Classical American Pragmatism

Its Contemporary Vitality

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James: Sympathetic Apprehension of the Point of View of the Other

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The relative worth of the individual person and the social group is never in doubt in William James's philosophy. Like his philosophical godfather, Ralph Waldo Emerson, he was first last, and always the great celebrator of individuals in all their splendid and multifaceted individuality and of individualism as an ultimate value. As James succinctly stated it, "Surely the individual, the person in the singular number, is the more fundamental phenomenon, and the social institution, of whatever grade, is but secondary and ministerial."[1] But pragmatist individualism itself can be understood only within the social relationships that constitute individuality, and James was no exception to this insight. Even in his psychology, the self as the dynamic center that creates order out of chaos includes a multitude of social selves that are taken up, developed further, or discarded.[2] By emphasizing the paramount importance of the individual person as the one who both experiences and theorizes and whose being-in-the-world is what is experienced and theorized, James laid the groundwork for measuring the worth of pragmatist social inquiry by the extent to which it contributes to the well-being of concretely situated individuals. But such individuals come to be only in relation to their physical and social environments, and the emphasis on these dynamic interactions also characterizes James's understanding of persons.

The Individualist

James was keenly aware of modern institutions' drift toward depersonalization and modern science's efforts to deny that the individual personalities of investigators contribute to the objectivity of their findings. To counteract such tendencies to swallow up the individual, he argued that although social systems are said to satisfy many interests, they cannot satisfy all of them, and among these interests are ones to which the very nature of organized systems must do violence should they attempt to interfere. James's admiring characterization of Thomas Davidson, an abrasive and highly unconventional bachelor-scholar, shows which unsatisfied interests he has in mind. When Harvard refused to hire Davidson because of his eccentricities and public attack on the teaching methods of its Greek department, for example, James felt that Harvard had made a serious mistake: "Organization and method mean much, but contagious human characters mean more in a university, where a few undisciplinables like Davidson may be infinitely more precious than a faculty-full of orderly routinists" (ECR, 90). Ever the individualist, Davidson avoided fixed hours to remain open to the uniqueness of each moment. Although he helped to found a night school for young workingmen in New York, he was hostile to socialism because he thought that it shares with all utopias the attitude that, insofar as they are parts "in a rule-bound organism," individuals are interchangeable (ECR, 92).

James praised such intense individualism because it served as a warning against the tendency of social organizations to diminish the idiosyncrasies that feed creativity. The social worth of upholding the ultimate value of each individual person is illustrated in Davidson's case by his genius for friendship and his explicit concern with the community. He advocated the abolition of creeds and their replacement by the example of a genuine community of friends. James points out that Davidson advocated not the individualism "of rapacious individual competition" but that of "spontaneously and flexibly organized social settlements or communities" (ECR, 94). He thought, for example, that the nuclear family was too isolated and inhuman and should be replaced by communities. Many of his ideas were carried out in practice. He built several cottages and turned some farm buildings into lecture halls, founding his "Summer School of the Culture Sciences" on a couple hundred acres in the Keene Valley in the Adirondacks. His summer school included women, among them "a few independent women who were his faithful friends" (ECR, 90). James seems to have been intrigued by Davidson's unconventional attitudes toward women, as when he notes that although Davidson's strong personality could have attracted adoring women disciples, he

discouraged this by treating them as equals and by taking their ideas seriously. He spoke to them as gruffly as to any of his male discussants and not with patronizing sentimentality. James remarks that strange to say, the women did not seem to resent this.

The important point in this praise of his friend is that the individualism that James celebrated was defined not in opposition to intimate relationships or to the public good but as a necessary component of a deeply experienced connection with others. It is true that Josiah Royce, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead systematically and continually draw out the interconnection where James mostly assumes it and that James acted on the belief more than he explicitly incorporated it into his writings, but he nonetheless consistently situates the self in relation to others.

