

Lecture XII. Belief

Belief, which is our subject to-day, is the central problem in the analysis of mind. Believing seems the most "mental" thing we do, the thing most remote from what is done by mere matter. The whole intellectual life consists of beliefs, and of the passage from one belief to another by what is called "reasoning." Beliefs give knowledge and error; they are the vehicles of truth and falsehood. Psychology, theory of knowledge and metaphysics revolve about belief, and on the view we take of belief our philosophical outlook largely depends.

Before embarking upon the detailed analysis of belief, we shall do well to note certain requisites which any theory must fulfil.

(1) Just as words are characterized by meaning, so beliefs are characterized by truth or falsehood. And just as meaning consists in relation to the object meant, so truth and falsehood consist in relation to something that lies outside the belief. You may believe that such-and-such a horse will win the Derby. The time comes, and your horse wins or does not win; according to the outcome, your belief was true or false. You may believe that six times nine is fifty-six; in this case also there is a fact which makes your belief false. You may believe that America was discovered in 1492, or that it was discovered in 1066. In the one case your belief is true, in the other false; in either case its truth or falsehood depends upon the actions of Columbus, not upon anything present or under your control. What makes a belief true or false I call a "fact." The particular fact that makes a given belief true or false I call its "objective,"* and the relation of the belief to its objective I call the "reference" or the "objective reference" of the belief. Thus, if I believe that Columbus crossed the Atlantic in 1492, the "objective" of my belief is Columbus's actual voyage, and the "reference" of my belief is the relation between my belief and the voyage—that relation, namely, in virtue of which the voyage makes my belief true (or, in another case, false). "Reference" of beliefs differs from "meaning" of words in various ways, but especially in the fact that it is of two kinds, "true" reference and "false" reference. The truth or falsehood of a belief does not depend upon anything intrinsic to the belief, but upon the nature of its relation to its objective. The intrinsic nature of belief can be treated without reference to what makes it true or false. In the remainder of the present lecture I shall ignore truth and falsehood, which will be the subject of Lecture XIII. It is the intrinsic nature of belief that will concern us to-day.

* This terminology is suggested by Meinong, but is not exactly the same as his.

(2) We must distinguish between believing and what is believed. I may believe that Columbus crossed the Atlantic, that all Cretans are liars, that two and two are four, or that nine times six is fifty-six; in all these cases the believing is just the same, and only the contents believed are different. I may remember my breakfast this morning, my lecture last week, or my first sight of New York. In all these cases the feeling of memory-belief is just the same, and only what is remembered differs. Exactly similar remarks apply to expectations. Bare assent, memory and expectation are forms of belief; all three are different from what is believed, and each has a constant character which is independent of what is believed.

In Lecture I we criticized the analysis of a presentation into act, content and object. But our analysis of belief contains three very similar elements, namely the believing, what is believed and the objective. The objections to the act (in the case of presentations) are not valid against the believing in the case of beliefs, because the believing is an actual experienced feeling, not something postulated, like the act. But it is necessary first to complete our preliminary requisites, and then to examine the content of a belief. After that, we shall be in a position to return to the question as to what constitutes believing.

(3) What is believed, and the believing, must both consist of present occurrences in the believer, no matter what may be the objective of the belief. Suppose I believe, for example, "that Caesar crossed the Rubicon." The objective of my belief is an event which happened long ago, which I never saw and do not remember. This event itself is not in my mind when I believe that it happened. It is not correct to say that I am believing the actual event; what I am believing is something now in my mind, something related to the event (in a way which we shall investigate in Lecture XIII), but obviously not to be confounded with the event, since the event is not occurring now but the believing is. What a man is believing at a given moment is wholly determinate if we know the contents of his mind at that moment; but Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon was an historical physical event, which is distinct from the present contents of every present mind. What is believed, however true it may be, is not the actual fact that makes the belief true, but a present event related to the fact. This present event, which is what is believed, I shall call the "content" of the belief. We have already had occasion to notice the distinction between content and objective in the case of memory-beliefs, where the content is "this occurred" and the objective is the past event.

