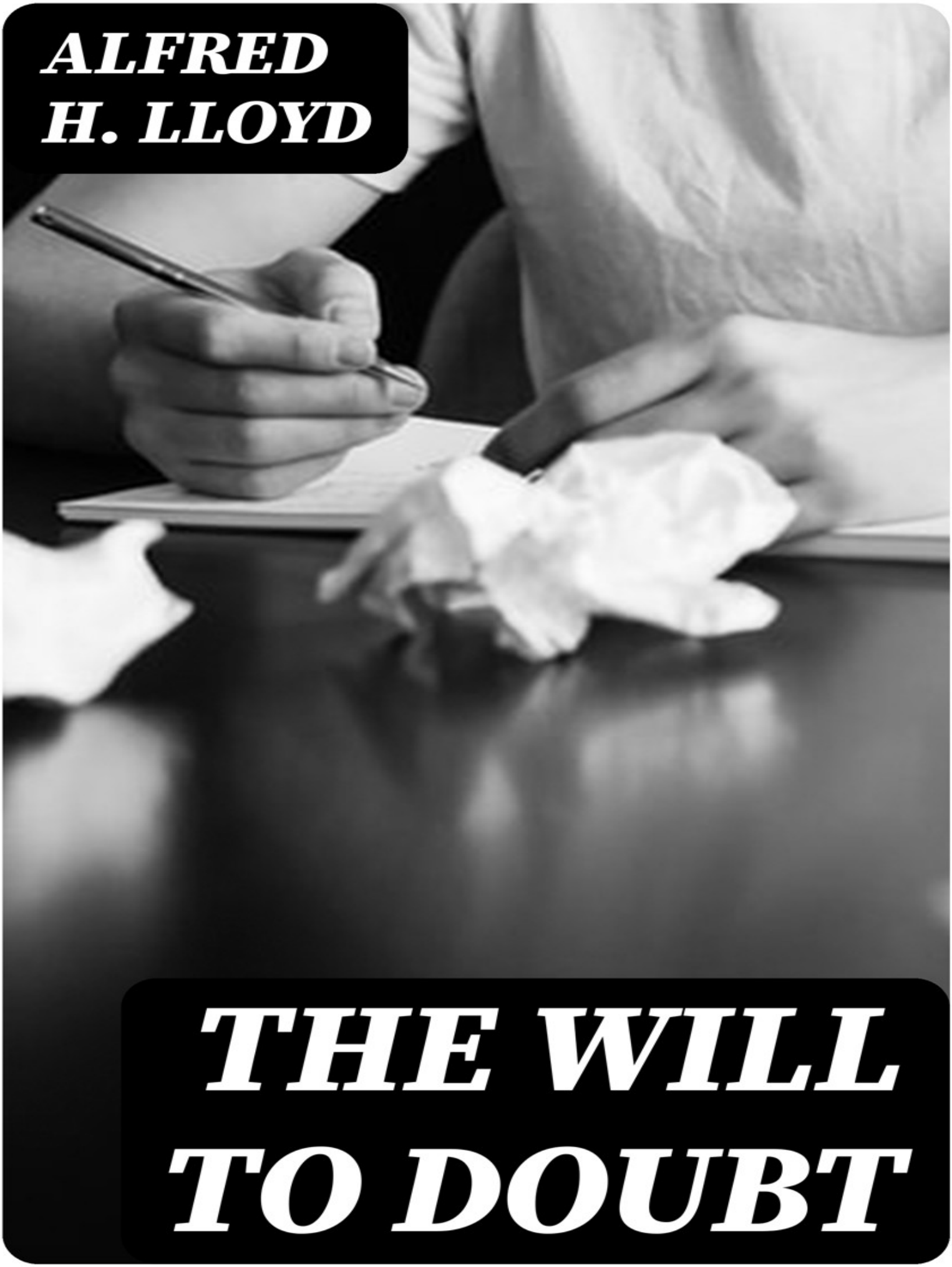
ALFRED H. LLOYD



THE WILL TO DOUBT

Alfred H. Lloyd

The Will to Doubt

An essay in philosophy for the general thinker

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PREFACE.

