



The Essential William James

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William James (1842-1910) was one of the most original and influential American thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a professor at Harvard University he published many works that had a wide-ranging impact on both psychology and philosophy. His *Principles of Psychology* was the most important English-language work on the mind since Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. His *Varieties of Religious Experience* practically inaugurated the field of psychology of religion, and it also remains a major inspiration for philosophy of religion. Perhaps most importantly, James publicized the movement of pragmatism and supplied much of its powerful momentum.

This book covers the primary topics for which James is still closely studied: the nature of experience; the functions of the mind; the criteria for knowledge; the definition of "truth"; the ethical life; and the religious life. His notable terms, still resonating in their respective fields, are all here, from the "stream of consciousness" and "pure experience" to the "will to believe," the "cash-value of truth," and the distinction between the religiously "healthy soul" and the "sick soul."

This volume's eighteen selections receive the bulk of the attention and citation from scholars, provide excellent coverage of core topics, and have a broad appeal across many academic disciplines. This well-organized compilation of James's important writings offers an exciting and fascinating tour for both the casual reader and the dedicated student interested in philosophy, psychology, religious studies, American studies, or any related field.

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