Streams of William James

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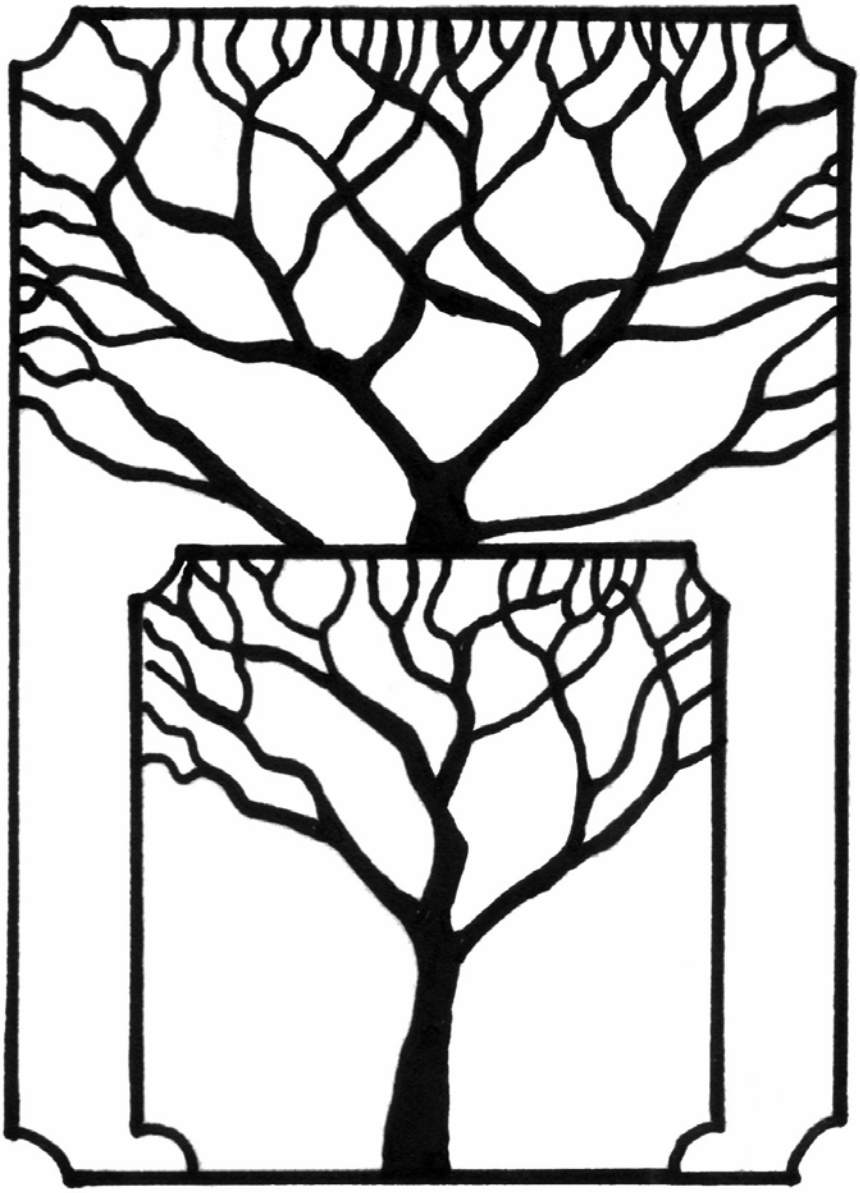

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Second Special Issue on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*
Contemporary Perspectives on James's Psychology of Religion
John Snarey and Paul Jerome Croce • Guest Editors

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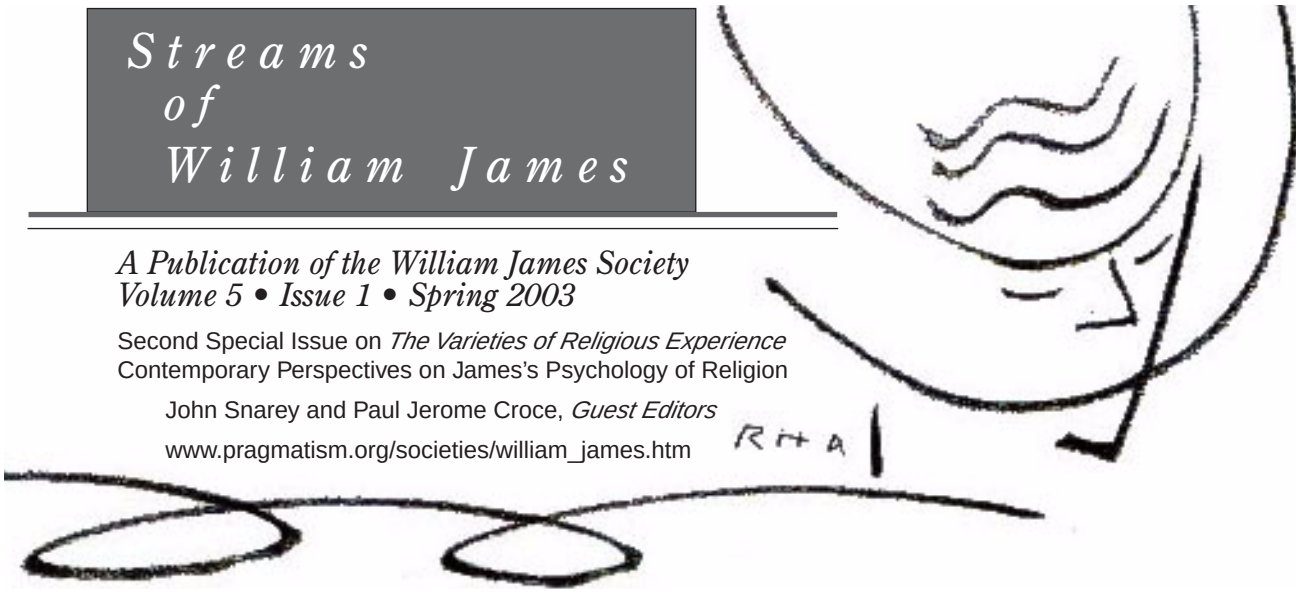

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Introduction to the Second Special Issue: Contemporary Readings of the Varieties

by John Snarey

In this second special issue of *Streams*, we again honor the centenary of William James's classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). The seven articles in this particular feast demonstrate that James's psychology of religion remains as thought-provoking and generative today as it was 100 years ago. This vitality is also illustrated in two centennial-year books on James, reviews of which close this issue.

A challenging article by Eugene Taylor begins the issue. He asks if some commentators have discounted James's existentially oriented, nonreductive phenomenology, overlooked his clearly stated purpose to focus on interior spiritual experience, misinterpreted James by reading him through Dewey and Peirce, and confused James's pragmatism for his radical empiricism. As an antidote to these over-rationalizing trends, Taylor closes with a call for a revolution in Jamesian scholarship to correct common misinterpretations of the *Varieties* and of James's work in general.

William D. Woody argues that modern research on conversion remains mired in the competing value judgments of researchers regarding the groups that they study, but that current disagreements could be alleviated with an experiential and pragmatic Jamesian perspective. Such an approach would evaluate the outcomes of modern conversions in the light of the experience of the convert, instead of evaluating the convert's new perspective. James's ideas and perspectives remain relevant into the 21st century as researchers study conversion in increasingly diverse belief systems.

The third article, in effect, operationalizes Woody's call through a 20-year longitudinal investigation of sudden transformations within a Jamesian framework. Janet C'de Baca and William R. Miller note in their study that contemporary researchers often differ on the question of whether personality can change. The *Varieties* described, in particular, two types of change: a more common, gradual, step-by-step growth and a change that occurs in a more sudden, discontinuous manner. The authors termed this second type a "quantum change," and interviewed people who described such a change. Their data confirm that James described a real phenomenon: people can be and are changed suddenly and profoundly.

Following the report of a longitudinal study, Mark J. Krejci presents two case studies that examine data relevant to James's thesis that an outcome or fruit of religious experience may be the unification of personality. Krejci persuasively posits that James presented a model that reflects the type of transformation facilitated by the therapeutic process. Krejci explores how James's work can provide insights to therapists interested in addressing religious issues in psychotherapy.

In the fifth article, Robert A. Emmons focuses on the incorporation of religious issues into the psychotherapeutic process, following leads offered in the *Varieties.* Emmons asks, "Is religion an effective way of integrating discordant impulses and goals into a coherent self-structure?" James devoted considerable attention to the unification or integration of the self and, Emmons notes, this is a topic which contemporary research can also address. He argues that the comprehensiveness of religion accounts for the ability of the religious sentiment to forge a harmonious pattern from a patchwork of discordant impulses and to rescue the psyche from inner turmoil and conflict.

Peter Venable reminds us that James's *Varieties* has already borne therapeutic fruit. James, that is, was an indirect architect of Alcoholics Anonymous. Others have also written on this connection, but Venable's contribution is to capture with superb succinctness James's influence on the most influential self-help group in existence.

Richard L. Gorsuch notes that, although *Varieties* is widely known and influential, another related area in which James labored and wrote, psychic research, has been less noticed. James conducted several investigations of psychic phenomena that had occurred in the United States and in England. Gorsuch addresses how, from James's perspective, religious and psychic phenomena are most usefully defined and studied, and how conclusions in the two areas are alike and how they differ. James's work and conclusions are then compared with contemporary research.

These seven articles share some common ingredients. Most obviously, all address conversion or self-unification experiences, although to varying degrees. A second common ingredient is spirituality—from Taylor's Jamesian emphasis on interior spiritual experiences to Gorsuch's respectful attention to psychic phenomena, the articles are consistent with the contemporary emphasis on spirituality. Finally, all of the authors draw on James's other writings, reminding us that the *Varieties* functions as a keystone in James's works by linking *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) and *The Will to Believe* (1897) with *Pragmatism* (1907) and *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909). The *Varieties*, in effect, helps us grasp the unifying spirit of James's work.

—John Snarey is Professor of Human Development and Ethics at Emory University in Atlanta (GA), where he teaches a master's course on James's psychology of religion at the Candler School of Theology and a doctoral seminar on James's complete works for the Department of Psychology and the Graduate Division of Religion. Dr. Snarey organized and chaired two centennial symposia on the Varieties *at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, which largely formed the basis of these two special issues. He can be reached by e-mail at jsnarey@emory.edu.*

Have We Engaged in a Colossal Misreading of James's Varieties*?*

by Eugene Taylor

A major question confronting all who write on William James is whether or not, over the past 100 years, we have engaged in a colossal misreading of his work.[1] Although not as large as that of his more famous brother Henry, the corpus on William is substantial. Yet many writers fail to read it, as they have also generally failed to read James in his entirety. As each discovers him anew, many different William Jameses have emerged. We marvel at the effect James seems to have had in inspiring each individual to such great heights. This, possibly, is his most enduring legacy. But we must ask as well, is there not also an accumulating body of evidence among all these opinions about what he actually said? What did he actually believe? What did he actually read? What actually was his point of view? While history shows us that we have many different interpretations of James, this situation also has led to a view of James circulating today that might not be exactly right. James's views regarding spiritual experience, especially as expressed in the *Varieties*, illustrates this point.

I will discuss only four of what I believe to be the more salient misreadings. The most persistent among psychologists appears to be that, although James said to his audience he was going to deliver the lectures as a psychologist of religion, the only field in which he could claim any expertise (James 1902, p. 2), modern psychologists, if they read him at all, do not generally read James after his *The Principles of Psychology*, claiming he ceased being a psychologist after 1890.[2] When they do read his *Varieties*, they tend to advance the interpretation that James is out of date because he did not apply the methods of scientific reductionism to his subject matter (cf. Gorsuch & Spilka 1987). Although he may have been interesting, they maintain that he was not a good measurer of religious behavior. This is a correct expression of the epistemology of these contemporary authors as they view the current center of gravity of the psychology of religion within psychology, but a misinterpretation of James's own metaphysical assumptions about what a scientific psychology that studies mystical experience should look like (Taylor 2003). They wished James had adhered more to the common standard. But James wished to overthrow that standard and establish instead a metaphysics more appropriate to a scientific psychology that was able to deal with experience, of which behavior would then be merely a subset. Psychologists, however, like philosophers and religious scholars, tend to compartmentalize him into his psychology, his philosophy, and his religion, and then judge him according to the standards of their narrow specialties, instead of taking him as a whole, which would transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Another problem in the interpretation of James is to read a little of his works and then write a lot about one's own ideas instead. This is good, because James gets anyone who resonates with his work to start thinking. But when it comes to rendering James's own thought, one result is that authors whose specialization is actually somewhere else usually miss James's central point or actually cannot articulate it because their epistemology is so radically different.

