

“Nevertheless, if we look on man’s whole mental life as it exists, on the life of men that lies in them apart from their learning and science, and that they inwardly and privately follow, we have to confess that the part of it of which rationalism can give an account is relatively superficial. It is the part that has the prestige undoubtedly, for it has the loquacity, it can challenge you for proofs, and chop logic, and put you down with words. But it will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions. If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits. Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that that result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it.

The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate || feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion... ..The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition. Instinct leads, intelligence does but follow.” p73 || 74

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Essays in Radical Empiricism

William James

President’s Address before the American Psychological Association, Philidelphia Meeting, December 1904.

Experience of Activity

“Activity, so far as we merely feel it, on the other hand, is only an impression of ours, it may be maintained; and an impression is, for all this way of thinking, only a shadow of another fact... ..Sustaining, persevering, striving, paying with effort as we go, hanging on, and finally achieving or intention – this is action, this is the effectuation in the only shape which by a pure experience-philosophy, the whereabouts of it anywhere can be discussed. Here is creation in its first intention, here is causality at work... .. To treat this offhand as the bare illusory surface of the world whose real causality is an unimaginable principle hidden in the cubic deeps, is, for the more empirical way of thinking, only animism in another shape.

You explain your given fact by your ‘principle’, but the principle itself, when you look clearly at it, turns out to be nothing but a previous little spiritual copy of the fact...” p69

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The Varieties of Religious Experience

William James

Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh (1901-1902)

Lecture III - The Reality Of The Unseen.

"... All our attitudes, moral, practical, or emotional, as well as religious, are due to the "objects" of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves. Such objects may be present to our senses, or they may be present only to our thought. In either case they elicit from us a reaction; and the reaction due to things of thought is notoriously in many cases as strong as that due to sensible presences. It may be even stronger... ...in general our whole higher prudential and moral life is based on the fact that material sensations actually present may have a weaker influence on our action than ideas of remoter facts." p53

"The sentiment of reality can indeed attach itself so strongly to our object of belief that our whole life is polarized through and through, so to speak, by its sense of the existence of the thing believed in, and yet that thing, for purpose of definite description, can hardly be said to be present to our mind at all..."

...This absolute determinability of our mind by abstractions is one of the cardinal facts in our human constitution. 2

Polarizing and magnetizing us as they do, we turn towards them and from them, we seek them, hold them, hate them, bless them, just as if they were so many concrete beings. And beings they are, beings as real in the realm which they inhabit as the changing things of sense are in the realm of space."p56

"Such is the human ontological imagination, and such is the convincingness of what it brings to birth. Unpicturable beings are realized, and realized with an intensity almost like that of an hallucination. They determine our vital attitude as decisively as the vital attitude of lovers is determined by the habitual sense, by which each is haunted, of the other being in the world.

...these feelings of reality... ...they are as convincing to those who have them as any direct sensible experiences can be, and they are, as a rule, much more convincing than results established by mere logic ever are... ...you cannot help regarding them as genuine perceptions of truth, as revelations of a kind of reality which no adverse argument, however unanswerable by you in words, can expel from your belief... ...Rationalism insists that all our beliefs ought ultimately to find for themselves articulate grounds... ...Vague impressions of something indefinable have no place in the rationalistic system, which on its positive side is surely a splendid intellectual tendency..." p72

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