

Living and writing philosophically Logi Gunnarsson

Immanuel Kant and William James both emphasize the importance of the practical for philosophical thought. In one sense, James is more radical than Kant. According to Kant, the correctness of philosophical attitudes gets established within (transcendental) argumentative *thought* itself. It is just that the correctness of some of the relevant positions depends on *practical* thinking. According to James, it is not enough to *think* about philosophical views to establish their correctness. In addition, a person must *live* according to the philosophical beliefs and in this way test them in life.

James espouses this position in his 1882 “Rationality, Activity and Faith.” In this paper, James proposes that one must *live* according to *both* of two conflicting philosophical theories about the objectivity of morality to establish which one is true. In this paper, I am interested in James’s test as a way of resolving many philosophical disputes, not only the controversy about the objectivity of morality. My overall aim in the paper is philosophical, not philological: Although I refer to the test as “James’s test,” I am here not interested in the question how he himself understands it.

I start by arguing that James’s test addresses a serious problem. I then present an argument to the effect that the test offers the correct solution to this problem. If James’s test offers the right solution, radical consequences follow for the activity of philosophy. It follows that doing philosophy requires *living* philosophically and that living philosophically requires living according to *conflicting philosophical theories* to test them for truth. In the remainder of the paper, I explore other radical consequences of taking James’s test seriously. These consequences concern how to *write* philosophically. They do not follow from the test itself. Rather, James’s test is essentially related to truths about philosophy even more important than the test itself. Expression of these truths requires a form of philosophical writing significantly different from academic papers. At the end of the paper, I indicate what form of writing that might be.