(4) Between content and objective there is sometimes a very wide gulf, for example in the case of "Caesar crossed the Rubicon." This gulf may, when it is first perceived, give us a feeling that we cannot really "know" anything about the outer world. All we can "know," it may be said, is what is now in our thoughts. If Caesar and the Rubicon cannot be bodily in our thoughts, it might seem as though we must remain cut off from knowledge of them. I shall not now deal at length with this feeling, since it is necessary first to define "knowing," which cannot be done yet. But I will say, as a preliminary answer, that the feeling assumes an ideal of knowing which I believe to be quite mistaken. It assumes, if it is thought out, something like the mystic unity of knower and known. These two are often said to be combined into a unity by the fact of cognition; hence when this unity is plainly absent, it may seem as if there were no genuine cognition. For my part, I think such theories and feelings wholly mistaken: I believe knowing to be a very external and complicated relation, incapable of exact definition, dependent upon causal laws, and involving no more unity than there is between a signpost and the town to which it points. I shall return to this question on a later occasion; for the moment these provisional remarks must suffice.

(5) The objective reference of a belief is connected with the fact that all or some of the constituents of its content have meaning. If I say "Caesar conquered Gaul," a person who knows the meaning of the three words composing my statement knows as much as can be known about the nature of the objective which would make my statement true. It is clear that the objective reference of a belief is, in general, in some way derivative from the meanings of the words or images that occur in its content. There are, however, certain complications which must be borne in mind. In the first place, it might be contended that a memory-image acquires meaning only through the memory-belief, which would seem, at least in the case of

memory, to make belief more primitive than the meaning of images. In the second place, it is a very singular fact that meaning, which is single, should generate objective reference, which is dual, namely true and false. This is one of the facts which any theory of belief must explain if it is to be satisfactory.

It is now time to leave these preliminary requisites, and attempt the analysis of the contents of beliefs.

The first thing to notice about what is believed, i.e. about the content of a belief, is that it is always complex: We believe that a certain thing has a certain property, or a certain relation to something else, or that it occurred or will occur (in the sense discussed at the end of Lecture IX); or we may believe that all the members of a certain class have a certain property, or that a certain property sometimes occurs among the members of a class; or we may believe that if one thing happens, another will happen (for example, "if it rains I shall bring my umbrella"), or we may believe that something does not happen, or did not or will not happen (for example, "it won't rain"); or that one of two things must happen (for example, "either you withdraw your accusation, or I shall bring a libel action"). The catalogue of the sorts of things we may believe is infinite, but all of them are complex.

Language sometimes conceals the complexity of a belief. We say that a person believes in God, and it might seem as if God formed the whole content of the belief. But what is really believed is that God exists, which is very far from being simple. Similarly, when a person has a memory-image with a memory-belief, the belief is "this occurred," in the sense explained in Lecture IX; and "this occurred" is not simple. In like manner all cases where the content of a belief seems simple at first sight will be found, on examination, to confirm the view that the content is always complex.

The content of a belief involves not merely a plurality of constituents, but definite relations between them; it is not determinate when its constituents alone are given. For example, "Plato preceded Aristotle" and "Aristotle preceded Plato" are both contents which may be believed, but, although they consist of exactly the same constituents, they are different, and even incompatible.

The content of a belief may consist of words only, or of images only, or of a mixture of the two, or of either or both together with one or more sensations. It must contain at least one constituent which is a word or an image, and it may or may not contain one or more sensations as constituents. Some examples will make these various possibilities clear.

We may take first recognition, in either of the forms "this is of such-and-such a kind" or "this has occurred before." In either case, present sensation is a constituent. For example, you hear a noise, and you say to yourself "tram." Here the noise and the word "tram" are both constituents of your belief; there is also a relation between them, expressed by "is" in the proposition "that is a tram." As soon as your act of recognition is completed by the occurrence of the word "tram," your actions are affected: you hurry if you want the tram, or cease to hurry if you want a bus. In this case the content of your belief is a sensation (the noise) and a word ("tram") related in a way which may be called predication.

