

Chapter 1 : Joyful Education: Varieties of Human Experience

Literature is the great storehouse of human experience, linking together different cultures and different centuries, accessible to far more people than the technical language of science. William James was trained as a medical doctor and was familiar with the science of his time, but he paid far more attention to literature than to science in.

Religious experiences[edit] James was most interested in direct religious experiences. Theology and the organizational aspects of religion were of secondary interest. He believed that religious experiences were simply human experiences: Religious trance is trance. Religious experiences are something that people sometimes have under certain conditions. There is a distinction between an existential judgment a judgment on "constitution, origin, and history" and a proposition of value a judgment on "importance, meaning, or significance". Scientific theories are organically conditioned just as much as religious emotions are; and if we only knew the facts intimately enough, we should doubtless see "the liver " determining the dicta of the sturdy atheist as decisively as it does those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul. Science studies some of reality, but not all of it: Vague impressions of something indefinable have no place in the rationalistic system 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 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. At the extreme, the "healthy minded" see sickness and evil as an illusion. James considered belief in the "mind cure" to be reasonable when compared to medicine as practiced at the beginning of the twentieth century. By contrast, the "healthy minded" deny the need for such preparatory pain or suffering. Saintliness[edit] For James, a saintly character is one where "spiritual emotions are the habitual centre of the personal energy. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down. A shifting of the emotional Centre towards loving and harmonious affections, towards "yes, yes" and away from "no," where the claims of the non-ego are concerned. Mysticism[edit] James identified two main features to a mystical experience: Ineffability "no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time. Transiency "Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Everywhere there is a frolic welcome to the eccentricities and extravagances of the religious life. Many will question whether its more sober exhibitions would not have been more fruitful of results, but the interest and fascination of the treatment are beyond dispute, and so, too, is the sympathy to which nothing human is indifferent. Mussolini , for instance, hailed James as a preceptor who had showed him that "an action should be judged by its result rather than by its doctrinary basis. He was simply impatient with his fellow academicians and their endless hairsplitting over matters that had no relation to life. A vibrant, generous person, he hoped to show that religious emotions, even those of the deranged, were crucial to human life. The great virtue of The Varieties, noted pragmatist philosopher Charles Peirce , is its "penetration into the hearts of people.

Chapter 2 : 12 types of experiences

Library Home - Return to Bio Page. The Varieties of Human Experience by William James is a seminal New Thought. A Study in Human Nature. Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion.

Reality is filtered by beliefs Progresses by successive approximation Proactively builds physical and mental environment Like so many ideas, it is easy to understand the four levels of human experience, but not understanding them can be risky. For example, there are many people who adopt fixed beliefs early in life, become intellectually lazy and then insist that beliefs are all one needs in life. Some of them even spend their lives desperately trying to convert other people to their belief system, instead of moving on to the higher levels of experience. At some point our ancestors could only experience emotion, then they possessed beliefs, then they developed true intellect. Some people think we have to learn to coexist with nature, but this is wrong “we must learn how to live in nature. And nature is a process of continuous change. The reason we are the most successful species on this planet is not because we are stronger or faster than other animals. We do this with intelligence. We have the ability to perceive what goes on around us, and more important, we can learn why. We do this with human reason “ a process of freeing our minds of old, fixed beliefs and observing reality with an open mind. Each of us has a choice. We can choose to imitate our ancestors, who could only process reality on the basis of beliefs, or we can ascend to the level of ideas, of reason. If we halt our personal development at the level of beliefs, we cannot contribute to the human adventure “ we are condemned to repeat old patterns and then die unnoticed. If we fail to learn all four levels of human experience, we can still survive for a while on Earth “ until nature deals with us as she deals with all inflexible, single-idea species. The people who ascend to the level of ideas are the same people who will cure diseases, who will colonize Mars, who will lead us into the next chapter of the human adventure. The rest can only be followers. This is no less than a boot camp for the mind. Please learn the levels of human experience, then experience all of them. The human family “ your family “ needs you, and you must be properly trained. You must know how to think.

