



William James in his times and ours; Essays on the occasion of the Centennial Exhibition at Houghton Library, “Life is in the transitions”: William James, 1842-1910.

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William James in His Times and Ours

Essays on the Occasion of the Centennial Exhibition at Houghton Library, “Life is in the transitions”: William James, 1842-1910.

When William James died in August 1910, he was recognized internationally as a brilliant, if controversial, philosopher. Founder of American psychology, James published his textbook *Principles of Psychology* in 1890 and saw his work dominate the field for generations of students. His most influential books—*Varieties of Religious Experience*, *Pragmatism*, and *A Pluralistic Universe*—set forth his ideas about truth, knowledge, and spirituality that countered rationalism, determinism, and monism. A beloved professor and inspiring lecturer, James filled auditoriums with his professional and popular talks, whether in Edinburgh, for the Gifford Lectures; at Columbia University, where he explained pluralism; or in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he talked to school teachers about habit, will, and life’s ideals. “None of us will ever see a man like William James again . . .,” his friend John Jay Chapman wrote after James’s death. “And yet it is hard to state what it was in him that gave him either his charm or his power, what it was that penetrated and influenced us, what it is that we lack and feel the need of, now that he has so unexpectedly and incredibly died.”

Houghton Library’s commemoration of the centennial of William James’s death gives us the opportunity to ask those very questions: What was it that made James significant, and what about James is relevant in our own time? Why do we continue to think about James? What does he mean to twenty-first-century intellectuals? What about his life and work still resonate for us today? To respond to these questions, we have asked twelve leading intellectuals and scholars to think about James from their own perspectives and to respond to a particular item displayed in the library’s exhibition “Life is in the transitions’: William James, 1842-1910.”

From more than sixty manuscripts, photographs, letters, and books in the exhibition, we have chosen a few that are important in understanding James’s life and work: his relationships with family and friends; his role as a public intellectual; his contributions to psychology, philosophy, religious thought, and psychical research; his teaching career at Harvard; and his passion for the rugged outdoors. Son and brother, husband and father, friend and colleague, James inhabited many “social selves,” as he put it, that revealed a rich and prismatic personality: loving and generous, demanding and imperious, strong-minded and tender.

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Jean Strouse, biographer of James's sister Alice, and Susan Gunter, biographer of James's wife Alice, take James's letters as the occasion to write about him as son, brother, and suitor, roles that generated considerable anxiety for him. Louis Menand, Bass Professor of English at Harvard, helps us understand what Charles Peirce, Chauncey Wright, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, members of the self-proclaimed Metaphysical Club—a short-lived, but influential, group of friends who met in Cambridge to discuss philosophy—thought about James. Those conversations continued in the natural settings that James so deeply valued, and naturalist Edward Hoagland invites us to consider the ties of James's "heart strings" to the outdoors.

James's relationship to his younger brother Henry, the renowned novelist, has puzzled many readers of both Jameses. Gore Vidal and Colm Tóibín reflect on the brothers' witty, wry, and sometimes tense responses to each other's works. Often the brothers' exchanges centered on money, financial problems, and investment decisions. Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust offers context for a record of James's salaries as a professor; a man who constantly worried about money, James, it appears, was paid generously, befitting his professional distinction.

Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker responds to James's marginalia in his copy of Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, a text that James assigned to his students at Harvard, but which caused him great consternation. Like some other books in the exhibition, this one shows James to be an active, even aggressive, reader. Professor of Philosophy and Theology David C. Lamberth puts in context James's notes for lectures that would become *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, notes that reveal James's "concern to defend a spiritualistic philosophy."

That concern led to James's involvement in the American Society for Psychical Research, an organization that, like its British counterpart, aimed to investigate scientifically such psychical phenomena as mediums, ghosts, and trance states. Historian David S. Reynolds explains the wide attraction and influence of these groups among nineteenth-century intellectuals. Philosopher and Princeton professor Cornel West reflects on James's famous essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," "a prophetic relic," West writes, unheeded by James's contemporaries, but ignored "at our own peril" today.

Last, Michael James, grandson of William James, asks us to contemplate Billy James's moving, painterly photograph of his dead father. "There is life," William James once wrote, "and there, a step away is death. There is the only kind of beauty that ever was."

Linda Simon

LINDA SIMON is Professor of English at Skidmore College, General Editor of *William James Studies*, and author of *Genuine Reality: A Life of William James* (1998).

Essays

LINDA SIMON

Introduction

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In His Own Words

to us. The radiance of Harry's visit has not faded yet & I come upon gleams of it 3 or 4 times a day in my farrings to and fro, but it has never a bit diminished the lustre of far off shining Newport all silver and blue & this heavenly group below.



