WILLIAM JAMES STUDIES

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William James Studies (ISSN: 1933-8295) is a bi-annual, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal dedicated to publishing high quality, scholarly articles related to the life, work and influence of William James. *William James Studies* is an open-access journal so as to ensure that all who have an interest in William James have access to its contents. The journal is published online by the William James Society.

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WILLIAM JAMES STUDIES
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CONTENT

Front Matter

FOUNDING THE WILLIAM JAMES SOCIETY

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I t is great to be with you today. Twenty-five years ago, I suggested the creation of a William James Society in what was then called the James Family Listserv. To see how that suggestion initially worked and then was significantly strengthened, particularly by members of the philosophical educational community, is heartening. To paraphrase James, truth happens to an idea through the hard work of people who care about his life and legacy.

My own journey with James started in the mid-1990s when a friend of mine suggested that since I liked Ralph Waldo Emerson, I might be interested in how William James carried on his tradition of a kind of "can-do" public philosopher into the later 19th and early 20th century. I was not immediately convinced by *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which seemed such an advocate for the sick soul. "[T]here is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand*"[1] as James suggested in the conclusion.

However, when I then looked through a copy of *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, I found his wit in titling a subsection of the "Perception" chapter on "Genius and Old Fogyism" to be helpful in understanding the importance of habit as well the ability to try new things every once in awhile—novelty, a term he often used, particularly in *Some Problems of Philosophy*—to break out of the merely rote and routine. I enjoyed it very much and could see some Emersonian-like can-do philosophy at work there. Reading further, I was particularly impressed with the "Stream of Consciousness" idea about the importance of transitions as well as places and found much else in the book to be an enjoyable read.

As I learned about his biography, I saw how James could not be the same kind of "can do" person that Emerson was on account of James's own life and struggles, both with himself and his quite demanding father. I appreciated his sense of "evil" both around and inside of him.[2] His struggle with free will against determinism was not just theoretical. There was a very real threat of suicide when he was young, and pulling himself through that very rough time seemed to me heroic.

I started collecting books by James. It turned out that there was a revival of interest in him at the time. I bought Dover and University of Nebraska reprints of the original Longmans

publications. He could turn things upside down, like in what became known as the James-Lange theory of emotion, in ways that made me think. His anti-imperialism fleshed out a man who was not just interested in the academic side of his life. I appreciated the hedging in his pioneering use of the word "pragmatism" by saying that it was merely a new name for some old ways of thinking, and by invoking the spirit of John Stuart Mill, with whom I had some passing acquaintance and who James's father met through an introductory letter from Emerson in England.[3] The tender minded and tough minded seemed a rough equivalent to Emerson's idealist and materialist categorizations in "The Transcendentalist" essay. Pluralism, open-endedness, tolerance for difference of opinion—all seemed and continue to seem to me to be noble goals.

Having a website that included a page for James was an interesting pastime. While not presenting myself as an academic, I did work on being knowledgeable about people like Emerson and James and became friendly with my often very intelligent visitors. I also became friendly with Frank Pajares, who taught in the education division of Emory University and ran the largest site on James at the time. I met Phil Oliver over the Internet during this time. I enjoyed reading about James's style of writing in a book by Frederick Ruf called *The Creation of Chaos,* comparing *The Principles of Psychology* to a great American novel like *Moby Dick,* and talking about the *Principles* as a triumph of healthy mindedness while the *Varieties* was an advocate for the sick soul, which I had felt myself years before. Richard Poirier drew a genealogy of writing that traced from Emerson through James in *The Renewal of Literature*. The quantum physics-like ambiguity and importance of point of view portrayed by Michael Frayn in his 1998 *Copenhagen* play seemed to resonate with James's ideas. While many of William's thoughts seemed at the time to me to bring him into my own contemporary world, I also was fascinated by his biography and historical context as told by Ralph Barton Perry, R.W.B. Lewis, Alfred Habegger, and particularly Linda Simon.

This brings me back to my idea to form a society for William James, which came in 1999 to a reaction to some posts back and forth between Eugene Taylor and myself in the James Family Listserv. Eugene had a way of presenting himself as the last word

on William James, and indeed he had published a book in 1996, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin*, with good recognition of Emerson's influence on James. Eugene also had a long list of blind peer reviewed works which he would often cite in his posts on the listserv. I had signed in and out of the listserv for a few years, disappointed to see that the only James who seemed worthy of discussion was William's brother, Henry. Eugene, however, often would comment on my posts. The turning point came when Eugene announced that William James's house on Irving Street in Cambridge was being sold to become condominiums. Around that time, I had made a query to Harvard about the William James lectures being held in alternate years between Emerson and William James Halls, to which I got a confused response from both the philosophy and psychology departments over the phone. Eugene said in the listserv that he did not think the people in Emerson Hall (home to philosophy) knew where William James Hall (home to psychology and sociology) was. I was also annoyed to see that the title for these "William James" lectures never had anything to do with William James. I then suggested forming a William James Society, which amazingly to me during that time of revival of pragmatism did not already exist.

I was encouraged to follow through with the idea of a Society by two people in the listserv who did occasionally talk about William with me: Jonathan Levin, who had recently published a book called *The Poetics of Transition* with significant coverage of James, and Jason Gary Horn, who had a recent book on James and Mark Twain, called *Crafting a Free Self*. Frank Pajares offered to join an advisory board, and it was with these three people that I published a few newsletters, which I called *Streams of William James*, and recruited scholars on James like Paul Croce, George Cotkin, and Richard Rorty. John Shook had done his doctorate with Peter Hare at the University of Buffalo in the philosophy department some years before. I met both John and Peter at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division conference that December of 1999, and each was encouraging. Through John I met Micah Hester and also briefly met John McDermott, who asked that all citations use the Harvard editions of James's work, a request which Peter later that same day said I could safely disregard. John McDermott was a real character. There were also people here in metropolitan Boston

who helped me. Roberta Sheehan, who was active in the Henry James Society, was friendly not only with John McDermott but Bay James, William's great granddaughter and literary executor, and Michael ("Micky") James, William's grandson, who lived in the Back Bay of Boston.

I expanded the Advisory Board to include John Shook and Micah to encourage its professionalization. Micah in particular was great at putting together a constitution and reaching further out to people while I worked with John to improve *Streams* with an editorial board and blind peer review for submissions. By 2000 John was at Oklahoma State University, which funded the printing and mailing of *Streams* for the rest of its life through 2004. I was thrilled that Micah got John McDermott and Linda Simon to serve as the first president and vice president of the Society. Meanwhile, I got John Snarey in the psychology department at Emory and Paul Croce in American Studies at Stetson to do guest editorships for *Streams* to celebrate the centenary of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 2002. James Medd, who joined the James Family Listserv in 1998, was one of our first members. He developed the first independent website for the Society. James Pawelski, whose early professional career included a stint at Albright College before moving onto UPenn, also served as guest editor in 2004.

Putting together and keeping *Streams* going in those early days was very enjoyable. An early contributor was the poet Mark Scott, who studied at Rutgers the same time Jonathan Levin was there. When I look back in the archives, I smile, having met people through the Internet from faraway places like Ramon del Castillo in Madrid and Renato Kinouchi in Brazil. We had a student essay contest, and one of the winners in 2001 is our recent secretary, Tadd Ruetenik.

There are some aspects of James that I think of almost daily. He had a preference for small things instead of large, which seems increasingly hard to deal with in this age of Amazon and mega-merged corporations.[4] He fought for underdogs. What seems to me his preference for almost a kind of fragmentation and piecemeal experience that one sews together in potentially this way, potentially that way, still rings true. The difference between a *perception* and a *conception*—what the French would call savoir compared to connaître—is essential to remember. The map is not the territory.

James's place in contemporary colleges and universities is predominantly in philosophy and religion departments these days. There is a bit of psychology, at least as a footnote, and English and history departments sometimes give him a bit of time. However, for me I would also put James in an art department, not only because of his time studying with John LaFarge under William Morris Hunt, but because that is what I classify myself and often see him as: an artist. I am not the only one to see him that way.[5] Among the beautiful tributes to him in Linda Simon's *William James Remembered* collection is Théodore Flournoy's "Artistic Temperament."[6] "Artist" is also the term that James used with a capital "A" to describe Emerson in his centenary address.[7] Interestingly, the James heirs that I knew were either artists or had a very artistic side to the way they presented themselves.

With professionalization of the Society came my own time to exit. I loved William James, but I am merely an artist with a BA in Semiotics from Brown in 1978. I owe a lot to people who truly made the hypothesis of an idea for a William James Society a live option, as we see it flourishing today. Eugene Taylor, Frank Pajares, Peter Hare, John McDermott, Richard Gale, Micky James, Hilary and Ruth Anna Putnam, Richard Rorty, William Gavin, Robert Richardson, and others are no longer with us, but there is now a place for the spirit of William James to live. And, again in that spirit, I want to leave you with some funny words from the William James correspondence that have stuck with me through the years. As you may know, William had a complicated relationship with his father, who once wrote a book called *The Secret of Swedenborg*, which William Dean Howells noted, "and he kept it a secret." In another context, William had this to say about another Swedenborgian.

> After dinner enter one of the Tafel translator & editor of Swedenborg, with the first volume and an immense encyclopedic work on the brain, based on a manuscript of Swedenborg's just out,—the most infernal Swedenburgling, Swedenburffling, Swedenbungling bore I ever met in my life, bringing the animal strength of the elephant, the insensibility of the rhinoceros, the learning of the German, & the intelligence of the jackass to converge upon the sole end of boring you. —

from a letter to his wife, December 19, 1882.[8]
    Thank you once again for having me.

    Special thanks to Paul Croce, Jeremy Orloff, Tadd Ruetenik, Mark Scott, and John Shook for reading earlier drafts of this paper and offering commentary.

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NOTES

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[1] James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 508.

[2] A letter to Shadworth Hollway Hodson from December 30, 1885, shows James's passionate belief that "life is evil." See *The Correspondence of William James*, Vol. 6, 99.

[3] Young, Frederic Harold, *The Philosophy of Henry James, Sr.*, 5.

[4] See his letter to Sarah Wyman Whitman in *The Correspondence of William James*, Vol. 8, 546, for an example of James talking about this.

[5] Henry James talked of the importance of William's time with Hunt and LaFarge in *Notes of a Son and Brother.* Howard M. Feinstein's *Becoming William James* also has good information on James's relationship with Hunt and Lafarge.

[6] Flournoy, Théodore. "Artistic Temperament," in *William James Remembered*, 84-88.

[7] See "Address at the Emerson Centenary," *William James: Writings 1902-1910*, 1120.

[8] *The Correspondence of William James*, Vol. 5, 338.

PHILOSOPHICAL TEMPERAMENTS, FREEDOM, AND RESPONSIBILITY[1]

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1

Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote in 1931 that philosophy is really "work on oneself," on "how one sees things."[2] In addition to Wittgenstein himself, one of the thinkers providing us with a glimpse of what it means to have a personal voice in philosophy, to be fully present as a human being in one's philosophizing, is obviously William James.[3] In this address, I will briefly explore a topic familiar to most of James's readers: his concept of a philosophical temperament. I will argue that this concept should not be understood in terms of reductive psychologism claiming that our temperaments simply *determine* our philosophical views but as an encouragement to freely seek and find one's own voice, *enabled* by one's temperament, and to take full responsibility for developing it further. Thus, my reflections also serve, I hope, as a suggestion to the community of James scholars of what could be seen as truly lasting and both personally and culturally significant in his pragmatism – even if we may have to move beyond what can actually be found in James's own writings.[4]

James's account of philosophical temperaments as personal characteristics[5] that inevitably frame and limit our engagement in philosophical theorization and argumentation is understandably controversial. James famously saw the history of philosophy as a history of clashes of temperaments, but this does not mean that he would have understood the temperament-relativity of philosophical discussion as a merely psychological phenomenon, or that he would have viewed our personal philosophical temperaments as something "merely personal" in the subjectivist sense of being arbitrary or idiosyncratic. Rather, questioning his own resolutely non-Kantian self-understanding, we may even see Jamesian philosophical temperaments as playing a quasi-transcendental role in constituting the *philosophical possibilities* we find genuinely open for us in discussion and argumentation (i.e., "transcendental" in a broadly Kantian, not Emersonian or transcendentalist sense). Some of these possibilities, and their limits, are explicitly ethical, while *all* of them contain ethical dimensions. I take James to be arguing, in *Pragmatism* and elsewhere, that our world-viewing in general is a value-directed and value-embedded human activity; accordingly, metaphysics also has an irreducibly ethical core.

Moreover, we are – or so I will suggest we may read James – at least to a certain degree responsible for *developing* our philosophical temperaments. We cannot just *arbitrarily* decide to find something philosophically possible, and something else impossible, for us to think; instead, the (both epistemic and ethical) choices we make within the area limited by such decisions are something we are at least partly responsible for. Accordingly, the philosophical discussions we engage in on the basis of our temperaments are at the same time, and all the time, processes of shaping and reinterpreting those temperaments, and hence also the limits of what we find genuine philosophical options in our lives.

It might be suggested – now going far beyond James's own views – that we can deny this responsibility only on pain of being excluded from what we (currently) consider "us" – a community of thinkers or inquirers who are answerable to each other for their ideas. Something like the Jamesian notion of an individual philosophical temperament is needed for us to be able to seriously maintain that one is responsible for what one oneself finds "thinkable" and "unthinkable" (ethically and more generally) in one's community, and the limits of purely rational argumentation must be acknowledged here. In short, personal philosophical (including, especially, ethical) responsibility is not merely the responsibility of rational argumentation, which is *only possible* within the limits set by our (responsibly) drawing the, or at least some, limits of the (for us) thinkable. I will later try to explain what I mean by this with reference to a non-Jamesian philosopher, Raimond Gaita.

The notion of a philosophical temperament should immediately be supplemented by another obvious Jamesian reference. In what is presumably his best known essay, "The Will to Believe,"[6] James argued – against evidentialist ethics of belief according to which it is always wrong to believe anything upon insufficient evidence – that in religious and other existential or *weltanschaulichen* contexts, we have a personal right to choose to believe, at our own risk, a hypothesis that makes our lives (for example) morally significant provided that we are dealing with a "genuine option" and that there are no purely intellectual or evidential grounds for deciding between that hypothesis and its rivals. One of the key Jamesian concepts in this context is, indeed, the concept of a *genuine option*, which I take

to be a close relative of the notion of a philosophical temperament. For example, it might be a genuine option for me – with my personal background in the Western world and Christian culture, even if I am not practicing any religion – to embrace Christianity, if I were considering the possibility of embracing any religious outlook at all. Only Christianity (rather than, say, Islam) would be "alive" for me – and as a Finn, presumably only Lutheran Christianity, more specifically, would be an outlook I could seriously consider adopting. In other words, it is "thinkable" for me to be or become a Christian, or not to be or become one. It is, however, quite unthinkable for me to turn into a Muslim or a Hindu. The Jamesian notions of a "live option" and a "genuine option" are not identical with the concept of the (temperamentally) thinkable, but they are parts of the same conceptual terrain.[7]

People may have various extremely problematic ideas about what is thinkable or unthinkable based on, for example, their religious convictions. On my reading, Jamesian pragmatist philosophy of religion is firmly opposed to any apologetic approaches. It could be suggested that one can coherently maintain both that (i) *if* one were religious, only a certain specific religious outlook (e.g., Christianity) would be "alive" for one as a genuine option (in the sense of "The Will to Believe"), and that (ii) it is unthinkable, or morally impossible, to maintain – that is, even to entertain the possibility as something to be seriously considered – that one's own religion (even when it is the only genuine option for oneself) would be, from an absolute metaphysical perspective, or from a God's-Eye View, *the* true one and all other religious standpoints would be false. Here, (ii) expresses the view, in my view clearly associated with Jamesian pragmatism, that religious exclusivism is not just wrong, or theoretically false, but ethically unthinkable because it profoundly misconstrues our common humanity characterized by irreducible diversity. We should find such exclusivism as unthinkable as we find racism, for instance; its rejection should be a premise rather than a conclusion in serious philosophy of religion. In particular, there is no way of maintaining, decently, that only one's own religion "saves."[8] Any attribution of such a life-transforming value to a religious outlook arguably needs to acknowledge others' (people representing different outlooks) entitlement to similar attributions from their own standpoints.

2

Raimond Gaita, one of the most original thinkers in the (broadly) Wittgensteinian tradition of moral philosophy, has emphasized the ethical significance of the concept of the "unthinkable." He writes:

> [Fearless thinkers in "practical ethics"][9] have extended the arrogance and insularity of the worst kind of academic professionalism beyond the academy. Generally they show no fear or even slight anxiety at the responsibility they have assumed. They have no sense of awe in the face of the questions they have raised, and no sense of humility in the face of the traditions they condescendingly dismiss. They are aggressively without a sense of mystery and without a suspicion that anything might be too deep for their narrowly professional competence. They mistake these vices for the virtues of thinking radically, courageously and with an unremitting hostility to obscurantism.[10]

Gaita uses the phrase, "fearless thinkers" pejoratively. The danger he warns us about here, in short, is not the danger of saying something false but of *saying something evil*.[11] Importantly, this threat, or an awareness of being haunted by such a threat, is something that is open only to *real human beings*: a mere "*res cogitans* can no more have a corrupt mind that it can be a crank."[12] Gaita's views here resemble James's urge to take seriously the "whole man [*sic*] in us," avoiding "vicious intellectualism:"

> The idea of being seriously responsive to the claims of reason means nothing unless people can seriously and without equivocation stand behind what they claim reason compels them to conclude. That is why a conclusion must be someone's conclusion in a sense more substantial than is suggested by the fact that he feels compelled to write it at the end of a piece of reasoning on a blackboard. The indivisible human being […] must be able to say in all seriousness: this is what I believe.[13]

Essentially the same point was, I think, made by James in his exploration of philosophical temperaments, an absolutely important concept for understanding what the *limits* of argumentation (also emphasized by Gaita) can mean. One philosopher's *modus ponens* can be another's *modus tollens* depending on their individual temperaments (and related individual or cultural unthinkabilities), but this does not mean that they would not be responsible for maintaining and developing the temperaments they do have. Our philosophical temperaments should never be considered "given"; they must be actively critically examined and re-examined. However, the question can be raised *how* exactly this is supposed to be possible, if those temperaments constrain what we are able to consider responsible argumentation. I am not entirely sure James ever explicitly told us how.

