



# WILLIAM JAMES STUDIES

SPRING 2016 • VOLUME 12 • NUMBER 1



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# INTRODUCTION TO *WJS* SPECIAL ISSUE: “PRAGMATISM, PHENOMENOLOGY AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE”

*J. EDWARD HACKETT*

**H**istorically, phenomenology and pragmatism emerge as separate trajectories and traditions. However, these traditions would not remain apart for long. Philosophers noticed that both phenomenology and pragmatism thematized experience, and any scholar of phenomenology knows fully well the fertile seeds James’s thought and pragmatism can yield. James enjoyed widespread appeal and fame, and crossed the Atlantic several times in his life. As a man of letters, he corresponded in several European languages, and is cited by almost every major phenomenologist. In keeping with this fertile ground to be explored, Kevin Decker and I wanted to revisit these themes in James (and in others too) and see what current philosophers nowadays think of the relationship between phenomenology and pragmatism. In so doing, we’ve brought together several promising attempts of both established and up and coming scholars that take up the question of the relationship between pragmatism and phenomenology in Edmund Husserl, John Dewey, William James, Max Scheler, Charles S. Peirce, Herbert Mead, and the contemporary pragmatist philosopher Mark A. Johnson.

In making good on the promise to think beyond James, but within the purview of phenomenology and pragmatism, Mark Johnson’s work is ripe for engagement. Kelvin J. Booth’s “The Meaning of the Social Body: Bringing George Herbert Mead to Mark Johnson’s Theory of Embodied Mind” attempts to synthesize George Herbert Mead’s theory of social meaning with Mark

Johnson's work on embodied mind. Specifically, Booth problematizes the underdeveloped conception of the social in Johnson's theory since Johnson's mention of the social is limited to infant imitation and distributed cognition. Mead's idea of a "conversation of gestures," while not strictly a "conversation" normally meant by the term, can be interpreted as part of Johnson's theory of embodied meaning since the *conversation of gestures* is "a seamless flow of simultaneous mutual adjustment of two organisms to each other in a single system of communication" (7-8). Moreover, this system of mutual adjustment can occur in the very pragmatic organism-environment relation that prefigures Johnson's theory of embodied mind.

In "Toward a Non-Reductive Naturalism: Combining the Insights of Husserl and Dewey," Gregory A. Trotter meditates on the relationship between phenomenology and pragmatism. He seeks to synthesize the naturalism gap between Dewey and Husserl and attempts to arrive "at the best insights of both philosophers regarding human modes of knowing and interacting with the world in an effort to get closer to a form of naturalism that does not require that we give up on the contributions to experience made by experiencing subjects" (21). In this article, Trotter open doors to philosophers whom we might not have expected to come together. According to Trotter, Dewey and Husserl agree that consciousness is and of the world (and therefore of nature). This non-reductive relation can help establish a much-needed, non-reductive naturalism that preserves room for experiencing subjects but can also avoid supernaturalist and transcendental philosophies that posit a radical break between mind and world in general.

Aaron Massecar's "How Pragmatism and Realist Phenomenology Can Bring Cognitive Science Back Into Philosophy" attempts to establish a framework for cognitive science. Specifically, he argues that Peirce's "extreme scholastic realism" and early phenomenology can explain a new source of realism that navigates between the excesses of a mind-independent traditional realism on the one hand and a Husserlian idealism of consciousness on the other hand. According to Massecar, Peirce

offers a semiotics of signs that forms the middle ground between the idealism of the subject and the realism of the external object. In other words, this process unfolds in experience and can provide a structural account for a realism rooted in Peirce's semiotics. Massecar seems to identify this process-based realism with the way in which intentional structures, for early phenomenologists like Scheler, are *extra mente* and with the relational structures or habits of behavior that emerge in Peirce. This process yields laws that are "constantly in the process of development and are immanent to experience" (43). These structures, Massecar posits, give us the tools to connect minds to the environment. Overall, his efforts are propaedeutic to exciting questions that can undoubtedly be expounded upon in the future.

Finally, I offer a new interpretation of James's metaphysics of value in his "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life." This interpretation, like Massecar's, finds inspiration in early phenomenology. Specifically, we can see that the complexity of James's thought experiment given in Section 2 of "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" are comparable to Scheler's phenomenologically-based value rankings. While James wrote without knowledge of Scheler, we can see the seeds of phenomenological thinking about value already in James's thought: the complexity of a value ranking culminates in religion providing the highest values for James as it does so in Scheler's account. I offer textual support for this interpretation of James's theory of value, and why we should interpret it through phenomenology by showing that he is committed to a type of realism that Scheler articulates (what I've called participatory realism elsewhere). I close the essay with some thoughts regarding the relationship between phenomenology and pragmatism that anticipates new questions to ask about the relationship between these two philosophical movements, and so it seems fitting to end on my essay and bring the volume to a close.

*University of Akron*  
[jhacket4@kent.edu](mailto:jhacket4@kent.edu)

# THE MEANING OF THE SOCIAL BODY: BRINGING GEORGE HERBERT MEAD TO MARK JOHNSON'S THEORY OF EMBODIED MIND

KELVIN J. BOOTH



*The body that creates meaning is not only, as Mark Johnson argues, an emotional, kinesthetic, and aesthetically experiencing body; the body that creates meaning is a social body. This paper uses George Herbert Mead's social theory of meaning, itself an embodiment theory, to develop the social aspect of Johnson's approach to embodied mind. The social body develops through what Mead calls the "conversation of gestures," wherein gestural meaning is a social form of embodied meaning. Symbolic meaning grows out of gestural communication through taking the role of the other, which is a result of the mimetic synchrony between child and adult. Especially important in this synchrony is the gesture of pointing, where the meaning of pointing is shared between child and adult. Understanding symbolic meaning as a form of embodied communication accomplishes what Johnson sets out to accomplish; it preserves the continuity between symbolically mediated cognitive processes and pre-symbolic cognition.*



In his book *The Meaning of the Body*, Mark Johnson brings together a number of important strands in cognitive science and the phenomenology of the body, and integrates them into a pragmatist philosophy of mind (Johnson, 2007). Meaning is grounded in embodied movement, emotion, and feeling, and it finds expression in what Johnson calls the aesthetics of human understanding. The word *of* in the title of Johnson's book should not be read as the meaning that a body has as an object in the world. Rather, meaning is *created by* the body. This approach breaks down any dualism between bodies and minds, as well as other persistent dualisms, such as concept and emotion and inner experience versus an external world. Johnson especially criticizes the mental representation theory of mind, which reinforces such dualisms. Using James and Dewey as a basis, as well as his own previous work with George Lakoff on metaphor and embodiment, Johnson offers a non-representational view of mind that expands the idea of meaning well beyond concepts and propositions.

Johnson's wide-ranging book provides an excellent basis for future developments in a pragmatist cognitive science, I want to focus on one element in particular needing further development—the social dimension of the theory of mind and meaning. Johnson does bring in social elements to some extent, for instance when he discusses infant imitation, and then again as one element of distributed cognition, but he does not offer an extended discussion of the social element of embodied condition. My intention here is to find a place within Johnson's pragmatist view of embodied mind for Mead's social theory of mind and meaning, which is clearly an embodiment theory since it is based on the gesture as bodily movement. The body that creates meaning is not only an emotional, kinesthetic, and aesthetically experiencing body; the body that creates meaning is a social body.

### EMBODIED MEANING

Johnson uses the word *meaning* very broadly. Meaning concerns the significance of our interactions with our environment, and the consequences of these interactions for actual and possible

experience. Linguistic meaning is only one dimension of these interactions with our environment, just one part of a “vast, continuous process of immanent meanings” (Johnson 2007, 10). Meaning “is not just a matter of concepts and propositions, but also reaches down into the images, sensorimotor schemas, feelings, qualities, and emotions that constitute our meaningful encounter with the world” (ibid., ix). This embodied view “sees meaning and all our higher functioning as growing out of and shaped by our abilities to perceive things, manipulate objects, move our bodies in space, and evaluate our situation” (ibid., 1). In short, meaning is a relation of the active body encountering and structuring the world. This embodied view of meaning is, he says, “the only way to preserve the continuity between so-called higher and lower cognitive processes.... The ‘higher’ develops from the ‘lower’” (ibid., 25). In terms of human ontogeny, our abilities to engage in developed symbolic communication grow out of our embodied kinesthetic and emotional interaction with the people and objects around us beginning in early infancy. In evolutionary terms, our distinctly human linguistic and conceptual meanings evolved from a pre-linguistic level of embodied meaning that we likely share with many animals, particularly our closest primate relatives.

Meaning for Johnson, and for pragmatism in general, is a relation of organism-environment, where we have not two separate things—the organism and the environment—but a unified relationship within which the organism and the environment have interdependent existence and function. An environment is always an environment *of* an organism, and the living organism is *of* its environment, not just *in* it. Similarly, there is no separation between mind and world. Meaning, as a mode of human life activity, is a way that the body is *of* its world, and how it *lives* its world. Dewey talks of immediate meaning that is prior to conceptual understanding and prior to the distinction between subject and object, mind and world. Subject and object are abstractions arising out of our linguistically mediated experience and are not characteristic of immediate embodied experience. Though a naturalist theory of mind supported by most mainstream philosophy rejects the dualism of mind and

body, Johnson notes that dualism creeps back into philosophy in the form of widespread acceptance of a representational psychology. This psychology is based on the idea of mind and world as being in some way separate from each other, with an external world being experienced by way of internal mental representations. The transactional embodied view developed by Johnson and based on the classical pragmatists precludes a representational psychology.

Some of Johnson's criticisms of mental representation are similar to criticisms that Dewey made of the psychology current in his day in his well-known reflex arc article (Dewey, 1896). Dewey rejects a standard notion of stimulus and response in which a stimulus is an object outside the body, the response belongs only to the organism, and the stimulus and response need to be mediated by an intervening third thing such as a concept or an idea. The need to posit mental representations or an information-processing faculty that mediates between an external stimulus and bodily response are present day examples of what Dewey was worried about. In Dewey's view, stimulus and response are functional factors or "divisions of labor" within a developing coordination. The stimulus is the organism-environment relationship in the process of falling away from equilibrium, setting a problem for the organism; the response is simultaneously a movement of the same organism-environment relation toward re-establishing integration. Meaning lies in the integrative response; it is part of the reintegration of experience. The response determines, or gives meaning to, the stimulus as a stimulus. William James also explicitly rejects a representational psychology, saying that it violates our sense of life. Someone sitting in a room reading a book "knows of no intervening mental image but seems to see the room and the book immediately just as they physically exist" (James 1912, 10-11). A representational psychology posits a false diremption between consciousness and content, as if consciousness is a self-existent thing that needs something outside itself as content. In reality, consciousness and content are the same thing "taken twice." A theory of embodied mind rejects any such cleavage within human experience.

Developing a transactional view of meaning based on work by Dewey and James, Johnson builds on the work he and George Lakoff have done on *image schemas*. For instance, because we are the kind of bodies that we are, we tend to think in terms of Up-Down, Toward-Away from, Center-Periphery, and In-Out, to name just a few of the many schematic structures of meaning-making that he and Lakoff have uncovered (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 1980). Johnson brings together this work with Shaun Gallagher's idea of the *body schema*, which Gallagher understands as a "system of sensory-motor capacities," a set of "tacit performances—preconscious, sub-personal processes that play a dynamic role in governing posture and movement" (Gallagher 2005, 26). Gallagher distinguishes the body schema from the body image. The *body image* is one's own body as an object of awareness. In contrast, the *body schema* functions without becoming an object of awareness. Gallagher's idea of the body schema is similar to what Samuel Todes calls the "subject-body," which is the body I am, not the body I have (Todes 2001). The subject-body or body schema, as well as Johnson's image schemas, should be understood not as static structures, but as dynamic capacities for movement through which we engage our world. To be alive is to be moving. Maxine Sheets-Johnston refers to a "primal animation" that is the ground of experience and sense-making (Sheets-Johnson 1999). At its root, meaning develops out of a dynamic capacity for movement of the body schema.

Coordinated bodily movement is anticipatory. A coordinated response to a change in the environment requires anticipating how events are immediately about to unfold and integrating these anticipations into ongoing activity. To catch a ball, I must anticipate its trajectory. To catch a rabbit, a coyote must anticipate its movement and make continual adjustments. We approach a household appliance with an organized set of expectations of how we will use it so that we are ready to use it when we reach it. When an obstacle or unexpected interference interrupts activity, there is, in Mead's terms, an "impulsion" to complete the anticipated act. Habits probe the situation, looking for a way to complete

themselves, and anticipations are experienced as felt possibilities toward a reorganization of the situation. There are feelings of welcoming and rejecting as the central nervous system “tries out” different incipient responses and we anticipate their outcomes. Eventually a definite course of activity is recovered. It is important to note that this process constitutes a kind of “thinking” that occurs on a pre-reflective level. Anticipations are not “mental” in any disembodied sense; they are not mental representations. They are felt possibilities of movement in the body schema or subject-body. The living being thinks with its movements. (ibid.) More accurately, it thinks with its incipient movements and anticipations.

Johnson emphasizes that embodied meaning is emotional in character. James and Peirce talk of doubt as rooted in a feeling of hesitancy, and belief as a feeling of assurance. Johnson draws on the work of Antonio Damasio and other cognitive neuroscientists to show how emotions underlie thinking. Following Damasio's terminology, emotion is mostly below the level of consciousness. Feeling is the conscious awareness of emotion, and “by the time we actually *feel* an emotion much of the essential life-sustaining bodily adjustment has already occurred” (Johnson 2007, 66). We make sense of things through our mostly unconscious emotional involvements with the world. Though emotion may be largely unreflectively experienced, “it is nonetheless *meaningful* to us, insofar as it constitutes an important part of our maintaining a workable relation to our surroundings” (ibid., 68).

To sum up some key points of Johnson's embodied view of meaning, meanings are grounded in transactions of body-world that are pre-linguistic and emotional, they are based in bodily movement and anticipation, and they gain structure through the body schema or subject-body.

### **SOCIAL MEANING**

The human subject-body is a social body; it is born and develops by being embedded in an emotional network of social attention and communication. Human communication is an inter-corporeal affair, a scene of bodies in relationships of movement and

anticipation. Embodied social relationships, for both human and nonhuman animals, are enacted through what Mead calls a “conversation of gestures.” A gesture is any movement of one organism that is responded to by another. It is that part of a whole-body movement that calls out a response in another individual. A movement is not a gesture on its own. It is a gesture when and because it evokes some response in another organism. Gestures can be limb movements, whole-body attitudes, postures, facial expressions, direction of travel, or any movement of the body. The gesture is not the whole act or movement, it is the *beginning* of a movement of one organism that evokes a response in the other. Mead calls these beginnings of movements “attitudes.” A gesture is a stimulus, understood in Dewey’s transactional understanding of stimulus from his reflex arc paper. The beginning of a movement of the gesturing individual is that part of a developing coordination of the second individual that is falling away from an equilibrium and that demands a reinstatement of equilibrium through a response.

A conversation of gestures involves the mutual adjustment of at least two organisms to each other. As one organism begins a movement, the second organism adjusts itself as it anticipates the full movement of the first individual. The beginning of the second organism’s response then evokes an adjustment on the part of the first organism, which then stimulates a further adjustment by the second organism, and so on. In Mead’s example of a dog-fight, one dog is ready to spring at another’s throat; it has the attitude of springing. The “reply” from the other is to adjust its position or attitude in expectation of the full movement. The first dog then alters its response accordingly in midstream. In humans, we can find a similar conversation of gestures in expert martial art contests where there is no time to think. Each participant responds immediately to subtle beginnings of movements of the other. Less dramatically, in everyday life this same process characterizes the unconscious adjustments we make in bodily posture, facial expressions, and tone of voice whenever we engage in social intercourse. As a result, a conversation of gestures is not strictly speaking a “conversation” in the sense of taking turns. It is a seamless flow of simultaneous

mutual adjustment of two organisms to each other in a single system of communication. It is more like a dance than a conversation. As with any life activity, each gesture is a transaction, an organism-environment relationship. In the dance of gestures, stimulus and response are functional distinctions from within the seamless flow of movement of the organism-environment relationship. A response of one organism is a stimulus for the other organism, so that stimulus and response interpenetrate each other. The conversation of gestures develops as a single dynamic system of communication and embodied meaning.

For Mead, the gesture of one individual *means* the anticipated outcome of the social act for the other individual. Recall that embodied meaning is the significance of an object or an event for actual or possible experience. It is an anticipated outcome of an organism's interaction with some aspect of its environment. In a conversation of gestures, the movements of one individual are part of another individual's environment. They have meaning for that other individual in relation to the anticipated outcome of the social act. The movements of the first individual are given meaning by the second individual *through* its immediate responses to the initial movements of the other, and according to the anticipated outcome of that movement. For example, a young chimpanzee's raised hand *means* the initiation of play to another young chimp, toward whom the first animal directs its movements, because play involving both chimps usually follows the raised hand. We can name this kind of social meaning *gestural meaning*. Gestural meaning is a social form of embodied meaning. It is embodied both in the sense that the first animal moves part of its body, and in the sense that the second animal's response is a bodily response. Gestural meaning is not something "mental." It is inter-corporeal. It exists in the relationship of bodily gestures of at least two organisms to other elements of the social act.

