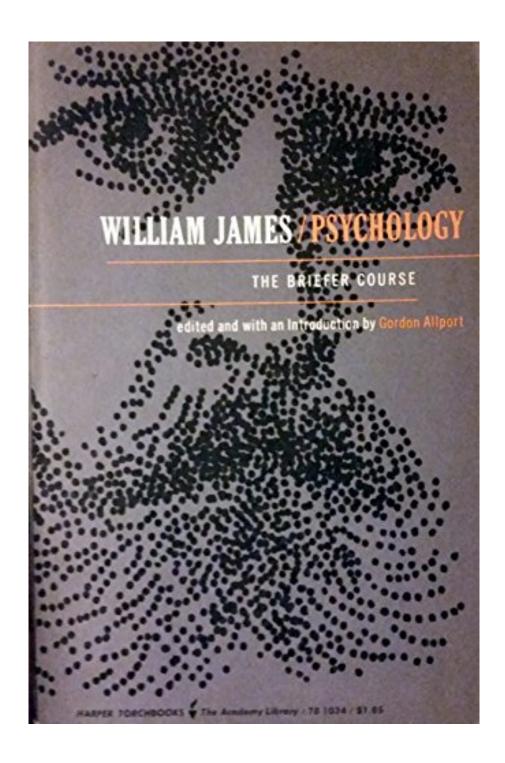


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American psychologist and philosopher James (1842-1910) examines a wide range of topics such as the importance and physical basis of habit, stream of consciousness, self and the sense of personal identity, discrimination and association, the sense of time, memory, perception, imagination, reasoning, emotions compared to instincts, the will and voluntary acts, and other subjects. This brief version omits the long-outdated first nine chapters of his original two-volume treatise. Annotation c. Book News, Inc., Portland, OR (booknews.com)

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James is excellent, this edition is fine

By Philip Mohr

I highly recommend Psychology: the briefer course to anyone who might be interested in the foundations of modern psychology. The work is very accessible, the style very straightforward, and the content far from dry or textbookish. The experience is definitely enhanced if one is familiar with some of the basic tenets of early modern thinkers (especially those like Kant and Hegel), but this knowledge is in no way required to enjoy James. He is treating psychology as a natural science, but it is important to understand that beyond this book James is a broad-ranging thinker, and so his Psychology dips its toes in many other fields of philosophy, and some fields not at all treated by philosophers (as, for example, the section at the end of Chapter 3 where he describes his experiences with spiritual mediums).

The book itself is printed well enough, and contains no extraneous material (introductory essays from some scholar, intrusive footnotes, chapter analyses, etc.), just the way I like it.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

An abridged version of a classic 19th century textbook

By Dr. H. A. Jones

Psychology: The briefer course by William James, Henry Holt, 1892; Harper and Row, 1961; Dover, 2001, 368 ff.

This is a simpler, less detailed version of William James' Principles of Psychology that was published in two volumes. William James was one of the founders of the subject and was both psychologist and philosopher. In this book he covers many of the classic topics that are of interest to both psychologists and lay people with his perceptive views presented in an accessible style that makes his writing easy to read for the non-specialist.

Thus he writes about habit, the stream of consciousness, the self, (mental) conception, association, memory, emotion, will, and other issues in an original and enlightening way. His views on habit underlie Rupert Sheldrake's principle of the morphic field in the way that events in the material world become easier when they are repeated. His thoughts on will or voluntary attention provided the inspiration for Jeffrey Schwartz and Henry Stapp's view of the mechanism of mind - that it was the act of volition that constituted free will, to focus on just one of the ripples in the stream of consciousness.

James uses the life of a bird as a metaphor for the human stream of consciousness, comprising flights and perchings. Only the `perchings' or substantive states of mind as James calls them contribute to knowledge and memory. He points out that our recognition of our `self' depends upon the success of our social relationships with others, particularly the esteem with which we are held in the minds of loved ones. There are some interesting reflections on the mental continuity of the self, despite physical changes to the body. This book is at the same readable academic level as James' books on The Variety of Religious Experience and Pragmatism, but is likely to appeal to a wider readership - to anyone in fact who is interested in human nature. There are so many pearls of wisdom here for a book written more than a century ago, and intimations of things that subsequent neurologists with a battery of sophisticated equipment have shown to be correct.

How We Reason by Johnson-Laird

Howard Jones is the author of The World as Spirit

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Dover edition is the best

By Durham

Like most of James's books, Psychology: The Briefer Course has been released by several publishers and I have most of them. But I prefer the Dover edition because the book does not have one of those prefaces that robs the reader of discovering James for him or herself and because this edition gives you more bang for the buck.

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