Public Philosopher

Although James never developed an explicitly social or political philosophy, he did address the pressing issues of his day, and his more strictly philosophical writings were often implicit responses to them. According to George Cotkin, even the intense personalism of James's philosophy can be seen as a response to the late nineteenth-century crisis of the individual brought about by the dislocations of the Civil War and the triumph of scientism. He calls James a public philosopher in the sense of "accepting responsibility for addressing public problems and for applying insights gained from one's technical work to public issues."[3] James T. Kloppenberg notes that neither James nor Wilhelm Dilthey were interested in developing a political philosophy, but they shared similar interests in extending their theories of knowledge and ethics into social and political analyses. He argues that their radical theories of knowledge precluded both laissez-faire liberalism and revolutionary socialism and eventually found expression in social democracy and progressivism.[4]

James's belief that social organizations should support rather than overwhelm the individual informs the causes for which he stood. He was staunchly anti-imperialist and argued against his country's participation in the Spanish-American War and its annexation of the Philippines as misguided adventures in colonialist expansionism. He was a pacifist who thought that although warlike instincts could never be abolished, they could be redirected away from the destruction of life. In "The Moral Equivalent of War" he proposed the creation of something like the contemporary Peace Corps or alternative service as a means to harness the noble sentiments and heroic gestures that have traditionally been called into being by war without the bloody destruction and loss of lives that

accompany it. He was also an early advocate of more humane treatment of mental patients, and he opposed the medical licensing of physicians, fearing that it would discourage nontraditional forms of medicine. Although not against vivisection, he urged those working with animal experimentation to monitor themselves and avoid the needless cruelty that was all too prevalent. His cooperation helped to ensure the founding of Radcliffe College as a means for young women to acquire from Harvard professors the education denied them at Harvard itself. In addition, although women were formally barred from matriculating at Harvard, he admitted women, including Mary Whiton Calkins and Ethyl Puffer Howes, as students in his own graduate classes and joined with the philosophy department in petitioning the overseers to grant Calkins a doctorate.[5]

On the other hand, James exhibited some of the prejudices of his class and was not immune to racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes.[6] He thought that women and some races are more instinctual and less amenable to education than "higher" races and the male sex.[7] He was conventional in his views of women's roles and defended the position that women should happily serve men's interests. Although valuing the working classes' contributions to society, he did not understand their need to share in the economic prosperity of the upper classes. These examples indicate the limitations of basing a social and political philosophy on the value of the individual without developing a corresponding theory of society and of the unequal distribution of power among classes, ethnic groups, and genders. As a counterweight to the excessive accumulation of power by the highly organized and extended institutions of the government, military, and corporations, however, James's defense of the individual still has worthwhile insights to offer. An oblique criticism of the unequal distribution of power can be found in statements such as the following: "The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such, national ones first and foremost . . . and in favor of the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way, under-dogs always, til history comes, after they are long dead, and puts them on the top."[8]

The Social Self

Because he developed a novel "concrete" or phenomenological approach to psychological subject matter, James could draw on a richly nuanced description of the human being active in the world to criticize traditional philosophical beliefs about the ego or self.[9] According to his

concrete point of view, the self is not assumed to be either transcendental or reductively empirical. Instead, as described from the perspective "of our immediately-felt life," the self is a process in time constituted through multiple relationships. The center of one's consciousness is not fixed but shades off into various fringe experiences, no one of which exclusively identifies the self, since "our *full* self is the whole field." In this field, as experienced in the present moment, "is a little past, a little future, a little awareness of our own body, of each other's persons, of these sublimities we are trying to talk about, of the earth's geography and the direction of history, . . . and of who knows how much more?" (*PU*, 129–30). In *The Principles of Psychology* James analyzes the larger field of the *full* self into its constituent parts. In this interplay of relations he distinguishes between "the '*me*'" as "an empirical aggregate of things objectively known" and "the *I* which knows them" (*PP*, 1:378–79). Although the nucleus of the "me" is the bodily self as felt and experienced at every moment, it is not limited by the corporeal body. Our instinctive preferences, along with the most important practical aspects of life, constitute the "me," or material self. We often feel as strongly about our possessions as we do about our more limited bodily self; for example, "our fame, our children, the work of our hands, may be as dear to us as our bodies are, and arouse the same feelings and the same acts of reprisal if attacked" (*PP*, 1:279).[10] It is within this more expansive sense of the self that James develops his account of the social self.

