Ersatz Belief and Real Belief

Jerome Gellman

Abstract: Philosophers have given much attention to belief and knowledge. Here I introduce an epistemic category close to but different from belief, that I call 'ersatz' belief. Recognition of this category refines our catalogue of epistemic attitudes in an important way.

Keywords: acceptance, William Alston, belief, ersatz belief.

I

The anonymous medieval Jewish Text, *Sefer Hachinuch* (The Book of Education) pronounces the principle that "One's heart follows after one's actions":

> From the actions that we perform the matter is fixed in our soul for ever. [For] a person's heart and all of his thoughts follow his actions, whether good or bad.... *for one's heart follows after one's actions.* (*Sefer Hachinuch* 1978)

According to this text, consistently repeated actions of a requisite type are apt for bringing about a stable change in one's thoughts and character.

Famously, Pascal applied just such a principle to acquiring a belief when he gave this advice following his argument for 'Pascal's Wager':

> Endeavour, then, to convince yourself, not by increase of proofs of God, but by the abatement of your passions. You would like to attain faith and do not know the way; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now stake all their possessions. These are people who know the way which you would follow, and who are cured of an ill of which you would be cured. Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc. Even this will naturally make you believe, and deaden your acuteness. (Pascal 1941)

Here Pascal, speaking to the reader, advises him to "convince yourself" by undertaking such activity that will "naturally make you believe." I take Pascal to be saying that belief in God will be produced by repeatedly performing, with persistence, certain relevant prescribed actions. Act 'as if' you believe and that has a good chance, in a natural way, of getting you *to* believe.

We may ask, though, whether Pascal's recipe for acquiring belief in God will yield belief or only what *looks* like belief in God, but really isn't. I can even think of a reason for saying that the result of using Pascal's recipe will not be real belief, an argument due to Bernard Williams (Williams 1973). Here it is. Presumably a person would know that she had gotten to the present result by way of what we might call Pascal's 'behavioral programming,' rather than by

being convinced, say, by evidence for God's existence or by simply finding herself with a sustained conviction that God existed. Normally, that person would subsequently remember that she had acquired the belief in just that programmed way. But then she could hardly actually believe that the proposition in question was *true*, knowing that she had it only because she had simply *chosen* to have it. She would know she believes it "whether or not it is true." So she could hardly think of her state as belief.

Now, I have argued elsewhere against Williams' argument as applying to all cases of self-induced belief. I will not go into that here. However, Williams does raise questions about a Pascalian would-be believer. He might, that is, not *really* believe that God exists, since presumably knowing that whatever psychological state he has achieved has been achieved only by behavioral programming which he voluntarily undertook for just that purpose. He may have a reason to *want* to believe – Pascal's wager – but have no reason to believe that when he gets the belief it will be true. So, maybe what will seem to him to be a belief in God will be something else masquerading as belief, close enough to the genuine article to allow for a mistake or even self-deception, but not a real belief in God's existence.

But maybe we should think differently about this. Pascal's would-be believer is positively eager to acquire a belief that God exists, because he has been convinced by Pascal's bet. So, maybe he will be primed to *really* believe that God exists, the behavioral programming notwithstanding.

So, instead, consider the following passage from George Elliot's *Daniel Deronda.* In it, Daniel Deronda's mother is explaining to him why, as a young woman, she fled from her austere Jewish religious upbringing and kept secret from him his Jewish roots. She says of her father:

> He never comprehended me, or if he did, he only thought of fettering me into obedience. I was to be what he called 'the Jewish woman' under pain of his curse. I was to feel everything I did not feel, and believe everything I did not believe. I was to feel awe for the bit of parchment in the *mezuza* [scriptural passages] over the door; to dread lest a bit of butter should touch a bit of meat; to think it beautiful that men should bind the *tephillin* [ritual phylacteries] on them, and women not, – to adore the wisdom of such laws, however silly they might seem to me. I was to love the long prayers in the ugly synagogue, and the howling, and the gabbling, and the dreadful fasts, and the tiresome feasts, and my father's endless discoursing about our people, which was a thunder without meaning in my ears. I was to care forever about what Israel had been; and I did not care at all. I cared for the wide world, and all that I could represent in it. I hated living under the shadow of my father's strictness. Teaching, teaching for everlasting – "this you must be," "that you must not be" – pressed on me like a frame that got tighter and tighter as I grew. I wanted to live a large life, with freedom to do what every one else did, and be carried along in a great current, not obliged to care. You are glad to have been born a Jew. You say so. That is because you have not been brought up as a Jew. That separateness seems sweet to you because I saved you from it.

