

# WILLIAM JAMES'S USE OF TEMPERAMENTS AND TYPES

## RESEARCH NOTE

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What did William James mean when he claimed that the history of philosophy is “to a great extent” a “clash of human temperaments”? Did this mean that philosophers, in his estimation, are bound to represent one or the other type, or orientation, associated with various generalized philosophical positions? Did it mean that philosophers were necessarily, in his terminology, either “tender-minded” or “tough-minded”? And if philosophical arguments are, in fact, expressions of physiological factors, through what means do these factors achieve expression? What, in sum, did James mean to imply when he invoked the concept of “temperament” and used the related notion of categorical “type”? How are we to understand and apply whatever insights he had to offer?



In the opening chapter of *Pragmatism*, William James famously argued that the history of philosophy is “to a great extent” a “clash of human temperaments.”<sup>1</sup> Although philosophers like to offer “impersonal reasons” for their conclusions, he said, in fact their temperament “loads the evidence . . . one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe.”<sup>2</sup> Every philosopher, James observed, “trusts his temperament” and wants “a universe” that suits it.<sup>3</sup> This should not be surprising. The same clash of temperaments, he noted, can be seen in many areas of human life. While it is manifested within philosophy in the conflict between “your [empiricistic] lover of facts in all their crude variety,” on the one hand, and “your [rationalistic] devotee to abstract and eternal principles,” on the other, parallel differences are apparent in the realm of manners between “formalists and free-and-easy persons”; in government, between “authoritarians and anarchists”; in literature, between “purists or academics, and realists”; and in art, between “classics and romantics.”<sup>4</sup> And all of these differences *make* a difference, inciting antipathy between these temperamentally diverse groups. Thus, after compiling a list of characteristics associated with “tender-minded” rationalists and “tough-minded” empiricists, James underscored how “the tough think of the tender as sentimentalists or soft-heads” and “the tender feel the tough to be unrefined, callous, or brutal,” their mutual apprehension being akin to the way “Bostonian tourists” and “a population like that of Cripple Creek” think and feel about one another.<sup>5</sup>

In light of James’s frequent use of contrasting pairs like the ones above—in *Pragmatism*, for example, between intellectualists and sensationalists, idealists and materialists, optimists and pessimists, religious and non-religious, free-willists and fatalists, monists and pluralists, and dogmatists and skeptics—it is important to emphasize that he did not intend to suggest any metaphysical or essential dualities.<sup>6</sup> Rather, James used what we might call conceptual or methodological dualities in a purely descriptive way, largely as rhetorical devices, contrasting rarely if ever encountered extremes (idealized representatives) of opposing points of view and opposing

behavioral tendencies, to make his arguments clearer and more persuasive. Even in the midst of his discussion of “tender-minded” and “tough-minded” philosophers, for instance, James explicitly indicated that he was talking about a spectrum of philosophical mentalities, a continuum ranging from the most rationalistic, at one end, to the most empiricistic, at the other. Only a relatively few historical figures, individuals like Plato, Locke, Hegel, and Spencer, have exhibited sufficiently “radical idiosyncrasy” to “set their stamp and likeness on philosophy,” thus coming to signify something like a pure type.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, “most of us have ... no very definite intellectual temperament,” James acknowledged; “we are a mixture of opposite ingredients, each one present very moderately.”<sup>8</sup> And the same caveat applied to his other dualistic distinctions—in psychology, for instance, between explosive and obstructed will, and in his study of religious experiences, between the “once-born” healthy-minded and the “twice-born” sick-minded.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, in these and many other instances, this kind of typological thinking helped James elucidate and advance his argument. And it is worth pointing out that in many instances of dualistic thinking James indicated that extreme cases have their own limitations as well as benefits. Meanwhile, “most of us,” he admitted, “have a hankering for the good things on both sides of the line.”<sup>10</sup> And, in fact, after so famously distinguishing “tender-minded” and “tough-minded” philosophers, James explicitly went on to invite his readers to integrate qualities from both empiricism and rationalism. Indeed, he offered “the oddly-named thing pragmatism as a philosophy” precisely because it “can satisfy both kinds of demand.”<sup>11</sup> And even though he actually proposed pragmatism as an epistemological *method* rather than a fully-constituted philosophical *metaphysics*, James did go on to fulfill crucial demands of both empiricism and idealism in his own metaphysical system (i.e., radical empiricism) by extending the empirical so far that it incorporated the subjective dimensions of experience.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, types for James were convenient conceptual or methodological tools, intended to facilitate understanding without introducing new essences into the various continua of experience.

