The Psychology of Belief

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I.—THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BELIEF.

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"Mein Jetzt und Hier ist der letzte Angelpunkt für alle Wirklichkeit, also alle Erkenntniss."—THEODOR LIPPS.

Everyone knows the difference between imagining a thing and believing in its existence, between supposing a proposition and acquiescing in its truth. In the case of acquiescence or belief, the object is not only apprehended by the mind, but is held to have reality. Belief is thus the mental state or function of cognising reality—I might, indeed, have called this paper 'The Perception of Reality'. As used in the following pages, 'Belief' will mean every degree of assurance, including the highest possible certainty and conviction.

There are, as we know, two ways of studying every psychic state. First, the way of analysis: What does it consist in? What is its inner nature? Of what sort of mind-stuff is it composed? Second, the way of history: What are its conditions of production, and its connexion with other facts?

Into the first way we cannot go very far. In its inner nature belief, or the sense of reality, is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to anything else. Mr.

Bagehot distinctly calls it the 'emotion' of conviction. I just now spoke of it as acquiescence. It resembles more than anything what in the psychology of volition we know as consent. Consent is recognised by all to be a manifestation of our active nature. It would naturally be described by such terms as 'willingness' or the 'turning of our disposition'. What characterises both consent and belief is the cessation of theoretic agitation, through the advent of an idea which is inwardly stable, and fills the mind solidly to the exclusion of contradictory ideas. When this is the case, motor effects are apt to follow. Hence the states of consent and belief, characterised by repose on the purely intellectual side, are both intimately connected with subsequent practical activity. This inward stability of the mind's content is as characteristic of disbelief as of belief. We shall presently see that we never disbelieve anything except for the reason that we believe something else which contradicts the first thing.[1] Disbelief is thus an incidental complication to belief, and need not be considered by itself.

The true opposites of belief, psychologically considered, are doubt and inquiry, not disbelief. In both these states the content of our mind is in unrest, and the emotion engendered thereby is, like the emotion of belief itself, perfectly distinct, but perfectly indescribable in words. Both sorts of emotion may be pathologically exalted. One of the charms of drunkenness unquestionably lies in the deepening of the sense of reality and truth which is gained therein. In whatever light things may then appear to us, they seem more utterly what they are, more 'utterly utter' than when we are sober. This goes to a fully unutterable extreme in the nitrous oxide intoxication, in which a man's very soul will sweat with conviction, and he be all the while unable to tell what he is convinced of at all.[2] The pathological state opposed to this solidity and deepening has been called the questioning mania (*Grübelsucht* by the Germans). It is sometimes found as a substantive affection, paroxysmal or chronic, and consists in the inability to rest in any conception, and the need of having it confirmed and explained. 'Why do I stand here

[1] Compare this psychological fact with the corresponding logical truth that all negation rests on covert assertion of something else than the thing denied. (See Bradley's *Principles of Logic*, bk. i., ch. 3.)

[2] See that very remarkable little work, *The Anæsthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*, by Benj. P. Blood (Amsterdam, N.Y., 1874). Compare also MIND vii. 206.

where I stand?' 'Why is a glass a glass, a chair a chair?' 'How is it that men are only of the size they are? Why not as big as houses?' &c., &c.[1] There is, it is true, another pathological state which is as far removed from doubt as from belief, and which some may prefer to consider the proper contrary of the latter state of mind. I refer to the feeling that everything is hollow, unreal, dead. I shall speak of this state again upon a later page. The point I wish to notice here is simply that belief and disbelief are but two aspects of one psychic state.

John Mill, reviewing various opinions about belief, comes to the conclusion that no account of it can be given:

"What," he says, "is the difference *to our minds* between thinking of a reality and representing to ourselves an imaginary picture? I confess I can see no escape from the opinion that the distinction is ultimate and primordial. There is no more difficulty in holding it to be so than in holding the difference between a sensation and an idea to be primordial. It seems almost another aspect of the same difference. . . . I cannot help thinking, therefore, that there is in the remembrance of a real fact, as distinguished from that of a thought, an element which does not consist . . . in a difference between the mere ideas which are present to the mind in the two cases. This element, howsoever we define it, constitutes belief, and is the difference between Memory and Imagination. From whatever direction we approach, this difference seems to close our path. When we arrive at it, we seem to have reached, as it were, the central point of our intellectual nature, presupposed and built upon in every attempt we make to explain the more recondite phenomena of our mental being."[2]

[1] "To one whose mind is healthy thoughts come and go unnoticed; with me they have to be faced, thought about in a peculiar fashion, and then disposed of as finished, and this often when I am utterly wearied and would be at peace; but the call is imperative. This goes on to the hindrance of all natural action. If I were told that the staircase was on fire and I had only a minute to escape, and the thought arose—'Have they sent for fire-engines? Is it probable that the man who has the key is on hand? Is the man a careful sort of person? Will the key be hanging on a peg? Am I thinking rightly? Perhaps they don't lock the depot'—my foot would be lifted to go down; I should be conscious to excitement that I was losing my chance; but I should be unable to stir until all these absurdities were entertained and disposed of. In the most critical moments of my life, when I ought to have been so *engrossed as to leave no room for any secondary thoughts*, I have been oppressed by the inability to be at peace. And in the most ordinary circumstances it is all the same. Let me instance the other morning I went to walk. The day was biting cold, but I was unable to proceed except by jerks. Once I got arrested, my feet in a muddy pool. One foot was lifted to go, knowing that it was not good to be standing in water, but there I was fast, the cause of detention being the discussing with myself the reasons why I should not stand in that pool." (T. S. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, 1883, p. 43. See also Berger, in *Archiv f. Psychiatrie*, vi. 217.)

[2] Note to Jas. Mill's *Analysis*, i. 412-423.

If the words of Mill be taken to apply to the mere subjective analysis of belief—to the question, What does it feel like when we have it? they must be held, on the whole, to be correct. Belief, the sense of reality, feels like itself—that is about as much as we can say.

Prof. Brentano, in an admirable chapter of his *Psychologie*, expresses this by saying that conception and belief (which he names *judgment*) are two different fundamental psychic phenomena. What I myself in a former article, MIND ix. 22, called the 'object' of thought may be comparatively simple, like 'Ha! what a pain,' or 'It thunders'; or it may be complex, like 'Columbus discovered America in 1492,' or 'There exists an all-wise Creator of the world'. In either case, however, the mere thought of the object may exist as something quite distinct from the belief in its reality. The belief, as Brentano says, presupposes the mere thought:

"Every object comes into consciousness in a twofold way, as simply thought of [*vorgestellt*] and as admitted [*anerkannt*] or denied. The relation is analogous to that which is assumed by most philosophers (by Kant no less than by Aristotle) to obtain between mere thought and desire. Nothing is ever desired without being thought of; but the desiring is nevertheless a second quite new and peculiar form of relation to the object, a second quite new way of receiving it into consciousness. No more is anything judged (*i.e.*, believed or disbelieved) which is not thought of too. But we must insist that, so soon as the object of a thought becomes the object of an assenting or rejecting judgment, our consciousness steps into an entirely new relation towards it. It is then twice present in consciousness, as thought of, and as held for real or denied; just as when desire awakens for it, it is both thought and simultaneously desired" (p. 266).

The commonplace doctrine of 'judgment' is that it consists in the combination of 'ideas' by a 'copula' into a 'proposition,' which may be of various sorts, as affirmative, negative, hypothetical, &c. But who does not see that in a disbelieved or doubted or interrogative or conditional proposition, the ideas are combined in the same identical way in which they are in a proposition which is solidly believed? The way in which the ideas are combined is a part of the inner constitution of the thought's object or content. That object is sometimes an articulated whole with relations between its parts, amongst which relations that of predicate to subject may be one. But when we have got our object with its inner constitution thus defined in a proposition, then the question comes up regarding the object as a whole: 'Is it a real object, and is this proposition about it a true proposition or not?' And in the answer *Yes* to *this* question lies that new psychic act which Brentano calls 'judgment,' but which I prefer to call 'belief'.