Our social sense of self is derived from the recognition that others give us. Since we play many roles, we have many social selves, for example, the rebellious daughter and the conscientious employee. Our behavior and even values change depending on our relation to these others. What is correct behavior in the professional relation of doctor to patient, for example, would not be acceptable among friends. Confusion can result when one of these split-off selves is thrown together with another, as when a mother is a customer seeking a loan at a bank where her daughter works as the loan officer. Some of these selves are also more important than others. Typically, for example, your lover's opinion of you outweighs all others, and her or his approvals and disapprovals call forth much stronger emotional reactions than seems called for to an outsider. Such social selves do not exhaust the empirical me, however, which also consists in a subjective self, or psychic dispositions, which are the more enduring part of the self. This self of all other selves is the active element in all consciousness (*PP*, 1:281–83).

Corresponding to these different levels of selves are also the instinctive impulses of bodily self–seeking, social self–seeking, and spiritual self–seeking. Social self–seeking consists of efforts to win the approval

of others, to attract their attention and notice. Besides people, the places and things I know can enlarge my self, metaphorically speaking. But not all the different selves that arise in concrete experience or that can be imagined can be realized. Although abstractly I can revel in an unlimited number of selves, I cannot concretely realize them. If I actualize a life as a marathon runner, for example, I cannot also be a bon vivant who eats and drinks excessively. In developing the self I want to be, many other possible selves must be suppressed, since I will have neither the time, energy, nor sustained interest to develop them. Once I have chosen what most counts for me, the judgments of others as to my abilities in being this self will outweigh all others. I may be thought to be a great cook, for instance, but if my chosen sense of self is that of an orchestra conductor, then even slight criticisms of my performances from music critics will affect me more deeply than the highest praise of my culinary skills. The effect of the approbation or disapproval of others, therefore, is always mediated through my own estimate of who I am, of my own choice regarding which of many possible characters or selves shall be my real self or core set of selves (PP, 1:293–96).

Left to ourselves, we would tend to aggrandize as many of our selves as would be concretely possible. But James thinks that for ethical reasons, these selves must be ordered hierarchically, beginning with the bodily self on the bottom, then the social self, and the spiritual self at the top. Each self offers something of worth to the next level, but the requirements of the higher level generally outweigh those of the lower. Bodily well-being, for instance, supports the other levels and should be developed, but the social ties that bind us to others ought to rank higher than more physical needs; for example, you ought to sacrifice a little extra sleep when your job requires you to wake up early. Some of this subordination of lower to higher happens naturally because it is impossible to realize all these selves haphazardly. The greatest guide to such ordering, however, is the social one by which we judge the acts of others. It is much easier to condemn the selfishness, bodily hoggishness, lust, social vanity, and despotism of others than to recognize and condemn similar behavior in ourselves. My tendency to let my own desires proliferate unabated is soon checked by my judgments on the repulsiveness and negative consequences of similar behavior in others. Thus, my warm feelings for all that pertains to myself are overruled by my intellectual judgments of the behavior of others that mirror back to me my own (PP, 1:299–300).

Besides noting the importance of our actual social relations as a means by which we come to understand ourselves more critically, James also appeals to a potential social self as an important component of our moral

and religious life. We can be strengthened in our resolve to defy the actual social self as perceived by others by appealing to an ideal social self. This happens when we move out of a social group to which we owe allegiance to become members of another social group because we think that it—or the change—is of greater worth. This happens, for example, when we leave one religious denomination for another, marry outside our ethnic or racial community, or switch from conventional to homeopathic medical practices. Given the negative judgment of actual social judges, I can appeal to possible social judges who would in the future praise my decisions, even if they never knew of my personal existence. Thus, in choosing to be a vegetarian in the face of opposition from my social circle, I can choose to believe that vegetarian eating habits will be commonly thought praiseworthy in the future and that the present practice of eating meat will be condemned as immoral (PP, 1:300–301).