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The chapters that follow comprise what might be called an introduction to philosophy, but such a description of them would probably be misleading, for they are addressed quite as much to the general reader, or rather to the general thinker, as to the prospective student of technical philosophy. They are the attempt of a University teacher of philosophy to meet what is a real emergency of the day, namely, the doubt that is appearing in so many departments of life, that is affecting so many people, and that is fraught with so many dangers, and in attempting this they would also at least help to bridge the chasm between academic sophistication and practical life, self-consciousness and positive activity. With peculiar truth at the present time the University can justify itself only by serving real life, and it can serve real life, not merely by bringing its pure science down to, or up to, the health and the industrial pursuits of the people, but also by explaining, which is even to say by applying, as science is "applied," or by animating the general scepticism of the time.

That this scepticism is often charged to the peculiar training of the University hardly needs to be said, but except for its making such an undertaking as the present essay only the more appropriate the charge itself is strangely humorous. One might also accuse the University of making

atoms and germs, or, by its magic theories, of generating electricity or disease. Scepticism is a world-wide, life-wide fact; even like heat or electricity, it is a natural force or agent—unless forsooth one must exclude all the attitudes of mind from what in the fullest and deepest sense is natural; scepticism, in short, is a real phase of whatever is real, and its explanation is an academic responsibility. Its explanation, however, like the explanation of everything real or natural, can be complete only when, as already suggested here, its application and animation have been achieved, or when it has been shown to be properly and effectively an object of will. So, just as we have the various applied sciences, in this essay there is offered an applied philosophy of doubt, a philosophy that would show doubt to have a real part in effective action, and that with the showing would make both the doubting and the acting so much the more effective.

But it may be said that effective acting depends, not on doubt, but rather on belief, on confidence or "credit." This will prove to be true, excepting in what it denies. To be commonplace, to write down here and now what is at once the truism and the paradox of this book, a vital, practical belief must always live by doubting. Was it Schopenhauer who declared that man walks only by saving himself at every step from a fall? The meaning of this book is much the same, although no pessimism is either intended or necessarily implied in such a declaration. Doubt is no mere negative of belief; rather it is a very vital part of belief, it has a place in the believer's experience and volition; the doubters in society, be they trained at the University or not, and those practical creatures in society who have kept the

faith, who believe and who do, are naturally and deeply in sympathy. And this essay seeks to deepen their natural sympathy.

Here, then, is my simple thesis. Doubt is essential to real belief. Perhaps this means that all vital problems are bound in a real life to be perennial, and certainly it cannot mean that in its support I may be expected by my readers to give a solution of every special problem that might be raised, an answer to every question about knowledge or morality, about religion or politics or industry, that might be asked. Problems and questions, of course the natural children, not of doubt, but of doubt and belief, may be as worthy and as practical as solutions. Some of them may be even better put than answered. But be this as it may, the present essay must be taken for what it is, not for something else. It is, then, for reasons not less practical than theoretical, an attempt to face and, so far as may be, to solve the very general problem of doubt itself, or say simply—if this be simple—the problem of whatever in general is problematic; and, this done, to suggest what may be the right attitude for doubters and believers towards each other and towards life and the world which is life's natural sphere; emphatically it is not the announcement of a programme for life in any of its departments.

The substance of chapters I., II., III., IV., and V. in small parts, and VI. and VIII. was given during the summer of 1903 in lectures before the Glenmore School of the Culture Sciences at Hurricane in the Adirondacks, and except for some revision chapters V. and VII. have already been

published—*Science*, July 5, 1902, and the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, June, 1905.

To Professor Muirhead, the Editor of the Ethical Library, I wish here to express my hearty appreciation of his interest and assistance in the final preparation of this volume for publication.

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INTRODUCTION.

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Without undue sensationalism it may be said that this is an age of doubt. Wherever one looks in journeying through the different departments of life one sees doubt. And one sees, too, some of the blight which doubt produces, although the blight is by no means all that one sees. There is heat everywhere in the physical world, but not necessarily only arson or even destructive fire. Morals, however, social life, industry, politics, religion, have suffered somewhat—and many would insist very seriously—from the prevailing doubt. Moreover, if the outward view shows doubt everywhere, the inward view is at least not more reassuring. Who can examine his own consciousness without finding doubt at work there? We would often hide it from others, not to say from ourselves, but it is there, and we all know it to be there. Other times may also have been times of doubt, but our day, as the time to which we certainly owe our first and chief duty, is very conspicuously and very seriously a time of doubt.