In every proposition, then, so far as it is believed, questioned or disbelieved, four elements are to be distinguished, the subject, the predicate, and their relation (of whatever sort it be), and finally the psychic attitude in which our mind stands towards the proposition taken as a whole.[1]

Admitting, then, that this attitude is a state of consciousness *sui generis*, about which nothing more can be said in the way of internal analysis, let us proceed to the second way of studying the subject of belief: *Under what circumstances does this peculiar attitude of mind arise?* We shall soon see how much matter this gives us to discuss.

Suppose a new-born mind, entirely blank and waiting for experience to begin. Suppose that it begins in the form of a visual impression (whether faint or vivid is immaterial) 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 (to simplify the hypothesis), that the candle is only imaginary, and that no 'original' of it is recognised by us psychologists outside. Will this hallucinatory candle be believed in, will it have a real existence for the mind?

What possible sense (for that mind) would a suspicion have that the candle was not real? What would doubt or disbelief of it imply? When *we*, the onlooking psychologists, say the candle is unreal, we mean something quite definite, *viz.*, that there is a world known to *us* which *is* real, and to which we perceive that the candle does not belong; it belongs exclusively to that individual mind, has no *status* anywhere else, &c. It exists, to be sure, in a fashion, for it forms the content of that mind's hallucination; but the hallucination itself, though unquestionably it is a sort of existing fact, has no knowledge of *other* facts; and since those *other* facts are the realities *par excellence* for us, and the only things we believe in, the candle is simply outside of our reality and belief altogether.

By the hypothesis, however, the *mind which sees the candle* can spin no such considerations as these about it, for of other facts, actual or possible, it has no inkling whatever. That candle is its all, its absolute. Its entire faculty of attention is absorbed by it. It *is*, it is *that;* it is *there;* no other possible candle, or quality of this candle, no other possible place, or possible object in the place, no alternative,

[1] For an excellent account of the history of opinion on this subject see A. Marty, in *Vierteljahrssch. f. wiss. Phil.*, vii. 161 ff. (1884).

in short, suggests itself as even conceivable; so how can the mind help believing the candle real? The supposition that it might possibly not do so is, under the supposed conditions, unintelligible.

This is what Spinoza long ago announced:—

"Let us conceive a boy," he said, "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*, 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*, ii. 49, Scholium).

The sense that anything we think of is unreal can only come, then, when that thing is contradicted by some other thing of which we think. The contradicting thing may then itself be held for real, till it in turn is contradicted by some farther object of our thought. Any object which remains uncontradicted is *ipso facto* believed and posited as absolute reality.

Now, how comes it that one thing thought of can be contradicted by another? It can't unless it begins the quarrel by saying something inadmissible about that other. Take the mind with the candle or the boy with the horse. If either of them say, 'That candle or that horse, even when I don't see it, exists in real extra-mental space,' he pushes into real extra-mental space an object which may be incompatible with everything which he otherwise knows of that space. If so, he must take his choice of which to hold by, the present perceptions or the other knowledge of space. If he holds to the other knowledge, the present perceptions are annulled, so far as their relation to that extra-mental space goes. Candle and horse, whatever they may be, are not existents in *outward* space. They are existents of course; they are mental objects; mental objects have existence as mental objects. But they are situated in their own spaces, the space in which they severally appear, and neither of those spaces is space in which outer realities exist.

Take again the horse with wings. If I merely dream of a horse with wings, my horse interferes with nothing else and has not to be contradicted. That horse, its wings and its place, are all equally real. That horse exists no otherwise than as winged, and is moreover really there, for that place

exists no otherwise than as the place of that horse, and claims as yet no connexion with the other places of the world. But if with this horse I make an inroad into the *world otherwise known*, and say, for example, 'That is my old mare Maggie, having grown a pair of wings where she stands in her stall,' the whole case is altered. Now the horse and place are identified with a horse and place otherwise known, and *what* is known of the latter objects is incompatible with what is perceived with the former. 'Maggie in her stall with wings! Never!' The wings are unreal, then, visionary. I have dreamed a lie about Maggie in her stall.

The reader will recognise in these two cases the two sorts of judgment called in the logic-books existential and attributive respectively. 'The candle exists as an outer reality' is an existential, 'My Maggie has got a pair of wings' is an attributive, proposition;[1] and it follows from what was first said, that all propositions, whether attributive or existential, are *believed through the very fact of being conceived*, unless they clash with other propositions believed at the same time, by affirming that their terms are the *same* with the terms of these other propositions. A dream-candle has existence, true enough; but not the same existence (existence for itself, namely, or *extra mentem meam*) which the candles of waking perception have. A dream-horse has wings; but then neither horse nor wings are the same with any horses or wings known to memory. That we can at any moment think of the same thing which at any former moment we thought of is the ultimate law of our intellectual constitution. But when we now think of it incompatibly with our other ways of thinking it, then we must choose which way to stand by, for we cannot continue to think in two contradictory ways at once. *The whole distinction of real and unreal, the whole psychology of belief, disbelief and doubt, is thus grounded*

[1] In both existential and attributive judgments a synthesis is represented. The syllable *ex* in the word Existence, *da* in the word *Dasein*, express it. 'The candle exists' is equivalent to 'The candle is *over there*'. And the 'over there' means real space, space related to other reals. The proposition amounts to saying: 'The candle is in the same space with other reals'. It affirms of the candle a very concrete predicate —namely, this relation to other particular concrete things. *Their* real existence, as we shall later see, resolves itself into their peculiar relation to *ourselves*. Existence is thus no substantive quality when we predicate it of any object; it is a relation, ultimately terminating in ourselves, and at the moment when it terminates, becoming a practical relation. But of this more anon. I only wish now to indicate the superficial nature of the distinction between the existential and the attributive proposition.

on two mental facts, first, that we are liable to think differently of the same, and second, that when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard.

The subjects adhered to become real subjects, the attributes adhered to real attributes, the existence adhered to real existence; whilst the subjects disregarded become imaginary subjects, the attributes disregarded erroneous attributes, and the existence disregarded an existence in no man's land, in the limbo "where footless fancies dwell".

Habitually and practically we do not *count* these disregarded things as existents at all, neither the times and spaces represented in our fancy, nor the subjects and attributes appearing located therein. The only times, places, subjects, relations, which popular thought *recognises* are those which we 'adhere to' in the way described. For the erroneous things *Vae victis* is the law; they are not even treated as appearances, in the popular philosophy; they are treated as if they were mere waste, equivalent to nothing at all. To the genuinely philosophic mind, however, they still have existence. They are not the same, nor have they the same existence, as the real things. But *as* objects of fancy, *as* errors, *as* occupants of dreamland, &c., they are in their way as indefeasible parts of life, as undeniable features of the Universe, as the realities are in their way. The total world of which the philosophers must take account is thus composed of the realities *plus* the fancies and illusions.

Two sub-universes, at least, connected by relations which philosophy tries to ascertain! Really there are more than two sub-universes of which we take account, some of us of this one, and others of that. For there are various categories both of illusion and of reality, and alongside of the world of absolute error (*i.e.*, error confined to single individuals) but still within the world of absolute reality (*i.e.*, reality believed by the complete philosopher) there is the world of collective error, there are the worlds of abstract reality, of relative or practical reality, of ideal relations, and there is the supernatural world. The popular mind conceives of all these sub-worlds more or less disconnectedly; and, when dealing with one of them, forgets for the time being its relations to the rest. The complete philosopher is he who seeks not only to assign to every given object of his thought its right place in one or other of these sub-worlds, but he also seeks to determine the relation of each sub-world to the others in the total world which is.

The most important sub-universes commonly discriminated from each other and recognised by most of us as

existing, each with its own special and separate style of existence, are the following:—

(1) The world of sense, or of physical 'things' as we instinctively apprehend them, with such qualities as heat, colour and sound, and such 'forces' as life, chemical affinity, gravity, electricity, all existing as such within or on the surface of the things.

(2) The world of science, or of physical things as the learned conceive them, with secondary qualities and 'forces' (in the popular sense) excluded, and nothing real but solids and fluids and their 'laws' (*i.e.*, customs) of motion.[1]

(3) The world of ideal relations, or abstract truths believed or believable by all, and expressed in logical, mathematical, metaphysical, ethical or æsthetic propositions.

