

Belief formation and how it shows all belief is rooted in self-belief

Believe means to accept as factually correct without being totally sure.

Belief is caused first by seeing no good evidence against your belief. Second by seeing evidence for it or what you think is evidence.

This is the right order for seeing evidence for your belief only happens if the obstacles to belief are not serious. The way has to be paved so you can consider if the matter is worth giving credence to.

When a belief is formed it works as a foundation for the formation of new beliefs. You may be aware that you have these beliefs or you may not. Beliefs are not necessarily conscious. For example, you may believe in a Christian style God and not realise you believe that you should be praying to him. Yet to believe in such a God is to assent to the validity of prayer.

To believe in x means to believe in more than just x. It is about believing in how you see the evidence. Whatever you believe says what kind of person you are. All belief comes from believing in yourself enough to base beliefs on that self-reliance.

There is no such thing as a single belief. Each belief is really a sum of beliefs. You never have one belief about anything. Beliefs all interplay and intertwine as well. You have beliefs you are barely aware of, clearly aware of and tacit/subliminal ones too. It is a very complicated interaction.

To believe x is true is to say non-x is false. Believing that x is true goes with another belief that anything contradicting x is false. A belief is at least two beliefs one positive and one negative.

Some atheists say they just lack belief in God and are not saying they think God is fiction.

It is said that if you merely lack belief in God but do not believe there is no God then you may call yourself an atheist but you are actually an agnostic. If so then the only difference is you are loyal to atheism which is why you are trying to be atheist.

However, lack of belief in God can count as atheism if there are beliefs behind it and with it that are atheistic. You may believe that if God existed he would have left some evidence so if you lack evidence and belief in God that is a sign that there is none. So you lack yes but not in an agnostic way. Lacking belief in God when it is you acting as if you decide what is right or wrong without an input from God is unbelief in action. It cannot be considered to be agnosticism though it resembles it.

Some Christians say that you can trust nothing unless it is a gift from a honest good God so they say that even if there is no evidence for God you must still believe. So belief is based on assumptions. You assume that everybody and all around you is just there to trip you up with lies and then you assume that God gets you out of that hole. But it does not change the fact that you are still cynical and atrociously judgemental under it all. You cannot use a God concept to smokescreen your perceived victimhood.

In fact there is an implied threat - assume God or you undercut reason and knowledge and everything we have learned. That is fear not assuming.

Plantinga is one of those Christians. He denies that he is running down reason by saying that belief in God needs no rational justification. He says we have to make assumptions about reason before we can use it anyway so if we assume it came from an all trustworthy God then we can trust it. That is like accepting a job client who writes their own references. It is meaningless and defeats the purpose. It makes you wonder if people are using God and religion to cover up their sense of the meaninglessness and ultimate meaninglessness of life. If you trust reason then saying, "My assumptions come from God. They are guesses yes but I build my faith in reason on them" is frankly just lying to yourself. A teacher who tells you to think of maths as assumptions and go along with it is not a teacher at all. He is hiding something. He is suspicious. Whatever Plantinga ends up with it is not faith in God though it poses as it and acts like it.

Belief formation is your job and props will not help. You do the work and you take the credit not God or religion or faith.

Connors & Halligan, 2014 gives us good guidance about how beliefs come about.

Everybody believes something.

The first thing is when a person meets something that does not fit her or his current beliefs and expectations.

Next the person tries to explain the new information within her or his current set of beliefs. The danger is that person might find the information unsettling and will only accept it is at true or true enough if it fits them.

Evaluation comes next. You assess your existing beliefs and how the ones that contradict them are going to be dealt with. You will probably want to protect the beliefs you have so the opposing ones might not sink in. If you suffer from a bad self image you may constantly monitor your life and what happens for signs that God is looking after you. You get biased and end up believing nonsense without having decent evidence.

Then comes acceptance of the new belief. The new belief may not be completely new but more of a modification of an existing one.

They talk about consequences last of all. That refers to how beliefs shape how you see things and remember them and will affect how you act. That reinforces your belief or in some cases can lead to you thinking you still believe when through force of habit you only think you do and you actually don't.

Another thing that will happen is that if the idea of believing something new occurs to you will only embrace it if it fits in reasonably well with what you believe in the present time. That problem is why we need to question how and why we end up believing something. It is more important for belief-groups to ask that than individuals.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Belief can be beliefs you are aware of having or ones that you don't know you have. Never say you have a belief for each belief is really belief that a is true and non-a is false. Beliefs intertwine. We must always examine why we believe what we do and how we came to believe it so that we can line up better to truth and truth does not care what anybody never mind you wants or thinks. To be our best self we must challenge our own beliefs. We must challenge why we believe that we believe something. All belief comes from self-belief so for that reason to be your real self you must examine ruthlessly.