

THE NATURE OF BELIEF

Belief is taking something to be likely to be true. You could be wrong but you believe what the evidence tells you.

Evidence is an indication that something is probably true. Everybody interprets evidence differently. When you believe something, it is because you think the evidence says it is probably true.

Belief is caused by your reason. Real belief is open to correction and even to being discarded should the evidence suggest or demand it.

You think to see if you accept that what you perceive should be taken as evidence or correct for unless you do that you cannot see if it really is evidence. You have to think before you can accept anything as evidence.

Even irrational people reason in some form, they just do it badly but they try to base themselves on reason all the same. You need to doubt things before you can believe them. If you refuse to doubt it is a sign you don't really believe for if you did you wouldn't be afraid to ask questions and have doubts.

If you say you believe something without evidence, you really just mean that you feel that it is true. But feeling is not believing for you can feel that what you know is not true is true. If you believe something because you want to and not because of the evidence you have for it that is no better for the evidence has nothing to do with causing the belief.

There is no belief without evidence because you cannot take something to be probably true without evidence or enough of it. For example, if you know that everybody in a pub gossips and slanders and you believe a bad report about somebody that you have heard there this is blind belief for it depends on inadequate evidence for you know and believe that the testimony is unreliable. It is because you know what the customers are like that you have to be tricking yourself into thinking that you do believe what they are saying. This kind of belief is called blind belief because it is blind to the reality.

Faith is trust and belief combined. Blind faith is believing something no matter how good the evidence that it is wrong is. You reason away the evidence or ignore it. Simple faith is hearing a story - even a mad one - and believing it just because you hear of it.

Blind faith is trying to force yourself to believe in something and work up trust. You cannot just decide to make yourself believe in something for it will be doomed to failure (page 14, What Do Existentialists Believe?). Believe is instilled by evidence not by the will. It is not belief to take something as true without evidence or sufficient evidence - that is assuming. Assuming is just a pretend belief.

Some may object that if blind faith is not faith then we believe in nothing but won't admit it because blind faith is the root of all our beliefs.

They say we believe we are not dreaming.

They say we believe in reason though it could be an illusion. [Note how that is a polite way of trying to make philosophy and thinking suspect. Reason should be adhered to as a method not a belief and we cannot stand for being accused of having just another belief - in reason.]

They say we believe such things without evidence.

But what we sense tells us what is real so there is evidence and evidence is the indicator of what is likely to your mind and not necessarily likely in itself or the objective sense. Do not fail to notice that the evidence that we are all depending on blind faith is very far-fetched. It is easier to do without blind belief and just have sensible beliefs. It is absurd to say I blindly believe I am not dreaming now for even when I am dreaming I reasonably believe that I am not unless I have a lucid dream in which I realise I am dreaming. What my senses sense even in a dream is real in the sense that I sense something that is real to me.

If I sense blue I sense blue and even if what I sense is an illusion I have still sensed blue so there is a sense that everything I sense is real and that is why if what I sense behaves like a person then it probably is a person even if the person is just an illusion. I don't know if the outside world is real but from the fact that I always experience truth it is probably real.

How can I say I always experience truth? I can experience that there is no car on the road I am walking on and be wrong and end up in a hit-and-run incident. What I sense is always the truth in content but I am just missing something I always sense truth but when I go wrong it is because I have sensed some of the truth. When I believe something that is obviously untrue and should be even to me it is because my perception of truth has changed and I see truth differently from what it really is. It is still truth to me.

It is true that in mathematics the basic mathematical operations are self-evident but the others are not for they are more complicated calculations. But although I cannot prove them I know that they are probably right for they seem to be and I arrive at them by using the self-evident basic calculations. I see no reason why nature would fool me in that matter.

Reason is a method the same as maths is. They are not about what you think and they don't care what you think.

Most attacks on reason stem from the feeling that reasonable belief can be wrong. It can. But that does not matter. So if I believe something reasonably and it is wrong then it does not follow that reason is dangerous. It is the misuse of reason that is the problem. It does not prove that I was into blind or irrational faith in reason.

Most people do not realise that they have to see that reason and experience are or are probably right and are always right in order to believe anything. To say x is probably right is about your subjective perception that reason seems to give grounds for accepting it. The objective - is it really as sensible and convincing as you think? - is a separate matter. Millions of clergy don't either. Many people don't even think about it. Truths are only self-evident when you let yourself see them as such. People need to take time to think.

Some say that blind faith is necessary to start you off on the way of knowledge and then as you use it, it sometimes verifies itself. For example, you blindly believe that cats are warm and when you touch them you find out that they really are. But you could just guess and find the guess verified. Blind faith is unreasonable for it goes too far.

Few people are taught the truths, that belief needs good grounds and reason is the tool you need and belief in reason is irrelevant, and few experience how forceful they are so the sceptics, believers are more sceptics than they see, are in the majority. You can't have beliefs without the truths.

A lot of what passes for faith and belief is in fact guessing and habit. Be true to yourself and look out for the evidence. Make up your own mind then and never close your mind for good. Otherwise you just sacrifice faith in yourself for something such as a religious ideology or whatever. Don't be manipulated by those who want to rob you of faith in your own mind and in yourself.

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