(4) The world of 'idols of the tribe,' illusions or prejudices common to the race. All educated people recognise these as forming one sub-universe. The motion of the sky round the earth, for example, belongs to this world. That motion is not a recognised item of any of the other worlds; but as an 'idol of the tribe' it really exists. For certain philosophers 'matter' exists only as an idol of the tribe. For science, the 'secondary qualities' of matter are but 'idols of the tribe'.

(5) The various supernatural worlds, the Christian heaven and hell, the world of the Hindoo mythology, the world of things seen and heard by Swedenborg, &c. Each of these is a consistent system, with definite relations among its own parts. Neptune's trident, *e.g.*, has no status of reality whatever in the Christian heaven; but within the classic Olympus certain definite things are true of it, whether one believe in the reality of the classic mythology as a whole or not. The various worlds of deliberate fable may be ranked with these worlds of faith—the world of the *Iliad*, that of *King Lear*, of the *Pickwick Papers*, *&c.*[2]

[1] I define the scientific universe here in the radical mechanical way. Practically, it is oftener thought of in a mongrel way and resembles in more points the popular physical world.

[2] It thus comes about that we can say such things as that Ivanhoe did not *really* marry Rebecca, as Thackeray *falsely* makes him do. The real Ivanhoe-world is the one which Scott wrote down for us. *In that world* Ivanhoe does *not* marry Rebecca. The objects within that world are knit together by perfectly definite relations, which can be affirmed or denied. Whilst absorbed in the novel, we turn our backs on all other worlds, and, for the time, the Ivanhoe-world remains our absolute reality. When we wake from the spell, however, we find a still more real world, which reduces Ivanhoe, and all things connected with him, to the fictive status, and relegates them to one of the sub-universes grouped under No. 5.

(6) The various worlds of individual opinion, as numerous as men are.

(7) The worlds of sheer madness and vagary, also indefinitely numerous.

Every object we think of gets at last referred to one world or another of this or of some similar list. It settles into our belief as a common-sense object, a scientific object, an abstract object, a mythological object, an object of some one's mistaken conception, or a madman's object; and it reaches this state sometimes immediately, but often only after being hustled and bandied about amongst other objects until it finds some which will tolerate its presence and stand in relations to it which nothing contradicts. The molecules and ether-waves of the scientific world, for example, simply kick the object's warmth and colour out. But the world of 'idols of the tribe' stands ready to take them in. Just so the world of classic myth takes up the winged horse; the world of individual hallucination, the vision of the candle; the world of abstract truth, the proposition that justice is kingly, though no actual king be just. The various worlds themselves, however, appear (as aforesaid) to most men's minds in no very definitely conceived relation to each other, and our attention, when it turns to one, is apt to drop the others for the time being out of its account. Propositions concerning the different worlds are made from 'different points of view'; and in this more or less chaotic state the consciousness of most thinkers remains to the end.

Every thinker, however, practically elects from among the various worlds some one to be for him the world of *ultimate* realities. From this world's objects there is no appeal. Whatever contradicts what is believed of them must get into another world or die. The horse, *e.g.*, may have wings to its heart's content, so long as it does not pretend to be the real world's horse. The real world's horse is the horse which is absolutely wingless. For most men, as we shall immediately see, the 'things of sense' hold this prerogative position and are the absolutely real world's nucleus. Other things, to be sure, may be real for this man or for that—things of science, abstract moral relations, things of the Christian theology, or what not. But even for the special man, these things are usually real with a less real reality than that of the things of sense. They are taken less seriously; and the very utmost that can be said for anyone's belief in them is that it is as strong as his 'belief in his own senses'.

In all this the everlasting partiality of our nature shows

itself, our inveterate propensity to choice. For, in the strict and ultimate sense of the word existence, everything which can be thought of at all exists as *some* sort of object, whether mythical object, individual thinker's object, or object in outer space and for intelligence at large. Errors, fictions, tribal beliefs, are parts of the whole great Universe which God has made, and He must have meant all these things to be in it, each in its respective place. But for us finite creatures, "'tis to consider too curiously to consider so". The mere fact of appearing as an object at all is not enough to constitute reality. That may be metaphysical reality, reality for God; but what we need is practical reality, reality for ourselves; and, to have that, an object must not only appear, but it must appear both *interesting* and *important*. The worlds whose objects are neither interesting nor important we treat simply negatively, we brand them as *un*real.

In the relative sense, then, the sense in which we contrast reality with simple *un*reality, and in which one thing is said to have *more* reality than another, and to be more believed, *reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life*. This is the only sense which the word ever has in the mouths of practical men. In this sense, *whatever excites and stimulates our interest* is real; whenever an object so appeals to us that we turn to it, accept it, fill our mind with it, or practically take account of it, so far it is real for us, and we believe it. Whenever, on the contrary, we ignore it, fail to consider it or act upon it, despise it, reject it, forget it, so far it is unreal for us and disbelieved. Hume's account of the matter was then essentially correct, when he said that belief in anything was simply the having the idea of it in a lively and active manner:—

"I say, then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than the imagination alone is ever able to attain. . . . It consists not in the peculiar nature or order of the ideas, but in the *manner* of their conception and in their *feeling* to the mind. I confess that it is impossible perfectly to explain this feeling or manner of conception . . . Its true and proper name . . . is *belief*, which is a term that everyone sufficiently understands in common life. And in philosophy we can go no farther than assert that belief is something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the idea of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination.[1] It gives them more weight and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; enforces them in the mind; gives them a superior influence on the passions; and renders them the governing principle in our actions."[2]

[1] Distinguishes realities from unrealities, the essential from the rubbishy and neglectable.

[2] *Inquiry concerning Hum. Understanding*, sec. v., pt. 2 (slightly transposed in my quotation).

Or as Prof. Bain puts it: "In its essential character, belief is a phase of our active nature—otherwise called the Will".[1]

The object of belief, then, reality or real existence, is something quite different from all the other predicates which a subject may possess. Those are properties intellectually or sensibly intuited. When we add any one of them to the subject, we increase the intrinsic content of the latter, we enrich its picture in our mind. But adding reality does not enrich the picture in any such inward way; it leaves it inwardly as it finds it, and only fixes it and stamps it in to *us*. "The real," as Kant says, "contains no more than the possible. A hundred real dollars do not contain a penny more than a hundred possible dollars. . . . By whatever, and by however many, predicates I may think a thing, nothing is added to it if I add that the thing exists. . . . Whatever, therefore, our concept of an object may contain, we must always step outside of it in order to attribute to it existence."[2]

The 'stepping outside' of it is the establishment either of immediate practical relations between it and ourselves, or of relations between it and other objects with which we have immediate practical relations. Relations of this sort, which are as yet not transcended or superseded by others, are *ipso facto* real relations, and confer reality upon their objective term. The *fons et origo* of all reality, whether from the absolute or the practical point of view, is thus subjective, is *ourselves*. As bare logical thinkers, without emotional reaction, we give reality to whatever objects we think of, for they are really phenomena, or objects of our passing thought, if nothing more. But, as thinkers with emotional reaction, we give what seems to us a still higher

[1] Note to Jas. Mill's *Analysis*, i. 394.

[2] *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Müller, ii. 515-17. Hume also: "When, after the simple conception of anything, we would conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition to, or alteration on, our first idea. Thus, when we affirm that God is existent, we simply form the idea of such a being as He is represented to us; nor is the existence which we attribute to Him conceived by a particular idea, which we join to His other qualities, and can again separate and distinguish from them. . . . The belief of the existence joins no new idea to those which compose the ideas of the object. When I think of God, when I think of Him as existent, and when I believe Him to be existent, my idea of Him neither increases nor diminishes. But as 'tis certain there is a great difference betwixt the simple conception of the existence of an object and the belief of it, and as this difference lies not in the facts or compositions of the idea which we conceive, it follows that it must lie in the manner in which we conceive it" (*Treatise of Human Nature*, pt. iii., sec. 7).

degree of reality to whatever things we select and emphasise and turn to *with a will*. These are our *living* realities; and not only these, but all the other things which are intimately connected with these. Reality, starting from our Ego, thus sheds itself from point to point—first, upon all objects which have an immediate sting of interest for our Ego in them, and next, upon the objects most continuously related with these. It only fades when the connecting thread is lost. A whole system may be real, if it only hang to our Ego by one immediately *stinging* term. But what contradicts any such stinging term, even though it be another stinging term itself, is either not believed, or only believed after settlement of the dispute.

