

**JUDGMENT AS  
BELIEF. A  
DISSERTATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649339952

Judgment as Belief. A Dissertation by Thomas Albert Lewis

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THOMAS ALBERT LEWIS**

**JUDGMENT AS  
BELIEF. A  
DISSERTATION**



EXCT  
JUL 29 1913

# JUDGMENT AS BELIEF

BY

Thomas Albert Lewis

---

## A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF  
THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY  
WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.



BALTIMORE

June, 1910

M

## CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY: The Problem and Method.....	5-7
II. PAST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY .....	7-20
Section i: Belief as vivacity of idea .....	8-11
Section ii: Belief as inseparable association .....	12-14
Section iii: Belief as ultimate assent .....	14-17
Section iv: Belief as action .....	17-20
III. PRESENT PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY .....	20-42
Section i: Descriptive .....	20-34
A. Belief with feeling paramount .....	20-24
B. Belief with cognition indispensable.....	24-34
Section ii: Pathological .....	34-37
Section iii: Experimental .....	37-42
IV. CRITICISM .....	42-45
V. REALITY-FEELING AND PRESUMPTION .....	45-47
VI. QUASI-BELIEF AND PRESUMPTION .....	48-54
VII. BELIEF AND JUDGMENT .....	54-68
Section i: Direct Evidence .....	56-64
A. Objective .....	56-62
B. Subjective .....	62-64
Section ii: Indirect Evidence .....	64-68
A. Interpretation of the Negative.....	64-65
B. Argument from Pragmatism .....	65-68
CONCLUSION .....	68-69
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....	70

## JUDGMENT AS BELIEF

### CHAPTER I.

#### *Introductory—The Problem and Method.*

In a rather uncritical fashion, it may be said that present theories of judgment fall into three classes. *First*, there are those theories that put judgment safely beyond the change of experience, beyond the power of growth and readjustment to disturb; *secondly*, there are those theories that are emphatically averse to this exaltation of judgment upon a throne where it shall forever rule over experience willy-nilly, but are rather in favor of putting experience itself on the throne; and, *thirdly*, there are those theories that strike a middle ground, that want to keep reason on the throne so that experience will not run away with itself into anarchy, but desire reason to be responsive to evolving life.

The first sort of judgments are found in formal logic. It can be said, with more or less truth, that this logic transcends actual, growing experience, individual and social, and forms a closed system of thought that sustains itself on a priori principles. It attempts by the use of the syllogism to weave a fabric of truth out of propositions that are not real fibers of existence, drawn from this sphere or that, from the world of fact or fiction, or some other. This logic, certain critics say, represents an endeavor to think at large, to gain knowledge through sheer reasoning with propositions as propositions, and not with propositions as they openly assert or tacitly presuppose some world to which the knowledge can refer.

The second kind of logical theory, which is the antipode of the theory just considered, belongs to the pragmatists. This doctrine exactly reverses things—that is, it gives stumbling, striving experience the place of honor and appoints judgment to serve. The pragmatist withdraws allegiance from all logic that claims to know more about guiding human happenings and events, as together or in succession they join in creating a life of progress and well-being, than the thought that is born of the travail of

those very events and happenings which it guides; he cuts loose from all the moorings of universal and necessary thought and floats away on the "flux of things" with no fixed point, to the right or to the left, behind or before, with no sun or stars in the sky except when present experience is in danger of going upon the rocks, and then it has to be a particular kind of sun or star—one made to order for this very experience, no universal sun or star being of the right uniqueness. To the pragmatist judgment is a projected plan that has no virtue in harmony of parts, but only in the way it works out in practice, the way it mends experience.

The third style of theory, that held by theorists who aim to strike a balance between the universalist and the particularist, criticize the former for pretending to be universal and necessary without being universal and necessary anywhere, and the latter for not generalizing the facts sufficiently to be able to corral them anywhere. To state this criticism in terms of present-day politics, the universalist is a "stand-patter," who believes in tariff from its very innate reasonableness, and the particularist is a "free-trader," who believes in letting each individual case settle its own affairs, as the occasion gives wisdom. One group of theorists over-emphasizes the authority of abstract thinking, and under-emphasizes the authority of concrete, active life, while the other, reversing the emphasis, commits the opposite error; the one worships the certain past, the other worships the uncertain future. The universality and necessity of formal logic are not false categories in their nature, but only in their use, *i. e.*, in being lifted out of experience and deified; neither, on the other hand, is changing experience (fluctuating phenomena) false *per se*, but only when it refuses to take its place in some realm of existence. It is a selective union of the two contrasting theories that is the desideratum—experience must not be allowed to divorce itself from relations, or relations from experience; thinking and action must join to satisfy all the facts of life.

The problem of bridging the abyss between abstract thought and concrete fact and event has furnished the motive for the investigation undertaken in this paper. Belief more than anything else seems to give promise of accomplishing the feat of satisfying conservative intellect and radical action, and that was



consequently the direction the investigation took. In this study my presentation is largely re-presentation; any originality it may have will be found mainly in the sifting and correlating of earlier thoughts on the subject. The paper is, indeed, a sort of census of those minds that have originated the chief ideas on belief. The census form consists of but two questions, first: "What is belief?" This was put to historical and present writers on psychology; then second, "Is judgment the same as belief?" and this was put to writers on worth theory, epistemology, and logic. The answers received to these questions, and the criticism and interpretation of those answers will, accordingly, be found to constitute the body of this investigation.

