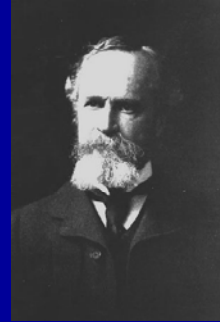




Spring2011

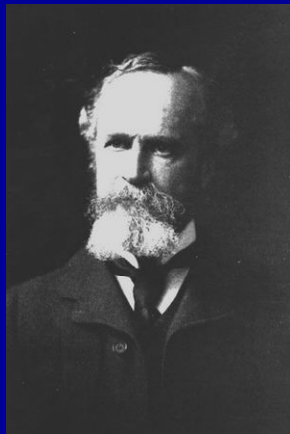


PHIL 203



Critical
Thinking

WILLIAM JAMES



- 1842-1910
- M.D Harvard -- 1869
- Instructor Anatomy and Physiology, Harvard – 1873
- Psychology, Harvard – 1875
- Philosophy, Harvard – 1879
- *Principles of Psychology* – 1890
- *The Will to Believe* – 1897
- *Varieties of Religious Experiences* -- 1902

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES



- Religious experiences
- Mystical experiences
- James' Criteria
 - Ineffability
 - Noetic quality
 - Transiency
 - Passivity
- Psychological characteristics
- Other religions

EVIDENTIAL WARRANT?



- Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come
- No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically
- They break down the authority of non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based on the senses alone.

Reports from Mystics

- Circumstantial evidence
- Eyewitness testimony?
- St. Teresa of Avila
- Hindu example
- Buddhist example
- William James' characterization
 - Ineffability
 - Noetic quality
 - Transiency
 - Passivity

St. Teresa of Avila

- Born 1515
- Wild childhood
- Sent to convent
- Joins to sisterhood 1536
- Serious illness 1538
- "Interior voices" 1555-6
- First rapture 1558
- Finishes *Autobiography* 1562
- Dies 1582
- Canonized 1622



Testimony as Evidence

- E₁. Statement
- E₂. Context
- E₃. Relevant biography

=====

T₀. St. Teresa made the statement because she believed it.

RIVAL EXPLANATIONS:

- T₁. Said it because it's false.
- T₂. Said it for some other reason

Testimony as Evidence

- E₁. Statement
- E₂. Context
- E₃. Relevant biography
- E₄. Made the statement because she believed it.

=====

T₀. Believes it because it's true.

RIVAL EXPLANATIONS:

- T₁. Believes it because . . .
- T₂. Believes it because . . .

Rival Explanations

St Teresa's Rivals:

T*₁. She was possessed.

T*₂. She was going crazy.

AT STAGE TWO:

T*₃. She was suffering from a brain tumor.

T*₄. She was experiencing some other divine presence.

T*₅. Newsweek hypothesis

Other Relevant Data

- Lots of similar reports from the Christian tradition.
- But, lots of similar reports from non-theistic traditions.
- New rival:
T₆. Religious pluralists' hypothesis



Argument from Mystical Experiences

E₁. Many sincere reports from theistic mystics.

E₂. Many sincere reports from non-theistic mystics.

=====

T₀. God exists and directly communicates with mystics.

Explaining Mystical Experiences

- **Theistic explanations**
 - Different traditions within theism
 - Problem of non-theistic mystical experiences
 - Religious exclusivism
- **Secular naturalistic explanations**
 - Neurophysiology of mystical experiences
 - Cause of these neurophysiological changes
- **Religious pluralistic explanation**
 - Evidence of religious pluralism?