**Belief as Emotion**

**Abstract**

It is commonly held that (i) beliefs are revisable in the face of counter-evidence and (ii) beliefs are connected to actions in reliable and predictable ways. Given such a view, many argue that if a mental state fails to respond to evidence or doesn’t result in the kind of behavior typical or expected of belief, it is not a belief after all, but a different state. Yet, one finds seeming counter examples of resilient beliefs that fail to respond to evidence, or that do not connect to action in the way we would expect them to. I offer a view of belief that does not force us to exclude states as *real* beliefs that we pre-reflectively think of as beliefs, and that does not require us to “outsource” the work belief seems to do to other mental states. Rather than assume that belief is a purely cognitive state, I propose that we view belief as a type of emotion where emotions are understood as including cognitive and non-cognitive elements. Thinking of beliefs as emotions can help us make sense of resilient or recalcitrant beliefs, of seeming breakdowns between belief and actions, and offer insight into the phenomena of persistent disagreement and self-deception.

1. **Introduction**

Beliefs figure prominently in our explanations and understanding of one another, are essential for navigating our way around the world, and at times help define our characters and motivations. It is not surprising, then, that beliefs also figure prominently in many philosophical discussions and debates. But it is not always clear what is being investigated in these discussions, or if the same phenomenon is being discussed in all the debates about belief. One way of trying to understand what kind of phenomenon is most closely captured by the designation of “belief” is to think about what distinguishes beliefs from other mental states.

While accounts vary about belief’s distinctive character, because a belief can be true or false, in a way that, for example, feeling angry or sad cannot be, beliefs are seen as paradigmatically *cognitive* states.[[1]](#footnote-1) What it means for a state or attitude to be cognitive, as opposed to conative or affective, is rarely made explicit, but a core idea is that such attitudes are what constitute *thinking* about the world in a way that can lead us to knowledge or to accurate representations. Indeed, some take it as constitutive of an attitude being cognitive that it has no phenomenal feel in the way that sensation, perception, or *feelings* in general do.[[2]](#footnote-2) Despite differences in the way this state is characterized, it is commonly held that (i) beliefs are evidence-sensitive, meaning that they are revisable in the face of counter-evidence[[3]](#footnote-3) and (ii) beliefs are connected to actions such that actions can be explained by what one believes, and inferences can be made about what one believes by how one acts.[[4]](#footnote-4) In what follows I sometimes will refer to the view which holds these two features as essential to belief as the “cognitivist” view of belief. Given such a view, many argue that if a mental state fails to respond to evidence or doesn’t result in the kind of behavior typical or expected of belief, it is not a belief after all, but a different state.[[5]](#footnote-5) Yet, one finds seeming counter examples of resilient beliefs that fail to respond to evidence, or that do not connect to action in the way we would expect them to. Consider the following: Anna, who suffers from Capras syndrome, believes her husband is an impostor even though she has no evidence for it and much against it. Balthasar believes the glass skywalk is safe and yet trembles as he tries to walk on it. Chakrapani believes that their lover will keep their promise to not betray them again even though past evidence indicates that they will, and David believes that the God as described in the Bible exists, though he is aware of the evidence suggesting that such a God does not exist and claims his reasons for believing are not based in evidence.

In all these cases, the subjects have beliefs that either 1) are misaligned with their actions or 2) recognize the evidence does not support their beliefs. Two responses are common in the face of such examples, which are often tied together. The first is to deny that these states which we pre-reflectively call “beliefs” really are beliefs, that is to put restrictions on what counts as a belief so that these are no longer counter examples. The second is to introduce unfamiliar mental states to account for what is going on in these cases where it appears that one has a belief, but the belief is not behaving according to what the cognitivist account allows.[[6]](#footnote-6)

I will offer a view of belief that does not force us to exclude states as *real* beliefs that we pre-reflectively think of as beliefs, and that does not require us to “outsource” the work belief seems to do to other mental states. Rather than assume that belief is a purely cognitive state, I propose that we view belief as a type of emotion where emotions are understood as including cognitive and non-cognitive elements. I see my view as building on Hume’s insight that *“belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures*” (*Treatise* 1.4.1, 2000). I will begin with a brief discussion of the kind of model of emotion which can accommodate beliefs as emotions (§ 1). I will then show how thinking of beliefs as emotions can allow us maintain that these problematic cases are beliefs, and further argue that the cost of excluding them from the category of belief is high. It is very difficult to find principled reasons to exclude them while not excluding all beliefs that are not paradigmatically rational, but, thinking of beliefs as emotions allows us to distinguish between irrational beliefs which deviate from the cognitivist model from those which are not (§ 2). This proposal will be met with a number of objections which I will then address (§ 3). I will conclude by considering how this view can also offer insight into the phenomena of persistent disagreement and self-deception (§ 4).

1. **Belief as a blended state.**

While contemporary theorists of emotion differ in their characterizations, a vast majority reject both purely “cognitive” theories which equate emotions with evaluative judgments, as well as “feeling-theories,” which equate emotions with non-cognitive (often automatic) reactions to the environment, much like passive sensations. This includes both those theories labeled “neo” or “quasi” judgmentalist as well as some perceptual theories. A number of these theories view emotions as essentially blended states, as involving both emotional feelings as well as evaluative judgments (or construals or appraisals).[[7]](#footnote-7) This is not to say that emotions are a combination of a mental states; fear, for example, cannot be reduced to the belief that I am in danger, the desire to flee, and some flutters in my stomach and sweat on my brow; one can experience such a combination and not feel fear.[[8]](#footnote-8)

One of the main obstacles for pure judgmentalist (cognitivist) views is they seem unable to explain recalcitrant emotions in a satisfying way. If I judge that spiders are not dangerous, but still feel fear when I see a spider, the cognitivist would claim that the kind of irrationality here is simply one of incoherence, having two contradictory beliefs: spiders are dangerous and spiders are not dangerous, given that my fear is an expression of the evaluative judgment that the environment is dangerous. As Michael Brady points out such a view “imputes too much irrationality to the subject of emotional recalcitrance” (2009, 414). An emotion conflicting with a reflective judgment is common and intelligible. What these theories get right, however, is that emotions can be assessed as rational or appropriate, and that some normative principle is being violated in the cases of recalcitrant emotions. This is very difficult to account for if they are seen as passive sensations, akin to having a headache.