In any event, the quasi-Jamesian point emphasized by Gaita (without citing James) is that even the most technically sophisticated argument is always *presented by someone*, a concrete person, in some real life situation and in a historical and cultural context, a person with an individual philosophical temperament as well as socio-political relations to other people. The strength of an argument must therefore be critically assessed in *holistic* terms taking such pragmatic contextuality seriously.[14] This is another way of saying, with Gaita, that the technically or purely intellectually "best," or sharpest, argument may sometimes undermine the conditions of sane and decent thought that argumentation as a human activity depends on. In a self-destructive way, the "best" argument may thus violate the enabling or even constitutive conditions of the holistic context it is grounded in. In other words, philosophical arguments cannot be isolated from their authors' and defenders' lives considered as totalities – their philosophical temperaments, that is. In this sense, for ethical reasons, the "best" argument (understood in the merely technical or intellectual sense) cannot, and must not, always or necessarily "win." Whether an argument is to be seriously considered at all depends on contextual factors that may determine its sanity – or insanity, as the case might be. To fail to recognize this is to be in the grip of "vicious intellectualism." As Gaita reminds us, sometimes our blindly[15] following the sharpest argument may not only lead us to a kind of lunacy but even to wickedness (e.g., in the sense of radically utilitarian thought experiments à la Peter Singer).

3

This takes us back to James's notion of a philosophical temperament. In the first lecture of *Pragmatism*, James wrote as follows:

> The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. Undignified as such a treatment may seem to some of my colleagues, I shall have to take account of this clash and explain a good many of the divergencies of philosophers by it. Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries when philosophizing to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He trusts his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. He feels men of opposite temper to be out of key with the world's character, and in his heart considers them incompetent and 'not in it,' in the philosophic business, even though they may far excel him in dialectical ability.
>
> Yet in the forum he can make no claim, on the bare ground of his temperament, to superior discernment or authority. There arises thus a certain insincerity in our philosophic discussions: the potentest of all our premises is never mentioned.[16]

Our chief challenge in philosophizing, then, is to avoid such insincerity – to inhabit and develop our temperaments as sincerely as possible. "Temperaments with their cravings and refusals," James added, "do determine men in their philosophies, and always will."[17] The core of James's view here, as already emphasized, is that philosophical positions are adopted by real flesh-and-blood human

beings living in a real natural and social world. Philosophizing is not a purely theoretical activity but entangled with the needs and interests of human individuals. The doctrine of philosophical temperaments as formative forces in the history of philosophy is inseparable from James's pragmatism. It also includes the idea that philosophizing ought to be understood as a thoroughly, even radically, reflexively self-conscious – and self-critical – endeavor aiming, fundamentally, at sincerity.

Jamesian philosophical temperaments, as suggested, are at least partly our own psychological and philosophical constructions for which we should take full responsibility.[18] By philosophizing we continuously paint self-portraits of ourselves as philosophizing individuals, using our philosophical "voice" in order to learn to use it better. We cannot responsibly pretend that our individual temperaments might not in some cases lead us astray; therefore, we might legitimately come to think that they have actually done so and thus find it necessary to holistically revise not only our beliefs about the world but the temperamental grounding of our arguments for those beliefs.[19] A philosophical temperament can be revised whenever it produces – pragmatically – results we cannot (or can no longer) see as truly "ours." At its best, philosophical discussion may amount to a serious and honest effort to identify and characterize the needs and aims of the temperaments grounding it. The concept of a philosophical temperament thus encourages us to continuous critical self-examination. It functions as a kind of philosophical or metaphilosophical mirror: we have to know who we are in order to be able to philosophize at all, and to enable our philosophizing to transform us.[20] Due to this reflexivity, the Jamesian notion of a philosophical temperament is actually a relative of the self-critique of human reason familiar from Kantian critical philosophy. The thoroughly fallible activity of entering into critical and possibly self-transforming philosophical dialogues amongst temperaments is, according to James, still a rational project, with rationality itself embedded in the pragmatic. It must also be a project taking seriously the "physiological" metaphors James used to characterize our finitude: our instinctive blindness to others' ways of finding life meaningful and our deafness to the "cries of the wounded" potentially harmed by our pursuing what we find valuable.[21]

Like Kant, James was (temperamentally) a philosopher of *human freedom*: the world is not determined but remains open to our human contribution, to our shaping reality in accordance with our purposive practices and the ends and goals they serve. The reflexive concept of a philosophical temperament also reminds us of this freedom and responsibility. We are not only urged to investigate the world around us as we find best but to critically examine our own capacities of investigation and critical reflection themselves. It is precisely in his apparently (but only apparently) reductively psychologistic account of philosophical temperaments that James is, crucially, a Kantian critical thinker.

It must be added that James is also, perhaps most importantly, a philosopher of *individual* freedom:[22] the world must in some sense be responsive to our individual temperaments. We are continuously responsible for our temperaments also in the sense that it is at our (or my) own responsibility to reflect on how we expect the world to be responsive to what we say and think about it, and on how we in turn ought to respond to the possible failures of these expected responses. We are free to categorize the world as we find best, but any such categorization must be critically (holistically) tested within a context of some kind of pre-understanding of what it is possible for "us" to think, given who we are, and thereby even the temperamental basis of our categorizing activities may at any time have to be reconsidered.[23]

In a vocabulary adopted from Gaita, we might say that while, from a Jamesian point of view, someone's not sharing our philosophical temperament does not exactly entail that they are cranks, lunatics, or evil – as Gaita[24] claims those who "fearlessly" think the "unthinkable" to be – in a more modest sense they do, by our lights, violate the conditions upon which sound argumentation depends. They are "out of key" with "the world's character", as James writes, "not in it". There is a sense in which someone not sharing my (our) philosophical temperament fails to "see the world aright" (quoting Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, 6.54).[25] What is not always sufficiently appreciated by interpreters (and critics) of James is, indeed, the above-emphasized view that we are – individually – responsible for our philosophical temperaments.[26] They are not immutable in the sense that they would psychologically determine our philosophical thinking. While James was one of the founders of

modern psychology, his psychological description of the temperamental grounding of philosophy is not psychologistic in the sense of reducing the normative philosophical level of inquiry to facts of psychology; it may rather be suggested, conversely, that his account of individual psychology is thoroughly philosophical. Psychological and philosophical analyses are intertwined, for example, in his famous distinction between the "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded" temperaments. The clash between these particular temperaments, and the related clashes between the various philosophical views associated with them, are, on James's analysis, decisive in the history of philosophy, and he puts forward his own pragmatism as a mediating approach intended to guide us in our critical reflection on our own temperamental inclinations. This simple fact indicates his firm conviction that temperaments are not permanently fixed but can be critically renewed and developed.

4

For the Jamesian pragmatist philosopher, a certain kind of freedom to "think otherwise" – to develop one's temperament in new directions – is always a real possibility. The scope of our genuine options *could* change, and as James himself often suggests, we may be required to transform our received ways of thinking. We are, paradoxically, "free" to think the (up to now) unthinkable and thus to existentially change who and what we are. On the other hand, we are not free to liberate ourselves from this freedom and the responsibility that goes together with it. We are not free not to be free but, as Jean-Paul Sartre insisted, doomed to freedom. As we remember from the "Will to Believe" writings, James himself maintained that we can employ the voluntaristic will to believe strategy in order to adopt a morally significant belief in freedom.[27] However, freedom is already *presupposed* by the will to believe strategy. There are no genuine options or ethically pregnant *weltanschaulichen* choices at all without there already being freedom to think and choose. James was thus (perhaps deliberately) inconsistent when emerging from his depression and crisis in the early 1870s and famously suggesting that his "first act of free will shall be to believe in free will."[28] He took himself to be free to decide whether to believe in freedom or not, but *this* choice seems to be an

illusion. His already believing in freedom was the inescapable ground for his very ability to so believe.

I would be prepared to suggest – though I cannot develop this interpretation at any length here[29] – that James was a Kantian in the sense of articulating the concept of freedom analogously to Kant's idea of freedom as a postulate of practical reason. While we cannot metaphysically speaking know, or even meaningfully speculate on, whether freedom exists in the mind- and thought-independent world, as conceived in terms of metaphysical realism, we cannot avoid employing the concept of freedom (and the related one of responsibility) whenever we seek to make sense of our human life in the human world, including our being able to discuss and argue *anything*, including anything related to freedom itself, as enabled by our philosophical temperament(s). This does not refute determinism as a metaphysical thesis about non-human nature but shows, transcendentally, that from within our practices of discussion and argumentation, we cannot but conceive of ourselves as free and responsible. We are doing so by merely taking ourselves to be participants of such practices (which we must do in order to, again, argue anything regarding freedom or anything else). In this sense, freedom is *constitutive* of our humanity; to be fully within the "human world" is to be free. Those who try to think otherwise are "not in it."

We always have and need one or another enabling – for pragmatists practice-embedded – frameworks for our thought and argument; our philosophical temperament functions like a Kuhnian paradigm in this regard, making it *possible* for us to subscribe to certain ideas or arguments while ruling out others as wrong or even unthinkable. But this does not mean that we could never change. Kuhnian normal science *can* change through a crisis.[30] James, on my reading, is a quasi-transcendental thinker in insisting that temperaments are historically relative and changing yet contextually constitutive conditions of what we might also call our "mindedness;"[31] that is, necessary conditions for the possibility of our viewing the world in certain ways, or in any way at all, and thus something to which we cannot take a "sideways on" perspective but that need to be understood and critically developed from within.[32]

We cannot, however, avoid the question of how exactly to *argue* for the necessity of, or the need for, a change in our philosophical

temperament. Having suggested that we are responsible for our temperaments and their possible changes, we still have failed to show how that responsibility can be really carried by any real life person. James himself maintained that pragmatism *should*, for example, mediate between the tough- and the tender-minded temperaments.[33] He never gave up the normative level of discussing temperaments, but if all discussion depends on temperaments, it is not easy to see how that level can be maintained.

This is also why we may perceive a problematic ambivalence in James's above-quoted injunction, "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will." James is right to maintain that we can only freely embrace the view that we are free, that is, adopt it reflexively in the context of our already understanding our human existence as free. But he does suggest, more problematically, that non-freedom (viz., our being causally determined without any possibility of free choice) is thinkable by us and in some sense metaphysically possible – as if this were just a matter of what we contingently choose to believe, and as if here, as elsewhere, we could "freely" choose what to believe in the light of the possible practical consequences of our beliefs. While I am generally in agreement with many leading ideas of James's pragmatism, including the significance of philosophical temperaments and "genuine options," here we need a more robustly transcendental (albeit temperament-based) approach to freedom as a necessary condition for the possibility of human life as we know it, including the possibility of Jamesian pragmatist inquiry into the ethics of belief.[34]

This does not mean that we would need to commit ourselves to an orthodoxly Kantian account of freedom as a postulate of practical reason, though it does require that we realize that freedom cannot be an illusion in the Kantian framework (let alone discovered to be an illusion by an allegedly non-illusory science or scientific metaphysics). The pragmatic transcendental approach may also be developed into a Wittgensteinian direction, conceptualizing freedom as a necessary condition for the possibility of any linguistic (or other) actions (including discussion or argumentation carrying any normative force) possible for us within the form of life we inhabit, or viewing the claim that as human beings we are free as a "grammatical" remark on what it means to be a human being at all – to be "one of us." Again, I end up urging, partly against James's

own temperament, that we necessarily have to include a Kantian-like transcendental element in our temperamental conception of what it is for us to (borrowing from Wittgenstein again) see the world "aright."

This also applies to how in my view our appreciation of William James's legacy should be developed in future scholarship. One of the implicit messages of this address has been that Jamesian pragmatism needs to be both historically and systematically developed in constructive dialogue with other philosophies, including diverging philosophical temperaments – among them the Kantian and Wittgensteinian approaches loosely invoked throughout my argument.

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NOTES

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[1] Presidential Address at the session of the William James Society within the 51st Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, Boston, March 28-30, 2024. Thanks are due to Phil Oliver for chairing the WJS session, to my co-panelists Randall Albright (the Founder of the WJS) and Justin Ivory, as well as to the audience for interesting discussion.

[2] Wittgenstein 1998, 24.

[3] On James's influence on Wittgenstein, see Goodman; Boncompagni; Pihlström 2023, chapter 9.

[4] In one of the best recent scholarly discussions of James and philosophical temperaments, Madelrieux usefully distinguishes between three uses of "temperament" in James: romantic expressivism, scientific ethologism (emphasizing psychological constitution), and logico-ethical dispositionalism (emphasizing dispositions of mind and moral thought).

[5] James, 1975 [1907], Lecture I.

[6] James 1979 [1897].

[7] In James's terms, in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (1979 [1897], 13-15), a genuine option must

be "live," "forced," and "momentous." See Pihlström 2021, chapter 4, for further discussion.

⁸ This Jamesian emphasis on human individuality and diversity can be interestingly compared to what Hannah Arendt called human "natality," that is, the fact that we are all born as different individuals and have the capacity of spontaneously bringing something new into the world. For discussion of Jamesian pluralism and Arendt's views, see Pihlström 2021, chapter 2. One of the best recent overall accounts of James's individualism is in Bush. Religious pluralism can also be defended on the grounds of a Jamesian insistence of individual psychological dispositions of character underlying religious thinking (see Madelrieux, 255).

⁹ Gaita refers to ethical theorists willing to consider, at least for the sake of argument, *anything* – even, say, the possibility of murdering a person in order to save others by taking the deceased person's organs – as a potentially morally serious issue to be discussed, e.g., in the classroom.

¹⁰ Gaita 2004 [1991], 322.

¹¹ Gaita 2004 [1991], 323.

¹² Gaita 2004 [1991], 324.

¹³ Gaita 2004 [1991], 324.

¹⁴ As I try to argue elsewhere (Pihlström 2021), I believe it is fruitful to develop Jamesian pragmatism, including the will to believe strategy, in terms of Morton White's holistic pragmatism.

¹⁵ Recall James's views on "a certain blindness in human beings" in *Talks to Teachers of Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1983 [1899]).

¹⁶ James, *Pragmatism* (1975 [1907]), 11.

¹⁷ James, *Pragmatism* (1975 [1907]), 24.

¹⁸ See Bush 2017, on James's individualism and responsibility.

¹⁹ For readings of James emphasizing our responsibility for our philosophical temperaments and the idea that temperaments are subject to criticism, see Putnam 1990, 227-228; Conant 1997, 208. In Madelrieux's (2021) terms, the idea of philosophical temperaments being open to criticism presupposes understanding them as fallible dispositions of the mind (a prevailing view, according to Madelrieux, in *Pragmatism*) rather than in terms of "romantic" expressivism or (reductionist) psychological character traits; the latter variants of the concept render criticism impossible.

[20] On the significance of personal transformation in James's ethical thought, see Marchetti 2015.

[21] For these metaphors, see James, *Talks to Teachers*, and the essay, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in James, *The Will to Believe*.

[22] See again Bush 2017.

[23] This ought to be seen as directly relevant to developing pragmatist approaches in metaphysics emphasizing the categorization-relativity (and thus value-relativity) of the way(s) the world is. See Pihlström 2009.

[24] Gaita 2004 [1991], chapter 17.

[25] The concept of a philosophical temperament thus plays a role analogous not only to Gaita's distinction between the thinkable and the unthinkable but also to, say, Thomas Kuhn's notion of a paradigm in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* or the later Wittgenstein's idea of "hinges" in *On Certainty*.

[26] Conant 1997.

[27] See especially the essay, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in James, *The Will to Believe*.

[28] Gunnarsson 2020.

[29] Pihlström 2021, chapter 3.

[30] Kuhn, by the way, carefully read James (Reisch 2018), and the Kuhnian view on the "invisibility" of scientific revolutions, as discussed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, as readily comparable to the Jamesian above-quoted observation that the philosopher relying on a temperament seeks to "sink" that reliance, instead of making the temperamental premises of their arguments explicit.

[31] Lear 1998.

[32] A certain combination of pragmatism and transcendental thinking is thus a feature unifying James's and Kuhn's otherwise quite different philosophical projects. They are, in my view, equally strongly, or equally weakly, transcendental pragmatists. See Pihlström 2022, chapter 2.

[33] James 1975 [1907], Lecture I.

[34] See again Pihlström 2021, for further discussion.

STALEMATE AT PORT ARTHUR: WILLIAM JAMES ON WAR, VULNERABILITY, AND PLURALIST PERSONALISM

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Using a close reading of a single clause and its context in a section in *A Pluralist Universe*, we see the moral dangers James saw in traditional ontology, in particular its relation to war and peace. This analysis opens up James's combining the personalist philosophy of his friend Borden Bowne (and others) with the pluralism he developed late in his career. This leads, further, to reflection of James's performative philosophizing. Finding in James a theory of "pluralistic personalism" gives us a fresh look at the far-reaching power of his basic concepts of moral philosophy.

"Every problem for James sooner or later becomes a moral question, that is, how would its solution help us?.... His whole system of pragmatism is based on his passionate concern for human need."[2]

Some philosophers are peacemakers, and some are not. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were not peacemakers—and they were the leading European rebels against the nineteenth century under its sign of reason, arrogant confidence, and conquering power—against the form of Western culture that, broadly speaking, formed itself around G. F. W. Hegel's thought. William James often stood among them: in his opposition to imperialism, credentialization of the academy, and commodified thinking. But, unlike the early existentialists and unlike Arthur Schopenhauer (with whom he shared an interest in will as the non-organic basis of life), James was a peacemaker. Pragmatism includes the ways one could form a world view, hold religious belief, or pursue a good life. James, in seeking freedom for experience as a life-practice, saw the different dispositions of different persons as the freedom of each, if each properly grasped it. His concept supporting these combined parts of the personalism of Borden Bowne and George Howison with his late pluralist ontology. I will explore this through a close reading of metaphor by James that puts the matter in terms of war as opposed to human flourishing, and then turn to James's relations to and form of personalism.

In this way James was like Immanuel Kant, despite their many differences. Both are the sort of philosopher who grabs the two ends of rope that other sorts of thinkers are pulling in opposite directions; and, standing in the middle whilst holding onto both ropes with both hands, they strain to keep upright in the tug of war. James tells us that the two ends are unity and multiplicity on the most technical level; and then stability and change on the most universal level; God and the world in religious terms; and then objective fact and real experience on the human level; at the last, holding together the two ends makes the common bond for all of us, our common life, our communications, the society of others with its moral obligations; and, most intimately, it defines James's own place in the world as he struggled through the great issue of philosophy—all these James

is groaning to keep from snapping away so that meaningfulness does not fly off from us. This is what Kant tried to do, too, having been terrified by the world without value and relationships, for which Hume had almost perfectly argued. Although James believed that Kant had widened, rather than narrowed, the battlefield between anti-theoretical empiricism and anti-empirical theory, it is also historically correct that James stood on a different part off the same battlefield, Kant having moved it at the start of the century to the place at which James found it at century's end. Both James and Kant were trying to make peace between the externality and objectivity of inductive science and the meaning-making moral freedom of the human person. To the moral freedom of the person James, unlike Kant, brought not the domination of reason over other impulses but the full capabilities of life, when he developed his pluralistic personalism.