Chapter 3 : German addresses are blocked - www.nxgvision.com

The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature is a book by Harvard University psychologist and philosopher William James. www.nxgvision.com comprises his edited Gifford Lectures on natural theology, which were delivered at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in and

Affectionate experiences Spontaneous, coming from a built-in reflex model of a human. Desired experiences
Desired experiences are connected with the nature of a human or made by one through process of life. They
wield a human from the subconscious. These are experiences a human is dependant from but are ones whose
nature he cannot understand due to dependency of consciousness on frequency of these experiences, that are
higher then the frequencies of the conscious effort. They are determined by the circulatory system. Emotional
experiences Experiences worked out by the means of conditioned directed and unconditioned condition of
living formation. An uncontrolled effort is innate in these experiences. They are dependant of tendons and
processes of cellular level. Sensational experiences Experiences that depend on the human ability to keep ones
work of the 5 organs: This means that the ability to have these experiences is dependant on the ability to level
and consequently to satisfy the nature of feelings. Timely experiences Are characterised by the ability to stay
in different satisfying sensations for longer periods of time Are dependant of the respiratory system, i. Spatial
experiences They are determined by the ability to express own existence by means of controlled efforts. They
are dependant on the bone system. These experiences are connected to the know how of holding the form with
body and consciousness, i. Experience of transformation It is a know-how to transform one effort into another,
i. These experiences depend on the brain, system of glands. They assume an ability to perfect the geometry
and to experience filling from the process of transformation when a real filling and uniting of the
consciousness with the process of energy happens. A level of intake is new in quality. Experience of creation
It requires a consistency of strength, formulated by the previous levels of experiences. Allows being in a
constant state of act of creation; depends on the ability to wield the energy of circulation. Experience of
pulsation The source of this experience is the Oneness Centre that determines all processes in the organism.
This experience is characterised by changed state of consciousness, i. Experience of perfection Experience of
independence form the external geometry when the internal geometry is higher then any geometrical model of
earth. Experience of superconscious effort The experience is formed by the special geometry that determines
the connection of the human spirit with the special structure or one of the 12 spatial models that formed the
life of a human of Earth. Experience of rebirth Experience caused by the process of transition from one life to
another. Is determined by the preparations and clinging to one of the 12 structures of space.

Chapter 4 : The Varieties of Religious Experience | Bookshare

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Joyful Education seems to have resonated with teachers, educators, and parents. Many have asked me about its technique or method. Current education does not teach us how to look properly at what we need to see. I want this blog to continue the discussion with a wider audience. They are the Future of Humanity Friday, January 28, Varieties of Human Experience In this blog and the next two blogs I want to focus on three kinds of experience i. Each of these experiences is important for a Joyful Education. The topic of these experiences is taken up in more detail in my forthcoming book, *Renewing the Sacred*. This blog will briefly present thoughts on pleasurable experiences. Often adults close off or get closed off from the second and third tier of experience, as our lives become smaller and more concretely factual and, therefore, harder to change. This difference in consciousness between child and adult is brilliantly captured by Whitehead in the quote above. What a difference between looking at stars and perceiving the glory of the heavens? How much more engaging and meaningful is this experience? How much more pleasurable? Small children are always engaged, time flows for them in that state that can only be called the eternal present, and they are ever involved in meaningful learning activities and thus are full of pleasure. So they laugh a great deal. But also as one moves up the ladder of these stages nothing essential is lost. I mean that there is little chance of engagement without it also being pleasurable and there is no meaning without real engagement, because meaningfulness is created: Thus all the elements become consciously reintegrated into one experience, so that, an engaging experience is also pleasurable, and a meaningful one is often, but not always, both pleasurable and engaging. More to come on this in the next posts. By pleasurable experiences I mean all the usual pleasures we understand--i. So if our lives have no enduring real pleasures we seek more of these immediate pleasures. There are diminishing returns with seeking such pleasures. All thrills diminish over time because it takes more to get the same result. Thus the search for happiness is, at this level, really fueled by great unhappiness. There is little pleasure in the classroom, whatever may be happening in other parts of school and at other times of the school day. Teachers often try to counteract this situation by making lessons funâ€”meaning amusing or recreational. Whatever short-term benefits reside in this approach, and there are some, in the long-run this is a mistake. The mistake is not in the attempt to make learning fun, which is laudable, but in thinking that fun is enough to turn the tide. To say that learning should be pleasurable is not to confuse education with entertainment. The difference is this: It should leave you with something you did not have before the encounter. It should improve you, provoke you, stir you up or confound you, enlarge your mind and heart in some way. It should bring forth what is inherent in the spirit, not deprive you of it. But it cannot leave you unchanged. Entertainment does not pretend to change, though great change could be the result. But I mean that the intent of entertainment is not to change you, but to amuse you, to relax and divert the mind for a time. Thus, good education is not about getting a little humor into the classroomâ€”though the more of that the better. Children do not need more entertainment. Children and youth do not long for amusement, for they are sated by it. If they long for anything it is to shake off the lethargy that society imposes upon them to keep them docile and passive. Passivity is bred into them. Passivity distorts human nature and thought. It is only when the original nature is subverted by false programs of development that the result is distorted and abnormal. It is this terrible environment that fuels the search for pleasure as a kind of opiate to dull the pain of the inauthentic life. What good teachers do is make lessons engaging and meaningful. There are strategies to accomplish this that I will share next post. Share some of your ideas before the next post.