The same noise may bring into your mind the visual image of a tram, instead of the word "tram." In this case your belief consists of a sensation and an image suitably related. Beliefs of this class are what are called "judgments of perception." As we saw in Lecture VIII, the images associated with a sensation often come with such spontaneity and force that the unsophisticated do not distinguish them from the sensation; it is only the psychologist or the skilled observer who is aware of the large mnemonic element that is added to sensation to make perception. It may be objected that what is added consists merely of images without belief. This is no doubt sometimes the case, but is certainly sometimes not the case. That belief always occurs in perception as opposed to sensation it is not necessary for us to maintain; it is enough for our purposes to note that it sometimes occurs, and that when it does, the content of our belief consists of a sensation and an image suitably related.

In a PURE memory-belief only images occur. But a mixture of words and images is very common in memory. You have an image of the past occurrence, and you say to yourself: "Yes, that's how it was." Here the image and the words together make up the content of the belief. And when the remembering of an incident has become a habit, it may be purely verbal, and the memory-belief may consist of words alone.

The more complicated forms of belief tend to consist only of words. Often images of various kinds accompany them, but they are apt to be irrelevant, and to form no part of what is actually believed. For example, in thinking of the Solar System, you are likely to have vague images of pictures you have seen of the earth surrounded by clouds, Saturn and his rings, the sun during an eclipse, and so on; but none of these form part of your belief that the planets revolve round the sun in elliptical orbits. The only images that form an actual part of such beliefs are, as a rule, images of words. And images of words, for the reasons considered in Lecture VIII, cannot be distinguished with any certainty from sensations, when, as is often, if not usually, the case, they are kinaesthetic images of pronouncing the words.

It is impossible for a belief to consist of sensations alone, except when, as in the case of words, the sensations have associations which make them signs possessed of meaning. The reason is that objective reference is of the essence of belief, and objective reference is derived from meaning. When I speak of a belief consisting partly of sensations and partly of words, I do not mean to deny that the words, when they are not mere images, are sensational, but that they occur as signs, not (so to speak) in their own right. To revert to the noise of the tram, when you hear it and say "tram," the noise and the word are both sensations (if you actually pronounce the word), but the noise is part of the fact which makes your belief true, whereas the word is not part of this fact. It is the MEANING of the word "tram," not the actual word, that forms part of the fact which is the objective of your belief. Thus the word occurs in the belief as a symbol, in virtue of its meaning, whereas the noise enters into both the belief and its objective. It is this that distinguishes the occurrence of words as symbols from the occurrence of sensations in their own right: the objective contains the sensations that occur in their own right, but contains only the meanings of the words that occur as symbols.

For the sake of simplicity, we may ignore the cases in which sensations in their own right form part of the content of a belief, and confine ourselves to images and words. We may also omit the cases in which both images and words occur in the content of a belief. Thus we become confined to two cases: (a) when the content consists wholly of images, (b) when it consists wholly of words. The case of mixed images and words has no special importance, and its omission will do no harm.

Let us take in illustration a case of memory. Suppose you are thinking of some familiar room. You may call up an image of it, and in your image the window may be to the left of the door. Without any intrusion of words, you may believe in the correctness of your image. You then have a belief, consisting wholly of images, which becomes, when put into words, "the window is to the left of the door." You may yourself use these words and proceed to believe them. You thus pass from an image-content to the corresponding word-content. The content is different in the two cases, but its objective reference is the same. This shows the relation of image-beliefs to word-beliefs in a very simple case. In more elaborate cases the relation becomes much less simple.

It may be said that even in this very simple case the objective reference of the word-content is not quite the same as that of the image-content, that images have a wealth of concrete features which are lost when words are substituted, that the window in the image is not a mere window in the abstract, but a window of a certain shape and size, not merely to the left of the door, but a certain distance to the left, and so on. In reply, it may be admitted at once that there is, as a rule, a certain amount of truth in the objection. But two points may be urged to minimize its force. First, images do not, as a rule, have that wealth of concrete detail that would make it IMPOSSIBLE to express them fully in words. They are vague and fragmentary: a finite number of words, though perhaps a large number, would exhaust at least their SIGNIFICANT features. For--and this is our second point--images enter into the content of a belief through the fact that they are capable of meaning, and their meaning does not, as a rule, have as much complexity as they have: some of their characteristics are usually devoid of meaning. Thus it may well be possible to extract in words all that has meaning in an image-content; in that case the word-content and the image-content will have exactly the same objective reference.

