

# RELATED SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS ON WILLIAM JAMES

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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](mailto:periodicals@williamjamesstudies.org) and we will include it at the next opportunity.



**Araujo, Saulo de Freitas. “Truth, Half-Truth, and Post-Truth: Lessons from William James.” *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2022): 478-90.**

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2020.1727390>

According to many authors, we live in a post-truth era, to the extent that truth has become subordinated to politics. This has implications not only to political debates, but also to science, technology, and common-sense thinking. In this paper, I claim that William James’s conception of truth may shed new light on the contemporary post-truth debate. First, I will present the essential elements of James’s initial position. Then, I will discuss some of his amendments to clarify and improve his theory to avoid misunderstandings. Finally, I will address his potential contributions to the contemporary post-truth debate, and consider whether there are special implications for psychology.

**Benjafield, John G. “Creators of the Vocabulary of Anglophone Psychology and Their Relationships.” *Review of General Psychology* vol. 26, no. 1 (2022): 104-121.**

<https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1177/10892680211064>

The vocabulary of anglophone psychology largely developed during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The creators of this vocabulary include such well-known names as William James, Joan Riviere, E. L. Thorndike, and James Strachey. Along with others, they invented many new words and word meanings for psychology. The more a psychologist responded to the need for new vocabulary the more likely were they to be mentioned in publications. Moreover, linguistically creative psychologists occurred together in publications to a greater extent than less linguistically creative psychologists, with William James having the most co-occurrences. A network is presented that links each member of a sample of 59 linguistically creative psychologists to the other member of the sample with whom they most frequently co-occur (e.g., E. L. Thorndike co-occurs most frequently with William James). For each pair, we provide brief descriptions of their similarities and/or differences. There is also

a cluster of translators who created new English words and word meanings in order to capture the meanings of words in other languages that had no satisfactory equivalents in English. Generally speaking, the more success psychologists have had in filling the lacunae in psychology's vocabulary, the more they have been recognized by others.

**D'Angelo, Diego.** "William James on Attention. Folk Psychology, Actions, and Intentions." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2022): 163-76.

<https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1080/00071773.2021.2020596>

This paper addresses three main concerns about William James's understanding of attention. In the first section, I will consider the question whether or not James's famous claim that "every one knows what attention is" should be understood as implying that his theory is a folk psychological theory of attention. After arguing against this interpretation, the second part of the paper spells out four main tenets in James's theory: attention is presented as transcendental, active, structuring, and embodied. Particular emphasis will be laid on the key role of bodily movements. The third and final section draws some conclusions concerning the intentionality of agency. According to James, the genesis of the intentions to act has to be located in attentional movements and comportments towards the surrounding world. At variance with some readings of James as a full-fledged phenomenologist, I suggest to complement his essentially pragmatist approach with the aid of phenomenology as providing useful input for further inquiries.

**Debaise, Didier and Isabelle Stengers.** "An ecology of trust? Consenting to a pluralist universe." *The Sociological Review* 70, no. 2 (2022): 402-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/003802612210847>

The idea of 'progress' was undoubtedly at the heart of the experience of the Moderns, guiding at the same time their thought, the values that they gave themselves, the hopes that animated them and of innumerable justifications that they found

for all the processes of dispossession, disqualification and dismemberment that they implemented. Starting with William James's diagnosis of the hold the idea of 'progress' has over us, and following his proposition that this idea is at work in the world itself, in the ecological and social ravages that it guides and justifies, this article aims to analyse the political and speculative effects of the notion of progress and to propose, through what we call an 'ecology of trust', other ways of collectively composing our modes of existence.

**DuBrin, Rosie. "He Finds Us Wanting': Morrison I. Swift and the Anarchism of William James." *American Political Thought* 11, no. 3 (Summer 2022): 291-319.**

In Pragmatism's (1907) opening lecture, William James reveals his anarchist sympathies when he introduces the writing of a contemporary Boston activist, Morrison I. Swift. Before reciting from Swift's "Human Submission" (1905), James extols Swift as "that valiant anarchistic writer" with whom he "[sympathizes] a good deal" and next confesses, "Swift's anarchism goes a little farther than mine does" (1907/1978, 20–21, 21). In this article, I put James in conversation with Swift to examine the anarchist commitments in "Human Submission" James might have found compelling and those he might have rejected. By treating Swift as a serious interlocutor with James, an alternative understanding of James's anarchism emerges, which I name "anarchism as a way of life." James and Swift would likely find each other's anarchist vision "wanting" (23), but where they diverge reveals both insights and shortcomings of James's anarchism as a way of life.