But how about his use of temperament, which seems to have a specific biological point of reference? Is it a methodological or rhetorical device of the same kind, or did James want us to take it literally as a genetic, physiological, or neurological *cause* of how we tend to perceive, think, feel, and act? If not quite either, is there some intermediate way of understanding his use of this term? To answer these questions, we must consider what James said about psychological terminology and then consult his actual use of the term over the full extent of his writing.

Throughout his *Principles*, James cautioned readers against conferring narrowly exclusive meaning to psychological terms. We do not yet know enough, he repeated over and over, to assume that *any* of our terms has a specific or univocal reference, much less adequate definition. Indeed, one of the principal sources of error in psychology, James asserted, is “the misleading influence of speech.”<sup>13</sup> In particular, he criticized the assumption that then-extant terms in the psychological lexicon had clear or singular referents, while also emphasizing that the absence of terms need not indicate the non-existence of still-unnamed phenomena. Psychology was at far too early a stage to warrant any strict standardization or regulation of its language. For this reason, in *Principles*, James used “consciousness” and “thinking,” “thought” and “feeling,” even “attention” and “will” interchangeably at times.<sup>14</sup> And if his caution extended even to these commonly used terms, it applied all the more to terms like “temperament,” which were variously defined, variously explained, and variously attributed to different phenomena in contemporary thought.<sup>15</sup> In 1880, for instance, Henry Maudsley, in a book that James used as a seminar text in 1896-97, wrote that “temperament” and “idiosyncrasy” are “big words” that

are at present little better than cloaks of ignorance; they are symbols representing unknown quantities rather than words denoting definite conditions; and no more useful work could be undertaken in psychology than a patient and systematic study of individuals—the scientific and accurate dissection and classification of the minds and characters of *particular* men in correlation with their features and habits of body.<sup>16</sup>

And eleven years later, Théodule Ribot, in another book with which James was very familiar, expressed the same view, that

the doctrine of the temperaments, as old as medical science itself, ever criticised and ever remodelled, is the vague and uncertain expression of the principal types of the physical personality, as furnished by observation, with the principal psychical traits that spring from them.... If the determination of temperaments could be rendered scientific, the question of personality would be greatly simplified.<sup>17</sup>

But the determination was obviously *not yet* scientific in 1891, nor even in the early 1900s, when temperament was defined in a very brief entry of the authoritative *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* as the “characteristic difference in congenital constitution of individuals, manifested, e.g., by differences in their emotional susceptibilities, in the rapidity of their mental processes, in the fixity of their conations.”<sup>18</sup> Following this seemingly unambiguous definition, the ante-scientific status of the term was implicitly acknowledged when the authors then divided temperament into the same categories—sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic—used by ancient Galenic medicine, and succinctly described what was “supposed” about each. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that temperament and its types were defined in a scientifically reliable way and empirically validated as relevant variables in developmental and personality studies, as James and others had essentially hypothesized that they would be.<sup>19</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that James himself avoided any technical or substantive use of temperament, and in fact the word does not appear, as one might expect it would, in the index of his biologically grounded *Principles*. Indeed, the only extensive use of temperament, in all of James’s works, is in *Varieties*, where it serves an analogous role to the one it fulfills in *Pragmatism*: as the key to one’s susceptibility or openness to this or that type of perception, thought, or feeling, albeit this time of a religious rather than philosophical nature. As he put it, one must be “temperamentally

qualified” for a given type of faith.<sup>20</sup> But here, too, no further specification of any biological factors is provided.

This leads the present author to conclude that temperament, in and of itself, was not a crucial variable for James, but rather—in *Pragmatism* and elsewhere—it served as a stand-in for various biologically grounded (and pragmatically equivalent) *psychological* processes about which he had written in many other places, but which were not yet linked in any detail or with any certitude to particular physiological, neurological, or genetic aspects of temperament.<sup>21</sup> Even though the word suggested that (unspecified) biological processes were associated with a person’s psychological constitution, it was that psychological constitution and the related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral inclinations that mattered. This could put an end to the matter, *except that* it should be acknowledged (before concluding) that James did go on to say, in *Pragmatism*, that “the picture I have given [of the temperamental differences between different types of philosophers] is, however coarse and sketch, *literally* true. Temperaments with their cravings and refusals do determine men in their philosophies, and always will.”<sup>22</sup> Although this was adamantly stated, it was similarly unaccompanied by any stipulation of what precise biological foundations accounted for these traits.<sup>23</sup>