At its most basic level, the meaning of a gesture does not require any sense of self-reference by the gesturing organisms. Nonhuman animals, according to Mead, respond only to the gesture of the other, but don't respond to their own gestures. In the dog-fight

example that Mead uses, each dog is totally absorbed in the movements of the other dog. It does not “think about” its own responses. Also, there is no imitation occurring. Each gesture calls out a *different* response in the other. Similarly, in the martial arts contest, or when guarding the hockey net against a rushing opponent, there is no time to think about one’s responses. Responses are immediate and unself-conscious. And of course we know that much of our non-verbal communication with other people takes place without our conscious awareness. In most (perhaps all) nonhuman animal communication, gestures are meaningful to others while the gesturing individual does not indicate this meaning to itself (Mead 1934, 81; see also Mead 1964, 110-11). That is, in Mead’s terms, there is meaning but no self-consciousness of meaning. If an animal cannot indicate to itself the meaning that its gestures have for others, then the animal cannot self-consciously communicate meaning. In other words, the gesture (in Mead’s terms) is not symbolic. Nevertheless, this mutual absorption in immediate bodily experience forms the inter-corporeal ground of symbolic meaning.

### **TAKING THE EMBODIED ROLE OF THE OTHER**

Almost as soon as infants are born, they enter into communicative gestural relationships with adults and are capable of rudimentary imitation. Johnson draws on the work of Andrew Meltzoff and his associates, who discovered that infants even as young as twelve days are able to imitate tongue protrusions and open mouth gestures of an adult (Meltzoff & Moore, 1977). Their later studies found the same phenomenon occurred just hours after birth.<sup>1</sup> Imitative abilities develop as infants gain more control over their movement, so that after a few months they are able to imitate tongue rolling, tongue protrusions to the side of the mouth, and simple hand movements (Meltzoff & Moore, 1989, 1994, 1997). This basic mimetic ability reveals an embodied relationship that Johnson calls a “primary togetherness” (Johnson 2007, 38). For Meltzoff and Moore, it is based on what they call a “supermodal framework” that can unify visual cues and motor responses. This, they claim, allows

infants to have a sense of “like me” very early in their development, giving them the ability to perceive an equivalence between adults and themselves. They note that infants sense this equivalence only with other humans, and not, say, with inanimate objects. But this ability to perceive such an equivalence itself requires explanation. Positing something like a supermodal framework does not do enough explanatory work. A sense of “like me” entails a sense of “me” as an object of awareness. In Gallagher's terms, this would require the infant to have a body image before it had developed a body schema. It also involves a rather sophisticated conceptual comparison—that something else is like this thing that I sense as “me.” Furthermore, the child would have an apprehension of its own physical and conscious states. Very young infants do not seem to have these abilities, and it would be very surprising if they did. Moreover, as in Mead's examples of the conversation of gestures, each individual is focused completely on the movement of the other individual, and not on its own movements. According to Mead, so-called “like-me” abilities can only develop through social interaction rather than serving as the basis for social interaction.

To understand imitation in children, Marcel Kinsbourne proposes that there is an “interactional synchrony between child and adult” (Kinsbourne 2005). This is similar to Johnson's idea of primary togetherness, with the advantage that it is explicitly embodied. Kinsbourne suggests that “there is a core predisposition of the human brain to entrain with conspecifics” (ibid., 68). And by “entrain” he means the child's synchronization with the bodily movements and facial expressions of others. Why conspecifics? According to Kinsbourne, infants tend to synchronize their movements with a source of arousal. Babies are genetically predisposed to find the faces of caregivers arousing, so they entrain with adult facial expressions (Meltzoff 1995). In early infancy, synchrony is restricted to simple behaviors, such as the basic mouth and tongue movements observed by Meltzoff, because these are some of the few movements over which a newborn has a degree of control. As the child matures, interactional synchrony grows more complex and extends to all kinds of bodily movements and gestures.

Much of this synchrony goes on unconsciously as children adopt the mannerisms of their family and culture. Almost from birth, then, the body schema of the infant is synchronizing to the movements of its caregivers. The body schema becomes increasingly social—thus allowing the emergence of a body image—as the child matures.

Is there something about the human body, particularly the human brain, which forms the basis of this embodied synchrony in humans? One clue is our enjoyment of repetition. We appreciate our routines, we like to practice skills, and we are drawn to rhythms and rituals. Of course any animal will tend to repeat what it enjoys or is trained to repeat, but human repetition is often just for the sake of repetition itself, regardless of the intrinsic rewards of the particular activity. Why might this be? The structuring of an unstructured situation, including that gained through repetition, can be experienced as rewarding. Most animals come into the world with genetically established behavioral structures already in place. This kind of genetic inheritance, of course, is largely lacking in humans. The value of repetition is that it brings structure to experience and activity that would otherwise be lacking.

Kinsbourne calls repetition for repetition's sake "self-imitation" (Kinsbourne 2005, 171). We are imitating our own actions. At the same time, we can see imitation as a kind of repetition. Instead of repeating one's own behaviors, we repeat the behavior of others. When we see imitation as an instance of repetition, we can see how it provides needed structure to the developing child. Imitation, or inter-corporeal synchronization, fulfills the same role as repetition, providing structure to behavior and experience. Though imitative behaviors have been reported in other animals, particularly chimpanzees, this is usually within a broad definition of what counts as imitation. When imitation has been tested in controlled laboratory environments and under a more restricted definition closely resembling human imitation, it can be open to alternative interpretations. Even if it is imitation similar to humans, it occurs only after training. Animals do not do it easily. In contrast, human children imitate spontaneously, easily, and often.

Two characteristics of the human brain likely enable imitation. One is the great plasticity of the human cerebral cortex, which allows a vast behavioral space of unstructured possibilities for human behavior and cognition. This lack of structure provides the neural matrix for repetition to take hold and provide cognitive and behavioral structure. The second characteristic of the cerebral cortex is its extensive overlapping of sensory and motor modalities through its highly complex interconnections with different areas of the brain, so that sensory modalities interact easily with motor modalities. This interaction results in the production of Meltzoff's "supermodal framework," which allows the repetition of others to serve the same structuring function of repetition. Mirror neurons, which fire in similar ways when one is performing an action and when one is observing the action done by others may help here, too. The complexity and lack of structure of the infant brain, then, make imitation both possible (due to its openness,) and necessary for human behavioral development because of the lack of existing structure. Nevertheless, overlapping of modalities and openness to mimetic structure does not necessarily yield anything like a sense of "like-me." Something else is required.

A further human ability that may be more closely related to imitation that at first may seem to be the case is the act of declarative pointing — pointing to show something to someone else. This gesture is a request or invitation for another individual to synchronize with or imitate one's own attention. While imitation is a mutual doing in which the child synchronizes her behavior with the adult, pointing is a request for a mutual undergoing: for the adult it is a request to synchronize the experience of what is pointed at with the child's experience of that object. Since any act simultaneously involves doing and undergoing, it is no stretch to think that an organism that tends to synchronize its doings with others would also want to synchronize its undergoings. Declarative pointing is one way to achieve this. Examined in this light, repetition, imitation, and declarative pointing are all manifestations of a generalized human ability and desire for synchrony of the body schema with the bodies of others, an ability that is based in the

peculiar nature of the human brain. This embodied synchrony provides the basis for the emergence of joint attention, and for taking the role of the other in human cognitive development. Taking the role of the other gives rise to symbolic meaning out of gestural meaning.

Michael Tomasello and his associates have carried out an extensive series of investigations of the development of joint attention in children. In the process, he has articulated a view of cognitive and social development that is highly compatible with Mead's theories. We can see the gradual development of the ability to take the role of the other growing out of interactional synchrony. Early social interaction between child and adult is dyadic: the child directs her attention either toward the adult or toward an object, but not to the relationship between adult and object. Between 9 and 12 months of age, attention becomes triadic. Here, children start checking and sharing adult attention, first to nearby objects, then to objects at a distance (Carpenter, Nagell & Tomasello, 1998). In Kinsbourne's terms, the child synchronizes her attention-paying behavior with that of adults. The child also begins showing objects to adults by holding them up to the adult's gaze. The child wants to have the adult's attention synchronized with her own attention toward objects presently at hand. The child and adult are engaged in a cooperative social act and the development of shared gestural meanings. A few months later, this synchronized attention becomes directed to objects at a distance. The direction of the adult's attention toward distant objects is a gesture that *means* a certain outcome of the social act involving those objects. Following an adult's gaze to a distant object requires the child to understand what the adult is attending to within a range of possibilities in the visual field. In some experiments, children also begin to expect certain outcomes from adult actions and will complete those actions if the adult fails to do so. Tomasello claims that the child begins to understand what the adult is *intending* as well as attending (Tomasello 1995). Nevertheless, this is still on the level of gestural meaning. The meaning of the gesture of the adult is the anticipated outcome of the social interaction, understood in the context of embodiment.

At 12 to 15 months of age, the child starts directing adults' attention by pointing to a distant object (Tomasello, 1995). The child now understands that adult attention and intentions can be directed to the same thing at a distance to which the child is already attending. This is a request or demand for shared intention. Joint attention becomes *joint intention*. There is a sense of *we*, and in Tomasello's phrase an activity is understood by the child as "what *we* are doing together." This shared intention forms the basis for symbolic communication, because it involves shared attitudes, anticipations, and the embodied meanings of shared gestures.

### THE EMBODIED SYMBOL

Declarative pointing is arguably the first symbolic act of a child, and perhaps was one of the first kinds of symbolic acts in human evolution. If this is true, then the original symbolic act is clearly an act of the body, not of some disembodied mind. In the act of pointing, both people respond to the gesture *as* a pointing so that they are both attending to the same thing. The pointing gesture of one individual stimulates in the other the same attitude of attending that it does in the person who is doing the pointing. The person doing the pointing expects the other to respond in this way. Pointing thus *means* the same to both—it means, "Look over there." And each person knows that it means the same to both. Tomasello calls this mutual understanding "role reversal." Each person involved in the pointing can put herself in the role of the other. Mead calls it taking the role or the attitude of the other. This role reversal is what makes a gesture, vocal or otherwise, fully symbolic in Mead's use of the term. The child is able to direct the adult's attention with symbols (pointing, using words or sounds, drawing pictures, etc.) just as the adult can use the same symbols to direct the child's attention. Gestural meaning, which is embodied social meaning, is now symbolic meaning, but it is still gestural nonetheless.

Though symbolic meaning is seemingly detached from embodiment because it can be abstractly represented in ways not tied to any particular bodies or objects, it is still rooted in embodied meaning. It is rooted in the felt bodily responses of the people using

and undergoing symbolic communication. A physical symbol might not be connected to a gesture in an obvious way. However, every symbol is the result of an embodied act of creation. It is a trace or deposit in the physical and social world left by acts of symbolic communication that are, at root, gestural in Mead's sense of gesture. It is a physical element in a conversation of gestures where that element evokes the same response in the person creating the symbol as it does in the person receiving it.

Pointing *refers*, or directs, the attention of the other to an object. The *reference* of the pointing is not just to the object; it is to the object as it functions in a later stage of the cooperative act. All symbols are in this sense a form of pointing or referring. For Mead, to think about something using symbols is to point things out to oneself. The symbolic *meaning* of pointing is not a "representation" in the sense of a correspondence between a mental symbol and an "external" object. It is the relationship of the present social act to a mutually anticipated outcome. But because symbols are abstract and cannot be guaranteed to evoke any particular bodily response, it is legitimate to say the symbols *represent* objects as they function in social interaction: they stand for objects other than themselves. Symbols are indeed representations, but they are not *mental* representations. Symbols are public objects with shared meanings in a social world.

Obviously, one of the most important objects of adult attention is the child. As the child follows adult attention and intentions back to herself, she develops a growing sense of herself as an object of attention, and thus an object of her own attention. It is not just her physical body that is the object of social attention, for a child can easily pay attention to parts of her own body without following the attention of others. The adult is most interested in the subjective experiences and intentions of the child. The child learns to follow adult attention back to her own subjectivity and to herself as an intending being, and in the process develops self-awareness. As this sense of self-awareness grows, the child also begins to understand that others have selves and intentions as well. She learns to direct her attention toward their intentions and feelings. This is where a

true sense of "like me" emerges. The child's understanding that the adult is "like me" emerges at the same time as there appears a "me," the self-as-object that the adult is like. The child is now able to take the role of the other in social relationships toward other people and herself in a shared world, and in the process becomes a self. The self develops *out of* shared embodied meanings. As self-awareness grows, so does the awareness of one's own meanings. Where animals and infants have meanings but no consciousness of meanings, the self-aware human has consciousness of meanings and can intentionally communicate meanings through symbols.

To sum up, we can start with Johnson's basic framework of embodied meaning as transactional, emotional, and grounded in bodily movement, but we should also incorporate into this framework Mead's idea of the gesture, his theory of taking the role of the other, and the development of symbolic communication. Symbolic communication is grounded in pre-symbolic embodied meaning of a socialized body schema. Each stage of development toward symbolic communication is a development of the gesture, which is the meaningful movement of the body. This understanding of the development of symbolic communication accomplishes what Johnson sets out to accomplish through a theory of embodied meaning. It preserves the continuity between so-called higher and lower cognitive processes, where the higher develops from the lower, both in individual human cognitive development and in the evolution of the human species.

*Thompson Rivers University*  
[Kbooth@tru.ca](mailto:Kbooth@tru.ca)

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#### NOTES

1. This early imitation in infants has also been confirmed in some other primates (See Ferrari et al., 2006; Nyowa, 1996). However, this imitation disappears quickly as the infant develops and does not seem to play a role in further social learning.

# TOWARD A NON-REDUCTIVE NATURALISM: COMBINING THE INSIGHTS OF HUSSERL AND DEWEY

GREGORY A. TROTTER



*This paper examines the status of naturalism in the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and John Dewey. Despite the many points of overlap and agreement between Husserl's and Dewey's philosophical projects, there remains one glaring difference, namely, the place and status of naturalism in their approaches. For Husserl, naturalism is an enemy to be vanquished. For Dewey, naturalism is the only method that can put philosophy back in touch with the concerns of human beings. This paper will demonstrate the remarkable similarities between Husserl's and Dewey's thought before contending that Dewey's "naturalistic humanism" offers a conception of naturalism which is compatible with Husserlian phenomenology. Furthermore, reading these two philosophers together, this paper argues, can point the way forward to a naturalism which avoids the dismissal of the contributions made by knowing subjects carried out by dominant contemporary strains of reductive naturalism.*



In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* — the last work published before his death and the last in a seemingly endless series of “introductions” to phenomenology — Edmund Husserl calls into question the implicit presuppositions on which the sciences, including philosophy, stand. These presuppositions, he argues, are carried over from the subjective perspective from which scientific inquiry is necessarily conducted. In the lecture which opens the *Crisis*, Husserl points out to his audience that despite the great success of the sciences, a crisis has nevertheless arisen precisely because human experience has been forgotten as the ground of scientific investigation. Because of this, Husserl contends, we are no longer asking the right questions. He writes, “The exclusiveness with which the total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century, let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the ‘prosperity’ they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity...questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence” (Husserl 1970, 5-6).

While Husserl focuses on an emergent crisis of the sciences, John Dewey emphasizes a crisis that has arisen within philosophy itself.<sup>1</sup> Lamenting the vestiges of antiquated idealist and supernaturalist philosophies which maintain a stronghold in contemporary philosophy, Dewey argues that the positing of non-empirical phenomena, that is, anything which can be said to exist outside the bounds of the natural world, leads to a neglect of the very serious problems that must be dealt with here and now. In other words, we have forgotten the questions which matter to us most in our everyday experience. Thus, Dewey, like Husserl, passionately argues for a return to human experience. But unlike Husserl, Dewey explicitly advocates for a naturalistic approach. For Dewey, this is the only method up to the task, the only one that can lead us back to what he calls “primary experience.” But for Husserl, naturalism is precisely the method that presents the greatest obstacle to a return to experience. Given their common

goal of retrieving the experiential ground of scientific and philosophic investigations, how could they have arrived at such different views about the method by which this task is to be carried out?

In what follows, I try to answer this question by arguing that Dewey's particular brand of naturalism, what he calls "naturalistic humanism," shares more in common with phenomenology than it does with contemporary versions of reductive naturalism. I think that when read together, the philosophical projects of Husserl and Dewey offer a form of naturalism that can serve as a powerful alternative to dominant contemporary strains of reductionism. The aim of the present paper will not be to suggest that Dewey is himself a phenomenologist or, conversely, that Husserl is a pragmatist. As Victor Kestenbaum warns of such an approach, "Too much of Dewey's meaning has been overlooked or misinterpreted as a result of the ascription of one label after another to his philosophy. Certainly, to burden Dewey's philosophy with one more label cannot possibly serve any reasonable end" (Kestenbaum 1977, 5). While Husserl has been subject to much less obscuring interpretations, I do not want to risk concealing the importance of either of their respective projects. Rather, the idea is to look at the best insights of both philosophers regarding human modes of knowing and interacting with the world in an effort to get closer to a form of naturalism that does not require that we give up on the contributions to experience made by experiencing subjects. In this sense, the "toward" in my title should be taken seriously. This project presents a way forward for thinking of naturalism along these lines while leaving open for further development the precise path such an approach should take.