As to the results of the census: The first question which was asked of Hume, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Bain, and as many modern psychologists, met with replies which strongly indicated that belief—whatever other attributes it might have—has these two: namely, an objective reference to reality, and a subjective reference to self. The second question, which was asked of Baldwin, Meinong, Bradley, Brentano, Urban, the Pragmatist, and others, received answers that tended to show that judgment has the very characteristics found to be the characteristics of belief—the subjective and objective characters. Baldwin's Genetic Logic has the genesis of judgment and the genesis of belief coinciding; Brentano, looking at judgment from the psychological as Baldwin does from the epistemological, sees judgment to be belief; both these men and others hold that judgment has existential reference; and Urban, through his worth theory, and the pragmatist, through his theory of logic, vie with each other in giving emphasis to the subjective control in life and judgment. Further support of the idea that judgment embodies in overt expression the dual nature of belief appears in a short criticism made of bare negation, the emptiness of which is easily explained upon the theory that identifies belief and judgment, and in a longer criticism of pragmatism, which aims to show that pragmatism supports the view of this paper—for in failing to reach belief, the pragmatist likewise fails to reach judgment, thus stopping at what Meinong, Baldwin and Urban call assumption.

## CHAPTER II.

## PAST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY.

*Section I: Belief As Vivacity of Idea.*

What is meant by Hume's theory, that "belief is a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression," will be most quickly, as well as most clearly brought out if we begin by setting forth the author's point of view. Perhaps the leading characteristic of Hume's philosophy is his skepticism; at any rate, we may be certain that in his treatment of belief, this motive leads. Reason is declared to be impotent as soon as it presumes upon its reputed authority; it is then no longer able to produce conviction. Outside of demonstrative and intuitive propositions, there is no such thing as certain knowledge. As soon as we attempt to gain truth inductively we land in the bog of "matter of fact," where knowledge can find no footing, and belief goes down in doubt.<sup>1</sup> Reason is chained to skepticism, and in spite of herself, she must give aid to her rival. The relation between belief and reason, as Hume regarded it, is well put in the following passage: "When I reflect on the natural fallibility of my judgment, I have less confidence in my opinions than when I only consider the objects concerning which I reason; and when I proceed still further to turn the scrutiny against every successive estimate I make of my faculties, all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last, a total extinction of belief and evidence."<sup>2</sup>

This brief consideration of the fundamental assumption of Hume's system of philosophy brings us without surprise—in fact, pretty much as a matter of course—to the statement that belief is not demonstrable, is not a state of mind "grounded in evidence." The more thought strives after judgments that give conviction of truth, the less the conviction grows. For abstruse and tortuous thinking serves only to drain away assurance. "It is not in the peculiar nature of our ideas or in their order that we find belief." The imagination with all its resources is not able so to join ideas that the mind will be moved to assert the reality they pretend. Nothing but artificial emptiness can ever result from the vain abstractions of the dogmatist. If we have conviction about matters of fact, they are to be credited to the natural

<sup>1</sup> Hume: *A Treatise on Human Nature*; p. 477.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 474.

working of experience; to habit. The author is quite explicit on this point. "All reasonings concerning causes and effects," he asserts, "are derived from nothing but custom, and belief is more an act of the sensitive than of the cognitive part of our nature."<sup>1</sup> And again: "If belief were a simple act of thought, without any peculiar manner of conception or the addition of a force and vivacity, it must infallibly destroy itself, and in every case terminate in a total suspense of judgment."<sup>2</sup> The feeling of conviction is, accordingly, "a sort of automatic governor," with which nature has provided the human mind to save it from the despair of utter doubt. The natural flow of life's happenings breeds in us unavoidably the lively concept of an unquestioning judgment.

We have thus far found the pioneer student of the "nature of that act of mind which persuades of the truth of what we conceive" to be quite consistent in his conclusions. Belief is simple and spontaneous like sensation, and it is no more to be had by a quest into the land of abstract thinking than is sensation. It is the "superior force of vivacity or solidity or firmness or steadiness" an idea has from being connected with the present impression; in fine, belief is for Hume a precipitate of custom.

When, however, Hume undertakes to discover the causes of belief, he seems forced to enlarge on his earlier conception of it. In this connection, Carveth Read observes that "Hume's next remark takes us deeper; an impression of the senses communicates its vivacity and force to all the ideas related to it. Hence, memory is distinguished from imagination by its greater vivacity and also by the fixity and order of its ideas, derived from the order of the original impressions. Further, the vigor and vivacity of mental processes, and therefore, of belief, is favored by the attention; by the associative principles of resemblance and contiguity; and more especially, by causation and by repetition and custom. Even an idea of which we have forgotten the correspondent impression may itself become the ground of belief and inference; because whatever firmness or vivacity it has it must be able to bestow on whatever is related to it. 'Of these impressions or ideas of memory, we form a kind of system, comprehending whatever we remember to have been present, either to our internal

<sup>1</sup> Hume: *A Treatise on Human Nature*; p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*