(All being more or less failures, especially the two outside ones). The more so as the above mentioned Harry could in no wise satisfy my cravings to know of the family and friends as he

William James. Letter to his family, [November 10, 1861].
William James Papers, b MS Am 1092.9 (2501). 20.3 cm.
(Case I, item 11)

Toward Extraordinary

Jean Strouse

WILLIAM JAMES HAD RECENTLY ENTERED THE LAWRENCE SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL at Harvard when he wrote this letter to his family in early November 1861. His elaborately facetious tone—the tone in which he often addressed these correspondents—served among other things to maintain an antic distance between him and the group at home he so clamorously longs for here.

“Home” in 1861 meant Newport, Rhode Island, but it had had many other locations during the nineteen previous years of William’s life, as Henry James Sr. hauled his young family back and forth across the Atlantic in a search of the perfect education, for the boys, that existed only in his mind. James Sr. urged on all five of his children a strenuous individualism that stressed perception, communication, and being extraordinary, no matter what one actually chose to do; and he valued interesting failure over any “too-obvious” success.

William and Henry succeeded at being extraordinary, as well as extraordinarily adept at perceiving and articulating varieties of human experience. Alice was nothing if not an interesting failure. Henry, whom William sends up here as “a so much uninterested creature in the affairs of those about him,” turned his deep imaginative interest in personal and moral affairs into high art. William ticks off a few of his own future endeavors at the end of this letter—leaving out philosophy, psychology, writing—and managed somehow to put off until 1910 the dire consequence he predicts: “death, death, death with inflation and plethora of knowledge.”

JEAN STROUSE, the author of *Morgan, American Financier* and *Alice James, A Biography* (which won the Bancroft Prize), is currently Director of the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at The New York Public Library.

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ABOVE LEFT: Whipple, Boston, photographer. *Charles Sanders Peirce*. Carte-de-visite, undated. Charles Sanders Peirce Papers, CSP 1643. Transferred from the Harvard University Archives, 1960. 10 x 6.5 cm.

ABOVE RIGHT: *Chauncey Wright*. Photograph, [1874 or 5]. Henry James Jr. Correspondence and Journals, pf MS Am 1094, box 1, p. 6a. Gift of the James family. 9.5 x 5.5 cm.

RIGHT: *Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.* Photograph, 1874. Henry James Jr. Correspondence and Journals, pf MS Am 1094 box 1, p. 5a. Gift of the James family. 10.8 x 8.6 cm.

(Case III, items 2, 3, 4)



The Metaphysical Club

Louis Menand

“WENDELL HOLMES IS ABOUT TO DISCOURSE OUT HERE on jurisprudence,” Henry James wrote in January 1872, in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton. “He, my brother, and various other long-headed youths have combined to form a metaphysical club, where they wrangle grimly and stick to the question. It gives me a headache merely to know of it.”

This was the group that Charles Sanders Peirce, one of its members, would later identify as the place where pragmatism was born. The club existed for less than a year, and there is no paper trail, but it is clear that the membership also included Chauncey Wright, a slightly older and under-employed mathematician, admired by Holmes and a mentor to both Peirce and James.

How did James’s band-mates feel about him? They thought that he was soft—a scientist who was skeptical (as they were not) about the claims of nineteenth-century science, its determinism, positivism, and materialism. “His wishes made him turn down the lights so as to give miracle a chance,” Holmes complained; Peirce thought James made pragmatism so individualistic that he renamed his own version of it Pragmatism; Wright called James’s views “boyish” and “rebellious.” They all condescended to him. But they also adored him. Peirce was so grateful for James’s friendship that, late in life, he gave himself a second middle name, Santiago—Saint James. And, after James died, when Holmes dug out their old letters, he wrote that they “revive a lifelong pain—the partial drawing asunder of two who loved each other.”

LOUIS MENAND is Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of English at Harvard. His book *The Metaphysical Club* won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 2002.

Louis Menand 23



Joseph Thacher Clarke, photographer.
Paul Ross and William James at Chocorua. Kallitype, [1889-91].
Letters to William James from Various Correspondents and Photograph Album,
pf MS Am 1092 (1185) #14. Gift of the James family. 20 x 25.7 cm.
(Case III, item 5)

Here He Is, On the Prowl

Edward Hoagland

WHEN THE GREAT LYRIC POET PETRARCH CLIMBED MOUNT VENTOUX, near Avignon, in the late 1330s simply for “the fair transalpine solitude,” it was a transformative moment, sometimes touted as having inaugurated the Renaissance. Nature, which had been ignored or derogated by medieval thinkers since the classical era, could once again be equated with spiritual refreshment or even uplift, not animistic heresy. The primeval peace of Petrarch’s cottage at Vaucluse, alternating with the hubbub of a papal or a ducal court, enhanced his limber capacities on the page, much in the way that country retreats have been enriching writers’ peregrinations ever since.