Chapter 5 : * The Levels of Human Experience

The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature by William James is free at www.nxgvision.com - the free Library of Metaphysical New Thought Books and Texts with Links to New Thought Communities and Teachers worldwide.

Educated by tutors and at private schools in New York. Family moves to Europe. William attends school in Geneva, Paris, and Boulogne-sur-Mer; develops interests in painting and science. Family settles in Geneva, where William studies science at Geneva Academy; then returns to Newport when William decides he wishes to resume his study of painting. William abandons painting and enters Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. Enters Harvard School of Medicine. Returns to medical school. Suffers eye strain, back problems, and suicidal depression in the fall. Travels to Europe for health and education: Severe depression in the fall. Depression and poor health continue. Accepts offer from President Eliot of Harvard to teach undergraduate course in comparative physiology. Accepts an appointment to teach full year of anatomy and physiology, but postpones teaching for a year to travel in Europe. Begins teaching psychology; establishes first American psychology laboratory. Marries Alice Howe Gibbens. Appointed Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Harvard. Continues to teach psychology. Teaches psychology and philosophy at Harvard: Briefer Course with Henry Holt. Publishes *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*: Becomes active member of the Anti-Imperialist League, opposing U. All were reprinted in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* His partially completed manuscript published posthumously as *Some Problems of Philosophy*. Dies of heart failure at summer home in Chocorua, New Hampshire. Survival, James asserts, is merely one of many interests human beings have: We are all teleological creatures at base, James holds, each with a set of a priori values and categories. When he gets the marks, he may know that he has got the rationality. The ideal philosopher, James holds, blends these two passions of rationality, and even some great philosophers go too far in one direction or another: Sentiments of rationality operate not just in logic or science, but in ordinary life. James is sympathetic both to the idea that the universe is something we can be intimate with and to the idea that it is wild and unpredictable. Certainly it is always seen in the philosophy of William James. Little, Brown, , pp. In fact he takes a number of methodological approaches in the book. As the book moves along, he involves himself in discussions with philosophersâ€”for example with Hume and Kant in his hundred-page chapter on the self, and he finds himself making metaphysical claims that anticipate his later pragmatism, as when he writes: The rhythm of a lost word may be there without a sound to clothe itâ€œ. Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone. If they do anything wrong, it is our shame. If they are insulted, our anger flashes forth as readily as if we stood in their place. There is an excitement during the crying fit which is not without a certain pungent pleasure of its own; but it would take a genius for felicity to discover any dash of redeeming quality in the feeling of dry and shrunken sorrow PP We answer by consents or non-consents and not by words. What wonder that these dumb responses should seem our deepest organs of communication with the nature of things! In this last quotation, James tackles a philosophical problem from a psychological perspective. Our psychic life has rhythm: We rest when we remember the name we have been searching for; and we are off again when we hear a noise that might be the baby waking from her nap. However, the objective world originally experienced is not the world of spatial relations that we think: Certainly a child newly born in Boston, who gets a sensation from the candle-flame which lights the bedroom, or from his diaper-pin [who] does not feel either of these objects to be situated in longitude 71 W. The flame fills its own place, the pain fills its own place; but as yet these places are neither identified with, nor discriminated from, any other places. Many habits must begin early in life: The significance of this view, according to James, is that our emotions are tied in with our bodily expressions. In his survey of a range of cases, James finds that some actions involve an act of resolve or of outgoing nervous energy, but others do not. I sit at table after dinner and find myself from time to time taking nuts or raisins out of the dish and eating them. My dinner properly is over, and in the heat of the conversation I am hardly aware of what I do; but the perception of the fruit, and the fleeting notion that I may eat it, seem fatally to bring the

