

The Argument from Religious Experience

Religious Experience

Religious experiences are evidence of a religious reality

In the same way that our everyday experiences are evidence of the empirical world

William James - The Varieties of Religious Experience

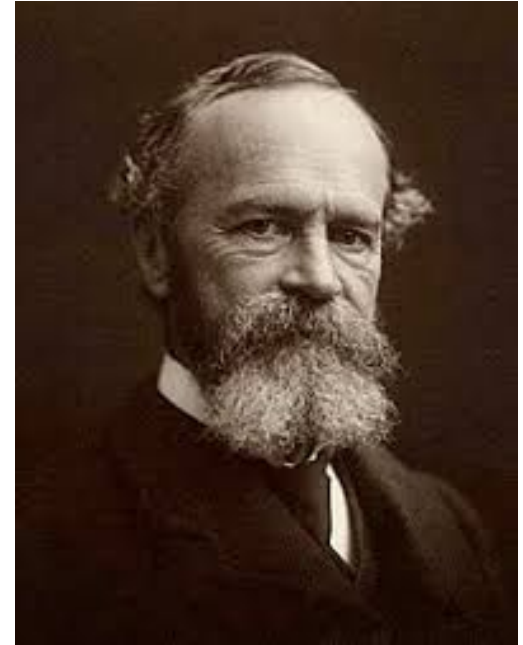
Two Types of Enquiry

Existential judgement or proposition

Relating to the nature, constitution,
origin and history, of the object of the
investigation,

Second proposition of value

Its importance, meaning or significance.



1842 - 1910

Response to Medical Materialism

When it alters in one way the blood that percolates it, we get the methodist, when another way, we get the atheist form of mind. So of all our raptures and our drynesses, our longings and pantings, our questions and beliefs. They are equally organically founded, be they of religious or of non-religious content. (James, 1982, p.14)

James argues that if we are to draw a distinction between religious states of mind, that do not have as their origin sources external to the subject of the experience, from other varieties of thoughts and feelings, which we do think relate to a reality beyond the subject, then we need psychological theory that accounts for this difference, if it is to be anything other than simply dogma.

The Quality of the Experience

The positive impact on the subject's life:

‘...we take an immediate delight in them; or else it is because we believe them to bring us good consequential fruits for life’ (James, 1982, p.15)

Inner Happiness & Serviceability

Inner experience is not enough otherwise 'drunkenness would be the supremely valid human experience' (James, 1982, p.16)

Experiences may fail the serviceability test. They may not fit with broader experiences.

- It is the initial sensation identifies it as significant
- Philosophical reflection on the coherence and the benefits it has on our lives