Our own William James, the pragmatically seminal philosopher and polymath Harvard professor, is a good example. His heart strings were probably more tied to his house under Mount Chocorua in the Sandwich Range of the White Mountains than to Cambridge; and at the end, he sought his deathbed there. Besides scrambling enthusiastically in the Whites, he also hiked up Mounts Marcy, Jo, and McIntyre in the Adirondacks—where he had another long-term hideaway in Keene Valley—and on Pikes Peak in the Colorado Rockies, Mounts Mitchell, Roan, and Grandfather in the Great Smokies, and several of the High Sierras.

As trim and vigorous-looking as some park ranger or surveyor in this photograph, James is pictured in his beloved Chocorua talking with Paul Ross, who, white-bearded, wearing a suit and boater, displays a bookman’s heron-stoop, unlike James himself. Ross was a local carpenter whom James once called the best talker he’d ever known except for his own father. Their friendship typified James’s pluralistic mysticism. Pluralism was an operative virtue for James, and quite what he shared with Emerson, Whitman, and other signature men of the New World.

Gargantuanly open to novel viewpoints and experiences, he was ready to jump on a train to go check on any lead, and like John Muir in California—another Emerson disciple—was inclined to utter glee in the face of nature’s cryptic hanky-panky. Just as Muir had run toward, not away from, the landslides of a Yosemite earthquake in 1872, James, who happened to be teaching at Stanford in 1906, exulted in the opening salvos of the historic San Francisco quake. “Admiration,” “delight,” “welcome,” he felt, and said that the next day he witnessed the best called forth in everybody in the city by the crisis. His curiosity burgeoned untrammelled by numerous health problems in a hectic life. Quintessentially versatile, open to any input, any voice, he became as American as writers get. And here he is, on the prowl.

EDWARD HOAGLAND sold his first book before graduating from Harvard in 1954 and published his twentieth when he was 76.

Edward Hoagland 25

W.J. to Mary Holton James

[1878?]

20 Quincy St.,

Cambridge, Mass. May 12

[1878?]

My dear Mary

You may remember me writing to you a couple of years ago that I had seen at a party, the evening before, "the future Mrs W. J." I have now the pleasure to announce, not that she is already that, but that she has succeeded in overcoming her natural reluctance to contemplate it as a future possibility, and is in short "engaged" to me since last Friday.

3115

William James. Letter to Mary Holton James, May 12, [ca. 1878].

William James Papers, b MS Am 1092.9 (3115).

Gift of the James family. 17.8 cm.

(Case IV, item 3).

Propensities and Blessings

Susan E. Gunter

AFTER SUBJECTING ALICE HOWE GIBBENS to over two years of a mentally torturous courtship, William James referred to their engagement in clichéd terms. He had resolved his philosophical quandary of whether a man with a propensity for instability and greatness should marry, by accepting sentimentalized heteronormativity. Finally he had proved to his family his masculinity, his ability to win a mate as had his younger brothers before him. Alice must have feared that William, another Harvard M.D. who experienced depression, might meet her father Dr. Gibbens's tragic end, yet she gambled and accepted him. No evidence remains that she regretted her decision. Her childhood friend, Katherine Putnam Hooker, saw Alice days before the marriage and found her as lively as ever and even more beautiful. Near the end of her life, writing to Kate Hooker, Alice worried that she had failed her husband. She does not specify what her failures had been, but she told her children during her last years she regretted her inability to keep William alive longer. Also, she may have regretted her failure to make her own mark in the world. In the end, however, she accepted where life with William had taken her. Shortly before she died she wrote to her eldest son Harry that she rejoiced in "the miracle of this day forty four years ago when your Father and I were engaged having so pathetically considered all our disqualifications and resolved to trust the future—the apple blossoms were out and all the spring seemed blessing us" (Letter to Henry James III, May 10, 1922).

SUSAN E. GUNTER is Professor of English Emerita at Westminster College, Salt Lake City, Utah. She is the author of *Alice in Jamesland: The Story of Alice Howe Gibbens James*, a biography of William's wife. She edited *Dear Munificent Friends: Henry James's Letters to Four Women* and, along with Steven H. Jobe, *Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men*.

Susan Gunter 27

H.E. J. to W.J. 1907

LAMB HOUSE.
 RYE.
 SUSSEX.

October 17th 1907

Dearest William!