act about. There is certainly no express fiat here;â€ PP If I am on an isolated mountain trail, faced with an icy ledge to cross, and do not know whether I can make it, I may be forced to consider the question whether I can or should believe that I can cross the ledge. In such a case the belief may be justified by the outcome to which having the belief leads. He extends his analysis beyond the religious domain, however, to a wide range of secular human life: A social organism of any sort is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that the other members will simultaneously do theirsâ€. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this condition, without which not only is nothing achieved, but nothing is even attempted WB James defends our right to believe in certain answers to these questions anyway. In the higher animals a theoretical or thinking stage intervenes between sensation and action, and this is where, in human beings, the thought of God arises. The blindness to which James draws attention is that of one human being to another, a blindness he illustrates with a story from his own life. Riding in the mountains of North Carolina he comes upon a devastated landscape, with no trees, scars in the earth, here and there a patch of corn growing in the sunlight. But after talking to the settlers who had cleared the forest to make room for their farm, James comes to see it their way at least temporarily: This plurality, he writes: Even prisons and sick-rooms have their special revelations TT Wordsworth and Shelley, Emerson, and W. But at some five hundred pages it is only half the length of *The Principles of Psychology*, befitting its more restricted, if still large, scope. For James studies that part of human nature that is, or is related to, religious experience. Healthy-mindedness can be involuntary, just natural to someone, but often comes in more willful forms. Some sick souls never get well, while others recover or even triumph: The first is ineffability: Thirdly, mystical states are transient; and, fourth, subjects are passive with respect to them: Nevertheless, James articulates his own beliefâ€which he does not claim to proveâ€that religious experiences connect us with a greater, or further, reality not accessible in our normal cognitive relations to the world: They lead to consistency, stability and flowing human intercourse. James holds neither that we create our truths out of nothing, nor that truth is entirely independent of humanity. Gustav Fechner and Henri Bergson. James concludes by embracing a position that he had more tentatively set forth in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: Certain sequences of pure experiences constitute physical objects, and others constitute persons; but one pure experience say the perception of a chair may be part both of the sequence constituting the chair and of the sequence constituting a person. It is never precisely defined in the *Essays*, and is best explicated by a passage from *The Meaning of Truth* where James states that radical empiricism consists of a postulate, a statement of fact, and a conclusion. His legacy extends into psychology and the study of religion, and in philosophy not only throughout the pragmatist tradition that he founded along with Charles Peirce , but into phenomenology and analytic philosophy. James is one of the most attractive and endearing of philosophers: *The Nation* 3 September Harvard University Press, 17 vol. Library of America, Contained in *Essays in Philosophy*, pp. Harvard University Press, Originally published in [PP]. Harvard University Press, ; first published in [WB]. Henry Holt, [TT]. Originally published in [V]. Originally published in [P]. Originally published in [PU]. Harvard University Press, [MT]. Originally published in Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, [E]. *Some Problems of Philosophy*. *The Letters of William James*, ed.

Chapter 6 : The Varieties of Human Experience by William James

The basic unit of study for psychiatric investigation is the individual human being in interaction with the environment. The psychological understanding of human biography provided by.

