfaction of the fundamental needs of the personality. It declares that back of all sensory experience—the material universe—are beings, activities, tendencies, ends which constitute the ultimate meaning of all life. In this faith the cognitive activity is

motivated by deep instinctive longings and is only negatively controlled by the intellectual system, sometimes, indeed, results in a reconstruction of that system. It has been truly said: "the soul likes to project that which is most deeply rooted in its own being furthest beyond itself. The objective lies for it, so to speak, in the middle distance; but that which is inmost, which originates in the most subjective stratum of the soul, it extends from itself into an Absolute, Over-objective."* That is, our own inmost heart postulates for us a universe of reality that lies beyond this objective world of the senses. The formulation of this reality is the work of the intellect, but in that work it is controlled by affection and desire. The soul, using the imagination as a brush, paints the far background of existence in the colors of its own intimate feelings. We require a spiritual world which will answer and satisfy our central cravings. Thus the Psalmist cried, "My soul thirsteth for God."

Since, however, we are under the necessity of *conceiving*, of clothing in intellectual forms, the supersensible reality which the heart postulates, no little trouble arises in the realm of belief. The materials which the intellect uses are sensuous images. Its most abstract constructions are built up of these images. We have to dress up the supersensible in the garments furnished by the senses. When the intellect has thus formulated what the heart has postulated in the realm beyond the senses, these forms themselves cannot be changed without a profound disturbance of the heart. But as the intellectual system undergoes reorganization, as it inevitably must in active minds, those forms, which are part and parcel of that system, must share in the reconstruction. Hence arises religious doubt. If, as sometimes happens, the intellect in its reconstituted system of ideas repudiates entirely these forms, and undertakes by itself to give an account of all reality, the result is a rationalistic

* Simmel. *Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie*. P. 154.

philosophy, which inevitably leaves the deeper cravings of the heart unsatisfied. Such a system cannot long endure. The heart will make its demands heard. On the other hand, if the heart demands that the forms in which its postulates have been clothed by the intellect shall never be altered, one of two results will inevitably follow—either intellectual growth will be arrested, or else the old forms will be filled with a new content of meaning. The struggle between the head and the heart is one of the significant phenomena of our time. In some persons their reconciliation is never effected. The most notable example, perhaps, of this refusal of the head and heart to co-operate was Herbert Spencer. There is singular pathos in the closing words of his *Autobiography*. After discussing the vastness of the manifold mystery of the universe and declaring the impotency of the intellect to comprehend it, he adds: "And along with this rises the paralyzing thought—what if, of all that is thus incomprehensible to us, there exists no comprehension anywhere? No wonder that men take refuge in authoritative dogma! * * * Thus religious creeds, which in one way or other, occupy the sphere which rational interpretation seeks to occupy and fails, and fails the more, the more it seeks, I have come to regard with sympathy based on community of need; feeling that dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with a wish that solutions could be found." He was only a distinguished member of that large, and probably growing, community of souls whose hearts require a religious interpretation of the universe, but whose intellectual systems are in disagreement with any such interpretation as has been offered.

There is a still larger number who have not repudiated all religious interpretations, leaving their hearts in naked want, but are more or less conscious of lack of harmony between their systems of thought and these interpretations, and yet strive to hold on to both. They

can take refuge on neither horn of the dilemma. There is a lack of unity in their inner lives. The sense of uncertainty hangs like a discouraging shadow over their mental life, not paralyzing but relaxing the nerve of religious faith. The equilibrium of their faith is very unstable. It has a very insecure support in intellectual forms. It stands like a tree clinging with a few roots to the bank of the stream whose waters have nearly deprived it of sustaining earth.

On the other hand, we should not forget that there is a species of doubt which originates in personal inclinations. Feeling may generate doubt as well as faith. Evil habits of life often give rise to feelings which repel a religious conception of the world, and influence the intellect to question the existence of a holy supreme Being and the moral order of the world. The debauchee, the thief, the murderer have very powerful reasons, not of the intellectual but of the emotional type, for wishing that the world were without a moral meaning or a moral ruler; and in this region of the mental life, more absolutely than in any other, "the wish is father to the thought."