Your liberality & the way,

You have written within any Calcutta Civil, having
 granted! Why the devil I didn't write
 to you after reading your Pragmatism
 - had I kept from it, I can't now
 explain save by the very fact of the full
 self-interest & enthrallment that
 the best cast upon me: I simply
 sank down under it into such
 depths of submission & assimilation
 that any reaction, ~~however~~ ^{very hearty} even that
 of acknowledgment, would have been
 almost the taint of dissent or
 escape. Then I was lost ^{in the} ~~to~~ wander
 off the street to which all my life
 I have (like the Jew's daughter) unconsciously
 Pragmatized. You are immensely ^{far} into the
 universally right & have been absorbing
 a number more of ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{rain} ~~is~~
 on the roof & the wind in the
 chimney. Oh your wind! ^(gallop) ~~Cherish!~~
 Cherish! Tell Alice that all this
 is for her too - had she shall also soon
 hear further (!) from your & here
 all & always Henry!

2203

Henry James. Letter to William James, October 17, 1907.
 Henry James Jr. Correspondence and Journals,
 b MS Am 1094 (2203). Gift of the James family. 25.3 cm.
 (Case IV, item 9)

Fraternal Feelings

Colm Tóibín

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HENRY JAMES AND HIS BROTHER WILLIAM in the last decade of William's life remained tense but cordial. William never ceased to feel that his younger brother was in need of advice about matters as tender and delicate as his finances and his prose style. While Henry resented this, he managed to write to his brother using a style elaborate and ornate enough to mask any dark fraternal feelings. He increasingly looked to his sister-in-law Alice, an intelligent and capable woman, for emotional support, and became fond of William and Alice's three sons, Harry, Billy, and Aleck, and their daughter Peggy. By 1907, both of William and Henry's parents had died, as well as their sister Alice and their younger brother Wilky. Of their siblings, only the wayward Bob, once a chronic alcoholic, now described here as "a spent volcano," survived. Brothers William and Bob would die in 1910; Henry would live until 1916. The "Ned" at the end of this letter, who is "irremediably without form & void," is Edward Holton James, the son of Bob, who was a socialist. In these years, Henry James was preparing the New York edition of his work, which would be published in twenty-six volumes. He had finished his book *The American Scene* and had reason to believe that he had not done justice to his native country. Theodora Bosanquet, who came to work for him in 1907, would remain his secretary until his death. (Since 1897 James had been dictating his fiction.) William James spent his summers in a remote part of the Adirondack Mountains, where he indulged in manly pursuits, while his brother, who had been living in Rye since 1897, continued to write both fiction and letters in a style that offered, as is clear from this letter, much ornament, nuance, shade, and circumlocution.

COLM TÓIBÍN is the author of several novels including *The Blackwater Lightship*, which was shortlisted for the 1999 Booker Prize, and *The Master*, which was shortlisted for the 2004 Booker Prize. His non-fiction includes *Bad Blood*, *Homage to Barcelona*, and *The Sign of the Cross*. His work has been translated into seventeen languages.

Colm Tóibín 29

H.J. Jm. 10.10.1905
 1905
 LAMB HOUSE.
 RYE.
 SUSSEX.
 November 23rd
 1905

dear William,
 I have some word of a spirit at
 it. Tell him, as RYE, any rate, how
 I await him, for his holidays,
 and here on this spot. And
 I wish & realize that his
 Harry's present conditions. That
 I am probably incapable of doing
 it, & he must judge me as I am
 him were not there. I am
 in response to what you write me
 of your having read the Golden Rule
 & try to produce some uneasy feeling
 of being in fiction, that will gratify
 you as a writer, but let me say
 dear William, that I shall
 be humiliated if you do like it
 & then by bump it in your objection
 with thing, of the current.

I have some word of a spirit at it. Tell him, as RYE, any rate, how I await him, for his holidays, and here on this spot. And I wish & realize that his Harry's present conditions. That I am probably incapable of doing it, & he must judge me as I am him were not there. I am in response to what you write me of your having read the Golden Rule & try to produce some uneasy feeling of being in fiction, that will gratify you as a writer, but let me say dear William, that I shall be humiliated if you do like it & then by bump it in your objection with thing, of the current.

the good to
 in fear of
 the ground
 well near
 letter it is
 against the
 the liberal
 to do some
 beautiful
 slow work
 then faintly
 & then
 after a lot
 of course I
 in the great
 it's humbly
 I've of, forty, good night. Love to
 you

Henry James. Letter to William James, November 23, 1905.
 Henry James Jr. Correspondence and Journals,
 b MS Am 1094 (2193). Gift of the James family. 25.3 cm.
 (Case IV, item 11)

Peculiar Blankness

Gore Vidal

LET ME, SOMEWHAT SHAKEN, GIVE MY IMPRESSION of Henry's uncharacteristic, edgy response to his ever-loving, would-be world scientist brother as Henry suspects, sentence by sentence, that the older brother is never going to "get it." I suspect that this knowledge—and what is Henry James but knowledge secretly gained, unknown to others—finally assures him of his mastery, as revealed in this letter from 1905. We know from elsewhere in the lives of the brothers Henry's disappointment at William's peculiar blankness when it came to the higher art of fiction at whose altar Henry was high priest, and so remains down the ages, while his brother more and more re-emerges as a shadowy would-be Cosmic Consciousness, lord of the universe.