Taylor argues, rightly, that we can over-emphasize the extent to which we have left behind a belief in transcendent reality as we became modern. So, in some ways, none of these explanations make rational sense. Here are some of the varieties of transcendent experience, very briefly sketched. Which one do you identify with at the moment? These experiences connect you to a personal God of a particular religion, who can be prayed to for intercession. They give you a taste of the bliss that awaits you after death. They also bind you to your fellow believers, and provide experiential evidence for the truth of your religion and its sacred texts. St Teresa, or the collective experience of 18th century Methodists or the Toronto Blessing in the s. Perennialist transcendence Humans sometimes have spiritual experiences, either within or outside of a religious context. These experiences point to a divine reality beyond all parochial religious dogmas, to a God beyond all names. Your spiritual life may be quite eclectic, for example combining Christian worship with Buddhist meditation. You may shift from a more Christian, personal idea of God, to a more apophatic or transcendent idea of God. Rather, nature is in some sense spirit. Transcendent experience might connect you to a particular spirit within nature, or to the spirit or energy of nature itself. You may be a panpsychist, believing all matter is animate. When we die, our energy returns to nature rather than surviving in any sort of personal immortality. Philip Pullman, Hayao Miyazaki Romantic transcendence You are not quite sure what is out there, but you have a sense or intimation that there is some spiritual dimension or transcendental or noumenal reality beyond phenomenal appearances. This transcendent reality may be transcendent to nature, or in some sense it may be nature itself. Humans cannot really know this transcendent reality directly or logically, but can have intimations of the Noumenal through emotional experiences in the arts both creating art or encountering it or in nature. However, it may be a false intimation – it is not entirely clear. We must resist the impatient grasping after rational certainty. Wordsworth who arguably shifted between this position, pantheist transcendence, and then finally religious transcendence , Keats Platonic or rational transcendence There is transcendental realm of divine reality beyond transient appearances, and the best way to access it is through the pure reason of maths and logic. The cosmos obeys the mathematical laws of this divine realm, and we can discover it by discovering the laws of the cosmos. Emotions and desires cloud our reason and our ability to access this reality. However, we might sometimes have intuitions or ecstatic experiences which give us sudden access to divine truths. Plato, Newton Transcendent humanism Humans have a unique capacity to create the transcendent, through artistic effort, but more broadly simply through noticing and appreciating life. Kenan Malik , Sanderson Jones of the Sunday Assembly, Jeanette Winterson possibly Ego-transcendence When humans have transcendent experiences, they are transcending their usual ego structures and achieving altered states where ordinary ego-consciousness is disrupted. Such states or experiences may happen spontaneously or through practices like meditation or drugs or sex or sports. Glimpsing the non-existence of self can be either liberating or terrifying. At its best, we get liberated from the ego and filled with love for other beings – either a particular being like our child or even all beings. You are skeptical of any claims about the survival of consciousness after death. Anything to get out of your head and escape the claustrophobic boredom of ordinary life. Alex from Clockwork Orange Techno-transcendence Humans transcend their individual selves through technology, which connects them to other beings and to a higher dimension of information. Through technology, we may eventually be able to create a SuperMind, or to download our identity onto the cloud of information. One observer of a Nazi rally described it thus: This does not involve God or the supernatural, rather it is part of a historical materialist process as humans engineer a more just and equitable future for their species. These prophetic visionary experiences may happen to an individual Lenin, Martin Luther King or may involve revolutionary populist movements, like the Paris Commune. A young Jihadist, by contrast, may move from traditional religious transcendence towards the downward transcendence of extreme violence, mixed with the millenial utopianism of historical materialist transcendence. It would be nice if all these varieties of

transcendence got along better with each other but that may be asking a lot. Did I miss out any? January 18, at 4: One thought I have is that the match of feeling being struck against the surface of abstraction creates the flame of transcendence and the ecstatic. I realize this may be a weak analogy, but I hope directionally somewhat explanatory. All humans have this capability. Above are the various interpretations of what this means and maybe some have other things that occur after this flame arises. My above understanding is enough for me, but I have no problem with others who want more or tell me they are experiencing more.

Chapter 7 : Project MUSE - A Study in Human Nature Entitled The Varieties of Religious Experience

Varieties of Human Experience In this blog and the next two blogs I want to focus on three kinds of experience (i.e. pleasurable, engaging, meaningful) that researchers in the field of Positive Psychology say that human beings generally seek.