I can feel that my present decisions are subject to the judgment of an ideal social self, that my actual social self "is at least *worthy* of approving recognition by the highest *possible* judging companion." For many people, such an ideal companion is God, and accusations of infidelity and fanaticism by their actual social circle can be overcome by their belief that they are observed by such an ideal spectator. For James, the innermost of the empirical selves is social and therefore can find social fulfillment only in an ideal world socially constituted. He thinks that the needs of our social self are so strong that it would be almost impossible to bear the deep failures of our social relationships without the feeling that our efforts are appreciated by some such ideal companion. It is therefore common to personify the principles of morality for the sake of which we sacrifice more tangible social approval (PP, 1:301).

Sympathetic Apprehension of the Other's Point of View

James never developed a systematic ethics because he thought that such formal systems miss the point that the source and arbiter of values must be each individual person.[11] Ironically, it is James's very commitment to the sacredness of the individual that leads him to regard blindness to the values by which others organize their lives as the chief obstacle to morality.[12] As long as we are merely spectators of the lives of others, we will judge them falsely because we will impose on them our own standards. Such dogmatism "is the root of most human injustices and cruelties" (TT, 150). To appreciate the vital significance of the inner life of other persons, no matter how they differ by color, class, gender, or culture, we must seek to understand them sympathetically, as they understand themselves. Instead of legislating morality, philosophers

should seek to satisfy as many demands as possible and cause the least pain (*WB*, 155). Thus, although every person is responsible for her or his own morality, the ultimate goal sought in promoting the moral life is inclusiveness. Others will tell us when our actions harm them, and it is our duty to find some way to accommodate them. The social aspect of James's ethical perspective cannot be found in a developed social theory but rests in his appeals to the concrete specificity of others as other. We respect others not by imposing our ideals as to what is good for them but by responding to their "actually aroused complaints," that is, by letting them speak for themselves (*WB*, 156).

Most contemporary philosophy is written for professional philosophers and judged by its logical coherence and technical virtuosity. James calls such dry exercises escapist and argues that philosophy should instead find its home in the messy world of everyday life, which it should help us to understand and transform. Instead of seeking the classic sanctuary of pure ideas so beloved of philosophy professors, James expects reflective engagement with "the world of concrete personal experiences to which the street belongs." Such a world "is multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed." Therefore, the proper judge of the success of philosophical endeavors is not limited to those in philosophy classrooms but includes everyone who seriously inquires into the meaning of life. Such inquiry requires no technical skill, only the confidence to "measure the total character of the universe as we feel it" (*PM*, 17–18, 23–24).

James criticized the style of argumentation that has become common philosophical practice, namely, carefully examining texts to expose their logical inconsistencies. Eschewing this model of interrogation, which treats others as adversaries harboring errors that must be tracked down, exposed, and eliminated, he sought to develop a method of sympathetic cooperation. According to his pluralistic and finitist conception of the way we come to understanding, every person has a unique and irreplaceable angle of vision because she or he is differently situated and has a varied ensemble of needs and desires and a characteristic temperament. Each person, therefore, will see and organize the world uniquely, and the knowledge gathered by the human community will be more comprehensive and valuable to the extent that it takes account of this rich variety of resources.

Sympathetic apprehension of the point of view of the other, therefore, is central to James's philosophy. In the absence of any absolute point of view, truths are matters of finite experiences that support one another. If they clash, then pragmatic truth has not yet been obtained. It is no use to appeal to ordinary logic to settle disputes because it cannot define and

confine existence within its perimeters. Temporal reality, "that distributed and strung-along and flowing sort of reality which we finite beings swim in," overflows its boundaries (*PU*, 97). The problem is not that a logical explanation cannot be produced but that any given situation admits of too many adequate explanations. James argues, therefore, that rationality is better understood as intimacy rather than as transparency. Disputes cannot be settled by simple appeal to the facts as transparent to all, since the world lends itself to many and even conflicting interpretations, and too many political, economic, religious, and cultural organizations try to impose their version of the truth on others. The rationality that is needed is recognition that all human beings depend on a limited and fragile resource base—the planet earth. We are united in a common destiny, since "the common *socius* of us all is the great universe whose children we are" (*PU*, 19). We must learn to share, accommodate, or negotiate one another's points of view at the peril of failing to survive at all.