The content of a belief, when expressed in words, is the same thing (or very nearly the same thing) as what in logic is called a "proposition." A proposition is a series of words (or sometimes a single word) expressing the kind of thing that can be asserted or denied. "That all men are mortal," "that Columbus discovered America," "that Charles I died in his bed," "that all philosophers are wise," are propositions. Not any series of words is a proposition, but only such series of words as have "meaning," or, in our phraseology, "objective reference." Given the meanings of separate words, and the rules of syntax, the meaning of a proposition is determinate. This is the reason why we can understand a sentence we never heard before. You probably never heard before the proposition "that the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands habitually eat stewed hippopotamus for dinner," but there is no difficulty in understanding the proposition. The question of the relation between the meaning of a sentence and the meanings of the separate words is difficult, and I shall not pursue it now; I brought it up solely as being illustrative of the nature of propositions.

We may extend the term "proposition" so as to cover the image-contents of beliefs consisting of images. Thus, in the case of remembering a room in which the window is to the left of the door, when we believe the image-content the proposition will consist of the image of the window on the left together with the image of the door on the right. We will distinguish propositions of this kind as "image-propositions" and propositions in words as "word-propositions." We may identify propositions in general with the contents of actual and possible beliefs, and we may say that it is propositions that are true or false. In logic we are concerned with propositions rather than beliefs, since logic is not interested in what people do in fact believe, but only in the conditions which determine the truth or falsehood of possible beliefs. Whenever possible, except when actual beliefs are in question, it is generally a simplification to deal with propositions.

It would seem that image-propositions are more primitive than word-propositions, and may well ante-date language. There is no reason why memory-images, accompanied by that very simple belief-feeling which we decided to be the essence of memory, should not have occurred before language arose; indeed, it would be rash to assert positively that memory of this sort does not occur among the higher animals. Our more elementary beliefs, notably those that are added to sensation to make perception, often remain at the level of images. For example, most of the visual objects in our neighbourhood rouse tactile images: we have a different feeling in looking at a sofa from what we have in looking at a block of marble, and the difference consists chiefly in different stimulation of our tactile imagination. It may be said that the tactile images are merely present, without any accompanying belief; but I think this view, though sometimes correct, derives its plausibility as a general proposition from our thinking of explicit conscious belief only. Most of our beliefs, like most of our wishes, are "unconscious," in the sense that we have never told ourselves that we have them. Such beliefs display themselves when the expectations that they arouse fail in any way. For example, if someone puts tea (without milk) into a glass, and you drink it under the impression that it is going to be beer; or if you walk on what appears to be a tiled floor, and it turns out to be a soft carpet made to look like tiles. The shock of surprise on an occasion of this kind makes us aware of the expectations that habitually enter into our perceptions; and such expectations must be classed as beliefs, in spite of the fact that we do not normally take note of them or put them into words. I remember once watching a cock pigeon running over and over again to the edge of a looking-glass to try to wreak vengeance on the particularly obnoxious bird whom he expected to find there, judging by what he saw in the glass. He must have experienced each time the sort of surprise on finding nothing, which is calculated to lead in time to the adoption of Berkeley's theory that objects of sense are only in the mind. His expectation, though not expressed in words, deserved, I think, to be called a belief.

I come now to the question what constitutes believing, as opposed to the content believed.

To begin with, there are various different attitudes that may be taken towards the same content. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that you have a visual image of your breakfast-table. You may expect it while you are dressing in the morning; remember it as you go to your work; feel doubt as to its correctness when questioned as to your powers of visualizing; merely entertain the image, without connecting it with anything external, when you are going to sleep; desire it if you are hungry, or feel aversion for it if you are ill. Suppose, for the sake of definiteness, that the content is "an egg for breakfast." Then you have the following attitudes "I expect there will be an egg for breakfast"; "I remember there was an egg for breakfast"; "Was there an egg for breakfast?" "An egg for breakfast: well, what of it?" "I hope there will be an egg for breakfast"; "I am afraid there will be an egg for breakfast and it is sure to be bad." I do not suggest that this is a list of all possible attitudes on the subject; I say only that they are different attitudes, all concerned with the one content "an egg for breakfast."