Brady offers a hybrid theory of emotions which he thinks can better account for recalcitrant emotions, as well as explain how emotions can be of epistemic value. For Brady emotions include inclinations to assent to evaluative construals, as well as emotional feelings which involve increased attention and sensitivity to the emotional object. Let’s take fear as an example: When I experience fear, the import of the situation is impressed upon me; I construe it as dangerous, and when I have such an experience I am “*inclined* to assent or endorse this view of the situation.” When I am afraid, both motivational and cognitive resources are mobilized which incline me both behave in a certain way and to assent or accept that things are a certain way. But though the experience primes me for such assent, I need not give it. Recalcitrant emotions occur when one experiences priming, but does not give into the inclinations. Brady argues that this explanation can explain their irrationality without attributing straight-out incoherence. It is irrational, he contends, to be inclined to assent to something one has determined is false, or when one has determined one has no good reason to be inclined to assent to it. But such cases are understandable because usually the feeling itself constitutes a reason to be inclined to assent, and so such inclinations may be hard to eliminate.[[9]](#footnote-9)

How then would beliefs fit into this picture? When I believe (or experience belief to keep things parallel), it is impressed upon me that the world is a certain way, and this feeling puts a great deal of pressure on me to assent or endorse that the world is that way. Just as feeling fear includes a strong inclination to endorse the view that *p* is dangerous, the feeling of belief includes a strong inclination to endorse the view that *p* is true. In both cases the feelings can sometimes be misleading or resisted. That I have the feelings associated with fear does not tell me that I have good reason to be afraid, but the feeling can motivate me to search for reasons which bear on the accuracy of the assessment that is embodied in the feeling, namely that the environment is dangerous. That I have the feelings associated with belief does not, by itself, tell me I have good reason to believe as I am inclined to, but having that belief-feeling[[10]](#footnote-10) can motivate me to search for reasons which bear on its accuracy, especially when it is questioned.

**2. Problematic states**

*2.1. Delusions*

Here is a case study described in a psychiatric journal:

RY is a 17-year-old man who was admitted to a metropolitan rehabilitation facility 4 weeks after sustaining an extremely severe traumatic brain injury. He was suffering both from Cotard syndrome and Capras syndrome. He is described as having the “belief that his father was an imposter” and the “belief he was dead and imprisoned in hell.” (Butler 2000)

While providing an account of delusions which distinguishes them from other false and irrational beliefs proves almost as difficult as providing an account of belief which distinguishes it from other mental states, we do not here need the degree of precision that may be needed if one were using the definition for clinical purposes.[[11]](#footnote-11) I will use “delusion” to refer to a state of “holding true” that is resistant to change despite “clear …contradictory evidence regarding its veracity.”[[12]](#footnote-12) As we see in the case of RY,belief attribution is used by psychologists and psychiatrists to describe what is going on in such cases. But it has seemed to many that this use of belief is misguided; that delusions do not exhibit some of the features required to be designated beliefs. The two main features pointed to by those endorsing “non-doxasticism” about delusions is that they fail to respond to evidence, and they do not seem to figure in actions and deliberation the way beliefs generally do. [[13]](#footnote-13)

How unresponsive to evidence does a state needs to be for it to cease to be a belief? David Velleman considers other kinds of non-delusional recalcitrant beliefs like, for example, our belief that we are more popular than we are. Such a belief may be revisable when faced with enough evidence in way delusions are not. He says the less responsive a state is to “corrective influences,” namely the less evidence-sensitive it is, the less likely he is to call it a belief. For example, he says that someone who is not Napoleon but who professes that he is does not actually have the belief that he is Napoleon. We normally describe such a person as believing he is Napoleon but, according to Velleman, we are mistaken in this usage:

Aren’t there people who believe that they are Napoleon? (People other than Napoleon, I mean.) Don’t such people have a belief that isn’t regulated for truth? I think the answer is that it isn’t literally a belief. I suspect that we tend to apply the term ‘belief’ in a figurative sense to phantasies for which the subject doesn’t or cannot have countervailing beliefs…The phantasy of being Napoleon is thus what he has instead of a belief about his identity; and in this sense it is his belief on the topic, just as a cardboard box on the sidewalk may be his house by virtue of being what he has instead of a house. If you ask me, however, a cardboard box on the sidewalk isn’t really a house. And a phantasy of being Napoleon isn’t really a belief. (2000, 289)

What excludes this kind of state from being a belief, for Velleman, is that “the subject doesn’t or cannot have countervailing beliefs” that can dislodge it. That one *does not* actually possess beliefs counter to something else one believes cannot be a reason to rule it out; one will not have countervailing beliefs to the ones that are the most secure and rational, for example that circles cannot be squares or I had eggs for breakfast this morning. So it has to be because the subject “cannot” have countervailing beliefs or evidence that would alter the “phantasy” that excludes it from being a belief. But what kind of “cannot” is at issue here? In the case of delusions the “cannot” is psychological. And depending on the type of delusion, one may have some countervailing evidence based on testimony, or discovered in the course of treatment that can lead to revision. These countervailing beliefs may even help to explain why some of the typical behavior associated with beliefs are sometimes absent in the case of delusions.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Many prejudiced and biased beliefs are so deeply engrained that it seems that one “doesn’t or cannot have countervailing beliefs” capable of dislodging them. To distinguish these from delusions one would need to argue that one *could* revise them in a sense that those with delusions *cannot* but again, if the impossibility (or extremely high degree of difficulty) is psychological, it is hard to see how such a distinction can be made in a principled way.[[15]](#footnote-15) The risk of excluding delusions from the belief-family is that similar considerations will lead us to exclude other false, irrational beliefs. Yet it is important that those other beliefs remain so that they can be exposed, criticized and possibly even altered. If delusions are excluded as beliefs, we are at risk of only counting rational beliefs as *actual* beliefs. [[16]](#footnote-16)

Another important consideration in thinking about excluding delusions is how to make sense of the subject’s own reports of belief. What do those with delusions mean when they say they believe the content of the delusions? One possibility is that their assertions are insincere. But this is rather far-fetched. Often these delusions are disruptive and painful to the subject and those around her. Why would someone pretend to have these beliefs? And again, the reluctance to attribute beliefs in such cases is not usually due to a suspicion that they are not genuinely endorsed, or taken as true. Rather it is the grounds for such endorsement (or lack of grounds) that lead to suspicion about its status as a belief.[[17]](#footnote-17)