Anthropology , Human evolution , and Timeline of human evolution The genus Homo evolved and diverged from other hominins in Africa, after the human clade split from the chimpanzee lineage of the hominids great apes branch of the primates. Modern humans, defined as the species Homo sapiens or specifically to the single extant subspecies Homo sapiens sapiens, proceeded to colonize all the continents and larger islands, arriving in Eurasia ,â€™60, years ago, [19] [20] Australia around 40, years ago, the Americas around 15, years ago, and remote islands such as Hawaii, Easter Island , Madagascar , and New Zealand between the years and The gibbons family Hylobatidae and orangutans genus Pongo were the first groups to split from the line leading to the humans, then gorillas genus Gorilla followed by the chimpanzees genus Pan. The splitting date between human and chimpanzee lineages is placed around 4â€™8 million years ago during the late Miocene epoch. Each of these species has been argued to be a bipedal ancestor of later hominins, but all such claims are contested. It is also possible that any one of the three is an ancestor of another branch of African apes, or is an ancestor shared between hominins and other African Hominoidea apes. The question of the relation between these early fossil species and the hominin lineage is still to be resolved. More recently, however, in , stone tools , perhaps predating Homo habilis, have been discovered in northwestern Kenya that have been dated to 3. During the next million years a process of encephalization began, and with the arrival of Homo erectus in the fossil record, cranial capacity had doubled. Homo erectus were the first of the hominina to leave Africa, and these species spread through Africa, Asia, and Europe between 1. One population of H. It is believed that these species were the first to use fire and complex tools. The earliest transitional fossils between H. These descendants of African H. The earliest fossils of anatomically modern humans are from the Middle Paleolithic , about , years ago such as the Omo remains of Ethiopia and the fossils of Herto sometimes classified as Homo sapiens idaltu. The most significant of these adaptations are 1. The relationship between all these changes is the subject of ongoing debate. The earliest bipedal hominin is considered to be either Sahelanthropus [39] or Orrorin , with Ardipithecus , a full bipedal, [40] coming somewhat later. It is possible that bipedalism was favored because it freed up the hands for reaching and carrying food, because it saved energy during locomotion, because it enabled long distance running and hunting, or as a strategy for avoiding hyperthermia by reducing the surface exposed to direct sun. However, the differences between the structure of human brains and those of other apes may be even more significant than differences in size. The reduced degree of sexual dimorphism is primarily visible in the reduction of the male canine tooth relative to other ape species except gibbons. Another important physiological change related to sexuality in humans was the evolution of hidden estrus. Humans are the only ape in which the female is fertile year round, and in which no special signals of fertility are produced by the body such as genital swelling during estrus. These changes taken together have been interpreted as a result of an increased emphasis on pair bonding as a possible solution to the requirement for increased parental investment due to the prolonged infancy of offspring. Archaic human admixture with modern humans , Early human migrations , Multiregional origin of modern humans , Prehistoric autopsy , and Recent African origin of modern humans By the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic period 50, BP , full behavioral modernity , including language , music and other cultural universals had developed. Since , evidence for gene flow between archaic and modern humans during the period of roughly , to 30, years ago has been discovered. This includes modern human admixture in Neanderthals, Neanderthal admixture in modern humans, [53] [54] Denisova hominin admixture in Melanesians [55] as well as repeated admixture from unnamed archaic humans to Sub-Saharan African populations. They inhabited Eurasia and Oceania by 40, years ago, and the Americas at least 14, years ago.

The Varieties of Religious Experience A Study in Human Nature Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in By.