James saw that lack of peace between the two sides meant war between them. Ontological and military war are deeply interconnected.[3] But James saw a second thing: that the scientific system was the aggressor general in the war, a stimulus perfectly suited to direct into battle the drives that persons normally and with seeming inherence have. And so while Kant hoped that peace comes through developing the reason that our moral lives have in common with our scientific inquiry, James held that spiritual life, exceeding intellection, must come back round to assert its own pacifying power against several of the darker tendencies of the scientific approach.[4] James had to reopen a door Kant had closed. I propose to show that one of the ways in which James accomplished this is to have recognized a darkness in science that makes us more vulnerable to war and to argue that his solution lay in what I will call pluralist personalism.

Past this door an interesting aporia marked the terrain James had to travel. One part of it was the impact upon civilization, society, and collective life that science was guiding. James was more fully aware of mass life than the picture of him as the trust fund genius permits some readers to take in. Because realist ontology was self-augmenting, attached to and supporting the large endeavors it could help grow, the singular person was the counterbalancing actor. But the singular person might be too self-protective, fearful enough to

close herself off from experience. Or, as James saw in his childhood, a very open way of living could become chaotic and unsteady. The open end of the aporia, then, was an act that James the philosopher must himself perform, since, although the philosopher sees no further ahead, he does know "that he must vote always for the richer universe, for the good which seems most organizable, most fit to enter into complex combinations, most apt to be a member of a more inclusive whole."[5] The act of stepping in between as counterweight to warring forces is the dramalogue for part of his performance as a philosopher. The aim of the performance was to create an image or a model of personhood that is pluralistic because it is unbowed by the dynamo of objectivity, keen for experience, and grounded in both the inner and outer worlds.

A passing reference by James to the scene of a war embeds war in his views on epistemology, ontology, and spiritual and moral life. In 1894–1895 the Japanese invaded the Liaodong Peninsula, just west of present-day North Korea in the Yellow Sea (now part of China), and took the newly constructed Russian military harbor at Port Arthur. But France, Germany, and Russia demanded control of the Peninsula; and Japan, threatened by a war with Russia for which it was not prepared, returned the base to China. Russia then leased it from China and added to the fortifications. In all this the Western powers were principally pushed by Kaiser Wilhelm's intense fear of Eastern hoardes, for whenever Wilhelm entered the scene big trouble usually followed.

And so less than a decade later Wilhelm's "cousin Nicky," Czar Nicholas, and all his Russians were fighting the Japanese Empire's attempt to retake Port Arthur. This war was fought for a solid year in an intricate and extremely murderous series of battles on land and sea. With each engagement, the Russians put up more concrete pillboxes and forts and barbed wire; and then when the Japanese took a bit of territory they set out barbed wire and land mines; and at sea each side planted mines and nets, the marine equivalent of barbed wire. Each entanglement of forces multiplied the layers of deadly obstructions, until the whole port and peninsula became ring within ring of hell. This was advance warning of the trench warfare of World War I.

The conflict was very well known in the United States because President Theodore Roosevelt brokered a peace at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, just a couple hours from William's Cambridge theater of operations, partly by plying diplomats from the two empires with a strong cocktail he specially invented for the occasion. James, regarding the Japanese as "little Romans," favored Japan.[6] "The insolence of the white race in Asia deserves a check," he wrote a few months after the war began.[7] In 1907 he wrote to Henri Bergson that the Russo-Japanese War and the publication of Bergson's *L'Évolution créatrice* are "the two great modern turning-points, of history and of thought!"[8]

This important geopolitical event nearly overwhelmed him. He said that the war made him "feel that concrete experience is essential to anyone who will write of war, and I have none."[9] And yet it so strongly stimulated his imagination that he did write about it. In 1908–1909, in Lecture VI of *A Pluralist Universe*, James writes:

> Sensible reality is too concrete to be entirely manageable—look at the narrow range of it which is all that any animal, living in it exclusively as he does, is able to compass. To get from one point in it to another we have to plough or wade through the whole intolerable interval. No detail is spared us; it is as bad as the barbed-wire complications at Port Arthur, and we grow old and die in the process.[10]

The movement that barbed wire makes difficult, by metaphor, is in the first instance the advancement of our comprehension of reality. Its thorns are like the innumerable details of experience of all sorts; its coils are like the snaring, tangling, slowing loops of every element in our experience. James says that conceptual thought gets us out of the barbs that stop us, or, more precisely, confine our mental view of the terrain.[11]

But in the context of the full passage, there is a second meaning.[12] Conceptual thought becomes the barbed wire. In this aspect it is no longer the good and useful thing that produces understanding, for "there is one thing it cannot do." This incapacity doubles its effect. The consequence of the speed that conceptualization gives our accumulation of information is that it

also obscures the ground beneath what it conceptualizes, "the nature of things." It gathers information and fallibly confirms hypotheses, but it abstracts out of nature as it really is a construct in its and our own current image. Whereas barbed wire had been one aspect of "reality's thickness," truly apprehending "reality's thickness" means not going over the barbed wire but going beneath it to the ground it covers up. The conceptual method guides us into the barbed wire, and it can explain the barbed wire but only in a limited way. It produces stalemate. The same object—reality, the barbed wire itself and its ground—is something more various when apprehended in its fullness without the "shortcuts." There is the depth, in the ground to which you must "turn your face," the flux you ought to "dive" into. It is by another means that we "bury ourselves in," or access, "the inner nature of reality or…what really makes it go...." Same ground, same details, same thickness—but different.

"Direct acquaintance and conceptual knowledge are complementary of each other; each remedies the other's defects," James says.[13] But he points to something much, much more: a notion, here but germinal, that when our understanding has not been corseted by concepts but can do all of which it is in the very long run capable, each particular synchronously admits us to the entire diachronesis, as "the solid dimension" of the universe, the real history of its goings-on.

Thus the passage has many ideas involuted into the doubled metaphor, from epistemology, ontology, moral philosophy, and even religion. As epistemology, it reveals the way we trick ourselves when trying to make perceptions yield knowledge. They must be conceptualized in order to be practically available, but this way of gathering knowledge edits out, veils, or suppresses so much that, as a result, we remain liable to be seduced by *sorites* and other puzzles of cognition until intellectualism subverts all "real connexions of any kind."[14] It thus sets "reality" in opposition to "imagination."[15] As ontology, James uses the metaphor to place his finger on the origin of the way in which the distinction between reality and perceptions deprives activity of concrete being and creates thereby a realm of apparently self-standing ideas in which perceptions must be founded.[16]

Its import as to metaphysics follows from the approach to consciousness by both epistemology and ontology. The image is an index of James's fuller acceptance of Bergsonian process.[17] In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson attempts to prove that the human mind includes a "virtual" reality composed of its entire fund of memories, immaterial and undetermined and therefore free.[18] Out of this freedom comes the creativity of mind and of intelligence, into which immediate sensory perception is synthesized in our activity. The empirically real is therefore just a part of the larger reality with "a thousand planes" to which the mind is attached.[19] The relation of consciousness to its objects of every description and category is at the heart of James's pragmatism, and it is this strong demand for integration of subject and object that was among the inspirations for Edmund Husserl's adaptation of intentionality into the defining character of consciousness.[20] In the Jamesian perspective, this freedom, this relationality, this creative flux—the true way in which consciousness operates—comprises every kind of attention as instruments of investigating and responding to the world, including fuzzy, vague, and even involuntary awarenesses.[21] Consciousness as an organ of truthfulness therefore is not restricted to the clear and distinct. James, along with Bergson and Husserl in their different ways, tells us that objects in the world do not demand the "objectivity" of science and that our attention really is and must be free from any such discipline in order to interpret and work in the world as richly as possible. Time and even space do not discipline us in the Kantian or Newtonian manners; relations and transitions are more fundamental than substances. We need not be channeled by walls of barbed wire; that is, dominated by the power of rationalized systems of production.[22] On the "ground" beneath we find that our unstable modern life and the many moving parts of our kinetic selves can freely join in the strength of imagination and constitute our psychic reality.[23] Whereas to the forces of progress and production, any part of the range of consciousness not readily appropriated is a waste that it strives to delegitimize. James says that

> the whole feeling of reality, the whole sting and excitement of our
> voluntary life, depends on our sense that in it things are really
> being decided from one moment to another, and that it is not the

> dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago.
> This appearance, which makes life and history tingle with such a
> tragic zest, may not be an illusion. As we grant to the advocate of
> the mechanical theory that it may be one, so he must grant to us
> that it may not.[24]

The correct understanding of the constitution of consciousness
requires for James our accepting into it that which is not only not
"objectively" empirical, and not merely that which is fuzzy, but also
even the augmented reality that mystics claim to take in. The
"ground" that the battle hides, replacing it with conditions created
so as to suppress human flourishing in favor of captivity by masses
in hostile action, by technology, and by destructive violence, is a
fundamental ground of reality, a metaphysical "location." This well-
known interest of James's, as we will see a little later, brings us
toward James's pluralist personalism.

As moral philosophy, there are three significant implications in
the metaphor. When James writes,

> To deal with moral facts conceptually, we have first to transform
> them, substitute brain-diagrams or physical metaphors, treat ideas
> as atoms, interests as mechanical forces, our conscious "selves"
> as "streams," and the like. Paradoxical effect![25]

we can see the first of these: that James stands against what has
become the most common style of meta-ethical philosophy, that of
propositionalist ethics. A "moral fact" is evaluated and analyzed as
a linear, static propositional claim. It is abstracted from the lives of
persons and from the diachronesis in which they feel joy and suffer,
face dilemmas, and take decisions, conform to their collectives or
resist them, and change through growing or through failing.

Second, the value of particulars—the details specific to each
actor and situation—in theorizing ethics is promoted in so far as
James regards them to be more concrete and useful than the
intellectualist or rationalist approach to moral philosophy does. But
also we can detect a reservation about just what we do with
particulars that philosophers using an empiricist approach to ethics
in conceptualizing the use of genealogy, such as Bernard Williams,
did not seem to see or to feel important.

> If what we care most about be the synoptic treatment of phenomena, the vision of the far and the gathering of the scattered like, we must follow the conceptual method. But if, as metaphysicians, we are more curious about the inner nature of reality or about what really makes it go, we must turn our backs upon our winged concepts altogether, and bury ourselves in the thickness of those passing moments over the surface of which they fly, and on particular points of which they occasionally rest and perch.[26]

Here James has got hold of something that he perhaps did not quite bring to consciousness and that might have presented a problem. While "passing moments" are preferable to "our winged concepts," the consequent quality we now call thickness, which means their situatedness and historicity, is a ground for the flying concepts that is not subject to James's critique of abstract ideas. As a ground, it shares the ability to give concepts some stability; and this must mean, further, since James wants to avoid immobilizing life, that the grounding which historical particulars (or the "manifold") gives might reveal something "foundational" in the sense of being universal about moral life. This kind of universality is not eternal or abstract but immanent, connecting generations and cultures. His sense that science is connected to war puts James on the side of the angels in the great debates in contemporary German post-Kantianism as to whether the empathic and hermeneutic elements in history and psychology are legitimate. Perhaps what is revealed in historicity is not conceptualized structure but might instead be something concerning existence itself: "the essence of life" out of which each particular comes to, or perhaps receives, its spatiotemporal specificity.[27]

James's desire to see life as a whole moving through time also appears as a psychological insight when he directly comments on war in "The Moral Equivalent of War."[28] That we keep returning to the same bad habits of conceptualization is akin to our continual return to the same bad moral habits, specifically those of the material gain, social energy, and psychic charges that making war gives us. Writing this essay just a year after the passage under inspection here, James sees the strength of these impulses in Japan as currently

"culminating." Japan is, he thought, reaching the full tide of desire for the "moral fruits" of "the martial virtues." Since we never start from zero but always from dispositions received from a history further back in time than we can reach, we must somehow accommodate the impulses but in a form so purified as to direct their energy toward "better services" that resolve rather than inflame fears for our survival. Even science inherits and then is a slave to our deeper drives. We can look at James's ways of accommodating beliefs that science cannot sustain as a similar attempt to transform deep patterns of behavior or thought in a manner that preserves their benefits, even if merely emotional, in the constitution of our motivations when we are trying to think and to act in better ways than our ancestors.

The third implication is something revealed by the metaphor itself. James writes,

I am quite willing to part company with Professor Bergson, and to ascribe a primarily theoretical function to our intellect, provided you on your part then agree to discriminate "theoretic" or scientific knowledge from the deeper "speculative" knowledge aspired to by most philosophers, and concede that theoretic knowledge, which is knowledge about things, as distinguished from living or sympathetic acquaintance with them, touches only the outer surface of reality. The surface that theoretic knowledge taken in this sense covers may indeed be enormous in extent; it may dot the whole diameter of space and time with its conceptual creations; but it does not penetrate a millimeter into the solid dimension. That inner dimension of reality is occupied by the activities that keep it going.[29]

The contrast between theoretical and speculative knowledge is not simply a matter of epistemology. It is a matter of theory of culture and of philosophical anthropology. "Theoretical or scientific" is based on the Kantian use of theory as observation, as intelligent, tested, finely-tuned sensory inspection of the world, which in turn builds upon the Greek etymology. "Speculative" here comprises a great many things that are other than this kind of knowledge. "Speculative" can cover a lot of ground, but the concept of it requires that there is more than one kind of knowledge—that analyzable or empirically verifiable knowledge is not the only kind of valid knowledge.

Here we are at Vico's claim of the kind of knowledge particular to humankind, the knowledge the maker has of that which she has made. James's imagination amplifies such a notion by contrasting the admittedly "enormous...surface" that conceptualizing speculation can cover with what we have seen "ground" means for him in this aspect of his work: the ground is deep, not merely an epidermis. The way in which conventional empiricism, the ontology of objectivity, and the moral practices of logical and technological warfare construe our ground renders it a mere stage or platform on which such forces conduct their operations and movements. But James says the reality is broader and deeper, that our "ground" has many dimensions, and layers, and realities, that we are in fact capable of encountering through our consciousness and its co-evolutionary (or intentional) connection to the universe. Thus, in the context of his philosophy, "speculative" connotes "creative"—the creativity that in Bergson's thought marks what is reality and that is part of what impels the Jamesian strenuous person to seek new experience, new knowledge, and new expression. This is the breadth and depth of the pluralistic universe in which persons as active forces circulate.

The ongoing creative inquiry and search for experience that consciousness conducts takes humankind beyond that which individuals can achieve but without the deceptive "unity of a stable system."[30] James contends that this pluralism extends across time, following Bergson; and we may see here a glimmer of an historically conscious ethics that is not based on rationalized history but on the molten, mobile reality of our historicity, into which the philosopher "stake[s]...his throw."[31] In an early letter from Berlin, James places intergenerationality into a conception of moral life that seems substantially that of his mature work. You can, he tells his friend,

> contribute your mite in *any* way to the mass of work which each generation subtracts from the task of the next; and you will come into *real* relations with your brothers—with some of them at least.... Our predecessors, even apart from the physical link of generation, have made us what we are.... *Every thing* we know and are is through men. We have no revelation but through man.[32]

Ralph Barton Perry tells us that in the *Pluralist Universe* lectures James "solemnly and publicly renounced logic" as a God's eye view of life.[33] And so he conceived of a kind of rationality that comprehended, rather than elided, both the personalities of actors and thinkers and the vastness of the world we can experience. He embedded such rationality into the world of experience. Based on the implications of the Port Arthur metaphor, we see here a "ground" that projects metaphysics deep into an ethics that develops out of the range of experience of consciousness. In "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" the notion of moral claim is so constituted as to be part of all human action, springing immediately into force along with consciousness and at work in every relation just because persons and their consciousness are part of reality.[34]

The self that is a person is not the Cartesian subject. James has ejected that kind of subjectivity:

> our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze. The collective and the distributive ways of being coexist here, for each part functions distinctly, makes connexion with its own peculiar region in the still wider rest of experience and tends to draw us into that line, and yet the whole is somehow felt as one pulse of our life,—not conceived so, but felt so.[35]

James's pluralist ontology is profoundly oriented toward our relations with one another and with nature. In this sense, it is an ethical project.[36] It is, furthermore, a moral philosophy centered on the agents of moral action—the full spectrum of consciousness embodied in persons. Each individual adds her own contribution, and the moral philosopher will revise and ameliorate.[37] In the words of John McDermott, in James's view every person "is Promethean and picaresque: a venturesome, risk-oriented prober into the widest and furthest reaches of the flow of experience."[38] A person is the being who "enters into the relational fabric of the world in a participative and liberating way which enables him to become human."[39]

James has a fascinating understanding of what personhood is in the pluralistic framework. The psychologist David E. Leary argues

that pluralism gives an expansive sense of the whole person, which he places in the context of James and later psychology; and that "personality" (or "personhood") for James is therefore not a matter of a jewel box soul but rather of many actions, aspects, relations, and "Me's" that have no hard boundaries among them within each person and across assemblages of persons.[40] "The Self in this widest sense" is not "the bare principle of personal unity" but instead a "*self of all the other selves*," "the source of effort and attention, and the place from which appear to emanate the fiats of the will."[41] This self is both continuous and discontinuous, both independent and dependent on others. Its form of wholeness is not absolute but, as Leary puts it, "constructed over time."[42] But James, writing as a philosopher as well as a psychologist, is interested not only in personality development but in conceptualizing the nature of experience. Personhood for him as for other personalists is not to be regarded as an empirical fact. Instead, it is a principle of the relation of the human to universal reality through our experience. As Randall Auxier puts it,

> the personal modality either creates or exceptionlessly characterizes *the* barrier between and among the plural existences that populate all experience.... The principle of conjunction for James is *time*...; the principle of disjunction is *person*.[43]

James' solution to the old antinomy—that is, a stalemate, as at Port Arthur—is to see consciousness as pulsation, just as light is neither particle nor wave but a third thing. The substantive is the resting transitive in the stream of thought, and the transitive is the moving substantive in the stream of thought; the stream itself is action indivisible except as appropriated for practical purposes.[44] Our thinking is truly the thinking we know—transient, streaming, fuzzy, on the fringe as well as at the center—rather than machine-like calculation or logical proof. At its most powerful as non-logical, our will motivates our interests and uses attention to drive the development of personality in a "strenuous" life. We do not proceed by the grid-search of logic but by the "sting" of things that provokes

us to try out various forms of inquiry, including logic, in order to find out what we might do about the world facing us.[45]

The effects of will, sparked by the stings of the world, includes every type of consciousness that comprises a person. In his 1890 paper "The Hidden Self," after discussing phenomena revealed by hypnosis, multiple personalities, and synaesthesia, James writes that in at least some people the total possible consciousness may be split into parts which co-exist...and are complimentary," among every sort of relation among them.[46] And in his entry in 1895 for an encyclopedia on "Persons and Personality," James emphasizes that the kinds of unity that the associationist psychology of his day—and, one can add, a number of analytic philosophers since then who turn personhood into a mereological puzzle—propose as the unity consciousness must have if it is to have unity, whether one argues it has or does not have unity, does not in the least fit the deep resources and multiform capabilities of actual conscious persons.[47]

Understanding the universe and understanding personal consciousness both alike cannot disregard all of this, even in mystical form, for we live with stings that cause all of them to spring or rush up in our complete engagement with the world.[48] Furthermore, the human person has a corporate aspect, for just as I am made up of many parts within myself, so also am I part of societies and part of the whole universe.