On the model of emotion as a blended state that we are working with emotions include both a kind of feeling which inclines one to endorse a state of affairs as actual, as well a more reflective or cognitive endorsement of the feeling. One way to help make sense of delusions is to think about them as examples of when the cognitive and non-cognitive elements of believing come apart or are not aligned. In such cases, especially when one is attending to other beliefs, like the belief that one’s therapist, family, and friends tell the truth, the delusion’s felt force can be diminished. Or maybe one can concentrate on the evidence opposed to the delusion for some time which can destabilize it. But when attended to, the *feeling* of its truth is so strong that it leads one to find evidence in its favor. Given that such a feeling of truth usually occurs when one also has evidence for the belief, it makes sense that one would try to construct a way of providing it with evidential grounds, which is what those with delusions often do.[[18]](#footnote-18) But given that, in fact, this feeling stems from complex pathological sources, not from good (even if non-evidential) reasons, we have a way of distinguishing these recalcitrant beliefs from others.

*2.2 Trust and Faith*

We have seen that the criteria appealed in the cognitivist view is at risk of excluding too many irrational beliefs as being actual beliefs. This consideration has been pointed out by others arguing for the inclusion of these problematic states. Huddleston (2012) and Viedge (2016), for example argue, as I have, that is important to have a wide enough conception of belief so that irrational beliefs can be exposed and rationally assessed. Those who exclude them as beliefs “let these states off the hook” (Huddleston, 217). [[19]](#footnote-19) But it is also the case that some of these states are not obviously flawed or irrational, and so another reason to think of beliefs as emotions is that it allows for the norms governing belief to be more expansive and offers a way of distinguishing between irrational evidence-resistant beliefs and ones that are not irrational. Another class of beliefs that some argue are not *really* beliefs are ones bases on trust, and religious beliefs, but at least some of these seem importantly different from delusions and other irrational recalcitrant beliefs. Consider the following example:

Suppose that your lover has been unfaithful to you. But suppose also that he or she is contrite and repenting and makes a reasonable case that it will not happen again. For instance, your lover was cunningly seduced when he or she succumbed to temptation, or there are some mitigating circumstances. You are seriously considering whether you can see past the betrayal. As you are discussing reconciliation, your lover says to you, “I will be faithful to you, I promise” and thereby sincerely and resolutely expresses his or her commitment (Marušić 2015: 264-65). After this statement you form the belief that your lover will keep their word.

If in such a case if you do believe, you are believing even while recognizing clear evidence against your belief. When I trust you, must I also believe that you will do what I trust you will do? In discussions about the nature of trust, a distinction is usually made between mere reliance and trust. I can rely on something or someone if I accept for purposes of planning that the person or thing will behave as I expect. I can rely on my car not breaking down just as I can rely on my colleague to print out the handouts. But reliance can come without belief, especially when the situation doesn’t leave much room for options; and in those situations one can, quite directly, *choose* to rely. Even if I have doubts about my car’s capacity to make the trip, if I have a crucial meeting I need make, I can choose to rely on the car even while being a little anxious the whole way. If I have a lot of positive evidence that my car will *not* make it, however, it doesn’t seem that I could rely on it by accepting for the sake of planning; I would have to make contingency plans in case it did not make it, for example.

If my colleague always prints out the handouts I may *rely* on the fact that he will in a way that does not constitute trusting that he will. If I actually trust him to do it, this comes along with reactive attitudes that are not present in mere reliance. If I am merely relying on him to make the copies because this is the usual state of affairs, I would not be betrayed if he failed to do so. And if I find myself irritated for his not doing it, this is a flaw in me, not him. It is because failures in cases of trust *do* constitute grounds for attitudes like resentment and anger, that one can only trust people and not objects.

What then are grounds, or reasons for trusting? Well, part of it is evidential, just as in the case of reliance. If I know someone well and come to see that he can be counted on, keep his word, *etc*., these are evidential reasons to trust him. But trust does not only come about from a careful weighing of the evidence; at least some of the reasons for trusting are non-evidential. I trust you because you are my friend or because our relationship requires that I do, or because I love you. Thinking about the example above, there is a difference, for example, between someone assessing the odds and deciding that it is worth betting on whether your lover will keep their word, and *you* trusting them to keep their word.[[20]](#footnote-20) And it is not clear, in certain contexts, that the right grounds for trusting are the evidential grounds. As Sarah Stroud (2006) has argued, the demands of friendship may actually require that I do not base my beliefs only on the evidence.

In some recent discussions of trust, a distinction is made between trusting when there is enough positive evidence to warrant believing the person is *not* trustworthy and when the evidence is absent or inconclusive. Something is wrong about trusting in the first case whereas trusting in the second case is less problematic.[[21]](#footnote-21) In those cases, trusting for non-evidential reasons seems warranted. When one has important non-evidential reasons to believe one’s friend is trustworthy and there is not overwhelming evidence against it, it is not clear that there is anything wrong with believing it.

The motivation for maintaining that trust can come without belief has to do with the reasons for trusting. Many think it is always irrational to believe for non-evidential reasons, and if trust entailed believing, then all non-evidentially based trusting would also be irrational. The conclusion that it is always irrational to trust in such cases can be avoided if the kind of “holding true” in cases of trust is not the same kind of “holding true” found in cases of belief. If this were the case then trust, like reliance, can come without belief; I can trust that you will do something even if I do not believe that you will.[[22]](#footnote-22) This is Guy Longworth’s view, for example. He says, “insofar as one has a conception of belief as governed by evidence, one has a reason not to conflate holding things true for practical purposes with holding things true for theoretical purposes” (2017, 264). His worry about counting these kinds of “holding true” as beliefs is that, according to the cognitivist view, they would all be irrational or defective because they are held for non-evidential reasons and any *beliefs* so held (if such a thing is even possible) are defective or irrational. But to say it is always irrational to trust in these cases is a worrisome conclusion. Moreover, as we have seen, we can distinguish cases of reasonable and unreasonable trusting. [[23]](#footnote-23)