We reach thus the important conclusion that *our own reality, that sense of our own life which we at every moment possess, is the ultimate of ultimates for our belief.* 'As sure as I exist!'—this is our uttermost warrant for the being of all other things. As Descartes made the indubitable reality of the *cogito* go bail for the reality of all that the *cogito* involved, so we all of us, feeling our own present reality with absolutely coercive force, ascribe an all but equal degree of reality, first to whatever things we lay hold on with a sense of personal need, and second, to whatever farther things continuously belong with these.

The world of living realities as contrasted with unrealities is thus anchored in the Ego, considered as an active and emotional term.[1] That is the hook from which the rest dangles, the absolute *πού στῶ*. And as from a painted hook it has been said that one can only hang a painted chain, so conversely, from a real hook only a real chain can properly be hung. Whatever things have intimate and continuous connexion with my life are things of whose reality I cannot doubt. Whatever things fail to establish this connexion are things which are practically no better for me than if they existed not at all.

In certain forms of melancholic perversion of the sensibilities and reactive powers, nothing touches us intimately, rouses us or wakens natural feeling. The consequence is the complaint so often heard from melancholic patients, that nothing is believed in by them as it used to be, and that all sense of reality is fled from life. They are sheathed in india-rubber, nothing penetrates to the quick or draws

[1] I use the notion of the Ego here, as common-sense uses it. Nothing is prejudged as to the results (or absence of results) of ulterior attempts to analyse the notion.

blood, as it were. According to Griesinger, 'I see, I hear!' such patients say, 'but the objects do not reach me, it is as if there were a wall between me and the outer world!'

"In such patients there often is an alteration of the cutaneous sensibility, such that things feel indistinct or sometimes rough and woolly. But even were this change always present, it would not completely explain the psychic phenomenon . . . which reminds us more of the alteration in our psychic relations to the outer world which advancing age on the one hand, and on the other emotions and passions, may bring about. In childhood we feel ourselves to be closer to the world of sensible phenomena, we live immediately with them and in them; an intimately vital tie binds us and them together. But with the ripening of reflection this tie is loosened, the warmth of our interest cools, things look differently to us, and we act more as foreigners to the outer world, even though we know it a great deal better. Joy and expansive emotions in general draw it nearer to us again. Everything makes a more lively impression, and with the quick immediate return of this warm receptivity for sense-impressions, joy makes us feel young again. In depressing emotions it is the other way. Outer things, whether living or inorganic, suddenly grow cold and foreign to us, and even our favourite objects of interest feel as if they belonged to us no more. Under these circumstances, receiving no longer from anything a lively impression, we cease to turn towards outer things, and the sense of inward loneliness grows upon us. . . . Where there is no strong intelligence to control this *blasé* condition, this psychic coldness and lack of interest, the issue of these states in which all seems so cold and hollow, the heart dried up, the world grown dead and empty, is often suicide or the deeper forms of insanity."[1]

But now we are met by questions of detail. What does this stirring, this exciting power, this interest, consist in, which some objects have? which *are* those 'intimate relations' with our life which give reality? And what things stand in these relations immediately, and what others are so closely connected with the former that (in Hume's language) we "carry our disposition" also on to them?

In a simple and direct way these questions cannot be answered at all. The whole history of human thought is but an unfinished attempt to answer them. For what have men been trying to find out, since men were men, but just those things: 'Where do our true interests lie—which relations shall we call the intimate and real ones—which things shall we call living realities and which not?' A few psychological points can, however, be made clear.

Any relation to our mind at all, *in the absence of a stronger relation*, suffices to make an object real. The barest appeal

[1] Griesinger, *Mental Diseases*, §§ 50, 98. The neologism we so often hear, that an experience 'gives us a *realising sense*' of the truth of some proposition or other, illustrates the dependence of the sense of reality upon *excitement*. Only what stirs us is realised.

to our attention is enough for that. Revert to the beginning of the chapter, and take the candle entering the vacant mind. The mind was waiting for just some such object to make its spring upon. It makes its spring and the candle is believed. But when the candle appears at the same time with other objects, it must run the gauntlet of their rivalry, and then it becomes a question which of the various candidates for attention shall compel belief. As a rule we believe as much as we can. We would believe everything if we only could. When objects are represented by us quite unsystematically they conflict but little with each other, and the number of them which in this chaotic manner we can believe is limitless. The primitive savage's mind is a jungle in which hallucinations, dreams, superstitions, conceptions and sensible objects all flourish alongside of each other, unregulated except by the attention turning in this way or in that. The child's mind is the same. It is only as objects become permanent and their relations fixed that discrepancies and contradictions are felt and must be settled in some stable way. As a rule, the success with which a contradicted object maintains itself in our belief is proportional to several qualities which it must possess. Of these the one which would be put first by most people, because it characterises objects of sensation, is its—

(1) Coerciveness over attention, or the mere power to possess consciousness: then follow—

(2) Liveliness, or sensible pungency, especially in the way of exciting pleasure or pain;

(3) Stimulating effect upon the will, *i.e.*, capacity to arouse active impulses, the more instinctive the better;

(4) Emotional interest, as object of love, dread, admiration, desire, &c.;

(5) Congruity with certain favourite forms of contemplation—unity, simplicity, permanence, and the like;

(6) Independence of other causes, and its own causal importance.

These characters run into each other. Coerciveness is the result of liveliness or emotional interest. What is lively and interesting stimulates *eo ipso* the will; congruity holds of active impulses as well as of contemplative forms; causal independence and importance suit a certain contemplative demand, &c. I will therefore abandon all attempt at a formal treatment, and simply proceed to make remarks in the most convenient order of exposition.

As a whole, sensations are more lively and are judged more real than conceptions; things met with every hour

more real than things seen once; attributes perceived when awake, more real than attributes perceived in a dream. But, owing to the *diverse relations contracted by the various objects with each other*, the simple rule that the lively and permanent is the real is often enough disguised. A conceived thing may be deemed more real than a certain sensible thing, if it only be intimately related to other sensible things more vivid, permanent or interesting than the first one. Conceived molecular vibrations, *e.g.*, are by the physicist judged more real than felt warmth, because so intimately related to all those other facts of motion in the world which he has made his special study. Similarly, a rare thing may be deemed more real than a permanent thing if it be more widely related to other permanent things. All the occasional crucial observations of science are examples of this. A rare experience, too, is likely to be judged more real than a permanent one, if it be more interesting and exciting. Such is the sight of Saturn through a telescope; such are the occasional insights and illuminations which upset our habitual ways of thought.

But no mere floating conception, no mere disconnected rarity, ever displaces vivid things or permanent things from our belief. A conception, to prevail, must *terminate* in the world of orderly sensible experience. A rare phenomenon, to displace frequent ones, must belong with others more frequent still. The history of science is strewn with wrecks and ruins of theory, essences and principles, fluids and forces, once fondly clung to, but found to hang together with no facts of sense. And exceptional phenomena solicit our belief in vain until such time as we chance to conceive them as of kinds already admitted to exist. What science means by 'verification' is no more than this, that no object of conception shall be believed which sooner or later has not some permanent and vivid object of sensation for its *term*.

Sensible objects are thus either our realities or the tests of our realities. Conceived objects must show sensible *effects* or else be disbelieved. And the effects, even though reduced to relative unreality when their causes come to view (as heat, which molecular vibrations make unreal), are yet the things on which our knowledge of the causes rests. Strange mutual dependence this, in which the appearance needs the reality in order to exist, but the reality needs the appearance in order to be known!

Sensible vividness or pungency is then the vital factor in reality when once the conflict between objects and the connecting of them together in the mind has begun. No object

which neither possesses this vividness in its own right nor is able to borrow it from anything else has a chance of making headway against vivid rivals, or of rousing in us that reaction in which belief consists. On the vivid objects we *pin*, as the saying is, our faith in all the rest; and our belief returns instinctively even to those of them from which reflection has led it away. Witness the obduracy with which the popular world of colours, sounds and smells holds its own against that of molecules and vibrations. Let the physicist himself but nod, like Homer, and the world of sense becomes his absolute reality again.[1]

That things originally devoid of this stimulating power should be enabled, by association with other things which have it, to compel our belief as if they had it themselves, is a remarkable psychological fact, which since Hume's time it has been impossible to overlook.