Personality is not "an immediate datum" but "an approved working assumption, wh. is psychologically easy and practically valuable."[49] And what could be more appealing to James than something "psychologically easy and practically valuable"? This view of personhood, founded in his epistemology, though expressed in psychological terms, links the complex, relational self to the striving, stung, strong, and strenuous willing self—to the moral actor that James saw in every individual as they unfold their inner disposition into a life of working responses to the world in which they are vulnerable. This is what I call James's pluralistic personalism.

Now, personalism as a whole is more of a program than a doctrine. It is an approach that appears in various schools of thought.[50] But in James's day, and in his hometown, it did appear as a philosophical school that went through to a third generation after

World War II, and its ideas continue today. This is the "Boston Personalism" founded by Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910).[51] James and Bowne were friends (through the second instantiation of the Metaphysical Club), though not close. There is little exchange of letters between them, notably James's writing to support Bowne against the "blatherskites" in the Methodist Church (in which Bowne was ordained) who put him on trial for heresy.[52] Bowne also on at least one occasion argued for a "communal conception of truth" that echoes the epistemology of Pragmatism.[53] People interested in Bowne recite James' polite encomia of Bowne, but people interested in James do not often refer to Bowne. Yet James quoted from Bowne's *Metaphysics* at length and approvingly in *Principles of Psychology*.[54]

Bowne's basic ontological position is that personhood (or "personality") is "the deepest thing in existence...intellect as the concrete realization and source" of being and causality.[55] Bowne says that if we dismiss abstractions because they are static and have no force in the world, what is left as real is solely the "power of action."

> Real things are distinguished from things having only conceptual existence by this power and fact of action.... We demand of being that it shall contain in itself the ground and explanation of the apparent order.... Only the definite and only the active can be viewed as ontologically real....[56]

> The truth is that in the separation between a thing and its power, we are the dupes of language.... Things as existing do not have the distinction of substance and attribute which they have in our thought. They do not consist of subjects to which predicates are externally attached...but they exist only in the predicates.[57]

He defines persons as non-substantial powers, holding that all "powers or forces are only abstractions from the one indivisible agent."[58] All force and therefore all being is personal; without intelligence the world would be merely a molar heap of inert objects.[59] In this way personhood as intelligence supplants both materialist mechanism and concrete vitality replaces the rationalist

Absolute for a non-absolute personalist idealism.[60] From this short overview of Bowne's position, we can see that his ontology is fully relational, like James's; that it is mostly an ontology of powers, or forces, rather than one of substances, roughly like James's; and that mind is not separate from being in the way that subjects are supposedly other than objects, quite like James. But unlike James, his concept of intelligence was limited to the traditional cognitive tasks. Bowne did not intuit, as James did, that relationality shows us that the fringes of consciousness, which are merely vibrational rather than dispositive, lead us into a vast, ultimately cosmic mutual influence of mind and the universe. In Bowne there is nothing like James's recognition that "Every smallest state of consciousness, taken concretely, overflows its definition."[61] Bowne did not advance as far as James toward a processual view of existence. He did not create a concept of personhood that resolved the turbulence of continual change with the sense of one's own identity. Nor had he any hint of the momentous consequences of Bergson's analysis of temporality, which showed how the apparently imposed world always feels "mine," suggesting a more advanced personalism. And he did not develop the sophisticated analysis of self-referentiality that Bergson and Husserl explored as part of uncovering the inseparability of consciousness and the universe. These notions in James that are not in Bowne serve as the elements of a pluralist personalism.

Another form of pluralistic personalism leaped from Boston to Berkeley in the person of George Holmes Howison (1834–1916). Howison was also a close friend of James.[62] Howison calls his system "personal and "multipersonal idealism."[63] Josiah Royce called it Howison's "multipersonalitairianism."[64] But all personalists are metaphysical pluralists, as Auxier says, because all must admit that personhood does not pertain solely to God.[65] Like James, Howison emphasizes the historical manifold as the locus of "all the essential moral qualities" we require of God, rather than a monistic Absolute.[66] And, also like James, he strongly emphasizes the cross-temporal community of meaning that persons create. But Howison sees all this as tending toward a final cause. Indeed, the "organising place" he gives to "Final Cause," subduing "Efficient Cause," resident in a "World of Spirits," is central to his thought

because it alone enables the "mutually thought correlation" of persons within the "Eternal Republic."[67] James, on the other hand, does not approach God as a real force, nor has he much use for final causes. His concern was not the actual final product of human inquiry, as Howison's was, but rather the capability—with all its failures as well as successes, always realized but partially—for open-ended, ever-enriching experience. His interest was not a complete cosmos—out there but of which we are a part—but the "completest" opening within each of us and for all of us as a community to reality.[68] To Howison this "transmission view" was merely "permissive." It encourages us but predicts nothing. The matter it left to chance that particularly disturbed Howison was that of personal immortality.[69] In this sense, Howison correctly read James's "tychism." To the "hope of the real improvement of this present world" and "the solvability of the Enigma of Evil" that Howison desired, James's meliorism was a "moral discouragement."[70] James and Howison apparently each saw the other's pluralism as too atomistic: Howison, because the lack of absolute knowledge is irrationalist and chaotic;[71] James, because Howison's logic is too rigid to allow the flow of consciousness.[72] In direct reply to Howison's published critique, James says that Howison does not untangle "the prima facie rebelliousness of the world of facts" but instead cuts them off from any capacity for relationship except through their "*rational fitness*" from the perspective of final cause.[73]

We can now see the elements of James's pluralistic personalism. The personalism part seems close to Bowne's: persons are relational and processual intelligences who make sense and meaning of the world for themselves, and they are not units advancing to some absolute (whether as its servants or as its creators), like iron filings turned all in the same direction straight to a magnet. But Bowne understands reality as intelligent and therefore personal, while James heads in a related but also very different direction when he started in Bergson's footsteps. The pluralism part distinctively concerns our richest and "completest" experience of our lives, broadly quite apart from what is the richness of reality or the universe itself. This, which Howison regards as mere "permission" rather than what I by simile call magnetically-enforced orders,

focuses us on the adventurous, eager, strenuous "energies of man" by which we participate in reality and in our communities.74 The pluralistic diversity of personality—the point of view we each congenitally have—is a factual motor of what becomes lives expanding beyond their starting-points. It is for the sake of living well in this manner that James urges us not to fly on the wings of concepts to crawl and wade through experiences that we are forever tempted to perch above by way of either science or theology.

In developing pluralism with an outcome in the ethics of personalism, James built on the spirit of personalism as his vision widened. Bowne's ontology has some real strengths that form an enduring foundation for personalism, but what appears as James's pluralist personalism goes much further and shows the personalist factor that both entered into but was also suppressed in early phenomenology (as, for example, in Husserl's avoidance of the ethical implications of subjectivity), although it was Bergson who ignited the last phase of James's thought. Part of James's widening was also due to Josiah Royce's influence. Royce pulled him to absolute idealism, and Bowne represented a non-absolute, or personal, idealist ontology that, it is easy to think, James found congenial. But there was more to it: something that was not exactly mysticism, as distinguished from the spiritualism of his day, because James himself did not have visions nor did he pursue a pure consciousness experience, although he clearly understood and sympathized with Buddhism vastly more by the time of *A Pluralistic Universe* than he had in *Pragmatism.* Also, he shared one of the basic impulses of personalism with Bowne that we also find in Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche: loathing of nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-century gigantism in business, academia, and empires. James also claims, in his own way, the basic premise of personalism: the absolute value of persons pitched against the instrumental and lesser value of objects, concepts, and words. Finally, James's concept of the intuitive philosophical core native to each person was the intuitive, core philosophical idea native to James himself and his philosophy. We see this in his early paper of 1879, "The Sentiment of Rationality," where he begins to fashion each major theme of Pragmatism from this observation.75

The claim that humans are the "highest" persons has become a millstone on the neck of the fortunes of personalism in the development of thought about the place of humankind in natural reality, now a crucial question in the age of the anthropocene and of artificial intelligence. This is in addition to the various exogenous forces that eclipsed personalism in philosophy after World War II and in theology from the weak developments from within personalism itself.[76] It is the case that the works of Bowne and others do acknowledge the non-human in ways that might be fruitful, but the issue is beyond the scope of this essay. In James's pluralistic personalism examined here, however, lie two lines of thought that can serve to discover a personalist response to the challenge of the other-than-human and the more-than-human. The first is the notion, associated with James's last work, that the consciousness or intelligence in non-human entities are a function of the universe properly understood as infinitely rich. The second, which James held in one form or another through most of his work, is the idea that our richest experience moves us to find the moral worth of non-human as well as of ourselves by using just that aporetic intelligence that is human intelligence rightly understood.

To complete the thought of this paper, however, it is necessary to talk about the person who leads us out of the stalemate. For if I completed an account of the intricate conceptual pattern of this allusion solely, in a passage, within a lecture, in a book, inside James's life work, I would not notice nor explain that the unsnaring is not disincarnate. James embedded the wide rationality he conceived in his experience, and we are therefore wise to hunt for the ways in which his writing expresses this, even if our more conventionally logical minds want to dismiss such things as poetry or "mere" performance. It is done by a person, Prof. James, in order to avoid dryness, not to replicate it. He aimed to bust up the stalemate.

And so I return to William James the peacemaker. If we look again at his use of the Port Arthur metaphor, we ought to notice that he shapes it as a miniature narrative. There's a "we" traveling through a life of the mind. And these travels become, through metaphor, a kind of dream or even nightmare: "*we* have to plough or wade through the whole intolerable interval. No detail is spared *us*" (italics mine). This echoes his own descriptions of intellectual

struggle, from his early "neurasthenic" fears about the nature of existence to his later intense struggle with traditional ontology that brought him at last to Bergson's overthrow of it. It is actual persons engaged with life whom barbed wire and warfare murder and who must find their ground by falling flat to hug it. The story so briefly narrated is that of vulnerability. The moral is that traditional ontology harms the narrator and the readers. It makes war on our souls.

James here speaks to one of his outstanding but little-noticed characteristics: his vulnerability. It is the hidden cause of much of his intimacy with his readers. Many of his important writings were not at first for readers. They were for auditors at lectures. This immediacy gave them not only the grace missing from journal publication but also the pathos of personal exposure to the feelings of others and the complicated, jittery affect of all actual and intense conversation. When lecturing and writing, James was a performer who knew that acting a role requires a veiled but nevertheless real part of the true human person that is the actor. His work shows more roles as we think more about it: scientist, empiricist, physician, psychologist, therapist, teacher, debater, friend, persuader, ethicist, political moralist, logician, science theorist, student of religion, nearly a mystic, all woven through his favorite role, that of philosopher. Realizing the performative aspect of James's address to us helps us see to what a high degree he regarded philosophizing as interpersonal and thus requiring the investment of one's personality in the recognition of the personhood of others. We also see that he strove to actualize a pluralistic personhood in which he and every other person can practice different roles and grow in various directions. For James, this is ameliorating in a way that marching to the beat of logic never can be.

To whom was the barbed wire at Port Arthur an obstacle? To all persons, real people who walked, had always been walking, across that land. At Port Arthur the ordinary earth was corrupted by arms, as our inner lives are hidden from us by metastasizing concepts. The immediacy and strength of this phrase in the text of the lecture puts us all in the contested, embattled spot, between armed empires and also between ontologies armed like deathstars, huge and embattled. (James in fact compared F. H. Bradley's idealist ontology to the

fortified and fallen Port Arthur.[77]) James's pluralism was an offer of peace in the ontological world war that carried along a notion of peace in the other spheres that were to tear civilization apart worldwide through a civil war in Europe nearly a century long. There, facing gigantic violence, stands the person.

This kind of peacemaking served some of the aims of a philosophical view of society that James did not explicitly develop, although he was constantly thinking about contemporary politics, as his letters show, and not infrequently spoke out on key issues. Although he never called himself a personalist, the notion of personhood and its implications in moral philosophy was for him, as for Bowne and others, a focus of the vast moral potential of consciousness, a real and present ground beneath our feet, as against the eliminationist force of reductionist philosophy, technocratic systems of knowledge, and martial violence to which the merely but infinitely human is vulnerable.

The problems of war and of totalized social systems, of course, did not end. Today true subjectivity that was a hope of rescue has been turned into a bad subjectivity. The heroic autonomous person often reveals the imperialist society and dominative technology. Or subjectivity is seen as one of the two elements of "Cartesian violence." And the person today is so overwhelmed by commodified "choices" by which she can be made to think that she as consumer is creating her "personality" by shopping that personhood is like a goose fattened to be made into fois gras by the capitalist butcher. Had James lived longer, he would likely have developed his principled critique of the disincarnate, dry, hollow, and dehydrated forms of philosophy according to one or another of the possible directions taken in the half-century after his death that we can see in his work.

Among those forms, one that gives us a fruitful comparison with James's ideas is the work of Emmanuel Levinas. James's lucidity was as completely opposite a form of philosophical prose to Levinas's language as imaginable. But his later development sprang from Bergson, as did Levinas's initial work, all despite the purgatory to which the work of Bergson, which is the object of James's work in this lecture, was consigned, along with Whitehead, by the orthodox pontiffs of Anglophone disciplinary philosophy until the

last few decades. James sensed that personhood is a concrete reality, even if we cannot say that it has the kind of unity denoted as "identity"; and that it is real as a multiplanar form of being. He seems to hold, further, that its reality is validated by its ethical weight, as it is the mode of being of the moral actor and of the living of moral life. James's example of the two souls on the rock who form a moral community foreshadows Levinas's category of the face of the Other, and both of them hold personhood together as moral agency.[78] Here in the passage about Port Arthur, James was foreseeing the calamity of war to which Levinas's mature work was a response: totalized ontologies that really are red in tooth and claw. Both saw totalized ontology as violence. In a Levianasian way, James wants to turn the stalemate of human relations into the improving morality of human relations, as when his two souls on the rock live in their moral claims on one another rather than at war with one another.

The freedom we have inheres in personhood because it is personhood that, in its fullest realization, ventures into the dimensions of life. That each personality has within it its own intuitive worldview signals this freedom: the pluralistic universe is ours to explore, not the property of impersonal rationality, which stems from fear and leads to aggression and suppresses rather than liberates. To James the wonder of the reality of persons, others and his own self, was a patent part of the pluralistic universe within each person and connecting all persons.[79]

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NOTES

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[1] Dr. Bennett Gilbert is the author of *Power and Compassion: On Moral Force Ethics and Historical Change*, forthcoming 2025

[2] May, Rollo, "William James' Humanism and the Problem of Will." *William James: Unfinished Business*, 74–75 (73–92).

[3] This thought is inspired by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro when he writes: "Ontological differences...are political because they imply a situation of war —not a war of *words*, as per the linguistic turn, but an ongoing war of *worlds*, hence the sudden, pressing insistence on the ontological import of our ethnographic descriptions, in a context in which the world ('as we know it') is imposed in myriad ways on other peoples' worlds (as they know them), even as this hegemonic world seems to be on the brink of a slow, painful and ugly ending," "Who is Afraid of the Ontological Wolf? some comments on an ongoing anthropological debate," *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 2-17. Viveiros de Castro refers here to James's ontological pluralism as well as to Gilles Deleuze. Manuel de Landa's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* is an extended meditation on the theme of ontology in war, based on Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the "machinic phyllum" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 456–459.

[4] Crary, Jonathan, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 13.

[5] James, William, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 158.

[6] Letter to Pauline Goldmark, February 24, 104, in William James, *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 10, 394; for his continued expressions of support for Japan, cf. 467, 548, and 564 n. 2; and James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 53, 54, and 105.

[7] Letter to Théodore Flournoy, June 14, 2004, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 109, 415.

[8] Letter to Bergson, June 13, 1907, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 378.

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[9] Letter to Bliss Perry, October 3, 1905, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 99.

[10] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 110.

[11] In a letter to Borden Parker Bowne written from Haarlem, Netherlands, while working on his Gifford lectures on August 17, 1908, James again uses spatial metaphors of "wading through the intervening concrete particulars," whereas instead we miss the richness of reality when we "jump or fly over the surface of experience and perch on distant spits conceptually...." (*The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 87–89).

[12] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 246–253.

[13] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 111.

[14] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 110.

[15] James, 112.

[16] James, 112.

[17] James, 113.

[18] Bergson, Henri, *Matter and Memory*, 14, 248-249.

[19] Bergson, 240–243.

[20] For the influence of James on Husserl, see Bruce Wilshire, *William James and Phenomenology: a study of "The Principles of Psychology*," 3ff.

[21] For a full account of the role of the "fringe" in James's view of consciousness, see Gerald E. Myers, *William James: his life and thought*, 247–262. Aron Gurwitsch discusses it from a phenomenological point of view in *The Field of Consciousness: Theme, Thematic Field, and Margin* (vol. III of his *Collected Works*), 301ff. Bruce Wilshire finds that James handled the fringe inconsistently with respect to developing a phenomenology (*William James and Phenomenology*, 87–108). Crary, *Suspensions*, 284ff. et passim, looks at the issue of the dismissal of fringe attention under nineteenth century capitalism.

[22] Anson Rabinbach in *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*, 52–83, showed the way in which rationalized capitalism turned human mental and physical energy into economic production.

[23] Gurwitsch, *loc. cit*.

[24] James, William, *The Principles of Psychology*, 153–154.

[25] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 111.

[26] James, 112.

[27] James, 113.

[28] James, William, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in *Essays in Religion and Morality*, 162–173.

[29] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 112.

[30] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 330.

[31] James, 347.

[32] Letter to Thomas Wren Ward, January 7, 1868, in James, *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 4, 249.

[33] Perry, Ralph Barton, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2.690. In *The Principles of Psychology,* 398, James writes about how much he disliked having to teach logic.

[34] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 340–341.

[35] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 130.

[36] Cf. Gary S. Slater, "The Moral Framework of A Pluralistic Universe," in *William James, Moral Philosophy, and the Ethical Life*, 347–362.

[37] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 341 (italics his).

[38] McDermott, John J. *Streams of Experience: reflections on the history and philosophy of American culture*, 147.

[39] McDermott, John J. ed. *The Writings of William James: a comprehensive edition*.

[40] Leary, David E. "William James on the Self and Personality: clearing the ground for subsequent theorists, researchers, and practitioners," *Reflections on The Principles of Psychology: William James after a century*, 101–137. Harry T. Hunt, in *On the Nature of Consciousness: cognitive, phenomenological, and transpersonal perspectives*, 115ff., sensitively develops a similar reading.