### **HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF NATURALISM**

Naturalism is an ambiguous term, to say the least, and this despite the fact that, by most accounts, it is the dominant contemporary philosophical paradigm. In its broadest construal, naturalism simply holds that we should include in our ontology

only entities which exist in the natural world. However, as Barry Stroud points out, the controversy over naturalism is not about whether one ought to be a naturalist but rather over “what is and what is not to be included in one’s conception of ‘nature’” (Stroud 2004, 22). Importantly, one’s method of investigating the natural world will depend on what one takes to be included in one’s conception of nature. Thus, we can distinguish between ontological and methodological aspects of naturalism. The ontological aspect provides an account of what there is, of what kinds of objects are included in nature, and the methodological aspect provides an account of how those objects should be studied.<sup>2</sup>

Husserl seeks to thwart naturalism as a methodological approach, specifically as applied to the study of human subjectivity. However, for Husserl, methodological naturalism is not sharply separated from certain naturalistic ontological claims, particularly of the physicalist variety. As Dermot Moran points out, Husserl associated naturalism “with a parallel commitment to physicalism and, in his day, sense-data positivism” (Moran 2013, 92). For him, consciousness is not some object which can be isolated and empirically studied. Many strains of naturalism suggest this approach. Certain forms of physicalism, for instance, would make of the mind something which can be studied as nothing more than brain states. As long as we have the appropriate tools to examine the structure of the brain, we will be able to learn everything there is to know about the mind, too. As Stroud summarizes this approach, “physicalism says that the natural world is exhausted by all the physical facts. That is all and only what the natural world amounts to on this view; there is nothing else in nature...It not only states all the physical facts, which presumably *can* be determined by broadly naturalistic means, but it goes on to say that those are all the facts there are—that they are the *whole* truth about the world” (Stroud 2014, 27). On this view, everything can, in principle, be studied in an empirical fashion; every object, including human consciousness, can be an object for empirical science. In other words, the same methodological approach deployed when studying the brain, for instance, can be deployed

*vis-à-vis* the nature of subjectivity itself. If we accept the point that all there is are physical facts, then subjectivity is rendered just one among many physical objects that can be studied by strictly empirical means. For Husserl, however, we lose something crucial if we approach the study of subjectivity in this way.

It is important to note that Husserl does not question the tremendous importance of empirical science. The empirical sciences have achieved significant successes and have contributed in countless ways to our understanding of ourselves and our world. But he warns that it is precisely the great success of the empirical sciences that has engendered a kind of blind faith in their ability to uncover *everything* about the world, including how it is that we humans experience the world in the ways that we do. Problems arise when the positive sciences extend their reach into the domain of human experience, attempting to explain human subjectivity as if it were merely one object among other objects. We can detect the continued deployment of this line of thinking in the contemporary drive to discover the neurobiological correlates of consciousness, for instance. For Husserl, however, consciousness is not a mere object. Rather, it is the condition for the possibility of experiencing objects, of having any experience at all. Naturalism, conceived as a methodological approach to the study of human subjectivity, is *the* problem threatening a proper understanding of ourselves: thus, a formidable foe that must be vanquished. To see why Husserl thinks this way, let us look more closely at his project in the *Crisis*, one of his most sustained engagements with the problems posed by naturalism.

History occupies a central place in the *Crisis*, a place it does not, for the most part, occupy in any of Husserl's other works. He is concerned with how it is that the world means something to us. More specifically, Husserl is concerned to uncover the way in which worldly meaning has been constituted. I mean here the way in which, for instance, language, art, and other cultural objects can be immediately apprehended as meaningful. His answer to this question involves the way in which the plurality of conscious subjects in the world intertwine in order to achieve an

understanding of meanings which are co-constituted, co-experienced, and intersubjectively verifiable. The way in which Husserl goes about uncovering this constitution of meaning involves a unique historical operation, a kind of genealogy which directs questions not into the factual or empirical state of affairs of a particular historical moment, but rather into the conditions for the possibility of the meanings we find readymade in the world today. Through this genealogical procedure, tradition is revealed to be the vehicle of worldly meaning, the way in which meaning is handed down through generations, appropriated, and furthered.

To make this a bit clearer, consider geometry, a science that serves as an example throughout the *Crisis* of this form of meaning constitution and to which Husserl devoted a short essay (published as an appendix to the *Crisis*) entitled, "The Origin of Geometry."<sup>3</sup> The formal science of geometry originated with Euclid and was further developed into something more like the geometry we know today by Galileo. But when we undertake a geometrical problem, we need not approach the world in the way that Euclid or Galileo did, that is, without a developed science of geometry. We do not need to achieve the original insight of Euclid in order to solve a geometrical problem. Rather, we can plug in certain theorems, say, the Pythagorean Theorem, and thereby solve our problem without achieving the genuine insight of the first geometers. And the reason that we can do this is because geometry is a science which has been handed down in the form of a tradition ever since its inception in the mind of Euclid. Geometry has been appropriated and built upon by subsequent geometers with the discovery of ever new applications and theorems. There is an entire history of thought and practice which is bound up with every application of the Pythagorean Theorem.

How is this genealogy supposed to achieve the radical reorientation of scientific inquiry for which Husserl is advocating? The idea here is to exhibit the science of geometry, and science in general, as precisely a *human* accomplishment rather than a form of inquiry that reveals pure, objective truths about the world. Geometry, he shows, had to be constituted by a particular

consciousness with a particular point of view on the world. What gets lost in our unquestioning application of scientific methodologies is that someone had to develop those procedures and methods. Methods of geometrical measurement, for example, were developed in response to a certain practical need, the need to build sturdier structures, for example (in this regard, there appears to be a definite pragmatic current running through Husserlian phenomenology). When we forget this aspect of science, when we forget that scientific methods are developed out of human thought and practice, we begin to think of them as rendering truths about the world unadulterated by subjective presuppositions and attitudes.

As Dermot Moran points out, “The peculiar manner in which the world and objects in the world appear to consciousness, their ‘phenomenality,’ is not simply an objective fact in the world but rather an accomplishment of an interwoven web of subjectivities that in this sense transcend the world and are presupposed by the sciences that study the world” (Moran 2013, 90). In the naturalistic practice of science, by contrast, the world is taken for granted as really existing and as being a certain way apart from its being perceived by a subject. But as Moran points out, “[n]aturalism betrays the very essence of science. It misunderstands the world because it misunderstands the subject’s necessary role in the project of knowledge. One cannot subtract the knowing subject from the process of knowledge, and treat the desiccated product as if it were the real world” (ibid., 92-3). If this is our approach to the world, then we will always miss a crucial aspect of it — arguably the most important aspect, namely, our contribution as knowing subjects to the constitution of meaning which is rooted in our subjective and intersubjective perspective.

For Husserl, every consciousness must take a point of view on the world. Thus, even the purportedly objective perspective taken by science is necessarily rooted in the subjective perspectives of the scientists engaged in inquiry. What Moran calls naturalistic objectivism “takes a stance that does not know it is a stance” (ibid., 105). The “subjective-relative” domain of the life-world

“constantly functions as a subsoil” in all our dealings with the world (Husserl 1970, 124). Recognition of this fact is crucial for the development of the sciences and philosophy. In this way, Husserl argues that a reductionist form of naturalism cannot fully explain our relation to the world insofar as it ignores and leaves unquestioned its own condition of possibility, namely, conscious, subjective experience.

### DEWEY’S NATURALISTIC HUMANISM AND ITS RELATION TO PHENOMENOLOGY

On a first approach, it seems that Dewey’s thought apropos naturalism couldn’t be further from Husserl’s. Indeed, the opening lines of Dewey’s *Experience and Nature* explicitly identify naturalism as his preferred method: “The title of this volume, *Experience and Nature*, is intended to signify that the philosophy here presented may be termed either empirical naturalism or naturalistic empiricism, or taking ‘experience’ in its usual signification, naturalistic humanism” (Dewey 1958, 1). But we are already in uncharted waters with Dewey’s melding of the concepts of ‘experience’ and ‘nature’ in his title and ‘humanism’ and ‘naturalism’ in his text — relationships which are typically not evoked in discussions of naturalism. The lines immediately following the above passage evince an affinity between Husserl’s and Dewey’s respective philosophical projects: “To many the associating of the two words [experience and nature] will seem like talking of a round square, so engrained is the notion of the separation of man and experience from nature” (ibid.). Dewey here alludes to philosophies which maintain that human experience is so unique that it is cut off from nature and that nature is thoroughly subordinate to human experience. However, he is equally suspicious of philosophies which conceive of experience as a *purely* natural phenomenon in the sense that it is mechanistic and determined and thus gives way to a reduction of experience, against which we saw Husserl arguing above. Dewey continues, “According to an opposite school, experience fares as badly, nature being thought to signify something wholly material and

mechanistic; to frame a theory of experience in naturalistic terms is, accordingly, to degrade and deny the noble and ideal values that characterize experience" (ibid.). Contrary to these views which oppose experience to nature, Dewey seeks to articulate a form of naturalism according to which experience and nature are irreducible yet inextricably intertwined. This basic position, which seems to guide much of Dewey's thought, suggests a strong but complex bond between his own naturalism and Husserl's phenomenology.

Dewey's primary concern is to develop a philosophy capable of offering solutions to real problems encountered in ordinary or "primary" experience. He spills much ink arguing against philosophical predecessors whom he credits with creating a chasm between philosophy and the concerns of everyday life. Philosophy, Dewey thinks, has been led astray by various idealisms and supernaturalisms: "Not tested by being employed to see what it leads to in ordinary experience and what new meanings it contributes, this subject-matter becomes arbitrary, aloof..." (Dewey 1958, 6). Philosophy's neglect of experience is that "which accounts for the revulsion of many cultivated persons from any form of philosophy" (ibid.). Philosophy must reorient itself *vis-à-vis* the concerns of ordinary life if it is to have any relevance for the aims of humanity. Dewey shares this conviction with Husserl, who remarks, "In *our* philosophizing, then — how can we avoid it? — we are *functionaries of mankind*" (Husserl 1970, 17). But unlike Husserl's attempt to return science and philosophy to the concerns of ordinary experience, Dewey's passes directly through naturalism.

Dewey's enthusiasm for Darwinian evolutionary theory has much to do with his desire to put the concerns of philosophy back in touch with the concerns of quotidian experience. The publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* generated a radical shift in our conception of nature. The account developed in that work overturned centuries of established belief that a "species" designated stable and unchanging traits of a group of organisms. Applied to nature more broadly, these older ideas held

that nature is a kind of teleological development, that nature is engaged in an unwavering progression toward a single, ultimate end. However, given the apparent flux and instability of nature, “there are but two alternative courses” if we are to explain nature as it is in itself (Dewey 1997, 6). As Dewey notes, “We must either find the appropriate objects and organs of knowledge in the mutual interactions of changing things; or else, to escape the infection of change, we *must* seek them in some transcendent and supernal region” (ibid., 6-7). Unfortunately, a glance through the history of philosophical thought suggests that the latter is the preferred option.

According to Dewey, Darwin offers us a way out. He writes approvingly, “Doubtless the greatest dissolvent in contemporary thought of old questions, the greatest precipitant of new methods, new intentions, new problems, is the one effected by the scientific revolution that found its climax in the ‘Origin of Species’” (ibid., 19). By showing that “all organic adaptations are due simply to constant variation and the elimination of those variations which are harmful in the struggle for existence,” Darwin ended the search for a transcendent guiding principle to be applied to the natural world. He showed that rather than owing its development to a divine creator or teleological organization, nature generates itself out of itself. The changes that we observe in the natural world are due to nothing else than the interaction of natural organisms with other natural organisms. Dewey thus credits Darwin with taking our heads out of the clouds, so to speak, and returning them to the world we see before us.

The return to primary experience initiated by the Darwinian revolution raises a question about the status of the knowing subject. What precisely is the relation between the subject and its object, that is, the natural world? Dewey’s answer to this question reveals the unique character of his brand of naturalism and his profound disagreement with philosophies that separate subject from object, experience from nature. Here, Dewey articulates the visions of nature to which he is opposed:

Experience, they say, is important for those beings who have it, but is too casual and sporadic in its occurrence to carry with it any important implications regarding the nature of Nature. Nature, on the other hand, is said to be complete apart from experience. Indeed, according to some thinkers the case is even in worse plight: Experience to them is not only something extraneous which is occasionally superimposed upon nature, but it forms a veil or screen which shuts us off from nature, unless in some way it can be 'transcended.' So something non-natural by way of reason or intuition is introduced, something supra-empirical. According to an opposite school experience fares as badly, nature being thought to signify something wholly material and mechanistic; to frame a theory of experience in naturalistic terms is, accordingly, to degrade and deny the noble and ideal values that characterize experience. (Dewey 1958, 1)

On the former view, experience is a non-natural object and is therefore cut off from nature. On the latter view, naturalizing experience amounts to reducing it to a mechanical and determined operation and requires that we ignore the richness and complexity of experience. In both cases, experience is opposed to nature. Dewey's project, then, is to relocate experience *within* nature without thereby reducing it to merely material processes.

The idea of an intimate correlation between experience and nature is integral to Dewey's thought. In the 1929 Gifford Lectures, published as *The Quest for Certainty*, he can be seen elaborating further upon the points made four years earlier in the Carus lectures that comprised *Experience and Nature*. Dewey notes that "all of the rivalries and connected problems" of epistemology "grow from a single root," namely, "the assumption that the true and valid object of knowledge is that which has being prior to and independent of the operation of knowing. They spring

from the doctrine that knowledge is a grasp or beholding of reality without anything being done to modify its antecedent state—the doctrine which is the source of the separation of knowledge from practical activity” (Dewey 1929, 196). For him, the object of knowledge only exists as such insofar as it is part of an *operation* of knowledge, insofar as it is an object of experience. Or, to put it in Husserlian parlance, the phenomenon has being only insofar as it appears. Dewey goes on to remark, “If we see that knowing is not the act of an outside spectator but of a participator inside the natural and social scene, then the true object of knowledge resides in the consequences of directed action” (ibid., 196). In other words, the world is disclosed precisely through the conscious activity of a knowing, thinking subject. There is a reciprocal relation between experience and nature. As he puts it, “[E]xperience presents itself as the method, and the only method, for getting at nature, penetrating its secrets, and wherein nature empirically disclosed deepens, enriches and directs the further development of experience” (Dewey 1958, 2).

We can now begin to trace some significant connections between Husserl and Dewey. The affirmation of a correlation between subject and object constitutes perhaps the strongest link between them. For both philosophers, subject cannot be fundamentally separated from object. Rather, the two are inextricably related. Neither pole exists in isolation from the other. This fundamental agreement, I think, is precisely what accounts for the significant overlap in their philosophical programs. Indeed, it seems to be the very motor that drives their thought. *The* operative principle in phenomenology is that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something and objects are always objects *for* consciousness. This principle expresses the phenomenological concept of intentionality, and it also reflects a Deweyan sentiment, namely, that the knowing subject is immersed in the world and is always in an intentional or experiential relation with it. It is on the basis of the discovery of this correlation that Husserl proclaims that we are simultaneously “objects . . . in the . . . world” and “subjects for the world” (Husserl 1970, 104-05). Dewey directly

echoes this claim when he remarks that “experience is *of* as well as *in* nature” (Dewey 1958, 4). This principle thus reflects both Husserl’s and Dewey’s fundamental conviction that the essence of both philosophy and science is constituted within the domain of experience.

This crucial idea, I claim, accounts for many of Husserl’s and Dewey’s shared conclusions, the most significant of which is that every conscious, experiencing subject experiences the same world as everyone else. There are, of course, different attitudes and perspectives one can take on the world, but the context of each attitude is that one’s consciousness is correlated to the very same world of experience. This idea, I think, is the key to understanding both Husserl’s and Dewey’s thought.<sup>4</sup> It is on the basis of this notion that Husserl’s genealogical inquiry discussed above is made possible. His historical inquiry into the origins of geometry is possible only insofar as the experience or consciousness of Galileo can be said to have been grounded in the very same world (though, of course, at a different stage of development) in which we are currently immersed. We can inquire into the original accomplishment of the first geometers because their science was developed from the ground of the world in which we find ourselves. We can rest on the original accomplishment of geometry precisely because that accomplishment constitutes a layer in the theoretical and practical development of our understanding of the world.

If there is a universal correlation between subject and object, if the geometer inhabits the same world as the mechanic, then it is equally true that the scientist, the philosopher, and the layman all share the same world of experience. This claim forms the crux of both Husserl’s and Dewey’s entire projects. Accepting this point is crucial for putting the claims of science and philosophy back in touch with the world of everyday experience. Dewey captures this idea perfectly when he notes that “experienced material is the same for the scientific man and the man in the street. The latter cannot follow the intervening reasoning without special preparation. But stars, rocks, trees, and creeping things are the same material of

experience for both” (Dewey 1958, 2). This is precisely the point of Husserl’s entire project in the *Crisis*, namely, to show that science is a human accomplishment developed out of the pre-scientific ground of the life-world of everyday experience. Only when we realize this will our scientific and philosophical projects reach their true potential, only then will science and philosophy “render our ordinary life-experiences . . . more significant, more luminous . . . and make our dealings with them more fruitful” (ibid., 7). Putting our theoretical inquiries back in touch with experience allows us to once again ask the proper questions, “questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence” (Husserl 1970, 6).

#### **CONCLUSION: HUSSERL, DEWEY, AND THE FATE OF NATURALISM**

At this point, the remarkable degree of agreement between Husserl’s and Dewey’s philosophical projects should be clear. But what are we to make of the status of naturalism in view of Dewey’s reappraisal of what naturalism can and should be? The basic point behind Dewey’s particular brand of naturalism is that we should not conceive of ourselves as beings cut off from nature. On the one hand, various forms of idealism and supernaturalism have long maintained that human thought and experience exist over and above the natural world. The latter is thus rendered unimportant. On the other hand, reductive forms of naturalism have led to a similar cleavage between the natural world and human experience, with experience then becoming the victim of purported insignificance. Both of these opposed poles leave no room for reconciliation between experience and nature. But as Dewey shows, the natural world is precisely where the social, political, and theoretical problems that are most pressing originate. A proper response to these questions demands a philosophical reintegration of experience and nature.