An example here would be Charles Taylor's recent book, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*, which is Harvard University Press's contribution to the centenary of the *Varieties* (C. Taylor 2002). The author is a translator of Hegel, a specialist in economics, politics, and social theory, knowledgeable about the history of the Catholic Church in Europe, and an admirer of German idealism.[3] We may say that Charles Taylor's orientation represents the quintessential example of the Western rationalist tradition. His essay on the varieties of religion today, while admirably written, is still only a slim volume of just over 100 pages, which he tells us he wrote as an after-thought to some other lectures he had been preparing. In a way, James does not come off as being that important in Taylor's own pantheon. The work contains a few interesting references to James but spends most of its time talking about social theory in the line of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim and misses the central point of James's work: namely, organized religion and personal spiritual experience are substantially different. Hence, Charles Taylor's claim that civilization has been on a steady march toward secularism misses the point that the sacred is hardly confined to the denominations, as James maintained. People have always had the capacity for spiritual awakening, and religious institutions are but the secondary reflection of that primary experience. Instead, Professor Taylor has a social theory but no apparent interest in the details of a dynamic interior spiritual life, which James spends the majority of *Varieties* talking about. Because of the inherent spirituality in human beings, the move away from institutional

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1. See Taylor (2002a, fn 1) for a listing of the many prefaces and new introductions to different editions of *The varieties of religious experience*.

2. A significant number of psychologists subscribe to this view, which is incorrect. See the numerous introductions to the psychological works of the Harvard edition of James's writings. These and others are reviewed in the appendix to Taylor (1996).

3. James likened Hegel's system to the grandiose delusions experienced under nitrous oxide and thought German idealism just another misplaced argument for the Absolute. James was, in my opinion, not a Kantian but a Swedenborgian, after his father, and also a transcendentalist in the tradition of Emerson. See Taylor (2001-2002; 2002a).

religion may fairly be regarded as a measure of our *increased* spirituality. This would explain why organized religion might not be any longer so widely respected by succeeding generations of young people, despite the worries about secularization among traditionalists in the Western religions. Our collective spirituality may be on the increase, even though our denominationalism is not.

Nevertheless, the publisher describes this little work by "one of the foremost thinkers in the English-speaking world," as "powerful," and as "casting a new light on the present." To his credit, Charles Taylor makes some mention of non-Western religions, and relies on an obscure scholar for references to what he misunderstands as New Age religion in the United States. However, he does not appear knowledgeable about the subject James actually wrote about—the interior spiritual life of the individual—nor realize that James was actually attempting to deconstruct the very framework Prof. Taylor so earnestly continues to advocate. James did not deal with the sociological aspects of organized religious institutions for a good reason. In fact, he self-consciously said he intended to avoid them in favor of a phenomenological (not a rational-analytic or sociological) approach. Prof. Taylor seems to have ignored James and proceeded along these other lines anyway.

Another contemporary misreading of *Varieties* is to presume that James was a pluralist who did not stand for a particular position, despite the fact that he, himself, claimed he was a radical empiricist. In this light, James is cast as a meliorist under whose umbrella everyone can eventually find a place, while the more central parts of his worldview are ignored, left unintegrated, or are redefined in more palatable terms. In this way he is normalized, rationalized, and homogenized.

An example of this homogenization can be found in the work of Ruth Anna Putnam, a philosopher in the tradition of John Dewey, who describes herself as a specialist in moral philosophy, ethical theory, American philosophy, and William James. In *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, which she edited, James is cast into the framework of the Western analytic tradition, in which he is interpreted philosophically, primarily through the ideas of his colleagues Charles Peirce and John Dewey.[4]

In her recent lecture at Edinburgh for the centenary of the publication of the *Varieties*, Ruth Anna Putnam extended this melioristic impulse by taking the position that, since James was a pluralist, we should by all means accept a pluralistic interpretation of James himself (Putnam 2002). By taking this position, she argues for the right to hold her differences with James's own overbeliefs. James had said in the *Varieties* that religious experience could be understood both in terms of what was generic to all human beings and what was idiosyncratic to the individual. From the generic could be derived an understanding of psychological processes common to all men and women insofar as phenomenological accounts of spiritual experience was concerned. What was idiosyncratic to the individual was an expression of that person's personal beliefs about the ultimate nature of reality, which might or might not have relevance for anyone else except that one person. These beliefs held by the individual over and above what was common to all human beings regarding religious experience James called "overbeliefs" (James 1902, pp. 513 ff).

James himself referred to dynamic theories of the subconscious as part of the generic make-up of each human being, while he considered his description of the farther reaches of our inward nature to be his own overbelief. Like Charles Taylor, Ruth Anna Putnam takes a more socially oriented explanation of religious life to be the true case, allowing James his explanation of more central, phenomenological origins within the mystical experience, while essentially disagreeing with him. She does not differentiate the mystical experience in her own work from the larger category of religion in general. In fact, she does not specifically mention it at all, but rather implies that it is a state sometimes described by people who claim to have such experiences, nothing more.

We grant her wish to have James interpreted pluralistically, since this is her own overbelief. But beyond that she goes no further in discussing the details of James's own view. With regard to what is generic, she also does not incorporate any of the new scholarship relating James's own dynamic psychology of the subconscious to the awakening of profoundly transforming mystical experiences. This is of some moment, since James's interpretation of morality and ethics, Prof. Putnam's chosen field of expertise, in the *Varieties* hangs on the power and depth of internal spiritual experiences for those who have had them, not on the internalization of rules and regulations guiding most adherents of organized religion who have never had such experiences.

This observation has less to do with Prof. Putnam, since she is not really addressing herself to James scholars, and more to do with a larger problem in modern philosophy, since mainstream philosophers are her intended audience. Modern philosophy in the twentieth century has been dominated largely by the analytic tradition, a school of logical analysis that seeks to exist in congruence with the logic and philosophy of the scientific method. This is not a philosophy of the person. It is not interested in accounts of personal experience. It is not a philosophy about life. At best, it is a model of impersonal social forces defined by the scientific method as the explanatory mechanism of behavior.

The force of this tradition is so strong that contemporary interpreters of American philosophy remain overanalytically inclined. In general, they have no depth psy-

4. See Putnam (1997). Also, philosophers in the analytic tradition generally follow Gerald Myers, whose *William James: His life and thought* (1985) tries to square James's ideas with normative, mainstream philosophy through the lens of Wittgenstein and Russell.

chology, and therefore would not understand James's emphasis on the subliminal, let alone the mystical, and they have little interest or understanding of either his major contribution as a first generation phenomenologist before Husserl, or his attempt to direct their attention to other ways of knowing other than the analytic. Moreover, they blatantly ignore James's deconstruction of their own rational enterprise. Yet the analytic philosophers purport to interpret James, religious experience, and his interpretation of it, while remaining confined to their analytic categories.[5] One unfortunate result is that their discussions remain primarily among themselves, ignoring the new evidence about the origins of James's philosophy that comes from the work of historians of psychology or religious studies, as well as the scholarship of younger, more cross-culturally literate scholars outside their circle.

Another, more subtle trend in interpreting James, and particularly *Varieties*, has been to consider the work neither as psychology nor philosophy, but to relegate it to religious studies and therefore to overlook its significance in the larger scheme of James's ideas and influence. This interpretive framework also overlooks the connections James himself understood he was making between psychology, philosophy, and religion.

A case in point is the recent Pulitzer Prize winning study, *The Metaphysical Club: A Study of Ideas in America* by Louis Menand. Here we have an extraordinarily well-written work, extensively researched, erudite, even wry in places, that purports to examine the origins of pragmatism in the late nineteenth century. Specifically, the author examines the ideas of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., William James, Charles Peirce, and John Dewey, first against the backdrop of the Civil War and then in the contexts of the subsequent rise of evolutionary theory, probability, and indeterminacy in philosophy and the sciences, as well as mainstream culture. In the end, Menand depicts pragmatism as our own distinctively American philosophy.

This is to say that Menand's account of James, delightful as it is, is a merely normative one. He accepts what all the commentators have said about James as true and repeats their misinterpretations. But where is psychical research? Where are the references to James's training in French experimental physiology? Where is James on consciousness, a psychological construct central to his pragmatism? Where is radical empiricism, and not pragmatism, as the core of James's metaphysics? Where is there even mention of *Varieties* as a text central to the pragmatist's corpus? He presumes that James is a philosopher, whom he then proceeds to interpret through Dewey, Peirce, and Holmes by homogenizing them altogether. Meanwhile, he keeps the inextricable connection between psychology and philosophy, and James's bridge through a psychology of religion, completely out of the picture.

True, the Emersonian connection is mentioned, but not much emphasized for the profound intellectual influence Emerson had on James's thinking, and there are a few mentions of James's French connections. But by and large, as most psychologists also do, Menand casts James erroneously in the tradition of German experimental science, Kantian philosophy, and British Empiricism (only this last is partly true). This amalgamation fits Menand's thesis that American high culture has benefited from the various pragmatisms of his protagonists, but it washes over the point that James was more than a mere eclectic philosopher within whose thought the expression of their own inclinations can be found by all.

To the contrary, James's proper intellectual lineage and the true spiritual roots of the pragmatist movement in America, I maintain, and the archival documents show, is the intuitive, literary, and philosophical inheritance of the Swedenborgian and transcendentalist milieu. And out of this lineage James did take a very specific stand—against scientific reductionism, bigness, rationalism, imperialism, moral high-handedness, and material greed. Instead, James (1902) was for a science that was a tool and not an ultimate end, the primacy of the mystical experience, the importance of individuals, pure experience in the immediate moment, and the moral equivalent of war.

Menand gets the economic, statistical, and social currents of mainstream white culture, but he misses entirely the spiritual currents of American pragmatism, which are rooted more in the philosophy from Emerson to James. This fact alone differentiates James significantly from Peirce, Dewey, and Holmes. When discussing the origins of James's pragmatism, however, Menand misses both the Swedenborgians and the transcendentalists. He thinks Emanuel Swedenborg was spelled "Immanuel" and that the philosopher-scientist was from Denmark—he was from Sweden; and he's never heard of the Swedenborgian Doctrine of the Rational and the Doctrine of Use, key influences on Charles Peirce as well as William James (Taylor 1986). He also misses the deeply religious currents of the spiritualists and mental healers, and he does not know his depth psychology before Freud, both integral chapters in *Varieties*, as well as major influences on the psychotherapeutic counter-culture, the radicalization of psychoanalysis, and the development of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. There is even a link from James's pragmatism to contemporary movements associated with women's spirituality today (Braude 2001; Taylor 1999). James was deeply immersed in these alternative currents in his own time as a way to reconcile science and religion. In this immersion, he spoke for more than just mainstream American white culture and the Protestant denomina-

5. Taylor and Wozniak (1996) trace the origin of this misunderstanding of James in both philosophy and psychology after 1900. Only Peirce, Dewey, and Flournoy seem to have understood what James was actually getting at.

tions (Taylor 1996).

Menand can be forgiven for these omissions, however, as one can only get so much between two covers. The danger is that the new reader of James does not know the alternative realities swarming around Menand's normative interpretation. Thus, if the reader is getting James in this narrow pragmatist context for the first time, then the same ingrained prejudices are recycled over and over again by the reigning Jamesian commentators.

In my opinion, there are a few simple criteria by which James should be rendered:

1) The origin of his philosophy is neither Cartesian, Kantian, nor Hegelian, but rather Swedenborgian and transcendentalist in the sense of his father's interpretation of the Swedish seer, Emanuel Swedenborg, and in the tradition of Emerson's "American Scholar," which led to the first uniquely American literary aesthetic independent of European roots. Attempts to link James primarily with German transcendentalism, German idealism, or German science are incorrect, as are the attempts to make him over into a philosopher who is somehow in agreement with the thrust of Western analytic philosophy. Meanwhile, adherents of these traditions, both in philosophy and psychology, continue to control mainstream interpretations of James (Taylor 1992).

2) The center of James's philosophy is radical empiricism, not pragmatism. Pragmatism is concerned with effects, while radical empiricism focuses on pure experience in the immediate moment before the differentiation of subject and object. The attempt to interpret James any differently through Peirce or Dewey and any attempt to privilege pragmatism over radical empiricism are errors of interpretation and suggest that the particular commentator does not understand radical empiricism.