[41] James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 280.

[42] Leary, "William James on the Self and Personality," 109.

[43] Auxier, Randall E. *Time, Will, and Purpose: living ideas from the philosophy of Josiah Royce,* 217, 224.

[44] James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 243–244.

[45] James, 926

[46] James, "The Hidden Self," in *Essays in Psychology*, 261.

[47] James, *Essays in Psychology*, 315–321.

[48] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 307–308.

[49] Letter to F. C. S. Schiller, January 10, 1904, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 483.

⁵⁰ For a general account of personalism and its varieties, see Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bentssen, "Personalism," in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism/; and Jan Olof Bengtssen, *The Worldview of Personalism: origins and early development*.

⁵¹ For the ideas of Boston Personalism, see the various essays in *Personalism Revisited: Its Proponents and Critics*; and *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social, Ethics, and Theology*, especially Deats' "Introduction to Boston personalism." Some works by and about its history include Randall E. Auxier, "The History and Principles of American Personalism: A Comparison of the Harvard and Boston University Schools," in *Roczniki Teologiczne*, 21–36; and Kevin M. Dirksen and Paul T. Schotsmans on Bowne and his Boston followers, "The Historical Roots of Personalism: Borden Parker Bowne and the Boston Tradition on Personal Identity and the Moral Life," in *Bijdragen: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology*, 388-403.

⁵² Letter to Bowne, December 29, 1903, in James, *Correspondence*, vol. 10, 350. Bowne and James corresponded between 1895 and 1909 (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 10, 641).

⁵³ See *The Real Metaphysical Club: the philosophers, their debates, and selected writings from 1870 to 1885*, 389–390.

⁵⁴ James, *Principles of Psychology*, 215.

⁵⁵ Bowne, *Metaphysics*, 86.

⁵⁶ Bowne, 16–17.

⁵⁷ Bowne, 21.

⁵⁸ Bowne, 24.

⁵⁹ Bowne, 252.

⁶⁰ For more on Bowne's ontology, see my "Two and One-Half Arguments For Idealism" In *Idealistic Studies*, 133–155; Thomas O. Buford, "Persons in the Tradition of Boston Personalism," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 214–218; and the same author's "Introduction" to selections from Bowne in *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*, 646–652, is a good summary of Bowne's metaphysics.

⁶¹ James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 129.

[62] Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose*, 202–210, examines the tangle of friendships among James, Bowne, Howison, and Royce in terms of the development of personalism, placing Bowne at the center. Howison went to Berkeley when James's effort to obtain a position at Harvard for him failed. It was Royce who then came to Harvard instead.

[63] Howison uses this phrase in a four page pamphlet, *Outline of the Philosophy Termed Multipersonal Idealism*, 1895, presumably published in Berkeley. I have not been able to look at it: Berkeley itself records no copy, and the only copies in WorldCat are two in Germany (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and Thüringer Landesbibliothek). Howison sent this pamphlet to James, who breezily replied on June 29, 1895 from Chocorua with a comment about the "triviality" of abstract metaphysics. He then had to smooth Howison's ruffled feathers on July 17 by blaming it on "the fragrances of the spruces and sweet ferns" at his mountain retreat (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 8, 50 and 57).

[64] As cited by James McLachlan, "George Holmes Howison: 'The City of God' and Personal Idealism," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 224.

[65] Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose*, 76–77.

[66] Howison, George Holmes. "In the Matter of Personal Idealism, in *Mind*, 234.

[67] Howison, George Holmes. *The Limits of Evolution and Other Essays, illustrating the metaphysical theory of personal idealism.*

[68] James, *Psychology: a briefer course*, 158.

[69] Howison, *The Limits of Evolution*, 279–285.

[70] George Holmes Howison, "Personal Idealism and Its Ethical Bearings," in *International Journal of Ethics*, 456.

[71] McLachlan, "George Holmes Howison," 237.

[72] Auxier, Time, Will, and Purpose, 208.

[73] James, *Correspondence*, vol. 9, 502–503 (June 17, 1901).

[74] Howison's thought, in my view, fails to resolve the tension between his vision of "a universe of self-determining rational beings" and their destination toward "an ultimate Harmony." He says, in dissenting to James from James's ideas in Pragmatism, "I'm, with Royse, [sic] for 'the eternal....'" (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 11, 286).

[75] In *Essays in Philosophy*, 32–64.

[76] For the developments in philosophy, see McDermott, *Streams of Experience*, 226. For the developments on theology, see Gary Dorrien, "Making Liberal Theology Metaphysical: Personalist Idealism as a Theological School," in *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, 241–242.

[77] Letter to F. C. S. Schiller, August 321, 1904, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 456.

[78] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 155.

[79] James also was tending toward a kind of personalist cosmopsychism at the very end of his life, as discussed by Jordan Ganeri, "Cosmic Consciousness," *The Monist*, vol. 105 (2022): 50-55 (43–57). Ganeri quotes James's "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher," *American Magazine*, vol. 68 (October, 1909): 580–589.

THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE AND CONVERGENCE OF WILLIAM JAMES & SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHIES OF RELIGION

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This essay examines the cross-cultural philosophical exchange between Swami Vivekananda and William James beginning with their interactions in the summer of 1896. It explores the initial divergence between Vivekananda's Vedantic Monism and James's pragmatic pluralism, despite their shared values such as the importance of pragmatic verification, the validity of mystical experiences, fideism, and panpsychism. Nevertheless, by the end of their lives both philosophers developed more compatible views. This convergence will be explained through the work of Henry Samuel Levinson and Swami Medhananda, who illustrate how each thinker, in their maturity, embraced a more inclusive view that transcends traditional dualities. Ultimately, James's pantheistic pluralism and Vivekananda's pantheistic cosmopsychism blur the theoretical distinctions between their mature philosophies. It concludes by discussing the convergence of James's and Vivekananda's later works towards similar spiritual inquiries, suggesting that their paths, while initially parallel, rapidly converge

into a shared vision of spiritual and philosophical inquiry. Furthermore, this essay also contextualizes this affinity between Vivekananda and James within the broader story of Indian philosophy on American pragmatism beyond James and Vivekananda. By noting the influence of Vedānta on earlier thinkers, like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, as well as Vivekananda's influence on James, a richer tapestry of the multicultural influences on Classical Pragmatism emerges.

THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE BETWEEN INDIAN AND AMERICAN PHILOSOPHIES

Most genealogies of pragmatism focus either on its European influences (Hamner, Brandom, Misak) or the local and indigenous influences on its development (West, Seigfried, Pratt, McKenna & Pratt, Spencer), but few substantially attend to the influence of Advaita Hinduism on its genesis. The obvious point of contact is the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the American Transcendentalists. In "Emerson and Hinduism," Russell B. Goodman reminds us that Emerson "lived during the first great period of European Sanskrit scholarship" and even though he did not read *The Bhagavad Gītā* until his forties, he encountered snippets and secondhand accounts of Vedānta, particularly the commentaries of Victor Cousin.[1] Consequently, Albert Spencer argues in *American Pragmatism: An Introduction*, that Vedānta shaped Emerson's favoring of experience over knowledge, a founding tenet of what would become pragmatism (36).

Of course, the most recent, thorough, and sustained examination of Vedānta's influence on Emerson, the poet Walt Whitman, and the origin of American philosophy is Jeremy David Engels's *The Ethics of Oneness*. He argues that *The Gita* and other Hindu texts inspired Emerson and Whitman to develop "philosophies of oneness that challenged the hegemony of liberalism" and to "imagine a different way of life than most Americans had adopted, a life based on

something deeper and richer and more vast than the market and the pleasure of the senses" that "returned Americans' focus to the 'high ends' of life, and ultimately proved a source of comfort and inspiration for generations of Americans to come" (p. 6). Likewise, Scott Stroud carefully elucidates the influence of John Dewey's pragmatism on Bhimrao Ambedkar, a key author of the Republic of India's constitution and social reformer, in his recent book *The Evolution of Pragmatism in India*. Finally, Ruth Harris's insights extend this analysis by showing how Swami Vivekananda's teachings further complicated these intellectual exchanges, intertwining Indian nationalism with universalist ideas that resonated deeply in the Western psyche. Harris also highlights how Vivekananda's adaptive methods of teaching to different audiences contributed to the kaleidoscopic nature of his legacy, influencing both spiritual democracy in India and challenging Western prejudices.

Indeed, several scholars appreciate Vivekananda's Indian influence on American pragmatism during the time between the Transcendentalists and Ambedkar's studies with Dewey at Columbia, specifically on William James. The first round of articles focuses on how Vivekananda's introduction of Vedāntic concepts to the West fundamentally shaped the development of transpersonal psychology, particularly in relation to William James. Prem Shankar and Uma Parameswaran argue that Vivekananda's teachings provided a crucial philosophical foundation for what would later be termed transpersonal psychology—a movement that sought to transcend the limitations of the first three forces in psychology: behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology. By integrating spiritual dimensions into the understanding of consciousness, Vivekananda's teachings paved the way for a psychology that embraces the transcendental aspects of human experience, starting with *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Decades later, Norris Frederick shifts focus to the impact of Vivekananda's ideas on James's understanding of consciousness. He argues that although James was initially resistant to the mystical and monistic aspects of Vedānta, his continued engagement with Vivekananda's teachings—especially through practices like yoga and meditation—led him to a more sophisticated appreciation of these concepts and bolstered his openness to mystical experiences.

Likewise, interest in Vivekananda's influence on James is experiencing a renaissance. Sarah Louise Gates examines how Vivekananda's ideas challenged and enriched contemporary Western psychological paradigms, positioning him as a crucial figure in the global exchange of philosophical ideas because his emphasis on self-realization and spiritual awakening offered a counternarrative to the dominant materialist and behaviorist paradigms of the time.

In particular, Chris Zajner presents an interpretation that most closely resembles the conclusion of our current inquiry. Zajner begins by acknowledging that while James admired Vivekananda and found his ideas intriguing, he ultimately rejected what he perceived as the monistic underpinnings of Vedānta; however James's rejection was not only based on philosophical grounds but also deeply influenced by his personal temperament, which favored pluralism over monism. He posits that James's understanding of Vivekananda's Vedānta was primarily shaped by his exposure to *Raja Yoga,* a work that emphasizes the discipline of mental control and the attainment of mystical states. This focus led James to view Vedānta as a system of extreme monism that he found incompatible with his own pluralistic worldview, which emphasized the diversity and unpredictability of experience. Zajner critiques this interpretation, arguing that James oversimplified Vivekananda's philosophy by equating Vedānta with a rigid monism and failing to recognize the broader and more inclusive nature of Vedānta, particularly its emphasis on Karma Yoga—the path of action. Furthermore, Zajner argues that Vivekananda's understanding of Vedānta is not strictly monistic but rather a flexible and adaptable philosophy that accommodates various temperaments and dispositions.

However, Vedantic monism is more nuanced than James realized, and Vivekananda advocates for a non-transcendental, experiential understanding of reality that aligns closely with James's own radical empiricism. Both thinkers, Zajner suggests, share a commitment to the non-transcendence of truth, the importance of personal religious experience, and the practical applicability of philosophy. However, James's failure to fully appreciate the diversity within Vedānta led him to misinterpret it as a philosophy that was fundamentally at odds with his pluralistic outlook. He also

explains the temperamental differences between James and Vivekananda, arguing that James's preference for a pluralistic universe, where real struggle and loss are possible, influenced his rejection of what he p as the deterministic and passive elements of monism. He suggests that James associated monism with a certain passivity or withdrawal from the world, which was antithetical to his own active, melioristic temperament. This, Zajner argues, led James to misjudge Vedānta as incompatible with his philosophical goals, when in fact, Vivekananda's teachings, particularly those emphasizing Karma Yoga, are deeply action-oriented and compatible with James's emphasis on active engagement with the world.

This analysis diverges from Zajner's argument in several ways. First, this article emphasizes the eventual convergence of James's and Vivekananda's respective philosophies, particularly their shared commitment to a pluralistic understanding of reality and mystical experiences, whereas Zajner argues that James ultimately rejected Vivekananda's philosophy due to his discomfort with the perceived monistic implications of Vedānta. Likewise, we agree that both thinkers evolved towards a more inclusive worldview and that James misunderstood Vedānta as a rigid, monistic doctrine incompatible with his pluralistic temperament; however, I contend his final introspective works reveal a shift in James's temperament as he faces his own mortality. Third, Zajner rightfully critiques James for not recognizing the practical aspects of Vedānta, such as *Karma Yoga*, which align closely with his own emphasis on meliorism; nevertheless, we conclude that their shared commitment to the authority of personal mystical experience and spiritual practices remains a constant continuity between the two, even if it is not explicit. Thus, Zajner suggests that James's philosophical temperament led him to misinterpret Vivekananda's emphasis on unity as escapist monism, contrasting with this essay's view that both thinkers ultimately acknowledged the unity and diversity of existence. In conclusion, this essay argues for a harmonious convergence between James's and Vivekananda's mature philosophies and that there is not tension but synergy between James's Pantheistic Pluralism and Vivekananda's Pantheistic Cosmopanpsychism.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN VEDĀNTA AND PRAGMATISM

From 1893-1897, Swami Vivekananda, who was trained in Western Philosophy, a disciple of the Hindu mystic Ramakrishna, and an influential social reformer and nationalist prior to Indian Independence, traveled throughout the United States and Europe spreading his vision of religious pluralism and Vedānta philosophy. Coincidentally, these years mark the peak of Classical Pragmatism and two of his most important public lectures were hosted in the centers of pragmatist thought. On September 11, 1893, he addressed the *Parliament of the World's Religions* at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago and although it is impossible to know if any pragmatists were among the thousands in attendance, the following month Jane Addams invited him to deliver a talk on "The Economic and Social Conditions of India" on October 24, 1893. Indeed, Addams and Vivekananda continued to meet with some regularity before his death in 1902.[2]

Another point of contact occurred on March 25, 1896, when Vivekananda delivered his lecture, "The Vedānta Philosophy," to the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club at Dane Hall in Boston, MA. In attendance was William James and Josiah Royce, both of whom had already known Vivekananda for well over a year since he was introduced to the entire philosophy faculty of Harvard on December 15, 1894, on one of the occasions when the Swami was in residence at the home of Sara Chapman Bull, a popular philanthropist, writer, and member of the Cambridge intelligentsia. Indeed, James was probably aware of Vivekananda even earlier, given that his children, Harry and Margaret, attended Vivekananda's lecture "Aspects of Religious Life in India" when the Swami delivered it to the Harvard Religious Union at Sever Hall on May 16, 1894. Like Addams, James continued to meet with Vivekananda until the Swami's death in 1902.[3]

Unlike Addams, the influence of Vivekananda soon explicitly manifests in James's writing and the Swami becomes an important interlocutor in his late works. In *Talks to Teachers*, James briefly mentions "a number of accomplished Hindoo visitors at Cambridge, who talked freely of life and philosophy" and the obvious benefits of their practice of meditation and yoga since childhood saying, "The good fruits of such a discipline were obvious in the physical

repose and lack of tension, and the wonderful smoothness and calmness of facial expression, and imperturbability of manner… I felt that my countrymen were depriving themselves of an essential grace of character."[4] Undoubtedly, Vivekananda was among these accomplished visitors and James's interest in the practice of yoga, despite his inability to enjoy its physical or spiritual benefits, would continue until his death in 1910.

In fact, his first direct reference to Vivekananda appears in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, where he cites yoga as one form of "methodical cultivation" of "cosmic or mystic consciousness" and defines it as the "the experimental union of the individual with the divine" through "persevering exercise; and the diet, posture, breathing, intellectual concentration, and moral discipline." James notes that the purpose of this program is to "overcome the obscurations of his lower nature sufficiently" to achieve *samâdhi*. He shares an extended quotation from Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* to explain it:

> That the mind itself has a higher state of existence, beyond reason, a superconscious state, and that when the mind gets to that higher state, then this knowledge beyond reasoning comes… All the different steps in yoga are intended to bring us scientifically to the superconscious state of samâdhi… Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness, and which, also, is not accompanied with the feeling of egoism… There is no feeling of *I*, and yet the mind works, desireless, free from restlessness, objectless, bodiless. The Truth shines in its full effulgence, and we know ourselves—for Samâdhi lies potential in us all—for what we truly are, free, immortal, omnipotent, loosed from the finite, and its contrasts of good and evil altogether, and identical with the Atman or Universal Soul.[5]

Clearly, James possessed a keen scholarly awareness of the connection between the practice of yoga and the state of *samadhi*, but it also should be noted that Vivekananda demonstrated samadhi for James during one of their conversations at Sara Bull's house during the week of October 4, 1894.[6] Furthermore, James concludes this reference in *The Varieties* by acknowledging that the "Vedantists say that one may stumble into superconsciousness

sporadically, without the previous discipline, but it is then impure. Their test of its purity, like our test of religion's value, is empirical: its fruits must be good for life."[7]

Through this emphasis on practice and impact, James parks Vivekananda very close to his ultimate conclusions that well developed mystical states can be authoritative for the individual who experiences them and that their veracity should be evaluated on how they transform the individual. More importantly, it coheres with his conclusion that the "existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe."[8] While James carefully states that the noetic content of mystical experiences should only function as hypotheses he also acknowledges that "The supernaturalism and optimism to which they would persuade us may, interpreted in one way or another, be after all the truest of insights into the meaning of life."[9]

Thus, mystical experiences count as noetic evidence for the individual and some hypotheses based on them may be true. Likewise, it seems that James favors *samadhi* attained through yoga as a worthy candidate, and, interestingly, he returns to Vivekananda in his final remarks of the lecture. Once again, he addresses the issue of whether there are alternative states of consciousness and their significance:

> Here the over-beliefs begin: here mysticism and the conversion-rapture and Vedantism and transcendental idealism bring in their monistic interpretation and tell us that the finite self rejoins the absolute self, for it was always one with God and identical with the soul of the world. Here the prophets of all the different religions come with their visions, voices, raptures, and other openings, supposed by each to authenticate his own peculiar faith.[10]

James frequently used the term "over-beliefs" to refer to the additional, interpretative beliefs that individuals or religious groups adopt to explain or give meaning to mystical experiences, often extending beyond the direct evidence of those experiences to include specific doctrinal or philosophical frameworks. As one who was "not personally favored with such specific revelations," James concludes that even though many of the "over-beliefs" that interpret

mystical experiences insist upon monism, they quickly turn to their pre-existing doctrines and "neutralize one another." Therefore, following any religious or philosophical explanation is a personal choice based on private experiences, subjective preferences, or pragmatic grounds. However, James believes that mystical experiences do serve as evidence of a more modest claim that "we have in *the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come,* a posit content of religious experience which, it seems to me, *is literally and objectively true as far as it goes*."[11]

This leads to James's pragmatic conclusion that this wider self is real because it has real effects upon the world, and the religions of the world focus on the transactions of the self and society with the real of this wider self. While this pragmatic view of religion is descriptively true, James admits it will not satisfy most traditional metaphysicians or theologians. However, he does ironically believe it is the "deeper way" which he explains as follows:

> It gives it body as well as soul, it makes it claim, as everything real must claim, some characteristics realm of fact as its very own. What the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state, I know not. But the over-belief on which I am ready to make my personal venture is that they exist. The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in.[12]

With regards to Vedānta it remains clear that James insists on resisting any kind of monistic over-belief. He even cites passages from Vivekananda's "Practical Vedānta" and "The Real and Apparent Man," lectures in a footnote which deserve some attention.