In conclusion some paragraphs must be given to the consideration of the practical question toward which this discussion has looked from the beginning; namely, the preacher's relation to religious doubt. The question as it relates to the preacher's own doubts can not here be considered in detail; but, it may now be remarked that his attitude toward other doubters will be necessarily influenced by his own experience. Every case of doubt is clearly a special problem and should be dealt with as such. Personal idiosyncrasies figure largely in each, and only general rules can be laid down. But in any case the preacher's primary duty is to *understand*. It is the especial function of preaching to *present religious truth in such a way as to secure its intelligent and whole-hearted acceptance, and through genuine belief to influence conduct in right directions*. But if the preacher be

ignorant of the nature of doubt and of the conditions under which it arises, his dealing with it will be unintelligent, misdirected and often disastrous. In general it may also be said that sympathetic treatment alone is appropriate and effective. Denunciation, while it has its limited function in preaching, should never be used to bring the doubter to the belief of the truth. The preacher who in such cases indulges in denunciation with the notion that he is following the example of Jesus makes a capital mistake from which knowledge of the nature of doubt would have saved him. Those cases which called forth the lightning-like denunciations of Jesus were typical examples not of doubt, but of the closed mind, a mental state which lies at the opposite extreme from doubt. There is, of course, a form of doubt which is sometimes called dishonest, and dishonesty should always be severely dealt with. But careful discrimination should be exercised in this matter. If doubt really exists, no matter what influences have induced it, it is a real state of mental uncertainty; and denunciation is misdirected if aimed at this state. It should be directed rather at those courses of conduct which have induced it. If evil courses of conduct have resulted in doubt concerning religious verities, it should be remembered that deeper down than these perverse habits are the old vital needs which when they can find voice, speak always in favor of the religious interpretation of the world. To remove the doubt thus originated, the most effective method is to awaken from their somnolence these vital needs and bring them into consciousness, that the soul may be flooded with those primal and powerful feelings on the waves of which faith rides to rightful dominion. Criticism of the immoral conduct, coupled with sincere sympathy for the transgressor, is the appropriate means for the preacher to use. To denounce the doubt as such is more likely to strengthen than to dispel it. To demonstrate that the doubt is not justified on in-

tellektual grounds is ineffective, because it did not really originate in the inconsistency of faith with the intellectual system, and therefore a merely logical reconciliation of the two will not remove it. If the mere disagreeableness of the religious doctrine has been the only real cause of its being held in the suspense of doubt—as is the case in the kind of doubt we are now considering—it is only necessary in order to turn the tables in its favor to arouse a more powerful counter-feeling which springs from a lower depth of the personality.

But it is a more difficult problem to deal effectively with the doubt which arises from a real conflict between the postulates of faith and the intellectual system of the doubter. Here denunciation is manifestly absurd. Denunciation implies moral dereliction; and in this case the doubter is conscious that moral dereliction is not the source of his doubt. Harsh criticism, the prophecy of future calamity, dogmatic assertion of every kind fall wide of the mark and are likely to be interpreted as the mere rage of intellectual impotency. The rational aspect of the doubt must be squarely met, and should be met in the broadest and fairest spirit. Just as in dealing with the class of doubters referred to above, personal sympathy and kindness are of the utmost importance; but genuine intellectual sympathy is needed also, and it is not always easy for the preacher to have this. The psychological reason for this difficulty may be readily perceived. The mental processes involved in the exercise of the ministerial function render it easier for the preacher to maintain an attitude of belief than for persons engaged in other occupations. We do not mean to attribute to ministers of religion any thing more than the ordinary weaknesses of human nature, when we say that the fact that it is to his professional and economic interest to maintain that attitude may not be without some degree of unconscious influence upon him. It is only to assume that he is normally human. He must maintain