3) James's psychology after 1890, based on his newly minted metaphysics of radical empiricism, called for the overthrow of reductionist positivism in psychological science, not its continued proliferation.

James was prescient enough to forecast in 1890 that, while any new infant science needs to be positivistic to get itself launched, sooner or later it will be renovated by philosophy. Scientific psychologists rejected this claim on the grounds that science deals only in truth, not metaphysics. James's retort was that all science is based on underlying assumptions that are generally agreed upon. This means that the reductionistic point of view could not possibly have a monopoly on ultimate truth, because it dictated that science could only study certain parts of experience and not others. James's own position, he said, was that "a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule" [6] (James 1897/1979, pp. 31-32).

James, however, was generally ignored by the discipline he helped to found, on the grounds that psychology was just then aligning itself with the basic sciences and had only just recently ejected all the philosophers, whom they encouraged to go and found their own national association. The problem was that most of these new psychologists were themselves laboratory men who had as a group determined their methods, that of the natural sciences, before they understood their subject matter—the full spectrum of human experience. Following their lead, scientific psychology, based on a reductionistic materialism, has continued to operate on the same set of merely tentative assumptions for more than a century, and thus must be held responsible for keeping the discipline in a state of infantile development.[7]

But the more recent humanistic revolution in the neurosciences, of which psychology seeks so diligently to be a part, has reintroduced philosophical questions about the relation of the brain to experience into current discussions about the philosophy of science.[8] As a result, scientists from Bernard Baars to Francis Crick are taking a second look at the relevance of James's metaphysics of experience. It is my prediction that a shift in who the powerbrokers of the discipline will be in the future may hang in the balance.

Having established the most rudimentary criteria for what James was actually trying to say, we may conjecture that his message was, in fact, more complex than his legions of interpreters. Everyone can find a place to stand under his umbrella because it is so wide and so vast, yet at the same time he had his hands on a definition of reality that he thought was closer to the truth

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6. This quote comes from James's *Will to Believe*, in the preface of which he first names his new metaphysics "radical empiricism." Charles Taylor (2002) cites it as well, but in a slightly different context than I have employed it here.

7. As the late Sigmund Koch has aptly pointed out, psychology established that its methods would be those of the physical sciences before it understood its subject matter. James had elaborated a similar idea in the preface to his *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890; namely, that even though all sciences needed to be positivistic in their orientation at their birth, sooner or later they were always overhauled by philosophy. Reductionistic positivists seized control of the discipline in its formative years in the 1890s and as a result, psychology has not evolved past its own presuppositions since then. Hence, psychology has been kept in an infant state of development for more than a century, making it irrelevant to large spheres of modern life. As an example, the psychotherapeutic counterculture has arisen to fill this gap. Scientific psychologists cannot imagine, however, that there is any other definition of psychology in common currency but their own. For a discussion of this problem from both James's and Koch's perspective and also James's solution, see Taylor (1998, 1995a, 1999).

8. For a discussion of the implications of the neuroscience revolution for the dialogue between science and religion, see the writings of the late Francis O. Schmitt (1990); also Taylor (1995b). Contemporary interpreters trained exclusively in the rationalist tradition would ask, of course, what humanistic revolution in the neurosciences?

than our present conception of science yields for us. His was a turn toward a more phenomenological, more observational, and even more existential kind of science that accommodated the full range of human experience, including psychic phenomena and mystical awakening, instead of the mere slice of experience that is presently made to stand for the whole in mainstream psychology.[9]

We may conclude that, while we have often engaged in a colossal misreading of James's *Varieties*, this is symptomatic of a larger problem; namely, that we have persistently engaged in a misreading of James's entire corpus. To help remedy this, I urge all who would seek to give a rendering of what James actually said to spend more time looking into the extensive corpus of James scholarship. Read more of James's complete works and not just one or two of them. Read him across disciplines, instead of staying confined to just your own. Finally, try to read him in his own right, instead of interpreting him only through the categories of your particular specialty. To move the discussion forward, I have called for a major revolution in James scholarship along the lines I have just suggested (Taylor 2002b). I extend a similar invitation to all who would aspire to write on James today.

—Eugene Taylor is Executive Faculty, Saybrook Graduate School, and Lecturer on Psychiatry, Harvard University. This article was originally prepared for the Symposium on "Contemporary Readings of James's Varieties," sponsored by Division 36 at the 110th Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, August 23, 2002, McCormick Convention Center, Chicago, IL. Requests for reprints may be e-mailed to Dr. Taylor (etaylor@saybrook.edu).

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9. Even more sympathetic reviewers who have claimed that I have exaggerated the case against modern interpreters and ignored James on mysticism, psychical research, abnormal psychology, and radical empiricism show that they do not understand the problem if all they can do is continue to part out these subjects without a conceptualization of how they fit into the whole of James's thought. We need to be both more detailed about how James is presented, as well as more synthetic with regard to his complete lifework.

Varieties of Religious Conversion: William James in Historical and Contemporary Contexts

by William Douglas Woody

William James (1902) devoted two chapters of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to religious conversion (pp. 189-258). His explanation of conversion stretched the boundaries of psychological explanation in the new and expanding field of psychology of religion, and his larger vision remains relevant today. In this article, I address James's approach to conversion in the context of the psychological study of religion in his day and then examine James's ideas relative to those of thinkers who have studied conversion in the 100 years since the publication of the *Varieties.* Finally, I will suggest an experiential and pragmatic Jamesian approach to ameliorate the contemporary disagreement regarding the moral evaluation of conversion phenomena.

The Conversion Chapters in Historical Context

In 1902, William James entered the psychological study of conversion in the field's optimistic infancy. On February 5, 1881, G. Stanley Hall introduced data suggesting that religious conversion was connected to the turmoil of adolescence, possibly providing the first data-based approach to the psychological study of religion (Street 1994). Hall proceeded to inspire others including, Starbuck (1899) and Leuba (1896, 1912). Edwin Diller Starbuck began his studies in the psychology of religion in 1893 while at Harvard Divinity School (Starbuck 1937; Booth, 1981), and, despite James's own fears that "to [Starbuck's] mind [James] rather damned the whole project with... words of faint praise" (James 1900, p. vii), James was one of Starbuck's supporters in the endeavor to extend the new science of psychology into religious phenomena. Starbuck next completed a Ph.D. with Hall at Clark University, and he published his first papers on the psychology of conversion during this time (Starbuck 1897a, 1897b). Starbuck (1897a, 1897b, 1899) repeatedly recognized the encouragement of Hall in his research, and he was also appreciative of President David Starr Jordan of Stanford University, who allowed Starbuck to teach a course on the psychology of religion and, thereby, to further develop these ideas in the classroom (Booth 1981; Starbuck 1899). James H. Leuba (1896, 1912) also recognized Hall's inspiration, and Leuba's (1896) excitement characterized the scientific optimism of his day. "The subjective facts of religious life belong to psychology. It is the duty and the privilege of that science to extend its beneficial scepter over this realm also. The time is particularly favorable for such an annexation; the power that ruled during the past centuries has grown senile, its authority is denied; a painful anarchy prevails. Let psychology accept the succession that falls to it by right" (Leuba 1896, p. 312). George A. Coe (1900) joined Starbuck and Leuba in confidently applying scientific psychology of the late 19th century to the behavior and experience of individuals who do or do not experience religious conversions.

Coe (1900), Leuba (1896), and Starbuck (1897a, 1897b) used what James (1900) called the "question-circular method" (p. vii), an open-ended questionnaire, to collect first-person accounts of conversion and then search for behavioral and experiential commonalities within the data. Starbuck (1897a), for example, plotted several trends, including the age of the convert, the location of the conversion, and the frequency of various thoughts and feelings for his participants. Leuba (1896) focused on the cognitive and emotional experiences of the convert, and Coe (1900) described some individual differences in the likelihood of conversion. To supplement and support his ideas James relied in part on all three authors for case studies, methodologies, and their descriptions and interpretations of conversion phenomena. As Gorsuch and Spilka (1987) note, however, James did not report the criteria he used to select the descriptions he borrows from the files of earlier writers, so the modern reader is left to wonder what permutations inspired James to make use of particular conversion cases. Additionally, the authors of his day presented cases largely from the Protestant Christian revival movement of the time, and James's examples are also limited in this way. Although he mentioned other possibilities beyond Protestant Christian sources, including "Buddhists or Humians" (James 1902, p. 195), he presented no extensive examples from other cultures (see Gorsuch & Spilka 1987) even though he had earlier encouraged Starbuck to collect data from other cultures, including "Catholic, Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and Hindoo sources" (James 1900, p. viii). While James, in characteristic form, chose to allow others to collect the data he used, he furthered a novel interpretation of the data.

Conversion in the Varieties

Throughout the *Varieties*, James (1902) takes an individual, experiential, and pragmatic approach to religion, which he defined as "*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual [people]... in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to what-*

ever they may consider the divine" (James 1902, p. 31). His approach to conversion reflects these emphases. He provides the reader initially with several examples, and then, drawing tentative generalizations from his particular examples, states that "to be converted, to be regenerated to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes united and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about" (James 1902, p. 189). To further clarify his definition, James distinguishes between conversion phenomena and more typical psychological changes. "Our ordinary alterations of character, as we pass from one of our aims to another, are not commonly called transformations, because each of them is so rapidly succeeded by another in the reverse direction; but whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual's life, we tend to speak of the phenomenon, and perhaps to wonder at it, as a 'transformation'" (James 1902, p. 194). As he does throughout the work, James uses sufficiently pluralistic terms to avoid the requirement of divine intervention and to avoid the exclusion of any form of religious experience. For example, when he uses his own life history to demonstrate the typical shifts a person's center of energies may undergo, he discusses the current standing of his "soul" (James 1902, p. 195), yet he immediately notes that "when I say 'soul' you need not take me in the ontological sense unless you prefer to" (James 1902, p. 195). James, in typical fashion, then returns from tentative inductions and definitions to the presentation of specific cases, many of which were drawn largely from the psychology of religion of his day, before presenting his explanation of conversion.

James's Explanation of Conversion

James provides his own account of the process of conversion. He bases his conclusions at least in part upon the work of his contemporaries, and he draws on their interpretations as well as their cases, but he extends his ideas beyond the conclusions of his predecessors. First, James notes the potential role of passion and excitement in the conversion process. "Emotional occasions, especially violent ones, are extremely potent in precipitating mental rearrangements. The sudden and explosive ways in which love, jealousy, guilt, fear, remorse, or anger and seize upon one are known to everybody. Hope, happiness, security, resolve, emotions characteristic of conversion, can be equally explosive. And emotions that come in this explosive way seldom leave things as they found them" (James 1902, p. 198). Additionally, James notes Starbuck's conclusions (1899) regarding the higher likelihood of these changes in adolescence. James then draws upon other psychological developments of his day to further explore the process.

After noting the excitement typically concurrent with conversion, James seeks a deeper explanation. He separates conversions into Starbuck's (1899) categories of the "volitional type" and "type by self-surrender" (James 1902, p. 206). Some conversions are willful acts of the believer, but James notes that the distinction between the two often remains blurred and that at least partial self-surrender occurs "in the great majority of all cases" (James 1902, p. 208). The more "striking and memorable" (James 1902, p. 216) cases, for James, involve self-surrender, and James seeks to apply the work of his contemporaries in unconscious processing in his explanation of these phenomena.

In his discussion of the conversion type by self-surrender, James admits that physical exhaustion is often concurrent with conversion, but he roots his explanation primarily "in the wonderful explorations by Binet, Janet, Breuer, Freud, Mason, Prince, and others, of the subliminal consciousness of patients with hysteria" (James 1902, p. 234). James notes "that the 'field of consciousness' has but recently come into vogue in the psychology books" (James 1902, p. 231), and he directs the reader to "the indetermination of the margin" of the field (James 1902, p. 232). While James (1902) uses the term "subliminal" (literally "below threshold" and not necessarily a Freudian unconscious), he refers to "the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science" as "an addition [to the field of consciousness] in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs" (James 1902, p. 233). James (1902) suggests that researchers study conversion phenomena as a possible "explosion, into the fields of ordinary consciousness, of ideas elaborated outside of those fields in subliminal regions of the mind" (James 1902, p. 234). He even speculates that the sudden convert may be more likely "one of those Subjects who are in possession of a large region in which mental work can go on subliminally, and from which invasive experiences, abruptly upsetting the equilibrium of the primary consciousness, may come" (James 1902, p. 237). Coe (1900) explored individual differences in suggestibility and the relationship of suggestibility to the conversion experience, and Coe's findings lend support to James's approach. In James's

words, Coe's "results strikingly confirm the view that sudden conversion is connected with the possession of an active subliminal self" (James 1902, p. 240). James pushed the limits of the psychological explanations of his day to address conversion phenomena, and his explanations of conversions figure powerfully into his criteria for the evaluation of conversion phenomena (see below).