Here is a woman who, from an early age, resisted behavioral programming into Jewish religious belief and practice. But, suppose that at some point, after thinking it all silly and stiffly resisting, she tires of the effort and decides to yield, and just lets her father manipulate her to become what he had wanted her to become – 'a Jewish woman,' as he defined it. And suppose she thus developed away from thinking it all silly into what *looked* like belief. Here, it would be in order, perhaps more than in the Pascal case, to wonder whether she *really* would have believed in such a case, rather than merely seemed to believe, having gotten an ersatz belief rather than a 'real' one. And the reason why we should wonder more here than in the Pascal case is that Daniel's mother would have had a first order desire *not* to believe, competing with a higher order decision to override that and yield to her father's regimen. In Pascal's case we assume that the would-be believer has a first-order desire to believe, which then might just push him over the top to become a believer indeed. So in the case of Deronda's mother we would have a better reason to suspect the non-genuineness of belief.

The questions I have been asking of cases from Pascal and Elliot are generalizable to the theory of cognitive dissonance and its subsequent refinements. Dissonance theory was invented by Leon Festinger in the 1950's, and has undergone a series of refinements and corrections (Festinger 1957, 1964). While the scope of the theory has been controversial in psychology, it is often agreed that dissonance theory, with needed refinements, applies to at least a significant subset of types of cases. It is these that interest me here.

Festinger's thesis applies when a person holds 'psychologically inconsistent' cognitions (beliefs or claims to knowledge). Festinger claimed that awareness of such inconsistency would produce an anxiety of dissonance in subjects, causing them to change at least one of the cognitions to reduce the dissonance. He elaborated a theory about how cognitions would be revised and why, which I will not go into here. The classic example of the application of dissonance theory is to a person who smokes cigarettes habitually and who has come to believe that cigarette smoking causes cancer. The dissonance is between her awareness (1) that she smokes heavily, (2) that this will most likely cause her to have cancer, and (3) that she wishes to avoid getting cancer. Festinger predicts that if such a person finds it too difficult to stop smoking, she will reduce dissonance by revising her belief that smoking causes cancer, or otherwise will neutralize that belief. So, she will talk herself into believing that the research on the link to cancer was not conclusive, or that she was relevantly different from the subjects upon whom research had been conducted, or etc.

Subsequent to Festinger's work, Elliot Aronson introduced an important refinement emphasizing one's self-image as especially mediating the creation of psychological dissonance (Aronson 1968, 1997). Thus, if one had a perception of oneself as "having to be stupid" to do a certain action, yet did that action, one would be expected to revise one's attitude toward the action to bring one's having done the action into alignment with a stable, positive self image.

One form of cognitive dissonance well studied exists when a person engages in an activity thinking initially that the activity is not worth doing. In certain circumstances and for certain types of people at least, this will cause a reevaluation of the activity as something valuable and worthwhile. Thus, in one type of study subjects are asked to engage in an activity that has in their eyes little or no intrinsic worth. If given a large amount of money as reward, afterwards the subjects are likely to be found not to have changed their minds about the intrinsic unworthiness of the task. If given only a negligible reward, however, subjects (who have agreed to do the task anyway) are found to a statistically significant degree to have changed their minds to now think the task to have been intrinsically meaningful, interesting, or worthy. The explanation of dissonance theory: Those receiving large rewards see the activity as worthwhile on account of the monetary reward they receive. They have no reason to change their estimation of the low intrinsic value of what they did in order to explain to themselves why they did an otherwise meaningless task. Those receiving meager reward, however, are faced with having done an activity that holds little, or no, or negative value for them. Why in the world, then, should they, smart, with-it people, have done it? To reduce the dissonance, they change their belief, now believing the task to have been a most worthwhile one. And *that's* the reason they did it.