an attitude of positive belief in order to be successful in the work to which he has devoted his life. Not only does doubt, especially if it become chronic, cripple his real effectiveness, but a reputation for heresy endangers the prospect of his securing employment by the churches. Of course, if the latter consideration comes to figure even semi-consciously in the determination of his attitude, he is dwelling next door to downright dishonesty; and a general acquaintance with preachers forbids the assumption of this as a consciously operating motive in the lives of any except a small and contemptible minority of them. On the contrary I am persuaded that in many instances, the knowledge of the danger of being subconsciously influenced by this material consideration leads many conscientious men to entertain suggestions of doubt which, perhaps, otherwise would not trouble them, and to search their minds with an excessive keenness of scrutiny. However, after all has been said, it would be an assumption of their superiority to ordinary human limitations to suppose that good ministers are never subject to the unconscious operation of this influence.

But apart from this, the characteristic direction of the preacher's attention tends to keep his mind focussed upon the religious needs of men; these needs are more constantly vocal in his own consciousness and more apparent to him in the lives of others than is the case with men in other occupations. When he contemplates the intellectual problems of faith, he approaches them, therefore, with a more pronounced bias in favor of the reality of the objects of belief than other men usually do. The reasons *for* receive a relatively greater emphasis and the reasons *against* a relatively weaker one than they do in most other minds engaged in these investigations. Other things, therefore, being equal, the preacher's peculiar point of view and modes of thought render it easier for him than for most other men to maintain an attitude of positive belief. Other things, to be sure, are not always

equal; and hence it should not be invariably assumed as a matter of course that others are more troubled by doubts than the minister. Especially should we bear in mind that the minister, if he uses his opportunities for study as he should, will become acquainted with many of the intellectual difficulties pertaining to religion which many of his hearers who are not engaged in intellectual pursuits never have to wrestle with, and their belief will, therefore, not be subjected to such severe tests as his. But we repeat that, *other things being equal*, he will find it easier than others to maintain a positive belief in the realities of religion. For this reason his intellectual sympathy with doubters is likely to be deficient. Openness of mind as to these matters is likely to decrease with the years; and without conscious effort, motivated by desire to keep in sympathy with those who are struggling with the intellectual problems of religion, his bark may be found at last, with furled sails, stranded in stagnant waters which have been cut off by the drifting sands from the deep currents and strong winds of the open sea.

If the preacher's mission is to get the truths of religion believed, it is essential that he should present them in a way to render the perplexed and questioning minds of this age accessible to them. At the same time it is equally important that he, while apprehending and appreciating the difficulties of the doubter, should hold and present his beliefs with the positiveness of assured conviction. The doubter is not assisted in the attainment of mental unity by discovering that the preacher has question marks parenthetically inserted after all his statements. The preacher should certainly be a believer, a genuine and enthusiastic believer; but an open-minded believer. His beliefs should not be of the hot-house variety, whose life can be assured only by keeping them in an atmosphere artificially warmed under a glass cover, with roots protected from the chilly soil; but should have the health and hardihood of the plant that thrives and

grows amidst the winds and frost of the open air. It is only thus that he can secure the confidence of the doubter; and this is a matter of the first importance. When the doubters have become convinced that he is a brave and intelligent believer who has not shrunk from looking squarely in the eye the most frowning difficulties, whose crown of faith is lustrous because it has been fairly won upon the battle-field, their hearts more readily open to him and the firm utterance of his convictions stirs deeper depths in their souls. The preacher is too often insulated from his doubting hearers because they have the impression that he would have less assurance if he had more knowledge, and would be less dogmatic if he had more courage. But the preacher who can convince his hearers of his open-mindedness, his absolute sincerity and his intellectual courage and yet proclaims his inspiring message with a sure note of positive conviction, blended with a note of sincere sympathy with those who have not been able to attain to his assurance, will grip the mind and heart of this perplexed and questioning age. He will be a real defender of the faith, because he will be a builder of the faith.