**Dunham, Jeremy. "Flights in the resting places: James and Bergson on mental synthesis and the experience of time." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (2023): 183-204.**

The similarities between William James' Stream of Consciousness and Henri Bergson's *La durée réelle* have often been noted. Both emphasize the fundamentally temporal nature of our conscious experience and its constant flow. However, in this article, I argue that despite surface similarities between the

OP theories, they are fundamentally different. The ultimate reason for the differences between the theories is that James believed that we should reject psychological explanations that depend on synthesis within the mental sphere. This is because such explanations are incompatible with empiricism. Instead, we should look to the physiological mechanisms underpinning mental states. In contrast, Bergson was an adamant defender of a form of mental processing which he called qualitative synthesis. Duration itself, for Bergson, is a form of qualitative synthesis. However, in 1906, less than five years before James died, Bergson convinced him to change his mind. This results in a huge shift in James' thought. Unless we understand how far apart James and Bergson were prior to this shift, we will not have a proper picture of the full influence of Bergson on James' thought, nor of the major changes to James' philosophy that occurred near the end of his life.

**Gäb, Sebastian. "Mysticism without concepts." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 90, no. 3 (2021): 233-46.**

It has often been claimed, e.g. by William James or Aldous Huxley, that mystical experiences across times and cultures exhibit a striking similarity. Even though the words and images we use to describe them are different, underneath the surface we find a common experiential core. Others have rejected this claim and argued that all experiences are intrinsically shaped by the mystics' pre-existing religious concepts. Against these constructivist objections, I defend the idea of a common core by arguing that even if all experience is interpreted through concepts, there could still be a common core. Those who reject the common core thesis usually argue that no distinction between experience and interpretation can be made since all experience is per se already interpreted. The notion of an uninterpreted experience is self-defeating. Drawing on current research on nonconceptual mental content, I argue (a) that experiences can have nonconceptual content; (b) that interpretation must be understood as conceptualization and (c) that conceptualization presupposes a raw mental content that is

not conceptualized. This raw content is not experienced as nonconceptual. Rather, the nonconceptual, uninterpreted common core is an abstraction which shows itself only through reflection. Thus, the existence of a common core is compatible with the fact that all experiences are interpreted.

**Garibaldi, Korey and Spencer Hawkins. “The Queerness of William James.” *Henry James Review* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 41-65.**

Generations of scholars have posited that Henry and William James are exact opposites of one another: the latter as the virile ideal of his effeminate younger brother. This essay joins a growing body of scholarship in challenging these lingering binaries. Through an examination of their childhoods, private relationships, Henry's published writing, William's canonical scholarly texts, their correspondence, and a host of other sources, a deeper sense of queer commonalities between these brothers comes into focus.

**Kirkland, Karl. “The Influence of William James on the Spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous.” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 62, no. 3 (2022): 424-32.**

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678187825>

This article challenges Bevacqua and Hoffman's (2010) seminal article in this journal on the degree to which Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) falls short in its attempt to download the complete spirituality of William James into the AA canon. Results of the analysis of this question reveal that AA has fully incorporated the depth of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985). When application of James's pragmatic method is applied to AA, the organization emerges as complete, with the abundant fruit of almost 2 million members worldwide. AA practices are not exclusivist, and do not offer a “one size fits all” restrictive paradigm. Rather, inspired by James, AA consistently gives explicit permission to members to find a path of their own construction that develops into an inclusive paradigm that has a lifelong trajectory.

**Klein, Alexander.** “How American is Pragmatism?” *Philosophy of Science* 88, no. 5 (2021): 849-59.

DOI: 10.1086/715656

This essay examines the provenance of a single, curious term that William James often used in connection with his own pragmatism. The term is *Denkmittel*, an uncommon German contraction of *Denk* (thought) and *Mittel* (instrument). James’s Central European sources for this now forgotten bit of philosophical jargon provide a small illustration of a bigger historical point that too often gets obscured. Pragmatism—James’s pragmatism, at least—was both allied with and inspired by a broader sweep of scientific instrumentalism that was already flourishing in *fin de siècle* European philosophy.