These attitudes are not all equally ultimate. Those that involve desire and aversion have occupied us in Lecture III. For the present, we are only concerned with such as are cognitive. In speaking of memory, we distinguished three kinds of belief directed towards the same content, namely memory, expectation and bare assent without any time-determination in the belief-feeling. But before developing this view, we must examine two other theories which might be held concerning belief, and which, in some ways, would be more in harmony with a behaviourist outlook than the theory I wish to advocate.

(1) The first theory to be examined is the view that the differentia of belief consists in its causal efficacy I do not wish to make any author responsible for this theory: I wish merely to develop it hypothetically so that we may judge of its tenability.

We defined the meaning of an image or word by causal efficacy, namely by associations: an image or word acquires meaning, we said, through having the same associations as what it means.

We propose hypothetically to define "belief" by a different kind of causal efficacy, namely efficacy in causing voluntary movements. (Voluntary movements are defined as those vital movements which are distinguished from reflex movements as involving the higher nervous centres. I do not like to distinguish them by means of such notions as "consciousness" or "will," because I do not think these notions, in any definable sense, are always applicable. Moreover, the purpose of the theory we are examining is to be, as far as possible, physiological and behaviourist, and this purpose is not achieved if we introduce such a conception as "consciousness" or "will." Nevertheless, it is necessary for our purpose to find some way of distinguishing between voluntary and reflex movements, since the results would be too paradoxical, if we were to say that reflex movements also involve beliefs.) According to this definition, a content is said to be "believed" when it causes us to move. The images aroused are the same if

you say to me, "Suppose there were an escaped tiger coming along the street," and if you say to me, "There is an escaped tiger coming along the street." But my actions will be very different in the two cases: in the first, I shall remain calm; in the second, it is possible that I may not. It is suggested, by the theory we are considering, that this difference of effects constitutes what is meant by saying that in the second case I believe the proposition suggested, while in the first case I do not. According to this view, images or words are "believed" when they cause bodily movements.

I do not think this theory is adequate, but I think it is suggestive of truth, and not so easily refutable as it might appear to be at first sight.

It might be objected to the theory that many things which we certainly believe do not call for any bodily movements. I believe that Great Britain is an island, that whales are mammals, that Charles I was executed, and so on; and at first sight it seems obvious that such beliefs, as a rule, do not call for any action on my part. But when we investigate the matter more closely, it becomes more doubtful. To begin with, we must distinguish belief as a mere DISPOSITION from actual active belief. We speak as if we always believed that Charles I was executed, but that only means that we are always ready to believe it when the subject comes up. The phenomenon we are concerned to analyse is the active belief, not the permanent disposition. Now, what are the occasions when, we actively believe that Charles I was executed? Primarily: examinations, when we perform the bodily movement of writing it down; conversation, when we assert it to display our historical erudition; and political discourses, when we are engaged in showing what Soviet government leads to. In all these cases bodily movements (writing or speaking) result from our belief.

But there remains the belief which merely occurs in "thinking." One may set to work to recall some piece of history one has been reading, and what one recalls is believed, although it probably does not cause any bodily movement whatever. It is true that what we believe always MAY influence action. Suppose I am invited to become King of Georgia: I find the prospect attractive, and go to Cook's to buy a third-class ticket to my new realm. At the last moment I remember Charles I and all the other monarchs who have come to a bad end; I change my mind, and walk out without completing the transaction. But such incidents are rare, and cannot constitute the whole of my belief that Charles I was executed. The conclusion seems to be that, although a belief always MAY influence action if it becomes relevant to a practical issue, it often exists actively (not as a mere disposition) without producing any voluntary movement whatever. If this is true, we cannot define belief by the effect on voluntary movements.

