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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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JAMES, PRAGMATISM, AND THE TWO CAMBRIDGES

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William James's pragmatism described truth not as a thing waiting to be discovered but as an increasingly helpful artifact, a thing that we thinkers and believers can be said to *make* for our own purposes. He said that the human believer "engenders" true beliefs upon the experienced world as a way of managing good and bad particular experiences.[1] Those true beliefs and theories are the concrete particular items that go to compose truth in the abstract, and there is no more to truth than the true beliefs we engender. They are useful in thinking and in practical life, and because they are so useful we believers and inquirers go to the trouble of generating them and piling them up in our minds, libraries, and databases.

This idea has figured prominently in philosophical thinking about thought over the past century or so, though mostly as a target of harsh criticism. In the last couple of decades, some of that criticism has originated with Cheryl Misak, who, in her 2016 book *Cambridge Pragmatism*, carries on her campaign to show both the importance of pragmatic thinking and the absurdity of James's best known claims about truth. In her work on pragmatism and its creators, Misak has argued again and again that a plausible pragmatic understanding of truth and meaning originated in the work of C.S. Peirce, was adapted and made much less plausible by James, and has managed to survive to the present day in both plausible and implausible versions.

Cambridge Pragmatism examines underappreciated historical details of this story, evaluating the impact of late nineteenth century Cambridge, Massachusetts, pragmatism on some of the first "analytic" philosophers in early twentieth century Cambridge, England. The pragmatic picture developed in New England by James was dismissively criticized in old England by Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore, but the English philosopher Frank P. Ramsey happened to be an early Peirce scholar, and his distinctly pragmatic theories of probability and semantics later went on to influence Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein. Thus, Misak explains, the ongoing Anglo-American analytic tradition turns out to have some pragmatic roots.

Cambridge Pragmatism patiently traces lines of influence from one Cambridge to the other, discussing celebrated and not-so-celebrated figures and ideas in both places. Not only James and

Peirce but Chauncey Wright and other members of the Metaphysical Club get a look, and the contributing Englishpersons F. C. S. Schiller, Lady Victoria Welby, and C. K. Ogden get subchapter headings. And the discussion of James and Peirce locates the origin of some of their most famous pronouncements in their less widely appreciated psychological and logical theorizing. However, Misak misrepresents James's view of truth in the story she tells, and thus she misrepresents Peirce and Ramsey when she contrasts their views with his. As it happens, Peirce and Ramsey also misread James in more or less the same way Misak does, and they thereby overlooked substantial points of agreement and disagreement with him. It is therefore especially worthwhile to try to clarify what James actually thought, since we readers may therefore also end up understanding James's fellow pragmatic thinkers better, in one way at least, than they understood themselves.

I

At the beginning of his lecture "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," James observes that:

> When Clerk-Maxwell was a child it is written that he had a mania for having everything explained to him, and that when people put him off with vague verbal accounts of any phenomenon he would interrupt them impatiently by saying, 'Yes; but I want you to tell me the *particular* go of it!' Had his question been about truth, only a pragmatist could have told him the particular go of it.[2]

The Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell grew up uninterested in "verbal" or merely definitional explanations of the things he investigated, even though those definitions might be necessarily true. He was much less interested in *what things were,* even what they intrinsically, necessarily, or essentially were, than in the particular details of *how things worked* or *how they did what they did*. And the adult Maxwell's famous equations eventually reflected this attitude. They explained light not with an essentialist, necessary definition, but instead in terms of what happens over time as moving electrical and magnetic fields interact. That explanation, now new

and improved over a century later with quantum-mechanical updating, provides the genuinely informative account of light.

Modern science, unlike the Aristotelian natural philosophy that preceded it, does not typically aim at giving the "essences" of the things it explains. It may incidentally manage to do it; maybe the contingent occurrences observed in experiments end up telling truth seekers necessary or definitional truths about things in nature, so that physics can be their metaphysics. Maybe water is essentially or necessarily H_2O, gravity is essentially the curvature of spacetime, and light is essentially the electromagnetic waves described in Maxwell's equations.[3] But maybe not, since it seems eternally debatable what exactly counts as the essence of anything, or even whether there are any real essences. If H_3O exists deep inside the planet Neptune, is it protonated water, or is that *necessarily* false? The picture of gravity as curved spacetime conflicts with quantum mechanics, so is the quantum story *necessarily* the one that needs correcting? Are radio waves, unknown to Maxwell though also described by his equations, *essentially* invisible light, and are radio frequencies *necessarily* invisible colors? One reasonable answer to all these questions is: Who knows, and, so long as we inquirers can make our experienced world better without deciding, who cares? Essences would seem to be beside the point of empirical studies and experiments, and even if Maxwell's "particular go" does not give the essence of light itself, it helps us possessors of eyes and makers of GPS systems generate and manipulate all kinds of EM radiation, giving us lots of power over the world and ourselves. That is, those equations are tremendously *practically informative*. They help us appreciate what light can *mean to us in our lives*. And William James tried to tell a story of truth that would satisfy a Maxwell-type thinker, explaining how truth *works* in our world rather than what kind of *thing* it essentially *is.*[4]

In this pragmatic story of how truth works, true thoughts and beliefs are tools that work as parts of real life, or the actual daily struggles of intelligent individuals to survive and make the world more satisfactory—satisfactory both to themselves and to others. The true thoughts are the good tools, the ones that actually tend to provide particular thinkers and actors, and the thinkers and actors around them, with lots of satisfactions. The false ones tend to make things worse. And even the most theoretical thinking is best

understood as letting thinkers know what good or bad things they can *expect to experience* if they *act* in certain ways. This claim amounts to a challenge to theories of truth as correspondence to reality; though truth can perhaps be verbally and uninformatively defined as correspondence with, copying, or mirroring the world of real objects, it is typically more helpful, or it gets us closer to spelling out the "particular go" of truth, if we do *not* understand truth as a copy or a mirror—except, that is, to the extent that copies and mirrors are tools, too.

And, as a matter of fact, even copies and mirrors *are* tools. Artifacts like mirrors do their job not simply by resembling, matching, or corresponding to what they mirror, but instead they prepare mirror users for upcoming experiences and indicate appropriate anticipatory actions. This is *why there are* mirrors; otherwise, despite their reflecting and copying power, nobody would ever have bothered manufacturing them and putting them on dressers, car doors, and blind corners in parking garages in the first place.[5] What's more, these mirror-tools can be made out of any kind of reflective stuff, and some high tech rearview "mirrors" on new cars are video systems instead of reflective surfaces. Thus different mirror-tools do not all do the job they were made to do by virtue of sharing either a physical microstructure or any other kind of essence. Mirrors, like pencils and pens, cookies and cakes, gestures and signals, five year corporate plans, universities, and lots of other instruments or tools, share no common essence. They are what they are by virtue of what they *do* and were made to do, not what they *are* or are made of. And, likewise, truths are not what they essentially are but instead are what they do, though part of what they do in some cases may be to reflect or copy the world beyond them. (Or, we might say, the world of which they are a part.) In the end, we believers only create and care about either mirrors or truths because of the useful things they happen to do for us in our life struggles. Thus the most helpful, Maxwell-type understanding of either set of artifacts will explain their "particular go," detailing for us, their creators, how either mirrors or truths do their work and why we therefore make and hold on to them.

James's functionalistic story of truth and meaning is thus an effort to explain why we believers bother trying to believe truths and how we evidently sometimes succeed. One might think that it

therefore gives contingent psycho-historical answers to logical questions, questions that call for logically necessary definitions or analyses; but James is not trying to refute or replace logical analyses of truth, only to supplement them—with a theory that actually does the most important philosophical work. In a well known letter to Peirce, James got emotional as he scorned Bertrand Russell's idea that a logical, definitional, analytical treatment of truth could do what needed doing: "I am *a*-logical, if not illogical, and glad to be so when I find Bertie Russell trying to excogitate what true knowledge means, in the absence of any concrete universe surrounding the knower and the known. Ass!"[6] Philosophical thinking about anything, including truth, should ultimately tell us thinkers what the thing *means to us,* or why we (should) want or deplore it. No purely logical analysis of truth can do this on its own. James's pragmatism will help by pointing us toward concrete, real life circumstances in which particular true beliefs confer particular benefits or disappointments on particular thinkers or faith-havers.

II

Pragmatic concern with what matters to real life thinkers does not originate with James, of course. Misak notes that for Peirce, even a logical idea as abstract as the principle of bivalence, or the claim that any given proposition is either true or false, is more than a truth justified by abstract reasoning.[7] Instead, we particular inquirers, in the course of our actual inquiries, *hope and have faith* that, as we try to salve our irritating doubts, we will always come to satisfying conclusions one way or the other about any given belief. And indeed, after enough investigation, we may someday find that all our doubts are permanently assuaged. This hope or faith, then, having functioned as a norm telling us how we *should* think about the questions we try to answer, will have turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. This means that if the principle of bivalence—again, a logical truth—turns out in the end to be a true or finally satisfactory thing to believe, it will have been a *product* of our real life human efforts to figure out what to think, say, and do. This true norm, if it really turns out to be true, was never just "out there" waiting to be found, existing in sublime independence of inquirers, their contingent experiences, and their active struggles for satisfaction. Its

truth is, or will be, as much a matter of what we hopers and believers have *made* as of anything we might have *found*.

The idea that inquirers make norms in hopeful pursuit of satisfactions is at the heart of the way Peirce understands not only logical but natural-scientific truth. In "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce dubs this pursuit, which James will eventually call the search for pragmatic truth, "the method of science."[8] He argues that scientific inquirers consciously aim at "realities" as they develop their beliefs, and this seems to Misak and others to entail an objective realism about truth diametrically opposed to James's desire-based relativism; ultimately, however, Peirce's "real things" matter to scientific thinkers only because pursuit of them evidently happens to yield, in the long run, the inquirers' real goal: the psychological satisfaction of stable belief. Tenacity, authority, and pure a priori reasoning, the alternatives to the scientific method, are also motivated by the desire for satisfying belief, but those methods, as it happens, fail to deliver. Eventually users of those alternative methods meet other inquirers fancifully devising and tenaciously gripping and enforcing contrary beliefs, and irritating doubts ensue on both sides. Scientific thinkers, by contrast, with their idea of objectively real things detectable from all perspectives, will develop their beliefs about those realities open-mindedly. Rather than ignoring or suppressing any beliefs other than their own, they will take account of what makes those other beliefs attractive, aspiring to come up in the end with beliefs that tend to satisfy everybody and cause nobody the pain of doubt. But their real, observable guides in this process, whether or not they know it, will be their own desires for wider satisfactoriness, not any putatively objective realities.

Peirce, following the pragmatic maxim that he introduced in "How to Make our Ideas Clear," thought of beliefs generally as habits, imperatives, or rules of behavior—we might call them norms—that inclined their holders to act in certain ways if they wanted certain experienced results. He says that "The essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise."[9] Inquirers generate scientific beliefs with the not-necessarily-conscious goal of tending to act so that they achieve an experiential psychological state—namely, the peace of mind that comes with the end of doubt. Thus, the beliefs that scientific inquirers devise may

match objective realities and they may not. It doesn't matter, since that kind of objectivity is not the real point of scientific thinking and inquiry.

This is evident, "Fixation" informs us, because if we inquirers watch ourselves as we actually investigate the world, we see that even if we tell ourselves that our goal is objective truth rather than mental satisfaction,

> … put this fancy to the test, and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false. And it is clear that nothing out of the sphere of our knowledge can be our object, for nothing which does not affect the mind can be the motive for a mental effort.[10]

Later in life Peirce looked back at "Fixation" and pointed out approvingly that it

> assumes, for no better reason than that real inquiry cannot begin until a state of real doubt arises and ends as soon as Belief is attained, that 'a settlement of Belief,' or, in other words, a state of satisfaction, is all that Truth, or the aim of inquiry, consists in.[11]

Scientific inquirers are not trying to use their minds to relate themselves to objects as they exist independently of their minds, because that project is self-evidently absurd. Instead, scientists, and inquirers and believers generally, are actually looking for satisfactory beliefs, or habits of action that are useful because they lead us to satisfactions.

Moreover, in "Fixation," the candidate beliefs to be assessed by this conversational, consensus-seeking "method of science" include the dogmas of the Assassins who followed the Old Man of the Mountain, the economic doctrine that free trade is better than protectionism, the credos of the great religions of history, and Kepler's nested-spheres theory of the planetary orbits. Peirce will go on to blow hot and cold over the years about the usefulness of this "logical" method in thinking about "vital" religious or moral topics,[12] but here, at the dawn of pragmatism, any seeker of any kind

of truth will find that the method of science is the only effective one. And the key axiom of this "human logic," as Ramsey would come to call it, is that even in matters of deductive or inductive reasoning, we believers do and should believe the beliefs that satisfy us. Ramsey's fellow early analytic philosophers Frege and Russell, as they adapted mathematical methods of definition and analysis to deal with the abstract propositions expressed in language, sometimes gestured beyond the world of our experience to a platonic realm of transcendent, quasi-mathematical, and humanly indifferent realities and relations; but not even our logical and scientific ideals of truth hail from any such region, according to the pragmatists.[13] Instead the truth we seek will be found in our real lives of experience, especially our experiences of frustration and satisfaction.

III

This Peircean attitude toward logic, science, and truth made an impact on Ramsey, who made an impact in turn on Russell and Wittgenstein. It takes work, however, to see the "analytic" philosophy of Cambridge, England, as having originated even partly in this kind of practical and psychological storytelling. Frege and Russell famously set out not to practice any kind of psychologism but to bury all varieties of it. Frege criticized Husserl and thus branched off from "Continental" philosophy in the German idealist tradition, and both Russell and Frege criticized Mill's empiricist treatment of mathematical thought.[14]

Frege and Russell founded the analytic tradition by developing theories of logical "propositions" whose existence, relations, and truth were independent of any psychological facts about what particular thinkers ever actually believed or inferred. Russell, in 1901, offered formal propositional logic as the basis of the ultimate philosophical method. As logic-based analysis of names, descriptions, and relations proceeded, he said:

> there is every reason to hope that the near future will be as great an epoch in pure philosophy as the immediate past has been in the principles of mathematics. Great triumphs inspire great hopes; and pure thought may achieve, within our

> generation, such results as will place our time, in this respect, on a level with the greatest age of Greece.[15]

And the rules of this method were not to be found by psychological observation of the way thinkers and believers actually talked and believed; instead these logical rules would provide norms that would *correct* real life talking and thinking.

But even as the young Ramsey contributed to the development of this "analytic" method, J. M. Keynes observed his departure "from the formal and objective treatment of his immediate predecessors."[16] Misak agrees with Keynes that under the influence of Peirce, Ramsey's reaction to Russell and the Tractarian Wittgenstein was a move "towards what he himself described as a sort of pragmatism," one that distinguished "human logic" from "formal logic."[17] Human pursuit of truth was not to be understood as an effort to grasp logically connected true propositions. Instead, truth itself was to get both a deflationary analysis—"'It is true that Caesar was murdered' means no more than that Caesar was murdered"—and a psychologistic treatment in terms of belief and assertion. For Ramsey, a true belief was a "set of actions," or, ultimately, a set of dispositions or tendencies to act in various ways, that had "utility" thanks to various "objective factors" and to "experiential states" associated with those factors.[18]

A given belief or set of action-tendencies could be distinguished from other beliefs by the observable causes and effects associated with it, including behavioral effects like assertions in language. Thus beliefs, like the truth those beliefs might possess, were natural, experienced phenomena, not transcendent entities known only to pure logical reasoning. Still, despite having an observable subject matter, Ramsey's "human logic" remained normative rather than merely descriptive. An observably developed and displayed belief might turn out not to be useful in dealing with the world of real things and facts, and thus that belief might turn out not to be related in the right way to the real world and its objects. Ramsey's pragmatism thus clearly preserved the possibility of objective truth and objective falsehood—unlike the pragmatism of James. Truths for James seemed to be beliefs that we individual believers could use "satisfactorily," where that meant "more satisfactorily to our individual selves." Individual thinkers would "emphasize their

points of satisfaction differently," and so truth was "plastic" or changeable by different believers at different times and places.[19] Ramsey's understanding of truth, by contrast, featured a norm of pragmatically objective correctness.

Moreover, since Ramsey, in "Truth and Probability," introduced Bayesian probability theory into his account of inquiry, his resulting objective pragmatism, according to Misak, advanced beyond both James's and Peirce's. It identified rational degrees of confidence in hypotheses according to mathematically specifiable axioms of probability, and it thereby implicitly acknowledged that inquirers are rational to seek partial beliefs of appropriate strength rather than the full, never-to-be-overthrown beliefs that Peirce identified with truth and took to be the goal of inquiry. According to Peirce, beliefs were habits of action, and true beliefs were satisfactory dispositions that would never lead inquirers to surprises or disappointments. Misak follows Russell in taking this to mean that any doubt mixed into our beliefs would lead to paralysis. At a fork in the road without a full belief about which way to go, a person would have no guide to action and would therefore be stuck waiting for certainty to appear somehow. But while Ramsey also understands beliefs in terms of actions, he "improves on Peirce's position by turning our attention away from full belief that is or is not toppled by experience, and toward degrees of belief, emphasizing that when we are uncertain of the truth, we need to take in more evidence and keep our degrees of belief consistent."[20] Ramsey, like Peirce, understood beliefs in terms of actions, but he saw that rational inquirers are in fact Bayesian updaters who act without waiting for certainty. They risk specifiable amounts of effort, money, time, or other resources on outcomes of specified probability.