Contemporary Approaches to Religious Conversion

Since James, the study of religious conversion has exploded through psychology and related fields. A text word search in PsychINFO (1887 to the present) for a combination of "religious" and "conversion" generates 431 references. Contemporary scholars approach the psychology of conversion from several fields, including theology (e.g., Martin 1989), physiology (e.g., Pavlov 1941; Sargant 1957), personalities of leaders and followers (e.g., Storr 1996; Schein 1950), and social influence (e.g., Cialdini 2000; Zimbardo & Andersen 1993). Although some of James's ideas have been corroborated by later researchers, aspects of his explanation remain disputed. For example, Pavlov and Sargant (1957) emphasize the physiological explanations for conversion phenomena in various contexts, and Sargant (p. 148) appreciatively cites James's awareness of the need for physiological arousal in the conversion process. While Freud (1927/1961) refers to unconscious processes in his explanation of a religious conversion, James's emphasis on unconscious processes has not remained at the forefront of contemporary explanations (see e.g., Schein 1956; Winn 1983; Hunter 1956; Merloo 1956; Lifton 1961). Since James, descriptions of the process have become more elaborate as the knowledge base grows. For example, Lofland and Skonovd (1981) expand James's "volitional type" and "type by self-surrender" to six different conversion types, but, as James notes, "sharp distinctions are difficult in these regions" (James 1902, p. 241).

In addition to widening scholarly perspectives on religious conversion, the study of conversion has expanded beyond mainstream religious groups to include the study of such phenomena in nonmainstream religious groups (Conway & Siegelman 1978; Hassan 1990; Martin 1989), interrogation of prisoners and so-called military "brainwashing" (Schein 1956; Winn 1983; Hunter 1956), political socialization (Merloo 1956; Lifton 1961; Hoffer 1951; Root 1958), and even therapeutic groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (Bufe 1991). The variety of perspectives provides the modern reader with a wide range of viewpoints and agendas, and the resultant milieu resurrects the pragmatic moral issue of conversion presented by James in the *Varieties*. Although his analysis was largely limited to American Protestant religious conversions, James pragmatically addressed the epistemological and ontological questions of divine intervention. His analysis sheds light on the current discussion.

Contemporary Conversions, Divine Intervention, and William James

Conversion drives powerful and potentially sudden changes in the convert, and concern often arises regarding the convert's new perspective. Contemporary scholars of conversion often explicitly or implicitly bring their own biases to their audience. Ethical considerations of conversion remain paramount, and authors often warn readers of the dangers of conversion to a certain group, a category of groups, or a philosophical or political perspective. Different authors perceive potential dangers differently, depending on their views. For example, several authors (e.g., Hassan 1990; Conway & Siegelman 1978; Martin 1989) warn potential converts of the dangers of nonmainstream religions (often called "cults") as opposed to mainstream religions, although some authors provide warnings regarding the dangers of religions considered mainstream (e.g., Conway & Siegelman 1982). A similar pattern applies in other topical areas as well; for example, some scholars illuminate dangers of specific political movements such as communism (e.g., Hunter 1956; Lifton 1961; Merloo 1956) or the Afghan Taliban (Francke 2002; Hassan 2001), while others express concern regarding latent indoctrination processes of American society (e.g., Root 1958; Sutphan 1984). Such biases influence authors' views of conversion and groups, and negatively loaded terms such as "brainwashing" and "cult" enhance the negative appearance of the convert's new perspective. Myriad practical problems are involved in evaluating a conversion, and too often the evaluator's view of the new perspective or group drives judgments of the conversion. What can James introduce into this discussion?

James addressed similar challenges in the *Varieties*' two chapters on conversion. Rather than attempting to evaluate different groups, James entered the discussion of whether some conversions provide evidence of divine intervention. For James (1907/1975a), "true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify" (p. 3). He argued that truth exists in its verification and in "cash-value in experiential terms" (James 1909/1975b, p. 3) for individuals and that "truth is a matter of finite experiences,... but nothing outside the flux supports them or guarantees them" (Seigfried 1990, p. 247). Furthermore, "all kinds of experience are relevant to the truth of claims in philosophy, psychology, and other domains... [including]

emotional, recollective, inquisitive, deliberative, judgmental and evaluative, as well as sensate, experience" (Crosby & Viney 1992, p. 103). James proceeded to broadly examine the individual experiences of converts for evidence of divine intervention.

James (1902) acknowledged that "it is natural that those who personally have [converted] should carry away a feeling of its being a miracle rather than a natural process" (p. 228), and James also noted that Jonathan Edwards, among others, argues that genuine conversions are the work of God and are totally different from anything available to nonbelievers (pp. 228-229). James investigated these arguments but can only conclude that "there is no unmistakable class-mark distinctive of all true conversions" (James 1902, p. 238). Yet, even if there are not two distinct groups of converts, this "must not leave us blind to the extraordinary momentousness of the fact of his [or her] conversion to the individual himself [or herself] who gets converted" (James 1902, p. 239). Furthermore, James allowed multiple levels of explanation for the phenomena of conversion; psychological necessity and divine intervention are not mutually exclusive, and both may be possible simultaneously. What guidance does James give for evaluating a conversion? "If the *fruits for life* of the state of conversion are good, we ought to idealize and venerate it, even though it be a piece of natural psychology; if not, we ought to make short work with it, no matter what supernatural being may have infused it" (James 1902, p. 237). James endorsed a pluralistic perspective (see James 1909/1977) in which several possible conclusions are acceptable, depending upon the experiences of the converted individual or individuals. Such insight could provide a compelling new direction for exploring some of the biases and concerns that plague the contemporary study of conversion phenomena.

James focused neither on the absolute truth of a religious claim nor on the character of a given group but on the practical fruits within the individual experience of the convert, and his perspective provides a model for addressing the conflicts and biases within the conversion literature. Some scholars acknowledge similar goals; for example, Sargant (1957) explored conversion in several contexts and insisted that "it must be emphasized as strongly as possible that this book is *not* concerned with the truth or falsity of any particular religious or political belief" (p. xvii). Sargant's perspective is a minority view in conversion scholarship. For example, Bufe (1991) asks the reader to choose whether Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is "cult or cure" (Bufe 1991). Bill, a founder of AA, acknowledged that his transformation was sudden and religious and that "nearly every A.A. has a spiritual experience that transforms his [or her] outlook at attitudes" (Alcoholics Anonymous 1957/1985, p. 63). Bill cites "William James' great wisdom" (Alcoholics Anonymous 1957/1985, p. 262) in the conversion chapters of the *Varieties* as a source of inspiration and as part of his quest for knowledge, and the twelve steps of AA (1988) guide the participant through a process of self-surrender as described by Starbuck (1899) and James (1902). The practical experiential gains made by members of Alcoholics Anonymous would drive James to move past the "or" of "cult or cure" (Bufe 1991) to the potentially brighter world of human recovery. In addition, more fruitful analysis of conversions from the perspective of the fruits of change in life of the convert could ease the tensions surrounding allegations of brainwashing, mind control, and "cult" membership.

Conclusions

James applied his experiential, pragmatic, and pluralistic approach to the psychological study of conversion in his day, blending ideas from the forefront of scientific psychology in the United States and Europe. Although a product of his time and his science, James went beyond his contemporaries and pushed limits of psychological explanation in 1902; thus, parts of his interpretation remain salient today. More relevant than his proposed psychological explanation for conversion, his integration of psychology and philosophy (see Crosby & Viney 1992; McDermott 1967) can ease the current tensions between scholars, converts, and their family members. As James pushed psychology forward in 1902, perhaps he can also stretch our boundaries a century later.

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Quantum Change: Sudden Transformation in the Tradition of James's Varieties

by Janet C'de Baca and William R. Miller

The term "personality" encompasses complex human behaviors, including actions, emotions, and cognitive processes, and can be defined in many ways (Costa & McCrae 1994). When viewed in terms of basic traits, personality is thought to be stable over a lifetime (Costa & McCrae 1994; Caspi & Herbener 1990; Costa & McCrae 1980). Conversely, when defined to include such things as motives, life goals, and overall psychological functioning (Heatherton & Nichols 1994), personality can be seen as changing and growing (Helson & Moane 1987; Ozer & Gjerde, 1989).

In some cases, personality can be abruptly reconfigured. With *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James (1902) described a wide range of experiences and, in particular, discussed two different forms of change. By far the more common of the two is gradual, step-by-step movement, continual successive approximations as in the opening of a flower. Other changes, James observed, occur in a more sudden, discontinuous manner, "considering at first those striking instantaneous instances of which Saint Paul's is the most eminent, and in which, often amid tremendous emotional excitement or perturbation of the senses, a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new" (James 1902, p. 217). James was interested in and wrote on the subject of sudden change throughout his career (see James's *The Principles of Psychology*, 1890; *The Will To Believe*, 1897; and *Talks to Teachers*, 1899.)

If this form of sudden, dramatic, and permanent change does occur in real life, it has received surprisingly little attention from psychologists since James. Interested in whether this phenomenon could be documented, we set out to interview people who may have had such experiences, and to determine what commonalities may be in their stories.

In November 1991, we were interviewed and an article appeared in the Sunday *Albuquerque Journal* newspaper discussing the phenomenon of "quantum change." We used as fictional examples of quantum change, Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, and George Bailey in the classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. People who had experienced such sudden life transformations were invited to contact us by telephone. We told callers that they would be asked to tell their story uninterrupted, and this portion of the interview would be audiotaped, after which they would be asked to complete some questionnaires. No payment was offered for participation. We received 89 calls, and finally interviewed 55 volunteers (31 women and 24 men). Callers did not become participants if they were unwilling to spend 3 hours in an interview, were unwilling to be audiotaped, lived out-of-town, wanted payment, or failed to appear for scheduled appointments. The 55 participants ranged in age from 30 to 78 years and were, overall, well-educated (mean years of education, 16). On average, their experience had occurred 11.2 years earlier (range, 2 months to 39 years).

Characteristics of Quantum Change Experiences

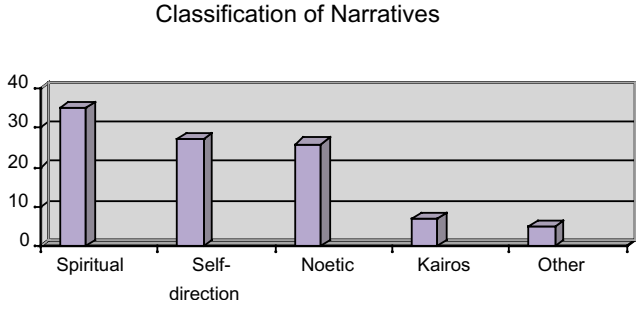
Both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study have been described in detail elsewhere (Miller & C'de Baca, 1994; Miller & C'de Baca, 2001). Briefly, the narrative audiotapes were transcribed and a set of rating scales and classification categories were developed for each of four general content areas—context, experience, effects, and explanation. The transcripts were read and rated by four coders, who then met to resolve discrepancies and develop consensus rankings on rating scales and classification categories. Participants were also asked to describe themselves on a variety of subjective dimensions before and after their quantum change experience, including a values card sort (adapted from Rokeach 1973; 1983). They were asked to identify, from the set of 50 cards, their 10 highest and 10 lowest priorities before the quantum change experience and currently. They ranked them within each of these sets of 10.

Consistent with the accounts presented by James a century earlier, the experiences of our storytellers were emotionally powerful. They remembered the experience in vivid sensory detail—most recalled exact date and time of day of their experience, even though, on average, more than a decade had passed. For most, like Scrooge, the experience began abruptly and was unexpected. Consistent with James's description of such sudden transformation as qualitatively different from ordinary, gradual change, our storytellers described it as clearly out of the realm of ordinary experience, and most had difficulty finding words to describe it.

