

# On a certain blindness in political matters

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## 0. A letter from Whitehead to Hartshorne on Peirce and James [1936], 1990

« [...] My general impression of the whole book [...] confirms my longstanding belief that in the oncoming generation America will be at the centre of worthwhile philosophy. European philosophy has gone dry, and cannot make any worthwhile use of the results of nineteenth century scholarship. It is in chains to the sanctified presuppositions derived from later Greek thought. It is in much the same position as mediaeval scholasticism in the year 1400 A.D. My belief is that the effective founders of the Renaissance are Charles Peirce and William James. Of these men, W.J. is the analogue to Plato, and C.P. to Aristotle, though the time-order does not correspond, and the analogy must not be pressed too far. Have you read Ralph Perry's book (2 vols.) on James? It is a wonderful disclosure of the living repercussions of late 19<sup>th</sup> century thought on a sensitive genius. It is reminiscent of the Platonic Dialogues. W.J.'s pragmatic descendants have been doing their best to trivialize his meanings in the notions of *Radical* Empiricism, Pragmatism, Rationalization. But I admit W.J. was weak on Rationalization. Also he expressed himself by the dangerous method of over-statement. [...] »

## 1. Prolegomena

### 1.1. A third Renaissance ?

1.1.1. Anthropological immanence, communism and theological naturalism

1.1.2. Transcendence, monarchism and supernaturalism

1.1.3. Pragmatism

### 1.2. Philosophical pitfalls

1.2.1. Scholasticism and docetism

1.2.2. Rationalism and empiricism

1.2.3. Radical empiricism

### 1.3. Jamesian Generalization

1.3.1. James encourages docetism and radicalizes empiricism

1.3.2. Jamesian scholarship involves some scholasticism

1.3.3. Jamesian askesis

## **2. On a certain blindness in human beings [1892], 1899**

### 2.1. Historical context

2.1.1. Monroe Doctrine, 1823

2.1.2. USS Maine explodes, Cuban war, Philippines war, 1898

2.1.3. The American Anti-Imperialist League, 1898

### 2.2. Basic claims

2.2.1. Plurality of facts

2.2.2. Privacy of minds

2.2.3. Common sense

### 2.3. Three cases of epistemological blindness

2.3.1. Selection of facts

2.3.2. Mental blind spot

2.3.3. Cultural bias

## **3. On a certain blindness in political matters**

### 3.1. War and peace

3.1.1. There is something wrong about us as we naturally stand, 1902

3.1.2. Remarks at the peace banquet, 1904

3.1.3. The Moral Equivalent of War, 1906

### 3.2. Basic claims

3.2.1. Plurality of classes

3.2.2. Privacy of class consciousness

3.2.3. Common praxis

### 3.3. Three cases of political blindness

3.3.1. Selection of class membership

3.3.2. Blind spot of class consciousness

3.3.3. Class struggle

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1. The epistemological *periagôgê*

4.1.1. Contemplation and action

4.1.2. Pure experience

4.1.3. Deselection, lucid spot, cultural awareness

### 4.2. XXIst century totalitarianism

4.2.1. Imperialism

4.2.2. Total disorientation

4.2.3. Totalitarian technologies

### 4.3. A political *periagôgê*

4.3.1. Selection of class membership

4.3.2. Blind spot of class consciousness

4.3.3. Class struggle