Given the potential costs associated with trusting I find the idea that trust can come without belief implausible. Trust makes you vulnerable, you open yourself up to the possibility of betrayal, as Richard Holton says it requires a kind of “emotional seriousness.” If I tell you sincerely that I will keep my word and you say you trust me even though you don’t believe me, I would have a hard time understanding you. Not being believed is a terrible feeling and it is the same terrible feeling as not being trusted.[[24]](#footnote-24) Two options are available: accept the view of belief which entails that we frequently do not actually believe those whom we trust are trustworthy, or see these as cases which reveal the limitations of that view of belief.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Again, if beliefs are emotions, we do not need to conclude that the kind of “holding true” found in cases of trust are not beliefs in order to allow for the possibility of rationally trusting for non-evidential reasons. Instead we can see that their rational assessment is similar to the way we assess other emotions. Whether a particular emotion is appropriate, justified, fitting or one I “ought” to have partly depends on the evidence. Suppose I am angry at my neighbor for failing to take care and running into my boat on a foggy day. If the fog lifts to reveal no one is the boat, my anger will disappear, and of it does not, then I can be rightfully criticized.[[26]](#footnote-26) How to assess the appropriateness of anger, or other emotions, in more murky circumstances is complicated. Even if it turns out that I was correct that my neighbor carelessly ran into my boat, other considerations can support being critical of my anger. These may include, for example, that I have a disposition to become angry too quickly which has been detrimental to me and my relationships. If I am trying to work on altering this disposition, it can be said I ought not to have become angry in this case despite the evidence.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Another kind of problematic “holding true” which shares some similarities with trust are those related to matters of religion, or perhaps what may more broadly be called “meaning-making.”[[28]](#footnote-28) I am worried about using the term “religion” because I do not want to include only those views committed to the idea of a deity or to a particular creed or dogma. I want to include in this category the beliefs (if they are that) of the practitioner in deep mediation who holds true, for example, that all beings are connected, or that the notion of an individual self is an illusion.[[29]](#footnote-29)

To exclude matters of faith from the domain of belief, on the face of it, seems the most counterintuitive, at least according to the way people ordinarily talk. When I tell non-philosophers that I work on issues related to beliefs, they often assume I mean religious beliefs and I need to explain that I am also interested in more mundane, factual beliefs.[[30]](#footnote-30) What then is the motivation for excluding them? Again, like with trust, they have a problematic connection to the evidence that makes them difficult to evaluate in any standard way. While some religious believers claim that their beliefs are evidentially based, there are also those who talk about faith as something like believing despite having no evidence, that the talk of evidence is beside the point. If this is the case, they seem to share what is problematic about delusions, namely that they are highly resistant to countervailing beliefs or evidence.

Because the reasons for excluding them are similar to the reasons for excluding the other kinds of cases I have discussed, the same considerations for including them apply in this domain. Again, it is very important that not all “meaning-making-holdings-true” get lumped together as being in some other category which excludes them from evaluation. If we retain the idea that they *are* beliefs then we can distinguish between them and they need not all be equally irrational or defective. The same criteria appealed to in cases of trust can be used in matters of faith, and the content of the proposition “held true” will matter in distinguishing between them. If one holds something true despite overwhelming evidence against it, this is different than holding true when the evidence is absent, neutral or very inconclusive. As in the cases of trust, believing for non-evidential reasons in the latter cases may well be rational. But in the “meaning-making” domain those cases will be even more rare than in matters of trust. It seems only propositions with vague or imprecise content will not have massive countervailing evidence against them, propositions like “there is something greater or beyond what can be measured materially.” But the more specific the content, the more likely it is that it can only be maintained by ignoring, suppressing or disregarding evidence, as would be the case with the belief that “there is such a person as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Jewish and Christian revelation: the God of the Bible.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

In matters of trust and faith, depending on the context, these beliefs can either be rational or not. Thinking about beliefs as emotions, and that they can be rationally assessed as other emotions are, can explain the differences between them. If one believes purely because of the strength of the feeling and the feeling overwhelms one so that one’s cognitive grasp is corrupted, then the beliefs are, epistemically, on par with delusions; Freud called religious beliefs delusions, in part, because he saw them as essentially unrevisable. And we might refer to a friend who seems incapable of attending to the clear evidence that her spouse is unfaithful as “deluded.” Of course, clinical delusions differ from these for many reasons, including the disruption and pain they cause. But the kind of irrationality displayed in the cases is similar.

However, when it comes to some religious propositions and some matters of trust, it may be that the endorsement is primarily based on reasons to *feel* a certain way, but one can still ask: are these feelings taking me away from the truth? If there is no evidence that your belief is false, then it is at least possible that they are leading you towards it.

**3. Objections and replies**

*(i) What do Beliefs feel like?*

To view beliefs as emotions may seem immediately implausible because it is unclear what the feeling is that accompanies them, whereas we can easily recognize the feeling of other emotions, though they may be difficult to articulate. I know what anger feels like, and what fear feels like, but what does belief feel like? Ronald de Sousa (2008) describes the “feeling of rightness” we have when propositions strike us as obviously true, like those which stem from the deliveries of the senses or recent vivid memories. De Sousa speculates that part of what might be going wrong for people suffering from OCD is that recent memory of performing certain actions “fails to trigger the right sort of feeling.”

Most of the time, with factual propositions, we will not notice the feeling. But this is the case with many emotions I have; they do not always have a strong phenomenal feel. Tapplolet makes this point, providing the example of the “quiet contentment while sharing a meal with a friend.” (2016, 6) We experience emotions all the time of which we are not aware, and become aware of them when something draws our attention to them, or when they are needed to react appropriately to the environment. I may not be aware that I am angry at my father until some event happens that makes me aware. While paradigm emotions can be analyzed experientially, we can also have long standing emotions (including beliefs) that are dispositions to have those experiences.