The attempt to bring philosophical concerns back within the frame of experience is a project in which, as we have seen, Husserl is engaged as well. However, his philosophy is often seen as

hostile to naturalism in whatever form it may take. This apparent hostility strengthens charges of idealism following Husserl's "transcendental turn." However, Dewey offers a naturalistic framework which does not require that we give up the idea that experience is a crucial piece of the meaning-making process. Indeed, in a Deweyan naturalistic framework, there is no meaning to be generated without the interaction of the knowing subject and objects of experience. Taking the insight from phenomenology that consciousness is always consciousness *of* some object and merging it with Dewey's insight that maintaining this position does not require that we ascribe some extra- or super-natural status to the mind allows us to be naturalists without thereby dismissing the necessary and inextricable contributions of the meaning-making subject. Husserl and Dewey both recognize the importance of the experiencing subject in the process of knowledge, and both recognize that attempts to isolate subjectivity from its position within experience are misguided. By integrating a Deweyan-style naturalistic humanism into this basic position, we can bolster this claim and, at the same time, take seriously the findings of the natural sciences and what they reveal about what kinds of creatures we are.

Marquette University  
[gregory.trotter@marquette.edu](mailto:gregory.trotter@marquette.edu)

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### NOTES

1. To be sure, Husserl also acknowledges a crisis within philosophy. Indeed, he cites the failures of philosophy as *the* reason for the crisis of the positive sciences: "Thus, the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences as members of the philosophical universe: at first a latent, then a more and more prominent crisis of European humanity itself in respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its total 'Existenz'" (Husserl 1970, 5-6).

2. As Robert Pennock has argued, methodological naturalism need not make any ontological commitments. Methodological naturalism states only that, for the purposes of scientific inquiry, non-natural entities do not exist. In this sense, naturalism is a methodological assumption rather than an ontological claim, a heuristic device for problem-solving which guides scientific inquiry (Pennock, 1999).

3. "The Origin of Geometry" is an excellent distillation of many of the themes in the *Crisis*. It is used frequently to talk about what Husserl is up to in the *Crisis* because it is such a concise example of his entire

project in that work. Husserl says of his localized reflections on geometry what can be said about his entire argument throughout the *Crisis*: “Our considerations will necessarily lead to the deepest problems of meaning, problems of science and of the history of science in general, and indeed in the end to problems of a universal history in general” (Husserl 1970, 353). This short essay has been tremendously influential. Indeed, Jacques Derrida’s first major published work was a long, critical introduction to “The Origin of Geometry” and can be read as a kind of “jumping off” point for Derrida’s later work on writing and speech.

4. In a footnote within the *Crisis*, Husserl confesses that this insight about the a priori correlation between subject and object, consciousness and world is the one which guides all of his work: “The first breakthrough of this universal a priori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness...affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this a priori of correlation” (Husserl 1970, 166).

# HOW PRAGMATISM AND REALIST PHENOMENOLOGY CAN BRING COGNITIVE SCIENCE BACK INTO PHILOSOPHY

AARON MASSECAR



*In this paper, I want to show that a strain of contemporary cognitive science could use phenomenology and pragmatism to help move its project forward. By going back to early phenomenology and early pragmatism, we find resources for being able to describe the active role that the environment plays in cognition.*



Recent work in cognitive science is challenging the distinction between the inside and the outside of the mind. Many have pointed to the 1998 essay by Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind,” as inaugurating this particular form of debate (Clark & Chalmers 1998). In that article, Clark and Chalmers argue that features of our environment play an active role in our cognitive processing. The term that they use is “active externalism.” Their theory is also known as the Hypothesis of Extended Cognition. The active process of the environment has been characterized by others like J.J. Gibson as “affordances,” (Gibson 1979) Jay Schulkin as “visceral appraisal mechanisms,” (Schulkin 2004) and Mark Johnson and George Lakoff as a form of “organism-environment coupling” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Each of these thinkers is pushing for an active externalism that seeks to explain how we offload cognitive functioning onto our environment and how that offloaded cognitive functioning influences future experience. Although this debate is relatively recent within cognitive science, it parallels a similar debate that took place one hundred years ago with Edmund Husserl and his students.

Many of Husserl’s students and contemporaries were displeased with his insistence that objects of experience were solely constituted by acts of consciousness. In particular, Roman Ingarden, Max Scheler, and Adolph Reinach were deeply concerned that Husserl’s position led directly towards an idealism that negated the role of the external world in constituting objects of consciousness. Each of these thinkers, in his own way, articulated a form of realism that supplements Husserl’s studies. Ingarden focused on aesthetic experience, Scheler on ethical experience, and Reinach on civil law. Ingarden, Scheler, and Reinach were representatives of a movement within phenomenology called “realist phenomenology” that was working to demonstrate the role that the external environment plays in our cognitive processing.

The main concept that hangs in the balance between Husserlian idealism and his students’ realism is the notion of intentionality. Husserl appropriated the medieval notion of intentionality through

Franz Brentano's rather nominalist reading of medieval thinkers like Duns Scotus. Had Husserl read the medievalists more directly, he might have derived a different notion of intentionality with a more realist bent to it.

This is the way that Charles Sanders Peirce read the scholastics and this is precisely the form of realism that he ended up with, a realism that he referred to as "extreme scholastic realism" (Peirce 1958). His reading of first and second intentions led him to argue for a view of experience that sees our feeling, acting, and thinking as mediated by signs that are themselves determined by objects that play an active role in determining different forms of interpretation. In other words, semiotics is another way of speaking about intentionality.

The phenomenology that we get from Husserl is a form of idealism. Husserl's students, however, describe a phenomenology that emphasizes realism, not idealism. Supplementing this with Peirce's semiotics provides a way of talking about active externalism that places intentional structures outside the mind rather than treating those intentional structures as being constituted by the mind. Intentional structures manifest principles operating in habits of behavior. On the smallest level, these are relations between objects. There are systems of relations that operate with enough regularity that they manifest laws. Laws are descriptions of regularity that manifest themselves in time. Peirce develops his semiotics as a description of the different ways in which the laws behave. The mind develops as a result of its attunement to these semiotic processes, these laws, these relations.

Part of the work of this paper will be a demonstration of the direct connection between these two lines of thought. Perhaps more importantly, the work of this paper will also be to provide a tradition, framework, and vocabulary that cognitive science can draw upon in order to enrich certain features of the debate.

### **THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE: CLARK AND CHALMERS**

In Clark and Chalmers' 1998 essay, "The Extended Mind," the authors use the hypothetical case of Inga and Otto, who both want

to go the Museum of Modern Art. Inga consults her memory of the museum's location and remembers where the museum is. Otto suffers from Alzheimer's, but he is sufficiently aware enough to be able to use a notebook; he consults his notebook in order to determine that the location of the Museum of Modern Art is on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. The only difference between the two is the "location," internal or external to their minds, of what they consult. Inga turns to her beliefs in the form of memories and Otto consults his beliefs in the form of information in his notebook. The point here is that the action-forming properties of the belief are essential, but not where the belief is located. In this sense, we can say that the environment plays an active role in the formation of our activities.

This is the same kind of organism-environment coupling that you can find in the works of Johnson and Lakoff. In Johnson's solo book, *The Meaning of the Body*, he discusses meaning instead of simply cognition. "The key to my entire argument is that meaning is not just what is consciously entertained in acts of feeling and thought; instead, meaning reaches deep down into our corporeal encounter with our environment" (Johnson 2007, 25). Meaning is constituted in our encounter with the world. The meaning that we experience is not based on some purely subjective feelings; meaning comes about as a result of organism-environment coupling. "They are qualities in the world as much as they are in us. They are the qualities of different experiences that involve both the structure of the organism and the structure of its environments inextricably woven together, and even attuned to one another" (25). The environment affords certain opportunities for engagement, and it is in this engagement that meaning is constituted. Within the situation, we find ourselves permitted to perform or not to perform certain activities, certain "possibilities for interaction and engagement" (90).

The embodiment of meaning that Johnson discusses is precisely the kind of embodied cognition that Jay Schulkin is referring to when he discusses "visceral appraisal mechanism." Much of Schulkin's empirical research has focused on the extent to which the

body is actively engaged in appraising the environment long before cephalic processes are involved. Schulkin writes:

At each level of the neural axis there are visceral appraisal systems that are integral in the organization of action. Cognition is not one side of a divide and viscera the other, with action merely a reflexive outcome. Research over the past fifty years, especially since the 1970s, has demonstrated that the brain is not carved up into structures functioning in isolation. Appraisal systems reside at every level of the nervous system. (Schulkin 2004, 208)

Information processing is not limited to cephalic or cortex-based processing; rather, information processing, appraisal mechanisms, are found all throughout the nervous system. Certainly, the skin on my knuckles can't simply decide which pair of gloves it wants to keep it warm, but my skin will respond to environmental stimuli before any of my conscious processes are involved. The point that I am driving at here is simply that there is empirical evidence to demonstrate that information processing, which is the heart of cognitive behavior, is not reliant on the cortex.

When we place Schulkin's work alongside Johnson's, we get the idea that visceral appraisal mechanisms are reflecting qualities of the environment: the body is the recipient of the activity of the environment. The kinds of structural conditions that are required for this kind of active externalism can be found earlier, in the work of J.J. Gibson's "The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception" (Gibson 1979).

Clark and Chalmers, Johnson and Lakoff, amongst others, make constant reference to J.J. Gibson's affordances as the kind of active externalism that allows us to make sense of the positive contribution of the environment for cognition. Affordances are features of our environment that permit certain forms of activity, forms of behavior. The door handle affords an opportunity for opening the door, the

coffee for elevating my mood. According to Gibson, these affordances are directly perceived in the environment.

When Gibson provides a brief historical account of the idea of affordances, he refers back to gestalt psychology. Within gestalt psychology, the whole object is perceived; colors are perceived right along with values. The first person to use the term “Gestalt” was Christian von Ehrenfels, who was a member of the school of Brentano, of which Husserl is probably the most famous student. So, digging a little deeper into the term that Clark and Chalmers use, “affordances,” we have come back to Brentano. Arguably, Brentano’s most influential follower was Edmund Husserl. We will turn to Husserl now in order to show how the contemporary understanding of active externalism was derailed from the beginning by Husserl’s idealism.

### REALIST PHENOMENOLOGY

In *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913), Husserl articulates the different reductions that are necessary in order to grasp the essences of objects. In bracketing and suspending the natural attitude, Husserl thought that he was able to simultaneously grasp the essences of objects as constituted by consciousness and leave aside any questions about the relationship between objects of consciousness and their existence external to consciousness. The essences were important, not their existence apart from any possible experience. This is an echo of Hegel’s move against Kant’s *ding an sich*. Instead of claiming that we don’t have access to the thing in itself, Hegel claims that the object as it is grasped by consciousness is in fact more than a mere shadow of the thing in itself, but is in fact the real object. Husserl takes this seriously and says that we have access to the real essence as constituted by noetic acts of consciousness. But because of the *epoche* that brackets the natural attitude, the connection between the object and the external world is lost. The problem with this approach is simply that it generates an idealism that is necessarily disconnected from the external world. As such, the intentional object and intentionality itself are necessarily constituted by the

mind, on Husserl's account. But the point from the realists' perspective is that the intentional structures are at least partly found in experience rather than simply constituted by acts of consciousness. This, I believe, is what Gibson is offering and what Clark and Chalmers are pointing towards.

Three of Husserl's students were not happy with this idealistic turn, in particular Roman Ingarden, Max Scheler, and Adolph Reinach. Together they form what has been called the "realist rejoinder" to Husserl's idealism. The basic point was the phenomenological *epoche* provided Husserl with access to the essential structures of objects but simultaneously cut those objects off from the world. The intentionality and intentional structures that one finds accompanying these essential structures are then internalized instead of found in experience of the world. Ingarden attempted to demonstrate that aesthetic objects are not wholly dependent on the mind for the continued existence; Scheler, through his critiques of Kantian formalism, attempted to show that values are direct objects of perception, thus showing that ethical objects are not dependent on sustaining acts of the mind; and, finally, Reinach attempted to show that laws are similarly not dependent on sustaining acts of consciousness for their continuity. Unfortunately, partly because of the war, these students were not able to fully develop the kind of thinking that might have moved contemporary phenomenology away from idealism towards realism.

### THE PEIRCE CONNECTION

This move towards a realist phenomenology is precisely the direction I read Charles Sanders Peirce as moving in. It is interesting to note that Peirce and Husserl both started using the word "phenomenology" most prominently around 1901. Peirce then switched from phenomenology to "phaneroscopy" around 1903. Spiegelberg claims this move was made as phaneroscopy allowed for a discussion of the *phaneron*, or the real object, which for Peirce was important because of his work in the development of a foundation for the sciences (Spiegelberg 1981). In any case, Peirce's description of the nature of philosophy begins with

phenomenology/phaneroscopy, then moves up through the normative sciences, and then to metaphysics. From the basic description of the way in which experience presents itself, through aesthetics, ethics, and logic, we are able to grasp the ontological principles that underlie the appearing of phenomena. It is worth noting that the normative sciences of aesthetics, ethics, and logic/laws map on to the areas explored by the realist rejoinder against Husserl.

Peirce, building on the medieval conception of universals, sees objects in terms of their relational structures, in terms of the patterns of behavior that they manifest when they come into contact with objects around them. These relational structures are not static and transcendent, as some critiques of universals would have it, but are, in fact, constantly in the process of development and are immanent to experience, constantly conditioning objects of experience in a law-like and general manner. Laws describe relations among relations. Peirce develops this description of laws into a theory of semiotics. Semiosis describes patterns of behavior that individual objects manifest when they interact with one another. Semiotics, then, is the formal description of patterns of behavior.

Peirce's classification of the forms of behavior, or semiotics, develops into  $10^{66}$  different kinds of signs. His characterization is different than what we would find with Husserl, insofar as Husserl talks about intentionality and Peirce is talking about semiotics; but they both go back to the medieval tradition of talking about first and second intentions. The point that really distinguishes Peirce from Husserl is Peirce's insistence that thought is not in the mind, but mind is in thought. The mind develops out of a more primitive semiotic process. The structure of thinking is certainly something in which the mind is heavily implicated, but that the content of thought is rather the relational structures that one finds immediately present in experience. They are given in experience and are not constituted by activities of consciousness. It is these structures that play an active and constitutive role in cognition. Without these structures, there would be no cognition.

**RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY COGNITIVE SCIENCE**

I would now like to move past the nebulous concept of affordances and to offer a more nuanced characterization of affordances as semiotics. This move attempts to break down the general category of affordances into different types or kinds by showing that, on a Peircean model, affordances do not exist in isolation; rather, they always already belong to a network of relations.

In terms of what Peircean semiotics can offer to help explain this, we can turn to the immediate and dynamic object, and the immediate and dynamic interpretant. For Peirce, semiotics always involves a triadic relation between a sign, an object, and an interpretant. A sign is anything that conveys meaning or information to someone about some thing. The point is that it puts us in connection with something beyond itself. What this means is that each sign belongs to a network of relations that points beyond itself. The nodes in the network are the individual objects. These individual objects do not demonstrate the entirety of their relations all at once, of course, but do so over an extension of time.

An interpretant is the effect that the sign has on the interpreter. Peirce makes a distinction between the emotional, energetic, and logical interpretants. Emotional interpretants involve affects, energetic interpretants involve activity, and logical interpretants involve thought. An emotional interpretant might be the rush of anger that you experience when you are cut off by someone else on the road. The energetic interpretant involves hitting the brakes and swerving out of the way. A logical interpretant might be the thoughts that you have about the other driver. Each of these can be the immediate response to a particular object. For example, seeing a dog might make one feel the pangs of loss, or make one run, or make one think about owning a dog. The immediate response is the immediate interpretant and the dynamic response, such as going to the local humane society to pick out a new dog, is the dynamic interpretant. There is also a final interpretant that articulates how anyone would tend to respond in these situations. This final

interpretant gets closer to articulating the kinds of general laws that were spoken about above.

Interpretants, just like affordances, are multi-dimensional and directly found in experience. Moreover, they are found belonging to networks of possible relations. These networks are the intentional structures that constitute our experience.

In perceiving and anticipating these relations, we use our memory and our imagination to determine possible courses of action. It is through these means that the mind develops. One might ask if there is any sort of empirical basis for positing these relational structures. It is here that we need to turn back to the work of Jay Schulkin. One aspect of Schulkin's account is his description of anticipation. Drawing on the work of Antonio Damasio, Schulkin states that "The hypothesis is that bodily representations informs cortical sites in anticipating future consequences for actions" (Schulkin 2004, 97). Anticipation, though it can clearly take place through imagining future states of affairs, need not be relegated solely to the imagination. Pervasive throughout the body are appraisal mechanisms that anticipate future states of affairs. These different forms of anticipation can be empirically verified through measurement of skin excitation — perspiration being one of the means by which it is measured.

Each of these different interpretants is afforded by an interaction with the object. There is an immediate object and a dynamic object. The immediate object is the particular aspect that is presenting itself at one moment in time, and the dynamic object is the object that gives rise to the immediate object as manifested over time. It should be clear that interpretants without objects are empty — one cannot speak about the content of interpretation without speaking about the object of interpretation. The overarching point for both Peirce and science in general, is to have a convergence of the dynamic interpretant and the dynamic object. For the purpose of this paper, the point is that any discussion that does not take into consideration both the interpretant and the object will either end up with a world-less mind or a mindless world — dependent upon whether it focuses on the interpretant or the object. Peircean triadic semiotics

moves past this binary classification and says that relations are real and the mind is constituted in the perception of these relations. If contemporary cognitive science adopts this triadic approach to addressing the problem of the extended mind, then I believe that many of the current problems will dissolve.

