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The Believing Game or Methodological Believing

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In *Writing Without Teachers* I laid down a rule for what I called teacherless classes: *no arguing.* If a reader responds to your writing by saying something that seems wrong, don't disagree, don't argue, just listen and try to see your text through that reader's eyes. The same when readers disagree with each other. "Eat like an owl: take in everything and trust your innards to digest what's useful and discard what's not" (this was a later formulation in *Writing With Power*, 264).

But as I was in the process of finishing that book in 1972, it struck me that many readers would feel that it was an intellectual scandal to outlaw what people feel is foundation of good thinking: disagreement and argument. I decided I needed to write a theoretical justification of "no arguing." I clearly failed with Joe Harris who made exactly this critique in 1996: "[S]tudents in his workshops . . . do not seem to be held answerable to each other as intellectuals" (31). But I didn't want theoretical writing to clutter up a very practical down to earth book, so I made it a long appendix essay. Ever since then, I've been chewing on the believing game: this seems to be my seventh essay (see Works Cited). Looking back on my career, I now see the believing game at the core of all my work.

I still struggle with how to name it. In my second essay, I tried a fancier more theoretically self-conscious term, "methodological believing." But then I worried that this was needlessly pretentious--and I like the irreverence of "game." Yet now as I write this essay, "methodological" seems central.

In what follows, I give a short definition of the believing game; then a tiny history of believing and doubting; and finally three arguments for the believing game.

Definitions

I can define the believing game most easily and clearly by contrasting it with the doubting game. Indeed, the believing game derives from the doubting game.

The *doubting game* represents the kind of thinking most widely honored and taught in our culture. It's sometimes called "critical thinking." It's the disciplined practice of trying to be as skeptical and analytic as possible with every idea we encounter. By trying hard to doubt ideas, we can discover hidden contradictions, bad reasoning, or other weaknesses in them--especially in the case of ideas that seem true or attractive. We are using doubting as a *tool* for scrutinizing and testing ideas.

In contrast, the *believing game* is the disciplined practice of trying to be as welcoming or accepting as possible to every idea we encounter: not just listening to views different from our own and holding back from arguing with them; not just trying to restate them without bias (as Carl Rogers advocated); but actually *trying* to believe them. We are using believing as a different tool for scrutinizing and testing ideas. But instead of doubting in order to scrutinize fashionable or widely accepted ideas for hidden flaws, we use belief to scrutinize unfashionable or even repellent ideas for hidden virtues. Often we cannot see what's good in someone else's idea (or in our own!) till we work at believing it. When an idea goes against current assumptions and beliefs--or if it seems alien, dangerous, or poorly formulated---we often cannot see any merit in it.*

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*I'm on slippery ground when I equate the doubting game with critical thinking, since critical thinking has come to mean almost any kind of good thinking. Consider this hopelessly vague definition at the head of the website of the *Foundation for Critical Thinking*

> Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.

> It entails the examination of those structures or elements of thought implicit in all reasoning: purpose, problem, or question-at-issue; assumptions; concepts; empirical grounding; reasoning leading to conclusions; implications and consequences; objections from alternative viewpoints; and frame of reference. Critical thinking — in being responsive to variable subject matter, issues, and purposes — is incorporated in a family of interwoven modes of thinking, among them: scientific thinking, mathematical thinking, historical thinking, anthropological thinking, economic thinking, moral thinking, and philosophical thinking.

> Critical thinking can be seen as having two components: 1) a set of information and belief generating and processing skills, and 2) the habit, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behavior. . . . . People who think critically consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably, empathically. (Scriven and Paul)

Who could ever be against anything here (except the prose)? Thus critical thinking has come to stand for everything good in thinking—and opposed to everything bad (what Burke might have called a "god term"). This shows the monopoly of the doubting game in our culture's conception of thinking itself.