Nearly all had an immediate sense, a knowing that they had passed through a one-way door through which they could not and would not wish to return. The narratives of our storytellers (Miller & C'de Baca, 2001) sound much like what James described in *Varieties*: "[W]hat is attained is often an altogether new level of spiritual vitality, a relatively heroic level, in which impossible things have become possible, and new energies and endurances are shown. The personality *is*

changed, the man is born anew, whether or not his psychological idiosyncrasies are what give the particular shape to his metamorphosis" (James 1902, p. 241). And in *Talks to Teachers,* "…there is no incompatibility between the general laws I have laid down and the most startling sudden alterations in the way of character. New habits *can* be launched, I have expressly said, on condition of there being new stimuli and new excitements. Now life abounds in these, and sometimes they are such critical and revolutionary experiences that they change a man's whole scale of values and system of ideas. In such cases, the old order of his habits will be ruptured; and if the new motives are lasting, new habits will be formed, and build up in him a new or regenerate 'nature'" (James, 1899/1992, pp. 756-757).

In our qualitative ratings of narratives, we arrived at a set of five mutually exclusive categories into which we initially classified cases. Some were explicitly transpersonal experiences of a spiritual or religious nature, in which the person felt acted upon or in the presence of something much greater than themselves. Others were primarily noetic in quality, in which the person suddenly received knowledge or insight of a profound nature, without a sense of its source. A third type we characterized as *kairos,* a sudden convergence and turning point in personal development, not experienced as received from an external source. These three categories, nevertheless, had many common characteristics. A fourth kind, which we termed self-directed change, seemed to be different from the others, described more as a conscious choice or intentional decision, not much different from ordinary experience. Finally, an "other" category included experiences that didn't seem to fit into any of these types. Ultimately we arrived at two major types of quantum change: a mystical (spiritual) type, and an insight type in which transpersonal elements were less evident (noetic and kairos). We decided that the self-direction and other categories (32%) were sufficiently different from the rest and did not constitute quantum changes.



James understood and defended the right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters (James 1897/1992). Both mystical and insightful types of change are evident in James's *Varieties.* Regarding the mystical type, James, though clearly a theist, insisted that such transcendent experiences need not be considered anomalous miracles, but could be subjected to scientific investigation: "The God whom science recognizes must be a God of universal laws exclusively, a God who does a wholesale, not a retail business" (James 1902, p. 494). Nor did James, himself not particularly religious, regard such changes as limited to religion.

> For example, the new birth may be away from religion into incredulity; or it may be from moral scrupulosity into freedom and license; or it may be produced by the irruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love, ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion.… In these non-religious cases the new man may also be born either gradually or suddenly. (James 1902, p. 176)

James was careful not to imply that one type of change (sudden or gradual) is superior or preferable to the other. As a psychologist, he was simply interested in understanding how it is that people can change so totally and abruptly.

> …I shall next ask you to consider more closely some of the peculiarities of the process of unification, when it occurs. It may come gradually, or it may occur abruptly; it may come through altered feelings, or through altered powers of action; or it may come through new intellectual insights, or through experiences which we shall later have to designate as 'mystical.' However it come, it brings a characteristic sort of relief; and never such extreme relief as when it is cast into the religious mould.… But to find religion is only one out of many ways of reaching unity; and the process of remedying inner incompleteness and reducing inner discord is a general psychological process, which may take place with any sort of mental material, and need not necessarily assume the religious form. (James 1902, p. 175)

People who have such experiences, including our own storytellers, commonly report an ineffable but clear sense of being passive recipients, of the event happening to them without (or in spite of) their own effort or intention. James likened it to

> … the salvation through self-despair, the dying to be truly born, of Lutheran theology, the passage into *nothing* of which Jacob Behmen writes. To get to it, a critical point must usually be passed, a corner turned within one. Something must give way, a native hardness must break down and liquefy; and this event… is frequently sudden and automatic, and leaves on the Subject an impression that he has been wrought on by an external power (James 1902, p. 110).

We were also struck by parallels in the transcendent quality of quantum change experiences today and those described by James a century ago. The experience is usually profoundly positive, powerfully memorable, and subjectively and markedly different from ordinary experience, in ways that people find difficult to put into words: "…the loss of all the worry, the sense that all is ultimately well with one, the peace, the harmony, the *willingness to be,* even though the outer conditions should remain the same. The certainty of God's 'grace,' of 'justification,' 'salvation,' is an objective belief that usually accompanies the change in Christians; but this may be entirely lacking and yet the affective peace remain the same…. The second feature is the sense of perceiving truths not known before.… A third peculiarity of the assurance state is the objective change which the world often appears to undergo. 'An appearance of newness beautifies every object,' … This sense of clean and beautiful newness within and without is one of the commonest entries in conversion records" (James 1902, p. 248). Exactly these elements turned up again and again in the narratives we recorded (Miller & C'de Baca 2001). A transient altered state of consciousness often occurs, altering perceptions of time, meaning, identity, and reality.

> Voices are often heard, lights seen, or visions witnessed; automatic motor phenomena occur; and it always seems, after the surrender of the personal will, as if an extraneous higher power had flooded in and taken possession. Moreover the sense of renovation, safety, cleanness, rightness, can be so marvelous and jubilant as well to warrant one's belief in a radically new substantial nature. (James 1902, p. 228).

One domain in which our quantum changers reported dramatic changes, and one less attended to by James, was in the values that guided their lives. Values that had been preeminent prior to their experience often fell to the bottom of the hierarchy, and previously irrelevant values became dominant (see Values Card Sort below). In essence, their value system was turned upside down. It also seemed that the guiding values of men and women became more like each other after quantum change, each moving away from sex-role stereotypes.

Values Card Sort

Priority Rankings **Before** Quantum Change			Priority Rankings **After** Quantum Change	
Males	Females		Males	Females
•Wealth	•Family		•Spirituality	•Growth
•Adventure	•Independence		•Personal peace	•Self-esteem
•Achievement	•Career		•Family	•Spirituality
•Pleasure	•Fitting in		•God's will	•Happiness
•Be respected	•Attractiveness		•Honesty	•Generosity
•Family	•Knowledge		•Growth	•Personal peace
•Fun	•Self-control		•Humility	•Honesty
•Self-esteem	•Be loved		•Faithfulness	•Forgiveness
•Freedom	•Happiness		•Forgiveness	•Health
•Attractiveness	•Wealth		•Self-esteem	•Creativity
•Popularity	•Faithfulness		•Loving	•Loving
•Power	•Safety		•Intimacy	•Family

This shift in values, they reported, occurred abruptly with their quantum change, and continued to the present time. Their experience was that they had been changed immediately and permanently. James in his discussion of how decisions are made, notes one particular type that is of interest to this discussion "It comes in consequence of some outer experience or some inexplicable inward charge, *we suddenly pass from the easy and careless to the sober and strenuous mood,* or possibly the other way. The whole scale of values of our motives and impulses then undergoes a change like that which a change of the observer's level produces on a view" (James 1890/1950, Vol. 2, p. 533).

Are these changes permanent? Ten years have now passed since our initial interviews with quantum changers. As a small step toward further understanding of this phenomenon, we have sought to interview these people again, now 21 years on average since their quantum change experience. Thus far, we have found and interviewed 27 (73%) of the 37 people we identified as having experienced quantum change, and three others have died. In general, they continue to recall their experience vividly after two decades, though there was at least one participant whose memory was unclear ("I'm trying to remember"). However, once prompted, recalled the incident ("Yeah, he introduced me to a church. That was about the time I was kind of going back doing some spiritual searching.").

Most reported that the positive changes they experienced have endured or continued to grow over the years. Descriptions of how the changes from the quantum change experience have unfolded over the years produced two categories: some quantum changers describe it as a onetime sweeping change, while others regard it as an ongoing process. Many quantum changers reported additional epiphanies over the subsequent 10 years. For example, "…gosh, I don't even know how to explain that experience of '88. It was just so awesome. I felt like a vessel that God could use, and that was four years after the other experience." In terms of the values card sort, the quantum changers continue to endorse values similar to those endorsed in the original study (see Priority Rankings after Quantum Change above). For example, the most frequently endorsed value was "God's will."

To be sure, our work has clear limitations. We have relied on subjective and retrospective reports. An obvious next step would be to interview both quantum changers and those who know them well, to obtain different perspectives on the nature and permanence of their transformation. We are struck, however, by the similarity of these spontaneous narratives and the examples provided by James in *Varieties.* There is a sense, in conducting these interviews, of hearing the same story in many different forms. The people we interviewed were quite diverse on many dimensions, and yet their uninterrupted accounts contain a certain sameness.

In sum, a real phenomenon seems to be described here. People can be and are changed suddenly and profoundly, in permanent and benevolent ways, through a process that is poorly understood at best. Given how easy it was to find our storytellers from a single news article, we suspect that quantum change is not a rare occurrence. Those who experience quantum change are, however, reticent to talk about it. Most of those we interviewed had told no one or very few people about their experience. Curiously, psychologists have also been reluctant to explore this subject. Beyond occasional case reports of anomalous transformations (e.g., Barlow, Abel & Blanchard 1977), psychology has given little attention or even a name to this phenomenon. If profound, pervasive, permanent, and positive change can occur within a matter of hours, should we not, like James, be interested in understanding it?

"Nothing can be more stupid than to bar out phenomena from our notice, merely because we are incapable of taking part in anything like them ourselves" (James 1902, p. 109). "The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in" (James, 1902, p. 519).

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Self and Healthy-Mindedness: James's Varieties *and Religion in Psychotherapy*

by Mark J. Krejci

As interest in incorporating religious issues into the psychotherapeutic process increases, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) can provide interesting directions for making connections between religious beliefs and therapeutic experience. When I first read *Varieties* as an undergraduate psychology student, I was looking for guidance about how I should address religious beliefs in the therapy I hoped one day to be doing. After reading enough of Freud's theory to know that his approach would not be my own (Freud 1913, 1927, 1930), I read *Varieties* with great anticipation, given my knowledge of its stature in the field of psychology of religion. Yet my original reading of James provided little guidance on how to incorporate religious issues into psychotherapy. In retrospect, this was not surprising, given that James's goal was to explore personal religious experience (James 1902, p. 29), not to discuss the therapeutic ramifications of this experience, as well as my own lack of experience as a therapist. Not until I began to teach a psychology of religion class did I again explore *Varieties*, and I was then struck by the connections I made between James's description of individual religious experience and the experiences of my clients as they dealt with religious issues during therapy.

This paper will present case studies representative of the "healthy-minded" and "sick soul" types presented in *Varieties* (James 1902) and discuss how religious issues were addressed in psychotherapy. The two case studies describe individuals who were able to use religion in very different ways in the process of coping with their stress, methods that were anticipated by James in the Gifford lectures. Although James did not claim to present a therapeutic approach, many of his ideas resonate with how religion can be conceptualized during the therapeutic process.

Case Study 1: Healthy-Minded Carl

James describes the healthy-minded person as someone who possesses an optimism, which is manifested in seeing life and the world as good. This person is drawn to a relationship with the divine because the divine is seen as inherently good and loving (James 1902). A client, I will call him Carl, was referred to me after he had experienced a divorce. Carl's wife had an affair with another man and subsequently fell in love with this man. She came to Carl and told him that she was going to file for divorce, marry the other man, move across the country, and take the children with her. One of Carl's friends from church brought him in for his first session because he was concerned by Carl's apparent lack of reaction to the recent divorce beyond the fact that he was no longer attending church.

During his initial interview, Carl talked about the divorce in a calm to light-hearted manner. While claiming that he wanted to be reunited with his former wife and that the separation from his children was deeply troubling to him, he remained calm and maintained a rigid grin on his face. He reconciled himself to his wife's actions by saying that she was "just going through a mid-life crisis," that she would end this "little thing," and, seeing the error of her ways, would shortly return with the children. He reported no anger or frustration at the turn of events but kept saying the phrase that "God will heal all things." This reaction, in and of itself, could indicate that Carl was using his religious beliefs to find peace in the midst of this crisis. When Christians are able to consciously turn things over to God, they experience positive psychological benefits in coping (Hopson 1996; Pargament 1997). However, Carl did not appear to be coping in this manner. When Carl was questioned about his religious beliefs and practices, his affect changed. He said he loved God and loved his church, but his voice revealed more anger than love. Yet, when prompted to reflect on this inconsistency, Carl denied any feelings of anger and said that things were fine in his faith life. When asked why he no longer attended church, Carl stated that a number of circumstances had arisen that prevented him from attending for the past eight months, a period that coincided with his wife's moving in with her boyfriend and before the legal dissolution of the marriage. Thus, consciously Carl presented that everything was just fine in his life, even though there were indications that he was troubled by the recent events in his life at an unconscious level.