My purpose in citing these studies is not to completely endorse their findings. Indeed researchers have challenged them on methodological grounds, and on grounds of individual differences among subjects when reacting to dissonant situations. Even after refinements were made in methodology, these studies were not unanimously accepted in the profession. Rather, my interest is to point out, what is generally agreed, that 'belief-changes' as a way of dealing with dissonance can and do occur, even if not on the scale or with the predictability of dissonance theory.

Now I can broaden my earlier questions: Might the result of cognitive adjustment when in dissonance be ersatz belief rather than belief, real belief? Might one not be misled into thinking he now suddenly believed, or self-deceptively think that? Consider the Pascalian would-be believer. He engages consistently over time in behavior for which he lacks the belief or evidence that it is tied to truth or is worthy of engaging in. Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that at least some of the time Pascal's advice will produce a change in cognition purely from a desire to diminish the dissonance between what one believes and what one is doing on a regular basis. But, after all, what results might not be belief at all, just ersatz belief.

II

By *ersatz belief* I do not mean feigned belief or ambiguous belief. By an ersatz belief that p I mean what has the capacity to fool one, even the subject himself, into thinking that he believes that p. Here's the idea. Let 'B' represent the facts

about a subject upon which we – including a subject – base a judgment that a subject has a belief. Think of B as being the positive 'belief-making characteristics.' As we shall see, philosophers differ over what goes into B, so let's hold off on saying just what B includes, while noting that B will include facts about a subject garnered from introspection, observation, and theory. Here is the notion of ersatz belief:

> S has an *ersatz belief* that p at t iff (1) S has B unambiguously at t and (2) there is a fact, F, about S at t such that F subverts S's having B at t.

Where:

> S has B unambiguously at t iff There is no basis for doubting or hesitating in ascribing *having-B-at-t* to S.

And where:

> A fact F *subverts* S's having B at t when (1) S has B unambiguously at t, (2) F is true of S at t, and (3) F shows that S does not have the belief that p at t.

I call B 'positive,' in contrast to F, which is 'negative,' in that B provides the reasons for thinking that belief is present, whereas F shows that belief is absent. In order for this to be coherent, *the absence of F* cannot be in B. Otherwise no belief could be subverted, for subversion requires that B be present and that F be present. If B were to include the absence of F, then subversion would entail that F was both present and absent. I hereby ban *the absence of F* from B on the grounds that F is to be such that the question of its presence does not arise when making a judgment that belief is present. (Nonetheless, F's absence does arise when judging that a belief is subverted.) So F's absence is not in B. We could compare F's subverting a belief's existence to the claim that the workings of a Cartesian demon subvert the truth of belief in physical objects. This does not require thinking that human beliefs in physical objects are accompanied by the conviction that there is *no* Cartesian demon.

A person could be fooled into thinking that S (he himself or someone else) had a real belief that p at t when it was only an ersatz belief because that person could determine that S had B unambiguously at t, yet have no reason to think that there were facts subverting S having B at t. So we get situations, for example, where an ascriber (the subject or others) of belief to S at t later becomes aware of facts about S, as a result of which the ascriber comes to realize that S did *not* have a belief that p at t at all, despite B's presence at t. Indeed, no matter how long S had the components of belief that p, in ersatz belief an ascriber could come to realize that S *never* believed that p.