**Levenson, Maximilian.** “A Relationalist Rethinking of Destructive Events: Making Better Choices with William James.” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (2022): 69-86.

<https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.36.1.0069>

The purpose of this article is to show how William James's thought can help to construct a critical approach to the conceptualization of unexpected destructive events and suggest modes of conceptualization that reduce social injustice. I draw on several interrelated themes in James's thought, including, but not limited to: metaphysical and moral relationalism, the tragedy of choice, and the psychology of selective attention (with particular emphasis on its consequences for ethical pluralism). Specifically, I argue that James provides resources for mounting a criticism of a kind of essentialist thinking about unexpected events; for showing how this essentialism can create social injustice by obfuscating social choices and causing marginalized groups to bear a disproportionate share of social costs; for helping to construct a pluralistic approach to unexpected events that makes transparent the tragic choices laying behind them; and for putting this approach to use in ways that mitigate social injustice.

**Magnus, PD. “William James on Risk, Efficacy, and Evidentialism.” *Episteme* 19, no. 1 (2022): 146-58.**

DOI: 10.1017/epi.2020.17

William James’ argument against William Clifford in *The Will to Believe* is often understood in terms of doxastic efficacy, the power of belief to influence an outcome. Although that is one strand of James’ argument, there is another which is driven by ampliative risk. The second strand of James’ argument, when applied to scientific cases, is tantamount to what is now called the Argument from Inductive Risk. Either strand of James’ argument is sufficient to rebut Clifford’s strong evidentialism and show that it is sometimes permissible to believe in the absence of compelling evidence. However, the two considerations have different scope and force. Doxastic efficacy applies in only some cases but allows any values to play a role in determining belief; risk applies in all cases but only allows particular conditional values to play a role.

**Mendes, Alexandre. “William James and the Deepest South.” *Transatlantica* 1 (2022): np.**

<https://doi.org/10.4000/transatlantica.19208>

This paper examines the impact on William James’s philosophical initiation of his trip to Brazil, in particular the Thayer Expedition (1865-1866), led by the Swiss-American scientist Louis Agassiz. My approach seeks to explore a “Southern transatlantic axis” in James’s thinking, which, I argue, has played a key role in the composition of his pluralistic point of view.

**Proust, Jeanne. “Attention and Free Will in Experimental Psychology: An Unexpected Analysis of Voluntary Action by William James and Theodule Ribot.” *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 57 (2023): 547-568.**

This article aims to highlight the difficulties encountered by the experimental psychology promoted by Ribot, at the end of the nineteenth century up until the beginning of the twentieth century, with regard to the question of free will as part of his analysis of voluntary attention. It also aims to shed some light



on William James's possible role in Ribot's subtle change of opinion in regards to the power of attention, as a mental effort somehow revealing the possibility of a top-down voluntary activity. In most of Ribot's work, at first glance, the will is understood as a determined product of our idiosyncratic character, of our affective and physiological tendencies—rather than as an autonomous faculty of self-determination. But what might look like Ribot's commitment to determinism calls for some nuance. Some uses of the term "voluntary" in his work, particularly to describe the phenomenon of attention, seem to refer to a form of free will looking a lot more like an autonomous faculty than like a mere illusion induced by an epiphenomenal conscious state. We end the paper with remarks about the current state of studies of consciousness and voluntary action in relation to Ribot and James's accounts of attention and will.

**Rodrigo, Benevides BG.** "William James and the Role of Mysticism in Religion." *Manuscrito* 44, no. 4 (2021): 453-88.

<https://doi.org/10.1590/0100-6045.2021.V44N4.RB>

In *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902) William James examines the role of mysticism in the development of religion. James argues that the root of all religions is precisely the experience of mystical states of consciousness. As we shall see, although James himself admits that his own psychological constitution shuts him out from these experiences, the acknowledgement of practical developments of mysticism within institutionalized religions illustrates the reality of these states of consciousness, a stance supported by James' pragmatism. Thus, the paper not only examines the nature of mysticism but presents James' pragmatist view of religion.