Carl appeared to be a prototype of the healthy-minded. James (1902) writes that this type of person tends to be optimistic in his or her outlook, usually happy, and has a motivation for being in union with the divine. However, he goes on to describe systematic healthy-mindedness as

> …conceiving good as the essential and universal aspect of being, deliberately excludes evil from its field of vision; …. To the man actively happy, from whatever cause, evil simply cannot then and there be believed in. He must ignore it; and to the bystander he may then seem perversely to shut his eyes to it and hush it up. (James 1902, p. 88)

While Carl did apparently have an emotional reaction to his ex-wife's actions, consciously he was unaware of these reactions and instead believed that everything would eventually "work out." As Carl's friend told me on the phone when he made the first appointment, Carl was reacting "as if nothing had happened." James understood this denial because he believed that the healthy-minded, with their all-encompassing happiness, would exclude reflection on evil as a means of "self-protection against disturbance" (James 1902, p. 88). Thus, Carl was not as upset by his wife's departure as his friends expected because his healthy-mindedness assisted him in maintaining an optimistic view.

As therapy proceeded, Carl began to reflect on his discomfort when he went to church. His anxiousness was not due to rejection by his faith community; he felt a strong sense of support from people at his church and continued to socialize with them away from church. In the end, it turned out that the anxiety was related to Carl's questioning the existence of God. His religious faith was centered on an all-loving God that protected those who believed in God. Carl claimed that nothing bad had ever happened to him before because God would not give him a burden that he could not handle. However, the shock of the affair, divorce, and loss of his family resulted in his questioning his very belief in God.

The reaction of this healthy-minded individual to his family trauma was anticipated by James when he talked of the healthy-minded person's religious orientation, an orientation which "directs him to settle his scores with the more evil aspects of the universe by systematically declining to lay them to heart or make much of them, … or even, on occasion, by denying outright that they exist." (James 1902, p. 127). According to James, this approach will work if things go well but that

> … it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy comes; and even though one be quite free from melancholy one's self, there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth." (James 1902, p. 163).

Carl's healthy-minded character with corresponding optimism undoubtedly played a role in his failure to see trouble in his marriage, even before his wife's affair. After contacting his former spouse, I was able to see that they did not have a life of marital bliss. Carl had consistently avoided conflict and was never comfortable in talking about anything of substance with his wife that could have resulted in a disagreement. During therapy, Carl consistently rejected the possibility that anything was wrong with the relationship and refused to accept his wife's characterization of their years of marriage.

Carl was not able to experience a Jamesian conversion experience because he was not willing to consider the degree of "evil" that existed in him. As a result, he was not able to reflect on his personal failings in the relationship or even consider the weaknesses of the relationship. In fact, Carl's healthy-minded religious orientation kept him from considering these deeper issues. He came to a session one day saying that he had equated his predicament to that of Job in the Biblical story and that, like Job, his "riches" would one day be restored by God, perhaps even in the person of another woman. This belief led Carl to conclude that God had not abandoned him but was merely testing him. Once the crisis of Carl's religious faith had passed, he was not interested in pursuing any further reflections concerning whether he or even his wife did anything in the relationship that hurt the relationship. Carl started to attend church once again, stopped coming for therapy, and remained in what I would consider to be a healthy-minded religious bliss. He happily accepted that he did not have to "worry" about his marriage. Carl's case underscores James's (1902) belief that while the healthy-minded would ignore evil, the sick soul would be better suited for the type of deep reflection that would result in a unified self. Carl remained unaware of issues leading to his divorce and thus never went through a transformation indicative of the process of unification.

Case Study 2: Sick-Souled Leo

Sick soul individuals are ones "who cannot so swiftly throw off the burden of the consciousness of evil, but are congenitally fated to suffer from its presence" (James 1902, pp. 133-134). James went on to describe different types of the "morbid mind" that range from people who find evil in the relation of their life to the environment, a type of evil that James says is "curable," to people who find evil in a "wrongness or vice in (their) essential nature… and which requires a supernatural remedy" (James 1902, p. 134). These people, in order to resolve this nature, must become twice-born as they become a "deeper kind of conscious being" (James 1902, p. 154).

The client with a sick soul will be referred to as Leo, given his similarity to Leo Tolstoy, who James presents as representative of the sick soul. When Leo came to see me, he had already seen over ten therapists in his 35 years of life. Since he was a teen, Leo had battled bouts of depression that had resulted in

suicide attempts and hospitalizations. At the time of his first appointment, he was taking antidepressant medication and reported continuing symptoms. Leo said that he had given up on the idea that he would ever end his depression and was coming to see me, a therapist associated with his religious denomination, because he needed to understand why he was "damned by God." He had sought the advice of priests but felt their answers were superficial (e.g., "We all have our cross to bear"). When asked about his faith life and religious beliefs, he stated that he believed in God but wondered what the purpose of faith was in light of endless suffering. Leo also was concerned about his "sinfulness" and how his depression stemmed from his moral weakness. Taylor (2002), reflecting on James's *Varieties,* similarly describes Tolstoy as having a "religious melancholy" and as struggling with a loss of meaning in his life. In addition, Leo also appeared to be dealing with what Taylor describes as "the acute sense of personal sin" (Taylor 2002, p.35).

What kept Leo motivated to maintain his faith life was not unlike the impetus of a person referred to by James as a "correspondent," who wrote: "I mean that the fear was so invasive and powerful that if I had not clung to scripture-texts…. I think I should have grown really insane" (James 1902, p.161). Leo reported that the prayers during mass were the only things to keep him in touch with any sense of good in the world. Such prayers as the Gloria and Sign of Peace as well as the death and resurrection theme of the mass gave him hope for the future. He also described a longing for some sign from God that he would one day be redeemed from his constant battle with the "evil" of his depression. This was similar to what Tolstoy referred to as "… a thirst for God" (James 1902, p. 156), which motivated his recovery. During therapy, Leo began to see his depression as God calling him to some sort of vocation. Leo realized that his suffering allowed him to understand what he referred to as the peacefulness of the eternal life when he would be enveloped by God's glory and would not suffer from depression. He grew to believe that God was calling him to use his suffering to reflect the peace of God's love. Much like Tolstoy's process of the unification of the self outlined by James (1902, pp. 183-184), Leo gradually altered his feelings toward himself and his predicament. He found insight into his depression through the emotional experience of God's love for him. James claims that the relief inaugurated in the unification of the self is extreme when found in the religious realm (James 1902, p. 175), and so it was for Leo who, through his faith experience, was finally able to understand his depression. This was a profound occurrence in his life because he was now no longer tormented by his depression nor saw it as a moral weakness.

Leo's sick soul thus became twice born through a therapeutic relationship that dealt with his use of religious beliefs to define his purpose: what Frankl (1954) called the satisfaction that comes with finding meaning in life. Leo achieved what James referred to as a "deeper kind of conscious being than he could enjoy before" (James 1902, p. 157). Like Tolstoy, Leo did not become what James would define as healthy-minded. Leo recognized that life would contain suffering, yet this recognition was now balanced by a deeper sense of how faith in God would impact his life and that his faith was now a source of strength to be used to overcome the despair of depression.

James claimed that most people fall between the extremes of the sick soul and the healthy-minded types he presented in *Varieties.* The two cases I present in this paper are also extremes; most clients cannot be neatly categorized into the healthy-minded or sick soul types.

Yet James anticipated well the therapeutic outcomes of these two cases. Leo's religious nature, with his beliefs developed as a sick soul, enabled him eventually to achieve a deep "conversion" that resulted in a redefinition of his life. McCallister (1995) claims that James described a "rearrangement" of the self-schema as the process of conversion. Leo's rearrangement was guided and enabled by religious schemas because it was only through considering his suffering in light of his faith that he was able to find a new insight, a unification of the self. His suffering was no longer a burden because, "[u]nification… once achieved, is seen to usher in enormous happiness and relief, and never more so than when the unification is of a specifically religious character" (Fuller, 1994, p.18).

Carl's healthy-minded approach to life resulted in a crisis of faith when he was confronted with sorrow in his life. Although the use of religion was helpful in therapy, it did not result in a profound change but a return to the "status quo" of the healthy-minded view. As James predicted, Carl went to great lengths in therapy to maintain his denial, even to the point of withdrawing from therapy to avoid reflection on his healthy-minded view of his life. The use of religious issues in therapy with Carl did not result in the unification experience. James would have probably been more drawn to the therapeutic experience of Leo since "over their (the healthy-minded's) shallow optimism and bland idealism, he favored the subconscious ferment and emotional upheaval of the twice-born type" (Fowler 1996, p. 166).

James did more than provide therapists with guidance on recognizing the sick soul or the healthy-minded client. He suggested that religious issues should be addressed in different ways in therapy, given the client's orientation. James wrote that the religion of the once-born will be different from that of the twice-born soul (James 1902, p. 166). He rejected the idea

that all people's religious experience needs to be similar and wrote that psychology should not try to fit every person into "identical religious elements" (James 1902, p. 487). As James so eloquently stated, "If an Emerson were forced to be a Wesley, or a Moody forced to be a Whitman, the total human consciousness of the divine would suffer" (James 1902, p. 487). Therapists who deal with religious issues should heed this insight. Tan (1996) discussed how therapists need to incorporate religious issues to the extent and in the manner in which the client is comfortable with religion being part of the therapeutic process. Some clients may desire an explicit integration of religion into therapy while others may want a more implicit integration or even no integration at all. Other authors call on therapists to address religious issues while keeping the clients' beliefs in mind and not proselytizing or promoting a certain view (Richards & Bergin 1997; Miller 1999).

James's very definition of, and focus on, religion can serve as a guide regarding how religious issues are to be incorporated in therapy. Rogers (1951, 1961) advocated that therapy should focus on the "here and now" of the client's experience of their self and that the client's emotional experience should be the focus of therapy. Fowler (1996) stressed how James presents the importance of the emotional experience of religion and, of course, the entire focus of *Varieties* was on the personal experience of religion. Taylor summarized James's view by writing:

> So the *real* locus of religion is in individual experience, and not in corporate life. That is one facet of the Jamesian thesis. But the other is that the real locus is in *experience*, that is, in feeling, as against the formulations by which people define, justify, rationalize their feelings…. (Taylor 2002, p.7)

When religious issues are addressed in therapy, the focus should be on the individual's experience of religion and the emotional impact of religion in the client's life, the "immediate luminousness" (James 1902, p.18) to which James referred early in *Varieties.* Many examples James used in *Varieties* regularly focused on the individual's experience of religion at the emotional level. This provides therapists with the guidance that the focus of religious issues in therapy should be the "religion of the heart over that of the head" (Taylor 2002, p.18).

Finally, when James wrote of the process of unification, he was describing what I observe in many of my clients. James described the process of unification as a gradual or sudden process brought about by emotional, behavioral, cognitive, or mystical changes. He goes on to say that:

"However it come, it brings a characteristic sort of relief; and never such extreme relief as when it is cast into the religious mould. Happiness! happiness! religion is only one of the ways in which men gain that gift" (James 1902, p. 175).

James went on to acknowledge that religion is only one means that can be used to achieve unification of the self, and it is true that, for many clients, religion is not an avenue that should be pursued in therapy. Yet, for the religious client, utilizing religious/spiritual insights is an influential means of achieving unification in therapy. A growing body of literature has been developed that highlights the efficacious use of religious/spiritual issues in psychotherapy (e.g. Richards & Bergin, 1997; Miller, 1999).

Further, James's understanding of the experience of religion suggests to therapists that they should consider the impact of religion at the level of the "subconscious self" (James 1902). James, in his earlier work *The Principles of Psychology* (James 1890), presented the idea that the self can be described as being composed of the "constituents" of the material Self, social Self, spiritual Self, and pure Ego (James 1890, p.292). In addition to describing the difficulty in detecting the spiritual self, James also noted the existence of subconscious aspects to our personality (James, 1890, p. 227) and unconscious states of mind (James, 1890, p. 162). Rizzuto (1996, p. 419) wrote that our encounters with God are impacted by our inner "psychic structure" as well as our current awareness. Although James's formulations of the subconscious did not take on this form, Rizzuto claimed that most people will come to therapy with some concept of God that plays a role in shaping the psyche and thus these inner psychic structures should not be ignored. If one considers religion from a cognitive perspective (e.g., McIntosh 1995), religion operating in the subconscious self could be conceptualized as taking the form of nonconscious schematic processing. Clients are typically unable to identify these schemas, and so they come to therapy to deal with the stress generated by the conflict of schemas, emotion, and experience. Both Leo and Carl experienced a nonconscious conflict between their God-schema of "God loves me and will protect me" and their psychic pain created by their problems of depression and divorce. Leo's transformation took part because his sick soul orientation made him open to considering alternative schemas (i.e., "God is calling me through my pain"), whereas Carl did not consider alternatives and instead ignored the psychic pain.