*Independent Scholar*  
[Aaron.massecar@gmail.com](mailto:Aaron.massecar@gmail.com)

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# THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REALISM OF JAMES'S THEORY OF VALUE

*J. EDWARD HACKETT*



*In this essay, I claim that Scheler's affective intentionality could be interpreted as underlying James's thought experiment outlined in Section II of his "The Moral Philosopher and Moral Life." In so doing, I advance the claim that James's value ontology could be described as a type of phenomenological realism, and that this interpretation of his value ontology through Scheler is the best way to make sense of James's metaphysical commitments of value. In the last part of this essay, I show how these insights have opened up future questions I will pose between phenomenology and pragmatism while also grounding those insights in the famous Rosenthal and Wilshire debate.*



While William James may talk indirectly about values in other places, Section II of “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” is the only place in his work where James directly and explicitly discusses his metaphysics of value. In this paper, I give that section a phenomenological interpretation. For James, the metaphysical question inquires into the meaning of the terms “good,” “bad,” and “obligation,” and he works out their meaning in a proposed thought experiment. There are four formulations of his overall thought experiment, and each part continually modifies the previous formulation. As such, I will argue the following thesis: Each version of James’s thought experiment reveals the necessity of affective intentionality and the subsequent intersubjectivity involved in value-experience at root in James as it is in Max Scheler.

At the very outset, I want to acknowledge one overall difficulty. Despite Scheler’s criticism of pragmatism in his *Erkenntnis und Arbeit*,<sup>1</sup> this essay acknowledges Scheler’s harsh treatment of pragmatism while at the same time finding that both are more compatible than his criticism might allow with respect to James’s “The Moral Philosopher and Moral Life.”<sup>2</sup>

This essay is organized in the following way: the first four sections outline the unfolding phenomenological description in every formulation of James’s thought experiment. In the first section I maintain that the natural attitude is found wanting. The second section introduces evidence for affective intentionality, and the third section introduces the problem of value conflict and the intersubjectivity of value-experience. Section four discusses how a possible way to reconcile value conflict lies in attempting to act on the true purpose of values and feeling: God. The fifth section, “Phenomenological Realism,” contains a summary of the paper’s overall ambition. In the final section, I provide some thoughts on the relationship between pragmatism and phenomenology that have animated and inspired the discussion I have here engineered between James and Scheler. In doing so, I offer thoughts about their relationship to sketch out future questions I wish to pose between pragmatism and phenomenology.

### FIRST FORMULATION

In the first formulation, James imagines a world with no God or interested spectator. We only need to imagine a physical world explainable by physical facts. Such a material and physical worldview cannot accommodate value, as values are realized-and-felt in consciousness. Let's look at the text more closely on this point: "Neither moral relations nor the moral law can swing *in vacuo*. Their only habitat can be a mind that feels them; and no world composed of merely physical facts can possibly be a world to which ethical propositions apply" (James 1956a, 190). In other words, the "interested spectator," together with the "mind which feels them," give rise to value. A world devoid of feeling could never have value in it. "Physical facts simply *are* or are *not*; and neither when present or absent, can they be supposed to make demands" (ibid.). An explanation of values necessitates the first-personal order of experience that *feels* them, and a world of physical facts rest only on attributing causal relations between objects. For James, the mind is a flux of sensation and feeling that *constitutes* how we experience the world. In constituting the world as felt objects, the natural attitude falls short. First, the natural attitude is not exhaustive of the variety of things we can experience. Second, the subjective acts of experience we live through as persons cannot be reduced to the same level of explanation within the natural attitude. Therefore, James considers both the subjective and objective features of experience as constitutive elements of the overall experience, or what he will later call "radical empiricism."

In this first section, the transition is made from the incompleteness of the natural attitude to showing that the first-personal level of experience is a necessary dimension for experiencing value.

### SECOND FORMULATION

In the previous formulation, James imagined a world with no mind, but only the bare physical world. Invoking a similar critique of the natural attitude, he, like Edmund Husserl, thinks the subjective order of experience is a necessary part in relation to the

physical world to arrive at the existence of value. As Husserl will put it in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, every conscious act takes a direct object: “We engross ourselves in the *essence of the consciousness of something* in which we are conscious of the factual existence of material things, animate organisms, human beings, the factual existence of technical and literary works and so forth” (Husserl 1983, 67). For him, the realization of values can only be brought about by a consciousness involved (or engrossed) in their relation. James puts his point succinctly, “Goodness, badness, and obligation must be *realized* somewhere in order to really exist.” (James 1956a, 145). As such, James adds into the thought experiment in this second formulation the addition of one sentient mind, which exhibits intentionality.

With the addition of a sentient mind, there is the possibility of good and evil to exist, but only because the mind possesses intentionality. For James, the mind is a teleological mechanism, as demonstrated throughout his work, but for now a passage from “Reflex Action and Theism” will suffice: “...the mind as essentially teleological mechanism. I mean by this that the conceiving or theorizing faculty functions *exclusively for the sake of ends* that do not exist at all in the world of impressions we receive by way of our senses but are set by our emotional and practical subjectivity altogether”<sup>3</sup> (James 1956b, 117).

In the above passage, the order of affective intentionality is added to the thought experiment along with the sentient mind, and in this way James establishes why we can make sense of the ends “set by our emotional and practical subjectivity.” Our emotional and practical subjectivity must be intentional *in the phenomenological sense* to bring about a relation in which the felt contents of experience can be experienced at all. The term “teleological” simply reflects the constitutive nature of the intentional relation since the assigned object becomes the value-correlate of a feeling consciousness. James offers further evidence for this view: “Moral relations now have their *status*, in that being’s consciousness...for he is the sole creator of values in that universe” (James 1956a, 190).

In this statement, James hints at the “status,” and James should be understood as meaning the “ontological status” of values. Values have their ontological reality in affective intentionality.

Many commentators read more into the term “create.” For instance, Michael Slater takes this as evidence that James supports a moral anti-realism about value,<sup>4</sup> yet creation denotes that feeling is necessary to experience people, things, actions, and purposes *as* valuable. Contrary to Slater, a phenomenological interpretation supports an opposing realism and can better explain James’s original efforts (as well as align with later texts). James states that “good and bad, the comparative ones better and worse must be *realized* in order to be real”<sup>5</sup> (James 1956a, 193). This realization and the emergence of feelings into experience finds company with Scheler’s phenomenology of value, and possesses the same commitment to realism. Let me explain.

Both James and Scheler hold that feelings precede our experience. They are primordially intentional, and so those feelings take an object. In Scheler’s words:

The actual seat of the entire value-a priori (including the moral a priori) is the value-cognition or value-intuition [*Wert-Erschauung*] that comes to the fore in feeling, basically in love and hate, as well as the “moral cognition” [*sittliche Erkenntnis*] of the interconnection of values, that is, their “being higher” and “being lower.” This cognition occurs in *special* functions and acts which are *toto coelo* different from all perception and thinking. These functions and acts supply the only possible *access* to the world of value. It is not only in “inner perception” or observation (in which only the psychic is given), but also *in* felt and lived affair with the *world* (be it psychic, physical, or whatever), *in* preferring and rejecting, *in* loving and hating, i.e., in the course of *performing* such intentional functions and acts, that values and their order flash before us! The a priori

content lies in what is given in these manners.  
(Scheler 1973, 68)

In the above passage, Scheler indicates his central insight: that the reality of values is felt in intentional acts of feeling. They flash before us only within intuitive-contents in self-awareness. These intuitive-contents are experienced by the material furnished *in* experience. The material of experience contains the various modalities of feeling persons experience, and value-intuition is not a mysterious capacity posited as some analytic philosophers rejecting epistemic and moral intuitionism. Instead, value-intuition is the sheer qualitative immediacy of feeling. Unlike an epistemic intuition, the feeling act immediately emerges in a relation to a value-quality of a person, good, or deed. Here, the German word for material is *die Materiale*, and Scheler uses this term instead of the German adjective “*Materiell*,” which indicates a modification to a noun asserting a thing’s materiality. Manfred Frings translated *Materiale* as “non-formal” since it emphasizes substantial content, and can be more readily seen in the common form/content distinction.<sup>6</sup> The inference to realism about experience is derived from taking experience seriously and not regarding the contents of experience as mere constructions of subjectivity, but as non-reductive features of the process of experiencing itself. Instead, these contents of experience are really real and emerge in relation to an object. This co-relational intentional structure *is the same* for everyone because the shared medium of experience consists in affective intentionality, and it is this very shared medium that makes possible experience of the world in terms of its ontological reality. As Bruce Wilshire once put this point, “The concept of ‘independently real’ must be related to primordial intentionality of mind if it is to be intelligible. Not only does this not render a causal explanation of experience impossible, it is necessary for it to be possible” (Wilshire 1977, 53). As such, prior to any conceptualization, the experience of the world is first felt.

My claim is that James arrives at a conception of intentional feeling identical to Scheler’s affective intentionality, and in essence,

this identification also means that those feelings bestow meaning on experienced objects.<sup>7</sup> The textual evidence for this interpretation rests on the constant theme of the teleological mind that appears throughout James's work. In addition, the passages in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" suggest that consciousness is necessary for the reality of values and that feeling plays a central role in his ethics. Moreover, phenomenology meets the same evidential demand of concretion in experience that characterizes James's earlier work, specifically the primordial role played by feeling and sensation. For example, he assigns the concretion of feeling as a physical change in the body with what will later be called the *James-Lange* hypothesis, found in his *Principles of Psychology*. As such, James has not conceived a thought experiment about moral properties and moral anti-realism. Instead, James is identifying how it is that we come to experience the contents of "good," "bad" and "obligation." These moral contents *constitute* and form the affective intentionality underlying primordial feeling-consciousness. In this interpretation, then, "good," "bad" and "obligation" are intentional correlates of the feeling acts that constitute their origin and actual presence in experience. This means that "they are objects of feeling and desire, which have no foothold or anchorage in Being, apart from the existence of actually living minds" (James 1956a, 197).

Like Scheler, James thinks emotional life is *directed* at what we find valuable and that requires a consciousness that is consciousness of them—the very same intentional relation Husserl described. Such thinking follows from James's most phenomenological work, a collection of essays he composed between 1904-1906 and was posthumously published in 1912 under the title *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.<sup>8</sup> In that work, the *relations* of pure experience are equally important just as much as *what is experienced directly*. These relations and the directed end, which we are taking as both the intended object and purpose of action as well as the intended object, are the very basis of his realist account of value. Experience consists in this very concrete sense. This interpretation can be supported from his essay "Does Consciousness Exist?"

Consciousness connotes a kind of external relation, and does not denote a special stuff or way of being. *The peculiarity of our experiences, that they not only are, but are known, which their “conscious” quality is invoked to explain, is better explained by their relation—these relations themselves being experiences—to one another.* (James 2003, 13)

In the passage above, consciousness is not a special substance as Descartes described, and does not exist apart from what and how persons experience the world. Instead, consciousness consists of the very worldly relation and aspects that are deeply felt. These relations are worldly, visceral, and concrete.

Consider again a passage from “Reflex Action and Theism.” In this following passage, the realism is indicated by the fact that contents of experience are *given* beyond simply the subjective interests I impose or bring to experience. Just as the above passage uses “relation,” the term “content” below indicates the objectively real felt content of experience.

The world’s contents are *given* to each of us in an order so foreign to our subjective interests that we can hardly by an effort of the imagination picture to ourselves what it is like. We have to break that order altogether,—and by picking out from it the items which concern us, and connecting them with others far away, which we say “belong” with them, we are able to make out definite threads of sequence and tendency; to foresee particular liabilities and get ready for them; and to enjoy simplicity and harmony in place of what was chaos...The real world as it is given objectively at this moment is the sum total of all its beings and events now. (James 1956b, 118-119)

In both passages, the relational aspect of experience is what is most real. The really real is *given*, especially in the 1881 lecture

“Reflex Action and Theism,” in which James describes our minds are structured in such a way to feel God. What is unique to him, and outstrips the intuitive deliverance of reality in phenomenology, is the conception of experience. As far as James complements phenomenology, he conceives of the relational and real object as intended, and once he has that view of experience as the grounding condition for all experiencing, James pays attention to the various ways in which possible experiencers will experience the world and form habits. So far, so good! By contrast, there is no possible way to delimit descriptions about experience, and even Husserl embraced the ultimate revisionary status of phenomenological description. The pragmatist embraces this about experience and calls for experimentation in how we understand the descriptions made about experience. Therefore, James offers us a freedom to analyze how these contents manifest in the decisions a conscious mind will make when suitably influenced by the possible content’s purpose.

However, such purposes cannot be appropriated for experimentation just yet in the text; that is, until another mind is added to the mix. What is clear about my phenomenological reading is that affective intentionality is indicated by the presence of one consciousness. Yet, value experience does not stop at the feeling intentionality exhibited by one mind. The mind that feels their efficacious reality must be a structure shared in common with another mind.

### **THIRD FORMULATION**

In a world of the solitary thinker, however, there is no “outward obligation.” Outward obligation indicates that another consciousness is needed, and this is the third formulation of the thought experiment. At this point, I want to be clear. I am suggesting that James’s efforts are not directed at describing a thought experiment of how to conceive of value or even meta-ethical commitments. Instead, his efforts in this formulation are aimed at describing how it is that we experience values themselves — that is, how values are intended in feeling on the part of one individual

relating to another, and the language of desire is to be understood through affective intentionality, not through the common agent and desire language of analytic ethicists. As James indicates in the *Will to Believe*, human desire constitutes the reality of values. “The desire for a certain type of truth here brings about that special truth’s existence” (James 1956c, 24). The implicit premise here is that “desire,” in bringing about “a special truth’s existence,” is not an instrumental and subjectivist conception of truth. Instead, affective intentionality opens us up to the insight of experience itself. Phenomenology is not committed to supplanting and replacing the content of experience, neither is James; rather, there exists a pre-philosophical intelligibility of experience. As such, human beings can have insight into that intelligibility. When we add another consciousness we now have the presence of outward obligation directed through feeling, and the beginning of the intersubjective experience of values, but a problem arises with two intentional minds.

First, the two thinkers may ignore the different claims that originate in how each feels about the world. One’s preferences may never conflict with the other’s. In such a world, James thinks an increase in “ethical quality” and value-feeling will commence adding to the complexity of value. If Adam desires never to eat apples and Eve does eat them, then there is no conflict between Adam and Eve, and a “moral dualism” arises about the same object. Given that there is no view outside-viewpoint for both persons, “no single point of view within it from which the values of things can be unequivocally judged” then desiring alone would be explanatorily insufficient about the work we want values to do for us (James 1956a, 192). Desire itself is incapable of adjudication, and this insight is the phenomenological point of this section. Without a hierarchy revealed in human feeling and affective intentionality, values would be inert. Adam and Eve would be incapable of taking an objective viewpoint between either their indifferent interests, where practically no objective viewpoint is necessary, or in the case when their desires conflict with the other’s interest. Without value-rankings, there can be no authority or truth to any claim, no decisive

way to adjudicate between competing moral claims. In his essay “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” James understands this limitation very well: “neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer” (James 1983, 149). Here James embraces a modest pluralism about values and desires. The way to solve this conundrum about competing values is to look into the structure of experiencing values.

At this point, James suggests that the direction (and intentionality) of our feelings can help decipher the conflict between the two minds. A “consciousness feels [an action] to be good or thinks it right, we *perceive* on the very threshold that the real superiority and authority” is found in exemplars with insight (James 1956a, 193). Exemplars are people who excel at having insight into experience:

Every now and then, however, some one is born with the right to be original, and his revolutionary thought or action may bear prosperous fruit. He replaces old ‘laws of nature’ by better ones in a certain place, and brings in total condition of things more ideal than would have followed had the rules been kept. (James 1956a, 206)

In this way, an exemplar can come along, reform older ways of thinking and open up a space for us to question the role of our ideals, and how those ideals are conducive to realizing a harmonious life.<sup>9</sup> This questioning happens in someone who can *perceive* in feeling the values opened up through *insight*, and how the consequences of this will concretize in experience. These insights provide fuel for conceptualizing the consequences of how values are felt within experience. As such, James can follow Scheler: values come on the back of desires we have about others, actions, places, and things. Others, actions, places, and things form the object of our feelings, and in feeling them, they offer us insight into perceiving a contextually-mitigated circumstance persons will face.

At this point, James scholars may recoil because of two worries. First, they might object that I am imposing a form of intuitionism on

James that he clearly rejects in the very beginning of “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life.” Insofar as intuition only means the qualitative immediacy of particular contents of experience, James can still be on board with phenomenology, and no such worry presents itself in my interpretation. He is committed to a phenomenological realism. In James’s words, “the immediately experienced conjunctive relations *are as real as anything else*”<sup>10</sup> (James 2003, 48). Second (and even more pressing), these intuitions could be seen as relying upon “an abstract moral ‘nature of things’ existing antecedently to the concrete thinkers (the two minds posited here) themselves with their ideals” (James 1956a, 193). Now, there are two possible readings of *antecedence*. On the one hand, James could mean a temporally prior and mind-independent order of value. If so, then he will not endorse such a position. James’s reaction to a formal metaphysics is well known and would find agreement with Scheler’s rejection of formalist ethics. On the other hand, the other possible understanding of the antecedence is logically prior. The order of values is given in experience and is not abstracted from experience in any sense. Hence, the phenomenological interpretation reads the antecedent-as-logically-prior as making sense of the conjoined experiencing and experienced. The unfolding experience of feeling and the intended value emerge in the material immanence of life itself.