I'd argue, however, that despite all attempts to de-fuse the word *critical* of any skepticism or doubting, it still carries that connotation of *criticism*. (It's as though the previous definition is really saying, "Please don't think there's necessarily any doubting in *critical*.") The word *critical* still does that work for many fields that proudly wear it as a label. For example, in "critical theory," "critical literacy," and "critical legal theory," the word still actively signals a critique, in this case a critique (of generally accepted "theory," "literacy," or "legal theory"). The OED's first meaning for *critical* is "Given to judging; esp. given to adverse or unfavourable criticism; fault-finding, censorious." Not till the sixth meaning do we get past a censorious meaning to a sense of merely "decisive" or "crucial."

A Short, Idealized History of Believing and Doubting

Believing seems to come first. It looks as though it was evolutionarily useful for children to believe parents and others with authority. When I was very little, my older brother and sister held out a spoonful of horse radish and said, "Here. This is good." I swallowed. After that, I wanted to distrust everything they told me, but soon I reverted to my natural trust and faith in them. That is, I tried for systematic doubt but failed. In the famous story (by O Henry?), the father tries to instill a more robust doubt by teaching his little girl to jump off the table into his arms--but then one day standing back and letter her crash to the floor.

But swallowing what looks good is a deep habit. Unless people are vigorously trained in critical thinking, they tend to grow up into adults who have a propensity to believe what looks obvious or what they hear from people in authority or from the culture. Adults, not just children, used to assumed that a rain dance could make it rain; they used to burn witches because of disease outbreaks. And plenty of people still respond gullibly to emails saying they've won hundreds of thousands of dollars if they'll just send one thousand dollars for legal fees. My wife is a volunteer tax preparer and health care counselor for senior citizens and has a remarkably sophisticated client who was just wiped entirely out by such a scheme.

So human *credulity* gets us into trouble. But when some people get burned enough, they finally learn to doubt everything. We see this most nakedly in matters of the heart: some people who feel betrayed come to resist *any* close

attachment. Sadly, we've been living through an era that tempts us into blanket cynicism. I catch myself starting to reject as false *by definition* any announcement that comes from my government or any big corporation. We all know people who have developed a knee-jerk skeptical temperament and reject all ideas.

But despite feeling betrayed by Bush and Exxon, I actually realize that it's *not* careful thinking for me to reject *any* statement or information that comes from their direction. For I'm the inheritor of a more sophisticated kind of skepticism that has developed over the centuries. This is a tradition of systematic skepticism that I call the doubting game or methodological doubting. The goal is not to *reject* everything but to use skepticism as test to see which ideas are more worth trusting.

Socrates was in on the development of logic and he showed the outlines of this systematic use of doubting in his adversarial dialogues (and note a recurrent playful or "game" element in those dialogues). He usually fueled these conversations with skeptical questions: "But *why* is it good to obey our parents, our rulers, and our traditions?" He spurred young people to question skeptically what their elders and their culture told them to believe. (He was killed for his efforts.)

Descartes is famous for a more self-consciously formal version of methodological doubting. He said, "I will doubt *everything*." But his goal was *not* to reject everything; his burning hunger was to find something he could *believe*-- something that *survived* the test of doubting. It was with so called Enlightenment thinking of the 18th century, with people like Voltaire undermining all religious authority, that a lot of this kind of skeptical rationality became fairly orthodox. And there was an important social dimension to enlightenment rationality. J. S. Mill gave the classic celebration of debate and argument. If we avoid censorship and create a truly free forum for the open debate of all ideas, he argues, we can winnow out bad thinking and find that ideas bear trust.

Note the important difference between blanket, naive, unthoughtful skepticism that rejects everything and the use of doubting as a methodological tool where the goal is not to reject but to test in order to see what's more trustworthy. Only temperamental skeptics are good at instinctive skepticism, but when a practice gets formulated as a tool--and we teach it as a conscious method in schools--then it's available to people of all temperaments.

Methodological doubting is central to the classical definition of scientific method (most famously formulated by Karl Popper): the process of trying to formulate various hypotheses about some particular issue in order to try to *disprove* those hypotheses--and thereby see which ones seem to survive. But

most scientists know that any faith they put in a hypothesis they fail to disprove can only be *provisional* faith. No amount of evidence can give certainty. The only certainty comes with negative skeptical claims such as "All swans are *not* white."