In the fourth lecture of "Practical Vedānta," Vivekananda contrasts the dualistic notion of individual souls with the Buddhist denial of such individuality, and advancing towards the Advaitic resolution that merges the individual with the universal. It delves

into the concepts of the soul's evolution, karma, and reincarnation, emphasizing the unity and oneness of existence as opposed to the separation implied by dualism. The speaker encourages a shift from focusing on personal salvation towards recognizing and fostering the divine nature within all beings, advocating for a life of selflessness and service as the true expression of one's highest self. This perspective is presented as not only a philosophical ideal but as a practical approach to living, highlighting the power of will and the importance of character development in realizing one's true, infinite nature. The lecture ultimately calls for a universal application of these principles, transcending limited individuality for a greater, universal identity rooted in unselfishness and the inherent purity of the soul. Undoubtedly, Vivekananda defends monism in the lecture, but his conclusion is pragmatic and pluralistic. Nevertheless, James quotes an earlier monistic appeal by Vivekananda intended to inspire those in guilt and despair to remember that the true self is infinite and one with God.[13]

Admittedly, "The Real and Apparent Man" is even more monistic. In this lecture, Vivekananda also emphasizes the quest for unity and the understanding of the soul's immortality and oneness with the universe. He argues that behind the changing phenomena of the universe lies the unchanging, singular reality of Brahman. However, Vivekananda also addresses the dualistic and non-dualistic views of the soul, advocating for a realization that transcends these distinctions and recognizes the soul's inherent purity and divinity. He argues that such realization brings about a transformation in perception, leading to universal love, peace, and the dissolution of evil. The lecture concludes with a call for the widespread dissemination of these truths, asserting their power to fundamentally alter human society and individual consciousness towards divine harmony. Again, we find Vivekananda explaining theological distinctions only to conclude that they should not distract the individual from living well, pragmatism, and supporting a pluralistic society.[14]

Despite originating from different philosophical assumptions, James and Vivekananda converge more than they diverge with regards to their views on the nature of the self, the pragmatic impact of mystical experiences, and the need for a pluralistic society. Both thinkers emphasize the existence of a deeper, more unified reality

beneath the surface of individual experiences. James, with his pragmatic approach, recognizes the validity of mystical experiences as evidence of a wider self that transcends individual consciousness, suggesting a pluralistic reality where personal and collective dimensions of existence co-exist. Similarly, Vivekananda, through Advaita Vedānta, advocates for the realization of the self's oneness with the universal Brahman, transcending dualistic distinctions between the individual and the absolute. Both agree on the transformative potential of this realization, advocating for a life of selflessness and universal love. Their agreement lies in the acknowledgment of a profound interconnectedness and unity underlying apparent differences, advocating for a harmonious coexistence that acknowledges diversity within a singular, ultimate reality. At this point in time, James remains more naturalistic, but these are the tensions that he devotes the remainder of his work untangling and when he does, he moves even closer to Vivekananda. Conversely, Vivekananda sees monism as the truth, but stresses that this truth should not be asserted at the expense of creating a pluralistic world. Indeed, he too will move closer to James in the remainder of his career by losing his grip on monism even more and clinging more tightly to pluralism as a theological fact, as well as a social goal.

JAMES SHIFTS FROM RADICAL EMPIRICISM TO PLURALISTIC PANTHEISM

As can be seen, the conclusion of *The Varieties* is quite ambiguous, with James validating the noetic veracity of mystical beliefs and accepting them as provisional evidence regarding the self and consciousness, yet still resists acknowledging them as evidence of the over-belief of mystical monism. In *The Religious Investigations of William James*, Henry Samuel Levinson also notes this ambiguity and claims James leaves at least two unresolved problems. First, James clearly rejected "crass supernaturalism" and "Romantic pantheism" because both cherry pick world events as supporting their over-beliefs. The former interpreting certain events as divine intervention, but not others, and the latter for claiming "the whole world was full of soul" while ignoring "those parts of the world that were simply brutal." But how does James steer between this Scylla and Charybdis without providing his own well drafted route for

legitimate and illegitimate mystical experiences? Second, how can James admit there is a wider and/or super self without the individual either suborning to the Divine or dissolving into the oceanic consciousness of the One?[15] While James answers the first question with pragmatism and the second with both agnosticism and even polytheism, those answers are vague and both questions push James towards the perennial problem of the One and the Many. This philosophical problem becomes his focus and to answer it he stretches his radical empiricism to include not only pragmatic naturalism but also the new pluralistic pantheism he articulates and defends in his late works.

According to Levinson, James previously resisted pantheism for three reasons: he believed 1) that nature is too plastic to be an expression of God, 2) that the "deterministic character of absolute idealistic pantheism" invalidates "moral judgements or regrets," and 3) that "allegiance to the logic of identity precluded acceptance of absolute pantheism, which entailed identification of the one with the many."[16] However, James begins to reconsider pantheism in his *Pragmatism* lectures. First, he postulates that "a pantheistic God might be an 'Ultimate,' not an absolute, an 'extract' from experience, not 'the whole.'"[17] Second, he distinguishes between "universes of discourse and universes of operation" which entails that no one universe of discourse," like Royce's absolute idealism, "could claim on evidence that the world had any unity of purpose." Therefore "Pantheism of an absolute sort ended in mystery, or failure to clarify adequately the relationship between the knowledge, purposes, and histories of persons and 'infinite' knowledge, purpose, and life."[18] James also incorporated our social operations into this process of world-unification, arguing that it is through the transactions of our relationships, institutions, and cultures that we move back and forth from "real *chaos*" to "real *reparation*;" however these oscillations are local, particular, and melioristic, not absolute, universal, and teleological (Ibid., p. 205).

James clarifies his pluralistic pantheism even further in *A Pluralistic Universe* by insisting upon an "empirical spiritualism" capable of overcoming cynical materialisms while avoiding a theism that "construed God and man and the world not only as externally related but as alien to one another." Pantheism permits both this "more intimate form of spiritualism" because it roots humanity in

the "deepest reality in the universe," does not conflict with "scientific evolutionism," and is compatible with "social democratic ideals."[19] Furthermore, this pluralistic pantheism is on full display in two of the last essays that James writes. In "A Suggestion about Mysticism," James postulates a "cosmic consciousness of indefinite extent to account for "typically" mystical states."[20] This would explain mystical experiences as moments when the threshold of our ordinary consciousness expands to include subconscious memories, psychic phenomena, and other transmarginal experiences. Indeed, Levinson postulates that this new openness was most likely due to at least four exceptional experiences that James documented late in life.[21]

Thus, Levinson rightly highlights the ambiguities and unresolved tensions in James's thought, especially concerning the noetic value of mystical experiences and the challenge of reconciling individual consciousness with a universal or divine consciousness. While his critique underscores James's reluctance to fully embrace mystical monism or provide a clear route between legitimate and illegitimate mystical experiences, these concerns ultimately draw James towards pluralistic pantheism in his late works. Levinson's work also reminds us that James's vague responses to these challenges reveal the inherently tentative and exploratory nature of his pragmatism. James's philosophical project is one of probing and inquiry, where definitive answers are less critical than the process of engaging with the questions themselves. In this light, James's acceptance of pantheism and his exploration of the mystical can be seen as emblematic of his broader commitment to a philosophy that is open-ended, pluralistic, and deeply humanistic. Levinson's critique, therefore, not only deepens our understanding of James but also underscores the importance of maintaining an open, inquisitive stance in philosophical inquiry—a stance that James himself exemplified throughout his life.

Indeed, these traits are on full display in "A Pluralistic Mystic," where James returns to the mysticism of Benjamin Paul Blood who authored *The Anesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*, the book which inspired James to experiment with nitrous oxide, ether, and other psychoactive substances to trigger mystical experiences and philosophical realizations. While James mostly articulates Bloods experiences of monistic unity, he cites Blood's conclusions

that mystical experiences often result in "sadness and disenchantment," that "Certainty is the root of despair," and that "Nature is miracle all. She knows no laws; the same returns not, saver to bring the different" as evidence that mystical experiences, even ones of unity, can be understood pluralistically and that novelty is a real feature of reality. In response, James famously states:

> 'Ever not quite!'-- this seems to wring the very last panting word out of rationalistic philosophy's mouth. It is fit to be pluralism's heraldic device. There is no complete generalisation, no total point of view, no all-pervasive unity, but everywhere some residual resistance to verbalisation, formulation, and discursification, some genius of reality that escapes from the pressure of the logical finger, that says "hands off," and claims its privacy, and mean to be left to its own life. In every moment of immediate experience is somewhat absolutely original and novel.[22]

This quotation reveals James's commitment to individual personal experience without invalidating the sense of unity present in most mystical experiences. James's pluralistic pantheism accepts that even if the oneness noetically revealed in the mystical experience is a true revelation of ultimate consciousness, the moment we begin to interpret it we tumble back into the pluralistic universe. And this tumble, this re-entry, is not a bad thing, for it is through this return to the individual that we encounter the novel. Therefore, we must remain suspicious not of experiences of mystical monism, but of the subsequent articulation of over-beliefs that seek to gobble up or invalidate either the novelty of our individual experiences or the validity of other religious and philosophical paths. All we can ever know is our path to the mystical, a path that may be intelligible for others who share our temperament or cultural background, but ever not quite sufficient to guide the multitudes.

Thus, James continues to navigate between the acceptance of mystical experiences as evidence of a broader, interconnected reality while avoiding the oversimplification of these experiences into a monistic framework. Yet, he seems less afraid to steer towards monism and more willing to acknowledge that mystical experiences consistently reveal noetic insights that, at the very least, support a collective sense of unity. This pluralistic pantheism further

illustrates his effort to reconcile the individual with the universal, suggesting that the vast, interconnected reality accommodates diverse experiences and perspectives, each contributing to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the whole. This perspective mirrors Vivekananda's teachings, which also emphasize the oneness of existence through the lens of Advaita Vedānta while advocating for a life that recognizes and honors the divine nature within all beings. Both thinkers, therefore, converge on the idea that individual experiences of the mystical can lead to a profound understanding of our interconnectedness, advocating for a worldview that embraces both the uniqueness of personal experiences and the universal bonds that tie all existence together. Their thoughts collectively underscore the importance of balancing individuality with a sense of unity, suggesting that true wisdom lies in recognizing the intricate dance between the many and the One. And as we shall see, Vivekananda becomes more comfortable with admitting pluralism as a theological fact and strengthens his commitment to the position that the ultimate view transcends both pluralism and monism.

VIVEKANANDA SHIFTS FROM VEDĀNTIC MONISM TO PANENTHEISTIC COSMOPSYCHISM

In *Swami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism*, Swami Medhananda presents Vivekananda as "a cosmopolitan Vedāntin who developed distinctive new philosophical positions through creative dialectical engagement with thinkers in both Indian and Western philosophical traditions."[23] As has been established, James is one of Vivekananda's Western interlocutors and Medhananda compares the two at length in his chapters on "The Will to Realize" and "Panentheistic Cosmopsychism." Most importantly, Medhananda charts Vivekananda's own evolution moving first from the "world-negating and quietistic outlook of traditional Advaita Vedānta" to the "Integral Advaita" of his teacher Ramakrishna which more "non-sectarian, world-affirming, and ethically oriented," until he developed his own cosmopolitan Vedānta which "defended not only a full-blown religious pluralism but also the more radical cosmopolitan ideal of learning from—and even practicing—religions other than our own."[24] It is also important to note that this final transition occurs *after* Vivekananda's first tour of

the United States and his conversations with James. True, Medhananda makes no explicit statements on the influence of James and the pragmatists on Vivekananda's cosmopolitan turn, but it is certainly an inquiry I hope to pursue in a future paper.

However, Medhananda does focus on at least two areas of overlap and potential influence between Vivekananda and James: that religious experience "provides a secure rational foundation for religious faith" and their similar arguments for panpsychism. In his chapter "The Will to Realize," Medhananda contextualizes Vivekananda's understanding of faith within the public correspondence between W.K. Clifford who defended strong evidentialism in "The Ethics of Belief," Thomas Huxley who defended weak evidentialism in "Agnosticism," and James who defended weak fideism in "The Will to Believe."[25] At this point, Medhananda digresses to note most of the previously mentioned biographical connections, their extensive conversations in 1896, and James's possession of a well-worn copy of Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga*, in which he argues that "religion is a rigorous 'science' based on supersensuous experiences that invite verification," and a published transcript of Vivekananda's lecture "The Vedānta Philosophy." Thus, Medhananda argues that Vivekananda must have been an important influence on *The Varieties* due to the previously mentioned citations and because they share the same thesis in favor of the scientific study of religions and the origins of religions in mystical experiences.

Furthermore, Medhananda argues that in his later essays "Reason and Faith" and "Faith and the Right to Believe," James "incorporates three new elements into his justification of religious faith" and that the influence of Vivekananda shaped these modifications. First, James makes a slight shift towards evidentialism by clarifying that mystical experience make it probable that religion is true, not certain. Second, the "the abundant evidence of religious experience" makes likely that "our ordinary experience is only a 'fragment of reality.'" Third, James introduces a "faith-ladder" that outlines "seven steps in the development of faith."[26] While one might assume the Swami would dismiss agnosticism, Medhananda argues that Vivekananda insisted that ironically most people, including people who consider themselves among the faithful, are actually agnostic because they *assent* or

believe that God exists, however they do not *know* that God exists because they have not had a mystical experience. In fact, the Vivekananda advocates that it would be better for people to humbly acknowledge this agnosticism rather than to assert conclusively that God does or does not exist.[27] This honest agnosticism is nearly identical to the openminded scientific agnosticism that is James's signature brand, especially in his later works, and Medhananda strongly asserts that James owes an unacknowledged debt to Vivekananda for the expanded empiricism found in *The Varieties* as it is also a central focus of Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga*. Thus, these modifications of faith that occur later in James are anticipated in the work of Vivekananda.

Finally, Medhananda argues that the pansychism present in the psychological works of James overlaps with the panentheistic cosmopsychism that Vivekananda articulates in his late work. Indeed, the conclusion of my thesis is that Vivekananda's late panentheistic cosmopsychism is not only different than the mystical monism that James rejects, it is also quite similar to his late pluralistic pantheism. Again, Medhananda contextualizes Vivekananda's cosmopsychism against the backdrop of turn of the century discussions which include James. He begins with John Tyndall's proto-clarification of what David Chalmers would later call "the hard problem of consciousness" (i.e. Is our subjective experience of consciousness reducible to neurophysiology?) as well as T.H. Huxley's epiphenomenalist answer, Clifford's panprotopsychism, and the version of panpsychism that James articulates in "Are We Automata?," and *The Principles of Psychology*.[28] James argues that Darwinian evolution rules out the sudden emergence of consciousness that Huxley's epiphenomenalism required and leaned towards Clifford's conclusion that "*If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things*."[29] In fact, Medhananda notes that James later explicitly labels his position to be "pluralistic pansychism" and clarifies this position in *Essays on Radical Empiricism* when he asserts that "both mental and physical states derived from pure experience."[30]

In comparison with Levinson, Medhananda is making the more conservative claim that panpsychism only makes a claim about consciousness whereas pantheism makes a claim about divinity.

Clearly, neither panpsychism or pantheism perfectly overlaps with the mystical monism that James rejects in *The Varieties*, but it is much closer to the version of Vedānta that Vivekananda defended during his travels in America. Furthermore, it may be identical to the cosmopsychism that Vivekananda develops through his conversations with James and his engagement with Western philosophy. Medhananda claims that this development results from Vivekananda's integration of three sources: Sāmkhya psychology, Advaita Vedānta, and the teaching of Ramakrishna. Medhananda starts with the latter, and claims that the guru maintained a "crucial distinction between two fundamental stages of spiritual realization, which he calls "*jñāna*" and "*vijñāna.*" He describes their difference as follows:

> According to Ramakrishna, *jñāna* is the Advaitic realization of one's true essence as the impersonal nondual Brahman, which is "immovable, immutable, inactive, and of the nature of Pure Consciousness (*bodha-svarūpa*)" (K 430 / G 430). The *jñānī* feels that Brahman alone is real and that everything else is unreal. However, Ramakrishna maintained that some rare souls, even after attaining *brahmajñāna*, can go on to attain the even greater state of *vijñāna*, a more intimate and expansive realization of God as the impersonal-personal Infinite Reality that has become everything in the universe. According to Ramakrishna, "The *vijñānī* sees that the Reality which is impersonal (*nirguṇa*) is also personal (*saguṇa*)" (K 51 / G 104). Hence, while the Advaitic *jñānī* dismisses Śakti (the personal God) as unreal, the *vijñānī* realizes that "Brahman and Śakti are inseparable" (K 568 / G 550). Moreover, while the *jñānī* dismisses the world as unreal, the *vijñānī* looks upon the world as a real manifestation of God. As Ramakrishna put it, "God, as Consciousness, has become the entire universe of the living and non-living" (*tini caitanyarūpe carācar viśve vyāpta hoye royechen*) (K 283 / G 300).[31]

In simplest terms, we could say that *jñāna* is monistic whereas *vijñāna* is "a panentheistic form of cosmopsychism, according to which everything in the universe is one and the same Divine Consciousness manifesting in various forms."[32] Indeed, when we take this mystical revelation from Ramakrishna and combine it with the religious pluralism that Vivekananda already practiced, a

syncretism emerges that no longer resembles the mystical monism that James once feared.

By highlighting Vivekananda's philosophical evolution, Medhananda positions him as a bridge between Eastern and Western thought traditions at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, Medhananda meticulously documents Vivekananda's journey from traditional Advaita Vedānta to a more inclusive, cosmopolitan Vedānta, due to his commitment to religious pluralism and the embrace of diverse spiritual practices. These are commitments shared by James and reinforced during their time together and mutual appreciation of each other's work. By focusing on the intersections between Vivekananda and James, Medhananda enriches our understanding of both thinkers and underscores the significance of cross-cultural intellectual exchange to the development of American pragmatism. However, while Medhananda's work is invaluable, a critical analysis reveals a need for further exploration into Vivekananda's acceptance of pluralism as a core aspect of his mature philosophy of religion. Medhananda's portrayal suggests that Vivekananda's cosmopolitan Vedānta, with its emphasis on religious pluralism and ethical orientation, represents not just a philosophical stance but a practical framework for living in a diverse world. This underscores the importance of acknowledging Vivekananda's vision of a pluralistic spiritual landscape, where different paths are not only recognized but celebrated as avenues towards the divine.