"The vividness of the first conception," he writes, "diffuses itself along the relations and is conveyed, as by so many pipes or channels, to every idea that has any communication with the primary one. . . . Superstitious people are fond of the relics of saints and holy men, for the same reason that they seek after types and images, in order to enliven their devotion and give them a more intimate and strong conception of those exemplary lives. . . . Now, 'tis evident one of the best relics a devotee could procure would be the handiwork of a saint, and if his clothes and furniture are ever to be considered in this light, 'tis because they were once at his disposal, and were moved and affected by him; in which respect they are . . . connected with him by a shorter train of consequences than any of those from which we learn the reality of his existence. This phenomenon clearly proves that a present impression, with a relation of causation, may enliven any idea, and consequently

[1] The way in which sensations are pitted against systematised conceptions, and in which the one or the other then prevails according as the sensations are felt by ourselves or merely known by report, is interestingly illustrated at the present day by the state of public belief about 'spiritualistic' phenomena. There exist numerous narratives of movement without contact on the part of articles of furniture and other material objects, in the presence of certain privileged individuals called mediums. Such movement violates our memories, and the whole system of accepted physical 'science'. Consequently those who have not seen it either brand the narratives immediately as lies or call the phenomena 'illusions' of sense, produced by fraud or due to hallucination. But one who has actually seen such a phenomenon, under what seems to him sufficiently 'test-conditions,' will hold to his sensible experience through thick and thin, even though the whole fabric of 'science' should be rent in twain. That man would be a weak-spirited creature indeed who should allow any fly-blown generalities about 'the liability of the senses to be deceived' to bully him out of his adhesion to what for him was an indubitable experience of sight. A man may err in this obstinacy, sure enough, in any particular case. But the spirit that animates him is that on which ultimately the very life and health of Science rest.

produce belief or assent, according to the precedent definition of it. . . . It has been remarked among the Mahometans as well as Christians, that those pilgrims who have seen Mecca or the Holy Land are ever after more faithful and zealous believers than those who have not had that advantage. A man whose memory presents him with a lively image of the Red Sea and the Desert and Jerusalem and Galilee can never doubt of any miraculous events which are related either by Moses or the Evangelists. The lively idea of the places passes by an easy transition to the facts which are supposed to have been related to them by contiguity, and increases the belief by increasing the vivacity of the conception. The remembrance of those fields and rivers has the same influence as a new argument. . . . The ceremonies of the Catholic religion may be considered as instances of the same nature. The devotees of that strange superstition usually plead in excuse for the mummeries with which they are upbraided that they feel the good effect of external motions and postures and actions in enlivening their devotion and quickening their fervour, which otherwise would decay, if directed entirely to distant and immaterial objects. We shadow out the objects of our faith, say they, in sensible types and images, and render them more present to us by the immediate presence of these types than it is possible for us to do merely by an intellectual view and contemplation." [1]

Hume's cases are rather trivial; and the things which associated sensible objects make us believe in are supposed by him to be unreal. But all the more manifest for that is the fact of their psychological influence. Who does not 'realise' more the fact of a dead or distant friend's existence, at the moment when a portrait, letter, garment or other material reminder of him is found? The whole notion of him then grows pungent and speaks to us and shakes us, in a manner unknown at other times. In children's minds, fancies and realities live side by side. But however lively their fancies may be, they still gain help from association with reality. The imaginative child identifies its *dramatis personæ* with some doll or other material object, and this evidently solidifies belief, little as it may resemble what it is held to stand for. A thing not too interesting by its own real qualities generally does the best service here. The most useful doll I ever saw was a large cucumber in the hands of a little Amazonian-Indian girl; she nursed it and washed it and rocked it to sleep in a hammock, and talked to it all day long—there was no part in life which the cucumber did not play. Says Mr. Tylor :—

"An imaginative child will make a dog do duty for a horse, or a soldier for a shepherd, till at last the objective resemblance almost disappears, and a bit of wood may be dragged about, resembling a ship on the sea or a coach on the road. Here the likeness of the bit of wood to a ship or

[1] *Treatise of Human Nature*, bk. i., pt. iii., sec. 7.

coach is very slight indeed; but it is a thing, and can be moved about . . . and is an evident assistance to the child in enabling it to arrange and develop its ideas. . . . Of how much use . . . may be seen by taking it away, and leaving the child nothing to play with. . . . In later years and among highly educated people the mental process which goes on in a child's playing with wooden soldiers and horses, though it never disappears, must be sought for in more complex phenomena. Perhaps nothing in after-life more closely resembles the effect of a doll upon a child than the effect of the illustrations of a tale upon a grown reader. Here the objective resemblance is very indefinite . . . yet what reality is given to the scene by a good picture. . . . Mr. Backhouse one day noticed in Van Diemen's Land a woman arranging several stones that were flat, oval and about two inches wide, and marked in various directions with black and red lines. These, he learned, represented absent friends, and one larger than the rest stood for a fat native woman on Flinder's Island, known by the name of Mother Brown. Similar practices are found among far higher races than the ill-fated Tasmanians. Among some North American tribes a mother who has lost a child keeps its memory ever present to her by filling its cradle with black feathers and quills and carrying it about with her for a year or more. When she stops anywhere, she sets up the cradle and talks to it as she goes about her work, just as she would have done if the dead body had been still alive within it. Here we have an image; but in Africa we find a rude doll representing the child, kept as a memorial. . . . Bastian saw Indian women in Peru who had lost an infant carrying about on their backs a wooden doll to represent it."[1]

To many persons among us, photographs of lost ones seem to be fetishes. They, it is true, resemble; but the fact that the mere materiality of the reminder is almost as important as its resemblance is shown by the popularity a hundred years ago of the black taffeta 'silhouettes' which are still found among family relics, and of one of which Fichte could write to his affianced: "*Die Farbe fehlt, das Auge fehlt, es fehlt der himmlische Ausdruck deiner lieblichen Züge*"—and yet go on worshipping it all the same. The opinion so stoutly professed by many, that language is essential to thought, seems to have this much of truth in it, that all our inward images tend invincibly to attach themselves to something sensible so as to gain in corporeity and life. Words serve this purpose, gestures serve it, stones, straws, chalk-marks, anything will do. As soon as any one of these things stands for the idea, the latter seems to be more real. Some persons, the present writer among the number, can hardly lecture without a black-board: the abstract conceptions must be symbolised by letters, squares or circles, and the relations between them by lines. All this symbolism, linguistic, graphic and dramatic, has other uses too, for it abridges thought and fixes terms. But one of its uses is surely to rouse the believing reaction and

[1] *Early Hist. of Mankind*, p. 108.

give to the ideas a more living reality. As, when we are told a story, and shown the very knife that did the murder, the very ring whose hiding-place the clairvoyant revealed, the whole thing passes from fairy-land to mother-earth, so here we believe all the more, if only we see that "the bricks are alive to tell the tale".[1]

So much for the prerogative position of sensations in regard to our belief. But among the sensations themselves all are not deemed equally real. The more practically important ones, the more permanent ones, and the more æsthetically apprehensible ones are selected from the mass, to be believed in most of all; the others are degraded to the position of mere signs and suggesters of these. This fact has already been adverted to in a former essay in MIND (vol. xii.). The real colour of a thing is that one colour-sensation which it gives us when most favourably lighted for vision. So of its real size, its real shape, &c.—these are but optical sensations selected out of thousands of others, because they have æsthetic characteristics which appeal to our convenience or delight. But I will not repeat what I have already written about this matter, but pass on to our treatment of tactile and muscular sensations, as 'primary qualities,' more real than those 'secondary' qualities which eye and ear and nose reveal. Why do we thus so markedly select the *tangible* to be the real? Our motives are not far to seek. The tangible qualities are the least fluctuating. When we get them at all we get them the same. The other qualities fluctuate enormously as our relative position to the object changes. Then, more decisive still, the tactile properties are those most intimately connected with our weal or woe. A dagger hurts us only when in contact with our skin, a poison only when we take it into our mouths, and we can only use an object for our advantage when we have it in our muscular control. It is as tangibles, then, that things concern us most; and the other senses, so far as their practical use goes, do but warn us of what tangible things to expect. They are but organs of anticipatory touch, as Berkeley has with perfect clearness explained.[2]

[1] The reader will be reminded of the part which real sensations play in a very large number of hallucinations or even, according to M. Binet, in all. Some sensorial process seems requisite in order that the illusory object shall appear *outwardly there*, though the *nature* of the object thus appearing may be determined by inward cerebral processes with which under normal conditions the outer *point de repère* had nothing to do.