The incredible success of science has given powerful authority to the idea of methodological or systematic doubting. Scientific knowledge has garnered incredible authority in our culture because of the accomplishments of technology. The prinicple has become enshrined: we can advance knowledge if we try to doubt and disprove what we're tempted to believe. For example, many people have faith in certain drugs or herbs that give them great relief, but scientifically double blind experiments show that many of these particular drugs don't in themselves do the job. (I know: things are not quite as simple as the classic Popper story of scientific method. I'll acknowledge that later.)

So this is where we are. We honor systematic skepticism or the doubting game as the best form of thinking. It's easy to doubt what's dubious, but the whole point of systematic skeptism is to try to doubt what we find most obvious or true or right. We can't act--or even think very far--unless we accept at least some view, so we want to know which views are most worthy of trust. Scientists do their best to disprove a hypothesis not because they want to reject it but in order to see if they can show it is worth trusting--for a while anyway.

Let me continue this story briefly into the future. Note the progression so far: naive believing causes trouble, so this leads us to doubt. But total blanket rejecting is too blunt a tool--and not livable--and so our culture learned to develop a more sophisticated methodological skepticism.

As you might guess, I think we're ready to the other shoe to drop. That is, at the moment, we're stuck with only naive belief. Our culture hasn't developed methodological or systematic believing to match methodological doubting. We haven't learned to use belief as a *tool*--as we use doubt as a tool. That is, over the centuries, we learned to separate the *process of doubting* from the *decision* to reject. But we haven't learned to separate the *process of believing* from the *decision* to accept. This separation that we made in the case of doubting will feel difficult in the case of believing. For the process of believing has caused enormous problems--and still does--while the process of doubting has born great fruit. Therefore, the process itself of believing feels tainted; our concept of belief tends to connote the decision to accept, that is, commitment. We tend to feel that believing can never be a part of careful thinking.

Since that appendix essay in *Writing Without Teachers,* I've been trying to describe methodological believing as a discipline--decoupled from commitment--decoupled from naive or temperamental credulity. I've been trying to show that

it is possible and that it makes sense to *try* to believe things that we don't believe--especially things we don't want to believe. And that trying can lead to a kind of conditional or temporary believing. People do it all the time--for instance when they hear and read tell fictional stories--and tell and write them. Just as you don't have to be a skeptical person to use methodological doubting, you don't have to be credulous or weak minded to believe things temporarily--and *try* to believe even more.

If this sounds crazy, it's probably because you've forgotten how hard it was hard to learn methodological doubting. When we were children, it seemed crazy for teachers to tell us that we should doubt multiple and conflicting ideas--that we should try to doubt ideas that we love. How can I doubt what seems right and precious to me--or doubt someone I trust? How can I doubt that the sun comes up in the morning? (When I taught at M.I.T., I regularly asked freshman to give me evidence for the why the earth spun on its axis and revolved around the sun. Many could not: their basis for accepting this idea was *belief in doctrine or authority,* not doubt of what's obvious.)

If you still think (naively) that it's easy to practice systematic skepticism--to try to doubt what you want to believe--you need only notice that lots of very smart people still can't do it. We see lots of our colleagues with PhDs who can only doubt ideas they *don't* like. We give our schools the job of teaching this ability: whenever people make lists of goals or outcomes for education at every level*, critical thinking* is usually central, and in this case the term usually connotes rational skepticism. Critical thinking or careful doubting doesn't come naturally to humans--especially to children. The point of a tool is to learn to do something that doesn't come naturally.

What especially interests me in true methodological doubting is the connative dimension: not just the need for an act of *intellect*, but also an act of *effort* or *will.* No one can *make* me doubt something I want to believe (for example, the efficacy of freewriting). It won't happen unless I actually *try.* The good news is that we've built a culture of critical thinking--at least in the academy--that makes me feel that I'm not thinking carefully unless I *do* try to doubt what I want to believe--even freewriting. This is good. My argument here is that we need to build a *richer* culture of rationality--richer than mere doubting or critical thinking--so that people will feel that they are not thinking carefully unless they try to believe ideas they don't want to believe.