However, this contrast reflects a misreading of Peirce, who fully appreciated the role of partial, somewhat doubtful beliefs in real human life. In his picture we living inquirers are indeed looking for the ultimate set of full beliefs that will never be called into question by doubt-inducing surprises, but we often fall far short of that ideal in daily life—maybe we will forever fall short of it—and sometimes we have rigorously arrived-at scientific beliefs that we put to good practical use while still finding them partly dubious. (Beliefs about how entanglement and gravity work among subatomic particles might seem currently to fit this description.) Peirce thinks that far

from paralyzing us, our doubts irritate us and motivate us to act—specifically, to act to get rid of those doubts. According to "Fixation," again:

> "both doubt and belief have positive effects upon us, though very different ones. Belief does not make us act at once, but puts us into such a condition that we shall behave in a certain way, when the occasion arises. Doubt has not the least effect of this sort, but stimulates us to action until it is destroyed."[21]

Doubt prods us on the spot to generate new tentative beliefs or hypotheses and test them by acting and seeing whether our resulting experiences bring us satisfaction or new irritations. When we are in doubt at a fork in the road we will not starve to death like Buridan's ass between haystacks; obviously, we will instead ask a passing stranger for directions, recheck our road map or GPS, more or less randomly pick a road to go down looking for landmarks (even many non-human animals will do that much), or do any of the other things we thinking beings really do. And we can understand these tendencies to tentative action as doubt-motivated, partial, somewhat probable beliefs. We inquirers and believers generate these halting tendencies to act, and then we, if usually only informally and without doing any math, update prior probabilities as more evidence comes in. This means that Peirce's original basic story of inquiry is perfectly compatible with the idea that thinkers often can, do, and should display broadly Bayes-like rationality both in science and in ordinary life.

Peirce was aware of formal Bayesian probability theory, with its "subjectivistic" treatment of probabilities as partial beliefs; and though he rejected that theory and was a "frequentist" instead, his philosophical attitude toward the nature of probability was nevertheless compatible with using "priors" on occasion and updating them as necessary, either as a matter of informal guessing and testing or of formal hypothesizing and data crunching.[22] In this, Peirce's outlook was like that of many contemporary statistical researchers who reject or are agnostic about Bayesian subjectivism. Those researchers still sometimes put aside their *p*-values and confidence intervals and use Bayesian methods to analyze data and make statistical inferences, especially now that computers can do

the complicated calculations involved. (Some of these researchers identify themselves as "pragmatists" about probability.)[23] Likewise, though Peirce did not see the nature of probability in a Ramseyan-Bayesian way, he did appreciate the importance, in both scientific thinking and in ordinary life, of partial beliefs and degrees of belief that change with new evidence.

Thus we might say that Ramsey's more analytical Bayesian pragmatism is not a more realistic or plausible outlook than Peirce's because Peirce could approve of it. While researchers patiently pile up and deploy evidence in their efforts to cure their own and others' doubts, they can, more or less tentatively, be subjectivists or frequentists about probability, religious believers or atheists, free-traders or protectionists, and so on. Peirce's "scientific method" directs anyone who wants to end up believing the final truth to experiment with tentatively held hypotheses concerning those or any other things. We inquirers are to hold out hope for a final truth that will close all these cases; but pragmatism itself does not say before the final comparing of notes what that truth will be, even regarding interpretation of the laws of logic or the axioms of probability. It does not even promise that there actually will be a final truth.

IV

Peirce did not think that he shared this outlook with James. He understood James to take the lunatic step of defining true beliefs as whatever rules for action might happen at any given moment to provide individual believers with good consequences, so that truths for this believer this week may not be truths for the next believer next week. James's own claim that the truth is "mutable" seemed to Peirce to confirm this reading.[24] There is no normativity in this picture, no getting things really wrong or right; there are only beliefs that are relatively or subjectively "true for you" or "true for me."[25] Believers cannot really clash in disagreement as they believe different things, and so there is none of what Huw Price has called the "convenient friction" provided by the goal of objective truth.[26] Peirce thought that such conflicts among seekers of the truth were necessary motivations in the creation of true beliefs and theories.[27]

And Ramsey thought James's view of truth was "ludicrous" for this Peircean reason.[28]

Here, Ramsey explains his own un-Jamesian pragmatic view, in which even a chicken can have a pragmatically true belief if it habitually abstains from eating a certain kind of caterpillar and thereby avoids unpleasant experiences:

> The mental factors in such a belief would be parts of the chicken's behaviour, which are somehow related to the objective factors, viz. the kind of caterpillar and poisonousness. … [T]he relation between the chicken's behaviour [i.e., its belief] and the objective factors was that the actions were such as to be useful if, and only if, the caterpillars were actually poisonous."[29]

James's version of this "truth is useful, mutable belief" story mentions no relationship that could make the chicken's "mental" belief true of "objective," or not-merely-mental, poisonous caterpillars. It thus makes truth about caterpillars, ludicrously, a mental matter relative to any individual chicken benefitted by the belief.

Curiously, this was not quite Peirce's own complaint about James's pragmatism. Instead, he thought James got the role of "habit" wrong in the pragmatic story of meaning and truth. Peirce's pragmatic maxim entailed that beliefs had meaning only as rules establishing habitual expectation and action under certain circumstances; James, however, "does not restrict . . . 'meaning,' . . . as I do, to a habit, but allows . . . complex feelings, endowed with compulsiveness, to be such."[30] James seemed to Peirce to interpret beliefs in terms of particular feelings and the particular acts they actually happened to motivate, not in terms of general *habits*. This meant that *true* beliefs would be whatever action-motivating feelings happened, in individual cases, to lead individuals to other feelings of satisfaction. James seemed thus to relativize truth to individual believers and whatever happened to satisfy them in their particular cases.

However, far from relativizing truth to individuals, James identified his final goal of inquiry thus:

> The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. It runs on all fours with the perfectly wise man, and with the absolutely complete experience; and, if these ideals are ever realized, they will all be realized together. Meanwhile we have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood.[31]

Inquirers look for beliefs that turn out to be satisfactory or useful "in the long run and on the whole of course," not just useful at any single moment for any particular believer or group of believers. That is, they are *typically* useful; they have the *tendency* to satisfy believers in the long run. James did speak of beliefs that were only "true for me" or "true for you," but, in the long run, those beliefs would turn out to be mere "half-truths" that we had only called "true" on our way to the "absolutely" true beliefs. Inquirers will find the latter only at a Peircean ideal end of inquiry.

This quasi-absolute truth is not a particular occurrent phenomenon; and, moreover, it is *we* inquirers and believers who will—or, better, would—devise this final truth if it is—or were—ever generated. Particular wants and feelings drive individual inquirers to dream up initially satisfactory beliefs, but unless those different inquirers irritate and help each other by sharing their different beliefs and experiences, no progress toward this ideal will be made. So James's final truth is clearly not something individual persons or chickens come up with entirely inside their own "mental" conditions.

V

James explicitly accepted Peirce's pragmatic maxim, which made beliefs into *general* rules for or habits of action.[32] But this means that both James and Peirce understood truth in psychological terms. Both saw the sort-of abstract, sort-of absolute truth possessed by some belief-habits as one big tendency, or habit, of those habits—namely, the habit of providing satisfactory experiences, or "verifications," to believers. James spelled this out by comparing truth with other habits or tendencies. Health, wealth, and strength are tendencies that some people have to do particular things, like

digest food well, hand over cash, and lift heavy objects as needed. Truth is, analogously, a habit or tendency of some beliefs to provide results believers like.[33] One case of good digestion or one 300-lb. dead lift does not make health or strength, and, likewise, one ocurrently satisfying belief does not make truth; but just as there is no abstract Platonic entity in which people participate and thereby become healthy or strong, neither is there one in which beliefs participate and thereby become true. Particular acts and particular resulting experiences play central roles in the ongoing creation and development of (health, wealth, strength, and) truth—which means that for James, and for Peirce as James understood him, the creation and development of truth is a contingent psychological process, one that cannot be understood using logical definitions alone.

This is neither a Platonistic nor a traditionally empiricist understanding of truth. Instead it is, we might say, a Darwinian natural history. Truth is like a successful plant or animal species that comes into existence, mutates, and evolves by natural selection. Like particular beliefs, individual conspecifics live and die by how well they do in the environment into which they are born, and the species itself grows as it adds more and more successful members. It has no existence apart from the individuals that make it up over its natural history, but it cannot be "reduced" to any number of those currently existing members. There will in the future be members of the species that do not exist now; and, moreover, abstract species do things that individual organisms do not do on their own. Sometimes they take over environmental niches, for example, exemplifying survival of the fittest by driving their ancestor species and other competitors out of existence. Analogously, individual "truths" are born as mutant beliefs that survive by providing satisfactions. Those satisfactory beliefs then multiply as believers interact, share their various truths, and then generate new generations of beliefs that are, we might say, the better adapted offspring of the old mutants. In this process abstract truth comes to be, changes, grows, and drives falsehood out of the intellectual ecosystem.

This abstract truth could not exist without individual beliefs and believers, but that obviously does not entail that whatever those believers happen to believe at any given moment is *eo ipso* true. There exists "convenient friction" because we different believers can share our different experiences of the world in support of our

different views and in criticism of (ourselves and) others. However, this is still not the story of a search for an "objective" truth now sitting external to us subjects waiting to be found. Neither does this story describe a truth relation that exists somewhere and somehow as a bridge between representations "inside" us or our minds and either abstract or particular objects "outside" us. Truth is not even a relation connecting two sets of "inner" things (like beliefs or concepts and Kantian "phenomena") or two sets of "outer" things (like representations in brains and represented distal objects). Pragmatic truth is not any kind of relation, and hence it is not a bridge across any kind of divide.

VI

The story of truth as a mysterious bridge or relation is a kind of fantasy. It appeals to a reader or hearer as the way things must fundamentally be, though it is lacking in evidence and familiar common sense details. What real, observable difference to real life would it make if that invisible truth-connection were not there? Pragmatism, by contrast, represents truth and meaning as tools inquirers use every day. It features a special kind of attention to particulars—the kind that William James's brother Henry, the novelist known as an originator of nineteenth century literary realism, conscientiously bestowed on his characters and scenarios.[34] Henry explicitly renounced romantic literary flights of imagination, and instead he anchored his fiction in familiar details of human interactions. He thereby helped his audience acknowledge and appreciate the way things really worked in their psychosocial world. And William's philosophical thought paid analogous attention to "the particular go" of truth and meaning. It showed believers and thinkers how they in fact develop their true beliefs and use them to search for ever-better ways of thinking and living. Henry acknowledged this similarity between his and his brother's work when he described himself as having "pragmatized" throughout his career as a writer of realistic fiction.[35] William James's pragmatism was also, one might say, "realistic" in this way.

Frank Ramsey, in his unfortunately short career, began to offer a picture of science, language, and truth as parts of human life rather than abstract sets of ideal procedures. He identified himself as a distinctive kind of philosophical realist because of this. In ordinary

usage, "Be realistic!" means something like, "Stop fantasizing!" Ramsey tried to display this ordinary realism in his philosophy, famously criticizing a particular approach to general statements because it did not display the "realistic spirit."[36] Misak argues that Ramsey's ordinary "realism" is the pragmatism he picked up from Peirce.[37]

However, in criticism of what he took to be Ramsey's idea that mathematical calculations were habits of thought that could be assessed empirically for how well they worked, Wittgenstein famously remarked: "Not empiricism, yet realism. That is the hardest thing. (Against Ramsey.)"[38] Empiricism is philosophy's first pass at this ordinary realism; it renounces Platonistic fantasies of certainty, or of knowledge untainted by contingent experiences and interests. However, empiricism features its own philosophical fantasies of foundational sense-certainty, and a genuinely realistic philosophical approach has to leave those behind, too. Ramsey thought his own Peircian realism did that, but Wittgenstein disagreed, and it was in trying to display an even-more-realistic spirit that he turned against not only his own earlier Tractarian idealizations of language but also Ramsey's empiricist-sounding pragmatism. [39] Going forward he would pay attention to particulars and assemble reminders concerning the way speakers really do use language—a way unsupported by any certainties at all.

William James likewise enjoins his readers to pay close attention to the way things are in their own real life practices of thought and inquiry instead of trying to impose norms or ideals from above those processes. However, if we philosophical thinkers take this advice, don't we give up the possibility of correcting and improving the ways believers actually happen to speak and think? Not at all; in real life, of course, *normative criticism and correction are part of our everyday procedures*. James's story of those procedures explains the "particular go" of those criticisms; it helps us see that when we do criticize others' beliefs—or our own—our real critical guides are neither abstract forms, phenomenal sense-data, nor extramental physical things. Whether or not any or all of those items exist, they are not the things that are, or should be, in charge of belief. Instead, believers' own irritations and satisfactions are, as James put it, the *causa existendi* first of our beliefs and then of our true beliefs.[40] They motivate us first to create ideas and then to hold on to the good

ones and weed out the bad. And those may be beliefs concerning any things we care about, including gross injustices, mathematical matrices, the gods of Homer, the dialectic of absorption and theatricality, and communities of nation-states. That is, we can come to develop absolutely true beliefs about "things" that are hard to see as "objective realities."

James's absolutely true belief does not yet exist in its final form and may never do so, and thus talk of it is understandable as a non-referring imperative to stay open-minded—very much like the Peircean-Ramseyan normative logical principle of bivalence mentioned above. Neither of these ideals is or depends on a static, unchanging truth awaiting discovery. Each is entirely compatible with the idea that truth has to be brought into existence as beliefs are forged and reshaped over and over.

CONCLUSION

Cambridge Pragmatism is valuable but significantly flawed. It is important to know that Russell's and Moore's scorn for James was not the only reaction to pragmatism in England at the dawn of analytic philosophy, but as Misak recounts this clarifying history she obscures the real philosophical value of pragmatism. Peirce and James shared the key insight that the truth about everything is best understood as no more, and no less, than a developing lot of beliefs that tend to satisfy believers; and as the old pragmatists spread this idea, they did more than pave the way for Ramsey's mathematically precise pragmatic epistemology. They also challenged the perennially troublesome idea that truth is a relation to reality, especially a reality made of things that are independent of truth seekers and their poor unstable experiences and desires. If studying paleo-pragmatism helps us see a way past this idea, we may have more to learn from it than who thought what and when.

NOTES

[1] From James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking,* 106 : "In our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add,* both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers human violence willingly. Man *engenders* truths upon it."

[2] James, *Pragmatism*, 95.

[3] Saul Kripke championed this kind of natural-science essentialism in much of his philosophical work. See his *Naming and Necessity*, for example, throughout.

[4] There is a longstanding debate among interpreters about what exactly James's "theory of truth" is supposed to be or to provide. That debate is summarized nicely in Capps, "The Pragmatic Theory of Truth." And an account of pragmatic truth similar to the Maxwellian one offered here is found in: Cormier, *The Truth is What Works*, esp. ch. 2; Capps, "A Pragmatic Argument for a Pragmatic Theory of Truth"; and Capps, "A Common-sense Pragmatic Theory of Truth."

[5] James makes this point, indicating the way correspondence, copying, or mirroring exists because of utility, in James, *Pragmatism*, 112-113: "I try to imagine myself as the sole reality in the world, and then to imagine what more I would 'claim' if I were allowed to. If you suggest the possibility of my claiming that a mind should come into being from out of the void inane and stand and copy me, I can indeed imagine what the copying might mean, but I can conjure up no motive. What good it would do me to be copied, or what good it would do that mind to copy me, if farther consequences are expressly and in principle ruled out as motives for the claim … I cannot fathom."

[6] Cited in Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 368.

[7] See Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism: From Peirce and James to Ramsey and Wittgenstein*, 48-51.

[8] Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition, Volume 3, 1872-1878*, 253-254.

[9] Peirce, Writings of Charles S. Peirce, 263-264.

[10] Peirce, Writings of Charles S. Peirce, 247-248.

[11] Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 2, 1893-1913* ,449.

[12] Peirce begins his Harvard lectures by expressing regret that his talks will touch in part on what he identifies as "Topics of Vital Importance." He thinks that his methods of reasoning, including the method of belief-testing that he had called the method of science and that James came to call pragmatism, are ill-suited to those topics, which are better left to instinct and sentiment. See "Lecture One" in Peirce, *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, esp. 108-111.

[13] Frege committed himself in his *Begriffschrift* to the objective reality of abstract mathematical objects, and Russell committed himself in his theory of definite descriptions to the supramental reality of abstract propositions. Frege, *Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*, and Russell, "On Denoting" contain the classic texts.

[14] The actual history of who was practicing psychologism and who was fighting it is, of course, more vexed than this. Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge*, contains one account of the complications.

[15] Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, 96.

[16] Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, 338. Cited in Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism: From Peirce and James to Ramsey and Wittgenstein* ,158-159.

[17] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*,158-159.

[18] Misak, 170.

[19] James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 35. Cited in Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*,4.

[20] Misak, 178-179.

[21] Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition, Volume 3, 1872-1878*, 247.

[22] Peirce accepted the same axioms of probability as the Bayesians, and he accepted Bayes's theorem itself, which follows from those axioms and the definition of conditional probability. He would also have had no objection to "Bayesian updating" as a way of trying to approach objective probability, though he rejected the idea that a subjective "prior" of .5 can be calculated with no

sampling evidence whatsoever, and he thought that the objectively understood probability P(B|A) was in the end the best measure of what degree of belief it was rational to give to B given A. (See Burch, "If Universes Were as Plenty as Blackberries", 431-432 and 438.)