#### FOURTH FORMULATION

What happens next is James’s effort to find something that can have objective authority between the alleged subjectivism in the third formulation and the need for objectivity when other desiring persons are added to the mix. In the last formulation, James starts to experiment with adopting a pragmatic stance towards God. God can occupy the role deficient in the third formulation. “The divine thought would be the model to which we should conform. But the theoretic question would remain, What is the ground of obligation, even here?” (ibid., 194). Even if belief in God is adopted pragmatically, the same metaphysical concerns of value remain.

At the opening of this question, James's efforts cannot be reduced to one particular normative system of ethics. In fact, he emphatically denies that systematicity is possible.

They [anyone disputing questions of good and bad] imagine an abstract moral order in which objective truth resides; and each tries to prove that this pre-existing order is more accurately reflected in his own ideas than in those of his adversary. It is because one disputant is backed by this overarching abstract order that we think the other should submit. (ibid.)

For James, our knowledge of reality is forever incomplete, experienced in piecemeal snippets, and we should cultivate an experimental attitude to the limits of how we experience such snippets in a dynamic world. "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it" (James 1998, 131). Yet, while we cannot be skeptical that we are experiencing at all, we must be modest in how limited any person's experience is. That is why supreme principles of morality, like the categorical imperative or the principle of utility, absolutize the content of moral experience beyond what experience allows in James. Let us take the example of utilitarianism. Part of the appeal of utilitarianism is its capacity to systematically reflect a moral order, even if that moral order is constructed and then projected upon human action, without consulting actual value-experiencing. Codifiability is in the back of the utilitarian's mind. Morality is neatly organized, yet the desired systematicity of utilitarians flies in the face of what James has in mind. This is the origin of his ethical pluralism: "The only possible reason there can be why any phenomenon ought to exist is that such a phenomenon is actually desired. Any desire is imperative to the extent of its amount; it makes itself valid by the fact that it exists at all" (James 1956a, 195).

In the face of such value pluralism, we may or may not adopt a theistic stance, but there is no moral world order to which our judgments – based on desire – could conform without the feelings of the Holy. Here, James introduces hierarchy into feelings and

desire. “That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end” (James 2004, 418). Human beings find certainty in some beliefs out of the expressed need and desire we feel towards life. Thus, when James regards acquiring *harmony* with the *unseen order* as our true end, then he is delimiting which purposes we should be open to in much the same way that Scheler’s value-rankings delimit the purposes we should be open to as well. There are some purposes more appropriate than others; James’s solution to the question of the pluralism of desire resides in the lived-experience of values, the concretion of their effects, and that such claims have forceful appeal (the value-qualities given to us through emotional intuition). Ethics is rooted in our responsiveness to the forceful appeal of claims, even though there is no abstract moral principle that could order all human desire. The fact remains we can have insight into how these values are felt since some purposes are given as higher than other purposes.

### PHENOMENOLOGICAL REALISM

The claim of realism derived from a phenomenological description of value-experience comes from a consideration of human life undergirded by an irreducible depth of experience. I have called this position phenomenological realism. Concerning values, phenomenological realism is the thesis that feelings and values are co-extensive entities, and as co-extensive entities feeling and values are ontologically part of the experiencing-process of reality. This irreducibility of experience is so basic that we cannot be skeptical about it. As James will say, experience “leans on nothing.” That’s his claim of humanism, and the humanism he shares with phenomenology consists in describing the elements of experience with an attention to both what is revealed in experience and how such revelations are actively organized.<sup>11</sup> Hence, metaphysics in light of James and Scheler achieves a twofold character. Following the embrace of pragmatism and phenomenology, metaphysics becomes an analysis of the revealed contents of experience (phenomenology) and the conscious choice of how best to organize those contents to enhance our lives (pragmatism). These contents of

experience are ontologically basic such that any theory of values (let alone ethics) is committed to their ontological reality. Beyond that, however, Jamesian pragmatism teaches us to take ownership of those contents for our own purposes. We all make choices as life unfolds, and those choices are underwritten by active, immanent insight into the order of feeling, an order that follows each of us throughout our life. This order of feeling-acts open us, on an individual or collective level, to higher purpose. A society can come to understand and systematize those feelings (what Scheler called an *ethos*) just as much as an individual can, and higher or spiritual feelings can steer us away from lower purposes to realize higher purposes. I have interpreted James's thought experiment as describing *this process*. Let me add one more piece of astonishing similarity between James and Scheler.

The order of the thought experiment consists of different levels of value-description. These levels are:

1. Nature alone embodied the natural attitude that Husserl contrasts against the phenomenological attitude.
2. An individual mind feels values, and values are realized by the mind that feels them. Affective intentionality is introduced at this level of the individual mind.
3. Two minds are introduced and desire is posited as that which highlights our interest, which is what we find valuable for James. Two outcomes are generated:
  - 3a. If the two minds possess indifferent desires, then there is no conflict of values
  - 3b. If the two minds possess different desires about the same object, then there is a conflict of values.
4. James denies an abstract moral order could simply commensurate the two desires that constitute the insight into the valued interest. As such, God is

introduced as the highest possible purpose of our desires and feelings to solve matters of conflict.

Therefore, James introduces the levels of nature, affective intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the unseen order of the Holy which our efforts attempt to harmonize with. Scheler's value-rankings, while not entirely the same, are similar. They move from the basic conception of sensate life all the way to the Holy. The value-rankings are not reducible to each other. At the first level, Scheler describes sensation, a state shared with any living creature as part of *nature*. At the next level, Scheler introduces the vital feeling and vital values. These feelings correlate with the values of strength, nobility, weakness, and fatigue. They are visceral, embodied, and signal the impetus of the environing world. Psychic feelings and spiritual values are those feelings of righteousness, justice, truth, beauty, and their negations. These feelings-acts are wholly intentional and form the basis of intersubjective experience of culture itself. Finally, there are Holy feelings intending the value of the person. These feelings endure more than any other. These feelings lead us to recognize the incredible unique singularity of the person and our ultimate inability to objectify a person, a living being with spiritual potential. In addition, these spiritual feelings are felt more intensely, and these feelings-acts fill out the entire person such that the person cannot be divided: a blissful person can only be wholly blissful. However, the point is not to master the content suggested by Scheler, but to indicate that there is an order of feeling that we come to know in experience that is similar in the order explicated in the first four sections above.

Experience reveals an intelligible order that is governed both by the realization of it in intentional acts, but also how previous individual persons and collective persons have realized those feeling-contents and value-correlates. In this paper, I have tried to explain James as committed to the same phenomenological realism I find in Scheler's writings.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, this effort implies a deep affinity between these two thinkers since the primordial level of

feeling underlies any ontological speculation about the human experience, including value ontology.

### FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

While this article has been a defense of a phenomenological realism about values and the affinity of that position shared by James and Scheler, there are a number of possible questions such affinity raises. One reason for the existence of this study stems from the conviction expressed at the end of Bruce Wilshire's response to Sandra Rosenthal. He writes, "Sometimes phenomenologists blur founding and constituting conditions... Pragmatism and phenomenology should be seen as mutually assisting philosophical efforts" (Wilshire 1977, 55). How can such mutual assistance be described between the phenomenological and pragmatic traditions? Where do I see this mutual assistance between James and Scheler? Certainly, James and Scheler have insisted on the primordial role affective intentionality plays in how they construe value-experience. Yet, when I point to the primordially and subsequent ontological consequence of that primordially, have I opened both Scheler and James up to the conflation of founding moments and constituting conditions?

A founding moment is identifying the intentional act that gives rise to all other subsequent experience and noemata-correlates. There can be higher noematic-complexes and strata of experience, and in Husserl feeling acts are founded on epistemic intentional acts. As such, values are higher levels of intentional fulfillment that ultimately depend on epistemic acts. Scheler reverses this priority. For him, the intentional act of love opens us up to being itself, yet the ambiguity between analyses of founding and constituting is never clear in Scheler. And James, while committed to *harmonizing* with the *unseen orders*, only describes the concatenations of pure experience towards the end of his life. Nothing gives rise to experience causally except that experience happens. In some ways, a naturalized view of our mind's teleological capacity can give rise to concepts, and a James scholar could fall back on the *Principles of Psychology* as a naturalized account of subjective life and

experience, at the cost of losing the deeply phenomenological nature of James's overall philosophy. Without phenomenology, Jamesian thought backslides into the same ambiguity, blurring constitutive and founding conditions.

The "mutual assistance" wanted from pragmatism and phenomenology is in the shared resources each offers the other to describe experience. In this way, James's pragmatism is a method to solve and verify the accuracy of phenomenological description. Since phenomenology can only disclose the world as it is experienced, which by itself is the very limit of what can be experienced, phenomenology opens up the very categories that inform later speculation. These speculations are tied to experience, but such speculations might later move beyond that which is given in the noetic-noematic correlation. When that happens, Jamesian thought can help restrain the speculative impetus. Phenomenology always collapses in upon itself when the phenomenologist who is so satisfied with her phenomenological descriptions finds herself then using those very descriptions to propose ontological solutions to metaphysical problems.<sup>13</sup> With tremendous accuracy, Sandra Rosenthal picked up on this worry.

. . . [A] "metaphysics of experience" for the pragmatist is not an analysis of meaning structures or of an existential a priori. Rather it is not about meaning at all, but about that brutally "there" independent reality which enters into the texture of experience and with which we interact via the mode of meaning constitution or meaning bestowal. Thus, what metaphysics in this sense attempts to explore is the implications of the *"felt" level of experience which underlies and makes possible a meaningful world of experience*. Such a metaphysics is not arrived at by the method of descriptive phenomenology must be placed with the context of the pragmatic methodology of experimentalism.<sup>14</sup> (Rosenthal 1974, 174-175; emphasis added)

Rosenthal regarded phenomenology as incapable of providing a way to analyze the content of experience as pragmatism does. Pragmatists can experimentally propose speculations about the “felt” level of experience, and if they stand the test of experience, then those speculations can be retained. For her, this experimentalism arises out of a realism rooted in process, which I also see, albeit differently, in the Scheler-James synthesis argued here in this article. According to Rosenthal, phenomenology cannot explain facts about this process. She takes phenomenology to be Peirce’s firstness, as nothing more than the “qualitative immediacy” or “brute interaction” of an organism relating to its environment (ibid., 176). For Rosenthal, the importance placed by pragmatism on lived experience *is* the very reason pragmatism is meaningful. It has the resources to make sense of the felt level of experience, and she proposes that Peirce can also be read as contributing significantly to a metaphysics of the felt level of the brutal *thereness* of experience. Peirce describes the phaneron and, in doing so, he “works back, as closely as possible within experience, to the level of what is ‘there’ in the immediate interaction of organism and environment...” (ibid.). By using “the ‘felt level’ of appearances as an inroad to the categories of metaphysical explanation,” Peirce can establish a metaphysical realism about “the immediacy of lived experience at its most primitive level” (ibid.). As such, the vital need for a method to test these ontological speculations is shown, and in asking what use an idea could be put to in our lives is the fairest test. This test ensures that the phenomenological description does not move beyond the language of human purpose, and that is what Rosenthal thinks is needed in following Peirce—or any of the pragmatists for that matter.

For Rosenthal, metaphysics can only be about the features of the process of organism and environmental interaction. Metaphysics is a speculative hypothesis which offers an explanation of lived experience by providing a “speculative description” of the features of that process which presents itself in the immediacy of organism-environment interaction, which is “open to” certain meanings, and which is known only through such meanings. The pragmatist as

metaphysician, then, is led ultimately to an explanatory real which enters into all experience, a speculative analysis of what that independent reality must be like to give rise to the felt level of experience and to “answer to” the meanings by which the independently real is known.

Minus the suggestion of a completely “independent reality,” the above passage suggests that the pragmatist is better suited to explain, even in speculation, the felt reality of experience. The components of that process have already been discussed through Peirce’s pragmatism, specifically his description of firstness. Yet, what Rosenthal did not anticipate is that gravitation towards ontology is the natural movement of the phenomenologist. There is only so much to describe in the intentional relation. Though to be fair, describing the co-relational structure of act and objects in itself is difficult to establish when confronted with an entire philosophical tradition obsessed with rendering subjective life in the very way we talk about objects scientifically.

The phenomenologist is capable equally of explaining the immediacy of organism-environment when the phenomenologist embraces the collapse and simultaneous opening up of the proposed categories described in the intentional act and intended object relation. Scheler anticipated the questions of organism-environment interaction. In his *Human Place in the Cosmos*, Scheler proposes a metaphysics of experience that speculatively describes “the features of organism-environment interaction” on a cosmological scale. Human beings are locus, the very ground of being, between the impulses of life and the ineffectual spirit. Spirit can only inspire the living being to suspend the enervating impulses of life-drives and in realizing and acting on spiritual intentional acts, the person realizes spirit into the world. God becomes realized as the ground of being through loving acts, and God only has reality between persons realizing and acting on love. As such, we could test Scheler’s later metaphysics through pragmatism.<sup>15</sup>

The point of introducing Scheler’s later metaphysics, or what could be called a philosophical anthropology, is that Rosenthal is directing pragmatism towards the same end. She wrote without

knowledge of Scheler, and if he is a phenomenologist taking up questions she wants answered, then it is not that phenomenology is found wanting, but phenomenology can move in the direction Rosenthal desires through pragmatic method. Metaphysics is not denounced as much as it is necessary to make sense of the felt level of experience, and Scheler and James provide ample theory and methodological devices to make sense of the felt level of experience. In other words, what Rosenthal uncovered in her objection to phenomenology *is* its own movement towards ontology. Indeed, a pure transcendental phenomenology has little to offer the pragmatist (or myself), and an existential phenomenology is already in motion heading towards its collapse into hermeneutic ontology. However, if we take phenomenology to be the preservation and recovery of the very sources of meaning-constitution and meaning bestowal in which lived experience occurs (that is, intentionality), then phenomenology can assist pragmatism in arriving at a realism about the processes of experience itself. Phenomenology recovers the intentional standpoint of the first-person perspective in which we start to experience the world, and pragmatism can test the limits of those insights.

University of Akron

[jhacket4@kent.edu](mailto:jhacket4@kent.edu)

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## NOTES

1. Zachary Davis is at work on a translation of the same essay forthcoming at Northwestern University Press, *Cognition and Work: A*

*Study Concerning the Value and Limits of the Pragmatist Motifs in the Cognition of the World.*

2. I've already engaged in these interpretive tensions before in a comparative piece between James and Scheler. For more information, see Hackett (2015).

3. This teleological point is well taken and the best explanation of it in recent literature is Steven Levine's response of its neglect in Cheryl Misak's *The American Pragmatists*. See both Levine and Misak's articles in the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2013). One might extend this insight further and show how Misak neglects the entire mechanism of pure experience in James's radical empiricism.

4. See Michael Slater's wonderful book *William James on Ethics and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

5. There exists a long tradition of scholarship about the relationship between James and his relation to phenomenology. For the connections made here, it might do the reader well to acquaint themselves with Charles A Hobbs's "Was William James a Phenomenologist," in *Streams of William James*, vol. 5, issue 4 (Fall 2003): 8-13 and John A. Drabinski's "Radical Empiricism and Phenomenology: Philosophy and the Pure Stuff of Experience" in *Journal of Speculative Thought* vol. 2, no. 3 (1993). Hobbs outlines the overall parallels of the later James that I have found equally prominent in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. However, in recent years, it is only Drabinski and Hobbs that focus on the later James though John Daniel Wild's, *The Radical Empiricism of William James* originally published with Doubleday in 1969 was re-issued (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980). The two preeminent works on James and phenomenology in the late 1960s belonged to both Bruce Wilshire and Hans Lischoten. Both focused on the *Principles of Psychology*. These are: Bruce Wilshire's *William James and Phenomenology: A Study of the 'Principles of Psychology.'* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1968), and published in the same year, Hans Lischoten's *On the Way Toward A Phenomenological Psychology: the Psychology of William James*. In addition, there is James M. Edie's *William James and Phenomenology* (Indiana University Press, 1987). Richard Cobb-Steven's work should also be mentioned, *James and Husserl: The Foundation of Meaning* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), and as far as I can tell, Megan Craig has produced the only extensive monograph in recent years connecting Jamesian themes to non-Husserlian phenomenology, that is,

Levinas. That work is entitled *Levinas and James: Towards a Pragmatic Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

6. I have always wanted to translate *Materiale* with a neologism “contentual” when contrasted with the *Formalismus* Scheler disputes in Kant’s ethics. My refrain owes its gratitude to the numerous conversations about Scheler with Kenneth W. Stikkers and Eric Mohr.

7. I am not the first to draw a deep connection to the work of Scheler and James. The most impressive account of this relationship textually consists of two places. First, there are some brief elements of how Scheler encountered pragmatism detailed in Fring’s *The Mind of Max Scheler* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), but most impressively, this connection is made by Kenneth W. Stikkers in his Preface to *The Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* trans. M. Frings (London: Routledge, 2012). In the last three years, there is also an article by Rebecca Farinas, “Art and Soul: James and Scheler on Pragmatic Aesthetics” in *Pragmatism Today* vol. 4, no. 1 (2013): 99-109. However, I must caution the reader that there are some series exegetical defects with Farinas about Scheler’s work that make me wary about the connections she draws between James and Scheler. She considers that Scheler’s value-hierarchy “is based on a formal, abstract a priori, but it is relative to lived experience” (104); she uses the term value-disposition as an origin of the value-hierarchy, and she stresses that Scheler’s axiology is “dependent on democratic, free actions within lived-experience” (ibid.). The first is erroneous since Scheler is resisting the formal apriority of Kantian ethics and immediate immanence of lived-experience reveals the “material a priori.” An argument could be made that if James has a conception of C. I. Lewis’s “operative a priori”, then Scheler’s material a priori may be very similar. Second, the language of “disposition” is too psychological to describe the phenomenological intentional act-center of the person that Scheler is describing. Lastly, the value hierarchy is not dependent on “democratic, free actions within lived experience” since there is nothing democratic about value-cognition. This third claim suffers from serious ambiguity and it is never qualified; I’m afraid these errors and others are only exacerbated since Farinas never develops her interpretation of Scheler by consulting any other texts in Scheler’s corpus other than the essay “Metaphysics and Art.”