We should all be familiar with ordinary discourse which recognizes ersatz belief. However, I do not claim that every belief has an ersatz counterpart. For some beliefs it might not make much sense to entertain the existence of its ersatz opposite number. As Tom Flint remarked to me about the place he has worked for a few decades, "I can't imagine ever coming to realize that I never believed in

the existence of Morris Hall." So I am not saying that for just every belief there exists its ersatz counterpart. To take an extreme example, you might be inclined to ascribe to your fish the belief that they were getting food when you sprinkled little worms into their water. Yet, you might have no idea what it would be like to discover that your fish never *really* believed they were getting food even though they always swam like mad toward the worms. Yet, there is no doubt that there are many beliefs for which there can intelligibly be an ersatz counterpart.

We are generally interested in whether a belief is real or ersatz only when the belief is of some momentousness. I am not moved to ask whether my belief that the Chinese eat dogs is a real or only a mock belief. Such an issue can and does arise when having a genuine belief is important to a subject or ascriber. A good example of this is in the religious life. For example, we can understand how one could recognize all of the components of B being possessed by a person and also think that only God knows whether that person really has the appropriate religious belief. And that is because one could realize that there were facts about the person that only God would know. And among these facts might be some that subvert what otherwise appears to be genuine belief. And we can understand how someone could truly say, "For a long time I thought I was an atheist (i.e., believed that I believed that God does not exist), but now in retrospect I realize that I was never an atheist (i.e. I never believed that God does not exist)." And that is because we can imagine a person discovering something about herself that shows that what she had was not a real belief that God did not exist, although it had all of the marks of belief.

Human beings have ersatz beliefs, but not animals. One necessary condition for a subject being able to have ersatz beliefs is that the subject possesses a sense of self. However, merely a sense of selfhood is not enough. There is good evidence for a sense of selfhood in orangutans, gorillas, (some) chimpanzees, and bonobos, and in bottlenose dolphins, as well as in elephants. (For primates see Gallup, 1987 and Gallup et al. 1995. For dolphins see Reiss and Marino 2001, and for elephants see Rizzolatti et al. 2006.) This is evidenced by self-conscious behavior of such animals in front of mirrors when they discover a mark on their body. It is also evidenced in some non-human primates whose deceptive behavior involves a projection of how they will be perceived by others (Mitchell 1991). Yet, it is doubtful that such animals can have ersatz beliefs. What more is required is a sense of self as a totality over time, a totality for which one can provide a coherent or nearly coherent *narrative*. What is required is a robust sense of self which takes in one's entire life (or great portions thereof) as telling what or whom one is, that is, the kind of self that can 'live toward death,' in Heidegger's terminology. And the reason such a sense of self is needed is that only by reference to such a self can what are otherwise the components of belief be subverted, as defined above. For only when given such a robust sense of self, can we say that *you* – the overarching coherent self considered in its entirety –

never *really* believed what you seemed to believe as evidenced by the presence of the 'components' of belief.

The question whether a *person* believes that p or has only an ersatz belief will be the question whether the overarching self, considered overall and as integrated into a whole, should be considered to believe that p.

To illustrate, consider 'Hickey' in Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. Hickey has killed his wife. He tells himself and others that he killed his wife because he loved her so much. He tells himself that he was a lout to her, treating her appallingly, yet she forgave him his every sin. He felt great guilt for the way he mistreated her, so continuing to live with her was simply not an option. Leaving her was also not an option, for she loved him so much she would be miserable without him. The only solution was to kill her, because he loved her so much. So, Hickey told himself and others. The reader, though, sees between the lines that Hickey really hated his wife. That's why he killed her.

In the play, Hickey never admits his hatred for his wife. But suppose O'Neill were to have written a sequel, in which Hickey comes to realize not only that all along he hated his wife but also that he never *really* believed that the reason he killed his wife was because he loved her. He now sees that he was not capable of acknowledging his hate for his wife and that being the reason for killing her. He now admits that he hated her for always forgiving him and he hated her for making a doormat of herself. He now sees clearly that he couldn't ever have believed that the reason for killing his wife was his love for her. That was just too preposterous for him, the person who he is, Hickey, to have ever believed that! He now acknowledges that he never *really* believed that he killed his wife because he loved her. Note how this subverting of Hickey's belief depends on the use of a narrative about the self that judges what that self is capable of and what its true feelings are. This illustrates the kind of robust sense of self that makes ersatz belief possible.