The solution to the riddle, then, seems to lie in two statements of fact: (1) James assumed and sometimes stated that *all* psychological traits, like all psychological phenomena, have neurological or physiological foundations. (2) What he was concerned about was never temperament per se, but *the psychological traits associated with them*. Thus, it is not “tender-bodied” or “tough-bodied” but “tender-minded” and “tough-minded” characteristics that lead to different philosophical orientations. And although James could not offer any specific account of the genetic, physiological, or neurological states underlying these characteristics, he could and did offer accounts of the *psychological* factors that are involved: the needs, desires, and demands stemming from each individual’s *personal interests*, whether intellectual or practical, aesthetic or moral. However these

might be theoretically undergirded by physiological states, they lead to selective perception, selective conception, indeed, to selection all the way up and down the hierarchy of psychological processes, according to James, extending from sensation and perception at the one end to volition and action on the other.<sup>24</sup> And it is always the *practical consequences* rather than *theoretical origins* that matter in James's considerations. It is how one *reacts* to what he or she has experienced that makes a difference. The *effects* of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions, not their physical *stimuli* or biological *sources*, are what James ultimately cared about. Whatever their biological foundations, what was important to him were the psychological phenomena and processes whose existence he assumed to be so grounded. It was *these*, not any hypothesized underlying temperamental factor per se, that made the crucial difference for James.<sup>25</sup>

For these reasons, any discussion of James's thesis about the temperamental foundations of philosophical attitudes (other than discussions that seek to update his position with evidence from twenty-first-century research) should focus on psychological rather than temperamental phenomena—on the personal characteristics, experiences, and concerns—that underlie his psychological as well as philosophical thinking.<sup>26</sup> This focus is consistent with James's later discussion of "The Types of Philosophic Thinking" (in the first chapter of *A Pluralistic Universe*), in which he underscores that "individuality outruns all classification" and directs his readers to the manifest phenomena of attention and selection rather than any underlying temperament as the crucial source of the "sketch" that each philosopher offers of the universe.<sup>27</sup> "A philosophy is the experience of a man's intimate character," James said there, "and all definitions of the universe are but the deliberately adopted reactions of human characters upon it."<sup>28</sup> It is by "feeling the whole push, and seeing the whole drift of life, forced on one by one's total character and experience," he argued in 1909, that one achieves "one's best working attitude."<sup>29</sup> This is true for all philosophers, James argued: their working attitudes, revolving around their personal characteristics, experiences, and concerns, which is to say, their

personal interests and their resulting selective attention and reactions, shape their thought about themselves and their approach to the world around them. This was no less true of himself...and he wanted it no other way.<sup>30</sup>

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#### NOTES

This paper, despite the number and length of its footnotes, was conceived as a narrowly focused “note” rather than full-blown “article.” It touches on a topic covered exceptionally well, with greater sweep and detail, yet differently, in Francesca Bordogna’s “The Psychology and Physiology of Temperament.” The distinction around which this paper pivots, providing its *raison d’être*, is the actual pragmatic use of “temperament” and “type” in James’s thought, a use that emphasized the *psychological consequences* (formulated here as “personal characteristics, experiences, and concerns”) of what James took to be their broadly physiological underpinnings. These consequences are what mattered in his work, both when he did and when he did not specifically cite “temperament” or “type” as a factor. Bordogna is no doubt correct in claiming that James believed in the ultimate biological foundation of psychology, and hence of philosophy, but in actual practice it was (for him) the more proximate psychological consequences of temperament and type that motivated psychological and philosophical, as well as artistic, religious, and moral creations. It is not surprising, therefore, that he designated psychology, not physiology, as “the antechamber of metaphysics” (James, “Review of *Grundzüge*,” 296),

nor was it inconsistent that after accepting Johannes Müller's dictum, *nemo psychologus nisi physiologus*, James hastened to add that it was "doubly true" (emphasis added) that, "so far as the nerve-centres go, *nemo physiologus nisi psychologus*" (James, "Review of *The Functions*," 336). One cannot do nerve-physiology of any extensive sort without prior awareness of the psychological phenomena to be explained.

<sup>1</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> James, 11.

<sup>3</sup> James, 11.

<sup>4</sup> James, 12.