Now there are some, and they are many, who would decry the discussion of such a thing as doubt, for they see only danger ahead. Doubt they compare with death or disease, and to dwell upon any of these is idle, unnatural, morbid. Why not let such things alone, and look only to what is pleasant, to what is good and true and beautiful? Then, too, doubt, the confession of doubt, is the royal entrance to philosophy and the risk of an entanglement with philosophy, which seems to them the source of much that is harmful, the essence of all that is impractical, is altogether too great. Doubt for them is even less to be played with than fire, with which already it has been compared here. Again, as others in matters political and industrial, so they in matters intellectual and spiritual resent anything that appears likely in any way to disturb the standing credit of the country. To doubt is just to join the opposition, and the opposition is made up of heretics and agents generally of mere destruction. To treat doubt as real and positively significant, as having any true worth in human experience, as being even a proper object of will, is to stop permanently, not the wheels of commerce and industry, but the wheels of the present life in all its phases. In a word, perhaps one of the words of the hour, Christian Science has not wished to be more inhospitable to the reality of disease than have these believers to the reality and usefulness of doubt.

Yet all who feel in this way are short-sighted. Their contentions, like those of their cousins, perhaps their country cousins, the Christian Scientists, may have worth for being corrective, but at very best they are only one-sided. In a fable, never in real life, a man might get the

smell of burning wood in his house and refuse to recognize the danger because of the inevitable delay to his business which the alarm of fire would involve; but doubt is not less real nor less dangerous, nor even less capable, when under control, of useful applications. Any danger, too, squarely faced is at least half met. Why, then, be so impracticable, so like characters in fables, as to overlook or turn one's back upon the doubt of the day, refusing it a place and a part in real life? The negative things of life can be so only relatively. Death itself cannot possibly be absolute, and doubt, not unlike death, indeed perhaps only one of death's messengers, must be even a gift, or an agent, of the gods. Some things, dangerous when hidden, are wonderfully serviceable, when recognized and controlled. Sometimes men really have entertained angels unawares.

And so throughout these chapters, although some may think me and those who follow me morbid, and although we may have to enter the dangerous parlour of philosophy, the doubt of our time is to be squarely and fairly faced. In all candour, we are from the start to be confessed parties to it, hiding nothing intentionally, and at the same time trying always to give nothing undue emphasis. The doubt that all seem to know, that many really feel without perhaps clearly confessing, and that some confess or even actually boast, we shall face and examine closely, trying as we can to find its true meaning and real worth. In short, the confession of doubt, of our doubt, and the fruits of confession are the burden of these chapters.

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THE CONFESSION OF DOUBT.

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Our confession must, of course, be thorough-going, and can be made so only through a complete statement of every possible reason that experience affords for the attitude of doubt. To the end, therefore, of such a statement we shall consider in this chapter certain general and easily recognized facts about doubt itself, while in chapters that follow we shall continue the confession by examining, first, our customary or "common-sense" view of things, and then the view of science, and having brought together in each case numerous incongruities, or contradictions, which ordinarily are at best only casually noticed or timorously overlooked, we shall find ourselves facing in a peculiarly telling way, not only certain strong reasons for doubt, but also some of the real issues that doubt raises. As no issue, moreover, can be more central or crucial than the meaning of the contradictions found to pervade our views of things, before completing our confession we shall allow ourselves some reflections, that should prove useful to us in the end, upon the possible worth of contradiction in human experience; for even to casual thinking contradiction, although good ground for scepticism, suggests some positive advantage and opportunity; the advantage of breadth, for example, of freedom from special form, or the opportunity of personal spontaneity and initiative as against the restraints of formal consistency, of class, and of

institution; and if these things, among others, can be associated with our case for doubt, our reflections will certainly not have been in vain. Then we shall close our confession by seeking the companionhip of a great doubter of modern times, and by learning what we can from him of doubt itself and of the doubter's natural world. And finally, as a result of all our own efforts, supplemented by his help, we shall be able to reap some of the fruits for life and thought that a confession so fully made may fairly claim.