(ii) *That beliefs are not emotions is revealed by what can be asserted about them.*

One may think that a difference between beliefs and emotions is exhibited in the way we can talk about them. Some think the assertion “I believe p though my evidence does not support p” is just like the classic Moore-paradoxical assertion “It is raining but I do not believe it is raining,” namely that both are incoherent. [[32]](#footnote-32) Whereas it does not seem incoherent to say “I fear p though my evidence does not support p being dangerous.” I have discussed the possibility of believing, in full consciousness, something you do not have evidential support for at length elsewhere.[[33]](#footnote-33) Even if such an assertion is not incoherent though, as in the case of other emotions, it may display a kind of irrationality. Beliefs, like fears, if central and powerful, can persist even when one’s reflective evaluations indicate one should not believe as one does. Consider someone who has grown up in a fundamentalist tradition and believes that the Bible is literally true. This person may come to conclude that this belief is unsupported, and that he should give it up. Now we can imagine that it would be very difficult to break the habit of believing something inculcated at a very early age and reinforced throughout one’s life—just as it is very difficult to give up smoking after twenty years even when one decides one should.

(iii) *Even when we know something is not the case, it can still seem to be. How are these seemings different from the feeling accompanying belief?*

Even when you *know* that the oar is straight though it looks bent, or when you *know* the proper answer to the Monty Hall puzzle even though you initially thought your chances of winning do not improve if you switch your guess, [[34]](#footnote-34) it still *seems* like the oar is bent when looking at, and the proper answer still *feels* counterintuitive. How is this seeming different from the feeling that accompanies belief? One of the ingredients in the blended belief-state are feelings that are much like those of these seemings, and if one didn’t have the reflective capacities to see otherwise one would believe, for example, that the oar is straight. Just like in the case of fear, one would not be afraid if one did not have the associated feelings, but one can have those feelings, recognize that they are unsupported, and not be afraid. When the feelings are strong, however, to remain unafraid is difficult. If belief is an emotion, then it is a blended state. Part of this blend includes a reflective endorsement of the belief when actively considered.

*(iv) Why must beliefs be emotions instead of just connected to them?*

One may think that the kind of cases I have appealed to points to beliefs being closely associated with emotions, and even *caused* by them, but that the feelings are independent of the belief, and that we have no reason to think that there is an actual feeling component that is *part* of the belief.[[35]](#footnote-35) But explaining the connection while holding on to the cognitive view of belief is difficult. Consider the belief “abortion is murder.” On the cognitive view the belief itself is simply a response to the evidence as it appears to one, a cognitive endorsement that this is an accurate representation of reality. The negative emotions associated with it may be anger and disgust toward people one sees as murderers, perhaps also feelings of pride, or righteousness, maybe a desire to see abortion made illegal, perpetrators punished, or a more general desire to promote good and minimize evil. And the idea is all these feelings are related in certain ways to the belief, but are not part of the belief itself. This way of seeing things has given rise to one of the central difficulties that has been troubling meta-ethicists for years. It is often thought that moral beliefs are inherently motivating in that they provide one with some reason to act (or not act) in the way that the proposition supports. But if they are really *beliefs* and beliefs are purely cognitive, this is problematic.

This issue has been addressed in many ways, but I want to draw attention to the response that recognizes that these judgments have a non-cognitive element at the same time that they purport to capture the truth. Michael Ridge (2014) has called these approaches “ecumenical” because they find some way of unifying the cognitivists and the non-cognitivists. As his discussion shows there are many different ways of doing this, all of which come with some advantages and disadvantages. I am not here concerned with the details but, rather, this shows that the notion of such a “hybrid state” is not entirely unfamiliar.

Now it may seem odd for me to refer to this example as supportive because when the ecumenical expressivist claims that moral judgments have cognitive elements, what they usually *mean* is that these states include a belief-like element. So to say there is a non-cognitive element in belief can sound like I am saying that there is a non-belief element in belief. But part of my point is to put into question this identification. Meta-ethicists are right to say that moral beliefs contain a cognitive element, as well as a non-cognitive element. Where they are mistaken, I contend, is in thinking there is anything peculiar about this; these elements are there in all beliefs. There is something to belief beyond intellectual processing, and it is not only when beliefs go wrong that there is more to them. To put another way, machines can have cognitions of some kind, but they cannot have beliefs. [[36]](#footnote-36)

Thought of in a certain way, the kind of hybridity endorsed by Ridge may seem very different from how I am suggesting we think about beliefs. Ridge thinks of these normative beliefs as a compound of two distinct states that are, in principle, separable. As discussed above, I see the hybridity as more like a blended state than a compound one. It could be, then, that the kind of hybridity suggested by theorists who posit what have come to be called “besires,” namely states that incorporate both representational and motivational elements (but are not divisible into a representational and a motivational conjuncts) is closer to what I have in mind. While I do see such accounts as helpful to my view insofar as they are endorsing the idea that one state can have more than one direction of fit, and allow for “cognitive-passionate hybrid states” (Swartzer 2013), what I am urging is that we do not need to posit a new mental state; rather we need to see that beliefs themselves incorporate these elements.

*(v) Does this view imply that young children and animals do not have beliefs?*

A worry that arises for cognitive theories of emotion is that they seem to exclude non-human animals and young children from experiencing emotions since they cannot make evaluative judgments. Must one possess the concept of fear or fthe earsome in order to *feel* afraid? Marianna Bergamaschi Ganapini (2019) has recently brought up a similar objection to theories which attempt to distinguish beliefs from other attitudes by appealing to their “feeling of truth”: “Non-human animals and babies have beliefs but they arguably lack the ability to assert or have any ‘sense of truth.’”

My view does not require that one has the concept of “truth” or “rightness” to be a believer. The feeling is one associated with expectations and dispositions that babies and non-human animals share with adult humans. Christine Tappolet argues that an advantage of the perceptual theory is it takes the “representational content of emotions to be non-conceptual” (2016, 16) even though “emotions can, and often do, involve conceptually articulated contents.” (2016, 18). The content of beliefs can almost always be so articulated by adult humans, but that does not mean that the “evaluative appraisal” that the world is as it appears to be need be conceptual any more than the “evaluative appraisal” that is represented in the experience of fear needs to include the concept of fearsome or dangerous.

4. **Other possible applications**

Given that it is unlikely that any view of belief will capture all the diverse phenomena associated with the way we think and talk about belief, the best we can do is offer hypotheses and compare them in terms of how well they can explain the phenomena. I have argued that my view does a better job of accounting for recalcitrant or resilient beliefs, and for distinguishing between those which are irrational and those which are not. I also think this view holds promise for dealing with issues related to disagreement and belief alteration, as well as helping to illuminate the phenomenon of self-deception. I will end by briefly considering how this may be the case.