[23] See Albers *et al.,* for example.

[24] Peirce complains in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 2, 1893-1913*, 450, that James's doctrine of the mutability of truth is one of the "seeds of death" for pragmatism that are promoted by younger pragmatists than he. James says that "the truths men gain about [reality] are everlastingly in process of mutation" in James *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 107.

[25] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 61: "[James] distinguishes himself from Peirce by taking the consequence a belief might make to a particular individual as pivotal for determining the belief's truth or falsity."

[26] See Price, "Truth as Convenient Friction", throughout.

[27] Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 2, 1893-1913*, 450.

[28] Ramsey, *F. P. Ramsey: Philosophical Papers*, 91. Cited in Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 208.

[29] Ramsey, *F. P. Ramsey: Philosophical Papers,* 40; cited in Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism* 169.

[30] Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce. Volumes 5 and 6*, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism and Scientific Metaphysics* 494.

[31] James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 106-107.

[32] See James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking,* 28-29.

[33] James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking,* 106: "All such qualities [as health and wealth] sink to the status of habits between their times of exercise; and similarly truth becomes a habit of certain of our ideas and beliefs in their intervals of rest from their verifying activities. But those activities are the root of the whole matter, and the condition of there being any habit to exist in the intervals."

[34] Cormier, in "Jamesian Pragmatism and Jamesian Realism," argues for the shared literary realism of the James brothers.

[35] Hocks, *Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought*, 40; cited at Cormier, "Jamesian Pragmatism and Jamesian Realism," 288.

[36] Ramsey, *F. P. Ramsey: Philosophical Papers,* 160.

[37] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 188, 236, and elsewhere.

[38] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 325, part VI, §23.

[39] See Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind,* 39-72 for a version of this story that portrays Ramsey as falling short of genuine ordinary realism precisely because of his Peircean tendencies.

[40] James, *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to Pragmatism,* 146-147.

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WILLIAM JAMES AGAINST A DEAD WORLD

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With the environmental crisis and its many foreseen disasters looming on the horizon, it could not be more timely to ask how pragmatic philosophy can make a difference in our efforts to repair our increasingly devastated Earth. Turning to William James's neutral monism, I ask: what does a Jamesian metaphysics look like? How does it frame the relationship between self and world? What implications does this have for escaping tricky conceptual snares within environmental ethics? And, finally, how can it cultivate perspectives leading to greater environmental intimacy and outcomes? By illuminating the existential binding of spirit and body, mind and matter, I argue that James provides a compelling springboard for escaping problematic tropes and mischaracterizations of the human condition, offering us a chance to develop a robust appreciation for nature and its fulsome affordances—an argument against a dead world.

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> But all such differences are minor matters which ought to be subordinated in view of the fact that, whether we be empiricists or rationalists, we are, ourselves, part of the universe and share the same one deep concern in its destinies. We crave alike to feel more truly at home with it, and to contribute our mite to its amelioration. It would be pitiful if small aesthetic discords were to keep honest men asunder.—William James[1]

While philosophy is an abundant resource for those interested in critically interrogating the relationship between self and world, this literature is not immune to a critique leveled at philosophy in general: rich in theory but light on *praxis.* Philosophy, it is argued, does not take seriously enough the objection that the point of philosophy should be not only to *interpret* the world, but to *change* it.[2] Certainly, this critique cannot be taken wholesale if this means cleanly dividing interpretation from its consequential effect on the material conditions of our lived experience. While we might not align ourselves with the position of Rorty's philosophical ironist, for whom philosophy is but an endless task of re-description and synthesis of philosophical *Weltanschauungs* as expressed through language, we can at very least appreciate that our interpretation of the world and our place within it directly inflects the possibilities and priorities of our worldly engagement. Philosophies that develop sensitive and robust interpretations of the world are necessary for worldly transformation. Yet, it seems fair to point out that—for all of the compelling work done under the banner of environmental ethics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century—we still face a host of deeply troubling issues rooted in environmental crisis. Natural resources are being depleted at an alarming and unsustainable rate. Rampant consumerism produces waste disposal practices that threaten human and non-human habitats alike. Global climate change comes in tandem with not only shifts in average temperatures across the globe, but radically changed bioregions and weather patterns—changes which, happening at an unprecedented rate, mark the era of the Anthropocene[3] as one of potential catastrophic loss of natural diversity. If environmental progress, however we might characterize it, is one yardstick against which

environmental philosophy may measure its success, it is hard to contend that it has not come up short.

Thus we come to the heart of the pragmatic injunction which we are right, I would argue, to issue philosophy: as articulated by Wayne Viney and Madisson Mullen, this injunction entails "one of the more challenging contemporary tasks . . . the development of an overarching *philosophical orientation* that *encourages ecological attitudes and studies.*"[4] This injunction, in my reading, consists of two critical components: the first pertains to *philosophical scope,* while the second refers to *intended consequences.* While it is not my goal to articulate a comprehensive vision of the project of philosophy, if we will grant that its general purview is not the investigation of natural phenomena themselves but rather the way in which natural phenomena "hang together" with the remainder of worldly experience,[5] then we might further understand that such a "philosophical orientation" merely acts to delimit the boundaries of philosophical enterprise. In speaking of "encouraging ecological attitudes," Viney and Mullen are, however, qualifying their injunction with a pragmatic consideration: such orientations are not merely aesthetic modes of description that we might hope will resonate with an imaginative audience, but a way to structure experience with a measurable "cash value" in terms of its ability to perform *work* in the world. What we need, in short, is a *vision with traction.*

In the account that follows, I will contend that we can find such a vision in the work of William James. While a superficial understanding of pragmatism may understand this school of thought to be at odds with a sensitive environmental framework, prioritizing "concern for experience and immediate results" and epitomizing "the greed, anti-intellectualism, and reckless disregard for future consequences that has characterized personal and public actions over the past century of American history" through "individualism and narrow vision," such a "careless pragmatism" fails to fully appreciate the ways in which pragmatism was developed alongside rich and environmentally engaged modes of metaphysical understanding.[6] For James, neutral monism provides a means to see the self as nothing more (or less) than a way of classifying a perspective on the real "metaphysical stuff": experience. This way of thinking helps us to cement our relationship with the environment

qua material reality,[7] but also help us to dissolve a key problem within environmental ethics: disputes surrounding anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric ethical systems. Furthermore, his insistence on an attitude of intimacy with the flux of experience gives us an indication of how we might foster attitudes that are not only ecocentric, but which explicitly value natural diversity—a critical issue in a world that faces habitat loss at an alarming and unsustainable rate.

THE INWARDNESS OF THE OUTER, THE OUTWARDNESS OF THE INNER: JAMES'S NOTION OF TWICE-TAKEN EXPERIENCE IN NEUTRAL MONISM

Essential to an understanding of James's neutral monism is the following thesis: "[t]here is no thought-stuff different from thing-stuff"; rather, these different varieties of "stuff" are in fact "the same identical piece of 'pure experience'" that can "stand alternately for a 'fact of consciousness' or for a physical reality, according as it is taken in one context or another."[8] This thesis is an ontological claim: rather than understanding the world to be made up of a dualism of mind and matter, James is committed to the idea that the world is made up of *both at once*—one stuff, experience, that captures both consciousness and materiality simultaneously but is only determined as one or the other according to the context in which it is considered *post hoc*.

While James's account is deeply *cognizant* of relations, it might (in a limited, provisional sense) be considered a misnomer to call it a "relational account." In a relational account of experience, we are compelled to think in terms of at least two metaphysical components: on the one hand, a subject or "self"; on the other, an object or empirical reality with which this subject interacts and thus shares relations. If we understand a relational account in this manner, we cannot avoid a consequential dualism—that "not subject, not object, but object-plus-subject is the minimum that can actually be."[9] Such dualisms, however, are antithetical to a Jamesian way of thinking. We are better off, he contends, to think of relations as not interactions between different "stuffs" that constitute discrete categories of experience, but rather as connections that might emerge within one "stream of consciousness," where we take such a consciousness merely as a *function* and nothing more. If we wish

to retain the language of "relation" (as James himself does), we need to think of this relation as *intra*-experiential rather than *inter*-ontological. "Experience" here is not a phenomenological term that seeks to describe the way in which exterior phenomena impinge upon the sensory and affective experience of a subject that stands fundamentally apart from the world, ever-negotiating the *me* in relation to the *it*; rather, it is the "primal stuff or material of the world" that can be taken twice over as the stuff of "subjectivity" or the stuff of "objectivity."[10]

James's use of analogy is informative here. According to traditional ideas of consciousness, he argues, we can understand consciousness to be a kind of "paint of which the world pictures are made": consisting of a menstruum (that within which pigment is suspended—e.g., oil) and the pigment itself (i.e., the colored material that forms a "mass of content"), consciousness can be siphoned into two distinct substances or "factors of experience" by a kind of physical subtraction, the material "stuff" of the pigment in contradistinction to the ethereal "menstruum" of consciousness which suspends it.[11] Such a view, however, might be said (in non-Jamesian terms) to confuse *heuristics* with *ontology.* Consciousness, as a *function*, can distinguish within experience between modes in which we might want to turn our attention to the *knower* (i.e., the subject-pole of experience) or, conversely, the *known* (i.e., the object-pole of experience) —in this analogy, the menstruum or the pigment—but this function does not imply two discrete substances, but merely two different contexts in which the focal point of experience is shifted and which we may then heuristically differentiate between. There is (analogically speaking) no menstruum and pigment, but merely paint: in one context, this is a physical substance that we might chemically analyze to break down into its constituent elements to learn how it might causally react with another substance; in a different context, it is a potential vehicle of subjective artistic expression with the potential to incite existential or sociological reflection. Yet, as we would intuitively understand in the last iteration of the analogy, it is only ever *one thing:* paint, singular but multi-faceted.

This functionality that consciousness possesses is not merely an underhanded re-branding of an old substance. The function of consciousness is *knowing*, but it posits no transcendent subject in

order to know.[12] We see evidence of this in James's articulation of conceptual knowledge, wherein we have two distinct instances of "pure" experience (i.e., the "immediate flux of life"[13])—the thinking/thought-of and the thing/perceived-of—whose connection is confirmed by the former *leading* to the latter as a terminus, two bookends of intermediary (i.e., "conjunctively transitional") experiences that lead from the first to the second (as in his famous example of Memorial Hall[14]). The intentionality that we might traditionally ascribe to a substantial consciousness is here not an intrinsic power of a subject that directs thought, but is instead adequately captured within experience by the notions of *substitution* and *leading.* Knowledge is "accomplished" when a concept, which can be substituted in different mental and physical operations, *leads* to a terminus in a percept that verifies the concept as true in the sense of "cognizant of reality" (rather than conflicting with reality)—as that which was "meant" and thus is properly said to be "known."[15] When this successful terminus is reached, we can step out of "pure" experience in recognizing these two "bookends" as, on the one hand, the *knower* (i.e., the starting-point) and the *object known* (i.e., the terminus). "In this continuing and corroborating," James remarks, "taken in no transcendental sense, but denoting definitely felt transitions, *lies all that the knowing of a percept by an idea can possibly contain or signify*."[16] Consciousness here is no *deus ex machina* that directs our knowing, but simply denotes, after the process of progressing through and verifying concepts in our experience, the later distinguishing between the different poles of this experience[17]—a distinguishing *created by* the percept's existence as terminus.[18] Invoking the traditional non-functional idea of the consciousness is additive in that it mistakenly projects dualism where in fact there is only one experience counted twice over.[19]

The relevance of this particular metaphysical framework to an environmental ethic may not be obvious, yet has real consequences. As James himself articulates, the distinction between the material and immaterial—matter and spirit, body and mind—is a distinction with a philosophical lineage that, originally representing two "equipollent" substances each as worthy of interest as the other, has come to decidedly weigh in heavily on one side or the other, depending on philosophical temperament.[20] In rationalist camps, the

immaterial that "strings the world together" is of paramount import; in empirical camps, however, the immaterial is naught but a residual spectre, a ghost of philosophies past that, not being conducive to empirical study, at best cannot be substantially engaged. Yet, taking up the metaphor of blindness that James employs elsewhere in his discussion of temperament,[21] both of these camps (taking, as they do, a particular vantage point from which to pursue their scholarly endeavors) fail to fully appreciate the gravity of the essential connection between these two facets of experience. Certainly James, in seeking to dissolve any notion of consciousness beyond a word denoting a function, has sympathies more clearly aligned with empiricism (as we might expect from a self-proclaimed "radical empiricist"). He will have no truck with a strict absolutism.[22] However, this key notion of what I previously called an intra-experiential relationality, woven integrally into the fabric of James's metaphysical thought, is uniquely positioned to seriously consider the idea that "subject" and "object" cannot be dualistically divorced and can only be understood as, to speak colloquially, "two sides of the same coin." Such thinking, I argue, is an important step on the way to constructing a viable environmental framework.

My reasons for this assertion are twofold, and address two overarching problems in our treatment of materiality within the history of philosophy. First, we can look as far back as ancient Greek philosophy (e.g., Platonic Forms) to find that metaphysical accounts that treat mind and matter as fundamentally different (whether a scaffolded pluralism or a monism that marks a difference between appearance and reality) have a tendency to cultivate environmentally dangerous notions of human exceptionalism. There is nothing inherently wrong with recognizing unique human capacities, and some of these capacities are verifiable through empirical investigation. However, treating these unique capacities non-naturalistically, as the privileged offshoot of a transcendental *je ne sais quoi*, produces grand narratives that reinforce a felt distance from the material environment that comes in tandem with disadvantageous normative valuations. Rationalist metaphysical frameworks, for instance, that bolster a hierarchy with subjective "mind" on top and objective "matter" on the bottom not only produce an awkward liminal space for the body in attempting to preserve an "ontological hygiene" between kinds,[23] but furthermore

foster attitudes that reflect an understanding of the material environment as merely a phenomenological playground for a more sophisticated type of being. Rationalist philosophers of the absolute variety, James argues, "dwell on so high a level of abstraction that they never even try to come down," its absolute mind "compatible with any state of things whatever being true here below" and indicating "no single actual particular."[24] Such attitudes of relative indifference toward material reality, evidenced by a history of rhetoric around the supremacy of the human spirit and "mastery of nature" (e.g., eighteenth-century Enlightenment sensibilities), can only be harmful in trying to adopt ecologically sensitive environmental attitudes that see humans as but a node in a web of complex and potentially vulnerable environmental interactions.

Second, however, we can understand that even empirical approaches that direct their attention to the study of what is given to us *via* sensory experience are in danger of cleaving apart subject and object into dualism, rendering them susceptible to short-sighted utilitarianism in human/non-human interactions. In a multiverse of radically different objects available for empirical study, consciousness can be understood as the bare presence of a *witnessing* that marks the difference between what is consciously entertained and that which is not.[25] While possessing greater primacy than in more rationalist accounts, objects are yet treated as discrete and divorced from us. I agree with James in seeing the empiricist's commitment to the richness of concrete experience—its "recogni[tion of] particulars in their full completeness"[26]—as an improvement in degree from the rationalist approach, yet it does not do enough work in undermining the dualism that rationalism sustains.[27]

It is worth pausing here to note that rationalism and empiricism (or, in an equivalent iteration of James's categorization of philosophical thought, idealism and materialism) are both animated by the desire to "banish uncertainty,"[28] to "have expectancy defined."[29] They are a reflection of the translation of personal experience into a philosophical temperament with a certain way of understanding how we ought to engage the world, whether this is (in the former case) "the reason, the atonement, that lies in the heart of things, and that we can act with" or (in the latter case) "the opacity of brute fact that we must react *against*."[30] That is to say, they do

not most fundamentally reflect different ontological positions for James, but rather a greater preference for either simplicity that unifies or a fragmentation that distinguishes.[31] However, how these motivating desires are taken up by philosophical temperament pushes one toward metaphysical frameworks that will result in aligning oneself with a more rationalist or empirical model that comes imbued with historically developed commitments to either ideal or material preeminence as the essential "stuff of the world." And both of these frameworks, I argue, offer evidence of James's claim that "[o]ur mind is so wedded to the processes of seeing an *other* beside every item of experience, that when the notion of an absolute datum is presented to it, it goes beyond its usual procedure and remains pointing at the void beyond, as if in that lay further matter for contemplation."[32] While James here is specifically noting the philosophical attraction to nonentity or the void "beyond," it is adaptable to the tension imposed by James's own neutral monism and its inherent lack of "other" beyond experience.

But this "other" beyond experience is exactly what James's neutral monism successfully eliminates. Speak of the object of your knowledge, speak of yourself as the knower—what you are speaking of in each instance is *precisely the same thing*. James's conception thus offers a compelling means to fruitfully interact with live topics of discourse within environmental ethics. The debate between anthropocentric versus non-anthropocentric environmental accounts is one such example. In anthropocentric models, ethical consideration is firmly anchored in the sphere of the human; this would equate to what Tom Regan calls "an ethic for the use of the environment" whereby the environment possesses ethical significance in virtue of its human use-value.[33] Conversely, in non-anthropocentric models, ethical consideration is rooted instead in the non-human sphere itself: a true "ethic of the environment" wherein the environment possesses intrinsic value. The tension introduced here, articulated in brief, should be clear: on the one hand, the vulnerability of anthropocentric models to exploitative practices that prioritize human preferences above environmental considerations; on the other, the seeming incoherence of attributing human values to non-human environmental entities.