There is another, more theoretical, ground for rejecting the view we are examining. It is clear that a proposition can be either believed or merely considered, and that the content is the same in both cases. We can expect an egg for breakfast, or merely entertain the supposition that there may be an egg for breakfast. A moment ago I considered the possibility of being invited to become King of Georgia, but I do not believe that this will happen. Now, it seems clear that, since believing and considering have different effects if one produces bodily movements while the other does not, there must be some intrinsic difference between believing and considering*; for if they were precisely similar, their effects also would be precisely similar. We have seen that the difference between believing a given proposition and merely considering it does not lie in the content; therefore there must be, in one case or in both, something additional to the content which distinguishes the occurrence of a belief from the occurrence of a mere consideration of the same content. So far as the theoretical argument goes, this additional element may exist only in belief, or only in consideration, or there may be one sort of additional element in the case of belief, and another in the case of consideration. This brings us to the second view which we have to examine.

* Cf. Brentano, "Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte," p. 268

(criticizing Bain, "The Emotions and the Will").

(1) The theory which we have now to consider regards belief as belonging to every idea which is entertained, except in so far as some positive counteracting force interferes. In this view belief is not a positive phenomenon, though doubt and disbelief are so. What we call belief, according to this hypothesis, involves only the appropriate content, which will have the effects characteristic of belief unless something else operating simultaneously inhibits them. James (Psychology, vol. ii, p. 288) quotes with approval, though inaccurately, a passage from Spinoza embodying this view:

"Let us conceive a boy imagining to himself a horse, and taking note of nothing else. As this imagination involves the existence of the horse, AND THE BOY HAS NO PERCEPTION WHICH ANNULS ITS EXISTENCE [James's italics], he will necessarily contemplate the horse as present, nor will he be able to doubt of its existence, however little certain of it he may be. I deny that a man in so far as he imagines [percipit] affirms nothing. For what is it to imagine a winged horse but to affirm that the horse [that horse, namely] has wings? For if the mind had nothing before it but the winged horse, it would contemplate the same as present, would have no cause to doubt of its existence, nor any power of dissenting from its existence, unless the imagination of the winged horse were joined to an idea which contradicted [tollit] its existence" ("Ethics," vol. ii, p. 49, Scholium).

To this doctrine James entirely assents, adding in italics:

"ANY OBJECT WHICH REMAINS UNCONTRADICTED IS IPSO FACTO BELIEVED AND POSITED AS ABSOLUTE REALITY."

If this view is correct, it follows (though James does not draw the inference) that there is no need of any specific feeling called "belief," and that the mere existence of images yields all that is required. The state of mind in which we merely consider a proposition, without believing or disbelieving it, will then appear as a sophisticated product, the result of some rival force adding to the image-proposition a positive feeling which may be called suspense or non-belief--a feeling which may be compared to that of a man about to run a race waiting for the signal. Such a man, though not moving, is in a very different condition from that of a man quietly at rest. And so the man who is considering a proposition without believing it will be in a state of tension, restraining the natural tendency to act upon the proposition which he would display if nothing interfered. In this view belief primarily consists merely in the existence of the appropriate images without any counteracting forces.

There is a great deal to be said in favour of this view, and I have some hesitation in regarding it as inadequate. It fits admirably with the phenomena of dreams and hallucinatory images, and it is recommended by the way in which it accords with mental development. Doubt, suspense of judgment and disbelief all seem later and more complex than a wholly unreflecting assent. Belief as a positive phenomenon, if it exists, may be regarded, in this view, as a product of doubt, a decision after debate, an acceptance, not merely of THIS, but of THIS-RATHER-THAN-THAT. It is not difficult to suppose that a dog has images (possible olfactory) of his absent master, or of the rabbit that he dreams of hunting. But it is very difficult to suppose that he can entertain mere imagination-images to which no assent is given.

I think it must be conceded that a mere image, without the addition of any positive feeling that could be called "belief," is apt to have a certain dynamic power, and in this sense an uncombated image has the force of a belief. But although this may be true, it accounts only for some of the

simplest phenomena in the region of belief. It will not, for example, explain memory. Nor can it explain beliefs which do not issue in any proximate action, such as those of mathematics. I conclude, therefore, that there must be belief-feelings of the same order as those of doubt or disbelief, although phenomena closely analogous to those of belief can be produced by mere uncontradicted images.