<sup>5</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, 13–14. James's claim about the temperamental foundations of philosophy was not a late-career invention. Twenty-eight years earlier, he had described one of his first substantive publications as "the first chapter of a psychological work on the motives which lead men to philosophize" (James, "Sentiment of Rationality," 64). In that article, James wrote that "a man's philosophic attitude is determined by the balance in him of ... two cravings," namely, a craving for "ease" and "simplicity" and a craving for "clearness" and "distinction": in short, between an inclination toward rational unity and a partiality for empirical multiplicity (James, 38). Further, he argued that any philosophy necessarily achieves its "monstrous abridgment" of "the fulness of the truth" by the "casting out of real matter", with each remaining concept reflecting "a particular interest in the conceiver" (James, 55-6). (He had explicated the interest-based selectivity of the mind in even earlier publications: his "Review of *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie*" and his articles on "Brute and Human Intellect" and "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence.") James built upon these three articles several years later in "Rationality, Activity and Faith," where he noted that his earlier article on "The Sentiment of Rationality" had exhibited "the failure of the purely logical function in philosophizing" as it argued that, "for a philosophy to succeed," it must "define the future *congruously with our spontaneous powers*" (James, "Rationality, Activity and Faith," 58, 64). In other words, "personal temperament... will make itself felt" in one's preference for this or that philosophy. Fifteen years later, James combined the original "Sentiment" with portions of "Rationality, Activity and Faith" to create the chapter on "The Sentiment of Rationality" in *The Will to Believe*. Much of what he

said in these articles regarding the psychological motives of philosophizing was prompted by his reading of Arthur Schopenhauer, as reflected in James's statement that "the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions" (James, *Will to Believe*, 77); see Leary, "New Insights," 12 and especially the appendix; also see Schopenhauer, *The World*, 2:160–87, and *Essays and Aphorisms*, 118–19). Perhaps it is worth noting that Immanuel Kant had treated "temperament" as well as "character" (even "character as the way of thinking"), but was as far as possible from recognizing psychological bias in philosophical thinking (Kant, *Anthropology*, 186–95).

<sup>6</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> James, 11.

<sup>8</sup> James, 11.

<sup>9</sup> See James, *Principles*, 2:1144–56, noting the comment on 1144 that the quality of willful action "is always due to the *ratio* between the obstructive and explosive forces which are present." Also see James, *Varieties*, chs. 4–7, noting the comment on 140 that "the radical extremes are somewhat ideal abstractions, and the concrete human beings whom we oftenest meet are intermediate varieties and mixtures."

<sup>10</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> James, 23.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., James, *Radical Empiricism*, 21–44 and 97–104.

<sup>13</sup> James, *Principles*, 1:193, capitals and italics deleted.

<sup>14</sup> For explications and assessments of James's use of relational, overlapping, tentative, and far from exclusionary psychological terminology, see Leary, *Routledge Guidebook*.

<sup>15</sup> Bordogna, "Psychology and Physiology," provides an excellent survey of the wide variety of descriptions, explanations, and attributions offered for temperament in the late nineteenth century. These explications provided different *names*, *typologies*, *descriptions*, and *claims* but no scientific *specifications* of supposed biologically determinative factors. And note that even "brain," for James, was "a fiction of popular speech" (James, *Principles*, 1:178–9).

<sup>16</sup> Maudsley, *Pathology of Mind*, 236.

<sup>17</sup> Ribot, *Diseases of Personality*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Jastrow and Baldwin, "Temperament," 672.

<sup>19</sup> For foundational scientific studies in a now-large and ever-expanding literature, see Thomas and Chess, *Temperament and Development*, Buss and Plomin, *Temperament*, Kagan, *Galen's Prophecy*, and Bates and Wachs, *Temperament*.

<sup>20</sup> James, *Varieties*, 169. There is a striking similarity in the ways that James talks about philosophy and religion. Both provide a "vision" of "the universe" and/or of "life": a *Weltanschauung* (or worldview), as he sometimes expressed it. But while traditional philosophy provides a "summary sketch" or "picture of the world in abridgment" (James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 9), religion represents "a man's total reaction upon life," including (among other things) both the emotions and the actions that life calls forth (James, *Varieties*, 36). Still, James implicitly leaves open the possibility that these two approaches to our lived reality might come closer and even overlap, *provided that* philosophy were to represent the response of the *complete* person, emotions and all, to "the world's presence" (James, 37; this is, in fact, precisely what James called for. See the final sentences of this article). This would require that one "reach down to that curious sense of the whole residual cosmos as an everlasting presence, intimate or alien, terrible or amusing, lovable or odious" (James, 37). This "sense of the world's presence," which appeals to "our peculiar individual temperament," makes us either "strenuous or careless, devout or blasphemous, gloomy or exultant, about life at large," and this reaction on our part "is the completest of all our answers to the question, 'What is the character [or "temperament"] of this universe in which we dwell?'" (James, 36–37). What would keep this more inclusive, expanded kind of philosophy, reaching beyond mere rational inquiry, from becoming even more equivalent to religion, traditionally defined, would be the absence of a notion of "the divine," whatever that might be for any particular person (James, 34). But in flirting with philosophical pantheism at the end of his life, James allowed that "the place of the divine in the world" could be reimagined, just as the nature of matter could be, in a more "organic" way, resulting in "a more intimate *weltanschauung*" that provides a "vision of God as the indwelling divine rather than the external creator, of human life as part and parcel of that deep reality" (James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 18–19). The concept of "reaction" in the foregoing discussion, as in one's "reaction upon life," is an important notion in James's thought, as discussed in note 25. (Clear echoes of Emerson here!) Bordogna makes a

