Last time we talked about the ideal method for forming beliefs (the method of inquiry) if your goal is to find the Truth; to develop a dynamic and adaptive personality; and so on. However, if your goal is to find “peace of mind,” the method of inquiry, because it demands we face problems which lead to the uncomfortable and disquieting sensation of doubt, will not provide peace of mind. These other two methods (the method of tenacity and the method of authority) provide that peace of mind by finding ways to avoid the problems that cause doubt. However, in avoiding doubt, we also avoid inquiry, and by avoiding that, we stop the cyclical process of learning and developing: we stagnate and remain ignorant. Consider again the diagram of the method of inquiry:

If the goal is to avoid the unpleasant sensation of doubt, one simply needs to avoid the problems that lead to doubt. The easiest way to do this (initially “easy” at least), is to hole oneself up in one’s current beliefs: to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to anything and everything that might problematize our current beliefs:
As Peirce says:

“If the settlement of opinion is the sole object of inquiry, and if belief is of the nature of a habit, why should we not attain the desired end, by taking as answer to a question any we may fancy, and constantly reiterating it to ourselves, dwelling on all which may conduce to that belief, and learning to turn with contempt and hatred from anything that might disturb it? This simple and direct method is really pursued by many men. I remember once being entreated not to read a certain newspaper lest it might change my opinion upon free-trade. "Lest I might be entrapped by its fallacies and misstatements," was the form of expression. "You are not," my friend said, "a special student of political economy. You might, therefore, easily be deceived by fallacious arguments upon the subject. You might, then, if you read this paper, be led to believe in protection. But you admit that free-trade is the true doctrine; and you do not wish to believe what is not true." I have often known this system to be deliberately adopted. Still oftener, the instinctive dislike of an undecided state of mind, exaggerated into a vague dread of doubt, makes men cling spasmodically to the views they already take. The man feels that, if he only holds to his belief without wavering, it will be entirely satisfactory. Nor can it be denied that a steady and immovable faith yields great peace of mind. It may, indeed, give rise to inconveniences, as if a man should resolutely continue to believe that fire would not burn him...When an ostrich buries its head in the sand as danger approaches, it very likely takes the happiest course. It hides the danger, and then calmly says there is no danger; and, if it feels
perfectly sure there is none, why should it raise its head to see? A man may go through life, systematically keeping out of view all that might cause a change in his opinions, and if he only succeeds -- basing his method, as he does, on two fundamental psychological laws -- I do not see what can be said against his doing so. It would be an egotistical impertinence to object that his procedure is irrational, for that only amounts to saying that his method of settling belief is not ours. He does not propose to himself to be rational, and, indeed, will often talk with scorn of man's weak and illusive reason. So let him think as he pleases.”

Like the Ostrich sticking its head in the sand as danger approaches, the person that adopts this method of tenacity (to cling “tenaciously” to one’s current beliefs at all cost) finds temporary peace of mind in avoiding the problems that lead to doubt (doubt which disturbs that “peace of mind”) even if those beliefs are ultimately quite foolish. But notice that without problems there’s no doubt; without doubt no inquiry; and the cycle of development stops dead in its tracks.

But the individual that adopts this method can only use it for so long before it breaks down and the method of inquiry forces itself back into the individual’s life. As Peirce says:

“But this method of fixing belief, which may be called the method of tenacity, will be unable to hold its ground in practice. The social impulse is against it. The man who adopts it will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him, in some saner moment, that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief. This conception, that another man’s thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one’s own, is a distinctly new step, and a highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed, without danger of destroying the human species. Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other’s opinions; so that the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community.”

In other words, the quickest and surest way to break free from tenacity (whether we want to or not) is to encounter another person with a different belief that is brought into tension with our own: we have to suddenly think about that belief, evaluate it against the other, and this very act gets the method of inquiry up and running again and breaks tenacity down. Remember what King said about Socrates’ method:

“I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.”

In fact, in many ways, the role of the gadfly is precisely this: to introduce the stage of “problem” into a tenacious individual’s life to motivate the ongoing method of inquiry (philosophia, right? Love of wisdom; love of learning). Consider Euthyphro: Euthyphro was really confident in his
belief about the definition of “piety” until Socrates came along and introduced a problem: his definition was poor. Euthyphro was then thrown into doubt and together they inquired. Euthyphro was under the spell of the method of tenacity until the gadfly entered the scene and replaced that method with the method of inquiry. This is inevitable, Peirce argues: we will be exposed to other people and other beliefs and thus the method of tenacity can work (bringing peace of mind) only for so long before we’re forced to start thinking, learning, growing, and developing again.

But there is one other method that leads to “peace of mind,” and one which lasts much longer than the method of tenacity: the method of authority. If the ultimate undoing of the method of tenacity was that individuals with different are bound to run into one another and engage in dialogue thereby problematizing each other’s beliefs when they’re brought into this productive and positive tension, the “solution” to that is to simply ensure that everyone believes the same things such that when they encounter one another in a society, there’s still no tension, no problems, and thus, no doubt and no inquiry (no development). Let’s look at the diagram for the method of tenacity one more time and compare it to the method of authority:

In the method of tenacity, this “barricading” ourselves in our current beliefs to avoid the problems that lead to doubt: we do this to ourselves. We actively avoid anything that my trouble our beliefs. In the method of authority, this is done to us by an external force: some authority (government, popular culture, religion, media, etc.). Not only to us, by (necessarily) to everyone around us, too:
When the authority gives us our beliefs (and again, beliefs operate unconsciously, so it’s not like we realize what’s happening here), it appears like we’re free to engage in the method of inquiry with one big difference. Consider the following example:

Bob: “I’m going to go have me a proper conversation! I believe the Yankees are the best team ever. I’m going to ask my buddy Joe what he thinks and we’re going to get into a good, honest, open debate! Hey Joe! JOE! What’s the best team in baseball?”

Joe: “I believe the Yankees are!”

Bob: “Wow, really? Me too! Huh...oh well, so much for debate, it’s good to know I’m at least free to engage in debate. I guess it wasn’t necessary this time. But let’s ask Mac and Merle and get into a debate with them instead!”

Mac and Merle: “We believe the Yankees are the best team!”

Bob and Joe: “Wow, really? Amazing! We were all set to debate you and get into a good, productive conversation, but I guess we all already agree!”

Of course, they don’t realize why they all agree: in fact, it seems like a general consensus, under the delusion that they’re operating in the method of inquiry, is a great indication that they’re all actually right!
But for Peirce, although this method is much more successful at lasting than the method of tenacity, it, too, is bound to collapse in time (though it can take generations this time). There are two ways in which the method of authority can be undermined, both of them involving finding ways to transcend the authority and reach to discover alternative beliefs, ideologies, and systems, that can then be used to compare and contrast then one-and-only system forced upon them by their authority. This will provide the necessary “tension” (between our system [which previously was all they had access to] and another system) to get the method of inquiry up and running again. The two ways are:

(1) **Space:** we look to other nations, cultures, and belief systems abroad to compare to our own.

(2) **Time:** we look to our own nation’s past (a very different place than today) to compare to our own.

Of course, the authority knows about these two possible avenues for tension and critique and it does what it can to dissolve them. For example:

**Space:** The authority closes down its borders to outside influences; censoring incoming information and outgoing searches.

**Time:** The authority revises history to create a false narrative that it wants you to believe.