James did not intend *Varieties* to be used directly for therapy, and it by no means delineates a course of treatment when dealing with religious issues. Still, I have come to appreciate his insights into the human condition as they relate to the personal experience of religion. This is the condition that is addressed when religion is a topic in therapy, the highly personal and

also deeply emotional issue of the client's spirituality and religious beliefs. During this centenary year of the publication of *Varieties*, James is recognized for his founding role in the psychological study of religious experience. He should also be recognized for the insights he provides to those of us who apply the psychology of religion in the therapeutic process.

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Spiritual Striving and the Unification of Personality

by Robert A. Emmons

William James, a decade prior to the close of the 19th century, vividly described conflicts or "rivalries" between different selves competing within the person, such as the philosopher, the lady-killer, the warrior, the philanthropist, the poet, the saint (James 1890/1983, p. 295). Subsequently, at the beginning of the 20th century, James devoted a key chapter to "the divided self" in the *Varieties*, where he observed, "The higher and the lower feelings, the useful and the erring impulses, begin by being a comparative chaos within us—they must end by forming a stable system of functions in right subordination" (James 1902, p. 170). More recently, Robert Jay Lifton (1999) depicted the latter part of the 20th century as the "age of fragmentation." He coined the term "protean self" to capture the dominant personality type of this period. Named after the Greek god Proteus, the Protean self lacks a stable inner core, is in continuous flux without integrity or mooring, in short, a fragmented, divided self. A variety of psychological, physical, and spiritual maladies can result from such identity conflicts.

Is religion an effective way of integrating conflicting impulses and goals into a coherent self-structure? In this article I will develop the following thesis: Personal religiousness may be an effective mechanism by which fragmentation of the sort Lifton discusses may be overcome and personality integration restored. The unification or integration of the self was a topic that James (1902) devoted considerable attention to in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, including a lecture entitled "The Divided Self, and the Process of Its Unification." In describing the characteristics of the "twice-born" individual, he stated:

> Some persons are born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well balanced from the outset. Their impulses are consistent with one another, their will follows without trouble the guidance of their intellect, their passions are not excessive, and their lives are little haunted by regrets. Others are oppositely constituted; and are so in degrees which may vary from something so slight as to result in a merely odd or whimsical inconsistency, to a discordancy of which the consequences may be inconvenient in the extreme. (James 1902, p. 168)

The restoration of inner harmony in the discordant personality, James goes on to say, may or may not take a religious form. In this article, I examine the evidence in the contemporary psychology of religion literature for the role of religion in the unification of personality. Religion invests human existence with meaning by establishing goals and value systems that pertain to all aspects of a person's life, with the potential to confer unity upon discordant impulses and strivings (Emmons 1999). The comprehensiveness of religion, in contrast with other belief systems, presumably accounts for the ability of the religious sentiment to forge a harmonious pattern out of a patchwork of discordant impulses. Rescuing the psyche from inner turmoil and conflict is also one important purpose of interventions based on both theological and psychological premises. In modern times, psychology has replaced theological notions of redemption and salvation with the psychological concerns of integration and unification, yet healthy religious experiences can be a major means for fulfilling these psychological concerns.

A number of distinguished thinkers in these respective disciplines have noted the unifying power of religious attitudes or concerns. Personologist Gordon Allport (1950) was impressed by the coherence and integration in personality that personal religion can foster, as he emphasized in his book on *The Individual and His Religion*. On the concluding page of this book, he strongly expressed his view in this statement: "It [the religious sentiment] is the portion of personality that arises at the core and... that has the longest range intentions, and for this reason is capable of conferring marked integration upon personality.... It is [a person's] ultimate attempt to enlarge and to complete his own personality by finding the supreme context in which he rightly belongs" (p. 142). Theologian Paul Tillich (1957) stated that "the ultimate concern gives depth, direction, and unity to all other concerns, and with them, to the whole personality" (p. 105). He described ultimate concern as a "passionate concern," as the "ground of everything that is," as "related to all sides of reality," as that which "unites all elements of man's personal life, the bodily, the unconscious, the conscious, the spiritual ones" (p. 106). Without ultimate concern, Tillich goes on to say, both the external world and internal workings of the mind conspire to produce a state of "complete disintegration" (p. 107). Religion is a binding force, with the potential to unite and bind internal fragmentation. Religion can produce connections at three levels: (a) internally—providing an integrated set of beliefs, intentions and actions; (b) horizontally—between people through a shared identity within a faith community; and (c) vertically—to creation and the Creator. The root meaning of the biblical term shalom includes the concepts of wholeness, completeness, and harmony. Shalom is the integrated state of a person who is in a right relationship with God, with others, and within him or herself. It is the inner serenity of being harmoniously at peace within and without.

The opposite of wholeness and harmony, of course, is fragmentation and conflict. Conflicts are a normal part of human experience. When there are choices to be made or decisions to be reached, competing desires are frequently involved. Behavioral impulses must be con-

trolled or inhibited when they are at odds with a person's overarching goals and values or with societal constraints. As the earlier quote from James illustrated, people handle conflict differently: one person may be immobilized by what seems to be the most trivial conflict, while the next person seems to move effortlessly through life seemingly free of conflict. For the former, conflict is a major source of suffering and misery in people's lives. Conflicting motives systems are a source of self-regulatory failure. A number of terms have been used to describe oppositional tendencies within the mind. These include discrepancies, disregulations, disconnections, contradictions, incongruities, incompatibilities, imbalances, fragmentation, and discontinuities. Heitler (1990) provided a basic, useful definition: "Conflict is a situation in which seemingly incompatible elements exert force in opposing or divergent directions" (p. 5). Optimal health and well-being occur when different elements of personality are integrated into a more-or-less coherent whole. Personality integration has long been viewed as an important precondition for optimal psychological health. The restoration of well-being, both physical and psychological, requires that competition between goals be eliminated or at least reduced to a manageable level. Integration has been defined as "the forging of approximate mental unity out of discordant impulses and aspirations" (Allport 1950, p. 92).

Conversion and Conflict

From the time of St. Augustine to the present, many have speculated that intense conflict, crisis, and personality fragmentation precede religious conversion (Johnson 1959), and that along with a resolution of crisis comes a greater integration of personality. Religious conversion is commonly claimed to offer nothing less than the transformation of the person from fragmentation to integration. James's passage on conversion is often quoted: "To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms" (James 1902, p. 189). In reviewing the factors operating in conversion, Clark (1958) concluded that "the most basic psychological element in conversion would appear to be conflict... the attraction of two incompatible ways of life" (p. 202). The drama played out in the mind of St. Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, in North Africa is legendary. His internal battles between pride and self-surrender, documented in his autobiography (397/1960) are required reading for students of spiritual formation. Despite the spiritual literature being replete with powerful testimonies and persuasive individual cases of wholeness brought about by conversion, no systematic, rigorous research has investigated whether religious conversion can truly bring about integration or wholeness of personality.

Research on Religion and Personality Integration

From a scientific vantage point, without empirical corroboration, statements concerning religion and personality integration lack validity. Corroborating claims such as these is a challenge, but in principle examining the presence of spiritual concerns in people's self-reported goal strivings can help to test these claims. In their review of over 100 articles on religion and mental health, Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis (1992) identified seven components of mental health, one of which was "personality unification and organization." Only one of the studies was relevant to this conception of mental health, and its results were inconclusive. The authors concluded that the relationship between personality unification and religious involvement cannot be clarified at present "because virtually no relevant data exist" (p. 255). The little relevant research there is suggests that people often report that inner harmony and wholeness replace inner turmoil and fragmentation following spiritual conversion. Two studies in particular bear relevance for the religion-unification hypothesis.

Sacks (1979) examined the effect of spiritual exercises on integration of the self-concept. In a sample of 50 Jesuit novices, he found that a four-week period of secluded meditation resulted in a significant increase in self-integration, as measured by Loevinger's concept of ego development. Little detail is provided about the nature of the spiritual exercises, making it difficult to isolate the specific cause of the increase in cognitive integration. Evidently, though, the thirty-day exercise sufficiently increased these men's ability to assimilate conflicting self-representations into a unified self-system. Unfortunately, how long the effect lasted beyond the period of observation is not known.

Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) compared inner changes in identity in spiritual converts with nonconverts who increased in their religious faith gradually, and with religious individuals who had not experienced a recent change in their faith. Participants were asked to what degree did they feel that their religious or spiritual change had redirected their life goals. Compared with the other two groups, the converts were more likely to have reported a positive life transformation as reflected in a more unified sense of self and a belief that their goals had become more significant and meaningful. To my knowledge, this was the first empirical study that attempted to examine transformational changes in personality as a function of religious life change.

Spirituality as Ultimate Concerns

In our own research program, we have employed the personal strivings framework to assess a person's commitment to religious and spiritual goals (Emmons 1999). One of the basic functions of a religious belief system and a religious worldview is that it provides "an ultimate vision of what people should be striving for in their lives" (Pargament & Park 1995, p. 15) and the strategies to reach those ends. There is a long history of using goal-language metaphorically to depict spiritual growth. In devotional writings, spiritual growth and spiritual maturity are viewed as a process of goal attainment, with the ultimate goal being intimacy with the divine. We conceptualize spirituality in terms of personal goals, or strivings (Emmons 1999). Strivings represent the typical ends or purposes that people seek in their daily lives. Spiritual strivings refer to goals that are oriented toward the sacred. They are those personal goals that are concerned with ultimate purpose, commitment to a higher power, and a seeking of the divine in daily experience. By identifying and committing themselves to spiritual goals, people strive to develop and maintain a relationship with the sacred. Examples of spiritual strivings are "to please God," "to achieve union with the totality of existence," "to immerse myself in nature and be part of it," "to share my faith with others," and "to approach life with mystery and awe." Spiritual strivings contain both conventional religious themes as well as more personalized expressions of spiritual concern that are not necessarily associated with a religious tradition. Coding strivings in this manner, compared to other existing measures, allows for greater inclusivity and more sensitivity to the diversity of spiritual expression in a religiously pluralistic culture. Because it is sensitive to temporal context, and because it deals with the inner life of the person, the strivings approach is ideal for examining the process of spiritual formation across the life span, as well as across different religious traditions.

Emmons, Cheung, and Tehrani (1998) examined the relationship between spiritual strivings and personality integration through measures of goal coherence. Participants completed a goal instrumentality matrix in which they were asked to judge the degree to which each of 15 personal strivings had a helpful (instrumental), harmful (conflictual), or no effect on each of the other strivings. Overall goal conflict was significantly negatively associated with both spiritual strivings and theistic strivings (those in which explicit reference to God is made). Furthermore, spiritual strivings were uniquely associated with overall goal integration. No other striving content category was associated with our measures of integration. Although James stated "But to find religion is only one out of many ways of reaching unity; and the process of remedying inner incompleteness and reducing inner discord is a general psychological process, which may take place with any sort of mental material, and need not necessarily assume the religious form" (James 1902, p. 175). Our data indicate that spirituality may be the best form. Greater levels of spiritual strivings, whether measured at relatively broad or narrower levels, tended to be associated with less overall conflict within a person's goal system, and thus a greater degree of integration. Spiritual strivings (e.g., "to praise God in action and thought") tend to show a greater number of positive, lateral associations with other goals in a person's goal network. In accordance with the view that religion represents ultimate concern, in theistic traditions, people experience God not only as Creator and Redeemer, but also as "Integrator."

The results of our research, when combined with research by Sacks (1979) and Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) described earlier, provide preliminary support for the thesis expressed earlier by James, Tillich, Allport, and others in the field of the psychology of religion. It should also be stressed here that the concept of personality integration, much like the concept of spirituality itself, is a broad, diffuse concept that cannot be easily reduced to a pat definition and certainly not operationalized in any kind of comprehensive way through a few self-report measures. Although we cannot do justice to the concept of integration here, there does appear to be sufficient evidence to warrant continued the examination of the thesis of religion as a unifier and integrator of personality. With advances in measuring systemic processes in goal networks, it has become possible to test the "religion-as-integration" hypothesis empirically.