From start to finish, moreover, of this study of doubt we have to remember that there can be no important difference between what is possible and what is real. Thus anything whatsoever that can possibly be doubted is really doubtful. Also, if anybody is amazed to hear mention of facts about doubt, as if doubt should not somehow submit to its own nostrum, let him merely reflect that, strangely enough, nothing is quite so indubitable as doubt, nothing so convincing as the reasons for doubt. Let me not be too subtle, but to doubt doubt is only to affirm it, and somehow —whether for good or ill need not now be said—all the negative things of life possess a peculiar certainty, and are all most easily proved. A great Frenchman once put the case quite plainly when he said, after canvassing very carefully the whole field of his consciousness, that his doubts were the only things there, the only things he could be quite certain about, and these were so very real that they left him absolutely [p.007] nothing but belief in himself, in his all-doubting and ever-doubting self, to rest upon. His was surely a sweeping confession, and his residuum of belief may not at first sight seem very promising or very

substantial, but quickly, I think, we shall find ourselves in agreement with him, at least as to the reality and the wide scope of our doubting, and it is also a possibility well worth foreseeing that we may even find his belief in the reality of an ever-doubting and all-doubting self a rock for our own saving.

So, to turn now to those general and easily recognized facts, which were to be the special interest of the present chapter, in the first place: *We are all universal doubters*. We are all universal doubters in the sense that every one of us doubts something, and there is nothing which some of us have not doubted. Who would be so rash as to say that what a fellow-being had questioned might not be questionable to himself also, or that, if anything in his own experience had ever been subject to question, all the other things might not also be subject to question? But the merely dubitable is the already doubtful. In this sense, therefore, not so abstruse and formally logical as it may appear, we are all universal doubters.

Our life is ever cherishing what we are pleased to call its verities, some in religion and morals, some in politics, some in mathematics and science, some in the more general relations to nature, but what elusive things these verities are! How shallow, or how hollow all of them are, or at one time or another may become. To take a rather minute case, such as it is always the philosopher's license to make use of, a case that is, however, quite typical in experience; here is a word—any word you like—that has been spoken and written by you for years. Always before it has been spelt correctly and clearly understood, but to-day how unreal it seems. Are

those the right letters, and are they correctly placed? Is that the true meaning? What has happened, too, to give rise to these unusual questions? Well, who can say? And who has not substantially asked every one of them, not merely with reference to some long-familiar word, but also with reference to much larger things in life? Self and society, love and friendship, mind and matter, nature and God have again and again been subjected to essentially the same questioning. The verities of life, all the way from simple words used every day to the great things of our moral and spiritual being, have lost, sometimes slowly, sometimes very suddenly, the reality with which we have supposed them endowed, and although we may still bravely believe we find ourselves crying out passionately for help in our unbelief. There certainly are the verities; not one of them can possibly fall to the ground; yet these very verities are never quite in our experience.

Still the world has its thoroughly confident people. Every one of us has met some of those estimable beings to whom doubt seems wholly foreign, people who assert with trembling voice and sacred vow that their convictions, political perhaps or religious, are unassailable, and that they must hold them to the grave. But, whatever may be said of political convictions, religious convictions have often been regarded as a contradiction of terms. How can one be sure and religious at the same time? Moreover, positive people under any standard are notoriously as fearful as they are dogmatic. Fear is often, if not always, the chief motive of dogmatism, and fear is hardly the most natural companion of genuine confidence. The part which the emotion of fear

has had, both in the personal life and in the doctrine of the dogmatic among men, would make a most instructive study.

If, then, dogmatic people are slaves to their fears, while more thoughtful people, as has not needed to be said, seem to get no reward from their self-consciousness but the uncertain reward of their doubts, then only such as live quietly, asserting nothing, depending on nothing, and even assuming nothing, but simply taking what comes, are left to represent genuine belief. Yet how many such are there? A few may seem to approach the ideal, if ideal it be, but the class itself in realization must be said to be a hypothetical one, and few, if any, of us could ever really envy or strive to imitate its supposed manner of living; for, in spite of all the dangers and all the doubts and fears, only the constantly examined life can ever really lure us. Doubt, besides being a general condition of life, seems to be also incident to what gives life worth.

But, furthermore, not only are we all universal doubters; the case for doubt in the world is, if possible, even stronger; for also—and this is the second general fact: *Doubt is a phase, nay, a vital condition of all consciousness*. To be a conscious creature is to be a doubting creature.