III

Philosophers are notoriously divided over accounts they give of belief. The five main categories of theories are what I will call the 'feeling theory,' the 'behavior theory,' the 'mixed feeling-behavior theory,' the 'internal representation theory,' and 'functionalism.' None of these theories about belief succeed in preserving the distinction that exists between real and ersatz belief. Hence, none of these theories gives an adequate account of all belief. Alternatively, none of them account for all senses or all uses of 'belief.' This is not necessarily an objection to each of the proposals about belief, since it is not always clear whether a proposal means to capture the notion of belief in 'folk psychology' or is meant to clean up folk psychology for more 'serious' business, like science. Nonetheless, let's look at some of these proposals to see the failure to capture our distinction.

Jerome Gellman

The Feeling Theory

L. Jonathan Cohen provides the following characterization of 'belief,' as very often and 'perhaps standardly' used in ordinary discourse:

> Belief that p is a disposition, when one is attending to issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition that p, normally to feel that p and false that not-p, whether or not one is willing to act, speak, or reason accordingly. (Cohen 1989, 1992)

To the disposition to "act, speak, or reason accordingly" Cohen assigns the name 'acceptance.' So belief is a disposition to feel that p is true and not-p false, irrespective of dispositions to act, speak, or reason on the basis of p. (Hereafter I will condense the feeling to: feeling that p is true.) How do I discover that I believe that p? Cohen's answer: By introspecting whether I am normally disposed to have the relevant feeling in the relevant circumstances. Others, I suppose, would come to think that I believe that p by inferring that from my behavior, acting in ways that show what inner feelings I have, though these might not be the very same behavior indicating what Cohen calls 'acceptance.'

Some will have a problem with Cohen's dividing off behavioral dispositions from belief, being convinced that such dispositions are of the very stuff of belief. I ask them please to play along with the idea that behavioral dispositions are separate from belief, to allow me to make my point about the fate of ersatz belief on Cohen's analysis. Playing along, then, there is still an immediate problem with Cohen's proposal. We should be familiar with the locution, "I have a feeling that p is true but I do not believe it." This does not have an inconsistent ring to it. Likewise, there does not seem to be an inconsistency in my saying, "I may have a disposition to feel that p is true, but I don't believe it." If so, we ought not to identify belief simply with "feeling that p is true." We can preserve Cohen's account by recognizing a distinct 'belief-feeling,' just that kind of feeling, or feelings, we have when we believe something occurently. We would not, of course, explain what a 'belief-feeling' is in terms of belief, but rather ostensibly, "It is *that* feeling," or in some other way that would not employ the term 'belief.' Then, I would have evidence that I believe that p when I have evidence that I am normally disposed to have *that* feeling in the appropriate circumstances.

The Feeling Theory cannot abide the possibility of ersatz belief. For in ersatz belief a person could have a tendency to have a belief-feeling that p, alright, and she could also think she has the belief that p, but she might not have a *real* belief that p because there are, for example, facts about her which she (or others) is not aware of, which are such that were she (or others) to discover them she (or others) would then realize *that she had not believed that p.*

This is a possibility not accountable for on the feeling theory of belief. The moral of the story is that not all belief that p can be merely a disposition to have a belief-feeling that p. The belief-feeling disposition must also be *secure*, meaning

that there cannot be any facts about the person at the time of having the belief-feeling disposition that p, which if discovered would show that the person did not at that time believe that p. In ersatz belief, belief-feeling tendencies would be insecure in precisely this way.