Thus, Vivekananda's mature philosophy, as articulated through Medhananda's lens, challenges us to move beyond narrow interpretations of spirituality and religion. It invites us to consider the transformative potential of embracing pluralism, not as a compromise, but as a deeper realization of the oneness that Vivekananda saw underlying all spiritual traditions. In this light, Medhananda's work is a call to action for contemporary scholars and practitioners to delve deeper into Vivekananda's teachings, exploring their implications for interfaith dialogue, spiritual practice, and the quest for a more inclusive and compassionate world. Indeed, it opens up avenues for further inquiry into the essence of Vivekananda's pluralism that are beyond the scope of our current inquiry. By emphasizing the importance of acknowledging this aspect of Vivekananda's thought, we not only pay homage to his

legacy but also recognize the enduring relevance of his vision in addressing the spiritual and ethical challenges of our time. Medhananda's work, therefore, is not just a scholarly endeavor but a timely reminder of the rich possibilities that emerge by acknowledging the plurality of paths leading to the divine.

CONVERGENCE
In conclusion, we must ask first what the theoretical differences are between pluralistic panpsychism, pluralistic pantheism, and pantheistic cosmopsychism, and more importantly what are the pragmatic differences? If we accept James as a pluralistic panpsychist, then we can say his late metaphysics is incompatible with cosmopsychism since we could live in a universe of conscious experience but not one in which the divine exists; however, if we accept James as a pluralistic pantheist the differences blur. Indeed, we find that while the two are not identical, both worldviews can incorporate the other. If the pluralistic pantheist admits that consciousness is pervasive, that the possibility of an ultimate consciousness exists, that mystical experiences are the best evidence of this ultimate consciousness, and that there are multiple valid systems of explanations for that experience, then Vivekananda's pantheistic cosmopsychism would certainly be among those valid systems of explanation. Likewise, if the vision of pantheistic cosmopsychism is true, it implies that every being is a novel manifestation of the divine on its own journey, that these individuals cannot be expected to accept as true the insights revealed in mystical experiences unless they are experienced first-hand, that scientific and spiritual inquiry into these phenomena should be encouraged, that *Raja Yoga* is one well-worn path among many towards these experiences, and that the majority of faiths reveal valid insights useful for all, then the lived experience of pantheistic cosmopsychism does not differ from either the pluralistic pantheist who has not experienced *vijñāna* or from the one who has.

Thus, the interplay between Swami Vivekananda and James serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of James within an interdisciplinary framework, bridging Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. This essay has traced their journey from distinct philosophical starting points—Vivekananda's Vedantic Monism and James's pragmatic pluralism—towards a harmonious

convergence that underscores the interconnectedness of the individual and the universal. By emphasizing the transformative power of mystical experiences, validated through pragmatic verification, their combined legacy enriches our understanding of self and consciousness. This convergence not only deepens our appreciation for the philosophical contributions of James and Vivekananda but also highlights the fruitful outcomes of cross-cultural philosophical dialogue. It showcases how interdisciplinary approaches can offer profound insights into the nature of reality, demonstrating that the exchange between different cultural philosophies is vital for the continued exploration of philosophical truths. Most importantly, this essay affirms the significance of James's work and American pragmatism as part of a global philosophical discourse, advocating for the importance of ongoing cross-cultural dialogue in the pursuit of understanding the complex tapestry of human thought and experience.

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NOTES

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[1] Goodman, 626-627.

[2] October 7, 1894, Cambridge, MA: Meets with Vivekananda while he is in residence with Sara Chapman Bull. December 16, 1895, New York: Addams attends his *Bhakti Yoga* lectures. November 27, 1899, Chicago: Vivekananda visits Hull House. August 13, 1900, Paris: Addams visits Vivekananda while in residence with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Leggett, in Hohner.

[3] March 29, 1896, Cambridge: James has lunch with Vivekananda at his home on 95 Irving St., August 13, 1900; Paris: James visits Vivekananda while in residence with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Leggett in Hohner.

[4] James, *Talk to Teachers*, 755-756.

[5] *The Varieties,* 361; *Raja Yoga*, 92-96.

[6] Hohner & Kenny, Vedanta Society of Northern California.

[7] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 361.

[8] James, 385.

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[9] James, 386.

[10] James, 460.

[11] James, 460.

[12] James, 463.

[13] Vivekananda, "Practical Vedānta," 159-166.

[14] Vivekananda, 1; "The Real and Apparent Man," 122-133.

[15] Levinson, *The Religious Investigation of William James*, 165-166.

[16] Levinson, 202.

[17] Levinson, 202.

[18] Levinson, 203.

[19] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 249.

[20] James, "A Suggestion about Mysticism," 259.

[21] James, 260.

[22] James, "A Pluralistic Mystic," 1312-1313.

[23] Medhananda, S*wami Vivekananda's Vedāntic Cosmopolitanism*, 1.

[24] Medhananda, 8-9.

[25] Medhananda, 265-268.

[26] Medhananda, 270-272.

[27] Medhananda, 273.

[28] Medhananda, 305-308.

[29] Medhananda, 309; *The Principles*, 149; emphasis in original.

[30] Medhananda, 309.

[31] Medhananda, 312.

[32] Medhananda, 313.

APPRECIATING THE MIND OF A FRIEND: A JOSIAH ROYCE AUTOGRAPH INSCRIPTION ABOUT WILLIAM JAMES

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I provide a transcription of an inscription written by Josiah Royce in a copy of his *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* which pertains to William James' opinion of that book and of Royce's work in general, followed by some brief remarks thereon.

I n this short note, I provide a transcription of an inscription written by Josiah Royce in a copy of his *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy,*[1] which pertains to William James's opinion of that book and of Royce's work in general, followed by some brief remarks thereon. Though not containing anything revelatory, I believe it is worthwhile for scholars to have access to Royce's comment, as it sheds additional light on what we already know about their personal and intellectual relationship.

The copy of *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* that contains the inscription is of the first edition, copyright 1892, published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston and New York. The printing must have been no earlier than 1900, however, as opposite the title page is an advertisement for other books by Royce from the same publisher, the first listed being *The Conception of Immortality*, which was published in 1900.

The inscription, located on the recto of the front endpaper, is dated 1911. Comparing it to an autograph letter of Royce's to Hugo Munsterberg in 1893 in possession of the Boston Public Library,[2] the inscription appears genuine. In particular, the letter and the inscription both have Royce's signature rather squished in at the bottom of the page, an unusual feature of the inscription, and the cramped signature appears the same in both. This helps to authenticate it, in my mind, in addition to the obvious similarity of the hand in the body of both the letter and the inscription. (See photograph.)
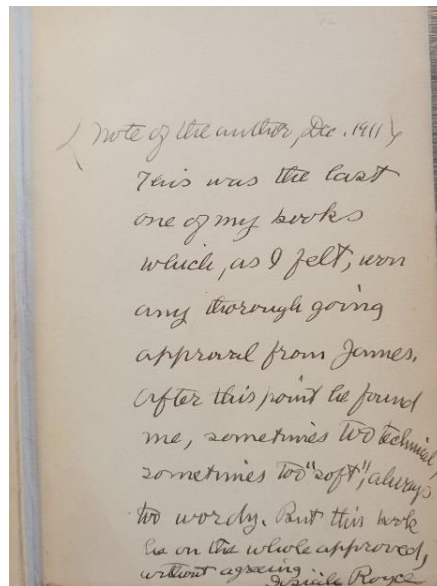
The text of the inscription is as follows (retaining the line breaks as written):

{Note of the author, Dec. 1911}
This was the last
one of my books
which, as I felt, won
any thoroughgoing
approval from James.
After this point he found
me, sometimes too technical,
sometimes too "soft," always
too wordy. But this book
he on the whole approved,
without agreeing.
Josiah Royce

Another unusual aspect of the inscription is that it is not addressed *to* anyone, merely prefaced by a statement (also in Royce's hand) that the note is written by him. This suggests perhaps that it was a copy of the book that Royce himself owned, and in which he desired to record a reminiscence of his still somewhat recently deceased friend. It is also possible that the book was given to a close friend or colleague to whom he felt he need not inscribe it.

I received this book from my uncle, Brian Beasley, in the spring of 2022, who acquired it from a rare book seller in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, several years before. The seller, unfortunately, had no further information on its provenance, and there is little other evidence to go on in the book itself, which, apart from the Royce inscription, is devoid of any other markings which might indicate ownership.

As for the date of the inscription, it is notable that Royce's book *William James and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Life* was published in November of 1911, just prior to the date of the inscription, and that book contains a Preface dated October 5, 1911.[3] It is clear that at this time James was very much in Royce's thoughts; perhaps the inscription was prompted by the recent publication of the book bearing his friend's name and containing a tribute to him, and one imagines that the emotions of the Christmas season may

have played a role. Of course, this is conjecture, and somewhat fanciful conjecture at that—we cannot know exactly why Royce wrote what he did, when he did.

Nevertheless, if what Royce reports is indeed true, it is interesting to consider the nature of *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* as a work, and why it may have met with James's approval where his later works did not. *Spirit* was written for a popular audience, and indeed is made up of material originally given as lectures. Perhaps this contributed to James's approval of the work, as James himself was notable for the popular orientation of his philosophical work. But it is also noteworthy that *Spirit* predates the more intellectually acrimonious period of their relationship, which began around 1895.[4]

In the inscription, Royce states that he felt that James considered his post-*Spirit* work to be "sometimes too technical, sometimes too 'soft', always too wordy". The criticism is an interesting mixture of what seem to be mostly stylistic comments, but the contrast between "too technical" and "too 'soft'" might remind one of James's contrast between "tough-minded" and "tender-minded" from *Pragmatism*. This isn't quite right, though—for James, intellectual "tough-mindedness" is not a matter of technicality, but rather a matter of focus on "hard facts," on the empirical, and a tendency to scepticism or pessimism. Indeed, he associates Royce with the "tender-minded" philosophers, though nevertheless of the "radical and aggressive" strain of commitment to the Absolute. In being radical, these philosophers avoid the wishy-washy compromise of the less-radical religious philosophers, who seek a mere *modus vivendi* between religion and science on whatever terms they think will carve out at least some special space for religion. The "radical" tender-minded philosophers, however, "dwell on so high a level of abstraction that they never even try to come down".[5] "Absolutism," James goes on, "has a certain sweep and dash about it, while the usual theism is more insipid, but both are equally remote and vacuous."[6]

As we know, James goes on to argue that what we require is a philosophy which combines the best of both attitudes, and that pragmatism is such a philosophy. But his comments about Roycean types of philosophies are telling: it suggests that he sees Royce's technicality not as part of a "tough-minded" appreciation for rigor

or scientific exactness, but rather as part and parcel of the remote and removed "abstractness" of a philosophy that is too disconnected from everyday life and everyday experience. That is why James criticizes Royce as being both too technical *and* too soft: both evince his tendency to favour abstraction over concrete detail and engagement with things as they are.

Indeed, in a letter to Dickinson S. Miller in 1899, James gives explicit voice to this criticism, saying some of the very things Royce would later discern in his friend's attitude towards his work, if in harsher terms:

> I have come to perceive what I didn't trust myself to believe before, that looseness of thought is R.'s essential element. He wants it. There isn't a tight joint in his system; not one. And yet I thought that a mind that could talk me blind and black and numb on mathematics and logic, and whose favorite recreation is works on those subjects, must necessarily conceal closeness and exactitudes of ratiocination that I hadn't the wit to find out. But no! He is the Rubens of philosophy. Richness, abundance, boldness, color, but a sharp contour never, and never any perfection. But isn't fertility better than perfection?[7]

While James here begins by summing up, in a seemingly unkind way, many of the thoughts that Royce knew his friend had about his work, he ends on a positive note: Royce's work is "rich," "abundant," "bold," and "colorful," and, while it lacks both sharpness and perfection, he closes with the pregnant question, "isn't fertility better than perfection?"

Strangely enough, I think the same must be said of James, whose work, while certainly aspiring to "tight joints," and which is itself rich, abundant, bold, and colorful, is nevertheless often undisciplined and lacking in precision. He often does not rigorously distinguish between ideas which are similar but distinct, and seems to overflow at times with a plurality of notions, all of which are interesting, but only rarely are they clearly delineated and precisely argued for. Perhaps James saw much of himself in Royce, but put to work towards ends he did not endorse.

That said, it remains for us to wonder why *Spirit* nonetheless met with James's approval (if not agreement, as Royce notes). Was it a matter less of the book itself, and more of the nature of their

relationship at the time? Is this inscription the result of Royce looking back and thinking fondly of the time prior to their more intense disagreements? We cannot know, but it is nonetheless important, I think, to be able to read, in Royce's own words, his sense of James's thoughts on his work, however colored by wistfulness and grief. Indeed, we know that Royce was self-aware enough to appreciate the nature of his relationship to James as both a friend and as a philosopher:

> No other philosopher in our country compares with James, I think, in his effectiveness as a man who has helped active and restless minds not only to win their own spiritual freedom, but to express their ideals in their own way. Sometimes critical people have expressed this by saying that James has always been too fond of cranks, and that the cranks have loved him. Well, I am one of James's cranks. He was good to me, and I love him.[8]

Crank or not, Royce felt that in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, at least, however much a "crank" he might have been, he had written something which won James's approval in a way his later works did not.

If I may venture a hypothesis, in the light of the above, to explain this fact, it would be that in *Spirit* Royce's approach was motivated by an attention to "the great concerns and issues of humanity," and in particular "certain significant spiritual problems of our own day,"[9] concerns and problems which are an inescapable part of the human experience. It is not merely to reveal The Absolute that Royce wrote the book, but rather to ensure our philosophical entitlement to the reality of our everyday experience of a world, and people in it, about which we *care* deeply. In the present context, it is fitting to see that in the later stages of the book, Royce writes about encountering a friend, not as a mass of molecules in relations describable by physical law, but as a being with a meaningful and conscious inner life whom one can *appreciate*, and whom one knows is also an appreciating being. "Here in my world of daily experience is my friend. In what sense is he real to me?"[10] One could elaborate a description of the observable physical facts and the unobservable physical particles and forces that determine those facts. Would we have found, as "a fact in space and time," his friend? "Nay, I have

as yet found him not at all. I did not *mean* this maze of molecules by my friend".[11] It is his ideals, his will, his approval, which are *facts* for us, but which are each person's unique possession and so not describable in the language of physical law. But they are nonetheless real for all that. While Royce does go on to argue for the existence of "the one Self" that can encompass and know us all, in order to guarantee our individual selves, the argument is rooted in our everyday experience of others and of our own, and their, spiritual concerns.[12] The Absolute is what guarantees our concrete individuality and the very real mutual appreciation of individuals for one another.

Royce's engagement with the thought of the historical philosophers he considers, and the positive view he goes on to sketch on that basis, is grounded in both that appreciation as well as a real sympathy for and empathy with the philosophers whose work he examines[13]—in a sense, a recognition that what the "tender-minded" philosopher cares about is always embodied in the "tough" facts of a real person and their life. Perhaps James liked *Spirit* because it placed its softness within the hard world, and eschewed technicality and abstraction in favour of direct appeal to the genuine concerns of a reflective human life—for example, in the palpable appreciation of one friend for another.

Acknowledgements

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[1] Royce, Josiah. *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy: An Essay in the Form of Lectures.*

[2] Josiah Royce to Hugo Münsterberg, Cambridge, Mass., 13 December, 1893. Ms. Acc. 2091-2110 Box 16, Hugo Münsterberg Collection, 1890-1916, Series 1: Correspondence, n.d., 1892-1916. Accessed online at https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/b8516v011, on January 4, 2024.

[3] Royce, Josiah. *William James and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Life.* His tribute to James, included as the first essay in the book and titled "William James and the Philosophy of Life," was composed, however, in June (*William James,* v).

[4] Oppenheim, Frank M. "How Did William James and Josiah Royce Interact Philosophically?" 85.

[5] James, William. *Pragmatism*, 16.

[6] James, 17.

[7] Perry, Ralph Barton. *The Thought and Character of William James*, quoted in Oppenheim, 86.

[8] Royce, "A Word of Greeting to William James," *Harvard Graduates Magazine,* 631. Paragraph break deleted. I thank Daniel Brunson for bringing this quotation to my attention.

[9] Royce, *Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, 473.

[10] Royce, 405.

[11] Royce, 405-406.

[12] Royce, 405-408.

[13] Cf. Kevin J. Harrelson, "The Ethics of History in Royce's *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*," 134-152.

Review of Alexis Dianda, *The Varieties of Experience: William James after the Linguistic Turn*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0674244276. $45.00.

How one appraises William James, indeed, how one regards philosophy more generally, may be framed by how his key conception of *experience* is regarded. Alexis Dianda has provided an insightful guide and critical review of this construction and, with her elucidation, we better appreciate how later neo-pragmatists converted his philosophy to epistemological concerns lying tangential to his interests and why a philosophy based on experience has enduring significance for contemporary thought.

Dianda tracks the conceptual origins of experience to the *Principles of Psychology*'s elaboration of the "stream of thought," (later, the "stream of consciousness"). By highlighting the artificiality of consciousness described in terms of "bits," these so-called "resting places" of retrospective characterizations exclude "the places of flight" or the transitive parts that link objects of thought. For James, such segmentation distorts personal experience, which he sought to correct by emphasizing the fluidity of mental life. And with that examination he concluded that "it is an experience, after all, that we introspect to see whether it includes consciousness, [and] discovering that it does not… proves that an experience is logically a more basic concept than consciousness."[1] He thereby would redirect psychology from an exclusive study of sensory inputs and responses to an altogether different concern, namely, characterizing experience as a primary phenomenon.

James's "solution" to the failure of capturing experience in a first order fashion by introspection was to collapse the distinction between consciousness and content into unified experience. He was led to this revision by his underlying opposition to duality in which the unity of consciousness is posed by a subject-object rendition of observation, a representative second order description. Accordingly,

self-consciousness is an artifact resulting from a given "bit" of experience abstracted from the unified flow and retrospectively considered in the context of different relations. Simply, the immediacy of the subjective cannot be captured by objective analysis, whose attempts James famously called the "psychologist's fallacy." In its place, he substituted singular experience as the most basic unit of the psyche, and upon that foundation he would analyze what happens both within the mental realm (its qualities, including continuity) and outside the mental realm in configuring the relations developed in the external world.

Thus, James's anti-reductionism depicts experience as a single phenomenon. In that construction, *mind* and *body* are but different aspects of what is basically one unit.