If I discover true expert disagreement on a controversial topic, the proper epistemic attitude, it seems, should be that I suspend judgment on the topic. This has sometimes been called “controversial view agnosticism.” [[37]](#footnote-37) But such deep disagreement is often found in areas that are the most important to one’s social identity such as philosophy, religion, morality and politics, and it seems that there would be something spineless about giving up such beliefs. Can it really be wrong to hold beliefs in these domains? The problem of disagreement should not be a problem at all if beliefs behaved simply as the cognitivist account holds. The answer to what to believe in cases where the evidence is truly evenly balanced as it would be in cases of actual expert disagreement would be obvious, and if you continue to hold beliefs on these topics then you are doing so on the pain of irrationality.

Again, recognizing that beliefs are emotions can explain what is going on in cases of deep disagreement and why it can be hard to change one’s belief even when there is evidence against it. To put it simply, evidence does not immediately affect feelings. If you are angry or very sad and you are told not to be and given a number of good reasons why you shouldn’t be, these reasons will not immediately lead to an alteration of your emotional state. In the areas where one finds deep disagreement, the beliefs held are ones where the feeling of their truth is very intense, and so it is not surprising that it would be difficult to alter such beliefs. Recent empirical work shows how, if one’s belief is seen as centrally connected to one’s identity, even if there is overwhelming evidence *against* the belief, it remains resilient. These studies suggest that the way to get people to be open to changing their beliefs is to begin by finding ways to make them more secure and less defended so that the presentation of facts does not feel like an assault on who they are.[[38]](#footnote-38)

While the account of belief I am defending can explain why recognizing deep expert disagreement does not dislodge beliefs, can it offer a recommendation or assessment of the position one *should* take in these cases? Again, it makes assessment more complicated, but I think similar kinds of considerations hold as when discussing matters of trust and faith. It could be that, in this domain, what one finds is a question of when to trust yourself. If there is overwhelming evidence that your belief is false, this is a reason to question whether the feeling of truth you have is well-based. If you continue to hang on to the belief, ignoring the evidence against you, you are believing badly. But again, if the evidence is neutral, or very inconclusive, then the fact that the belief is one central to your social identity may well provide you with good enough reason to believe it.

Building on our discussion of recalcitrant beliefs, we can see how thinking of belief as emotion may also help dispel some of the puzzles related to self-deception. Thinking back to matters of trust, even if not all the reasons to trust are evidential, when the evidence that your spouse has been unfaithful, or that your child is a drug dealer, mounts high enough, we may call someone who continues to believe against the evidence “self-deceived.” The notion of self-deception has led to many philosophical puzzles. If self-deception is anything like other-deception then I must both hold the warranted belief, for example that my child is a drug dealer, and the unwarranted one that he is not. As in the case of delusions, as well as more common cases that Tamar Gendler has brought out attention, like, for example, people manifesting fear-behavior when they walk on a glass skywalk overlooking the Grand Canyon even though they say they believe it is perfectly safe, what often leads us to say that someone is self-deceived is that their behavior is at odds with the belief they avow.[[39]](#footnote-39) For example, I believe my spouse is faithful and yet find myself tempted to look at his emails. I may even have a story that I believe about why I have such a temptation which has nothing to do with fidelity, but, someone looking at my behavior, would conclude that I do not actually believe as I say I do.

A common response to this puzzle is to deny that one of the attitudes -- either the welcome, unwarranted one or the unwelcome, warranted one--is actually a belief. As is the case with the recalcitrant beliefs discussed above, there are different candidate suggestions for what these belief-like states *really* are. Again, one can see the pressure to do so if one holds on to the traditional assumptions that beliefs are particularly sensitive to evidence, and guide behavior in a predictable way. While I do not have the space here for a full treatment of the problem of self-deception, thinking about what it is like to have other conflicting emotions can help in understanding the phenomenon if beliefs are indeed emotions. I can both love and hate my father. Or, if we want to think about an example that can be expressed about the same proposition: I can feel sad that my 90-year old mother who has lived a full, rich life but has been suffering is about to die and happy that she is about to die. Tension will accompany these conflicting emotions just as it accompanies the self-deceived agent, and such emotional mixes often lead to odd behavior. [[40]](#footnote-40) It may well be the case that I will disavow one of the emotions much of the time, though my behavior will reveal that both are there.