We all decide the relevance of our understandings of the world for our ways of living and choose which values to live by and which to reject. Nonetheless, James argues that our sentiment of rationality will not be satisfied until we have sufficient evidence that our understandings of the world get a hold of what is most valuable for us to know not only to survive but to thrive as a species. Nor will it be satisfied until we have sufficient evidence that the values by which we live allow for the fullest human development. But these demands of our rationally aesthetic and practical nature can be satisfied only within the larger community of which we are a part. I can have evidence that my concepts and values work for me, for instance, but I cannot know that they will continue to work in the long run, in varied circumstances, in terms of other people's beliefs and values, or in the light of all the evidence possible unless others can confirm, transform, or reject my beliefs and values.

Concern for the point of view of others, therefore, is as central to knowledge claims as it is to ethical claims. Instead of piecing together the dead body of once living facts, understanding should seek to uncover the process by which facts become facts. The positivist empiricist model of understanding a complex entity by dissecting its parts after the fact will never yield insight into how it came to be thought of as just this thing out of many possible alternatives. An act of living sympathy with the motives and intentions by which persons make sense of their world gives insight into the creative spontaneity by which human beings create stability in a world of process. This intuitive sympathy allows us to overcome the bewilderment that can follow from the realization that many alternative post hoc decompositions can equally explain why things are understood as they are. A living understanding of the diverse interpre-

tations by which persons organize experience is far more valuable than any amount of empiricist postmortem conceptual decompositions just because such fragments of dead results cannot explain why there is no limit to possible alternative explanations for the same events or entities (*PU*, 116–18).

For James, communication is fully and dynamically embodied: "Before I can think you to mean my world, you must affect my world; before I can think you to mean much of it, you must affect much of it; and before I can be sure you mean it *as I do*, you must affect it *just as I should* if I were in your place" (*MT*, 23–24). Without interactive confirmation there is no way to know that our beliefs are justified. But such interactive confirmations themselves take place within a horizon of shared meanings and values. James has shown that no one has any right to claim a privileged insight into being. Conflicting opinions are inevitable, and the philosopher's task is to "offer mediation between different believers, and help to bring about consensus of opinion" (*VRE*, 359). It is not to pronounce judgments of truth and falsity, since philosophers can no more claim a god's-eye view into reality than anyone else can. James breaks with the empiricist model of knowledge, according to which we, like spectators, simply look and see what the world is like and then collect the facts. He also breaks with the idealist model of subsuming sense data under a priori categories. The pragmatist model of knowledge is that of a praxis, a doing or ordering. We intentionally organize experience to satisfy our aesthetic and practical interests. Since there is no way to organize experience into recognizable objects or to apprehend relations without selective interest, disputes over knowledge are at the same time disputes over the selective interests operative in a given case as well as over what counts as a better outcome.[13]

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the point of view of others to understand and evaluate the basis of their claims. James argues that we are more likely to achieve such insight when we attempt to apprehend the points of view of others sympathetically than when we either impose our own perspective on them or approach an alien view through a critical examination of logical flaws. A first principle of interpretation derived from these insights is to approach a person's claims, or a text, by trying to understand the particular angle of vision—that is, the combination of insights and values—by which that person organizes her or his life or by which texts are structured. The next step, if possible, is to work with other persons toward mutual understanding, for we cannot assume that anyone understands others as they understand themselves. Finally, since not all perspectives are equally insightful or worthwhile, such mutually arrived at perspectives are tested by the relevant community to assess

whether the knowledge gained is worth retaining and developing further, given the concrete outcomes of acting on these beliefs.