similar assessment of the relation between James's discussions of philosophy and art (Bordogna, "Psychology and Physiology," 18–21). The additional relation of morality to temperamental responsiveness is touched upon at the end of note 25.

<sup>21</sup> In essence, in arguing for pragmatism, James used "temperament" and "type" pragmatically, providing a good example of the pragmatic method of focusing on the sensory (empirically evident) effects of a presumed (hypothesized) underlying reality. See James, *Meaning of Truth*, 31; James, *Principles*, 2:929; and James, *Pragmatism*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, 24. Italics added.

<sup>23</sup> It should also be noted that James never used more precise designations of temperaments themselves than vague references to "psychopathic temperament," "insane temperament," and the like. "Psychopathic temperament" was a particular favorite, especially in his *Varieties* (see, e.g., James, *Varieties*, 28, 132, and 142); but it was no more precisely defined there than "insane" or "neurotic temperament" (James, 27 and 29). The common-language implications of the individual adjectives rather than any empirically verified theory were expected to do all the work, as in his references to "sanguine" and "melancholy" temperaments (James, 115), "sympathetic" and "cynical" temperaments (James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 15–16), and "artistic" and "aristocratic" temperaments (James, "Review of *Unüberwindliche Mächte*," 212). Elsewhere he spoke of "bottled-lightning" vs. "phlegmatic" temperaments (James, "Gospel of Relaxation," 122) and referred to his own "impatient" temperament (James, "James on Tausch," 190). Clearly, James used temperament-related language in a very elastic way, as when he referred to Spencer's temperament as "the atmosphere" of his mind, which was "so fatally lacking in geniality, humor, picturesqueness, and poetry, and so explicit, so mechanical, so flat in the panorama which it gives of life" (James, "Herbert Spencer Dead," 97). Of course, we get what James means descriptively, even without the provision of any physiological explanations. The elasticity of his use of "temperament" can also be seen in his attribution, however tentative, of "different temperaments" to "different races of men" (James, *Talks to Teachers*, 106). For example, "Southern races are commonly accounted more impulsive and precipitate" while "the English race, especially our New England branch of it, is supposed to be all sicklied over with repressive forms of self-

consciousness" (James, 106). Finally, with even greater metaphorical license, he extended the concept to nature and the universe, speaking in various places of "the temperament [or sometimes "the character"] of Nature itself" (e.g., James, "Notes for Philosophy 20C," 326). This use of the term was meant to indicate that we have a *personal* relationship with our world, that we *see and think about it* in particular ways, and that we *respond to it* accordingly, depending upon (e.g.) whether we see it or want it to be wild and unpredictable or tame and orderly (James, 326–327). Some of us, James pointed out, feel more at home in unfettered, chaotic reality whereas others would prefer to live in a nicely groomed, artificial garden (James, "Letter to Hugo Münsterberg," 241).

<sup>24</sup> Interests were absolutely fundamental for James. How they affect the actual process of selection was still a mystery, he admitted, but "possibly a minuter insight into the laws of neural action will some day clear the matter up," though it was also possible that "neural laws will not suffice, and we shall need to invoke a dynamic reaction of the form of consciousness upon its content" (James *Principles*, 1:546–47; regarding the hierarchy of selectivity across the psychological spectrum, see James, 1:1, 273–78).