Neither would there be a different sort of belief-mimicking on Cohen's account of belief, a mimicking deceiving people, including a subject, into thinking a subject has a genuine belief. To mimic belief that p would be to mimic a tendency to have a belief-feeling concerning p. There are two possibilities: (a) a mimicking of the tendency, (b) a mimicking of the feeling. I will assume that anything that mimics a tendency is itself a tendency, so will discount (a). On (b), we would have a counterfeit belief-feeling. It would be unlike the belief feeling but similar enough to it for it to deceive people, or to allow people to deceive themselves, that they have a genuine belief. On (b) we do get a conceptual distinction between belief – real belief – and what mimics belief. I doubt, though, that the distinction applies in practice. Are we familiar with two quite similar, though different, feelings, one a belief-feeling and the other not a belief-feeling but deceptively like it? I doubt that is the case. So there seems to be no sense in which a good account of a mimic of belief could be made out on Cohen's Feeling Theory.

The Behavior Theory

I cannot deal with every version of behavior theory, so I will choose just one with the claim that what I say about it and ersatz belief applies just as well to other versions. I take Ruth Barcan Marcus as my representative. She puts forward the following account of belief:

> (RBM) X believes that S just in case under certain *agent-centered circumstances* including x's desires and needs as well as *external circumstances*, x is disposed to act as if S, that actual or non-actual state of affairs, obtains. (Barcan Marcus 1990)

The idea is that we can capture a fact about a person's or an animal's behavioral dispositions by talking about beliefs. A belief is a disposition to *act* a certain way, which the speaker (who might also be the subject) identifies as acting as if a certain state of affairs exists. The switch from propositions to states of affairs is intended to facilitate ascribing beliefs to animals who can be expected not to have propositional attitudes. So an animal can behave as though a certain state of affairs obtains without formulating to itself a proposition recording that state of affairs. Talk about 'belief,' then, turns out to be just convenient shorthand for talking about behavioral dispositions.

There is an immediate problem with RBM. It is difficult to see how we can understand what it is to act *as if* S obtains without invoking belief.[1] Consider this.

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[1] In light of what I write below this is inaccurate. What is correct is that we cannot say what it is to act as if S obtains without invoking belief *or* acceptance. However, if we countenance the

Suppose for the longest time Sam has had a 'desire' and a 'need' to kiss Sally. He decides that the next time he sees Sally he is going to just go up to her and give her a big kiss on the cheek. Sam is walking in the street and Sally is coming toward him. He approaches her and gives her a big kiss on the cheek. Given his desires and needs, and given that this is Sally, and that Sam is kissing Sally, it should follow, on RBM, that Sam believes that the state of affairs: *This is Sally*, obtains. Is this right? No. Because actually Sam *believed* that the person coming toward him was Shirley, his sister who he has not seen in years. He kissed Sally because he *believed* it was Shirley, being overcome with emotion at seeing her after such a long time. So, it is false that Sam believed he was kissing Sally, even though he had a disposition to kiss Sally and acted 'as if' he was kissing Sally.

Now, you might object that my example does not work because I have focused too finely on the moment that Sam kisses Sally. If we allowed in behavioral dispositions prior to and following the kissing episode things would be different. (For example, Sam might have "There is Sally. I will kiss Sally.") While I do not think this will suffice to defend the behavior theory, I propose to avoid further discussion by stipulating in my example that prior to and during the kissing episode Sam has no relevant behavioral dispositions other than for kissing Sally (so, for example, has no relevant verbal dispositions.) And immediately following the episode Sam suffers total and irrevocable amnesia with regard to the episode. So, by hypothesis, we are dealing with a specific, very limited disposition. What constitutes Sam's belief that he was kissing Sally is not a behavioral disposition but Sam's *thinking* that it was Sally he was kissing.

This illustrates the difficulty of giving an account of belief in terms of RBM. In the above case it is hard to see, given Sam's desires and needs concerning both Sally and Shirley, how we could distinguish between Sam believing he was kissing Sally rather than Shirley. The problem is being able to say what it is "to act as if S obtains" without recourse to x's beliefs in addition to x's desires and needs.