Whatever Henry's opinion of his brother's inability to deal with art, whenever it began to go above its humble station of mere utility, this letter shows Henry beating William to the attack. Henry is quite aware that in *The Golden Bowl* he has created one the greatest works of literary fiction, where great works are rare, and, to a brother like William, unwelcome. Henry even shows mock horror at the idea that he ever could produce "some uncanny form of thing, in fiction" that William would like. That production, Henry says, would be greatly humiliating.

And thus the Jacobite ax falls.

GORE VIDAL is a novelist, essayist, and playwright whose career has spanned six decades. The author of more than twenty-five novels, numerous screenplays and television scripts, and works of non-fiction, he has recently published *Gore Vidal: Snapshots in History's Glare* (2009).

crowning illustration of the truths, that Life is the maintenance of a correspondence between the organism and its environment, and that the degree of Life varies as the degree of correspondence. The many proofs which have been given that the life and the correspondence advance hand in hand, become doubly conclusive on finding that the two culminate together.

Omission of the aesthetic - Condemnation of the Heroic, in as much as mere persistence is ^{made} synonymous with perfection of life, and truckling accommodation to external things the chief merit. He may reply, that the heroic temper, fatal to the individual, favors the persistence of the tribe, is praised by the tribe and is consequently, even in the individual whom it leads to destruction, adjusted to his social environment. But this immediately imports the aesthetic into the general conception of environment - i. e. removes the notion adjustment from the plane of mere outward phenomena in which his exposition has exclusively set it down.

Herbert Spencer. *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1871-73).
WJ 582.24.6. Gift of the James family. 20 cm.
(Case V, item 2)

The First Two Evolutionary Psychologists

Steven Pinker

MORE THAN A DECADE AFTER READING THIS MAGNUM OPUS, William James wrote one of his own using the same title, *The Principles of Psychology*, and the same goal, namely an overview of the science of mental life rooted in the new evolutionary biology. James underlined Spencer's coinage "survival of the fittest" twice and helped himself to the phrase a half dozen times in his own *Principles*.

But James's marginalia ("Sophism." "What right has he . . . ?" "Nonsense yourself!") remind us that the similarities are title-deep. He deplores Spencer's view of the mind as a passive associator of sense data ("In other words the 'notebooks' of a scientific man will of themselves evolve the result."), and his view of progress as correspondence between organism and environment ("Condemnation of the heroic, inasmuch as mere persistence is to be synonymous with perfection of life, and truckling accommodation to external things the chief merit."). The scorn continues in James's *Principles*, where he wastes no opportunity to smack Spencer around.

Of these two early evolutionary psychologists, only James had the modern conception of evolution. True, Darwin himself eventually co-opted the phrase "survival of the fittest," but Spencer coined it years before the *Origin* was published, and never lost his Lamarckism or his misconception of evolution as a directional, progressive force. Spencer thought that no good could come from interfering with evolutionary progress; do-gooder policies only allow "the imbecile and idle . . . to multiply at the expense of the capable and industrious." This laissez-faire political philosophy would—inaccurately—come to be called Social Darwinism.

Though James left that passage uncommented, one can't help but feel that his disdain for Spencer's psychology and biology extended to Spencer's politics. For James, "survival of the fittest" was no impediment to the heroic, no cause for truckling accommodation. It bequeathed us with martial values, he wrote in a famous essay, that we must learn to channel into "the moral equivalent of war."

STEVEN PINKER is Harvard College Professor and Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. He has quoted William James in each of his books on language, mind, and human nature, including *The Language Instinct* and *How the Mind Works*. His wife, the novelist Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, brought James to life as a character in her novel *The Dark Sister*.