[2] See *Theory of Vision*, § 59.

Among all sensations, the *most* belief-compelling are those productive of pleasure or of pain. Locke expressly makes the *pleasure-* or *pain*-giving quality to be the ultimate human criterion of anything's reality. Discussing (with a supposed Berkeleyan before Berkeley) the notion that all our perceptions may be but a dream, he says:

"He may please to dream that I make him this answer . . . that I believe he will allow a very manifest difference between dreaming of being in the fire and being actually in it. But yet if he be resolved to appear so sceptical as to maintain that what I call being actually in the fire is nothing but a dream, and that we cannot thereby certainly know that any such thing as fire actually exists without us, I answer that we, certainly finding that pleasure or pain [or emotion of any sort] follows upon the application of certain objects to us, whose existence we perceive, or dream that we perceive by our senses, *this certainly is as great as our happiness or misery*, beyond which we have no concernment to know or to be."[1]

The quality of arousing emotion, of shaking, moving us or inciting us to action, has as much to do with our belief in an object's reality as the quality of giving pleasure or pain. In MIND ix. 188, I have sought to show that our emotions probably owe their pungent quality to the bodily sensations which they involve. Our tendency to believe in emotionally exciting objects (objects of fear, desire, &c.) more than in indifferent ones is thus explained without resorting to any fundamentally new principle of choice. Speaking generally, and other things being equal, the more a conceived object *excites* us, the more reality it has. The same object excites us differently at different times. Moral and religious truths come 'home' to us far more on some occasions than on others. As Emerson says, "there is a difference between one and another hour of life in their authority and subsequent effect. Our faith comes in

[1] *Essay*, bk. iv., ch. 2, § 14. In another place: "He that sees a candle burning and hath experimented the force of its flame by putting his finger into it, will little doubt that this is something existing without him, which does him harm and puts him to great pain. . . . And if our dreamer pleases to try whether the glowing heat of a glass furnace be barely a wandering imagination in a drowsy man's fancy by putting his hand into it, he may, perhaps, be awakened into a certainty greater than he could wish, that it is something more than bare imagination. So that the evidence is as great as we can desire, being as certain to us as our pleasure or pain, *i.e.*, happiness or misery; beyond which we have no concernment, either of knowledge or being. Such an assurance of the existence of things without us is sufficient to direct us in the attaining the good and avoiding the evil which is caused by them, which is the important concernment we have of being made acquainted with them" *Ibid.*, bk. iv., ch. 11, § 8.

moments . . . yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences." The "depth" is partly, no doubt, the insight into wider systems of unified relation, but far more often than that it is the emotional thrill. Thus, to descend to more trivial examples, a man who has no belief in ghosts by daylight will temporarily believe in them when, alone at midnight, he feels his blood curdle at a mysterious sound or vision, his heart thumping, and his legs impelled to flee. The thought of falling when we walk along a kerbstone awakens no emotion of dread, so no sense of reality attaches to it, and we are sure we shall not fall. On a precipice's edge, however, the sickening emotion which the notion of a possible fall engenders makes us believe in the latter's imminent reality, and quite unfits us to proceed.

The greatest proof that a man is *sui compos* is his ability to suspend belief in presence of an emotionally exciting idea. To give this power is the highest result of education. In untutored minds the power does not exist. Every exciting thought carries credence with it. To conceive with passion is *eo ipso* to affirm. As Bagehot says:—

"The Caliph Omar burnt the Alexandrian Library, saying: 'All books which contain what is not in the Koran are dangerous. All which contain what is in it are useless'! Probably no one ever had an intenser belief in anything than Omar had in this. Yet it is impossible to imagine it preceded by an argument. His belief in Mahomet, in the Koran, and in the sufficiency of the Koran, probably came to him in spontaneous rushes of emotion; there may have been little vestiges of argument floating here and there, but they did not justify the strength of the emotion, still less did they create it, and they hardly even excused it. . . . Probably, when the subject is thoroughly examined, conviction will be found to be one of the intensest of human emotions, and one most closely connected with the bodily state . . . accompanied or preceded by the sensation that Scott makes his seer describe as the prelude of a prophecy:—

'At length the fatal answer came,
In characters of living flame—
Not spoke in words, nor blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul'.

A hot flash seems to burn across the brain. Men in these intense states of mind have altered all history, changed for better or worse the creed of myriads, and desolated or redeemed provinces or ages. Nor is this intensity a sign of truth, for it is precisely strongest in those points in which men differ most from each other. John Knox felt it in his anti-Catholicism; Ignatius Loyola in his anti-Protestantism; and both, I suppose, felt it as much as it is possible to feel it." [1]

[1] W. Bagehot, "The Emotion of Conviction," *Literary Studies* i. 412-17.

The reason of the belief is undoubtedly the bodily commotion which the exciting idea sets up. 'Nothing which I can feel like *that* can be false.' All our religious and supernatural beliefs are of this order. The surest warrant for immortality is the yearning of our bowels for our dear ones; for God, the sinking sense it gives us to imagine no such Providence or help. So of our political or pecuniary hopes and fears, and things and persons dreaded and desired. "A grocer has a full creed as to foreign policy, a young lady a complete theory of the sacraments, as to which neither has any doubt. . . . A girl in a country parsonage will be sure that Paris never can be taken, or that Bismarck is a wretch" —all because they have either conceived these things at some moment with passion, or associated them with other things which they have conceived with passion.

M. Renouvier calls this belief of a thing for no other reason than that we conceive it with passion, by the name of mental vertigo.[1] Other objects whisper doubt or disbelief; but the object of passion makes us deaf to all but itself, and we affirm it unhesitatingly. Such objects are the delusions of insanity, which the insane person can at odd moments steady himself against, but which again return to sweep him off his feet. Such are the revelations of mysticism. Such, particularly, are the sudden beliefs which animate mobs of men when frenzied impulse to action is involved. Whatever be the action in point—whether the stoning of a prophet, the hailing of a conqueror, the burning of a witch, the baiting of a heretic or Jew, the starting of a forlorn hope, or the flying from a foe—the fact that to believe a certain object will cause that action to explode convulsively is a sufficient reason for that belief to come. The motor impulse sweeps it unresisting in its train.

The whole history of witchcraft and early medicine is a commentary on the facility with which anything which chances to be conceived is believed the moment the belief chimes in with an emotional mood. The cause of sickness! When a savage asks the cause of anything he means to ask exclusively 'What is to blame?' The theoretic curiosity starts from the practical life's demands. Let some one then accuse a necromancer, suggest a charm or spell which has been cast, and no more 'evidence' is asked for. What evidence is required beyond this intimate sense of the

[1] *Psychologie Rationelle*, ch. 12.

culprit's responsibility, to which our very viscera and limbs reply?[1]

Human credulity in the way of therapeutics has similar psychological roots. If there is anything intolerable (especially to the heart of woman), it is to do nothing when a loved one is sick or in pain. To do anything is a relief. Accordingly, whatever remedy may be suggested is a spark on inflammable soil. The mind makes its spring towards

[1] Two examples out of a thousand:—

Reid, *Inquiry*, ch. ii., § 9:—"I remember, many years ago, a white ox was brought into the country, of so enormous size, that people came many miles to see him. There happened, some months after, an uncommon fatality among women in child-bearing. Two such uncommon events, following one another, gave a suspicion of their connexion, and occasioned a common opinion among the country people that the white ox was the cause of this fatality."

H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, ii. 388: "On the third day of our stay at Mowa, feeling quite comfortable amongst the people, on account of their friendly bearing, I began to write in my note-book the terms for articles, in order to improve my already copious vocabulary of native words. I had proceeded only a few minutes when I observed a strange commotion amongst the people who had been flocking about me, and presently they ran away. In a short time we heard war-cries ringing loudly and shrilly over the table-land. Two hours afterwards, a long line of warriors were seen descending the table-land and advancing towards our camp. There may have been between five and six hundred of them. We, on the other hand, had made but few preparations except such as would justify us replying to them in the event of the actual commencement of hostilities. But I had made many firm friends among them, and I firmly believed that I should be able to avert an open rupture. When they had assembled at about a hundred yards in front of our camp, Safeni and I walked up towards them and sat down midway. Some half-dozen of the Mowa people came near, and the shauri began.