Another problem here is that RBM might not be able to distinguish between my momentarily believing *that this is a chair* and my momentarily believing the conjunction *this is a chair and 2+2=4.* For supposing I believe that 2+2=4, then my now at this very moment having a disposition to act as if *this is a chair* might not be distinguishable from my having a disposition to act as if *this is a chair and 2+2=4*. That is because it might be that at the moment I believe *that this is a chair* I also am such that I have a disposition to answer 'yes' if you ask me if 2+2=4. Yet, we do recognize a difference between the two beliefs. Furthermore, a person who believes that 2+2=4 and also believes that this is a chair does not

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category of acceptance we will have a most difficult time distinguishing between belief and acceptance on purely behavioral grounds. So we get a dilemma for the present view: if we do not countenance acceptance, then we cannot explicate the 'as if' without recourse to belief. If we do countenance acceptance, we will not be able to distinguish between it and belief. See below section IV.

necessarily also believe the conjunction of the two, though he might have a disposition to acquire that belief.

But suppose we could somehow revise RBM to fix up these difficulties. Still, RBM would fail because it cannot sustain the distinction between real and ersatz belief. RBM is severely focused on the predictability of a person's behavior, given background knowledge of her desires, needs, and external circumstances. However, we cannot distinguish between real and ersatz belief in terms of different predictions about a subject's behavior. The only relevant prediction in the vicinity is this: "If (roughly) a person, x, acts *as if* S obtains, then there is no fact about x such that if that fact were discovered then that would show that x had not believed that S obtained." But of course, this prediction is not about X's behavioral dispositions at all. And of course, that prediction can be false when RBM is true. Acting 'as if' is as insecure as was belief-feeling.

I will spare the reader the time of going through the mixed theory, internal representation theory, and functionalism in detail (See Alston 1996). Instead, I will make do with just pointing out that the mixed theory is heir to the shortcomings of feeling and behavior theories. Also, neither defining belief as the aptness of internal language representations to be deployed (Internal Representation Theory, See Fodor 1968, 1975) nor as whatever it is that causes certain behavioral dispositions (Functionalism, see Putnam, 1975), has the power to distinguish conceptually between real and ersatz belief. In ersatz belief internal representations can be in place and be apt for bringing about relevant behavior without real belief being present. And the same holds for there being in place whatever it is that creates a disposition to act in relevant ways, without a real belief being in place.

I conclude that the major proposals for understanding belief are not entirely adequate, since they would have us identify merely ersatz beliefs as real beliefs. Whichever analysis of belief that appeals to us, in order to cover all sorts of belief we must tack on a further condition, where 'A' is the favored *analyzandum* of belief, and F is as before, yielding:

> S believes that p iff (1) A, and (2) there is no fact, F, about S at t such that F subverts A at t.

IV

Belief and Acceptance

We need a term to describe a state of a subject that is neutral as to whether the subject believes p or has only an ersatz belief that p. Various philosophers have introduced 'acceptance' as a technical term to cover what to them, respectively, might bear some similarities to belief, but isn't belief. These philosophers include William Alston (1992), L. Jonathan Cohen (1992), Robert Stalnaker (1984), Bas Van Fraassen (1980), and Edna Ullman-Margalit and Avishai Margalit (1992).

They do not all have the same distinction in mind, however. This is partly because of different conceptions of belief and partly because of being interested in different things to contrast with belief. In any case, the proposals are not meant to capture an established difference in usage but to mark a distinction felt needing to be made. Indeed, the favored distinction may be overlooked in ordinary language or get expressed in various ways, not always clear and adequate. In the spirit of this history, I propose that we reserve the term 'acceptance' (although it is not entirely satisfactory) for the state that is neutral as to whether the subject believes p or has only an ersatz belief that p. Acceptance, for me, does not involve a judgment about a person's overarching self-hood. Acceptance applies, roughly, to what is true of a time-slice subject at a given time. Neither does that S *accepts* p entail that at any time S performs an act of *accepting* p. Of course, S may have done so, but acceptance can also exist without a decision by a subject, being simply a state of the subject, engendered by choice or not.