Steven Pinker 33

[A]

Year	Salary	Notes
1872-73	\$300	
1874-75	600	
1875-76	1650	
1876-80	2000	
1880-81	2500	From Dec. 1, 1880 house \$1000
1881-82	1500	
1882-83	1250	
1883-85	2500	
1885-88	3000	
1888-90	3500	
1890-92	4000	
1892-93	2000	
1893-95	4000	
1895-97	4500	
1897-99	5000	
1899-00	Absent 2500	
1899-01	" 2500	
1901-02	2000	½ charged to Gurney Fund
	Ditto to retirement	

[List of William James's salaries at Harvard University]. Typescript, undated.
 William James Papers, b MS Am 1092.9 (4577).
 Gift of the James family. 28 cm.
 (Case V, item 11)

A Professor's Salary

Drew Gilpin Faust

THIS DOCUMENT CHRONICLING WILLIAM JAMES'S HARVARD SALARY over a thirty-year span is something of a mystery. We do not know who compiled it, when, or for what purpose. It is typed, and James himself is not known to have typed anything. Most likely this is the work of a biographer or would-be biographer—an effort to situate the life of the mind within the more mundane realities of late-nineteenth-century higher education—uniting the world of William James with that of Charles William Eliot.

James experienced a happy growth in his salary over his years of service to Harvard, a growth that significantly outstripped changes in the cost of living, which was in fact decreasing during a period known as The Great Deflation. In part, James's compensation reflected changing responsibilities, as his annual course load increased to four at the peak of his career, then declined, along with his salary, after the turn of the century. But James's remuneration also seems to have been influenced by his distinction: by the 1890s his salary was close to Harvard's professorial maximum. How did this compare to average salaries across the state and nation? In 1890, when James was paid \$3,500, the average national income was \$445; the state average was \$460, a ratio of nearly 8:1. The average Harvard University professor today makes about five times the national average. Despite the consistent increases in his income, James worried incessantly about his financial security. After his retirement in 1907, he depended upon a very welcome \$3,000 annual pension from the Carnegie Fund.

DREW GILPIN FAUST is President of Harvard University and Lincoln Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Drew Gilpin Faust 35

[A]

27

is case-hardened in that direction —
it needs a miracle of grace to melt it.
~~An egg~~ The egg-shell must burst and
the contents pour out; — pour out and never
be able to gather up again.

It may well be that these are
two psychic stages, and that the theistic
one is the profounder stage, although
(as elsewhere also happens) it may be lived
on by the less important individual.

Philosophy. Philosophies are only
pictures of the world which have
grown up in the minds of different
individuals. They can best be so discus-
sed: But which ^{of the kinds of} ~~sort of~~ picture on
the whole ~~do~~ are the facts most ^{fairly} ~~clearly~~
and fully shown? In which do you ^{fairly} ~~more~~
^{represented} ~~more~~ most of the details of life
which you know — represented without
omission, addition, or distortion? — that is
one way of comparing the pictures; and

William James. [The Varieties of Religious Experience]. Autograph manuscript, ca. 1901.
William James Papers, b MS Am 1092.9 (4480) box 26. Gift of the James family. 26 cm.
(Case VI, item 7)

Pictures in Philosophy

David C. Lamberth

THIS ENTRY WAS MADE IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1902 *VARIETIES* second course of lectures, on “the philosophy best adapted to normal religious needs,” but James scuttled the plan for that course largely due to health reasons. Nonetheless, it proves a good description of the opening of his 1908 *A Pluralistic Universe*—with its picture of rationalism against empiricism, and its concern to defend a spiritualistic philosophy.

The metaphor of pictures in philosophy typically calls Wittgenstein to mind, but here we see James, early trained as a painter, invoking it in 1901 to characterize philosophies. Wittgenstein remarked in *Philosophical Investigations* that “A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.” James, too, sees the inexorability of the hold of pictures. But he is apt to understand that hold as temperamental rather than simply linguistic, specific to both our individualities and shared cultures, being realized through our experiences, while both shaping and being confirmed by them.

Also remarkable is James’s concern with how we judge our pictures. He notes two different criteria, one inclusive, almost pluralistic, and the other more aesthetic—invoking harmony, beauty, but also puzzlingly, “suggestiveness for life.” This plural and sometimes competing read on our values recurs throughout James’s work. While attentive to difference, he did not incline away from argument and evaluation, however fallible it was. This sensibility seems part of the draw of James in our time of increasing awareness of plurality, and the tensions varying values pose for societies and individuals.

DAVID C. LAMBERTH is Professor of Philosophy and Theology in the Faculty of Divinity at Harvard University. A past president of the William James Society, he is author of *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience* and a number of other works on James, pragmatism, and religion.