"'What is the matter, my friends?' I asked. 'Why do you come with guns in your hands, in such numbers, as though you were coming to fight? Fight? fight us, your friends! Tut! this is some great mistake, surely.'

"'Mundelé,' replied one of them . . . 'our people saw you yesterday make marks on some tara-tara [paper]. This is very bad. Our country will waste, our goats will die, our bananas will rot, and our women will dry up. What have we done to you that you should wish to kill us? We have sold you food and we have brought you wine each day. Your people are allowed to wander where they please without trouble. Why is the Mundelé so wicked? We have gathered together to fight you if you do not burn that tara-tara now before our eyes. If you burn it we go away, and shall be your friends as heretofore.'

"I told them to rest there, and left Safeni in their hands as a pledge that I should return. My tent was not fifty yards from the spot, but while going towards it my brain was busy in devising some plan to foil this superstitious madness. My note-book contained a vast number of valuable notes. . . . I could not sacrifice it to the childish caprice of savages. As I was rummaging my book-box, I came across a volume of *Shakespeare* [Chandos edition] much worn, and well thumbed, and which

action on that cue, sends for that remedy, and for a day at least believes the danger past. Blame, dread and hope are thus the great belief-inspiring passions, and cover among them the future, the present and the past.

These remarks illustrate the earlier heads of the list on page 335. Whichever represented objects give us sensations, especially interesting ones, or incite our motor impulses, or arouse our hate, desire or fear, are real enough for us. Our requirements in the way of reality terminate in our own acts and emotions, our own pleasures and pains. These are the ultimate fixities from which, as we formerly observed, the whole chain of our beliefs depends, object hanging to object, as the bees, in swarming, hang to each other until, *de proche en proche*, the supporting branch, the Self, is reached and held.

Now the merely conceived or imagined objects which our mind represents as hanging to the sensations (causing them, &c.), filling the gaps between them, and weaving their interrupted chaos into order are innumerable. Whole systems of them conflict with other systems, and our choice of which system shall carry our belief is governed by principles which are simple enough, however subtle and difficult may be their application to details. The conceived system, to pass for true, must at least include the reality of the sensible objects in it, by explaining them as *effects on us*, if nothing more. The system which includes the most of them, and definitely explains or pretends to explain the most of them, will, *ceteris paribus*, prevail. It is needless to say how far mankind still is from having excogitated such a

was of the same size as my field-book; its cover was similar also, and it might be passed for the field-book, provided that no one remembered its appearance too well. I took it to them. 'Is this the tara-tara, friends, that you wish burnt?'

"'Yes, yes, that is it.'

"'Well, take it, and burn it, or keep it.'

"'M—m. No, no, no. We will not touch it. It is fetish. You must burn it.'

"'I! Well, let it be so. I will do anything to please my good friends of Mowa.'

"We walked to the nearest fire. I breathed a regretful farewell to my genial companion, which, during my many weary hours of night, had assisted to relieve my mind when oppressed by almost intolerable woes, and then gravely consigned the innocent *Shakespeare* to the flames, heaping the brush fuel over it with ceremonious care.

"'Ah-h-h,' breathed the poor deluded natives sighing their relief. . . . 'There is no trouble now.' . . . And something approaching to a cheer was shouted among them, which terminated the episode of the burning of *Shakespeare*."

system. But the various materialisms, idealisms and hylozoisms show with what industry the attempt is for ever made. It is conceivable that several rival theories should equally well include the actual order of our sensations in their scheme, much as the one-fluid and two-fluid theories of electricity formulated all the common electrical phenomena equally well. The sciences are full of these alternatives. Which theory is then to be believed? That will be most generally believed which, besides offering us objects able to account satisfactorily for our sensible experience, also offers those which are most interesting, those which appeal most urgently to our æsthetic, emotional and active needs. So here in the higher intellectual life, the same selection among general conception goes on which went on among the sensations themselves. First, a word of their relation to our emotional and active needs—and here I can do no better than quote from an article published some years ago.[1]

"A philosophy may be unimpeachable in other respects, but either of two defects will be fatal to its universal acceptance. First, its ultimate principle must not be one that essentially baffles and disappoints our dearest desires and most cherished powers. A pessimistic principle like Schopenhauer's incurably vicious Will-substance, or Hartmann's wicked jack-at-all-trades, the Unconscious, will perpetually call forth essays at other philosophies. Incompatibility of the future with their desires and active tendencies is, in fact, to most men a source of more fixed disquietude than uncertainty itself. Witness the attempts to overcome the 'problem of evil,' the 'mystery of pain'. There is no problem of 'good'.

"But a second and worse defect in a philosophy than that of contradicting our active propensities is to give them no Object whatever to press against. A philosophy whose principle is so incommensurate with our most intimate powers as to deny them all relevancy in universal affairs, as to annihilate their motives at one blow, will be even more unpopular than pessimism. Better face the enemy than the eternal Void! This is why materialism will always fail of universal adoption, however well it may fuse things into an atomistic unity, however clearly it may prophesy the future eternity. For materialism denies reality to the objects of almost all the impulses which we most cherish. The real

[1] "Rationality, Activity and Faith" (*Princeton Review*, July, 1882, pp. 64-9).

meaning of the impulses, it says, is something which has no emotional interest for us whatever. But what is called extradition is quite as characteristic of our emotions as of our sense. Both point to an Object as the cause of the present feeling. What an intensely objective reference lies in fear! In like manner an enraptured man, a dreary-feeling man, are not simply aware of their subjective states; if they were, the force of their feelings would evaporate. Both believe there is outward cause *why* they should feel as they do: either 'It is a glad world! how good is life!' or 'What a loathsome tedium is existence!' Any philosophy which annihilates the validity of the reference by explaining away its objects or translating them into terms of no emotional pertinency leaves the mind with little to care or act for. This is the opposite condition from that of nightmare, but when acutely brought home to consciousness it produces a kindred horror. In nightmare we have motives to act but no power; here we have powers but no motives. A nameless *Unheimlichkeit* comes over us at the thought of there being nothing eternal in our final purposes, in the objects of those loves and aspirations which are our deepest energies. The monstrously lopsided equation of the universe and its knower, which we postulate as the ideal of cognition, is perfectly paralleled by the no less lopsided equation of the universe and the *doer*. We demand in it a *character* for which our emotions and active propensities shall be a match. Small as we are, minute as is the point by which the Cosmos impinges upon each one of us, each one desires to feel that his reaction at that point is congruous with the demands of the vast whole, that he balances the latter, so to speak, and is able to do what it expects of him. But as his abilities to 'do' lie wholly in the line of his natural propensities; as he enjoys reaction with such emotions as fortitude, hope, rapture, admiration, earnestness and the like; and as he very unwillingly reacts with fear, disgust, despair or doubt,—a philosophy which should legitimate only emotions of the latter sort would be sure to leave the mind a prey to discontent and craving.

"It is far too little recognised how entirely the intellect is built up of practical interests. The theory of Evolution is beginning to do very good service by its reduction of all mentality to the type of reflex action. Cognition, in this view, is but a fleeting moment, a cross-section at a certain point of what in its totality is a motor phenomenon. In the lower forms of life no one will pretend that cognition is anything more than a guide to appropriate action. The ger-

minal question concerning things brought for the first time before consciousness is not the theoretic 'What is that?' but the practical 'Who goes there?' or rather, as Horwicz has admirably put it, 'What is to be done?'—'*Was fang' ich an?*' In all our discussions about the intelligence of lower animals the only test we use is that of their *acting* as if for a purpose. Cognition, in short, is incomplete until discharged in act. And although it is true that the later mental development, which attains its maximum through the hypertrophied cerebrum of man, gives birth to a vast amount of theoretic activity over and above that which is immediately ministerial to practice, yet the earlier claim is only postponed, not effaced, and the active nature asserts its rights to the end.