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1. Cognitive attitudes present their content as true, but beliefs are not the only attitudes that do and so many accounts to articulate what distinguishes belief from other cognitive attitudes such as imagination, assumption, acceptance. David Hunter (ms.) has recently argued that if beliefs are states, we should resist saying they are true or false as they have no semantic properties. While I think Hunter is right to push for clarification here, when philosophers, and most of us most of time, talk about beliefs being true, they usually mean the content of what is believed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Those who are sometimes called conservatives about “cognitive phenomenology” hold this view. See Bayne and Montague (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For some this means that if one recognizes evidence which undermines one’s belief, one will thereby lose the belief, namely that what it *means* to believe is that you take it to be evidentially supported. Those who support this view include, among others, Adler (2002), Gendler (2008) Shah (2003), Van Leuuwen (2014) Velleman(2000). But the revisability condition can be read it in a weaker sense to mean that one has the capacity to revise one’s belief even if one actually does not. Grace Helton (2018) has recently defended the view that is a necessary condition of belief that it is revisable in this weaker sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Another necessary condition that is often articulated to delineate belief from other mental states are that they are “inferentially promiscuous,” or available as premises though a wide range of inferences. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ganapini ( 2019) calls this view “strong traditionalism.” She recognizes that this view is at risk of depopulating the category of belief in a problematic way. She and Helton (2018) both agree that a theory of belief should preserve the idea that humans have many beliefs. They both offer a less strict way of thinking about what is distinctive about belief so that is can still allow some irrational states to count as beliefs, though both accept that their views may be somewhat revisionist. The kind of revisability and rationality conditions they propose would allow for all the problematic states I discuss here to be beliefs. Further they seem to apply to emotions as well. Indeed Christine Tappolet (2016) argues that the charge of irrationality indicates that “if there is something wrong, some action *ought* to be taken to improve the reliability of our emotional system…there is some hope we can get rid of inappropriate emotions” (38) and so it seems they are revisable in Helton’s week sense, and adhere to Ganapini’s minimal rationality constraint. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For an illuminating discussion of these problematic states see: Bayne, T. and Hattiangadi, A. (2013). They refer to the category of “quasi-beliefs” as those which “are belief-like in some respect but not all respects” and that “fail to fully conform to the functional role characteristic of belief” (125); these are seen as “bedfellows” of belief, and the challenge is to explain what is going on in these cases. This is what they call “the bedfellow challenge.” They canvass and criticize a number of strategies for accounting for such states and conclude that even if some of these accounts can help make sense of how these states play causal roles in behavior, they rightfully point out: “Talk of belief is not only in the business of providing causal explanations of behaviour, it is also – and perhaps even more fundamentally – in the business of making ourselves intelligible to each other as rational creatures. And from this perspective the bedfellow challenge emerges as deeply problematic, for we don’t know how to think of rationality when it comes to the borderlands of belief” (140-141). Schwitzgebel (2010) also critiques a number of ways of addressing some of these problematic cases, and argues that they should be understood as examples of vague or “in-between” beliefs “where careful description of the subject’s mental state requires refraining from either ascribing or denying belief” (533). Bayne and Hattiangadi point out that it is unclear “how the fuzzy conception of belief might accommodate the rational dimensions of belief-talk.” (140) Part of Schwitzgebel’s point, I take it, is that in such cases we cannot easily and decisively say whether one’s belief or behavior is irrational but need to acknowledge the complexity and, at times, messiness of our mental lives. I will argue that if we think of beliefs as emotions then we capture these elements of complexity, but it also offers us a model to think about belief’s rationality; we should assess beliefs’ rationality as we do emotions. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For an overview of the literature and for some ways in which these components are described see; de Sousa, Ronald, "Emotion", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/emotion/>, and for an overview of the challenges that a number of theories face see the first chapter of Tappolet (2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Helm (2001) for further discussion on this point. He says of emotions that they “are unitary and not compound states of evaluative feeling, states involving elements of both cognition and conation simultaneously” (2001, 59). Helm realizes that describing emotions as feelings of this very particular kind runs afoul of the cognitive-conative divide, that is the view that all states must be either one or the other, and argues that the divide should be rejected because an adequate account of the phenomenology of emotions cannot be provided while it remains. I agree and one upshot of my view is that an adequate account of the phenomenology of belief cannot be provided while it remains. Tappolet (2016)’s view that emotions are kinds of perceptions may also offer a way of incorporating the cognitive, motivational, and feeling aspects into one state. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Brady may overstate what is required for irrationality. That one is inclined (in some sense) to assent to the appearance that the stick is bent in the water when one knows it is straight, is not irrational. Still, even such inclinations create a kind of tension, and take some work to resist. That such inclinations can at times be so strong that they are given in to, even when one sees they are not based on good reasons, is all that matters for my account of belief. I elaborate some on this kind of case further below. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Describing the nature of this component is difficult, but I will attempt to say more about it below. Jonathan Cohen has argued that what distinguishes belief from acceptance is that when one believes something one “feels” it true in a way that one does not if one only accepts it. I want to take seriously the idea that beliefs involve such “credal feelings.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For a helpful discussion of the difficulty of defining delusions and the differences between different kinds of delusions, see Lisa Bortolotti’s (2010) introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is how DSM-5 defines delusions. It also refers to them as “beliefs,” but many philosophers dispute this categorization. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. What has come to be called “non-doxasticism” about delusions is widespread though there is disagreement concerning how to categorize the non-belief state that characterizes delusions. Greg Currie (2000), for example, argues that many delusions are better understood as imaginings that one mistakes as beliefs, he says they would “sometimes be better described as a delusional metabelief based on a cognitive hallucination”; one misrepresents imaginings as beliefs. His main reason for thinking they are not beliefs is because they fail to play the role that beliefs play in action and they are not evidence-sensitive. Andy Egan (2009) argues that to make sense of delusions we need to introduce a new mental state called “bimagination” which should be understood as “something *in between* paradigmatic belief and paradigmatic imagination – that delusional subjects are in states that play a role in their cognitive economies that is in some respects like that of a standard–issue, stereotypical belief that P and in other respects like that of a standard-issue, stereotypical imagining that P.” Part of what I will be urging is that what is often thought of as paradigmatic believing is actually a restrictive subset of the stereotype. Richard Dub (2015) has argued that delusions should be classified as acceptances based on a certain kind of affective state. Again, one of the main features Dub identifies that reveals delusions are not beliefs is that they are unresponsive to evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In a discussion defending her view that most delusions should be seen as beliefs, Bortolotti (2011) points out that both their unrevisable nature, as well as their discontinuity with behavior, is often exaggerated by those who deny them belief status. She says, “Delusions are typically resistant to counterevidence, more so than ordinary beliefs, but it is probably an exaggeration to say that ‘normal reality testing is powerless against delusions.’ Three sources of information recommend caution: the consideration of clinical case studies; the evidence on the effectiveness of cognitive probing (often in the context of cognitive behavioural therapy) in the treatment of delusions; and the reports of people who successfully manage their delusions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Nikolai Viedge (2016) raises a similar worry about Velleman’s example, arguing that, given his criteria for what counts as a belief “bigoted mental states” would fail to qualify as beliefs. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Both Helton (2018) and Ganapini (2019) accept that the standard revisability or rationality condition is too strong because it risks only including rational beliefs as beliefs. Ganapini cites an abundance of evidence that “it has become increasingly apparent that some of our beliefs – or what we would intuitively call ‘beliefs’—are at times behaviorally inert, immune to evidence, or inferentially encapsulated.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For an overview of those who think that one can mistakenly believe that they have beliefs which they do not have, and so the limits of self-reporting see Ganapini (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For a vivid example of how evidence and experience is appealed to in defense those who believe they were abducted by aliens see Sullivan-Bissett (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Also see Levy (2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For an extended discussion about how, at times, the beliefs formed by a disinterested bookie can, and should, deviate from someone more partial, see Marušić (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Katherine Hawley (2014), as well as Guy Longworth (2017). Allan Hazlett (2016) makes a similar distinction in discussing the possibility of beliefs that manifest loyalty, and whether such intellectual loyalty can be a virtue. If one’s beliefs are such that one refuses to consider evidence to the contrary then they would not manifest any virtue, but Hazlett suggests one can believe for reasons of loyalty while still maintaining open-mindedness. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See, for example Hawley (2014), especially 2030-31. She largely bases her discussion on Holton (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Crispin Wright (2004) labels the kind of attitude we have towards “hinge” or “cornerstone” propositions a kind of acceptance, but since it does not require evidence or is subject to the same evidential or alethic norms, he does not want to label it a belief. He concludes that it is a kind of “rational trust,” claiming, like Longworth and others, that as long we don’t have evidence against it, its practical justification makes it rational. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Paul Faulkner (2011) argues that it is often the case that we believe what people say (and are warranted in so doing) *because* we trust them and that this kind of trust is often not based on the evidence which would allow us to predict that one would tell the truth. Faulkner distinguishes this kind of “predictive” trust (which seems to map on to what I have called mere reliance) from “affective” trust which is based on what we normatively expect of one another and allows for the appropriateness of reactive attitudes such as resentment and disappointment. Allan Hazlett (2017) argues that not believing others wrongs them. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Berislav Marušić (2015, chapter 7) argues that we should see trust as a kind of belief, but that “trusting belief” is different from evidential belief because the reasons for trusting are different in the case of trust. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This story about the boatman and the fog is one that Ram Dass frequently tells. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See Tappolet (2016, 37-38) for a discussion of the plasticity of our emotional systems which allows us to influence our emotional dispositions. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. We sometimes even talk about having “faith” in someone to mean we trust him. Longworth’s discussion of trust alluded to above builds on Kant’s account of “moral faith.” [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. It is possible that belief in some philosophical theories would count as “religious” in this wide sense. David Kiloren (2015) has argued that robust moral realism should be viewed as religion, but he thinks this is not a reason to reject it, and that it more defensible than most other religions. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. While some, most notably, the “Reformed epistemologists” (Plantinga, Wolterstorff, 1983) have defended the rationality of religious beliefs despite their failing to be based on evidence, others have suggested that faith be thought of as quite different from belief and so should not be evaluated in the same way; having faith that something is the case, it is argued, can be rational even if belief is not. This is, for example, Robert Audi’s position. Audi (1991, 2008) argues that there is a kind of propositional faith that does not entail belief which he calls “fiducial faith.” His two main reasons for distinguishing between these states are first, that faith includes a positive attitudinal element that belief need not, and second, that faith is compatible with a higher degree of doubt than is belief. This attitude is not simply a cognitive or intellectual state which is what a belief is, according to Audi who accepts the cognitive conception. For similar reasons, William Alston (1996) thinks many attitudes of religious faith should be classified as “acceptances” rather than “beliefs.” Neil Van Leeuwen (2014) has argued for a similar conclusion, that we should view the attitudes of factual belief and religious credence as different cognitive attitudes and, again this is because “religious cognitive attitudes lack the defining characteristics of factual beliefs (2).” One such defining characteristic is that they are evidentially vulnerable, and another is that they don’t have relationship with action that one finds with “factual beliefs.”