**Schulkin, Jay, and Tibor Solymosi.** "Modest Neural Truths: Dispositions and Foraging for Coherence." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (2023): 137-64.

William James's lead continues to provide a balancing act of inquiry and truth with plurality and conflict. First, this article considers this balancing act in neuroscience, both what we have been learning since James published *The Principles of*

Psychology and in how neuroscience is done. As pragmatists have long argued against dualisms and absolutes, the authors situate contemporary understanding in its historical context. Humans have evolved as brains-in-bodies-in-cultures and navigate such worlds through good-enough strategies, not a disembodied reason. Embodied intelligence is laden with instinct, habit, and emotion as much as it is about consciousness. Truth, for James, is focused on nuanced success outcomes, both modest and broad. James's sense of fallibility is critical in terms of comfort and discomfort in a social group. More prosocial behavior tends to be honest and less sociopathic, of course unless it is myopic and only in group orientation, which it often is. Understanding ourselves through the neuroscience does not answer most of the questions nor solve all the problems. However, such understanding is an important tool in aiding our coping efforts, especially regarding contemporary life.

**Sheehy, Bonnie.** "Reparative agency and commitment in William James' pragmatism." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 5 (2022): 818-36.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2022.2032589>

This paper highlights a central feature of William James' pragmatism to challenge the conflicting charges that his political and ethical thought amounts to either a Hamlet-like impotence or a Promethean-like sovereignty. I argue that James develops an account of reparative agency and commitment which figures in his philosophy of hope as a response to the problematics of action. Reparative agency concerns the possibility of acting in the midst of constraints that frustrate or otherwise inhibit action. Conceptualizing agency in this way entails a reevaluation of the status of commitment in James' thought and the possibility of a more collective practice of hope.

**Sheehy, Bonnie.** "David Lapoujade, William James: Empiricism and Pragmatism." *American Literary History* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 696-98.

<https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1093/alh/ajac019>

**Świerzowska, Agata. “‘A Free Godlike Soul’: The Image of William James in the Letters of Wincenty Lutosławski. Prolegomenon to the Study of Wincenty Lutosławski’s Correspondence with William James.” *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2022): np.**

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2047433>

The aim of the paper is a preliminary presentation of previously unpublished letters of the Polish philosopher and social activist Wincenty Lutosławski (1863–1954) to William James (1842–1910), offering some insight into the relationship between the two thinkers. In this friendship, which lasted almost 17 years and was based mainly on exchanging correspondence, Lutosławski, known for his love of writing letters, was more active and effusive. The extensive body of letters he sent to James is a record of private—often on the verge of intimate—experiences and reflections of the Polish philosopher. However, the personal nature of Lutosławski’s letters was a result of his specific attitude towards James, as well as his conviction of the special character of the American philosopher. This article attempts to characterize the relationship between the philosophers, but from Lutosławski’s perspective; it also explores how Lutosławski perceived James and how he was building his image of a perfect human being. The letters referred to in the paper, still not edited, provide ample testimony to the long-standing friendship between the two philosophers and constitute an important source of information about Lutosławski as well as James. This article should be considered as the start of further research on this correspondence.

**Terry, Clayton L. “William James and the Pragmatic Rhetoric of Exemplary Figures: Inspirations for Spiritual Meliorism, Democratic Individuality, and Empowered Social Change.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2022): 401-15.**

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2022.2061583>

As a longstanding area of practice and inquiry in rhetorical scholarship, the role of the example in rhetorical discourse has undergone its share of debates, discussions, and important

advancements. One important topic of discussion on these matters involves the role of the example in providing either strategic ambiguity or experiential clarity. Through an analysis of William James's deployment of a pragmatic rhetoric of exemplary figures in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, this essay advances a view of the example as a resource for transforming the ambiguous consequences of inner ideals into pragmatic and empowered social action. In a chapter titled "The Value of Saintliness," James invokes a cadre of saintly figures as exemplars in the attempt to cultivate democratic individuality and inspire social change efforts through the conduct of spiritual meliorism. This essay offers expanded conceptions of exemplarity and pragmatist rhetoric in contexts concerning democracy and social justice.