A Concretely Relational Self

Pragmatists modified the Darwinian model of evolution to take account of the unique human powers of imagination and intelligence through which we organize and transform the surrounding world both mentally and physically. Humans are a species for whom not just survival but survival as a valued form of life became paramount.[14] In his developmental psychology or from his concrete point of view (phenomenology of being-in-the-world), James demonstrates that selective interest operates on every level as the means by which human beings organize experience into the many structured worlds in which we live. *The Principles of Psychology* does not treat minds as disembodied spirits but "takes into account the fact that minds inhabit environments which act on them and on which they in turn react; because . . . it takes mind in the midst of all its concrete relations" (*PP*, 1:19). James draws on his reconstructed Darwinian model of the interaction of organism and environment to explain how persons organize their experiences into knowledge and assert and test values in interaction with their surroundings, both physical and social. We mistakenly think that the world appears the same to everyone who looks carefully because we do not realize how profoundly recognition depends on the fact that humans are born into a community that passes on a cultural heritage that usefully organizes experience through feeling, gesture, language, and physical interactions.

According to the pragmatist evolutionary model, persons doubly depend on their communities. Social relationships are the only means for the transmission of the cultural heritage that provides the intellectual tools necessary for the creative spontaneity that defines human beings, and the community is the only means to test the wider validity and worth of the individual's contributions to organizing experience and enacting values. In this mutual interdependence, "the community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community" (*WB*, 174).[15] In their day-by-day testing, my personal beliefs must continue to be satisfactorily confirmed over time and by others if they are to be valued as objectively true and not only subjectively true. This is why James often directly addresses his listeners or readers and asks them to test his explanations against their own experiences. In a footnote to his explanation of the way attention carves objects out of an overabundance of sensory stimulation, for instance, he lists many scholarly works on the function of conception, some of which

support and some of which contradict him. To make it clear that he is not appealing to their authority to decide the issue, however, or to purely logical arguments, he concludes by saying that "the reader must decide which account agrees best with his own actual experience" (*SPP*, 33 n. 3). Truths are "invaluable instruments of action" that have been proven to lead us to worthwhile outcomes. Although they are theoretically verifiable, however, it is impossible in practice to personally test all our beliefs. We take most of them on a credit system and must trust the verifications claimed by others as much as we do our own. "We exchange ideas; we lend and borrow verifications, get them from one another by means of social intercourse" (*PM*, 97, 102).

In *Pragmatism* James shows how the community transmits these organizing principles as commonsense beliefs. Common sense embodies concepts originally invented by unknown ancestors and adopted and passed on by the community because they were found useful for organizing experience. Our past beliefs—including such commonsense concepts as substantial continuity over time, cause and effect, time and space, and reality versus appearance—apperceive new experiences, and each modifies the other in doing so. Instead of treating these fundamental concepts as logical categories deducible by reason alone, as intuitions, or as reflections of the inner nature of reality, James explains them as cultural constructs, "extraordinarily successful hypotheses," first spontaneously created by unknown geniuses and then slowly and laboriously transmitted over time (*PM*, 94). Persons are indebted to the social order into which they are born or in which they grow and develop, first of all, for the original categories by which they apperceive the world and for the values that are passed on to them. But society also provides an intersubjective means for judging the relevance and importance of continuing to hold these beliefs and values, as well as providing adequate grounds for developing new concepts and values. Although only individuals can create new concepts or values, the community initially provides the means for doing so by socializing its members into an already interpreted world and an approved set of values.

Truths are what work in mediating between the older body of truths and new experiences eventuating in new facts. The funded character of experience includes not only what I have learned through my own experiences but also commonsense beliefs, which filter personal intuitions through received expressions of a shared, cultural heritage (*PM*, 33–37). James often criticizes both idealist and positivist philosophical theories because they cannot account for the commonsense beliefs he thinks support his radically empiricist commitments. Therefore, in acknowledging that his own philosophy of pure experience coheres neither with the

idealist language of traditional philosophy nor with commonsense beliefs, he appeals for help to the wider community. James concludes his essay "A World of Pure Experience" by stating that only "by the contributions of many co-operating minds" will his radically empiricist philosophy of pure experience have any hope of growing into a respectable system (*ERE*, 44).