Bryan Norton, in locating an ambiguity within the term "anthropocentric," attempts to resolve this problem by proposing

two strains of anthropocentrism—*strong* and *weak*—that differentiate between anthropocentric preferences that are merely *felt* (a desire sated at least temporarily by an experience) and those that are more fully *considered* (such a desire that has been filtered through and thus judged according to a rationally adopted worldview).[34] The "cash value" of such a differentiation is that, if we adopt a *weak* anthropocentrism, we can acknowledge that humans may be the *source* of value in the world while yet acknowledging the environment as a *locus* of human value which, in light of our human interests in the environment as they emerge as part of our *Weltanschauung*, we ought to accord ethical consideration. Weak anthropocentrism gives us a means to criticize exploitative environmental practices that, while in line with felt preferences, are not "rational" in reflecting consideration of the impact on an adopted worldview, and furthermore allows us to recognize human experience as key to value formation[35]—as Kelly A. Parker phrases it, not saying that "human whim is the measure of all things, only that humans are in fact the measurers."[36]

Norton's weak anthropocentrism does do a significant amount of "pragmatic heavy lifting" in terms of its ability to arbitrate between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric philosophical orientations, but it maintains a dualism through which loopholes in environmental stewardship may yet emerge. If weak anthropocentrism only demands of us that we take more seriously *considered* preferences that come in tandem with a rationally adopted worldview, then exactly what this worldview "looks like" remains undetermined—and it may not be closely linked with environmental principles of sustainability at all. We need not look so far as the extremes of transhumanist utopianism transcending corporeal form to recognize that our material conditions—while no passive "phenomenological playground"—do lack the vocality to assert their inestimably vast role in shaping subjective experience. This, I would argue, is how the account loses traction: it presumes a rational worldview that is fully cognizant of the material facet of human experience. James's own view, on the other hand, dissolves the tension between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric accounts while offering a metaphysical perspective that makes this omission in recognition much more difficult.

There can be no divorce between the subject and their material

conditions because experience is incoherent without both "poles": even conceptual thinking, abstractions that we are wont to think of as somehow removed to some degree from reality, only express ideas that stand in for percepts that can be verified through an experiential terminus, "shiveringly thin wrappings for so thick and burly a world as this."[37] Here, "anthropocentric" and "non-anthropocentric" simply refer to perspectives taken toward these different poles as circumstance dictates: the knower that orients experience or the object that constitutes its parameters. Jason Scott Robert, who adapts James's metaphysical account into his own pragmatic environmental ethics coined "wild ontology," supports this point, claiming that the primacy of experience means that "the debate between anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists never even arises.[38] There is only one *ontos on,* or really real: experience.[39] The question relevant to sustaining environmental diversity thus becomes: what kind(s) of experience *do* and *should* we value?

INTIMACY[40] AND FLUX AGAINST A DEAD EARTH

In his lecture on Henri Bergson, James extols the virtues of a philosophical framework that resists positing the conceptual valorization of rationalism at the expense of the concrete particulars of experience.

> What really *exists,*is not things made but things in the making. Once made, they are *dead*, and an infinite number of alternative conceptual decompositions can be used in defining them. But put yourself *in the making* by a stroke of intuitive sympathy with the thing and, the whole range of possible decompositions coming at once into your possession, you are no longer troubled with the question which one of them is really real.[41]

Concepts are here the *memento mori* of life arrested; what is most lively and real is the creative and shifting force that precedes them, which can be found in the flux of life. Philosophy, he argues, "should seek this kind of living understanding of the movement of reality, not follow science in vainly patching together fragments of its dead results"—understanding the *really real* as experience, we can see that empiricism not only fails to properly banish

consciousness as a woolly residue of stronger dualisms past, but furthermore misunderstands its own object of study by playing into the scientific pursuit of seizing and extracting conceptual knowledge from the fullness of sensory experience. "Reality falls in passing into conceptual analysis; it mounts in living its own undivided life—it buds and burgeons, changes and creates."[42] Courting this "intuitive sympathy" in "div[ing] back into the flux"[43] will open us up to a sophisticated understanding of reality, and will furthermore help us appreciate that the proper role of conceptual knowledge is only to "harness up reality in our conceptual systems in order to drive it the better."[44]

This last sentiment might give the cautious reader reason for pause. If what we are looking for is a way to skirt orientations toward the world that lead to shortsighted exploitation, then the notion that the world of experience is something that we might, with the lasso of conceptual thinking, drive like a beast of burden is obviously somewhat problematic. But we would be wise here to bear in mind the context in which James uses this analogy. James's analogy is not employed to bolster some kind of narrative of the triumph of the human spirit over a wild nature; rather, he is making the point that the function of conceptual thinking is a reflection of our fundamentally pragmatic interaction with the world. Sensible reality is "too concrete to be entirely manageable"; the wide swath of this reality in comparison to the limitations of any finite living being dictates that we have a practical interest in finding means to more efficiently navigate the former.[45] Conceptual thinking, then, is the way by which we can use our powers of abstraction to more efficiently "get about." It is concerned with mitigating our own limitations within a challenging world rather than treating this challenging world as a latent provocation or arena for a dual of wills. Our faculty of abstraction allows us to traverse the world "almost as if we controlled a fourth dimension, skipping the intermediaries as by a divine winged power, and getting at the exact point we require without entanglement in any context," and even though these faculties are themselves of a mental constitution, they steer towards *particular* termini within concrete experience.[46] James's account, then, avoids the snare of troubling narratives that we would rather avoid while staying sensitive to the essential bond that affixes the full range of human modes of experience to the particulars of

experience.

We can thus see that, while the radically pro-conceptual intellectualism that James so strongly critiques is a real problem for properly understanding the world, conceptual thinking remains critical for us. In fact, perceptual engagement that pays attention to the particulars of the world, far from being fundamentally contrary to it, goes hand in hand with conceptualization. It is only by using concepts that we can make sense of and more fully interact with the non-conceptual, and the two are in fact so tightly knit that it can be difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. "The universal and the particular parts of the experience," he comments, "are literally immersed in each other, and *both are indispensable*."[47] Attempting to rectify a misguided notion of concepts as divorced and purified from the flux of experience, James further comments that

> [c]onception is not like a painted hook, on which no real chain can be hung; for we hang concepts upon percepts, and percepts upon concepts interchangeably and indefinitely; and the relation of the two is much more like what we find in those cylindrical 'panoramas' in which a painted background continues a real foreground so cunningly that one fails to detect the joint.[48]

Achieving intimacy with the flux of experience, then, does not (as in the analogy of menstruum and pigment with consciousness) consist of somehow "stripping away" conceptual thinking in order to "get at" the raw goods of perception, but rather entails fostering a kind of attentiveness that enriches both as two inextricably intertwined facets of experience. We can see this in James's comment that "[p]erception prompts our thought, and thought in turn enriches our perception"—meaning that "[t]he more we see, the more we think; while the more we think, the more we see in our immediate experiences, and the greater grows the detail and the more significant the articulateness of our perception."[49]

Having said this, we might now ask: how do we achieve this intimacy? While we ought not look to James for specific guidance that we might treat as an environmental "how-tos," we can look to "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" for clues. In this text,

James in part turns to nature as the indefatigable source of meaning that intellectualist tendencies, swollen beyond their proper utility, render invisible (or, at very least, diaphanous). The problem with a high degree of education, he argues, is that it socializes us to value only the exceptional, and we are given to understand that the exceptional is to be located only within the domain of the extra-natural—something to be found in what was earlier called the transcendental *je ne sais quoi.* "We are trained to seek the choice, the rare, the exquisite exclusively, and to overlook the common," and—"stuffed with abstract conceptions, and glib with verbalities and verbosities"—we fail to see the value in the perceptual side of mundane experience.[50] Yet, according to James, "of the kind of fibres of which such inanities consist is the material woven of all the excitements, joys, and meanings that ever were, or shall be, in this world."[51] To recognize this, we must become like those who, like Emerson, have such "responsive sensibilities" that they can, faced with snow puddles under a clouded sky, be "glad to the brink of fear."[52] This involves a kind of *descent*, to be "brought down to the non-thinking level, the level of pure sensorial description" whereby the "good of all the artificial schemes and fevers fades and pales; and that of seeing, smelling, tasting, sleeping, and daring and doing with one's body, grows and grows."[53]

I am loathe to take up too wholeheartedly James's vision of this descent; its echoes reverberate in "What Makes a Life Significant," which seems to romanticize "virtue with horny hands and dirty skin" in a way that might be construed to make an exploitative spectacle of working class life as somehow humble but authentic and necessary.[54] However, James's descent might be fruitfully taken up as an endorsement of an quasi-eco-phenomenological approach to understanding the richness of world-self relations. Writing on the relative merits of both phenomenology and pragmatism for an environmental ethic, Meg Holden says that, while phenomenology is primarily oriented toward achieving descriptive depth with phenomena, pragmatism is slightly differently tuned into the way in which the salient aspects of this description can transform people's cognition and understanding.[55] If we are aiming for a philosophical orientation toward the environment with real purchase and we need to emphasize the value of an anti-dualistic neutral monism that sees experience as the Janus-faced coin of subject and object, then

pragmatism will be interested in picking up threads of phenomenological description that are capable of transforming one's private vision of the environment. Phenomenological engagement with the natural environment presents possibilities of refining one's understanding of how subjectivity, not something set apart from "other" nature, simply expresses a way of classifying experience that is receptive to something radically larger than the subject. This form of thinking is much more in line with ecosystem models that urge us to understand how humans are bound up with a living structure of complex ecosystems of which humans are an unusually powerful but rather minuscule part—an understanding rooted in careful perceptual interaction, but built up with enriching conceptual processing.

And evidence that immersion in natural habitats *can* and *does* produce such thinking abounds. Nancy Wells and Kristi Lekies, for instance, found in a study conducted with a sample size of two thousand adults that exposure to both "domestic" and "wild nature" as children positively correlated with an identification with nature that developed ecocentric (rather than anthropocentric) attitudes later in life.[56] These findings are echoed by Christien Diehm's work in deep ecology and conservation social science.[57] James's encouragement of developing our "responsive sensibilities," then, might be productively explored as a suggestion to simply spend more time, especially in our formative years, exposing ourselves to natural settings in order to develop a perceptive and thoughtful understanding of subjectivity as merely a lens for understanding our place in systems of worldly relations within a naturalistic experience.

More specifically, Wells and Leckies highlight an especially crucial accomplishment of such an exposure to nature: a heightened sensitivity and respect for biodiversity.[58] This sensitivity and respect has a direct bearing on the potential to reinforce the value of a diverse and pluralistic material world within which selves can develop rich and meaningful lives. James, in his adoration of plurality, explicitly advocates on its behalf not only in terms of philosophical outlook, but also experiences at large: the philosopher knows that they "must vote always for the *richer* universe, for the good which seems most organizable, most fit to enter into *complex relations,* most apt to be a member of an inclusive whole."[59] If, in

short, experience only takes place as a transaction with and cognitive redevelopment of percepts rooted in worldly situations, then limitations on the available objects of perception indicate limitations on the kinds of perceptual and conceptual content with which we can engage. Natural diversity takes on the cast of existential values. We can thus look to James to understand that intimacy with the flux of life entails not only closing the gap between subject and objective reality, but valuing the plethora of difference that the latter offers us—and taking steps to preserve it for the sake of value intrinsic not to a subject or an object in itself, but the fecundity of experience of which we all partake.

What, then, is the most distinctively pragmatic takeaway from a Jamesian project of environmental intimacy through neutral monism? Environmental intimacy *via* immersion, I have argued, is key, and well-substantiated by research within, e.g., environmental psychology. But to merely recommend more time outdoors, especially for children, does not seem to be a particularly innovative insight, nor does it have clear avenues for deployment. While this paper has been primarily exegetical, carving out a space for the further development of a robustly Jamesian approach to combating environmental degradation, it is important that it not ironically remain at the level of the conceptual without returning to the rich humus of lived experience. I will thus gesture toward one domain which I contend is ripe for a Jamesian intervention: environmental education. Environmental education is increasingly available as a curricular component at most levels of education, from elementary through postsecondary; however, the way in which environmental education is often siloed, treated as distinct from humanistic disciplines, is an impediment to understanding the environment as experientially and thus existentially holistic. In fact, an interdisciplinary approach to environmental education that takes history, literature, and art (non-exhaustive) as not mere allies but genuinely integral components could do a great deal to enrich both environmental understanding and the virtues that might mobilize sympathy into action. This is especially true in the context of biodiversity diminishment. I have maintained above that the Earth affords us a dynamic cast of materials that directly undergird and inflect the quality of our lives within it; the implication here is that a diminishment of this dynamism, as is the inevitable consequence

of biodiversity reduction, has broad ripple effects on our lives as diverse as life itself. This is a lesson that is facilitated by environmental immersion, but can be fostered further (and with a wider range of objects of study), through pedagogical means emerging through a variety of modalities.

Take, for instance, a familiar example: the coffee plant, most commonly gracing our kitchens as the roasted drupes of *Coffea arabica*. Most of us—75% of Americans, at very least, if we consider individual weekly consumption[60]—are familiar with the distinctive rich waft of freshly brewed coffee. It is an aesthetic pleasure, consumed black (a bitter and bracing comfort), with cream and sugar (a decadent and well-balanced treat), or in a variety of other ways—even sweetened and adorned with a scoop of gelato in a luxurious *affogato.* However, coffee is more than a gastronomical delight. It enhances our cognitive faculties, improving our alertness and memory (psychology), and rendering us more capable of executing ambitious projects. In 17th century Britain, coffee houses—also known as "penny universities"—provided a public space for education, reflection, and conversation (history). Refined, the caffeine in the coffee plant is a helpful substance in combatting migraines (medicine). The coffee plant *Coffea arabica* is one empirical object that might be taken many such ways, and likely many more as its form adapts across time and space. It is also (along with other *Coffea* species) an endangered species in the wild, rendering its cultivated forms especially vulnerable to disease (see, for example, the history of the banana). A Jamesian metaphysics understands that such a plant is an object that might be known, and certainly understanding its biological characteristics (e.g., morphology, habitat, symbionts) is crucial for its preservation. But this object also reaches back to the subject in an act of mutual reconstruction in the flux of experience whereby we are shaped by its capacities and these, in turn, shape its future. Articulating this multifarious relationship in multimodal, interdisciplinary fashions is one way in which we can more powerfully articulate the bases of experiential goodness for a diverse audience of pluralistic learners—including those who may not have direct access to environmentally rich landscapes. We would do well to heed the advice of environmental hermeneuticists like Brian Treanor, who point to environmental writing as a critical tool in environmental

immersion,[61] as well as take note of the tremendous popularity of texts such as Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass,* Anna Tsing's *Mushroom at the End of the World,* Merlin Sheldrake's *Entangled Life,* and other kindred texts within the environmental humanities that reach well beyond an academic context.[62] From nature writing to geomapping to archival research, there are a plethora of offerings within diverse fields to fruitfully understand experience as bridging subject and object.

A metaphysical framework cannot, in and of itself, provide a remedy for all of the world's ills. A Jamesian approach to metaphysics, however, promises to point us in new directions, including one fruitful to environmental education—one that knits more tightly together the diverse empirical realities that we face with the transformative goods and values that our material realities provide.

CONCLUSION: THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHIZING

As we might expect from the author of an essay titled "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," James is no stranger to feelings of moral impulse: we have "but *one conditional commandment,* which is that we should seek incessantly, with fear and trembling, so to vote and to act as to bring about the very largest total universe of good which we can see."[63] The philosopher is uniquely positioned here to assist in the achievement of this good. A philosophical orientation that takes seriously a neutral monism that sees not "thought-stuff" nor "thing-stuff" as the be all end all of life, but rather an experience that renders both simple classifications of the primal stuff of experience can help environmental ethics progress beyond the chasm of anthropocentrism and anti-anthropocentrism that disconnects thinkers who are united in their care for our environment. Furthermore, the intimacy with the flux of life that takes percepts as fundamental yet "melted into" concepts—an intimacy that James strongly advocates—can help us recognize how immersion in natural environments can aid in developing ecologically-friendly dispositions that are important to maintaining natural diversity. James's metaphysics is thus fruitful from a theoretical standpoint, helping environmental thinking progress beyond stultifying philosophical tensions, as well as more directly

in terms of informing strategies for cultivating social attitudes of environmental stewardship.

While it might be tempting to underestimate the value of, colloquially, "helping philosophers talk to one another" by dissolving differences in ethical theory, it is important to realize what James himself appreciates so well: that conceptual thinking, yes, *subtracts* something of the fullness of concrete experience, but so too has the power to transform it. Philosophical discourse, then, is anything but impotent. But so much of current philosophy becomes hopelessly mired in recognition of the minutiae of *difference*: is phenomenology right to focus so exclusively on the experience of the subject, even if recent reformulations (e.g., eco-phenomenology) try to do this with an eye toward the formative role of the material environment? Or are we better off thrusting the subject to the side and trying to cultivate some means for the objective world to speak for itself—taking in tandem the difficult charge of performative contradiction (e.g., new materialisms)? If philosophy is a resource for providing an orientation toward the world, and pragmatism is committed to thinking of ways that such thinking can produce real effects on the world, then a paramount value of James's work is that it develops ways for us to free up the invaluable resource of philosophical contemplation by pointing to modes of thinking that more directly connect with ways of transforming our lives. As he so beautifully phrases it, we are all "part of the universe and share the same one deep concern in its destinies," and it would be a shame "if small aesthetic discords were to keep honest men asunder"—especially in a project of such visceral and immediate gravity as sustaining the Earth that hosts us all.[64]

NOTES

[1]. William James, "The Types of Philosophic Thinking," in *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977), 486.