In so many ways psychology is teaching us to-day with renewed emphasis that we are conscious of nothing as it is, and that more or less clearly we all know our shortcoming in this regard; or again, with still more directness and emphasis, that for us there is no such thing as a state of consciousness which does not indicate tension, or unstable equilibrium, that is to say uncertainty, in our activity. Nor have we need of the testimony of science to these facts,

since common personal experience is well aware of them. In small things and in great consciousness transforms or refracts. In small things and in great consciousness marks a moment of poise between an impulse to do something, and more or less distinctly recognized conditions or relations that would put restraint upon the doing of it. Even the law of relativity, a psychological law only in its definite formulation, in its idea a simple fact of everyday experience, true for all conscious states from the crudest perceptions of the organs of sense to the most highly developed ideas of critical reflection, by binding as it does all the details of actual or possible experience into a whole, every part of which acts upon the other parts, points very directly to this fact of poise and instability, besides indicating also that knowledge never can be literally or objectively exact, and that at least with some clearness every knower must know it cannot. How can there ever be even a single stable or a single finally accurate element in the consciousness of a creature whose experience, in the first place, can comprise only related, interdependent parts, and whose nature, in the second place, is an essentially mobile and active one? Moreover, as just one other way of suggesting the inexactness and uncertainty of consciousness and the balancing, tentative nature of all conscious life, we always think, and think properly, of conscious creatures as having will, as doing what they do purposely or from design. The new psychology, however, to which we naturally turn, and which again has only formulated what we can recognize from everyday experience, declares that the purpose in conscious activity is not a developed, but an always

developing one. Purposive action is action that never finally knows, but is ever finding out its real intent, purpose being identical with the progressively discovered meaning of action. A volitionally, purposively active being is always a seeker as well as a doer. Indeed, any doing would itself be empty, or idle, if it were not a seeking, and so if it were not subject to conditions of some uncertainty. In so many ways, then, through the necessary inexactness of consciousness, through the unstable equilibrium of all conscious activity, through the law and fact of relativity, and through the tentative and provisional nature which must always belong to purpose, we see how doubt must be a phase or condition of all consciousness.

Illustrations are abundant. Thus, once more to take a somewhat minute case, which is really more significant for being minute, with regard to conscious activity being in a state of tension, visual sensations always involve muscular sensations, and these are incident not only to expressed, but also to possible, yet restrained, movements. The eyes may have been moved and the head turned, but in spite of the impulses present in them the legs have not been used to bring the observer nearer to the object seen, nor have the arms and hands been raised to secure a contact with it, and perhaps a tracing of its lines, although some stimulus for such contact and tracing must be always present as a part of the actual or possible value of the experience. Or, again, to adopt an illustration used for a different purpose by Professor William James, so simple a process as the spelling of a word is complicated with all sorts of diverting and unsettling impulses as each letter is expressed. Let the

word be *onomatopoetic*. Can I really spell it correctly? And what a gauntlet of dangers I have to run. The initial letter *o* tempts, perhaps with childhood memories of the alphabet, to *p-q-r-s-t*, etc., or to indefinite words or syllables, actual from my past or possible to my future experience, such as *of, off, opine, October, -ology, -ovy*, and so on, or, to suggest mere possibilities, such as *ontic, oreate, ot*, or *ow*; and every succeeding letter is equally a scene of combat, a place of dangers met—safely met, let us hope, and triumphantly passed. Worthy the boy, or the man, who reaches the end unhurt. And what a voyage of uncertainties, what a course between hope and fear, confidence and doubt, the spelling of words or the spelling of life as a whole always is. One's whole vocabulary, real or possible, or one's whole repertory of acts is more or less directly involved, whatever one does. As to the tentative nature of purpose, which seems the only other point here that can possibly require illustration, the right we all reserve to change our minds in the different affairs of life tells its own story. We never do do, or can do, exactly what we consciously would do; and recognizing this, men, as well as women, insist on the right of a change of mind, and sometimes even of conscious misrepresentation or of disparity between their seeming and their being in thought or in deed. That such a claim has its dangers does not now concern us; it has also its opportunities; but the fact of it and the ground for it are quite evident. Even jurisprudence, for which loyalty to established and visible forms is peculiarly sacred, has its ways, direct and indirect, of recognizing that purposes develop, that the returns are never all in, that any purpose