"If there be any truth at all in this view, it follows, that however vaguely a philosopher may define the ultimate universal datum, he cannot be said to leave it unknown to us so long as he in the slightest degree pretends that our emotional or active attitude towards it should be of one sort rather than another. He who says, 'Life is real, life is earnest,' however much he may speak of the fundamental mysteriousness of things, gives a distinct definition to that mysteriousness by ascribing to it the right to claim from us the particular mood called seriousness, which means the willingness to live with energy, though energy bring pain. The same is true of him who says that all is vanity. Indefinable as the predicate vanity may be *in se*, it is clearly enough something which permits anæsthesia, mere escape from suffering, to be our rule of life. There is no more ludicrous incongruity than for agnostics to proclaim with one breath that the substance of things is unknowable, and with the next that the thought of it should inspire us with admiration of its glory, reverence and a willingness to add our co-operative push in the direction towards which its manifestations seem to be drifting. The unknowable may be unfathomed, but if it make such distinct demands upon our activity, we surely are not ignorant of its essential quality.

"If we survey the field of history and ask what feature all great periods of revival, of expansion of the human mind, display in common, we shall find, I think, simply this: that each and all of them have said to the human being, 'The inmost nature of the reality is congenial to *powers* which you possess'. In what did the emancipating message of primitive Christianity consist, but in the announcement that God recognises those weak and tender impulses which paganism

had so rudely overlooked? Take repentance: the man who can do nothing rightly can at least repent of his failures. But for paganism this faculty of repentance was a pure supernumerary, a straggler too late for the fair. Christianity took it and made it the one power within us which appealed straight to the heart of God. And after the night of the Middle Ages had so long branded with obloquy even the generous impulses of the flesh, and defined the Reality to be such that only slavish natures could commune with it, in what did the *Sursum corda!* of the Renaissance lie but in the proclamation that the archetype of verity in things laid claim on the widest activity of our whole æsthetic being? What were Luther's mission and Wesley's but appeals to powers which even the meanest of men might carry with them, faith and self-despair, but which were personal, requiring no priestly intermediation, and which brought their owner face to face with God? What caused the wild-fire influence of Rousseau but the assurance he gave that man's nature was in harmony with the nature of things, if only the paralysing corruptions of custom would stand from between? How did Kant and Fichte, Goethe and Schiller, inspire their time with cheer, except by saying, 'Use all your powers; that is the only obedience which the universe exacts'? And Carlyle with his gospel of Work, of Fact, of Veracity, how does he move us except by saying that the universe imposes no tasks upon us but such as the most humble can perform? Emerson's creed that everything that ever was or will be is here in the developing Now; that man has but to obey himself—'He who will rest in what he *is*, is a part of Destiny'—is in like manner nothing but an exorcism of all scepticism as to the pertinency of one's natural faculties.

"In a word, 'Son of Man, *stand upon thy feet* and I will speak unto thee!' is the only revelation of truth to which the solving epochs have helped the disciple. But that has been enough to satisfy the greater part of his rational need. *In se* and *per se* the universal essence has hardly been more defined by any of these formulæ than by the agnostic x; but the mere assurance that my powers, such as they are, are not irrelevant to it, but pertinent, that it speaks to them and will in some way recognise their reply, that I can be a match for it if I will, and not a footless waif, suffices to make it rational to my feeling in the sense given above. Nothing could be more absurd than to hope for the definitive triumph of any philosophy which should refuse to legitimate, and to legitimate in an emphatic manner, the more powerful of our

emotional and practical tendencies. Fatalism, whose solving word in all crises of behaviour is 'All striving is vain,' will never reign supreme, for the impulse to take life strivingly is indestructible in the race. Moral creeds which speak to that impulse will be widely successful in spite of inconsistency, vagueness and shadowy determination of expectancy. Man needs a rule for his will, and will invent one if one be not given him."

After the emotional and active needs come the intellectual and æsthetic ones. The two great æsthetic principles, of richness and of ease, dominate our intellectual as well as our sensuous life. And, *ceteris paribus*, no system which should not be rich, simple and harmonious would have a chance of being chosen for belief if rich, simple and harmonious systems were there. Into the latter we should unhesitatingly settle, with that welcoming attitude of the will in which belief consists. To quote from a remarkable book:—

"This law that our consciousness constantly tends to the minimum of complexity and to the maximum of definiteness, is of great importance for all our knowledge. . . . Our own activity of attention will thus determine what we are to know and what we are to believe. If things have more than a certain complexity, not only will our limited powers of attention forbid us to unravel this complexity, but we shall strongly desire to believe the things much simpler than they are. For our thoughts about them will have a constant tendency to become as simple and definite as possible. Put a man into a perfect chaos of phenomena —sounds, sights, feelings—and if the man continued to exist, and to be rational at all, his attention would doubtless soon find for him a way to make up some kind of rhythmic regularity, which he would impute to the things about him, so as to imagine that he had discovered some laws of sequence in this mad new world. And thus, in every case where we fancy ourselves sure of a simple law of Nature, we must remember that a great deal of the fancied simplicity may be due, in the given case, not to Nature, but to the ineradicable prejudice of our own minds in favour of regularity and simplicity. All our thoughts are determined, in great measure, by this law of least effort, as it is found exemplified in our activity of attention. . . . The aim of the whole process seems to be to reach as complete and united a conception of reality as possible, a conception wherein the greatest fulness of data shall be combined with the greatest simplicity of conception. The effort of consciousness seems to be to combine the greatest richness of content with the greatest definiteness of organisation."[1]

The richness is got by including all the facts of sense in the scheme; the simplicity, by deducing them out of the smallest possible number of permanent and independent primordial entities; the definite organisation, by assimi-

[1] J. Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (Boston, 1885), pp. 317-57.

lating these latter to ideal objects between which relations of an inwardly rational sort obtain. What these ideal objects and rational relations are would require a separate article to show. Meanwhile, enough has surely been said to justify the assertion made above that no general offhand answer can be given as to which objects mankind shall choose as its realities. The fight is still under way. Our minds are yet chaotic; and at best we make a mixture and a compromise, as we yield to the claim of this interest or that, and follow first one and then another principle in turn. It is undeniably true that materialistic, or so-called 'scientific,' conceptions of the universe have so far gratified the purely intellectual interests more than the more sentimental conceptions have. But, on the other hand, as already remarked, they leave the emotional and active interests cold. The perfect object of belief would be a God or 'Soul of the World,' represented both optimistically and moralistically (if such a combination could be), and withal so definitely conceived as to show us *why* our phenomenal experiences should be sent to us by Him in just the very way in which they come. All Science and all History would thus be accounted for in the deepest and simplest fashion. The very room in which I sit, its sensible walls and floor, and the feeling the air and fire within it give me, no less than the 'scientific' conceptions which I am urged to frame concerning the mode of existence of all these phenomena when my back is turned, would then all be corroborated, not de-realised, by the ultimate principle of my belief. The World-soul sends me just those phenomena in order that I may react upon them; and among the reactions is the intellectual one of spinning these conceptions. What is beyond the crude experiences is not an *alternative* to them, but something that *means* them for me here and now. It is safe to say that, if ever such a system is satisfactorily excogitated, mankind will drop all other systems and cling to that one alone as real. Meanwhile the other systems coexist with the attempts at that one, and, all being alike fragmentary, each has its little audience and day.

I have now, I trust, shown sufficiently what the psychological sources of the sense of reality are. Hume declared that its source was the idea's liveliness; Hartley and James Mill maintained that it was its association with other ideas; Prof. Bain has said that it was its connexion with our motor nature. Each is right in part; so that my completer account is less simple than any of its classic

predecessors. I have not aspired in it to the slightest originality; I only hope to have woven the traditional doctrines into a less vulnerable whole than I have yet met in print. The absolute, uncriticised reality of the Self is the root of the whole matter, concerning which there is much more to be said, but not at this time and place. There is also much to be said about the connexion of the sense of reality with the Will. The will can change the relative power which objects have of compelling our attention. The will can increase or diminish our emotional and impulsive reactions upon them. The will can end by making us believe things through making us *act* as if they were real, although at first without belief. Belief and will are thus inseparable functions. But space is lacking to treat of their connexion, which I leave willingly untouched, since the masterly treatment of the subject by Renouvier is so readily accessible to every reader.[1]

[1] *Psychologie Rationelle* (1875), ii.