[2]. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Frederick Engels, *Feuerbach: The Roots of the Socialist Philosophy,* trans. Austin Lewis (Whithorn: Anados Books, 2018), 59.

[3]. The term "Anthropocene" is not without its detractors, and for good reason: the prefix *anthropos-* suggests that it is an era marked by geological change caused by the human species at large, failing to recognize both the unequal environmental effects incurred by developed Western countries and the histories of colonial violence that undergird relationships with land and economy. However, as no equally suitable term has been solidified in relevant literature, I use this term provisionally with this caveat appended.

[4]. Wayne Viney and Madisson Mullen, "Tempering the Foolish Faiths: William James and Ecology," *Ecopsychology* 9, no. 1 (2017): 26.

[5]. James, "The One and the Many," in *Writings,* 265.

[6]. Robert C. Fuller, "American Pragmatism Reconsidered: William James' Ecological Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 14, no. 2 (1992): 160.

[7]. For the purposes of this paper, "the environment" will be used interchangeably with "material reality," "the physical world," "concrete experience," "the objective realm," "the perceptual," etc. to stand in for the natural non-human aspect of experience (rather than, for example, human built or social environments).

[8]. James, "The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience," in *Writings,* 271.

[9]. James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?," in *Writings,* 170.

[10]. James, "Consciousness," 170.

[11]. James, "Consciousness," 172.

[12]. James, "Consciousness," 170.

[13]. James, "The Thing and Its Relations," in *Writings,* 215.

[14]. See James, "A World of Pure Experience," in *Writings*, 201.

[15]. James, "World," 201-203. James does specify that a great deal of our knowledge operates provisionally (or "virtually") in that

it *could* be verified but never is fully verified by experience—what matters is that it is not challenged by our experience. See James., "World," 204-05.

[16]. James, "World," 201.

[17]. James, "Consciousness," 170.

[18]. James, "World," 203.

[19]. James, "Consciousness," 171.

[20]. James, "Consciousness," 169.

[21]. See James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in *Writings,* 629-645.

[22]. James, "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy," in *Writings,* 368.

[23]. The phrase "ontological hygiene" is a productive one for thinking about normatively loaded ontological taxonomies, and I borrow from an excellent cross-disciplinary text on posthumanism: Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 35.

[24]. James, "Present Dilemma," in *Writings,* 368.

[25]. James, "Consciousness," 171.

[26]. James, "Sentiment of Rationality," in *Writings,* 319.

[27]. The older dualism of rationalism, James argues, related to the soul and matter, whereas the "indefeasibly dualistic" neo-Kantian conception (wherein "the evaporation of the soul-substance has proceeded as far as it can go without being yet complete") is that of subject and object—see James, "Consciousness," 170. The distinction to be made here pertains to the project at hand mostly only inasmuch as the more recent neo-Kantian conception brings subject and object closer together yet not quite close enough.

[28]. James, "Consciousness," 326.

[29]. James, "Consciousness," 332.

[30]. James, "Consciousness," 333.

[31]. James, "Consciousness," 319.

[32]. James, "Consciousness," 322.

[33]. Tom Regan, "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 3, no. 1 (1981): 20.

[34]. Bryan Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak

Anthropocentrism," *Environmental Ethics* 6, no. 2 (1984): 134.

[35]. Norton, 135.

[36]. Kelly A. Parker, "Pragmatism and Environmental Thought," in *Environmental Pragmatism*, ed. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (New York: Routledge, 1996), 33.

[37]. James, "Concerning Fechner," in *Writings,* 530.

[38]. Jason Scott Robert, "Wild Ontology: Elaborating Environmental Pragmatism," *Ethics and the Environment* 5, no. 2 (2000): 202.

[39]. Robert, 197.

[40]. Throughout this paper, "intimacy" and "environmental intimacy" are being used to connect James's use of the word "intimacy" (direct subjective experience, unity) with the standard environmental philosophy concept of "environmental intimacy" (a deep, experiential, and meaningful understanding of the relationship between self and world).

[41]. James, "Bergson," in *Writings,* 577 (second emphasis added).

[42]. James, "Bergson," 577.

[43]. James, "Bergson," 573.

[44]. James, "Bergson," 569.

[45]. James, "Bergson," 569.

[46]. James, "Bergson," 569.

[47]. James, "Percept and Concept—Some Corollaries," in *Writings,* 256 (emphasis added).

[48]. James, "Percept," 256.

[49]. James, "Percept," 256.

[50]. James, "Blindness," in *Writings,* 642.

[51]. James, "Blindness," 640.

[52]. James, "Blindness," 642.

[53]. James, "Blindness," 642-43.

[54]. James, "What Makes a Life Significant," in *Writings,* 649.

[55]. Meg Holden, "Phenomenology versus Pragmatism: Seeking a Restoration Environmental Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 22, no. 1 (2001): 40.

[56]. Nancy M. Wells and Kristi S. Lekies, "Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences to Adult

Environmentalism," *Children, Youth and Environments* 16, no. 1 (2006): 13.

[57]. See Christian Diehm, *Connection to Nature, Deep Ecology, and Conservation Social Science: Human-Nature Bonding and Protecting the Natural World* (Lexington: Lanham, 2020).

[58]. Diehm.

[59]. James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *Writings,* 626.

[60]. National Coffee Association of the U.S.A., "National Coffee Data Trends 2025," accessed November 22, 2025, https://www.ncausa.org/Market-Research/National-Coffee-Data-Trends.

[61]. Brian Treanor, "Narrative and Nature: Appreciating and Understanding the Nonhuman World," in *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham, 2014).

[62]. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013); Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Mushrooms Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* (New York: Random House, 2020).

[63]. James, "The Moral Philosopher," 625-26.

[64]. James, "Philosophic Thinking," 486.

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E.E. SOUTHARD AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PRAGMATIST PSYCHIATRY[1]

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Psychiatry is so strongly identified with psychoanalysis that its alternative and pre-Freudian possibilities are often neglected. For example, William James's tremendous influence in psychology seems to have had no parallel in psychiatry. This is in part due to shifting disciplinary and institutional norms as psychology became an independent research field while psychiatry stayed closely tied to asylums and prisons. As concerns about mental health and hygiene supplanted fears of insanity in the broader society, new opportunities for an explicitly pragmatist psychiatry arose. A key figure here is Elmer Ernest Southard (1876–1920), who studied with James and Josiah Royce before going on to a distinguished career as a neuropathologist. In a variety of professional publications and presentations, Southard invokes James, Royce, and Charles Peirce as the intellectual font for his practice and research as the head of Boston Psychopathic Hospital. Unfortunately, Southard died prematurely, and his efforts to combine classical American pragmatism with psychiatry fell into obscurity.

ON THE ABSENCE OF PRAGMATISM IN PSYCHIATRY

In September 1909, at the invitation of G. Stanley Hall, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung came to the United States to lecture on psychoanalysis. Their lectures were part of the Clark Conference, which brought luminaries from across the sciences to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Clark University. Famously, William James also briefly attended, in part to meet Freud, who James then described as a *halluciné* (delusional) to Mary Calkins and "...a man obsessed with fixed ideas" to Théodore Flournoy.[2] This negative assessment appears in many investigations of pragmatism and psychoanalysis, but another element of James's resistance to Freud interests us here: Freud's condemnation of "...the American religious therapy (which has such extensive results)..."[3] As Rozenweig and others argue, here James refers to the Emmanuel Movement, which combined elements of faith healing, homeopathy, medical treatment, and psychotherapy; indeed, exactly the sort of treatment James was undergoing with James Ralph Taylor for his heart issues and neuroses. Freud dismissed this approach to treatment as appealing to the weakness of the public, "...at once construct[ing] a counter-image that in turn became an important psychoanalytic stereotype—psychoanalysis was austere and difficult, requiring extraordinary expertise but promising radical cure."[4] Thus, the conflict between James and Freud was not only about an *account* of the mind, *psychology*, but about the *treatment* of the mind, *psychiatry*.

Johann Christian Reil coined the term *psychiatry* in 1808, arguing for its status as one of three fundamental divisions in medicine, along with surgery and pharmacy. Indeed, "He warned philosophers (by which term he was mainly referring to the psychologists of his day) not to try to subsume mental illnesses into a form of philosophical psychology."[5] Of course, both Freud and James trained as MDs, and a broader investigation would have to include the professionalization and scientization of both medicine and psychology. For now, however, we can note that psychiatry only appears in James's *Principles of Psychology* a handful of times, in references to books by Emile Kraepelin and Theodore Meynart, Freud's teacher.[6] Similarly, in volume 13 of the *Works: Essays in Psychology*, 'psychiatry' does not even merit an index entry, despite

"healthy-mindedness" being a lifelong personal and professional concern.[7]

On the other hand, James's influence on psychiatry within his own lifetime also seems limited. For example, Otto Marx has reviewed the archives of the *American Journal of Insanity* and the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, and found very few, largely minor, references to James. Regarding the former, this is in part because "...the *Journal of Insanity* was the organ of an Association which, up to the nineties, limited membership to superintendents of asylums. Outpatient psychiatry, the treatment of neuroses, and forensic psychiatry were in this country predominantly in the hands of neurologists."[8] The neurologists had little use for James, either, even when publishing psychological, and, by 1910, even psychoanalytical, papers.

> We are left with the conspicuous absence of William James's name from the journals of neurology and psychiatry…James's pragmatic and pluralistic approach may have represented a threat rather than an aid to the psychiatrists and neurologists looking for a psychology which would reduce the complexity of the clinical data. James provided no ready answers; instead, he raised questions about all assumptions made in psychology and expressed great doubt that any one approach would suffice.[9]

In short, James's pragmatic pluralism was not seen as useful by practitioners, at least on the carceral and medical sides of mental health. James's absence from the *American Journal of Insanity* is ironic, as "According to the Harvard College Library Charging Records, James was an avid reader of the *American Journal of Insanity* in the 1880s and might have seen the first notice of Freud on a a psychological topic..."[10] We will return to irony at the end, as one of the times James does appear in the *American Journal of Insanity* is in 1919, as part of Elmer Southard's Presidential Address.

Of course, even with over 100 years of development in approaches, methods, and results, James's reputation among psychologists is assured. Among psychiatrists, James still appears

rarely, often only mentioned in debates about "pragmatism" in some sense. For example, Bradley Lewis argued in the mid aughts that George Engel, creator of the biopsychosocial model, fulfills the spirit of philosophical pragmatism: "At the most basic level, Engel resembles the pragmatist in that his core impulse is to heal divisive intellectual splits and conceptual dualisms."[11] David Brendel goes further, arguing

> ...philosophical pragmatism [is] the most compelling theoretical approach to clinical psychiatry in the twenty-first century—the approach that is most likely to empower the clinician and the patient to collaboratively develop a treatment plan that heeds the multidimensional complexity of the patient's life, recognizes the confusion and uncertainty that grows out of this complexity, and aims for a favorable therapeutic outcome.[12]

More commonly 'pragmatism' is often used in psychiatry to invoke not the rich philosophical tradition, but rather a general rejection of theoretical frameworks, which either offers a path forward, as with Moen's critique of evidence-based medicine and psychiatry, or is the reason for psychiatry's failure to advance for 50 years, as argued by Ghaemi.[13] Finally, and most recently, Looi, Bonner, and Maquire argue that while there is merit in a broad pragmatism in psychiatric care, a narrow pragmatism manifests as a technological solutionism, where treatment is driven by the existence of apps, drugs, or techniques, rather than the needs of patients: "...narrowly pragmatic solutionism sometimes creates a problem when none actually exists, merely because there is an app for its solution."[14]

A comprehensive account of pragmatism and psychiatry is impossible here, from either an historical or theoretical perspective. Nonetheless, I hope to offer some additional impetus for inquiry by looking at a psychiatrist explicitly indebted to pragmatism: Elmer Ernest Southard (1876-1920). My approach here is itself Peircean and pragmatic, in that I want to look at what some practitioners have found useful, rather than only philosophers speculating about practices. Furthermore, while there is notable work on pragmatism and psychoanalysis, especially by Vincent Colapietro and Eugene Taylor, both pragmatism and psychiatry are internally complex sets

of competing traditions, and so here we can only offer another entryway into these matters.

ELMER ERNEST SOUTHARD

Our practitioner is Elmer Ernest Southard, born in 1876 and died from pneumonia in 1920 with an already tremendous career at age 43. While largely forgotten, Southard was one of the most influential psychopathologists of his day, with appointments at Danvers State Hospital, Harvard University in both the Psychology Department and the Medical School, Boston Psychopathic Hospital, the Massachusetts State Board of Pathology, etc. For example, in 1913 as head of Boston Psychopathic Hospital, Southard worked to reorganize the Harvard Medical School faculty in Diseases of the Nervous System into a single department bringing together Neuropathology, Neurology, and Psychiatry, with clinical rotations at BPH as part of the curriculum.[15] Southard graduated from Harvard with a philosophy degree, studying with William James and Josiah Royce, as well as Hugo Munsterberg, before attending Harvard Medical School: "My real mental set was given me, I now think, by William James in his course (1896-1897) on abnormal psychology, and especially in a certain walk back from McLean Hospital (for mental disorder) after a class visit."[16] He was especially close to Royce and participated in the festschrift for Royce at the 1915 American Philosophical Association meeting, published in May 1916 in *The Philosophical Review*. There, before applying the methods he learned in Royce's seminary to the topic of delusions, Southard notes: "I well remember when my training with James and Royce was regarded as something as a disability: it was questioned whether a man with philosophical antecedents could do the work of an interne in pathology! Nowadays we have pretty well worked through that period to one of greater tolerance."[17]

Among his dozens of publications, we will note two books: *Shell Shock and Other Neuropsychiatric Problems Presented in Five Hundred and Eighty-Nine Cases Histories from the War Literature, 1914-1918* (1919), and *The Kingdom of Evils: Psychiatric Social Work Presented in 100 Case Histories, Together with a Classification of Social Divisions of Evil* (1922). The former is significant for Southard's intervention into the debates over whether

"shell-shock" was a mental or neurological disorder. In a trope, coined by Southard in 1910 and still used to articulate debates during this period, the issue was whether psychopathology concerned "brain spots" or "mind twists."[18] Significantly, in an article on these hypotheses, Southard appeals to his participation in Royce's Seminary in his analysis. More broadly, regarding another distinction between functional and organic diseases, Southard asserts: "Such distinctions may be practical; I have even heard them termed pragmatic, although I doubt whether the true pragmatist could see much use in the distinction as drawn."[19] While the nuances of Southard's analysis are unnecessary for our current purpose, it is evidence that Southard was not the only practitioner bringing some concept of pragmatism into their practice.

Furthermore, his experience evaluating and treating veterans informed the other, posthumous, book on psychiatric social work: "A minor blessing of the war will be the incorporation of mental hygiene in general medical practice and in auxiliary fields of applied sociology, *e.g.*, medico-social work."[20] Southard's role in the development of social work, inspired by his close friendship with Josiah Royce and Richard and Ella Lyman Cabot, is an important part of the story of pragmatism's influence on mental health. His co-author, Mary C. Jarrett, led the graduate program in psychiatric social work at Smith College, founded in 1919 with Southard's input and support.[21] As with his roles at Boston Psychopathic Hospital, Harvard Medical School, etc., this broader story requires an historical and institutional analysis.[22] Here, however, we will focus on the conceptual, as articulated by Southard in his 1919 article "Applications of the Pragmatic Method to Psychiatry."

MAKING PSYCHIATRY (MORE) PRAGMATIC

"Applications of the Pragmatic Method to Psychiatry" began as an abstract, read before the Thirty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Association of American Physicians. Southard begins with several definitions and formulations of pragmatism, mostly drawn from James's lectures collected as *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* and Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*. He also invokes Peirce's "laboratory habit of mind" to immediately connect pragmatism to medicine.[23]

> That the pragmatic method, altogether aside from any philosophic implications, must have very important relations to medicine would nowadays be denied by no man. In fact, the whole attitude of the medical man to medicine would not suffer if it should receive the designation "pragmatic" …Pragmatism in medicine must have especially close relations with treatment and prognosis.[24]

From this assertion, Southard continues to apply pragmatic principles to seven problems in psychiatry:

1. Psychiatry and Clinical Neurology
2. The So-Called "Unity of Insanity"
3. Diagnosis by Orderly Exclusion
4. Neurosyphilis and General Paresis
5. Diagnostic Precession of "Focal" Versus "Symptomatic" Cases
6. Diagnostic Precession of Schizophrenic Versus Cyclothymic Cases
7. Placement of Involution-Melancholia

We will not detail all of Southard's applications here, especially as most of these involve his own, somewhat idiosyncratic, classification of mental diseases and appreciating his points would require a deeper excursus into post-World War debates on classification. However, it is important to see the breadth of pragmatic applications Southard attempts in this short talk and article.