8. The most decisively concise statement of James’s radical empiricism rooted in phenomenology is Charles Hobbs’s article mentioned in note 5 above.

9. I will not press the point here, but this later passage is suggestive. Interpreted in the direction I am pushing James, the passage could suggest James's ethics to be compatible with Scheler's ethical personalism.

10. Conjunctive relations are all those conscious relations of particular contents of pure experience, and pure experience is at root the primordial feeling and sensation of reality itself. "Pure experience," James writes a page later, "is *but another name for feeling and sensation*" (James, 2003, emphasis added).

11. While not a comparison between Scheler and James, I develop the case for a humanism based upon James and Husserl. See Hackett (2013b).

12. For more information about my interpretation, see Hackett (2013a).

13. In this way, one can naturally understand the outgrowth of Heideggerian fundamental ontology *qua* Husserlian phenomenology.

14. I italicized a portion of this passage where her words explain Scheler quite well.

15. For more information on my efforts along these lines, see Hackett (2015).

# THE EARLY RECEPTION OF JAMES'S *VARIETIES*

WILLIAM JAMES SOCIETY  
2014 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*JAMES CAMPBELL*



*This paper takes up a series of four related themes from among the many that appear in The Varieties, and considers how they were received by early commentators. The four themes are: (1) James's adoption of a psychological standpoint for examining matters religious; (2) his position that personal experience is a better indicator of the meaning of religion than any second-hand evidence; (3) his view that extreme, even morbid, experiences are more valuable to study; and (4) his exploration of the question of religious truth. The value in returning to these early commentaries after over a century is that they offer us a sense of how The Varieties was received by his presumed target audience.*



William James's Gifford Lectures in Natural Religion, published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, were delivered in Edinburgh, Scotland, in two series of ten lectures each between May 1901 and June 1902. His original plan was to divide the twenty lectures in half, offering in the first series a consideration of "Man's Religious Appetites," a psychological or descriptive account of our religious propensities, and in the second series a more metaphysical consideration of the philosophical significance of these propensities in "Their Satisfaction through Philosophy" (VRE 5; cf. 13). As he prepared the lectures, however, the amount of psychological material continued to grow. The experiential data fascinated him, and he was drawn to explore it more deeply than he had originally intended. As a result, the exploration of the religious propensities of his many witnesses came to make up the bulk of the volume. While the metaphysical material consequently became much less prominent, this fact should not suggest that the latter inquiry into the significance of these experiences was of lesser interest to James.

In my remarks, I want to tease out a series of four related themes from among the many that appear in *The Varieties*, and consider how they were received by early commentators. The four themes are: (1) James's adoption of a psychological standpoint for examining matters religious; (2) his position that personal experience is a better indicator of the meaning of religion than any second-hand evidence; (3) his view that extreme, even morbid, experiences are more valuable to study; and (4) his exploration of the question of religious truth. The value in returning to these early commentaries after over a century is that they offer us a sense of how *The Varieties* was received by his presumed target audience. In our ongoing attempts to understand and evaluate this text, we can benefit from a familiarity with the interpretations of its early readers.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

Beginning with the psychological standpoint, James admits that he was "neither a theologian, nor a scholar learned in the history of

religions, nor an anthropologist.” He was, rather, a psychologist — a very skilled psychologist — and, as he notes, for the psychologist “the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution” (VRE 12). Thus, he believes that the phenomena of nervous instability and psychical visitations, of trances and voices and visions, of melancholy and obsessions and fixed ideas, that he details in *The Varieties* should be just as interesting to the psychologist as are other mental phenomena. Considering the phenomenon of “instantaneous conversion,” for example, he writes “[w]ere we writing the story of the mind from the purely natural-history point of view, with no religious interest whatever, we should still have to write down man’s liability to sudden and complete conversion as one of his most curious peculiarities” (VRE 188). Regardless of our eventual interpretation of such a conversion as either “a miracle in which God is present as he is present in no change of heart less strikingly abrupt,” or as “a strictly natural process . . . neither more nor less divine in its mere causation and mechanism than any other process, high or low, of man’s interior life. . .” (ibid.), the conversion experience itself is an event to which the psychologist should attend. In his careful — almost clinical — introduction to the lectures, James the psychologist proceeds with an inquiry that attempts to provide “a true record of the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate” (VRE 14). For him, experiential religion is of immense importance to a full understanding of human nature, not to be neglected by psychology. It is further necessary to avoid the prejudices of “medical materialism” (VRE 20) that these experiences represent evidence symptomatic of mental illness. He admits that those who lead deeply religious lives — saints, martyrs, and others — may be statistically unusual; but he maintains that they are not significantly more unusual than those who live for sports or music, for gardening or philosophy.

James assumes the perspective of physiological psychology that maintains that “definite psycho-physical connexions . . . hold good” and assumes that “the dependence of mental states upon bodily

conditions must be thorough-going and complete” (VRE 20). He continues that, while the methods of psychology are far different from those traditionally associated with inquiries into spiritual matters, this mode of inquiry should not be seen as a rejection, or even a disparagement, of religion. While handling the phenomena of religious experience “biologically and psychologically as if they were mere curious facts of individual history” might suggest to some individuals “a degradation of so sublime a subject,” or even worse an attempt “to discredit the religious side of life” (VRE 14), he sees no necessary connection between his use of the methods of psychological science and any efforts to undermine the potential human value of religion. As he writes, “how can such an existential account of facts of mental history decide in one way or another upon their spiritual significance?” (VRE 20). Psychology explores, in a manner that applies equally well to “the dicta of the sturdy atheist” and to “those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul” (ibid.), human self-understanding. Religious behavior is ultimately human behavior; and the various phenomena of the religious life — melancholy, trances, conversions, and so on — are each “special cases of kinds of human experience of much wider scope” (VRE 28).

Some of the commentators on *The Varieties* were not as comfortable as James was with adopting the standpoint of psychology. Frank Sewall, for example, writes that “[t]o treat religion as a psychologist and at the same time to regard it only as ‘natural,’ necessitates the elimination of the spiritual element and the directing of attention only to exhibitions of what is called the religious emotions on the sensuous and neurotic plane of life.” (Sewall 1903, 244-245). Ferdinand Courtney French goes in the opposite direction. Rather than suggesting that psychology undermines religion, he maintains that religion undermines psychology. French writes that, because experiences like “sudden conversions, celestial visions and mystic ecstasies” begin in “the hidden region of the subconscious,” they are quite frequently ascribed “to a supernatural source” (French 1905, 380). He notes that for the most part modern psychology treats these experiences as

“subjective facts,” while at the same time denying their presumed “ontological significance” (ibid.). James, however, offers a different approach, one that maintains that the phenomena of religious life indicate access to a spiritual world. French responds that to follow James is to abandon the scientific approach: “Whatever metaphysics or epistemology may say of such a view, psychology as a science must regard these religious experiences as purely phenomenal” (ibid.). Science must be “as rigorously phenomenistic in the mental sphere as in the physical sphere,” he continues; and, regardless of any personal interpretation of these experiences, psychologists should not discover in them “any manifestation of the transcendent” (ibid.).

### THE PRIMACY OF EXPERIENCE

The second theme in *The Varieties* that I wish to consider is the primacy of experience. For James, the personal aspects of religion are the core, and all of the rest — the non-experiential — is second-hand. “In seeing freshly, and not in hearing of what others saw, shall a man find what truth is” (ERM 111), he writes at his most Emersonian.<sup>1</sup>

James continues that personal religion is “the primordial thing,” and that it “will prove itself more fundamental than either theology or ecclesiasticism.” Churches and other religious institutions, once established by founders as diverse as Christ, the Buddha, Mahomet, and the originators of the various Christian denominations, “live at second-hand upon tradition; but the *founders* of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communion with the divine” (VRE 33). Further, he notes that “the evidence for God lies primarily in inner personal experiences” (P 56). He writes that religion does not continue because of its “abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives,” nor its “faculties of theology and their professors.” These are simply “after-effects” and “secondary accretions” upon what he calls the “phenomena of vital conversation with the unseen divine” that renew themselves over the ages “in the lives of humble private men” (VRE 352; cf. P 266). For Edwin Diller Starbuck, the focus of James’s inquiry remains such

questions as “[w]hat does this particular religious experience feel like from the *inside*, and how does the world look viewed from this standpoint?” (Starbuck 1904, 101). We cannot advance such an inquiry through the study of doctrines or institutions, but only through the exploration of religious personalities. One anonymous reviewer praises James for his ability “to understand and interpret experiences which he does not share, except as a poet sympathetically shares the experiences which he portrays” (Anonymous 1902, 993). In this regard, Sewall notes that “we see good old John Bunyan, and the preacher Whitefield, and Saint Theresa, and Cotton Mather, Channing, Tolstoi, and Thoreau, Billy Bray, Madame de Guyon, Sister Seraphique, Saint Francis and Saint Xavier, William Penn and John Woolman, and many others led out by the magic of this master to dance, so to speak, to the measures of the modern psychology of religion” (Sewall 1903, 244). Freed of all historical context and doctrinal blinders, these individuals are able to portray the fullness of their religious experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the early commentators on *The Varieties*, perhaps because of their roots within the Protestant tradition, seem not to have been greatly bothered by the personal aspect of James’s study.<sup>3</sup> Other commentators, however, note that James’s personal, even private, approach to his topic runs counter to the social understanding of the religious life that they favored. For John Grier Hibben, for example, “the significance of the individual case of personal religious experience can be adequately appreciated only in its general religious setting and historical antecedents” (Hibben 1903, 185). Thus, the meaning of even “[t]he extreme case of religious experience” must be evaluated through a consideration of “its effect upon the community, the tribe, the nation, or the age in which it occurs” (ibid., 184). Further, Hibben notes that while even “great religious movements” are rooted in “the personal religious experience of a conspicuous leader of thought,” at the same time that leader must be “accounted for in a large measure by the religious atmosphere of the age in which he lives” (ibid., 185). So, while it is true “that Luther founded Protestantism; it is also true that Protestantism produced Luther” (ibid.).

### THE VALUE OF THE EXTREMES

The third theme that I wish to explore is James's belief that it is better to study religious experiences of the more extreme sort. From his initial focus upon the personal, we now turn to consider "the acute religion of the few against the chronic religion of the many" (VRE 98); and James urges us not to waste time with individuals for whom religion is "a dull habit." Rather, we should examine those for whom it is "an acute fever." The typical member of the former group he sees as only being religious at "second-hand": "His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit" (VRE 15). Thus, little is to be gained by our study of such individuals. Much, however, is to be gained by studying the members of the latter group, made up of individuals who burn with religious fervor. These individuals, whom James characterizes as the "geniuses" of religion, have demonstrated in their lives all sorts of "peculiarities" that the average believer has not; but, while admitting that these experiences are "ordinarily classed as pathological" (*ibid.*), he advocates their careful examination.

We know that, in general, James "loaded the lectures with concrete examples," maintaining, as we might expect, that "a large acquaintance with particulars often makes us wiser than the possession of abstract formulas, however deep" (VRE 5). We know further that he chose many of these examples from among what he calls "the extremer expressions of the religious temperament." While he recognized that his focus on these "convulsions of piety" (*ibid.*) might make some in his audience uncomfortable, his intention was to portray religion in what he called "its more completely evolved and perfect forms" (VRE 12). It was his belief that we should stay away from the vague border areas and focus upon the most central and flamboyant instances of religious experience. He writes that "at their extreme of development, there can never be any question as to what experiences are religious. The divinity of the object and the solemnity of the reaction are too well marked for doubt" (VRE 40). When there is doubt or hesitation on our part, it is because the religious state of mind is weak, and thus "hardly

worthy of our study at all.” For him, it is important to concentrate on those “exaggerated” cases “where the religious spirit is unmistakable and extreme” (VRE 40; cf. 26, 44, 48, 303). In this context, when he introduces the concept of “pathology,” he should not be understood to be implying that he views religious experiences as episodes of mental disorder. The term should suggest, rather, an amplification or magnification of a sort that he believes is particularly helpful to scientific inquiries. If we hope to understand these religious phenomena as continuous with the rest of human behavior, he continues, “we cannot possibly ignore these pathological aspects of the subject. We must describe and name them just as if they occurred in non-religious men” (VRE 17).<sup>4</sup> After all, he writes, “[t]he sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down” (VRE 46; cf. ERM 62; C 10:458).

James’s interest in the more extreme forms of religious experience met with far greater resistance from the religious commentators than his personal focus. While Eric Strickland Waterhouse maintains that had James’s volume “been limited to normal forms, the disregard of the abnormal would have been held sufficient condemnation,” and F.C.S. Schiller has no problem with the fact that James explores “the dark corners of the human mind,” others complained about the overall emphasis of the work (Waterhouse 1910, 327; Schiller 1903, 404). George B. Stevens writes that the volume exhibits “especially the abnormal and bizarre manifestations of religious sentiment,” and as a result produces “the most unconventional and the raciest treatment of the philosophy of religion which has yet appeared” (Stevens 1903, 114-115). George Albert Coe writes that James made no attempt “to separate the typical from the aberrational.” Rather, “[t]he average religious man is even said to be an imitator of the extremist, who is the ‘pattern-setter’” (Coe 1903, 66-67). Further, James gives “exceeding prominence . . . to morbid growths,” and as a result the volume “can hardly be regarded as a portrait” of religious consciousness (*ibid.*). A. Caldecott offers his similar impression that James has made “too much of the abnormal and the morbid: more than we can make use

of if we are bent on attaining a really scientific view of the religious nature of man" (Caldecott 1910, 312).<sup>5</sup>

In defense of the everyday, Hibben grants that "while the extreme case may throw much light upon the nature of religious experience . . . the abnormal in turn cannot be adequately estimated save through the light shed upon it by the normal" (Hibben 1903, 183). For him, our focus should thus be "midway between the extremes," and our goal should be attempting to understand "the normal man, the great body of sane individuals whose religious experiences are no more connected with pathological phenomena than their experiences of friendship, of patriotism, or of moral obligation" (ibid.). Our inquiries in religion should be grounded in "the common experiences, the commonplace experiences if you will, of simple conviction and quiet devotion" (ibid., 184). In a similar fashion, Starbuck notes that "James sets great store by intense experiences, and passes by the ordinary experiences as being poor copies or mere conventionalities" (Starbuck 1904, 103). He continues that James believes that these "extreme examples" presented to us by "the expert specialists in religion, even though eccentric, . . . yield the profounder information" (ibid.). For Starbuck, however, "one must believe that the study of variants in development gives fruitful results only in that they illustrate in a graphic way the normal processes of growth" (ibid.). Without the background of normal processes, we cannot tell what to make of the others. The focus of our efforts in psychology must thus be to understand the commonplace. Further, Starbuck suggests that "the dramatic souls, the specialists in religion," had not been as "original and causative" in the development of religions as James believes (ibid.). He maintains, on the contrary, "that the great and solid results of human attainment are wrought out within the everyday life of the compact mass of humanity; that it is there we are to go if we are to get the truest picture at last of what religion really is" (ibid., 104). It is these individuals, Starbuck writes, whom we must study because it is likely that "this mass of living, acting, striving persons, with its varying shades of experience, and its fine feel each for the other . . . has done more, not only in refining and fixing our modes

of religious life, but in discovering and shaping them in beliefs, than have the ‘revelations’ of all mystics combined” (ibid.).

In further defense of normalcy, Sewall would avoid both “dreary examples . . . of the dull, habitual kind” of religion that James rejects, and “the acute kind of religious emotional pathology” that he champions (Sewall 1903, 246). For Sewall, we should seek out examples of “normal religion,” by which he means “religion as a perfectly normal, healthy, and happy factor in human life” (ibid.). As a result, he contends that, in *The Varieties*, James has dealt with “every variety of religious experience, save that of genuine religion itself” (ibid.). He writes further that what James offers in these “entertaining and oftentimes amusing chapters . . . is only a collection of eccentric examples of emotional or intellectual disorder, and by no means of the normal and healthy religion of every-day life as the average world know it and respect it, however varied and unsuccessful are their efforts to realize it” (ibid., 248-249). Thus, Sewall calls into question James’s assumption that “the abnormal is the way to the normal, and the diseased life the best means of studying the life in health” (ibid., 249). For him, James’s method of studying religion is like “walking through a medical museum, as compared with watching a body of healthy youth on a spring morning in the athletic field” (ibid., 250).<sup>6</sup>

For his part, Adolph Augustus Berle wants religious experiences to be taken seriously, and thus he has a good deal of sympathy with James’s approach; but, he continues, “we do not want, and the Christian people as a whole will not permit, the experiences of the church to be grounded even superficially in these transitory and least impressive elements, which, while furnishing the materials for thought and suggestion, are never to be confounded with the real power which is over and behind them” (Berle 1903, 14). As he continues, James is mistaken to draw so heavily from cases of a pathological sort. “There are millions of people who know nothing, and will never know anything, of most of the diseases which occupy the medical practitioner and the surgeon. This whole method is the method of the pathologist, which is fundamentally false as applied to the spiritual life” (ibid., 18-19). Finally, Rashdall protests against

James's study in which his "sole interest" seems to be in the "abnormal character" of the experiences. Rashdall has serious doubts about "James's preoccupation with the marvelous and the abnormal" (Rashdall 1903, 246-247). He believes that James finds "the essence of religion in feeling and emotion," and that he rejects religion's "rational or intellectual side" (ibid.). Further, because James seems to ground religion "entirely upon the evidence afforded by these abnormal experiences to the few who have gone through them," others who have not been so blessed "must apparently depend entirely upon the external testimony of those who have experienced such things" (ibid., 248).<sup>7</sup>

### RELIGIOUS TRUTH

The final theme that I wish to consider is James's discussion of the question of religious truth. Wedged between "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" (1898) and *Pragmatism* (1907), *The Varieties* offers us a sketch of his developing Pragmatism. He is particularly interested in grounding theoretical discussions of religion in the practical differences that would "result from one alternative or the other being true" (VRE 350). Using this criterion, he maintains that discussions of God's familiar "metaphysical attributes" — aseity and necessariness and immateriality and indivisibility and so on — have no significance for human experience (VRE 351). If, however, we engage with what James calls God's "moral" attributes, like holiness, omnipotence, justice, and love, we will find there material that functions in life. "They positively determine fear and hope and expectation" (VRE 353).