(3) I come now to the view of belief which I wish to advocate. It seems to me that there are at least three kinds of belief, namely memory, expectation and bare assent. Each of these I regard as constituted by a certain feeling or complex of sensations, attached to the content believed. We may illustrate by an example. Suppose I am believing, by means of images, not words, that it will rain. We have here two interrelated elements, namely the content and the expectation. The content consists of images of (say) the visual appearance of rain, the feeling of wetness, the patter of drops, interrelated, roughly, as the sensations would be if it were raining. Thus the content is a complex fact composed of images. Exactly the same content may enter into the memory "it was raining" or the assent "rain occurs." The difference of these cases from each other and from expectation does not lie in the content. The difference lies in the nature of the belief-feeling. I, personally, do not profess to be able to analyse the sensations constituting respectively memory, expectation and assent; but I am not prepared to say that they cannot be analysed. There may be other belief-feelings, for example in disjunction and implication; also a disbelief-feeling.

It is not enough that the content and the belief-feeling should coexist: it is necessary that there should be a specific relation between them, of the sort expressed by saying that the content is what is believed. If this were not obvious, it could be made plain by an argument. If the mere co-existence of the content and the belief-feeling sufficed, whenever we were having (say) a memory-feeling we should be remembering any proposition which came into our minds at the same time. But this is not the case, since we may simultaneously remember one proposition and merely consider another.

We may sum up our analysis, in the case of bare assent to a proposition not expressed in words, as follows: (a) We have a proposition, consisting of interrelated images, and possibly partly of sensations; (b) we have the feeling of assent, which is presumably a complex sensation demanding analysis; (c) we have a relation, actually subsisting, between the assent and the proposition, such as is expressed by saying that the proposition in question is what is assented to. For other forms of belief-feeling or of content, we have only to make the necessary substitutions in this analysis.

If we are right in our analysis of belief, the use of words in expressing beliefs is apt to be misleading. There is no way of distinguishing, in words, between a memory and an assent to a proposition about the past: "I ate my breakfast" and "Caesar conquered Gaul" have the same verbal form, though (assuming that I remember my breakfast) they express occurrences which are psychologically very different. In the one case, what happens is that I remember the content "eating my breakfast"; in the other case, I assent to the content "Caesar's conquest of Gaul occurred." In the latter case, but not in the former, the pastness is part of the content believed. Exactly similar remarks apply to the difference between expectation, such as we have when waiting for the thunder after a flash of lightning, and assent to a proposition about the future, such as we have in all the usual cases of inferential knowledge as to what will occur. I think this difficulty in the verbal expression of the temporal aspects of beliefs is one among the causes which have hampered philosophy in the consideration of time.

The view of belief which I have been advocating contains little that is novel except the distinction of kinds of belief-feeling such as memory and expectation. Thus James says: "Everyone knows the difference between imagining a thing and believing in its existence, between supposing a proposition and acquiescing in its truth...IN ITS INNER NATURE, BELIEF, OR THE SENSE OF REALITY, IS A SORT OF FEELING MORE ALLIED TO THE EMOTIONS THAN. TO ANYTHING ELSE" ("Psychology," vol. ii, p. 283. James's italics). He proceeds to point out that drunkenness, and, still more, nitrous-oxide intoxication, will heighten the sense of belief: in the latter case, he says, a man's very soul may sweat with conviction, and he be all the time utterly unable to say what he is convinced of. It would seem that, in such cases, the feeling of belief exists unattached, without its usual relation to a content believed, just as the feeling of familiarity may sometimes occur without being related to any definite familiar object. The feeling of belief, when it occurs in this separated heightened form, generally leads us to look for a content to which to attach it. Much of what passes for revelation or mystic insight probably comes in this way: the belief-feeling, in abnormal strength, attaches itself, more or less accidentally, to some content which we happen to think of at the appropriate moment. But this is only a speculation, upon which I do not wish to lay too much stress.

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