Southard's first pragmatic intervention is illustrative: is psychiatry even a distinctive discipline, or is it only a misnamed neurology? Southard contends that psychiatry and neurology are indeed distinct pragmatic entities, at least for now. And what is the pragmatic difference that makes a difference? "The moment we trace and compare the respective consequences of these two ideas, we perceive that clinical neurology leads to quite a different effect upon the patient from that to be expected when psychiatry approaches him."[25] And any claim that clinical neurologists and

psychiatrists are really both neuropsychiatrists is "...simply a pious wish…"[26]

It is worth dwelling here a moment, as Southard will make a similar point in his pragmatic response to the question of the unity of insanity. Recall the "brain spot" and "mind twist" debate mentioned above. As a neuropathologist, trained to diagnosis via autopsy, Southard has often been cast as a brain spot person. That is, by his own account, Southard rejected psychophysical parallelism and interactionism, and yet brain spots and mind twists "...are in some sense and in the long run identical hypotheses."[27] Indeed, Southard declared a few years earlier that "...no single doctrine has, to my thinking, been so pernicious as the doctrine which proposes to separate mind and body before we know much about either."[28] However, Southard was not one to reduce mind twists to brain spots, despite his reputation. For example, he recounts his extensive experience with the variety of lesions and spots in schizophrenic brains. This variety, and thus lack of a clear pattern, leads him to suggest an analogy with kidneys in diabetes. Diabetes, characterized in part by excessive sugar in the urine, seems like a kidney disease. However, the kidney lesions of a diabetic are quite secondary to the source of the disease in the pancreas. From this analogy he suggests a general category of "intrinsically-normal-but-extrinsically-abnormal," and furthermore suggests the possibility that "...the brain in dementia praecox [schizophrenia] be intrinsically normal yet extrinsically abnormal, in the sense of producing delusions, catatonic excitement or stupor, or other characteristic symptoms whose genuine origin might conceivably lie entirely outside the nervous system."[29] As Abraham summarizes:

> Southard's somaticism was thus in many senses qualified: first, multi-disciplinary perspectives were need for proper psychiatric diagnosis and treatment, focus on structural bases of mental illness did not render invalid any functional approaches to etiology, and the relations between brain pathology (in many forms) and psychopathology was complex — straightforward lesions are not enough.[30]

We see here an echo of James's own complex understanding of mind-body interactions.[31] For example, in the *Principles* James asserts "The fact that the brain is the one immediate bodily condition of the mental operations is indeed so universally admitted nowadays that I need spend no more time in illustrating it, but will simply postulate it and pass on. The whole remainder of the book will be more or less a proof that the postulate was correct."[32] This is not to *reduce* the mental to the physical, at least in a mechanical sense, as James also maintains that minds pursue ends. A decade later, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James rejects a "medical materialism" that would reduce all religious experience to brain states as too simplistic and skeptical, even while maintaining the "...convenient hypothesis that the dependence of mental states upon bodily conditions must be thoroughgoing and complete."[33] However, as *all* mental states have a bodily origin, we should judge the pathological and the spiritual as pragmatists judge any idea: "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots."[34]

Thus, we can also see a Jamesian pragmatism in Southard's somaticism, one that "...unstiffens all our theories, limbers them up and sets each one at work."[35] But even Southard's pragmatic somaticism does not consider neuropathology and psychiatry to be one and the same, for a reason not yet emphasized: the *social* difference it makes on the patient as to which kind of practitioner assigns a diagnosis. The practical difference between brain spots and mind twists is in the training of doctors because that impacts how they approach and treat patients and their families.

The importance of the social in pragmatic psychiatry is clear in Southard's analysis of the "unity of insanity" debate. Does psychiatry, whether neuropathological or psychopatholical, study one thing, or many? The debate also concerns the connection between legal and medical definitions of "insanity," but as Southard sets that aside, so shall we.[36] Instead, he appeals to experience in a psychopathic hospital to contend that psychiatry concerns maybe 80 distinct entities of maybe a dozen classes, distinguished in part by their effect on the patient:

> The pragmatic question is, what difference does it make to the patient whether he is said to be affiliated with one or the

> other of these entities? I am not sure that I can prove that there is a different "conduct to be recommended" or different "experience to be expected" (to use James' phrases) for all of these eighty-odd entities. But I am entirely sure that it makes a great difference to the patient…as well as to the social unit in which he lives, whether we regard the patient as a victim of neurosyphilis or whether we regard him as a victim of alcoholic psychosis.[37]

Some obvious differences to the patient, and his social unit, are prognosis and treatment. This is especially so in an age before penicillin or antipsychotics. Indeed, in several places Southard argues that it is pragmatic to reserve the diagnosis of general paresis, an almost invariably fatal form of late-stage syphilis, until the patient proves resistant to treatment for 'mere' neurosyphilis. Furthermore, the pragmatic importance of distinguishing this form of delirium from that shows the importance of etiology: alcoholic psychosis is caused by imbibing a chemical, while neurosyphilis is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection which may also be congenitally transmitted. Thus, a victim of neurosyphilis with a family likely has a family with syphilis: "It would be an important addition to the technique of preventative medicine if the spouses and the children of all paretics were subjected to blood tests for their own individual interest and in the interest of the health of the community."[38] Southard pragmatic interest in the social units of his patients was not only epidemiological, however. This is clear from his investment in social work, especially psychiatric social work, as an essential component of medical treatment: "The medical and social aspects of out-patient treatment for nervous and mental disorders are so closely interwoven that they can hardly be discussed separately."[39]

In short, while a trained anatomist, Southard's pragmatism led him to promote a biopsychosocial model of mental health 60 years before George Engel's seminal paper criticizing the biomedical model of illness.[40] The remainder of Southard's article concerns a few more pragmatic nuances in his theory of what we would now call differential diagnosis.[41] Let us note one more, as it will bring us back to the social. Southard places focal brain disease diagnosis after drug disease diagnoses, such as alcoholism, but before bodily

diseases. He acknowledges this order might seem illogical, as bodily diseases should be addressed first as the broader category. Nonetheless, he appeals to practice over logic: "If a man has mental disease and if one has excluded the great groups of syphilis, feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, and alcoholism (with all their practical social implications), then one naturally desires to clear up other large brain aspects of the mental case."[42] Again, these practical social implications are both the likely sharing of illnesses among family members, and the impact of a particular members' illness on their social unit. Southard adds a different pragmatic caveat here: the 'logical' order of diagnosis could depend on the *institution* as well. His order is the pragmatic logic of psychopathic hospitals, but a general hospital could, even should, prioritize bodily diseases over brain diseases. There are at least two plausible reasons why the pragmatic rule might give different outcomes: 1) the experience and training of the doctors, nurses, and social workers involved in each kind of facility, and 2) the prioritization of symptoms by the patient choosing, or being assigned to, one kind of facility over another. As he writes the year before, "The academic question, whether one is an epileptic alcoholic or an alcoholic epileptic because a vividly practical question, when the pragmatic, that is to say, the therapeutic, question is raised."[43] Specifically, the therapeutic question is what kind of institution the physician would send the patient to. So much for the medical equivalent to whether the man goes around the squirrel or not. The important thing for Southard is not prescribing one specific order for all circumstances, but that there is a considered order at all, because "[it] makes a difference *to the patient* in 'conduct to be recommended' and 'experience to be expected' whether we approach him diagnostically in an orderly fashion" (emphasis added).[44]

Institutions change, and so with the pragmatic entities-for-now neurology and psychiatry, so to perhaps the distinction between clinics:

> As the horizons of medicine widen, it is conceivable that the hospital of the future may be a social institution, administered by men of sociological-medical training. The community no doubt will more and more demand that the

> hospital treat the whole man, that the treatment of disease aim at complete social adjustment, and that the hospital go outside its walls to prevent disease.[45]

A TRAJECTORY CUT SHORT

Southard's unique training in medicine and philosophy, as well as multiple roles as educator, institutionalist, researcher, and practitioner, provided an opportunity for an explicitly pragmatist approach to mental health to propagate. In addition, Southard was deeply loyal to his teachers, James and Royce. Richard Cabot, in a letter to Southard's biographer Frederick Gay, emphasized this loyalty as illustrated by remarks Southard made a week before his death: "Now this was said in the present tense—'I *am* a pupil of William James,' despite the fact that Dr. Southard graduated (from college) in 1897, and had not studied with James for at least twenty-three years."[46] Indeed, Southard spent the decade of James and Royce's death turning the so-called "disability" of his philosophical training into a call for standards of care and practice in psychiatry. Unfortunately, the beginning of the next decade saw Southard's premature death, and his calls for a pragmatist psychiatry were lost in the enthusiasm for psychoanalysis.

In June of 1919 Southard gave a Presidential Address to the American Medico-Psychological Association, originally the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, and now known as the American Psychiatric Association. This organization published the *American Journal of Insanity*, whose studied neglect of William James opened this article.

As this meeting was the 75th anniversary of the society, Southard offers an extensive history of psychiatry as a discipline and within the broader culture, with his characteristic acumen. Significantly, for us, Southard also opens his address by acknowledging how his presidency says something about the shifting nature of the association:

> I still contemplate with astonishment my election to the office of president in your association. I was deeply touched by the honor. Not a hospital superintendent...I could in no sense represent the initial thoughts or inborn habitudes of the

> Original Thirteen or of their successors for many a year...I am pleased to think, therefore, of my choice as a bit of an index of the remarkable and still rising democracy of our institutions, which has not been so much forced as fostered by the great advances in medical technique and the increasing complexity of total problems in the institutions which our association still largely stands for.[47]

Southard places Emerson, Peirce, James, and Royce among psychiatrists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Issac Ray not only as illustrations of the *zeitgeist*, but as contributors to the development of mental health, or hygiene:

> Then I think of the laying-down of the idea of pragmatism by Charles Peirce, the great and little known central figure of American thought. And then I think of the man William James who put pragmatism across the American scene, but added thereto what I may call *the psychiatric touch* and really typifies all that is best in American thought. Emerson, Peirce, James—these are three American names to conjure by, and they are deeply responsible for the spiritual, the logical, and the practical factors in the whole of mental hygiene.[48]

In this, the last year of his life, Southard sketched an ambitious publication plan, including half a dozen books. Of these, one more missed opportunity deserves special notice from philosophers. In a letter written to Gay while he was dying of pneumonia, Southard asserts:

> What interests me most is a proposition to edit the works and Mss. of Charles Peirce…Royce worked on them somewhat before he died and thought there might be three volumes of works. I feel that my own intellectual life is going to be made over by the work. I think I shall know whether pragmatism is so by the time I am through.[49]

This letter was dated February 5th, and Southard died of complications from pneumonia on February 8th. With Southard's death, the *Collected Papers* were not published until 1931-1935.[50] Furthermore, earlier that week on February 3rd, Southard presented "Pragmatic Psychiatry" before the New York Neurological Society, and the following night before the Mental Hygiene Association. While we do not know the content of those talks, and thus whether it advanced the arguments and positions made in "Applications of the Pragmatic Method to Psychiatry," it is further evidence of Southard's commitment to making psychiatry more pragmatic. What difference might he have made, to philosophy and psychiatry, had he lived?

NOTES

[1] Thank you to two anonymous reviewers for their detailed and thoughtful comments.

[2] Saul Rozenweig, *Freud, Jung, and Hall the King-maker* (Rana House Press, 1992), 174.

[3] Rozenweig, *Freud, Jung, and Hall the King-maker*, 174.

[4] Nathan Hale, *Freud and the Americans* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 226.

[5] Andreas Marneros, "Psychiatry's 200th Birthday," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 193, no. 1 (2018): 1-2, https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.108.051367. Include date accessed.

[6] William James, *Works,* Volume 10, 1719.

[7] Among others, see John Kaag, *Sick Souls, Healthy Minds* (Princeton University Press, 2020) and Tadd Ruetenik, "Fruits of Health; Roots of Despair," and Richard Shusterman, "William James, Somatic Introspection, and Care of the Self."

[8] Otto Marx, "American Psychiatry without William James." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 42 no. 1 (1968), 58

[9] Marx, "American Psychiatry," 61

[10] Eugene Taylor, "William James and Sigmund Freud: 'The Future of Psychology Belongs to Your Work,'" *Psychological Science* 10, no. 6 (1999): 465-466. See also Colapietro, "Pragmatism and Psychoanalysis." While Southard undoubtedly learned Freud through James, and was well-versed in early

psychoanalysis as a practicing psychiatrist, his only sustained engagement with Freud is philosophical and political. Specifically, in "Sigmund Freud, Pessimist," Southard classifies Freud as a Minor Pessimist alongside von Hartmann and Nietzsche, in contrast to Major Pessimists such as Schopenhauer.

[11] Bradley Lewis. "The Biopsychosocial Model and Philosophic Pragmatism: Is George Engel a Pragmatist?" Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology 14, no. 4 (2007), 300. https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.0.0142 300. Include date accessed

[12] David H. Brendel. "Beyond Engel: Clinical Pragmatism as the Foundation of Psychiatric Practice." *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 14, no. 4 (2008), 311. https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.0.0145. Include date accessed. See also Brendel 2004.

[13] For example, https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/rise-and-fall-pragmatism-psychiatry

[14] Jeffrey Looi et al. Looi, Jeffrey C.L., Daniel Bonner, and Paul Maguire. "Maslow's Hammer: Considering the Perils of Solutionism in Mental Healthcare and Psychiatric Practice." A*ustralian Psychiatry* 29, no. 6, 689. https://doi.org/10.1177/10398562211005438689. Include date accessed

[15] Tara H. Abraham. "Psychiatry in American Medical Education: The Case of Harvard's Medical School, 1900–1945." *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 35, no. 1 (2018), 12-13.

[16] In Frederick P. Gay. *The Open Mind: Elmer Ernest Southard, 1876–1920*. Normandie House, 1938, 43. The textbook for that course was *Pathology of the Mind*, probably the 1879 edition, by British psychiatrist Henry Maudsley, namesake of Maudsley Hospital; see Gay, *The Open Mind*, 47.

[17] E.E. Southard, Southard, E.E. "On the Application of Grammatical Categories to the Analysis of Delusions." *The Philosophical Review* XXV, no. 3 (1916), 425. The pejorative use of "disability," even if directed to Southard by his medical colleagues, is additionally problematic due to his active participation in the eugenics movement. For example, he served on the Board of Scientific Directors of the Eugenics Records Office starting in 1913 as announced by the American Association for the

Advancement of Science (see also Allen 1986, 238). The following year he gave the Presidential Address at the American Breeders' Association, entitled "Eugenics vs. Cacogenics."

[18] E.E. Southard, "The Mind Twist and Brain Spot Hypotheses in Psychopathology and Neuropathology." The Psychological Bulletin XI, no. 4 (1914), 117. See also Tara Abraham, Abraham, Tara H. "Between the Mind Twist and the Brain Spot: The Materialist Dimensions of Psychopathology in the Work of Elmer Ernest Southard." *Nuncius* 32 (2017), 261–285.

[19] Southard 1914, "Mind Twist and Brain Spot," 118-119.

[20] E.E. Southard, *Shell-Shock and Other Neuropsychiatric Problems Presented in Five Hundred and Eighty-Nine Case Histories from the War Literature, 1914–1918*. W.M. Leonard, 1919, iv.

[21] See Lois M. French, *Psychiatric Social Work.*, E.L. Hildreth & Company, 1940, 40; Joseph M. Gabriel "Mass-Producing the Individual: Mary C. Jarrett, Elmer E. Southard, and the Industrial Origins of Psychiatric Social Work." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 75, no. 3 (2005), 441; and Mathew D. Bessette, "'Nervous Diseases'" and the Politics of Healing: William James, Josiah Royce, and the Early Dynamic Psychiatry Movement in America," *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 1,41, fn. 111.

[22] See Nathan, "The Psychopathic Hospital," for one survey of institutional histories. He concludes " The psychopathic hospitals are important for several reasons. They developed the template for

contemporary psychiatric practice. They constitute an important part of psychiatry's turn away

from the asylums, thus setting the stage for deinstitutionalization. They shifted and enlarged the

scope of psychiatric care. They served an important integrative function, combining inpatient and

outpatient treatment models, and joining biological and psychosocial perspectives" (Nathan 2023, 431).

[23] See *CP* 5.411, from 1905's "What Pragmatism Is," for one example: "The writer of this article has been led by much experience to believe that every physicist, and every chemist, and, in short, every master in any department of experimental science, has had his mind moulded by his life in the laboratory to a degree that is little suspected."

[24] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 139.

[25] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 140.

[26] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 140.

[27] Southard, "Mind Twist and Brain Spot," 118.

[28] E.E. Southard, E.E, "Psychopathology and Neuropathology: The Problems of Teaching and Research Contrasted," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 23 (1912), 232. It is worth noting that Southard broader project in this talk is to defend the pathological method of research, invoking the authority of William James on the importance of exaggerations and perversions from *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

[29] Southard, "Mind Twist and Brain Spot," 122.

[30] Abraham, "Between the Mind Twist and Brain Spot," 282.

[31] See W.E. Cooper, "William James's Theory of Mind," for one systematic account of philosophical interpretations of James on this issue. See Stephanie Hawkins, "William James, Gustav Fechner, and Early Psychophysics" for an account focusing on James's relationship with psychologists.

[32] *W* 8, 18

[33] *W* 15, 20. See also Taylor, "A Perfect Correlation Between Mind and Brain."

[34] *W* 15, 25.

[35] W 1: 32. For one effort to connect James's psychology and pragmatism, see Brunson, "Pragmatism and Neurodiversity."

[36] Southard names Charles Mercier as an example of the approach; see his 1890 *Sanity and Insanity*.

[37] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 141.