So just as methodological doubting is *not* natural, so too methodological believing is not natural. It's not natural to try to believe ideas we disagree with or even hate. It has to be a tool or game that is decoupled from temperament or commitment. In short, methodological doubting and believing are symmetrical,

and I'm claiming that we need both. If we try systematically to doubt everything, we're not trying to reject everything, we're trying to find flaws we couldn't see before. If we try systematically to believe everything, we're not trying to accept everything, we're trying to find virtues we couldn't see before. In addition to discovering which ideas look best after the scrutiny of doubt, we can discover which ideas look best after the scrutiny of believing. And (as I'll show soon) neither tool can demonstrate that anything is actually true.

Three Arguments for the Believing Game

(1) *We need the believing game to help us find flaws in our own thinking.* The doubting game is supposed to do this job, of course: not just find other people's bad thinking but find weaknesses in our own thinking. But the doubting game or critical skepticism often falls down on this job.

The flaws in our own thinking usually come from our assumptions---our ways of thinking that we accept without noticing--assumptions that are part of the very *structure* our thinking. Some assumptions are particularly invisible to us because we are living as part of a community and culture. It's hard to doubt what we live inside of: we can't see it and we unconsciously take it for granted.

Here's where the believing game comes to the rescue. Our best hope for finding invisible flaws in what we can't see in our own thinking is to enter into *different* ways of thinking or points of view--points of view that carry different assumptions. Only from a new vantage point can we see our normal point of view from the outside and thereby notice assumptions that our customary point of view keeps hidden.

Of course the doubting game has *one* method for helping us find flaws in our own assumptions: debate. If we talk with others who disagree with us, and if we accept the rule of the doubting game that all ideas are fair game for debate-- even our own cherished ideas--then we have a good chance of finding flaws in what we take for granted.

But most of the people we talk to live inside our culture, even our smaller community, and so we don't run into people who question these culturally shared assumptions. And even if we do, critical thinking often helps us *fend off* any criticisms of our ideas or ways of seeing. We see this problem in much academic and intellectual interchange. When smart people are trained only in the tradition of the doubting game, they get better and better at criticizing the ideas they don't like. They use this skill particularly well when they feel a threat to their ideas or unexamined assumptions.

Yet they feel justified in fending-off what they don't like because they feel they are engaged in "critical thinking." They take refuge in the feeling that they would be "unintellectual" if they said to an opponent what in fact they ought to say: "Your idea sounds really wrong to me. It must be alien to how I think. Let me try to enter into it and get a better perspective on my thinking--and see if there's something important that you can see that I can't see." In short, if we want to be good at finding flaws in our own thinking (a goal that doubters constantly trumpet), we need the believing game.

(2) *We need the believing game to help us choose among competing positions.* Again, the doubting game is supposed to do this job. But consider some of the typical arguments that swirl around us. Should we invade countries where atrocities are happening? Should we test school children with nation wide tests in order to improve schools that leave children behind? Should we use grades in teaching?

The doubting game can reveal flaws or bad logic in *arguments* that support one position or another other. But flaws an *argument* do not demolish the *position* itself that these arguments are trying to support. We see this problem everywhere. Over and over we see illogical arguments for good ideas and logical arguments for bad ideas. We can never show that an idea or opinion or position is wrong--only that a supporting argument is wrong. No wonder people so seldom change their minds when someone finds bad reasoning in their argument.

For example, there are arguments for and against military intervention to stop atrocities--for and against national testing and grading. It is possible to find flaws in many of those arguments, but logic cannot show that intervention or national testing or grading are right or wrong. To decide whether to invade or test or grade--these are *decisions* that involves acts of *judgment*. Decisions or acts of judgment always depend on how much weight to give various arguments. In short--and scientists are often more explicitly aware of this--the doubting game can find flaws, but it can't make decisions for us.