Live possibilities are those that are grounded in actual conditions but that come to pass only through our active intervention. Taken at face value, our acts reveal "the workshop of being, where we catch fact in the making." James offers as a serious hypothesis of practical reason that the fate of the world is precarious and its outcome dependent on "a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done" (*PM*, 138, 139). In this really dangerous universe, tough-minded pragmatists must be willing to risk failure if they have not understood rightly what it takes not only to interact successfully in the universe to preserve a robust form of human life but to bring about a continuous development of humanity that is good rather than evil. With no guarantee that an all-powerful being will appear in the nick of time to rescue us from our mistakes, we must be willing to pay with our own persons, if need be, to realize our ideals.

But we do not exist in the world as isolated beings; we are social through and through. Even in our all too precarious universe, we must still count on our fellow women and men to cooperate with us if the job is ever to be done. And for those who are religiously inclined, who are tender-minded as well as tough-minded, who feel that it is beyond merely human powers to conquer the evil in the world, James holds out the possibility of cooperating with higher powers who might also be working to save the world (*PM*, 141–44).[16] Even in the realm of religious belief, James is a pluralist who imagines these higher powers as being many rather than one.

Notes

1. William James, "Thomas Davidson: Individualist (1903)" (*ECR*, 97).

2. The self as organizing center of experience does not contradict James's arguments for the reality of relations, or "halo of felt relations," which form the horizon or fringe within which objects can be cognized (*PP*, 1:247, 1:249n. 19). Specific relations must be actively dissociated from a "much-at-onceness" if we are "to enjoy simplicity and harmony in place of what was chaos" (*SPP*, 32; *WB*, 95). See Charlene H. Seigfried, *William James's Radical Reconstruction of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 75–97, 106–9; and idem, *Chaos and Context* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978).

3. George Cotkin, *William James, Public Philosopher* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 4.

4. James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 145–95.

5. Charlene H. Seigfried, "1895 Letter from Harvard Philosophy Department," *Hypatia* 8 (Spring 1993): 230–33.

6. See Charlene H. Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 111–41.

7. William James, "Brute and Human Intellect" (*EPS*, 36–37).

8. Letter of William James to Mrs. Henry Whitman, June 7, 1899, *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James, 2 vols. (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 2:90, quoted in Cotkins, *William James*, 141.

9. For an extended explication of James's concrete point of view in philosophy, which anticipates but also diverges from what has since been called a phenomenological approach, see Seigfried, *William James's Radical Reconstruction*.

10. As this quotation makes clear, it is possible to use James's analysis in a gender-neutral way, although the masculinist bias of James's explanation is evident in his repeated references to "*a man's Self*" as including "his clothes and his house, his wife and children." "A man" in this quotation is being used in the sense of "humankind," which therefore slants the understanding of humanity as seen from a masculine perspective, as can be seen in such equivalent phrases as "our wife and babes," where the pronoun once again excludes women (*PP*, 1:279–80).

11. In an essay entitled "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," however, James does argue that ethics would never develop in a "*moral solitude*," because obligation arises only when concrete persons make claims on one another (*WB*, 146–48).

12. William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (*TT*, 132–49) and "What Makes a Life Significant" (*TT*, 150–67).

13. For the centrality of aesthetic and practical interests to James's pragmatist model of knowledge, see Seigfried, *William James's Radical Reconstruction*.

14. See William James, "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence" (*EPH*, 7–22).

15. Jürgen Habermas takes this quotation, which is inscribed on the wall of William James Hall at Harvard, as expressing "the essential intuition of pragmatism." According to Habermas, "The maxim asserts the reciprocal dependence of socialization and individualization, the interrelation between personal autonomy and social solidarity, that is part of the implicit knowledge of all communicatively acting subjects; it does not merely express a more or less subjective opinion concerning what some person believes is the good life" (*Justification and Application*, trans. Ciaran Cronin [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993], 114). This information was brought to my attention when posted on the DEWEY-L list by Howard G. Callaway, Aug. 18, 1995.

16. See Charlene H. Seigfried, "Introduction," in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), xi–xii.