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American Society for Psychical Research. *Proceedings*, Volume 1 (1885). List of members.
 Widener Library Phil 58.3. James Walker Bequest fund, 1887. 22.4 cm.
 (Case VII, item 4)

Psychology, Psychical Research, and the Paranormal

David S. Reynolds

IN 1885, WILLIAM JAMES HELPED TO FOUND the American Society for Psychical Research, an American counterpart to the Society for Psychical Research in London. In his scientific interest in paranormal and unconscious phenomena, James occupied a dynamic middle space between nineteenth-century pseudoscience and twentieth-century psychoanalysis. Since the 1840s, millions of Americans had been swept up in pseudoscientific crazes: spiritualism, in which people attended séances to communicate with the dead; mesmerism, in which people put into hypnotic trances allegedly gained extraordinary powers, such as the ability to spot diseases inside the body or travel to distant time and space; and phrenology, which held that people's characters could be measured by skull bumps formed by brain "organs." William James tried to bring scientific objectivity to the study of the paranormal. His interest had been stimulated by the famed trance medium Lenora Piper, who in sittings with James and his wife displayed apparent powers of extrasensory perception. Although James was suspicious of spiritualist séances, he was fascinated by telepathy, trances, and dreams. The membership of the American Society for Psychical Research included some of the leading scientific intellects of the time, such as the celebrated astrophysicists S. P. Langley and Edward C. Pickering, the medical researcher Henry P. Bowditch, the philosopher Josiah Royce, and the Harvard anatomist Charles S. Minot. An achievement of the society was to suggest that the paranormal was grounded in the unconscious, an idea also investigated by the French psychologist Pierre Janet and later by Freud.

DAVID S. REYNOLDS is a Distinguished Professor at CUNY Graduate Center. His books include *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson*, *Walt Whitman's America*, and *John Brown, Abolitionist*. He is Honorary Co-Chair of the New-York Historical Society and the winner of the Bancroft Prize, the Christian Gauss Award, the Ambassador Book Award, and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

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^{but} tell ^{only} half the whole story. ^(only) ^{(war is worth them;} It says that ^{its} taking
~~fail to tell the~~ ^{story.} ^{its} wars are its
^{to, taking} human nature as a whole, ^{its} wars are its
^{best} ~~its~~ protection ^{against} from its ^{weaker} ~~lower~~ self, and that
^{mankind} Society cannot afford to go without them.

Pacifists ought ^{first of all}
^{to enter} ^{more deeply} into
~~to put themselves at~~ ^{Do that first in any controversy, first do that, then more} militarism's ^{ethical}
^{and ethical} point of view. ^{Above the point,}
^{then more the point,}
 says ~~the~~ ^{the} Cabot J. J. Chipman, and your
 opponent will follow you. So long as
~~the pacifist peace party~~ ^{anti-milita-}
^{disci-}
^{plinary} ^{educative} ^{function,} ^{no moral equivalent of}
^{peace of war} ^{as} ^{an} ^{analogous,} ^{as} ^{one} ^{might}
 say, ^{to} ^{the} ^{mechanical} ^{equivalent} ^{of} ^{heat,}
 so long they fail to realize the full
 awkwardness of the situation. And ~~the~~ ^{as}
 a rule they do fail. The duties, penal-
 ties and sanctions ^{pictured in} of all the ~~peace~~ ^{utopias}
^{of} ^{kind} ^{are} ^{too} ^{weak} ^{and} ^{to} ^{touch} ^{to} ^{make} ^{the}
^{any} ^{right} ^{appeal} ^{to} ^{the} ^{military} ^{imagination.} ^{of} ^{mind.}
^{Socialism} Tolstoy's pacificism alone ^{of}
~~proaches~~ is the only exception to this rule,

William James. [The Moral Equivalent of War.] Autograph manuscript, [1910].
 William James Papers, MS Am 1092.9 (4548). Gift of the James family. 26.5 cm.
 (Case VIII, item 2)

A Last Great Essay

Cornel West

WHEN THE AMERICAN GIBBON WRITES THE CLASSIC WORK on the decline and fall of the American empire, the major themes will be the corrosive effects of corporate and financial greed on our democratic polity, the military overreach of our troops in wars abroad, and the loss of individual initiative and innovation in a market-driven culture of superficial spectacle. This item from William James's last great essay "The Moral Equivalent of War" (1910) will be a prophetic relic—unheard and unheeded. His dramatic warnings against bigness—in business, finance, and government; his poignant pleas to resist U.S. imperial presences around the world; and his moral focus on the sacredness of individuality and courage of persons guided by a habitual vision of greatness are vintage Jamesian motifs. And we ignore them today at our own peril.

Harvard's William James was our most prescient and paradoxical of thinkers. He was our greatest humanist intellectual despite his lack of a B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. (he had only an M.D.). He was our most profound and adorable philosopher who was suspicious of the profession of philosophy. He was the product of an upper-class family yet his heart was always with the underdogs and misfits. He was our most ebullient and incandescent writer who harbored a deeply tragic sense of the human condition. And he was our most humble and generous genius who taught three of the most arrogant American geniuses—George Santayana, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Gertrude Stein.