In fact, historians of science have shown cases where scientists have refused to give up on hypotheses that seemed to be disproven by experiments. They say things like "Well the testing was flawed" and even, "This hypothesis is just too beautiful to give up." In effect, they're saying, "The *argument* for my hypothesis is flawed, but that doesn't mean my hypothesis is wrong." They are making an act of judgment. I'd suggest that when they take positions like these (succumbing, it might be said, to "mere feeling" or "gut thinking"), they are actually using the believing game and finding virtues in a position that the

doubting game seems to disqualify. Perhaps the disconfirmation *was* flawed; or perhaps there were flaws in how the position was formulated.

And suppose you are trying to get *others* to choose among options--that is, you are trying to persuade people who disagree with you. You will probably use the doubting game to show flaws in their arguments. Fair enough. But often (surprise!) they don't change their mind and immediately agree with you. But you haven't disproved their *position*, only their supporting arguments. They won't change their position unless you can get them to *see* the issue the way you see it. For that, you need the believing game. Of course you can't *make* them take the risk of playing the game--of actually *trying* to believe your position, even hypothetically and temporarily. But the believing game is inherently collaborative. Your have no leverage for asking them to try to believe your position unless you start by taking the risk yourself of trying to believe *their* position. The best way to introduce the believing game is to play it and show that you've given a good faith effort to believe what they believe--even asking them to help you.

But there danger here. Your mind can be changed. (This is a not-hard-hat job.) And believing game may see permissive, but there's also a surprising principle of rigor that Wayne Booth articulated: that we cannot validly *reject* an idea till we've succeeded in dwelling in it--in effect believing it. If you in your mind dismiss their idea as crazy--or even if you can restate their idea "nicely" but from your alien point of view (the Carl Rogers task)--there may be something valuable and correct in it, but that you're still too blind to see. They may seem wrong or crazy--they may *be* wrong or crazy--but nevertheless they may be seeing something that none of us can see.

We may feel totally for or against invading to stop atrocities or national testing or grading--but usually there are gray areas that the believing game is particularly good at uncovering. It might help you believe that there are *certain conditions* or *certain senses* in which it makes sense to invade, test, or grade. Most "real world" practical problems or disputes are deeply hermeneutic--more like interpreting a text than getting the right answer in geometry. To show that a text truly means X does not displace the claim that it also means something quite contrary to X (even if only partly or in certain senses).

Bottom line: The doubting game is a tool. It won't make a decision for us; it just puts us in a better position to exercise judgment about matters that cannot be proven. The believing game is also a tool. Our judging will be more trustworthy if we can use the believing game to find hidden virtues that might exist in positions that are supported by faulty arguments. Tools help us think

better. This leads to my third argument for the believing game. It's about thinking.

(3) *We need the believing game in order to achieve goals that the doubting game neglects.* I've given two arguments for how the believing game helps the doubting game meet its *own* goal. Now argue how the believing game also serves a completely different goal: how develops a different kind of careful thinking from what the doubting game develops--a different dimension of our intelligence or rationality, and also a different way of interacting with others.

This is no argument *against* the doubting game in itself, since it obviously develops an indispensable dimension of intelligence or rationality. The only thing I'm arguing against is the *monopoly* of the doubting game in our culture's notion of rationality or careful thinking--a monopoly that has led us to neglect a different and equally indispensable kind of careful thinking.

So now I'll contrast the doubting game and believing game as ways of using the mind and of functioning with others:

Phenomenologically, the doubting game teaches us to fend off, spit out, guard ourselves. The believing game teaches us to welcome or swallow For us sophisticated children of the doubting game, this is not easy: trying to believe an alien idea can make us fear being changed or polluted.

