

Anthropomorphism

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In my lectures and conversations I always made my pragmatism subordinate to what I called Anthropomorphism, in which these three propositions were prominent (I purposely state them vaguely in order to be brief). 1st. Man's faculties, like those of any animal, are pretty nicely adjusted to the needs of his life; and he is so immersed and submerged in conceptions of the *pragmatisch* (I don't say the *praktisch*) in such entirety that no conception, direct or indirect, can be had of an exterior standpoint, and these very words I am writing, together with all other affirmations and denials of "limits of human cognition," are quite meaningless except so far as they predicate nonsensicality of one another. But in that, their only meaning, the *denials* of limits are golden truth. 2nd. "Man has not attained to any knowledge that is not either mechanical or anthropological." (*Studies in Logic*, 1882, p. 181). His least imperfect ideals must *therefore* take human shape; and his least false understanding of that which is behind the Universe is Theism - or rather a Theistic Religion. 3rd. Human instincts ought to be implicitly trusted within their proper sphere. "All human knowledge, up to the highest flights of science, is but the development of our inborn animal instincts" (*Ibid.*). But *Reason* goes wrong perhaps oftener than it goes right.

1906-7 | PAP [ed.] | MS [R] 293:1-2; NEM 4:313

If I were to attach a definite meaning to "anthropomorphism," I should think it stood to reason that a man could not have any idea that was not anthropomorphic, and that it was simply to repeat the error of Kant to attempt to escape anthropomorphism. At the same time, I am confident a man can pretty well understand the thoughts of his horse, his jocose parrot, and his canary-bird, so full of *espièglerie*; and though his representation of those thoughts must, I suppose, be more or less falsified by anthropomorphism, yet that there is a good deal more truth than falsity in them, - and more than if he were to attempt the impossible task of eliminating the anthropomorphism I am for the present sufficiently convinced.