> As "subjective" we say that the experience represents; as "objective" it is represented. What represents and what is represented is here numerically the same; but we must remember that no dualism of being represented and representing resides in the experience per se. In its pure state, or when isolated, there is no self-splitting of it into consciousness and what the consciousness is "of." Its subjectivity and objectivity are functional attributes solely, realized only when the experience is "taken" i.e., talked-of, twice, considered along with its two differing contexts respectively, by a new retrospective experience, of which that whole past complication now forms the fresh content. The instant field of the present is at all times what I call the "pure" experience. It is only virtually or potentially either object or subject as yet.[2]

If experience is allowed to rest within its own domain, undisturbed by reflexive re-consideration, the problem of dualism evaporates, "for the dualism of knower and known is an *external* dualism of experienced relations not an *inner* dualism of substance. This is the fundamental metaphysical postulate of James's radical empiricism."[3]

James thus divided experience between a primordial "pure" form and a derived aspect that is one step removed from the original "vague feelings" that lay beyond articulation. Pre-reflective

experience, or what James called "unverbalized sensation" or subconscious mentation, is "pure" in the sense it resides beyond "culturally specific ways of understanding."[4] Dianda goes to great lengths to "pin down pure experience," whose various formulations have been subject to myriad commentary assigning James's to putative panpsychism,[5] a metaphysical realism, or a phenomenology.[6] By admitting that "pure experience" is a "bit of a misnomer," she emphasizes a gradation of "experience," in which primordial pure experience, what James calls "the passing moment," remains a source of non-epistemic meaning and significance despite its presence as only "vague feelings."

James sought to offset the encroachment of "intellectualisms," but not at the expense of the inescapable processing that accompanies introspection or self-awareness more generally. In essence, he is arguing for a spectrum of thought stretching between the inarticulate feeling to the concretized concept in which language plays a crucial role.

> From the cognitive point of view, all mental facts are intellections. From the subjective point of view all are feelings… And then we see that the current opposition of Feeling to Knowledge is quite a false issue. If every feeling is at the same time a bit of knowledge, we ought no longer to talk of mental states differing by having more or less of the cognitive quality; they only differ in knowing more or less, in having much fact or little fact for their object. The feeling of a broad scheme of relations is a feeling that knows much; the feeling of a simple quality is a feeling that knows little. But the knowing itself, whether of much or of little, has the same essence, and is as good knowing in the one case as in the other.[7]

By emphasizing that thoughts and feelings are two aspects of experience that fall on a continuum, neither one to be taken in isolation from the other, James described the mind in terms that preserved its irretrievable unity and the inviolate standing of unmediated subjectivity.

The most prominent rejection of *experience* as James (inconsistently) used it occurred with the rise of the "linguistic turn"

by which neo-pragmatists (principally Sellars and Rorty) rejected James's notion of experience, which they maintain

> is always already mediated by language, [and] if experience cannot play the role of "furnishing" the mind with ideas or data, securing objectivity, then it has no valid *philosophical* status…. There is little room for doubt that experience cannot play the role cast for it at the dawn of epistemology, nor can it live up to the hopes empiricists once invested in it.[8]

The linguistic turn thesis argues that

> there is no relevant difference between experience and language. In this view, "experience" is either a convoluted term for what should more properly be seen as a discursive process though which we come to construct the self and culture, or it is a philosophically uninteresting stand-in for the causal events that are more adequately treated by the sciences.[9]

Dianda laments that the discussions about Jamesian experience hinged on debates about objectivity and perception, and she then asks, "how did pragmatism, a tradition that once ranked among the philosophy's great defenders of experience, become nearly synonymous with the overcoming of experience? The response to this question can be briefly put: pragmatic inquiry became preoccupied with traditional epistemological inquiry."[10] By regarding James through the epistemic lens to peer at the concrete, Rorty, Sellars and others in pursuit of their own agenda displaced James's philosophical project in their effort to overturn the philosophical status of representation, truth, and justification.[11] Although James and Rorty share a critique of the correspondence theory of truth and representationalism, their differences lie in what kinds of questions are "interesting."[12] Thus the question at the base of their confrontation is the nature of philosophy and the relevant issues guiding its discourse.

Dianda maintains that neo-pragmatic inquiry, having become preoccupied with traditional epistemology, subverted the fecundity

of James's psychology and its larger philosophical significance.[13] In her overview, she emphasizes that James's original interests were directed to exposing the falsification of depicting mental and moral lives without the contributions of feelings or sensibilities.[14] For James, "reality outstrips the conceptual and the linguistic…[so] the philosopher (as language user) must strive to demonstrate the insufficiency of language itself."[15] He not only denied the concretization that would displace subjectivity with an objectivizing Cartesianism, but he also asserted the active role of the individual in creating the world in which the subject lives. "The human being is always actively organizing her experience. We organize our environment, arrange phenomena, and focus on some aspects of our reality, while ignoring others, for reasons more than mere physical need."[16] Dianda emphasizes that experience is *active* and a *lived* process. Accordingly, the values through which we know the world and frame our own experience are thus constitutive to the reality in which humans live. To fracture the objective/subjective balance governing that knowledge not only distorts our understanding, but it also misconceives it. That orientation pervaded James's thought and directed every aspect of his philosophy, perhaps most importantly, the meaning of truth and the authentication of the personal underlying it. On this reading, James's essential precept is this creative aspect of the mind that undergirds his various appeals to experience as capturing the moral-existential picture of human action and cognition.

Dianda is less concerned with critiquing Rorty as with recalling the primacy of experience and with her eye trained on pragmatism, she mounts a trenchant defense of James's key insight:

> For James, philosophy was never an exercise in solving puzzles, erecting systems, or having the final say on some truth. While striving for clarity, the philosopher is more committed to the betterment of life. A theme that is present in James's work from the beginning to the end is the caution against what he calls "vicious intellectualism"…. the reduction of the complexities of our existence to excessively limiting concepts or categories; it is vicious to the extent that by focusing on our abstract conceptions we cut ourselves off

from engagement with the very things we purportedly attempt to understand or engage.[17]

Or, more pointedly, "a philosophy whose principle is so incommensurate with…emotional pertinency leaves the mind with little to care or act for."[18] And with that dictum we appreciate the core of James's humanist philosophy, one forged in denial of a positivism that had creeped into all manner of human self-assessment.

James abandoned "pure experience" in his later works because of criticisms he could not resolve. But he would not abandon his central thesis and when facing the philosophical tribunal, he declared,

> I have finally found myself compelled to *give up logic*… It has an imperishable use in human life, But that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality. . . . Reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it.[19]

And Dianda sympathetically concludes that

> James's concerns are not those of the classical empiricist or their descendants, attempting to build a psychological or linguistic/logical foundation for all of our knowledge…James's concern is the experience of a subject who acts in the world, whose boundaries are porous, and whose mind is never a theater in which the dramas of experience are played. In James's hands, "experience" refers to the relationship between the subject and her world.[20]

Or in James's own words:

> We are so subject to the philosophic tradition which treats *logos* or discursive thought generally as the sole avenue of truth, that to fall back on raw unverbalized life as more of a revealer, and to think of concepts as the merely practical things…comes very hard. It is putting off our proud maturity

of mind and becoming again as foolish little children in the eyes of reason. But as difficult as such a revolution is, there is no other way, I believe, to the possession of reality.[21]

And for James that reality was fundamentally moral: human-derived, human-constructed, and human-intended. On this view, *experience* that draws from all the diverse sources of the subjective becomes the métier of human agency, an idea that could only stand within a renewed humanism. James revitalized that mission and in its further development we find the heart of his philosophy, flawed in its discursive attempts, but reaching to the heart of human subjectivity that, in his view, legitimately restrains the analytic reduction. That theme of limits has had an illustrious history in the century that followed, and it is in that array of ideas James holds *critical* authority. No wonder Wittgenstein read him so carefully![22]

By valorizing and clarifying the structure of experience, James sought to countermand the analytic imperative and thus save subjectivity.[23] Dianda's enlistment in that project, imbued with a philosophical ethos, perhaps out of tune with the temper of the contemporary discipline, is a welcome breath of fresh air by reminding us of James's abiding relevance in validating the personal and understanding the constitutive role of the subjective in acquiring and applying knowledge. That "pure experience" failed its philosophical mission may be understood as a relic of a misconceived project, or, having faced its own limits, philosophy returned to its own comfort zone, for better and for worse.

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[1] Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought*, 79.

[2] James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?," 1151.

[3] Taylor and Wozniak, *Pure Experience: The Response to William James*, xvi.

[4] Ford, *William James's Philosophy*, 81.

[5] e.g., Gale, The Divided Self of William James.

[6] Ford, *William James's Philosophy*, 75-80; Putnam and Putnam, "What the spilled beans can spell;" Wilshire, "The breathtaking intimacy of the material world."

[7] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 452.

[8] Dianda 2023, 21-22.

[9] Dianda, 66.

[10] Dianda 2023, 9-10.

[11] Rorty, "Pragmatism, relativism, irrationalism;" Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*; Misak, *The American Pragmatists*.

[12] Dianda 2023, 35-6.

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[13] Dianda 2023, 10.

[14] Dianda 2023, 105.

[15] Dianda 2023, 65.

[16] Dianda 2023, 108.

[17] Dianda 2023, 15.

[18] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 941.

[19] James, *The Pluralistic Universe*, 725.

[20] Dianda 2023, 232-3.

[21] Jame, *The Pluralistic Universe*, 755.

[22] Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James*.

[23] Tauber, *William James and Sigmund Freud on the Mind*.

RELATED SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS ON WILLIAM JAMES

Spring 2024 – Fall 2024

In recognition of the fact that James scholars are publishing articles in other academic journals, the editors believe that it is important to keep our readers informed of the diversity within James scholarship by drawing attention to relevant publications outside of WJS. This section of the journal aims to provide articles that address the life, work, and influence of James's thought. If you have recently published a peer-reviewed article on James or have noticed an omission from this list, please contact our Periodicals Editor, Jordan Williamson at periodicals@williamjamesstudies.org and we will include it at the next opportunity.

Cowley, Stephen J. "How Expertise is Enabled: Why Epistemic Cycles Matter to Us all." Social Epistemology 38, no. 1 (2024): 83-97.
DOI:10.1080/02691728.2023.2287592

Rather than ask if expertise is under threat, this paper uses case studies to show how expertise is enabled. Its appearance can be traced to how the already known evokes sensibility, judging, thinking and languaging. As defined below, it draws on epistemic cycles. Using Secchi and Cowley's (2021) 3M model, this posits a second cut between the micro and the macro. In the mesosphere, people create temporary domains or what William James (1991) calls 'little worlds'. Within these corpora popularia, the new is made possible – expertise sets off unimagined outcomes. Thus, many concerns cannot be solved by scientific correlates of a natural ontological attitude: indeed, the truism clarifies many social challenges. We lack social institutions that dedicate expertise to goals like ecosocial justice and life-sustaining relations. Once the necessary expertise is traced to epistemic cycles, we can demand of institutions that they create bodies that seek to bring a rich future to evolution.

DiLeonardi, Sean. "Mediation, Stream of Consciousness, and the Faulknerian Voice: As I Lay Dying to The Town."
Twentieth Century Literature 70, no. 2 (2024).

Duns, Ryan. "No Orthopathy without Orthoaesthesis: On the Necessity of Negative Effort." Harvard Theological Review, 117, no. 2 (2024): 317-41.

Theologians have become increasingly attentive to the role emotion and experience must play in theological reflection. Several thinkers have recently done so by appropriating and developing Jon Sobrino's understanding of orthopathy, or "right affect." A close examination of these efforts, however, reveals inconsistencies in the way the category is understood and deployed. This article redresses these inconsistencies by complementing orthopathy with orthoaesthesis, or "right perception." The article opens by considering various appeals to orthopathy before suggesting how

William James's theory of emotion might provide the category with clarifying content. The second stage engages Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch as practitioners of orthoaesthesis. Special attention is given to Murdoch's "techniques" aimed at transforming how practitioners perceive reality. With Murdoch's guidance, the article contends that orthopathy is ineluctably bound to and not possible without orthoaesthesis. The article concludes with a constructive proposal to show how orthoaesthesis-orthopathy contributes to a Christian theological anthropology.

Moore, Candace. "Piqued: Compounded Interest and the Intersubjective Scene." differences 35, no. 1 (2024): 74-96.

In conversation with Silvan Tomkins, William James, Sianne Ngai, and others, "Piqued: Compounded Interest and the Intersubjective Scene" further theorizes one of the most taken-for-granted of the classic affects: interest. This essay argues that the piquing of interest is essential for projection, attachment, or resentment, even, to follow. Interest not only compounds, or accumulates with itself, sometimes sharpening or transforming into those more intense affects that we tend to associate with driving forces. It also acts combinatorially, as an elemental ingredient of all affects. Because of interest's fundamental role in initiating momentum, combining with other affects, switching registers—in transmissible, communal, or mediated forms—it is worth confronting interest's ubiquity to better understand how it, once provoked, functions culturally. To better demonstrate interest as a foundational, compounding affect in coexperienced dynamics and their representations, the author unpacks scenes of intersubjectivity in the television series Killing Eve (bbc America, 2018–22).

Nikkel, David H. "William James: The Mystical Experimentation of a Sick Soul." Religions 15, no. 8 (2024): 961-80.
DOI:10.3390/rel15080961

Especially in The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James developed the polar categories of healthy-minded individuals content with their once-born religion versus sick souls who need to

become twice-born in order to find religious peace. Biographers of James have concluded that he does not fit well under either of his polar categories. Drawing on both data about James' life and on his philosophical and theological writings, I demur from the biographers' conclusion and instead advance the thesis that the overall pattern of William James' life is best understood as a sick soul searching for—and ultimately finding—twice-born religion in connection with mystical experiences. Notably, James attempted to theorize about mystical experiences as connecting with divine reality/ies in naturalistic ways compatible with scientific knowledge of his time. Scientific knowledge today makes it more difficult to find evidence of direct divine input in religious experiences, yet one might find value in religious experiences in terms of James' pragmatic criterion for truth: their beneficial or adaptive effects.

Pihlström, Sami. "Situated Religious Cognition in Jamesian Pragmatist Philosophy of Religion." Religions 15, no. 7 (2024): 815-29.
DOI:10.3390/rel15070815

Pragmatist philosophy of religion has, since the early days of the tradition, developed distinctive accounts of (what we now call) "situated" religious cognition highly relevant to currently ongoing discussions in this developing field. This paper focuses on William James's pragmatism as an important example of such an approach in the philosophy of religion. Some central "situational" themes in James are identified, and special attention is given to the relation between the (situation-dependent) concepts of belief and hope in Jamesian pragmatism. The ontological status of the "objects" of situated religious cognition is thereby also briefly discussed.

Savransky, Martin. "In the fourth person singular: pragmatism, anarchism, and the earth." Subjectivity 31, (2024): 1-15.

Nothing has done more to cement William James's reputation than his unrepentant individualism. In a present marked by the challenge of imagining modes of transformative action worthy of our planetary travails, James's individualism appears dated, unworthy

of the present. Yet such judgement neglects its pragmatic dimension, as well as its political connections to James's anarchistic pluralism. Situating anarchism at the centre of James's vision, this article argues that his defence of individuals constitutes no ontological postulate but forms part of a speculative theory of change. Rather than apologia for individual heroism, James's individualism is better understood in the impersonal voice of the "fourth person singular:" individual lives matter not as originary sources of heroic action but as zones of divergence through which terrestrial forces of mutation and metamorphosis pass. Revisiting connections between James's individualism, pragmatism, and anarchism, the article offers a radical reappraisal of James's thought as a vital method for intensifying unruly forces of transformation on an earth unstable and unsafe.

Snarey, John R. and Joel McLendon. "William James's Experience of Presenting the Varieties of Religious Experience: His Gifford Performance in Historical Context." History of Psychology 27, no. 3 (2024): 227-245. DOI: 10.1037/hop0000255

William James delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1901 and 1902, and his 20 lectures were published as The Varieties of Religious Experience. While the book is a classic in the psychology of religion, little to no attention has been given to the immediate context of James's lectures or his state of mind and perspectives during his delivery of each. This study aimed to understand James's 20 Gifford Lectures as separable performances and to uncover his experience of delivering each. We placed in conversation two first-hand accounts of the lectures—The Scotsman newspaper reports and James's correspondence. A word-count methodology was used to compare the newspaper reports among them-selves. The results showed that the separate reports by James and The Scotsman were strongly correlated. For instance, both James and The Scotsman reported that the 1901 lectures were better received than the 1902 lectures. Further, both confirm that James and his audience engaged each other in a complicated dance involving competing expectations and worldviews. The results demonstrate that viewing the lectures as performance events

experienced by James within personal and societal historical contexts clarifies our understanding of James, each of his 20 lectures, and the book that enshrined them.

Tadajewski, Mark. 2024. "Beyond the Extended and Distributed 'Self': From Subliminal Extended Selves to Nonlocality and Neurocapitalism." Journal of Marketing Management 40 (7–8): 662–74. DOI:10.1080/0267257X.2024.2346019.

Russ's extension of William James' reflections on the self has been a significant accelerant of interpretive and Consumer Culture Theoretic research. In this paper, I will outline a different way we can engage with James' oeuvre; specifically via psychical research and parapsychology. These fields are subsequently linked to recent debates on quantum interconnectedness, nonlocality, brain-computer interfaces and capitalist-materialist telepathy. This endeavour initially responds to Russ's point that 'What we call "self" is really "selves". Besides distributed selves and multiple selves shared between individuals, there are also multiple selves within individuals'. It builds upon Craig's respective accounts by proffering materialist and post-materialist perspectives on human-human dynamics and human-computer technological affordances. As we shall see, William James encourages us to recognise multiple selves, multiple levels of consciousness, and the psychical extension of self.

Zackariasson, Ulf. "Stances and Skills to in-Habit the World: Pragmatic Agnosticisms and Religion." Philosophies 9, no. 3 (2024): 57. DOI:10.3390/philosophies9030057

This paper explores two routes along which a pragmatic philosophical approach can contribute to reflections on agnosticism. The first of these approaches is developed in dialogue with William James, and it is oriented towards the needs and obligations of individuals and the extent to which agnosticism affects our abilities to lead strenuous lives. The second is developed in dialogue with Richard Rorty. It is oriented towards how agnosticisms can be adopted within particular vocabularies vis-a-vis other vocabularies

as a pragmatically helpful strategy or skill. I discuss the extent to which these can contribute to philosophical reflection on agnosticism and propose that they show that the agnosticism debate would benefit from a broadened focus where epistemic and pragmatic considerations are better integrated than presently. This would enable us to discuss different types of agnosticism that come to the fore in various contexts and whether they prevent us or allow us to better handle concrete problems in our interactions with the world.