With regard to learning, the doubting game teaches us to extricate or detach ourselves from ideas. In contrast, the believing game teaches us to enter into ideas--to invest or insert ourselves. Wayne Booth talks about the need to learn to "dwell in" an idea if we want to understand it. Polanyi insists that there is a "fiduciary transaction"--a core of trust--that is tacit in all learning. As children of the doubting game, we carefully invite our students to read and listen with a skeptical mind, but nevertheless that skepticism will not be very intellectually productive unless students have first *fully understood* what we want them to view skeptically. This means listening and entering into the words. (Think of all the believing and trusting it takes to get an M.I.T. degree in science. They have to learn a *lot*--"trying to drink out of a fire hydrant" is the common metaphor. There's no time to do much skeptical doubting.)

Language vs. experience. The doubting game is the rhetoric of *propositions* while the believing game is the rhetoric of *experience*. The doubting game teaches us that we can test or scrutinize points of view better if we put them into propositional form. This helps us bring logic to bear and see hidden contradictions (symbolic logic being the ideal form for scrutinizing thinking). The believing game teaches to try to understand points of view from the inside. Words can help, but the kind of words that most help us experience

ideas tend to be imaginative, metaphorical, narrative, personal, and even poetic words.

But not *just* words. Images and sounds and body movements are particularly helpful for entering into alien ideas. Role playing--and yes, silence. When someone says what seems all wrong, the most productive response is often merely to listen and not reply at all. Teachers can productively insist on short periods of silence after a controversial point has been made. Not all cultures are so wedded to argument with its proliferation of words. In many cultures, silence is felt to correlate with good thinking.

With regard to action. The doubting game teaches us the value of disengaging from action--pausing, standing back, standing on the sidelines. This helps us see flaws we miss when we jump in and act on a point of view. The believing game teaches us to engage or act on an idea—and sometimes we cannot understand something till we've engaged and acted. This is where role playing gets its power: understanding through doing and inhabiting--not debating.

Gender. The doubting game promotes ways of using the mind and being with others that have been associated in our culture with masculinity: arguing, resisting, saying no, pushing away, competing, being aggressive. The believing game promotes mental and social activity that has been associated in our culture with femininity: being compliant, listening, absorbing, swallowing, accepting, saying yes, not arguing back, not sticking up for own view. When women play the doubting game--arguing, disagreeing, and debating--they are often seen as less feminine. When men function play the believing game--not arguing back, accepting, trying to help the other person's point of view--they are often seen as less masculine.

The individual and social dimensions. The doubting game promotes *both* individualism and social interaction. It promotes individualism by inviting the lone person to question and doubt the group and see the self as separate and different. As Socrates pointed out, logic allows the individual to outvote the group. But the doubting game is also highly social, since it invites us to use others in argument and debate in order to find flaws in what looks reasonable or natural--and especially to find flaws in our own views.

So too, the doubting game promotes both social action and individualism. It invites the social process of enlisting others to help us look for virtues in what seems wrong hopelessly wrong to us. Here, the intellectual leverage comes from the cooperative process of merging with others. Temporarily at least, the individual pushes aside her differences and sense of uniqueness and tries instead to blend with others. "Help me see what you see; I can't see it." The

believing game doesn't strike me as highly individualistic except in this one crucial way: it invites the individual to listen and take seriously her own experience and point of view--even if it looks crazy--and not feel that one must subordinate one's perceptions or experience or thinking to that of the group. But it supports this kind of individualism by asking for a flexible, constantly shifting methodological *groupishness*. It invites an individual who looks crazy to others to say, "Stop arguing with me; just listen for a while. If you can, help me make my position clearer and better."

Consider a few of the ways that the believing game helps with the central activities of academic life.

Reading. The believing game helps us enter more fully into texts that we find difficult or alien--and also helps us discover and understand a wider range of interpretations. We want to teach students critical thinking, but they also need to learn to enter into texts that feel alien to them--to dwell in them and experience them--not stay untouched and outside them.