Return to the Top Lecture 1 - Religion and Neurology IT is with no small amount of trepidation that I take my place behind this desk, and face this learned audience. To us Americans, the experience of receiving instruction from the living voice, as well as from the books, of European scholars, is very familiar. At my own University of Harvard, not a winter passes without its harvest, large or small, of lectures from Scottish, English, French, or German representatives of the science or literature of their respective countries whom we have either induced to cross the ocean to address us, or captured on the wing as they were visiting our land. It seems the natural thing for us to listen whilst the Europeans talk. The contrary habit, of talking whilst the Europeans listen, we have not yet acquired; and in him who first makes the adventure it begets a certain sense of apology being due for so presumptuous an act. Particularly must this be the case on a soil as sacred to the American imagination as that of Edinburgh. The glories of the philosophic chair of this university were deeply impressed on my imagination in boyhood. Such juvenile emotions of reverence never get outgrown; and I confess that to find my humble self promoted from my native wilderness to be actually for the time an official here, and transmuted into a colleague of these illustrious names, carries with it a sense of dreamland quite as much as of reality. But since I have received the honor of this appointment I have felt that it would never do to decline. The academic career also has its heroic obligations, so I stand here without further deprecatory words. Let me say only this, that now that the current, here and at Aberdeen, has begun to run from west to east, I hope it may continue to do so. As the years go by, I hope that many of my countrymen may be asked to lecture in the Scottish universities, changing places with Scotsmen lecturing in the United States; I hope that our people may become in all these higher matters even as one people; and that the peculiar philosophic temperament, as well as the peculiar political temperament, that goes with our English speech may more and more pervade and influence the world. As regards the manner in which I shall have to administer this lectureship, I am neither a theologian, nor a scholar learned in the history of religions, nor an anthropologist. Psychology is the only branch of learning in which I am particularly versed. To the psychologist the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution. It would seem, therefore, that, as a psychologist, the natural thing for me would be to invite you to a descriptive survey of those religious propensities. If the inquiry be psychological, not religious institutions, but rather religious feelings and religious impulses must be its subject, and I must confine myself to those more developed subjective phenomena recorded in literature produced by articulate and fully self-conscious men, in works of piety and autobiography. Interesting as the origins and early stages of a subject always are, yet when one seeks earnestly for its full significance, one must always look to its more completely evolved and perfect forms. It follows from this that the documents that will most concern us will be those of the men who were most accomplished in the religious life and best able to give an intelligible account of their ideas and motives. These men, of course, are either comparatively modern writers, or else such earlier ones as have become religious classics. I may take my citations, my sentences and paragraphs of personal confession, from books that most of you at some time will have had already in your hands, and yet this will be no detriment to the value of my conclusions. It is true that some more adventurous reader and investigator, lecturing here in future, may unearth from the shelves of libraries documents that will make a more delectable and curious entertainment to listen to than mine. Yet I doubt whether he will necessarily, by his control of so much more out-of-the-way material, get much closer to the essence of the matter in hand. The question, What are the religious propensities? In recent books on logic, distinction is made between two orders of inquiry concerning anything. First, what is the nature of it? And second, What is its importance, meaning, or significance, now that it is once here? The answer to the one question is given in an existential judgment or proposition. The answer to the other is a proposition of value, what the Germans call a Werthurtheil, or what we may, if we like, denominate a spiritual judgment. Neither judgment can be deduced immediately from the