<sup>25</sup> The concept of "reaction" deserves special mention here. Ever since James declared that modern evolutionary theory had made the reflex arc essential to modern psychology, the concept of behavioral response had become central to psychology. "Any mind, constructed on the triadic-reflex pattern," he wrote, "must first get its impression from the object which it confronts; then define what that object is, and decide what active measures its presence demands; and finally react" (James, "Reflex Action and Theism," 98). "The conception of *all* action as conforming to this type is the fundamental conception of modern nerve-physiology" (James, *Principles*, 1:35). The world is as it is, but how we *react* or *respond* to it, is crucial for James. And our responses are aesthetic and emotional, as well as intellectual and moral (see James, 1:273–77, 2:1058–59, and 2:1164–82). The point is that we humans are not—and should not be—*passive* beings, suffering input from our environment; we have response-ability, we can react, and our responsiveness can lead to "action which to a great extent transforms the world" (James, "Remarks on Spencer's," 21). Our task, to put it broadly and philosophically, is, first, the "ascertainment of the character of Being" or Reality, and, second, if we find that it falls



short of what seems ideal, to change it, “no less!” (James, “Reflex Action and Theism,” 111, and James, “Letter to Charles Augustus Strong,” 342). Of course, what seems ideal will vary from person to person, so a philosophy is always “the expression of a [particular] man’s intimate character,” and “all definitions of the universe” are no more and no less than “the deliberately adopted reactions of human characters upon it” (James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 14). “Will you or won’t you have it so?” is “the most probing question we are ever asked” by the universe or by life, a question to which we respond “by *consents or non-consents* and not by words” (James, *Principles*, 2:1182). And our “dumb responses”—hopefully including action that will facilitate what is more ideal—are “our deepest organs of communication with the nature of things,” “the measure of our worth as men,” and “the one strictly underived and original contribution which we make to the world!” (James, *Principles*, 2:1182). This insight goes way back to James’s personal commitment, in April 1870, to resist the pressures of the world toward what he believed to be inappropriate “fields of action” (James, “Diary [1]”), and it foreshadows his later statement that “we crave alike to feel more truly at home” in this universe and “to contribute our mite to its amelioration” (James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 11). In the end, “behavior,” which is to say, some response to our situation, “is the aim and end of every sound philosophy” (James, “Reflex Action and Theism,” 111). Interestingly, contemporary research on temperament, with its focus on “the large number of chemicals that monitor excitation and inhibition in the central nervous system,” has explored the impact that systematic individual differences in modes of reactivity—i.e., innate tendencies toward greater or lesser excitation or inhibition—have upon an infant’s disposition, ability to learn, and tendency to develop this or that style (or type) of emotional and behavioral responsiveness (see Kagan, *Galen’s Prophecy*, 51; also see ch. 2, 5, 7, and 8). And though their proposed etiologies differ (Kagan’s being based on up-to-date scientific neurochemistry while James simply hypothesized varying degrees of “neural inertia”), Kagan’s excitatory vs. inhibitory types bear an uncanny resemblance to James’s explosive vs. obstructive forms of voluntary action, and both of their schemes emphasize the long-term consequences of habituation. (On James’s speculation regarding neural inertia, see James, *Principles*, 2:1142.) Finally, James discusses moral philosophy as ultimately drawn from one’s *responses* to the world,

including “the cries of the wounded” (James, “The Moral Philosopher,” 158). On his “visualizing” and then “resisting, risking, and changing the ways things are,” see Leary, “Visions and Values.”

<sup>26</sup> Among the personal experiences that matter, as attested by James's own life and work, are experiences with sickness and health, and how one responds to them, which become part of one's personal make-up. Another kind of experience involves habit and habit-formation. One of this journal's reviewers asked whether the cognitive and behavioral tendencies associated with this or that temperamental type could be undercut by the establishment of habits, for which James was such a vociferous advocate. James's response would seem to be that, yes, some modification of temperamental expression is possible, but it is constrained by the range of interests (associated with temperament) that motivate a person's selective attention and action. (See Bordogna, “Psychology and Physiology,” 15-18, for a consonant discussion of individual freedom and intelligence in light of temperament.) As regards the plasticity of both physiology and personality, James was clear that some flexibility and enhanced individuation are both possible and desirable, but any fluctuations or deviations will fall within the parameters (however broad or narrow) of one's basic constitution, or so he clearly implies. (His discussion of “the law of inhibition of instincts by habits” is relevant here; see James, *Principles*, 2:1014-15.) In short, there are limits to the apparent and actual plasticity of individual natures.

<sup>27</sup> James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 7, 9–10.

<sup>28</sup> James, 14.

<sup>29</sup> James, 14–15.

<sup>30</sup> I apply the lessons of this article in “The Psychological Roots of William James's Thought,” which will appear in *The Jamesian Mind*, edited by Sarin Marchetti.