or meaning must sooner or later assume a new form, and so may even now be other than it seems. Bequests for institutions, for example, are allowed to continue in force, although, with the demands of a more enlightened day, the formal conditions under which they were made have been openly violated. In short—for it all comes to this—"Not the letter, but the spirit," is an inevitable comment, or at least an inevitable feeling about everything that is done. A man vaults a fence, and then, even if he get over fairly well, vaulting is not what it was for him. He may continue to use the old word, or the same arms and legs, but with a changed meaning and a changed feeling of limb and muscle, and so with a new purpose and a new body to control and modify his next performance. And what is true for vaulting is true also for making boxes or tables, for writing essays, for talking, for thinking, for founding colleges or theological seminaries, or finally, for what we so indefinitely call living. An activity such as throughout its length and breadth ours is, conscious activity that must for ever heed the call: "Not the letter, but the spirit," an activity that never is, therefore, and never can be without the elements of the game, since it must ever wait on its own revealed consequences in order to grow into an understanding of its real meaning; such an activity, among other things, cannot but fasten doubt upon us as a most natural heritage. As man is conscious, to doubt is human. Other things may be human, too, but doubt is so certainly and conspicuously.

Thirdly, in this presentation of general facts: *Doubt is inseparable from habit*. Habit is usually associated with what

is permanent and established, but just here lies its undoing. As we usually understand it, habit really deadens what it touches by leading to abstraction or separation from actual conditions. Conservative as it surely is in things important and in things unimportant, in things personal and in things social, it sets him who is party to it behind the times, for no act in its second expression, no simply repeated act, no mere habit could ever be up to date in the sense of really meeting all the emergencies of its own time. Personal habits make fixed characters; social habits make customs and laws; religious habits make churches and creeds; intellectual habits make schools; and of all these products, which for the sake of the single term we will call institutions, it must be said, however paradoxically, that in being made they are also outgrown, for the habitual turns formal and unreal and so unsatisfying. A growing nature has her ways of making even conservatives keep pace with her. An institution in the sense of an acquired manner of action, personal or social, can never really be an end in itself, although to a narrow view it may often seem to be; it is at best only the manifested means to a newly developed or developing end which must eventually transform it. In so large a thing, for example, as political life, the institutes of monarchy have become the instruments of democracy, and this conspicuously ever since the French Revolution; in the history of thought, of man's intellectual life, the objective dogmas of one time have been only the subjective standpoints of the next, the metaphysics of one time has made the scientific method, the working hypothesis, of the succeeding time; and in so small a thing as a child's

vocabulary, the oft-repeated and finally mastered syllable *ba*, or some other equally intellectual, has become in time only one of the means to a whole word, say *baby* or *bath*, or even *basilica* or *barometrograph*. In all life the thing we get the habit of is only a tool with which we strive towards something else. Some one thinking no doubt of Hercules has called the institutions of life a great club which the irresistible arm of society, always a hero when looked back upon, swings fatally against the present.

So intimately is change seen nowadays to be related to habit, or indirectly involved in it, that in technical science a new account of habit has been formulated. To cite but one case, Professor Baldwin, says:[1] "Habit expresses the tendency of the organism to secure and retain its vital stimulations," and such an account, placing the interest of habit in so general and so changeable a thing as "vital stimulations," is designed to make habit fundamentally, not merely a tendency to repetition or imitation, but instead a demand for constant adaptation or differentiation. In the doctrines of inheritance, also, always moving necessarily in close sympathy with those of habit, a similar departure has been made. Both habit and inheritance are in fact seen to belong to life in a world of change, or variation, and they have assumed what I will style a protective colouring accordingly. The habit of always being adapted is at least as radical as it is conservative.

With this reform in the account of habit we have not only analogous reforms, as was said, in the account of inheritance, but also in the scientific view of character, custom, law, creed, and the institution generally. Moreover,

if in scientific theory we find these new views, in practical life there are at least signs of the same standpoint. What may be called a new conservatism—the most truly conservative thing being taken to be the most thoroughly pertinent or adaptive thing—has for many years been getting possession of us, and is now quite manifest. Our political constitutions are amendable constitutions; our religious rites and doctrines are recognized as only symbols; our theories are only standpoints.