[38] E.E. Southard, and Mary C. Jarrett, *The Kingdom of Evils: Psychiatric Social Work Presented in One Hundred Case Histories Together with a Classification of Social Divisions of Evil*, The Macmillan Company, 1922, 459.

[39] Southard and Jarrett, *Kingdom of Evils*, 524.

[40] In a 2017 retrospective on Engel's paper, Wade and Harrigan note that Engel was not the first to highlight the limitations of the biomedical model, citing Adolf Meyer's 1917 "Progress in Teaching Psychiatry." Derick T. and Peter W. Halligan, "The Biopsychosocial Model of Illness: A Model Whose Time Has Come," *Clinical Rehabilitation* 31 no 8 (2017), 995–1004.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0269215517709890. Include date accessed. Coincidentally, but not surprisingly, Meyer was deeply influenced by John Dewey's pragmatism — see Vincent Colapietro, "John Dewey and Adolf Meyer on a Psychobiological Approach: Conflict, Tragedy, and Survivance," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* XC–2 (2023). https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.3523 Include date accessed

[41] See E.E. Southard, "*Diagnosis per Exclusionem in Ordine*: General and Psychiatric Remarks." *Transactions of the Association of American Physicians* XXXIII (1918), 267–301.

[42] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 143.

[43] Southard, "*Diagnosis per Exclusionem in Ordine,*" 298.

[44] Southard, "Pragmatic Method," 142.

[45] Southard and Jarrett, *Kingdom of Evils*, 524.

[46] Gay, *The Open Mind*, 57-58.

[47] Southard, "Cross-Sections of Mental Hygiene," 91.

[48] Southard, "Cross-Section of Mental Hygiene," 110. Emphasis in original.

[49] Gay, *The Open Mind*, 286.

[50] See Houser, "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Peirce Papers."

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Review of Wayne Viney, *William James's Pluralism: An Antidote for Contemporary Extremism and Absolutism* New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2022. 134pp. ISBN 9781032228464. $53.49.

Making full use of his many years teaching psychology and researching William James, Wayne Viney provides a brief and well informed volume on James's *Pluralism*. The emeritus professor at Colorado State University strongly endorses the "beloved American psychologist and philosopher" (viii) for his recognition of the diverse and ever-changing qualities of the world. Both James (1842-1910) and Viney add their adamant critique of the contrast to pluralism, namely monism, as it appears in both the absolutes of theory and in political extremes.

The book exhibits a version of a classic tension. Should pluralism acknowledge the legitimacy of views that are not pluralistic? Doing so maintains theoretical fidelity to pluralism, with its openness to all views, even as that can strengthen monist positions. Those supporters of single grounds for truth are not likely to reciprocate with respect for pluralism, which they dismiss for paying too much attention to the unimportant "litter" of diverse facts compared to "pure and definite" single truths, as James points out (92). By contrast, not acknowledging monism boosts pluralist positions, but leaves monists alienated and ready to dismiss pluralist views. In short, this stance encourages polarization, with each cluster of thinkers rallying to its own worldview and encouraging opposition against the other side.

Challenges with monism and pluralism abound. Such difficult positions are fodder for good philosophical inquiry, albeit also for

abundant cultural tensions. This is why James called the question of "the One and the Many … the most central of all philosophic problems, central because so pregnant" (PU, 64). Viney wades into these challenges and has produced a book with two souls. He offers "critical scrutiny of all methods," pluralist and monist, but devotes more energy to promoting pluralism against monism (45).

JAMES SCRUTINIZING BOTH MONISM AND PLURALISM

When facing sharp philosophic disagreements, James had an impulse to respect "the good things on both sides of the line," as he said late in life (Prg, 14). In his youth, he even said "nothing is true unless with the admission that its opposite is also true" (CWJ, 4:475). At that point, he was torn between contrasting intellectual positions pulling him toward religious and scientific outlooks and toward idealistic and empirical ways of thinking. This was part of his early crises which also included the burdens of ill health, uncertainties about his career, uneasiness about his relations with his family, especially his forceful father, and even doubts about his prospects for marriage. He never fully solved his troubles but turned them to constructive purposes by resolving to make decisions - despite his deep ambivalence - by wading into those uncertainties to learn what he could about the poles of his dilemmas and by making decisive choices despite feeling uncertain.[1] That is the context for his well known resolution to let his "first act of free will … be to believe in free will" ([Diary 1], Ap[ri]l 30, [18]70, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, [82]). This intellectual posture would lead to his "decisive ambivalence," a way of acting and thinking that would serve as a template for many of his personal decisions and a framework for most of his theories.[2] In particular, he hesitated strongly for two years about his attraction to Alice Gibbens before they married in 1878; at age twenty five, he was unclear about "the ontological window" through which his father developed his spiritual philosophy, and by age sixty he was respectfully studying such perspectives as subliminal encounters with "the more" at the "mystical window" to the religious "universe outside" of us; and most of his theories include deep reckoning with sharp contrasts, including empiricism and idealism, doubt and belief, a fighting faith and a comforting faith, philosophies based on

objective and subjective experiences, and "tough-minded" and "tender-minded … mental make-ups." (to Henry James [Senior], Sept[ember] 5, [18]67, CWJ, 4:195; VRE, 339 and 400; and Prg, 13).

In one of his first professional writings, "The Sentiment of Rationality" (1879), James identifies psychological sources for people's attractions to different worldviews. Sentiments, based on traditions, feelings, and esthetic attractions, point each thinker toward "a conception of the frame of things," which then grows elaborately into the rational philosophies or ideologies where that person feels most "at home." His examples anticipate his later accounts of monism and pluralism: the impulse for "reducing the manifold … to simple form," suggests an "essence of things" supporting belief in "the underlying One"; other people, however, feel a "passion for distinguishing" with "impulse to be acquainted with the parts" of experience supporting recognition of plural "particulars in their full completeness" (EPh, 32, 33, 35-36, and 37-38). At this point, when James was just embarking on a career in the new field of psychology, he showed most interest in "the motives which prompt men to philosophic activity," even as he revealed impatience with the "illusory simplification" of what he would call monism and its "monstrous abridgment" of so much "real matter" (EPh, 360, 54, 55). And with shades of his father's spirituality and in anticipation of his later religious thought, James found both outlooks limited because "of experience as a whole[,] no account can be given." For tangible experience, always evading our theories, he was content with "ontological wonder" about the "mysterious … essential attribute of the nature of things." (EPh, 62 and 63).

Embarking on his career in psychology, philosophy, and religious thought, while chastened by his humility about the ability for theories to grasp the "muchness" of experience, James explained the role of monism and pluralism for gaining understanding of the world (SPP, 32). In *Pragmatism*, James scrutinizes these orientations, first with "curiosity" because this philosophical contrast presents a "classification with the maximum number of consequences" for ranges of thoughts and choices (Prg, 65 and 64). Then he gives the case for monism a fair hearing about its proposals that "the world is … one subject of discourse," with "parts … hang[ing] together" as shaped by their "first lines of influence"; and

to the monist, "all things without exception eventually could be subsumed" to a common source, and they operate with "unity of purpose," and are expressed in "one story" and are understood by "one Knower" (Prg, 66-71). He breaks with his patient delivery about views that "the world is one" to say that he finds it "impossible … to represent" their points clearly, and he even offers a joshing critique of monism by impatiently wondering "why is 'one'" more excellent than 'forty-three,' or than 'two million and ten'?" (Prg, 65, 74 and 65). Still, remembering his evaluation of diverse temperaments, he recognizes "the authority" that monism "always will possess over some persons" (Prg, 74).

Viney tacitly recognizes James's "Sentiment of Rationality" in observing that "beliefs … serve hedonic functions" (54). While James's purpose is the presentation of a "psychology of philosophizing," with different sentiments shaping each rational commitment across the philosophical spectrum (EPh, 359), Viney presents his observation as a critique about how the "words of politicians or religious leaders often carry more weight on scientific matters than the words of scientists" themselves. For those endorsing such ideologies, he continues, "loyalties to a system are often inversely related to the rationality of the structures on which the system is based" (54). James evaluates sentiments and rationality in relation; Viney laments their mixture.

Viney also includes some positive references to monism. This philosophy presents "how things … hang together," offering clarity and unity when thoughts are confusing (1 and 10). And its message of ultimate unification addresses the "sadness, brokenness, meaninglessness, and fragmentation encountered in the world of experience," then offers genuine "solace for" the resulting "dislocation and homelessness" (2 and 9). In short, Viney's support for monism focuses on its appeal rather than its truth to experience. He draws upon James's terms to refer to the "universe" about the "connections" and hoped for "unities," and to the "multiverse to emphasize the manyness of things" (6). His view is also a reminder of James's approach to religious belief in "The Will to Believe" where he offers "a defense of our right to adopt a believing attitude," with Viney defending the appeal of an attitude philosophic, because in each case, "insight and logic… are not the only things that really do produce our creeds" (WB, 13, 20). Viney also resembles James

with both showing impatience about those who "follow faith unreasoningly" (WB, 7).

DIVERSE ENDORSEMENTS OF PLURALISM BY VINEY AND JAMES

Wayne Viney critiques monistic philosophies vociferously. Their outlooks are "comforting but misleading," with "audacious simplistic claims" about any "single avenue to truth" (ix). His coverage includes dismissal of moral monisms; monisms guided by the methods of religion, science, and political ideology; single causal explanations; and monisms based on matter or on ideals, with each claiming the other can be reduced to its chosen "singular reality" (76). He points to the irony of such a diversity of monisms. The belief in singular sources of truth does not extend to agreement about which source to privilege. And with "monistic philosophies" steering people to believe "what to count and what not to count," they encourage confirmation bias with prior ideas shaping conclusions based on what James calls the power of selective attention to "lay … its weighty index finger on particular items of experience" (PPS, 381). For all the shortcomings of absolutist monism, James was willing to accept a "belief in the Absolute" as a "moral holiday" when facing "metaphysical paradoxes" or "intellectual inconsistencies" (Prg, 43). In effect, that is a way to describe his "will to believe" in views beyond logic but presenting "genuine options … of the forced, living, and momentous kind" (WB, 14).[3]

While praising pluralist recognition of diversity encouraging embrace of "genuine novelty," Viney extends his critiques of monism to its cultural and political manifestations (5). With each focus on "a single story," these philosophies encourage "stereotypes" about ideas and people. He goes further, calling them "lies and distortions" based on "submission" to authority, even "cult-like … obedience" (6 and 95). With their absolutism, monistic philosophies point to the "monstrous foreignness and toxicity" of differences, and they encourage their supporters to "anger and violence when their beliefs are challenged" (31 and 29).[4] There is considerable evidence for this throughline from monism's theoretical absolutism to cultural and political extremism. Viney presents many examples about three pressing moral issues: abortion,

birth control, and death with dignity. In each case, he endorses pluralism for providing "acquaintance [with] … the multiple experiential and existential dimensions" of the particular people coping with these challenges (33). He argues that monists, by contrast, offer "a decorous simplicity," and he resents their charge that pluralism promotes a "culture of death" for ending the life of the fetus, as with the case of abortion (43). Viney critiques this "thin and brittle" charge emerging from abortion "taken as a singularity." Instead, he evaluates abortion in what he calls the "thickness of experience," with this choice "as a convenience" or because of "an ectopic pregnancy" threatening the life of the mother, and many other reasons based on "deeply personal decisions by women and their families" (31, 32, and 38). Viney argues that monists overlook the nuances of experience with focus on a simple but abstract question, life or death?

With polarization surrounding these and other culturally fraught issues dividing liberals and conservatives, the charges of both Viney and the monists add to the conflict and the resulting gridlock, despite his "hope [for] moderation on all sides" (32). In addition, with Viney choosing one side in these moral debates, there is little room for identifying or responding to what idealist philosophers have called the pluralist sources of extremist politics. Conservatives enlist this argument to accuse liberals of replacing moral absolutes with a diversity of views, which they claim encourages strong leaders to seize power without humane standards.[5] The monist association of pluralism with theoretical and practical relativism is not fully fair but this thinking is part of the plurality of human orientations to the world. James's approach to pluralism with scrutiny of both pluralism and monism, for all of the shortcomings of his openness, would reckon with these contrasting arguments. James supports his scrutiny of both views by enlisting his observations about the temperamental bases for differing views and about people's selective attention to different parts of experience. These perspectives offer potential for listening across the differences for evaluation of each for its resources and scrutiny of both for their potential shortcomings—not for solutions but for perhaps some of James's "meliorism," with improvements and even persuasion through learning across the polarized tensions (Prg, 137).[6] Viney, however, makes a different choice, with endorsement of pluralism

against monism, which offers potential to rally fellow advocates for pluralist theories and practices. Their contrast points to two paths for addressing disagreement in times of conflict like our own, persuasion to widen support for one's views and advocacy to strengthen the supporters of those views.

Part of Viney's choice is based on his endorsement of modernist culture. He portrays the past as "ages of abysmal scientific ignorance" lacking "the comprehensive reach required in modern theoretical or technical discourse" (47-48). Based on this view of progress with the present as a pinnacle of human civilization, he highlights real achievements, including "pluralism … consistent with the growth of multiculturalism" enabling people of different races and genders to achieve increased cultural freedom (89). He also praises the "values of viewpoint diversity," which suggests some sympathy for James's observations about the temperamental bases for differing views, even with pluralism versus monism. The modern world has also brought material benefits for sophisticated development and mass consumption of goods and services previously undreamed of, even as these achievements, fueled by scientific and technical insights, have brought massive side effects, especially with environmental damage and increased social inequality. James was concerned about a "future … when science has become so difficult as to be quite inaccessible to the mass of vulgarians and is … possessed of unlimited control of natural forces, by means of terrible machines, which … will keep the world in order by mere terror" (ECR, 329). Viney does not mention these prospective side effects of progress, and he tacitly supports a Darwinian view of modern achievements because "what clearly doesn't work cannot be conserved" (24).

Even with his enthusiasm for science, Viney qualifies his "respect and appreciation" with critique of the view that these successful methods of laboratory and field offer "the exclusive pathway to knowledge" (49). He credits other ways to gain "objective verifiable knowledge about many things" without reliance on science, including "spatial intelligence,… introspective … and linguistic knowledge," and even animal "knowledge tied to sensory capacities that humans do not have" (50). This coincides with James's own respect for the different experiences of diverse people, each "one in a million" beyond monistic abstractions and

stereotypes, and he also recognizes thinking in non-human animals: "How different must be the worlds in the consciousness of ant, cuttle-fish, or crab!" (PPS, 277). Viney continues his critique of scientific overreach in citing more variations that emerge from "differences of opinion about what science is" and from "the proliferation of new instruments and new methodologies … within contemporary science." These parts of his views of science as "increasingly pluralistic" support the book's general endorsement of the reality of the world's multiplicity (50). Like James, Viney supports the methods of scientific inquiry. But James held out skepticism about the results of research investigations, wondering early in his career about how "our formulas indicate a truth but do not reveal it," before later insisting that "theories … become instruments, not answers to enigmas" (MEN, 176; and Prg, 32). Instead, Viney maintains confidence in those results from "the salutary interventions of science," especially to surpass many non-scientific claims from religion and politics (Viney, 52). For Viney, science is not "omni-competent," but rather is a guide for modern thinking, providing the substance of professional and liberal views about cultural orientations and moral choices.

Viney's own philosophic orientation is akin to the views of Donald Crosby as expressed in *The Philosophy of William James: Radical Empiricism and Radical Materialism* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2013). When critiquing the most insistent tendencies for materialism and idealism to adopt monist versions of their views, Viney steps back from his dismissals of these reductionist theories to suggest the plausibility of "emergent materialism" for depicting that "mind arises from matter." This is a view still committed to the materialist type of monism but with recognition of "heterogeneously variable matter" understood to contain pluralist multitudes: "vast unplumbed curiosities and mysteries, … beneficent beauties and continuing adaptations" (78-79). These monist leanings in Viney are pluralist. Then, with all of his hearty dismissal of monism – with focus on other expressions on monism – Viney still harbors some of James's own impulses for scrutinizing both monism and pluralism to reap insights deeper than one perspective alone.

AMBIVALENCE, INQUIRY, AND DEBATE

Viney's book reminds readers that James himself is inconsistent about pluralism. At times, James supports its openness to all views, including monism, but in other places, he endorses pluralism in contrast with monism. His two ways of thinking about pluralism reflect his embrace of ambivalence to enable learning from different views, even contrasting ones. And James's inconsistencies reflect his unblinking engagement with experience in all its robust richness beyond words and theories, even as he was persuaded that pluralism comes closer to faithful descriptions of those rich experiences than do other theories. Viney offers some endorsement of these Jamesian thoughts in his recognition that some monistic accounts of "regularities and practices… work well" (53). That does not make monism a candidate for accurate accounts of reality, but it does offer a way to accept a kind of pragmatic monism, useful for many purposes by pointing to "workable connections" within the pluralism of experience (3).

Viney's fine study of "James' pluralism" is at once a short primer on the pragmatist's own avid curiosity about the richness and depths of contrasting views over monism and pluralism, and an account of James's endorsement of the diverse realities of experience—and a testimony about Viney's own similar preferences for those leanings in James. In making his case for the truth of pluralist approaches to reality and morality, Viney tacitly uses James's own psychology with his insights about the capacity for selective attention to shape each person's own experience based on what they "agree to attend to" (PPS, 380). Viney's own preferences include special attention to James's anti-monistic endorsements of pluralism, with less attention to James's own openness to some monistic position, which he evaluated "not by their [monistic] origin but by the value of their fruits" in lived practice (VRE, 7). With that, this is a sound scholarly book that veers into serving as a personal account displaying its own "difference … of emphasis" (Prg, 12). With William James's own recognition that philosophical inquiry embodies a sea of contrasting "human temperaments," he would not object (Prg, 11).