Noting needed emendations in Behavior Theory, in the meantime we could say that S *accepts_b* that p iff S has the dispositions to behave that S has when S believes that p. For the Internal Representation Theory, we would say that S accepts_ir that p iff S has internal representations, I, apt for causing behavior, B, such that I and B are of the sort that S has when S believes that p. Both formulations are meant to be neutral as to whether S also S believes p. And similarly for functionalism. My suggestion will not work as is for the Feeling Theory and for the Mixed Theory. And that is because the major advocate of the Feeling theory, L. Jonathan Cohen, and an important backer of the Mixed Theory, William Alston, reserve the term 'acceptance' for purely behavioral dispositions, so would not want to apply that term to feeling dispositions. So, to accommodate Cohen we would have to distinguish between 'feeling acceptance' and 'behavioral acceptance.' And to accommodate Alston would want to distinguish between 'mixed,' 'behavioral,' and 'feeling' acceptance.

'Acceptance,' meant technically, cannot be subverted, although the components of a subject's believing that p can be numerically identical to components of S's believing that p, and believing can be subverted. (Nonetheless, as a non-technical, every day word, we might imagine someone who exhibits all the components of 'acceptance' – be they what they may – saying that he never *really* accepted p, although he thought he did! However, as I am using the term, 'acceptance' cannot be so construed.)

So far I have remained neutral between accounts of belief and acceptance. Others have endorsed an acceptable modified version of Alston's mixed theory of S believes that p, which goes like this (Gellman 2007):

(1) If S considers whether p is the case, S will tend to feel it to be the case that p.

(2) If someone asks S whether p, S will have a tendency to respond in the affirmative.

(3) S will tend to use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning where this is appropriate.

(4) S will tend to act in ways that would be appropriate if it were the case that p, given S's goals, aversions, and S's other propositional attitudes.

(5) S has a tendency, when acting in ways cited by (1)-(4), to act in a way that displays S's feeling that p.

I now add this clause:

(6) There is no fact, F, about S such that F subverts (1)-(5).

Let's call this 'belief$_m$' since it is a mixed view of belief, including dispositions both of feeling and behavior. Accordingly, we can define 'acceptance$_m$,' mixed acceptance, as (1)-(5) minus (6), leaving open whether (6) is true.

Believing and Being a 'Believer'

Sometimes, we not only say that a person 'believes,' but also that she is a '*believer*' in or of something. The latter locution has especial use in religions. A person is said to be an Islamic 'believer' or a 'believer' in Jesus. One can, though, also be a believer in extraterrestrial life, a believer in the Chicago Cubs, and a believer in trickle-down economics. A believer has a loyalty, a trust, a commitment, a stick-with-it-ness to whatever it is she is a believer in. A believer in extraterrestrial life will not easily change his mind, will be dedicated to discovering evidence for the existence of life away from earth, subscribe to magazines fostering his point of view, and the like. And a believer in the Chicago Cubs will go to the Cubs games religiously season after season, not giving up on a team that gives fans only little cause to cheer.

As the term 'believer' is ordinarily used, that S believes$_m$ that p does not entail that S is a 'believer' in p or something closely associated with p. S must also have a believer's loyalty, and the like. But neither does S being a 'believer' in X *entail* with regard to salient propositions in the vicinity of X that S *believes$_m$* those propositions (with the possible exception of propositions such as those stating that it is good, worthwhile, or meaningful to be loyal to X.) S may only accept$_m$ those propositions without believing$_m$ them, the degree of a person's trust and faith in X being an indication of mere acceptance$_m$, as much as of belief$_m$. So there is no entailment either way between believing$_m$ and being a believer. Indeed, there is no clear probability line from being a believer to belief$_m$, since, for example, a pronounced loyalty and trust can be a sign of mere acceptance$_m$ fused, say, with strong hope and desire just as much as of belief$_m$. I suspect that the judgment that a person is a 'believer' often has a strong social dimension, emphasizing a person's dispositions, in behavior and feeling, as conforming to an expected pattern of a group's behavior. A person who is a 'believer' shares his loyalty and trust with others who recognize him as such.

Jerome Gellman

This should lead us to a consideration of the social dimensions of religious belief, which I have pursued elsewhere and whose continuation I leave for another time.

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