So, once more, because change is at least an ever-present companion, if not actually an integral part of habit, doubt must be as real and general as habit. Change must make doubt. Sociologically, institutionalism must always imply a contemporary scepticism; the conservative must have an unbeliever for his neighbour. Indeed, to add an important point, some go so far as to say in general that change, that is, something new and different, is not only a necessary incident but also an actual motive in all activity, and when all is said they seem quite right. Perhaps habit, as always an interest in adaptation, would imply as much. Certainly novelty is a universal motive, and as for society there can be no question that it has a very strong predilection for lawlessness in all its forms. True, it may be objected that at times men, individually or collectively, seek not something else, but simply *more* of something already secured; more money, it may be, or more learning, or more territory, or more pleasure. There is, however, in spite of man's many conceits to the contrary, no change that is purely quantitative. *More* is also *different* or *other*. Accordingly, we both always find, and, what is even more to

the point, always seek a real change whenever we do anything. To speak again in most general terms, the motion in the outer world, which is the fundamental stimulus of all 'consciousness, both physically, that is, literally, and figuratively, is more than merely an outer stimulus; something there is within the nature of the subject which answers to it with perfect sympathy and makes it equally an inner motive. Forsooth, could any stimulus ever produce a response without its being in accord with an existing motive? Life, then, is a game, and the game of life, doubts and all, is a real interest as well as a necessity. We are creatures of habit, but we have, and we cherish, no habit stronger or more essential than the habit at once of adaptation and variation.[2]

A fourth general fact, very closely related to the foregoing, is this: *Doubt is necessary to life, to real life, to deep experience*. Doubt is but one of the phases of the resistance which a real life demands. Real life implies a constant challenge, and doubt is a form under which the challenge finds expression. The doubter is a questioner, a seeker; he has, then, something to overcome; he fears, too, as well as hopes.

Were all things settled once for all, were all things clearly known and freely executed, or were the consequences of the things to be done always capable of being accurately foretold, there would be no real living, there would be nothing really to do. In such case life in general, or in any of its different expressions, religion, or politics, or art, or science, or industry, or morals, if one may suppose for a moment that any of these differences could ever develop,

would consist in a purely passive condition, a mere fixed status; it would be a wholly static thing falsely called life; its movement, if movement there were, could be only the rest or routine of strictly mechanical motion.

To a real life, then, doubt, as an evidence of challenge and resistance, is absolutely necessary, and appreciation of just this necessity is certainly an important part of our present confession, and the confession is important, because it is sure somewhat to brighten what heretofore may have seemed a dark horizon. Confession often changes night to dawn, and here the association of doubt with real living, with a world in which there is always something to do, awakens emotions that such words as relativity, and instability, and change, and even game, have discouraged, or even wholly suppressed. Leasing, perhaps better than any one else, has given expression to these emotions, and has at the same time reflected what in his day had certainly begun to be, and what in our own time very widely and very deeply is, the ideal spirit. Thus, as he wrote:—

"Not the truth that any one may have or may think he has, but the honest effort which has been exerted to compass it, makes what is really worthy in human life. For not in having, but in seeking truth, are those powers developed, in which alone man's ever-increasing perfection consists. Possession makes us inert, lazy, proud. If God held in his right hand the perfect truth, and in his left the ever-restless struggle after truth, and bade me choose, although I were bound to be ever and always in the wrong, I should humbly select the left, saying: 'Father, give; surely the pure truth is for Thee alone.'"

This is a splendid utterance, and it has touched a responsive chord in human nature the civilized world over, not so much, however, for the humility of the choice as for the zeal in a life of seeking and striving, or for the idea that knowledge is itself a dynamic thing, a living, moving function, not a passive possession. The knower is made also a doubter, and the doubter appears as having, in a sense, forgotten, without for a moment betraying, the constant doubting within him. If I may so speak, he has, even while he lacks; such is the condition of his seeking; such is the way in which doubting is necessary to real living. Doubt saves from the possession that makes "inert, lazy, proud," yet does not take away. Doubt makes experience always deep, even putting consciousness in touch with reality, and it makes life for ever living.

Still others may be quoted in the same vein. Socrates made life, particularly mental life, if this may be supposed distinct, essentially active or dynamic when he identified true wisdom with self-conscious ignorance, with a power in one of always finding oneself in error, and in modern times Hegel has done the same thing as effectually, though perhaps not in general so intelligibly, by finding a principle of negativity or contradiction the very mainspring of all consciousness, of all thinking. Known truth is at once imperfect or even false, being necessarily partial, relative, and at best only tentative, very much, let us say, recalling something already remarked, as an established form of life is no longer the real life, but merely the developed means to a revolution, a life that is passing even as soon as it has come.