ABBREVIATIONS, with original appearance and publication dates in square brackets:

CWJ	*The Correspondence of William James*, 12 vols., Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley, et al., eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992–2004). Volumes in *The Works of William James*, 19 vols., Frederick Burkhardt, et al., eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975–88).
ECR	*Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, 1987.
EPh	*Essays in Philosophy*, 1978.
MEN	*Manuscript Essays and Notes*, 1988.
PPS	*The Principles of Psychology*, 3 vols., 1981 [2 vols., 1890].
Prg	*Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1975 [1907].
PU	*A Pluralistic Universe*, 1977 [Hibbert Lectures on the Present Situation in Philosophy, 1908; 1909].
SPP	*Some Problems of Philosophy*, 1979 [1911].
VRE	*The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, 1985 [Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, 1901–2; 1902].
WB	*The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 1979 [1897]

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NOTES

[1] See, for example, Paul Croce, "WWJD: Would William James Doubt?" *Streams of William James* 3 (Fall 2001): 15-16.

[2] For explanations about James's "decisive ambivalence," see Paul Croce, *Young William James Thinking* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 26, 245, and 270.

[3] Viney disagrees; he refers to "James's rejection of … moral holidays" because, as he explains in the context of religious beliefs beyond logic, James could not "rely on the adequacy of some ancient doctrine" to explain "a current technical or theoretical problem" (98 and 102). Viney's position seems to be based on his confidence in scientific insights.

[4] Although written in a different style from Viney's "nontechnical" book (i), Roberto Frega's *Practice, Judgment, and the Challenge of Moral and Political Disagreement, A Pragmatist Account* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012) also applies pragmatist thinking to address deep values differences in theory and practice. While Viney endorses pluralist responses, Frega suggests first "seriously engaging with the beliefs held by others" even with their "variety of normative practices" to understand "what it means to be rational in different areas of moral and political practice" (5, 8, 13). Without these efforts, Frega suggests, "the claim to validity of one's own belief would be no more than a subjective and irrational effort at making one's own way dominate" (84). This describes the paradoxical but often politically effective charge by conservatives that liberal pluralists are intolerant of monistic moral and religious views. Therefore, "in cases of controversies that divide the public sphere into competing and contrasting visions," Frega proposes, not endorsement of a particular outlook, but use of the method of inquiry for rational deliberation about those differing visions and about the resulting differing views about issues (98). Yet Frega also displays confidence that those inquiries will result in positions "that are revisable" and "with reference to the[ir] consequences," outlooks similar to Viney's pluralism (99).

[5] Edward Purcell, Jr., *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), examines the competition between absolutist and relativist thinking in the middle of the twentieth century, with the former charging that relativist lack of

standards encouraged totalitarian strongmen and the latter charging that those dictators ruled with political absolutism.

[6] Paul Croce, in "Learning Across Differences," Episode 1 of "Healing Our Cultural Wounds" (Public Classroom, 2025), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IT40KWVP-0&t=813s, accessed January 24,2026, explores use of James's ideas to encourage listening across differences.

RELATED SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS ON WILLIAM JAMES

Spring 2025 - Fall 2025

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.

Bui, Dung Xuan. "William James's Pragmatism Unleashed: Igniting Modern Education with Dynamic, Student-Driven Innovation," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 22, no. 2 (2025): 209-227.

William James's pragmatic educational philosophy, emphasizing practicality, experiential learning, and personalization, offers a transformative framework for modern education, particularly relevant in Vietnam's shift from theory-centric to practice-oriented systems. This study is driven by the need to address Vietnam's educational challenges, where overemphasizing rote learning limits stem innovation and global competitiveness. James's philosophy, rooted in his evolutionary and psychological insights, prioritizes real-world application, as he stated, the teacher's art is to connect the pupil's mind with the world's living realities. The research highlights James's unique focus on individual agency using historical and comparative analysis and social pragmatism. Results suggest that integrating James's experiential methods, such as hands-on stem projects and personalized learning, can enhance student engagement and creativity, fostering skills critical for a stem-driven education in Vietnam.

Craig, Megan. "Hearing Voices in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2025): 190-203.

This article considers the role of testimony in William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in order to highlight the unique style and structure of the text and its effect on readers. Understanding *Varieties* as a performative, multivocal, creative experiment in pedagogy and teaching puts the book in conversation with more contemporary theorists of liberatory education including Paulo Freire and bell hooks.

Crippen, Matthew. "William James and the Pragmatics of Faith: Bridging Science, Religion and Global Indigenous

Epistemologies," *Religions* 16, no. 9 (2025): 1116. doi: 10.3390/rel16091116.

This article examines William James's philosophy of science through his pragmatic response to epistemic fallibilism, emphasizing how actionability rather than evidential certainty underwrites both scientific and religious practices. While James explicitly drew comparisons between science and Abrahamic scriptures, my account highlights resonances with non-Western traditions, particularly Indigenous American and Asian epistemologies, also situating some of James's philosophical motivations within his biography. James may have indirectly absorbed Asian religious and philosophical teachings from American Transcendentalists who engaged with them, and he may have encountered Amerindian perspectives through the cultural milieu of the United States or during his Amazonian expedition. In either case, threads within these global Indigenous traditions align with the weight that James's work gives to contextual, agent-relative forms of knowing that are inseparable from action. I conclude by discussing how James's ideas support an account of animism that integrates Amerindian thought with the extended mind thesis. I also detail how his pluralistic account of experience and reality creates conceptual space for the co-existence of science and spirituality, ironically by undermining the assumption that the two operate according to radically distinct epistemologies. Throughout the article, I connect James's thought to more recent debates in religion and metaphysics.

Ni, Yifeng and Ning Liu. "Bridging the theory-practice divide in public administration: Wang Yangming and William James," *Public Policy and Administration* 40, no. 3 (2025): 452-476. doi: 10.1177/09520767251315504.

Public administration (PA) is a practical discipline that faces persistent challenges in establishing effective connections between researchers and practitioners. This divide between

theory and practice hinders practitioners' use of research findings and the integration of practical experiences into scholarly work. Bridging this divide holds practical significance and leads to a deeper understanding of PA's disciplinary identity as more than just a form of science. This paper brings together the philosophies of Western thinker William James and ancient Eastern philosopher Wang Yangming, promoting a virtuous pragmatic approach to bridge the theory–practice divide in PA. This approach offers a teleological and embodied perspective on knowledge, providing a nuanced framework for understanding the theory–practice divide. By drawing on Wang's coherent virtue–ethical framework and James' embodiment and pragmatic philosophy, this paper argues that unifying theory and practice requires establishing a common purpose that is perceptually familiar to both parties. Moreover, shaping and acting on this purpose inherently involves cultivating the virtues of Cheng (Sincerity, 诚) and Ren (Benevolence, 仁). Grounded in the virtuous pragmatic approach, we introduce a three–stage research praxis framework to guide the research process and encourage practitioner engagement in existing research endeavors. This study serves as a valuable contribution to bridging the theory–practice divide in PA and advancing pragmatic PA studies in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts.

Hedlund, Nicholas. "Toward a Unified Science of Spiritual Experience—Visionary Realism and the Ontology of Interiority: Philosophical Commentary on Chatlos's Framework of Spirituality," *Zygon* 59, no. 4 (2024): 996-1012, doi: 10.16995/zygon.19049.

This article proposes visionary realism as a philosophical framework to underlabor for the development of a unified science of spiritual experience. By integrating elements of Roy Bhaskar's critical realism, Ken Wilber's integral theory, William James's radical empiricism, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's participatory epistemology, and Rudolf Steiner's

subtle empiricism, visionary realism outlines key ontological and epistemological challenges to studying interior realities such as consciousness, culture, and spirituality. Visionary realism critiques the reductionist tendencies of physicalism (scientific materialism) and the neo-Kantian conflation of subjectivity and interiority, reclaiming interiority as an emergent, ontologically real dimension of the natural world that, while epistemically relative and fallible, can, in principle, be understood objectively—namely, in an ontologically realist and transfactual manner. This article advances an expanded or integrative empiricism—radical, deep, and subtle—that integrates subjective, intersubjective, and objective methodologies to legitimize spiritual experience as a domain of rigorous scientific inquiry. It further explores the nested relationship between a science of interiority, a science of spiritual experience, and the emerging academic field of soul studies. This integrative framework seeks to bridge science, philosophy, and theology, offering transformative responses to the meaning crisis and the larger global metacrisis by fostering a secular spirituality capable of re-enchanting the disenchanted world.

Hughes, Derick. "Modesty's Inoffensive Self-Presentation," *Philosophical Psychology* 38, no. 6 (2025): 2570-2592.

Philosophers often characterize modesty as a disposition that primarily or exclusively involves individual attitudes about one's worth in relation to others. Borrowing from William James, I offer an interpersonal view of modesty that requires an emotional disposition sensitive to causing others offense based upon one's self-presentation. On this view, modesty is a trait with the following three necessary features: (1) the modest person, A, endorses a norm of self-presentation M, (2) A is justified in believing that another person, B, endorses M, and (3) A is emotionally disposed to avoid offending B by violating M. These conditions account for the variety of modesty norms about one's merits and

achievements, personal objects, and traditional modesty norms in dress and self-presentation.

Kien, Pham Thi and Bui Xuan Dung. , "william james's Pragmatism in Educational Theory: A Comprehensive Theoretical and Practical Analysis in Contemporary Educational Contexts," *Pragmatism Today* 16, no. 1 (2025): 133-144.

Kinlaw, Dennis. "Reading as Spiritual Experience: Theological, Affective, and Cognitive Approaches," *Religions* 16, no. 8: 987. doi: 10.3390/rel16080987.

This article explores the often-overlooked question of how literary reading might give rise to experiences that readers themselves identify as spiritual. Framed by William James's account of "mystical susceptibility" and recent psychological models of spirituality as altered states of consciousness involving shifts in perception, affect, and cognition, the essay asks how engagement with narrative may occasion such states. Drawing from selected examples and critical traditions, it examines the conditions under which reading becomes spiritually resonant. Theologically, the piece considers the formation of attentiveness and imaginative receptivity in writers such as Teresa of Avila and Jessica Hooten Wilson. From affect theory, it engages Rita Felski's language of enchantment; from cognitive studies, it draws on empirical approaches to literary studies and Tanya Luhrmann's work on absorption and the cultivation of spiritual perception. By drawing attention to absorption as a psychological and aesthetic phenomenon, this article suggests a renewed interdisciplinary approach—one that connects empirical studies of attention and transformation with older theological and affective insights. In this way, literature may be examined not as a site of doctrinal meaning or subjective feeling alone, but as a form of engagement capable of opening readers to spiritual insight whose impact might be measured through qualitative means.

Lane, Robert. "“The Arbitrament of the Big Battalions”: Russell’s Argument Linking James’s Account of Truth to Authoritarian Violence," *Russell* 45, no. 1 (2025): 3-31.

Bertrand Russell argued that William James's pragmatic account of truth implies that truth is not objective and that James's abandonment of objective truth makes it inevitable that violence will be used to settle disagreements, including political disagreements. On my view, there is an inconsistency in James's account of truth that yields two different readings of that account, one on which the truth of the belief that p does require, and another on which it does not require, that it actually be the case that p . I argue that Russell's criticism of James fails if it is directed against the first reading of James's account of truth, because on that first reading, there is such a thing as objective truth. However, Russell's criticism fairs better against the second reading of James's account—that is, it fairs better once its conclusion is weakened, from the claim that James's account makes it inevitable that violence will result from disagreements, to the claim that when violence is in fact used to end a disagreement and succeeds in doing so, the victor is the one who has the true belief.

Ni, Yifeng and Ning Liu. “Bridging the theory-practice divide in public administration: Wang Yangming and William James,” *Public Policy and Administration* 40, no. 3 (2025): 452-476. doi: 10.1177/09520767251315504.

Public administration (PA) is a practical discipline that faces persistent challenges in establishing effective connections between researchers and practitioners. This divide between theory and practice hinders practitioners’ use of research findings and the integration of practical experiences into scholarly work. Bridging this divide holds practical significance and leads to a deeper understanding of PA’s disciplinary identity as more than just a form of science. This paper brings together the philosophies of Western thinker William James and ancient Eastern philosopher Wang

Yangming, promoting a virtuous pragmatic approach to bridge the theory–practice divide in PA. This approach offers a teleological and embodied perspective on knowledge, providing a nuanced framework for understanding the theory–practice divide. By drawing on Wang's coherent virtue–ethical framework and James' embodiment and pragmatic philosophy, this paper argues that unifying theory and practice requires establishing a common purpose that is perceptually familiar to both parties. Moreover, shaping and acting on this purpose inherently involves cultivating the virtues of Cheng (Sincerity, 诚) and Ren (Benevolence, 仁). Grounded in the virtuous pragmatic approach, we introduce a three–stage research praxis framework to guide the research process and encourage practitioner engagement in existing research endeavors. This study serves as a valuable contribution to bridging the theory–practice divide in PA and advancing pragmatic PA studies in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts.

Reitan, Eric. "The Moral Hope Argument," *Religions* 16, no. 8 (2025): 1060, doi: 10.3390/rel16081060.

This essay develops a distinct moral argument for the reasonableness of believing in God (conceived as a perfectly good creator) inspired by the pragmatic argument for "the religious hypothesis" advanced by William James in "The Will to Believe." It also contextualizes the argument relative to familiar moral arguments, notably those of C.S. Lewis and Kant. Briefly, the argument developed here holds that when facing more than one coherent picture of reality, each of which could be true based on the arguments and evidence but only one of which fulfills the hope that in a fundamental way reality is on the side of moral goodness (what I call "the ethico-religious hope"), a reasonable person could opt to believe in the hope's fulfillment and live accordingly. Following James' approach, however, this argument does not imply that others who do not adopt such a picture are necessarily irrational or less rational.

Reyes Cárdenas, Paniel. "A Semiotic and Pragmatic Proposal for the Academic Study of Spirituality and Religious Experience," ***Esferas : Revista Interprogramas De Pós-Graduação Em Comunicação do Centro Oeste*** **no. 32 (2025).**

This paper proposes a semiotic and pragmatic framework for the academic study of spirituality and religious experience, drawing on the insights of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Josiah Royce, Bernard Lonergan, and David Tracy. It challenges the limitations of traditional approaches that neglect the dynamic and relational nature of experience, advocating for a more holistic and transformative understanding mediated by a rigorous science of signs. Peirce's semiotics, with its emphasis on the mediation of signs and the three universes of experience, provides a foundation for interpreting religious experience as an engagement with the transcendent. James's pragmatism complements this framework by focusing on the practical consequences and transformative potential of religious experience. Royce's concept of the "Beloved Community" highlights the communal dimension of religious insight, while Lonergan's cognitive theory and Tracy's notion of "religious classics" offer further tools for understanding the transformative and hermeneutical aspects of religious experience. This integrated approach aims to bridge the gap between philosophy, theology, and spirituality, fostering a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of religious phenomena in the modern world.

Robinson, William S. "Epiphenomenalism and Evolution Response to John Wright," ***Journal of Consciousness Studies*** **32, no. 3 (2025): 63-78.**

In earlier work, I have defended epiphenomenalism against a formidable argument given by William James in 1890. Recently, John Wright has offered a very plausible critique of my defence. This paper provides clarifications and explanations that are required to respond to Wright's

critique, and concludes that epiphenomenalism remains viable in the face of James's argument.

Seager, William. "William James, David Bohm, and the Puzzle of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 32, no. 5 (2025): 37-61, doi: 10.53765/20512201.32.5.037

Stroud, Scott R. "Democratic Education between Empowered Skepticism and Partisan Dogmatism." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2025): 204-219.

What sort of education does democracy require? How can we balance the ideals of openness to others and assertion of our own ideas to disagreeing others that democracy demands? This article explores the tempting solutions to the paradoxical charges of democracy—skepticism and partisan dogmatism—and finds them lacking. Using insights from William James and John Dewey, this study argues that there are two habits or senses of charity needed in pluralistic democracies. These habits of imagination open us to the complexities of other agents and to moral situations in general. Democratic education thereby seeks these habits as a way to maintain the tentative balances required by living among agreeing and disagreeing others.

Wójtowicz, Marek. "The Issue of the Pragmatist Sources of Post-Truth, Considered in the Light of William James' Definition of Truth." *Forum Philosophicum* 30, no. 1 (2025): 215–27. doi:10.35765/forphil.2025.3001.10.

"The post-truth era" is one of the terms characteristic of modern times. It describes the widespread acceptance of deception and manipulation in public life, especially in the mass media. The investigation presented here first seeks to clarify the phenomenon of post-truth, on the basis of an analysis of those authors who have proposed and popularized the concept, such as Steve Tesich, Ralph Keyes and Matthew d'Ancona. Next, it explores the thesis put

forward by Dariusz Juruś regarding the influence of the philosophy of pragmatism on the development of post-truth. In order to evaluate that thesis, William James' conception is examined, including his definition of truth, his radical empiricism, and the idea of a genuine option. It turns out that the American philosopher's pragmatism can undoubtedly not be counted among the sources of post-truth.