

## **Will, Deliberation, and Belief** **—Interpreting William James’s “The Will to Believe”**

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### **Abstract**

This paper interprets and develops one of the main issues dealt with in William James’s “The Will to Believe”: the issue of what positive role non-intellectual factors such as passions and volitions play in an individual’s deliberative process of belief formation. A popular way of interpreting “The Will to Believe” holds the controversial view that individuals can legitimately use non-intellectual factors such as passions and volitions to determine their beliefs only when a certain set of conditions are satisfied. However, the interpretation offered in this paper, accepting that non-intellectual factors provide no epistemic justification for beliefs, contends that various kinds of non-intellectual factors can legitimately play distinctively positive roles in an individual’s deliberative process of belief formation and thus contribute to the settlement of belief. This new interpretation not only avoids many problems facing the above-mentioned popular interpretation, but also further develops some of the central insights in “The Will to Believe.”

**Key Words:** William James, epistemology, will, belief, deliberation