

THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

---

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES.

A PHILOSOPHY so complete and so significant as that of William James, touching, as it does, every traditional problem, and expressing through the medium of personal genius the characteristic tendencies of an epoch, cannot be hastily estimated. There is no glory to be won by pressing the attack upon its unguarded defenses; while solemn verdicts, whether of commendation or censure, would surely prove premature and injudicious. But there is perhaps one service to be rendered to James and to philosophy for which this is the most suitable occasion, the service, namely, of brief and proportionate exposition. Every philosophical system suffers from accidental emphasis due to the temporal order of production and to the exigencies of controversy. Toward the close of his life James himself felt the need of assembling his philosophy, of giving it unity and balance. It was truly one philosophy, one system of thought, but its total structure and contour had never been made explicit. That James should not have lived to do this work himself is an absolute loss to mankind, for which no efforts of mine can in the least compensate.<sup>1</sup> But I should like to make a first rude sketch, which may, I hope, despite its flatness and its bad drawing, at least suggest the form of the whole and the proper emphasis of the parts.

If one could read James's writings in a day, and forget the order of their publication, one would, I think, find that they treated of three great topics, the nature of the human mind, the

<sup>1</sup>James left an unfinished "Introduction to Philosophy," in which he had made a beginning of a systematic restatement of his philosophy, but owing to its incompleteness it does not, as it stands, afford the reader the total view which was in the author's mind as he composed it.