

**AN ESSAY ON
PERSONALITY AS
A PHILOSOPHICAL
PRINCIPLE**

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An Essay on Personality as a Philosophical Principle by Wilfrid Richmond

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AS A

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLE

BY THE REV.

WILFRID RICHMOND, M.A.

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

37 BEDFORD STREET

1900

PREFACE

THE following essay is intended to illustrate a philosophical principle, not to establish a philosophical conclusion. The only legitimate principle of philosophy is experience, of which philosophy professes to be the interpretation. But it is rash to assume that we know what we mean by experience without explicit statement and discussion. Some particular aspect of experience we are each of us sure to emphasize. It is well to describe clearly the aspect under which we are disposed to assert that experience should *prima facie* be viewed. This will be the philosophical principle. If the principle or the aspect of experience which we wish to present happens to involve differences from the views commonly assumed in philosophical literature, this full and free description of the point of view at starting is the more necessary. In any case an hypothesis must be entertained before it can be proved, and it must be stated before it can be entertained. And a philosophical principle is such an hypothesis. This, then, is the object, to present a certain aspect of experience in such a way as to secure that it may be entertained as a

philosophical principle, a principle to be hereafter justified and established.

As to the manner in which the subject is treated, I am afraid I must be prepared for criticism from two points of view. In the first place, it will be said that the treatment is rhetorical rather than scientific, popular rather than philosophical. I would venture to point out that this is a consequence of the aim of the book. I think philosophy has travelled away from life, and that it is a misfortune that reflection on the deepest principles of life should not be kept as far as possible within the reach of the very large body of people who are asking themselves the philosophic question, and who find themselves repelled by the form in which the answer to the question is offered for their acceptance. I think also, as will appear, that philosophy still suffers, in spite of many protests, from the vice of intellectualism,* and that the adequate presentation of philosophical truth must always include appeals to imagination and emotion. This neither is, nor is intended to be, an apology for faults of style in this direction, of which I am conscious, and for which I must bear the blame. On the other hand, if any one, glancing at the preceding paragraph, should turn to the book itself, it may well be that he will find himself entangled in abstruse technicalities, such as I have seemed to condemn. The

* Cf. Seth, "Man's Place in the Cosmos," articles on Bradley and Münsterberg. Also Ward, "Mind," N.S., 5.

passages where these occur—and they occupy no inconsiderable space—are defensive passages. I am attempting, in such passages, to disengage what seems to me to be the natural view of experience from certain philosophical presumptions and traditions by which it is obscured. Again I cannot pretend to disclaim responsibility for difficulties in expression which I have not been able to avoid.

Two remarks should be made as to the actual subject matter of the essay. The title is "Personality." As the subject is treated, I may be told that "fellowship" would more nearly describe the principle I am trying to illustrate.* But my enterprise is a kind of philosophical socialism. I wish to claim as the due of the social fellowship capacities which are usually treated as prerogatives of the individual. I should not have said my say, unless I had attacked the individualism, against which I protest, in its own citadel, the conception of the individual personal being.

Lastly, I wish to say something as to the frequent allusions, direct and indirect, to Christianity and Christian experience. No assumption as to the historical basis of Christianity in facts, such as are contained in the Gospel record, is in any way necessary to the argument of this essay. But Christianity, Christian experience, the Christian way of looking

* The Greek word *κοινωνία* covers the variety of meaning which neither "fellowship" nor any other English word would adequately represent.

at things, is itself a fact, however it may have arisen. The experience of modern civilised humanity is the experience from which we start, and the experience of modern civilised humanity is largely Christian. Sometimes it is where it is most Christian that it has best exemplified the principle which I wished to illustrate. Where this was so I have taken and used the Christian view of life and the universe. Nor have I been afraid to speak of the Christian view of experience, as it were, from the inside. Such a view of experience can be properly understood from no other point of view. But for the purposes of the argument of this book Christianity would be the same fact that it is, if the claim of the Gospels to be authentic and historical were disproved. It would remain the fact that under whatever inspiration the experience of mankind had been shaped by the principles, beliefs, and emotions which have supplied to modern Europe its working philosophy of life.

ANALYSIS

PART I

EXPERIENCE AND PERSONALITY

CHAPTER I

EXPERIENCE

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Experience is the ultimate first principle, and the final test of philosophy.	3
Philosophy begins with the assumption of experience,	4
though it does not therefore exclude a sceptical conclusion,	5
or confine itself to the <i>prima facie</i> limits of experience,	5
or take any one element in experience as the final test of truth.	6
The history of philosophy shows that experience is capable of self-interpretation.	6
But the starting-point is experience as it is experienced unwarped by philosophical theories,	6
such as, <i>e.g.</i> , that experience means the events of the individual consciousness,	7
or that experience is thought.	8
The beginning is the critical point. The first question to be answered is, What is the vital element in experience?	10

CHAPTER II

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