Discussion. Because of the dominance of critical thinking, especially in the academy, academics and students tend to feel that the best way to show they are smart is by pointing out flaws in the views of others. Discussions can take an adversarial tone. People tend to feel un-smart when they don't see the flaws that "smart" people point out--or when they say something like, "What? Tell me more about that. I'm trying to see it as you see it." Discussions tend to be more fruitful if we have more people giving this believing game response. (In discussions among philosophers, it often counts as an indictment when someone says, "I fail to be able to understand your train of thought.")

Writing. Our current model for academic or essayist writing tends to be adversarial. When people write an essay advancing a position, especially in the academy, they are usually expected start off trying to show that all other points of view are wrong. There are epistemological problems with this ritual. As we see most clearly in the interpretation of texts, right and wrong is not an either/or matter. The believing game suggests modes of writing persuasively and analytically that are nonadversarial.

Concluding Reflections

The believing game is alive in our midst--but not well. Look more closely at people who are deeply smart and creative rather than just quick in debate; people who work out new ideas and creative solutions rather than just criticizing or developing existing ideas; people who collaborate productively with others

and bring about action. I think you'll see that the believing game is central to the good work many of these people do.

But because of our current model of good thinking (rational skepticism or the doubting game), most of us lack the lens or the language to see skill these people exhibit--to dwell genuinely in ideas alien from their own--as intellectual sophistication or careful thinking. When we see them listening and drawing out others, we call them generous or nice rather than smart. We don't connect good listening to intelligence. We say "Isn't it wonderful how they can mobilize others and actually get things done," but we see that as a social and personal gift rather than an intellectual skill. We call creativity a mystery. And because our intellectual model is flawed in these ways, we don't *teach* this ability to enter into alien ideas. (See my 2005 *College English* essay for extensive suggestions for classroom uses of the believing game.)*

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*There's a teaching method that is widely used in some fields that reflects a *tacit* understanding of the believing game: role playing. And there's an even more widely accepted teaching method that favors the rhetoric of experience (central to the believing game)--and not just the rhetoric of propositions. That is, many teachers in various fields use *workshops* to help teach concepts to the students. They recognize the limitation of lectures and reading since they operate by propositions. They acknowledge Dewey's point that we cannot hand an idea to someone like a brick--that we need to *set up an experience* that leads the learner to create the idea herself. Experiential education has grown into a lively field with various journals and many conferences.

A parting testament to the doubting game. In case you persist in thinking that I'm biased against the doubting game, let me acknowledge that this essay is an exercise in skeptical doubting. All three of my arguments criticize weaknesses or flaws in the doubting game; I am being critical, adversarial, combative, practical, and hard-assed; I'm using discursive propositional language, not experientially oriented language. I am using the doubting game as a tool to try to undermine what I see as misguided faith in the doubting game. If I wanted to use the *believing game* here, I'd have done better to tell stories and convey experiences--whether in words or, ideally, in workshop activities. (I've settled for inserting a few micro-story-examples.) One of the advantages of the doubting game is quickness--and I'm trying to make this a short essay. I hope my use of the doubting mode reinforces my larger message: I'm not trying to get rid of the doubting game--merely to add the believing game.

Summary. The doubting game and believing game are tools or methods. As such they cannot make decisions for us. The doubting game can't prove that a position is wrong; the believing game can't prove validity. For decisions we need to make judgments. But our judgments will be better if we get to use both sets of

tools. In summary, I'm arguing for a richer and more accurate picture of rationality or intelligence or careful thinking.

I've been chewing on this bone so long that I can't possibly acknowledged all the help I've gotten. But one important story hasn't slipped my porous memory. I sent an early draft of my 1986 essay to two friends. One gave me a powerful sharp critique--a brilliant performance of the doubting game. It *should* have been enormously helpful, but I somehow couldn't digest or use it-- it stopped me. The other friend--the late, brilliant, much-missed Paul Connolly--gave me a brilliant believing game response. He entered in and speculated and fantasized about what might make sense in my draft. This response got me to move--it carried me forward to better thinking and a better essay. There's no need to run away from a crass benefit of using the believing game as a response technique: when we ask for believing feedback, we are saying "Please give me some more good material for my essay?"

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