

Doubt & Belief



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
MBA, Wharton School of Business

Charles Peirce makes it perfectly clear that doubt and belief operate in tandem to determine most human thought and behavior. Our beliefs determine our behavior under conditions to which they apply, and our doubts drive us to investigate until we have new beliefs with which we can rest. Belief requires no mental effort where doubt consumes whatever mental energy is available. It is good to have a set of beliefs that work well for you in the world, regardless of where those beliefs come from and regardless of whether they are true. Resolving doubt can be

hard work. Finding the truth can be harder or impossible. Beliefs are called into doubt when they do not bring about the intended results, which triggers an investigation to arrive at new and better beliefs. Otherwise beliefs just sit there waiting to be activated, which is a good thing since there are so many of them!

Peirce identifies four sources of belief. *Tenacity* is simply clinging to your current belief, regardless of how you came to believe it. *Authority* is reference to some external person, society, institution, document or search engine. Third is what Peirce calls natural preference, by which he means intuition or common sense; whatever comes naturally. Art follows *natural preference*. Peirce finds virtue in all these categories of belief and he sincerely recommends them all, provided they are effective in your actual life. If not, or if you care about the truth of your beliefs, he recommends a generous version of the *scientific method*, in which your best reasoning is tied up with dialogue and experiment in the real world. Working with all four categories of your belief, we can explore doubts that may lead you to new beliefs that serve you better. Trust me. Call me.

Concise Personal Counseling

\$175 per 70-minute session ~ Walking Distance From St. John's College
(505) 913-7159 ~ DrJoe@Fergi.com ~ www.Fergi.com