For the rest, the positive value of doubt to real life can hardly need further emphasis. In one form or another the idea, as important as many may find it commonplace, must constantly recur in these pages. We turn, therefore, to our fifth, and for the present, last general fact, with which we shall find ourselves still in sight, perhaps even in clearer sight of the brighter horizon. We are all universal doubters; doubt underlies all consciousness; even habit has gloomy doubt, as Horace would say, sitting up behind; like pain or want, like ignorance or contradiction, doubt is a dynamic principle, making experience deeper and ever deepening, and life real and alive; and fifthly: *As man is dependent and feels dependent, he is a doubter. His widespread, or rather his universal, sense of dependence begets doubt*. Witness the fact that doubt shows man a seeker after company; the company of nature, the company of his fellows, the company of God.

Of course the social impulse, thus to be associated with doubt, is only one of the phases of its dynamic and life-giving character, for a social life, a life of dependence on what is without, of real relations beyond self, must be a life of real and constant movement. Nothing so much as such relations gives vitality. This special phase, however, of the place of doubt in real life is a very interesting one, and it suggests, besides, so much that is of positive value as almost to transform what so far has been in large part a sceptic's confession into a sceptic's boast.

Thus, in the first place, doubt seeks the company of nature. "Return to nature!" has time and again in human history been the cry of the human heart. Has civilization lost

its hold, seeming unreal, artificial, formal? Has morality become hollow? Has a lover suffered the shattering of his dearest hopes? Has a creed lost its credibility? Have you and I wearied of our study or our labour, whatever it be, and come to wonder if it, or anything, is worth while after all? Have friends, ideals, and God Himself deserted us? We turn, and all people turn to nature. Exactly so the homesick traveller takes himself homeward, or the prodigal arises and goes to his father. And your experience and mine, and the poetry of all literatures, which tells so deeply the experiences of all men of all times, are a constant witness to the comfort, and forgiveness, and renewed confidence in self that nature imparts. Nature is our infancy, in which all things are possible; she is our untrammelled will; she is infinitely hopeful for us and infinitely kind; her necessity is so wide and so open that its very law, so different from any human law, is our greatest opportunity. True, our resort to nature is sometimes, perhaps in greater or less degree always, by the way of moral dissipation, or political anarchy, or intellectual suicide, or religious profanity; but even these dark ways to the home and the great mother-heart of us all have never been hopelessly misleading. If history and literature and personal experience can be trusted, even they have led to a kind nature. Have you never failed in anything and become reckless, and then profited from the very knowledge of yourself which the recklessness uncovered? Personally and socially recklessness, return to nature that it is, is always a helpful assistant to nature's great teacher, experience. Great is the pathos, but also, as it is understood, great is the inspiration of Rousseau's

passionate outcry that his will was perfectly good. He was incapable of a single wholesome relation in life, yet, so he said, no man was better than he! Rousseau, philosopher of revolution, spoke for nature. Out of her great love, nature always takes the will for the deed—and perhaps she alone should have the privilege of doing that; for she knows that the deed, however violent, however bad, is sure to leave at least the will good.

But intellectually, as well as morally or politically, or as well as in any of the departments of the practical, emotional life, when trouble comes we turn to nature. Nature has a mind as well as a heart, and when state, and church, and social tradition have lost their validity and infallibility, their various formulæ being no longer reasonable to us, when we have to depose them from their position as our accepted teachers, then we become scientists, which is to say, intellectual prodigals. Science, the open-minded study of nature, is only a homesickness for truth seeking relief. Does the scientist doubt? He is one of the princes of doubters. He doubts, as in due time we shall more fully appreciate, even to the extreme position of agnosticism. He doubts all things human that always he may be learning of nature.

So the companionship of nature for the comfort and pardon which she is sure to give, and for the deeper knowledge which she is certain to impart, is a passion of the doubter. True, no passion is free from dangers; yet this passion, at least this passion, has somewhat of hope in it.

But, secondly, the companionship of one's fellows is not less strongly desired. Huddling together in time of distress is by no means peculiar to the animal world; in human life it