

**THE PROBLEM OF  
PERSONALITY; A CRITICAL &  
CONSTRUCTIVE STUDY IN THE  
LIGHT OF RECENT THOUGHT**

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The problem of personality; a critical & constructive study in the light of recent thought by  
Ernest Northcroft Merrington

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# THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITY

A CRITICAL & CONSTRUCTIVE STUDY  
IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT THOUGHT

BY

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## FOREWORD.

THE present work represents an effort to state the problem of Personality in relation to some of the fundamental truths of philosophy and theology. The kingdom of truth is to be found, if anywhere, 'within you'; and it is worth while to seek to clarify our ideas regarding the somewhat vague concept of Personality in order that the constructive spirit which is manifest everywhere to-day may have some materials with which to work. This is but a partial attempt to express certain opinions, which, whatever their defects may be, have at least passed through the fires of criticism in three universities, and have proved to the author and others with whom he has discussed them that, in an age of much questioning, they have a helpful influence upon the truths by which we live, and upon the life itself which is 'more than they.'

The substance of this work is a Thesis which is hereby published with the authority of the Division of Philosophy of Harvard University, by whom it was accepted as part of the work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, on the recommendation of the Examining Committee, Professors J. Royce, G. H. Palmer and R. B. Perry. To these and other Harvard teachers and friends, especially the late William James and Professor H. Münsterberg, I have to make acknowledgments. Also I am grateful to Professors Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison and James Seth (of Edinburgh), and to Professor Francis Anderson and Principal Andrew Harper (both of Sydney) for their earlier help.

As the first part of the book is occupied with an examination of certain views of the Self held by recent philosophers in Britain and America, and is somewhat technical to a certain class of readers, some may prefer to begin with the Second Part in which the subject is more constructively treated.

The following characteristic note from the late Professor William James upon the views set forth in this work should be of interest to those who knew him, and who admire his brilliant

work as philosopher and teacher. It expresses a certain facet of his theory of the Self, which supplements what is given in Chapter I by way of estimating the place of Personality in his thought :—

‘ The part of your thesis that hits me hardest is the remarks on “ Experience ”—with the rest I am in sympathy of tolerance if not of active echo. I have worked for so many years with the “ passing thought ” formula which pragmatically does all the work of a Self, that the inability to define the Self except by its work makes me perhaps unduly hostile, not to the word, of course, but to the use of it as a fundamental term in philosophy. The “ train of experience ” kind of self gets its unity after the facts only ; but the “ unanalyzable principle ” kind is anterior to the facts and seems to warrant their having unity. But if one makes of each stage of unity already achieved in fact, an active worker for more unity, with efficacy too, doesn’t the warrant also seem to exist ? ’

In reply, I must say here simply, it all depends upon the point of view, and leave the reader to form his own opinion in the sequel. But may I acknowledge my debt in heart and mind