William James's improvisational style, moral compassion, scientific temperament, and restless zest for experience are the precious leaven in our democratic loaf. Let us keep it fresh to delay the work of our American Gibbon!

CORNEL WEST is the Class of 1943 University Professor at Princeton University. He is the author of nineteen books, including *The American Evasion of Philosophy* and *Democracy Matters*.

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William James Jr., photographer. *William James*. Chocorua, New Hampshire.
Photograph (modern copy of an original taken ca. August 26, 1910).
MS Am 1092.13. Source unknown. 10.7 x 16 cm.
(Case IX, item 1)

In His Own Words

Michael James

AS AN ASSISTANT PAINTING TEACHER IN 1910, William “Billy” James Jr. (1882-1961) took this final photograph of his father. The vivid whiteness of the recumbent figure lying on a humble cot diagonally viewed, and the darkness broken only by the sculptural curve of the iron headboard create a chiaroscuro effect. Diffused lighting captures the modulating gray tones of the head, the texture of the beard, and the carefully folded hands—keeping them separate from the coverlet’s draping folds. Admitted into the hallowed silence of William James’s death room, our response is one of quiet awe; yet with a second lingering look, we contemplate his inexorable end—indeed our very own.

“ . . . death sits at the heart of each one of us; some she takes all at once, some she takes possession of step by step, but sooner or later we forfeit to her all that nature ever gave us . . . let us submit beforehand . . . ”

Letter to Robertson James, July 25, 1870.

“How life is but a day & expresses mainly but a single note . . . farewell! a blessed farewell!”

Letter to Henry James Sr., December 14, 1882.

[On his son Hermann] “ . . . to think of that little, fat placid, unconscious soul, with his broad kindness, having to go through that dark portal & become that changed little form gasping for breath on this bed, as he did! and we not understand a word of it, or where or what he is. Oh! It is inexpressively pathetic and sad.”

Letter to Alice H.G. James, July 30, 1885.

“Well such is life! all of these deaths make what appears here seem strangely insignificant and ephemeral, as if the weight of things, as well as the numbers, was all on the other side . . . ”

Letter to Henry James, July 11, 1888.

“There is life; and there, a step away is death. There is the only kind of beauty there ever was. There is the old human struggle and its fruits together. There is the text and the sermon, the real and the ideal in one . . . ”

“Talks to Teachers” (1889).

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“To anyone who has ever looked on the face of a dead child or parent, the mere fact that matter could have taken that precious form, ought to make matter sacred for ever after . . . That beloved incarnation was among matter’s possibilities.”

Pragmatism (1907).

“I am as convinced as I can be of anything that this experience of ours is only a part of the experience that is, . . . but *what* or *whose* or *where* the other parts are, I cannot guess. It only enables me to say ‘behind the veil, behind the veil!’ . . .”

Letter to Charles Eliot Norton, October 17, 1908.

[On Benjamin Blood] “. . . let *my* last word, then . . . be *his* word:—There is no conclusion, what has concluded, that we might conclude in regard to it? There are no fortunes to be told, and there is no advice to be given.—Farewell!”

Pluralistic Mystic (1910).

“It has come so rapidly, rapidly . . .”

William James, August 24, 1910,

as recorded by Alice H.G. James in her diary.

MICHAEL “MICKY” JAMES is an artist, sculptor, and author, most recently of *The Adventures of M. James: A Sailor’s Diary* (2005) and *The Adventures of God and Others* (2010). After discharge from the navy, he studied under Boardman at the Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, and spent a year restoring fifth- to twelfth-century mosaics at Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, under the direction of Thomas Whitemore of Cambridge, Mass. He is a grandson of William James and the youngest son of the artist Alexander R. James (1890-1946).

Contributors

THOMAS MCLEAN is Lecturer in English at the University of Otago in New Zealand. He is the editor of *Further Letters of Joanna Baillie* (2010). In 2005-2006, he held the Houghton Mifflin Visiting Fellowship in Publishing History at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

LAURENCE SENELICK is Fletcher Professor Oratory at Tufts University, where he is also Director of Graduate Studies in drama. He is Honorary Curator of Russian Theatre in the Harvard Theatre Collection. In recognition of his scholarship, he received the St. George medal of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation for the advancement of Russian art and theatre. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010. Among his recent publications are *The American Stage: Writing on Theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner* (2010), *Theatre Arts on Acting* (2008), and *A Historical Dictionary of Russian Theatre* (2007).

Contributors' notes for the essays in "Life is in the transitions" appear at the end of each piece.