    As in the cases of trust discussed above (and for Audi these attitudes are very similar) one of the main motivations for carving out a category of non-doxastic propositional faith is to have a way of maintaining its rationality. Holding a belief when one’s evidence is inconclusive is deemed by many to be irrational or impermissible and so to make room for faith or trust being rational or permissible, it is suggested that these attitudes are not beliefs. The other option, which I am urging, is that we see these examples as exposing that belief is not purely intellectual or cognitive. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The latter proposition is the one specified by Alvin Plantinga when defending the rationality of religious belief. Elsewhere, I critique his arguments and discuss further how one can distinguish between the permissibility of different religious beliefs. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Jonathan Adler (2002)’s discussion, especially pp. 26-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See (deleted for blind review). Huddleston (2014) makes an even stronger claim, namely that one can believe something one knows is false. This does not seem possible. If you believe something that can be stated in the form of the proposition, then you take it to be true. You can recognize that it is possible it is false but you cannot *know* that it is false. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monty\_Hall\_problem [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The widely discussed phenomenon of “motivated belief” or “motivationally biased belief” points out how emotions can lead one to believe in certain ways, for example, by leading one to attend to certain evidence and not others. This is the prevalent way of understanding self-deception. See, for example Mele (2000). On such a view belief can be infected by emotions in certain ways that will lead away from rationality. On my view a belief-state is an emotion and so to evaluate the appropriateness of belief we have to think, not only about whether the evidence supports the truth of the proposition believed, but also about the more complex question of whether the affective endorsement allows the belief to serve the more complex role that beliefs seem to fulfill over and above representing truth, the role of navigation, coherence and agential flourishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. This claim should be somewhat qualified. If artificial intelligence reaches a point where emotions are attributable to such “machines,” then beliefs will be as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. J. Adam Carter (2018) offers an illuminating discussion of this view as well as a (qualified) defense of it. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. For an overview of some of these studies, see <http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/i-dont-want-to-be-right>. This article primarily discusses Brendan Nyhan’s work on changing people’s minds about the safety of vaccines. It concludes by quoting him as being optimistic about the vaccine issue: “ Vaccines, fortunately, aren’t political. ‘They’re not inherently linked to ideology,” Nyhan said. ‘And that’s good. That means we can get to a consensus’ Ignoring vaccination, after all, can make people of every political party, and every religion, just as sick.” Six years after this article was written, we are seeing that beliefs about vaccines and diseases can become political, and his optimism may have been misplaced. A recent article (on which Nyan is a co-author) shows how difficult it can be to correct people’s beliefs about epidemics, and how dangerous misperceptions can be. See Carey, et al (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Gendler (2008a, 2008b). Another advantage to thinking about beliefs as emotions is that many of these examples can be explained as a conflict of emotions. For example, in the skywalk case the subject is experiencing two distinct emotions both which include the inclination to assent to the way the situation feels. I experience the feeling of fear on the one hand, and the feeling of belief on the other. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. For a discussion of ambivalent emotions see Tappolet (2005), and for some empirical research on emotional dissonance see Pelt, A., et al (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)