other. They proceed from diverse intellectual preoccupations, and the mind combines them only by making them first separately, and then adding them together. In the matter of religions it is particularly easy to distinguish the two orders of question. Every religious phenomenon has its history and its derivation from natural antecedents. What is nowadays called the higher criticism of the Bible is only a study of the Bible from this existential point of view, neglected too much by the earlier church. Under just what biographic conditions did the sacred writers bring forth their various contributions to the holy volume? And what had they exactly in their several individual minds, when they delivered their utterances? These are manifestly questions of historical fact, and one does not see how the answer to them can decide offhand the still further question: To answer this other question we must have already in our mind some sort of a general theory as to what the peculiarities in a thing should be which give it value for purposes of revelation; and this theory itself would be what I just called a spiritual judgment. Thus if our theory of revelation-value were to affirm that any book, to possess it, must have been composed automatically or not by the free caprice of the writer, or that it must exhibit no scientific and historic errors and express no local or personal passions, the Bible would probably fare ill at our hands. But if, on the other hand, our theory should allow that a book may well be a revelation in spite of errors and passions and deliberate human composition, if only it be a true record of the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate, then the verdict would be much more favorable. You see that the existential facts by themselves are insufficient for determining the value; and the best adepts of the higher criticism accordingly never confound the existential with the spiritual problem. When I handle them biologically and psychologically as if they were mere curious facts of individual history, some of you may think it a degradation of so sublime a subject, and may even suspect me, until my purpose gets more fully expressed, of deliberately seeking to discredit the religious side of life. Such a result is of course absolutely alien to my intention; and since such a prejudice on your part would seriously obstruct the due effect of much of what I have to relate, I will devote a few more words to the point. There can be no doubt that as a matter of fact a religious life, exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and eccentric. I speak not now of your ordinary religious believer, who follows the conventional observances of his country, whether it be Buddhist, Christian, or Mohammedan. His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit. It would profit us little to study this second-hand religious life. We must make search rather for the original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct. These experiences we can only find in individuals for whom religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever rather. Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence. If you ask for a concrete example, there can be no better one than is furnished by the person of George Fox. The Quaker religion which he founded is something which it is impossible to overpraise. In a day of shams, it was a religion of veracity rooted in spiritual inwardness, and a return to something more like the original gospel truth than men had ever known in England. So far as our Christian sects to-day are evolving into liberality, they are simply reverting in essence to the position which Fox and the early Quakers so long ago assumed. Every one who confronted him personally, from Oliver Cromwell down to county magistrates and jailers, seems to have acknowledged his superior power. Yet from the point of view of his nervous constitution, Fox was a psychopath or detraque of the deepest dye. His Journal abounds in entries of this sort: I asked them what place that was? Immediately the word of the Lord came to me, that I must go thither. Being come to the house we were going to, I wished the friends to walk into the house, saying nothing to them of whither I was to go. As soon as they were gone I stept away, and went by my eye over hedge and ditch till I came within a mile of Lichfield; where, in a great field, shepherds were keeping their sheep. Then was I commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood still, for it was winter: So I put off my shoes, and left them with the shepherds; and the poor shepherds

trembled, and were astonished. Then I walked on about a mile, and as soon as I was got within the city, the word of the Lord came to me again, saying: It being market day, I went into the market-place, and to and fro in the several parts of it, and made stands, crying as before, Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield! And no one laid hands on me. As I went thus crying through the streets, there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood. When I had declared what was upon me, and felt myself clear, I went out of the town in peace: But the fire of the Lord was so on my feet, and all over me, that I did not matter to put on my shoes again, and was at a stand whether I should or no, till I felt freedom from the Lord so to do: After this a deep consideration came upon me, for what reason I should be sent to cry against that city, and call it The bloody city! For though the parliament had the minister one while, and the king another, and much blood had been shed in the town during the wars between them, yet there was no more than had befallen many other places. So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs, which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. So the sense of this blood was upon me, and I obeyed the word of the Lord. We must describe and name them just as if they occurred in non-religious men. It is true that we instinctively recoil from seeing an object to which our emotions and affections are committed handled by the intellect as any other object is handled. The first thing the intellect does with an object is to class it along with something else. But any object that is infinitely important to us and awakens our devotion feels to us also as if it must be sui generis and unique. Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado or apology as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. Taine, in the introduction to his history of English literature, has written: They always have their causes. There are causes for ambition, courage, veracity, just as there are for digestion, muscular movement, animal heat. Vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar. Perhaps the commonest expression of this assumption that spiritual value is undone if lowly origin be asserted is seen in those comments which unsentimental people so often pass on their more sentimental acquaintances. Alfred believes in immortality so strongly because his temperament is so emotional. Peter would be less troubled about his soul if he would take more exercise in the open air, etc. A more fully developed example of the same kind of reasoning is the fashion, quite common nowadays among certain writers, of criticising the religious emotions by showing a connection between them and the sexual life. Conversion is a crisis of puberty and adolescence. The macerations of saints, and the devotion of missionaries, are only instances of the parental instinct of self-sacrifice gone astray. For the hysterical nun, starving for natural life, Christ is but an imaginary substitute for a more earthly object of affection. It seems to me that few conceptions are less instructive than this re-interpretation of religion as perverted sexuality. It is true that in the vast collection of religious phenomena, some are undisguisedly amatory- e. Religious language clothes itself in such poor symbols as our life affords, and the whole organism gives overtones of comment whenever the mind is strongly stirred to expression. Language drawn from eating and drinking is probably as common in religious literature as is language drawn from the sexual life. So it is here

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