Exploring these moral attributes reminds us that for James happiness is at the core of our being. "How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure." He believes, further, that religion contributes to this pursuit, and that the happiness that religious belief offers us serves "as a proof of its truth." When such belief brings a person happiness, it "almost inevitably" is adopted. "Such a belief ought to be true," he writes of the believer's ideation, "therefore it is true" (VRE 71). Throughout

*The Varieties*, James discusses the various religious experiences as possessing “enormous biological worth.” Still, we may wonder whether there is any worth to the content-claims of these revelations? As he himself writes, “[w]hat is the objective ‘truth’ of their content?” While he admits that “the natural propensity of man is to believe that whatever has great value for life is thereby certified as true,” he still means for ‘truth’ itself to be “taken to mean something additional to bare value for life” (VRE 401; cf. 300). Believers, of course, assume that religion is true in the sense that their theological doctrines correspond with some supernatural reality. James writes that religious people believe “that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom the God is present, are secure in his parental hands.” In this comfortable state of dependence, they rest assured that “we are *all* saved, in spite of the gates of hell and all adverse terrestrial appearances.” Because God exists, there is “an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved” (VRE 407; cf. P 55, 264).

The question of religious truth remains a complicated topic. Theological ideas seem to exist on at least two levels; and each of them, in some sense, claims to correspond with reality. First, there is the idea of an existent Being, a God, with whom believers have a nurturing relationship. Second, there is the idea of palpable benefits that we derive from the feeling that we have a relationship with this God. For traditional believers, the former has priority; and actual benefits from believing in a God are possible only if there is a relationship with an actual God. James suggests an alternate approach that enables us to count the benefits themselves as evidence of the relationship with a God. The problem that he sees with focusing initially on the existence of a God is that our attempts to reach an answer may defy ages of serious effort. In the meantime, the lives of many potential believers would suffer if they were forced to forego the potential happiness from a belief in a God whose existence could not be antecedently proven. This open stance is the one from which he writes “the uses of religion, its uses to the individual who has it, and the uses of the individual himself to the world, are the best arguments that truth is in it” (VRE 361). He had

recognized all of this earlier in *The Varieties*, when he wrote that religious opinions, like any other respectable opinions, must be tested “by logic and by experiment”; but when we test our beliefs, these tests must be broad in nature, considering such criteria as “[i]mmediate luminousness, . . . philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness” (VRE 23).<sup>8</sup>

James’s folding of the question of truth back into the question of value is another instance of his belief that in the fullness of experience there is much that reason cannot prove. In our lives, we are frequently without “articulate reasons”; and rationality is only one of the values in the full life of the person. If individuals have spiritual intuitions, he writes, “they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits . . . something in you absolutely *knows* that the result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it” (VRE 67). James admits that he is speaking here descriptively rather than prescriptively, of lived experience, simply recognizing the fact that people tend to follow their intuitions. “I do not yet say that it is *better* that the subconscious and non-rational should thus hold primacy in the religious realm,” he writes. “I confine myself to simply pointing out that they do so hold it as a matter of fact” (VRE 68; cf. 340-342).

James’s presentation of the matter of religious truth in *The Varieties* was opposed by early commentators in at least two ways. Some thought that the volume betrayed credulity about the objects of religious belief; others challenged his understanding of how religious belief “works.” Beginning with the charge of credulity, Hibben notes that James is open to infiltration from the subconscious. Hibben fears, however, that the subconscious “may be also the region of chimeras and delusion” (Hibben 1903, 185). Berle continues that James refuses to distinguish between more familiar Christian experience and “all of the pseudo-experiences which more or less masquerade under the appellation Christian” (Berle 1902, 933). Here he points to the way that James would allow “Mrs. Eddy’s Christian Science, [John Alexander] Dowie’s Zionism and other similar cults [to] stand on precisely the same scientific

basis with Christian experience” (ibid.). In James’s attentiveness to the testimony of his sources, he “opens the gates to all” and “accepts the statements of all his witnesses at face value” (ibid.). As a result, his many informants present a wave of testimony that is offered as “just as true and valuable for the interpretation of religious experience as the body of Christian testimony which has been the bulwark of the church’s confidence for centuries” (ibid.). Elsewhere, Berle expands along this line that nowhere in *The Varieties* do we encounter a single passage in which James’s attitude “is other than one of serene and absolute confidence” that the experiences he portrays are “real things to those who present them,” and he remarks that “the simplicity with which the most startling records are introduced as evidence is calculated to make one rub his eyes to see whether after all it is not merely a dream” (Berle 1903, 8-9). The experiences that James recounts are all “accepted as accurate and substantially true transcripts of what the subject passed through”; in no case is the “actual, real, and valid character” of the experience “brought into question” (ibid., 9). For Berle, James “exhibits here a credulity which is hardly accordant with the demands of the enlightened intellect of our age” (ibid., 10). In fact, he continues, James commits “one of the worst cases of the credulity of science, if it be science,” that he has ever encountered (ibid., 11). Berle is unwilling to “swallow in this reckless fashion,” the various testimonies that James presents. “Most of these data have absolutely no means of verification,” he concludes. “They can be subjected to no test at all, but the subjective test of the investigator’s own mind” (ibid., 11-12).

From the different perspective of truth and working, John Henry Muirhead approaches this question in the broad fashion that James does. “The belief that ‘works’ is true but it must work all round,” he writes. “It must satisfy our needs but it must satisfy them all, the needs of the reason not less than those of the will and emotions (if indeed they are different) our demand for harmony in our intellectual as well as for harmony in our moral world” (Muirhead 1903, 245). John Ellis McTaggart inquires more critically about the objects of religious beliefs. Supposing on James’s account that a

person has a working belief that “God is powerful,” McTaggart asks, what does this belief tell us about? Not anything about God, he maintains, but only about the functioning of the belief: “‘God is powerful’ is true . . . *means*, according to Dr. James, that the belief that God is powerful works” (McTaggart 1908, 106-107). The assertion that appeared to be about God is in fact “an assertion about my belief” (ibid). Other commentators, like Rashdall, focus on the perspectival problem that James has opened up by rejecting the universal claim that “it must be true for you as well as for me” (Rashdall 1903, 249). He maintains that James’s view would undermine our “faith in the validity of Reason, in the existence of truth and the duty of pursuing it” (ibid., 248). As a result, he sees James’s view “as a deliberate abandonment of the search for truth and a handing over of Religion and Morality (and why not Science?) to the sway of willful caprice” (ibid., 249).<sup>9</sup>

I hope that I have managed to convey, in this brief survey of the early reception of James’s *Varieties*, a sense of the meaning that early readers took from the volume. Although these readers were interested in many aspects of James’s study, I have tried to tease out his ideas, and their responses, on four central themes: his psychological approach to the topic of religion; his emphasis upon personal experience; his stressing of more extreme cases; and his attempt to rethink the meaning of truth with regard to religious themes. As we continue to study and evaluate James’s text, we can benefit greatly from a familiarity with its earliest commentators who constituted James’s intended audience.

University of Toledo

[james.campbell@utoledo.edu](mailto:james.campbell@utoledo.edu)

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## NOTES

1. In his 1838 "Address" at the Divinity School, Emerson maintains that "[h]istorical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual . . . whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul" (130, 126-127).
2. Wayne Proudfoot suggests that our greatest obstacle in appreciating *The Varieties* a century after its publication "is likely to be James's lack of attention to historical context. He juxtaposes material from biographies of Counter-Reformation saints with quotations from Tolstoy, Ramakrishna, and contemporary proponents of mind-cure . . . he wants to construct a composite portrait of types of religious experience that he takes to be the same across different historical and cultural settings" ("Pragmatism and 'an Unseen Order' in *Varieties*," 43).
3. Some more recent commentators have been troubled by his personal inclination. David A. Hollinger, for example, writes that "James's ostensibly species wide account of religious experience is deeply Protestant in structure, tone, and implicit theology . . . *Varieties* is constructed to foreground certain religious sensibilities and not others, and to present the core of religion in general as having been most attractively manifest in exactly the cultural tradition to which James's listeners and readers were directly heir"

(“‘Damned for God’s Glory,’” 11, 14; cf. John Edwin Smith, “Introduction” to *The Varieties*, xviii-xix; Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 23-24).

4. Joseph Jastrow indicates the importance of recognizing this continuity when he writes in Baldwin’s *Dictionary*: “The broadest and in many respects most scientific and suggestive use of the term pathology regards it as coextensive with normal in biology; the latter applies to normal life in all its variety and complexity, the former to that of the morbid, the diseased, and the abnormal in no less extensive and comprehensive a sense . . . anatomy, physiology, psychology, sociology present pathological as well as normal aspects” (“Pathology,” 267).

5. Compare John Watson, *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, 154; Rashdall, Review of *The Varieties*, 246-248.

6. In a similar fashion, Granville Stanley Hall writes: “Most of the cases and experiences which constitute so large a part of his volume are abnormal and teratological [monstrous], from which true religion, I believe, saves its followers” (*Adolescence*, 2:293 n.8; cf. Webb, “Psychology and Religion,” 68).

7. Compare Ezra B. Crooks, “Professor James and the Psychology of Religion,” 124-125. John E. Smith notes that in James’s consideration of mysticism he disavows any “first-hand acquaintance with the phenomena he was describing. This is surely paradoxical; it appears that James was convinced at second-hand that only first-hand experience in religion represents the genuine article” (“Introduction” to VRE, xvi).

8. James later writes in *Pragmatism*: “If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged” (P 40-41, emphasis original).

9. Compare Bertrand Russell, “William James’s Conception of Truth,” 124-125.

Review of *Outline of a New Liberalism: Pragmatism and the Stigmatized Other*. By Nelson W. Keith. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015. 255 pp. \$95

Nelson Keith's *Outline of a New Liberalism* is a must-read for anyone interested in social justice, pragmatism, contemporary political philosophy, or critical philosophy of race. It is a wonderful book about social justice that, on the negative side, focuses on the failures of modern rational-liberalism to achieve justice for those whose identities have been socially devalued, *the stigmatized Other* (peoples of color, women, sexual minorities, and other ethnic and cultural minorities); and, on the positive side, focuses on the promise of a different species of liberalism, one based on a pragmatism and phronesis (practical wisdom), which is conceptually equipped to attend to social exclusions and to produce ideals of justice that are sufficiently flexible and pluralistic so as to be genuinely inclusive. Focusing more specifically on how the political landscape and the political life of the US have been shaped by the combination of modern rational-liberalism and racism, Keith offers compelling arguments about how modern rational-liberalism has been complicit with racial injustices and how a pragmatist-phronetic pragmatism can address those injustices. These arguments draw on the insights of black intellectuals (such as Paul Dunbar and Ralph Ellison) and black philosophers (such as Cornel West and Eddie Glaude), who are put in fruitful conversation with classic pragmatists such as Dewey and James. I will review both the negative and the positive arguments of this book along two central ideas that structure its lucid reflections and highlight both what modern rational-liberalism misses and what the pragmatist-phronetic alternative can capture: (a) the critical concepts of *self-determination* and *emancipation*, and (b) the attention to the tragic. In both sections of my review I will bring to the fore how the author uses important insights from

William James and, in particular, how Jamesian naturalism and pluralism are vindicated as the centerpiece of a liberalism that can properly address social justice issues.

### **SELF-DETERMINATION AND EMANCIPATION**

In chapters one and two Keith develops the critical and deconstructive work necessary to diagnose the failures of modern rational-liberalism, clearing the way for the more capacious form of liberalism outlined in later chapters. Keith argues persuasively that the major drawback of modern rational-liberalism is its commitment to “a science of measurement” that, in making everything a matter of calculation, fixes and homogenizes all aspects of human life. In chapter three, Keith finds a corrective in the pragmatism of James and Dewey and, more specifically, in the prioritization of *lived experience* proposed in their naturalism and pluralism: their naturalism underscores that everything in human life is in flux and, therefore, subject to change and uncertainty; and their pluralism celebrates the diversity and heterogeneity of human life and proposes a normative basis for vindicating forms of human identity and human living that have been excluded, devalued, and stigmatized. According to the arguments of chapter three, the *scientific* pragmatism of Peirce and his followers will not do for setting liberalism on a new path; but the promise of a new liberalism can be found in the *historical* and *experiential* pragmatism of James and Dewey, which understands human life as shaped by human self-determination in plural and unpredictable ways. Ultimately, Keith contends that it is only the notion of self-determination that we find in James that is uncompromisingly pluralistic and subject to flux and uncertainty without qualification, whereas the one we find in Dewey’s naturalism is ambivalent and often too close to a scientism that reduces the heterogeneity and uncertainty of human life to the principles of science and calculation. It is ultimately through James that Keith articulates his own notion of self-determination based upon the conditions of flux and uncertainty of human life, and open to irreducibly plural conceptions of meaning, knowledge, value, and purpose. Keith’s pragmatist liberalism centered around this notion

of self-determination is further expanded in chapter four by proposing *phronesis* as its method. He argues that it is only through a pragmatism-phronesis dialogic that the possibilities of redress and melioration toward social justice can be adequately pursued for all — not only for the stigmatized Other, but for the mainstream as well. Chapters five and six offer productive ways of appreciating social relationality without binaries that separate Self and Other. In these chapters Keith unmasks and criticizes the dualistic modes of thinking employed in identity-construction and shows how identity-deconstructionism can help us overcome those binaries in which identity politics and the identities of stigmatized Others become entrapped, offering “difference” theory as a conceptual way out for genuinely liberatory forms of political thinking and praxis. Anyone interested in social justice and liberatory political philosophy should find useful resources and provocations in the synthesis of pragmatism cum phronesis and “difference” theory contained in Keith’s liberalism.

Keith emphasizes throughout the book that the critical notion of self-determination that we should extract from pragmatism is one that is transformative and liberatory. That is, one that is at the service of *emancipation*: the emancipation of human identities and forms of life that have suffered social exclusion and stigmatization. As he puts it early on in the book: “what is needed is not an even-handed stance toward all experiences but a weighted pragmatism that stands for rectifying historical injustices and privileges, together with the retrieval of silenced voices and meanings” (24). The method of phronesis and the theoretical stance of a historical and experiential pragmatism provide “attractive possibilities for what the stigmatized Other seeks: a place where different experiments of living . . . can be fruitfully explored” (Ibid.). Converging with the critiques and correctives of contemporary classics such as Charles Mills’ *The Racial Contract*, Keith’s book offers a powerful liberal social-justice framework that gives center-stage to the experiences, needs, and aspirations of plural stigmatized Others.

**ATTENTION TO THE TRAGIC**

The crucial attention to the tragic appears at the beginning and at the end of the book (chapters one and seven), as bookends that nicely frame the discussion of the political sensibility that a pragmatist-phronetic liberalism needs in order to properly attend to the demands of social justice. A key component of Keith's indictment of modern rational-liberalism is its way of evading the tragic elements of social life. As he puts it, adapting a poetic image from Paul Dunbar, through the homogenizing and calculating approach of modern rational-liberalism (as exhibited, for example, in cost-benefit analysis metrics), the injustices suffered by stigmatized Others become "invisible" and are left "defensively hidden, via the use of masks behind which feigned smiles obscure deep pain (Dunbar) while inhuman treatment and injustice persist" (7). As the concluding chapter emphasizes, while modern rational-liberalism is ultimately anti-humanistic and turns human beings into "desiccated calculating machines", the promise of a pragmatist-phronetic liberalism is to help us all in the challenges of constructing self-determined lives as we come to terms with the tragic elements of everyday life. For Keith, pragmatism will not be able to facilitate genuine emancipation unless it has a place within it for tragedy. Arguing that Peirce, and at times even Dewey, fell short of offering a pragmatism with a tragic sensibility, Keith turns to Sidney Hook's "Tragic Sense of Life" (and Miguel de Unamuno's rumination) and invites contemporary pragmatists to go back to that tragic sensibility and to undertake the challenge of addressing the tragic aspects of our life in common with special attention to those who have been excluded and stigmatized. Keith's engaging and provocative book nicely sets the agenda for contemporary pragmatist discussions of social justice.

José Medina  
Vanderbilt University  
[jose.m.medina@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jose.m.medina@vanderbilt.edu)