Why does commitment to a set of ultimate concerns appear to foster greater unification of personality? Psychology does not have the tools to test whether God spiritually illuminates (the "sensorial photism" that James describes) the mind and heart of the convert, but it can suggest some plausible mechanisms that can be empirically tested. Ultimate concerns serve as focal points around which people organize their lives, view of themselves, goals, and activities. With the divine incorporated into one's worldview, a person is able to see various midlevel tasks, plans, and purposes as related to, and perhaps part of, a larger ultimate concern. Theoretically this would enable the person to organize the various aspects of his or her life in relation to the larger framework. This would also serve as the basis for seeing life in the long view, for long-term motivation and sustained performance of even mundane behaviors as part of a set of spiritual goals or strivings. Imbuing a goal with a sense of the divine is likely to decrease any prior ambivalence in commitment to that goal. Does one need a greater justification than the perception that one's goals are pleasing to God?

A priority for future research should be longitudinal studies, employing pre- and post-conversion measures of personality integration. It might be profitable to assess changes in internal goal conflicts as a function of spiritually-based intervention techniques such as prayer, medi-

tation, or other spiritual practices such as those in the Sacks article (1979). Spiritual disciplines and the self-reflection that these require would appear to be necessary steps in increasing one's awareness of discordant elements in one's self-system. Johnson (1959) speculated that "Amid the distraction and contradiction of many appeals, prayer focuses attention upon a supreme loyalty. In the conflicts of unruly desires, prayer recollects the major purpose and unifies the energies along the channel of this dedication" (Johnson 1959, p. 144).

Lest I paint too optimistic a picture here, it should be acknowledged that personal religiousness, no matter how well intentioned, can increase as well as decrease conflict and fragmentation of the self. First, there is no guarantee that spiritual strivings will be well integrated within the overall self-system. Sincerely held beliefs may be held with a degree of ambivalence because they prove costly in the person's social environment. Doubt and conflict are a normal part of spiritual development, as many authors have pointed out. With conflict a normal part of growth, including religious growth, spiritually-oriented lifestyles can be associated with more rather than less conflict. Such conflict need not be detrimental to one's well-being, though in reality it often is. Second, fundamentalist religious mindsets might enhance internal consistency at the cost of interpersonal disharmony. Cognitive processing associated with fundamentalist thinking is likely to lead to the person's inability to tolerate healthy skepticism or doubt. Dogmatically held beliefs can bring about a forced unity at a surface level that might obscure conflicts that still persist at a deeper, less accessible level. Third, religious strivings might make people aware of discrepancies between what they believe and what they actually do. Although ideally such discrepancies can be motivating and lead to enhanced striving and ultimately to deeper faith, discrepancies between belief and action can also engender powerful feelings of inappropriate guilt, depression, and self-flagellation. Spiritual maturity or spiritual intelligence may be the critical factor influencing the integration of spiritual concerns into a well-functioning, coherent self-system.

A final point concerns the concept of personality integration as a viable outcome variable for psychology of religion research. There has been a tremendous revival of interest in demonstrating that religious and spiritual variables predict well-being outcomes, including happiness, vitality, and life satisfaction. Rarely, however, is the appropriateness of these outcome measures evaluated theologically. Secular models of adjustment emphasizing personal happiness and well-being risk neglecting theologically relevant markers of adjustment and optimal functioning from a theistic point of view. An emphasis on integration and wholeness expands the current focus on narrower conceptions of well-being that primarily emphasize personal happiness. Intrapersonal integration might be one outcome that is highly valued in both secular and religious traditions. An emphasis on integration and wholeness expands the current focus on narrower conceptions of well-being that primarily emphasize personal happiness and satisfaction and is in keeping with James's (1902) emphasis on the fruits of religious experience. Although the particulars may differ, psychologically and theologically-based interventions are each attempts to reconcile inner discord and restore wholeness to persons.

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Overcoming Half-Hearted Surrender

By Peter Venable

William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* had a major impact on Bill Wilson, a chief architect of Alcoholics Anonymous (cf. Finlay 2000; Walle 1992). In fact, shortly after Wilson had a dramatic spiritual experience while he was last hospitalized due to his alcoholism, his friend Ebby gave him a copy of James's book. Wilson read it intently and "would later say that James, though long in his grave, had been a founder of Alcoholics Anonymous" (Anonymous 1984, p. 124). The three essential factors common in all of the *Varieties* case histories which influenced Wilson were personal calamity, utter defeat, and appeal to a higher power (Anonymous 1984, p. 124).

James comments on this dynamic in the following selection:

> A drunkard, or a morphine or cocaine maniac, offers himself to be cured. He appeals to the doctor to wean himself from his enemy, but he dares not face blank abstinence. The tyrannical drug is still an anchor to windward: he hides supplies of it among his clothing; arranges secretly to have it smuggled in in case of need. Even so an incompletely regenerate man still trusts in his own expedients. Every one knows cases of this incomplete and ineffective desire to reform, drunkards whom, with all their self-reproaches and resolves, one perceives to be quite unwilling seriously to consider never being drunk again! (James 1902, pp. 320-321; cf. James 1890, Vol. II, pp. 565, 628)

In James's era such "drunkards" and "maniacs" were diagnosed as being insanely obsessed. In Alcoholics Anonymous, insanity is described whenever any alcoholic has the insane idea to drink—and totally forgets that the first sip begins yet another compulsive drinking spree and consequent calamity. James accurately addresses the dilemma of any substance dependent (addicted) individual: commitment to absolute abstinence is most difficult and daunting. Addiction clinicians advise that recovering individuals discard all of their substance paraphernalia. Why would anyone in their right mind wish to keep mementos and souvenirs of their addiction—whether pipes, ashtrays, shot glasses and beer mugs, empty pill containers, etc.? Would those who tried to commit suicide (and remarkably, some survive) keep their guns as a trophies on their mantles?

Most importantly, James remarks—and Bill Wilson et al. advocate—that total surrender to the fact of addiction and total abstinence is the prerequisite of genuine recovery. Incomplete desire to reform comes to nothing, ultimately, as long as there is an anchor windward. One must be adrift to be ready to take a helping hand.

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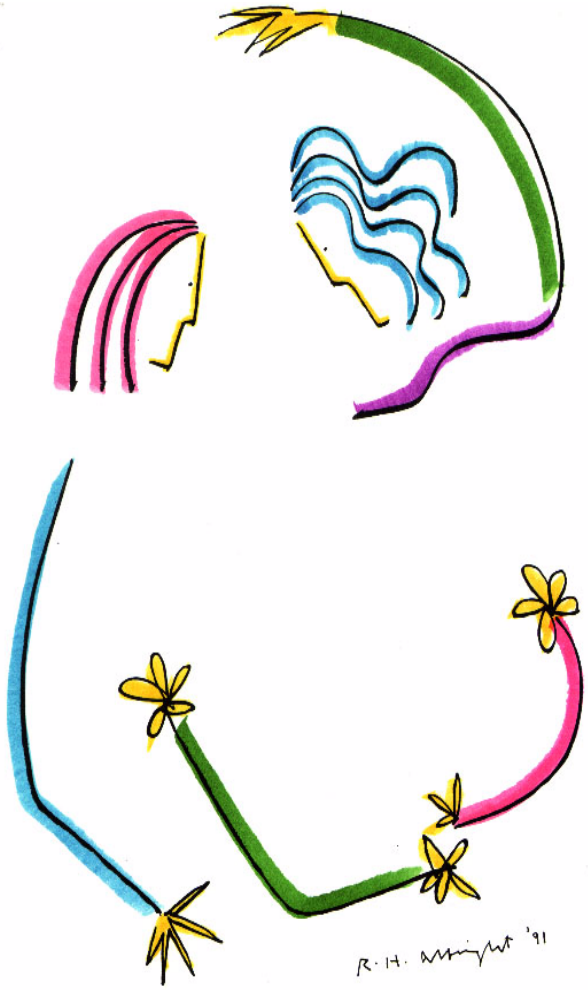

Recovery R.H. Albright

James on the Similarities and Differences Between Religious and Psychic Phenomena

by Richard L. Gorsuch

With William James's wide variety of interests, and the nature of the times 100 years ago, it is no surprise that James investigated both the psychology of psychic phenomena and the variety of religious experience. His writings on the latter are well known and widely read. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) is, in fact, one of only a very few books in psychology to be continuously in print for over a hundred years and to be the focus of a retrospective review in *Contemporary Psychology* (Gorsuch & Spilka 1987). Less well known is his psychic research, which never culminated in his writing a book. Thus, it is fortunate that his articles, his letters, and other unpublished documents on psychic phenomena have been collected by Murphy and Dale (1961) and in the series *The Works of William James* under the title *Essays in Psychical Research* (Burkhardt & Bowers, Eds. 1986; hereafter referred to as *Essays*). This volume of his collected works consists of a number of investigations of psychic phenomena that had been reported in the USA and in England.

Excellent and extended introductions have been published with both of these books (Marty 1982; McDermott 1986; Smith 1985), introductions that are, in fact, substantially longer than this article. A comparison of these two books, however, may help us not only better understand James but also the similarities and differences between psychic and religious phenomena. Psychic and religious phenomena share in "going beyond science." For many people each involves the supernatural, whether in the form of a deity or of spirits. While James obviously studied both areas, an argument can be clearly made that James devoted considerably more time and effort to psychic phenomena than he did to religious phenomena. His active commitment to understanding psychic phenomena extended across some 30 years. He was instrumental in founding the American Society for Psychical Research in 1884 (James 1986, pp. 5-9), his paper on "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished" was included in *The Will to Believe* (James 1897, pp. 299-307), and one of his last essays was "The Confidences of a 'Psychic Researcher'" (James 1986, pp. 361-375), just a year before his death in 1910. He was involved with the "major players" in both England and the United States. His reports include numerous personal episodes of seeking and exploring reports of psychic phenomena. A reading of both books suggests that he spent more hours with mediums than he spent in churches.

The purpose of this article is to compare James's approaches to religious and psychic phenomena. It will address questions such as how religious and psychic phenomena are defined, what research methods were deemed useful for each, and how conclusions in the two areas were alike and how they differed. Overall, this article focuses on the similarities and differences in James's approach to these two areas. Due to the broad audience already acquainted with *Varieties*, however, this essay will make more references to the *Essays*.

Definitions and Objectives

Psychic phenomena include a variety of unusual events, such as the current usage of the term implies. For James's era, the events ranged from apparitions, mediums, and clairvoyants, to haunted houses, thought transference (telepathy), and telekinesis. James accepted this common usage without feeling the need for a formal definition of the area. Operationally, James was concerned with interactions of people with the "spirit world," as in mediums, or human capabilities that transcend the material world, as in telepathy. Most of what James reports is from mediums. This is probably because it is an easy way to collect data: one has only to go to a spiritualist session and record what happens. And it can be quasi-experimental: what does a medium say to the different people whom he or she has never met before? The intent of his involvement in psychic research was to establish whether any psychic phenomena are true.

Compared to James's usage of "psychic phenomena" to refer to the extraordinary, the *Varieties* defines religion broadly but within normal human experience. Religion is "*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*" (James 1902, p. 31). He contrasted it with that of a moralist. Moralists and Christians are alike in being "less swayed by paltry personal considerations and more by objective ends that call for energy, even though that energy brings personal loss and pain" (James 1902, p. 45). But the moralist participates in a volitional spurning of the wrong and affirming the right, whereas the "Christian *par excellence*" is a "result of the excitement of a higher kind of emotion, in the presence of which no exertion of volition is required" (James 1902, p. 46).

James's definition of religion is, as has been often noted, of "individuals in their solitude." And yet much of religion is directly social. It is hard to conceptualize a religion without a community of faith. This critique applies to both areas. The role of culture and cultural expectations for mediums and spiritualists is also ignored.

The definition of religion involves broad philosophical issues dealt with by religion. In addition to whether the supernatural being exists, religion also calls forth vital issues such as the nature of evil and of conversion. It also raises the question of what types of religion are helpful and heal the divided soul, and which are harmful, such as the excesses that lead to the one-sidedness of fanaticism (James 1902, pp. 340-344). Pursuit of these issues is part of the task of *Varieties*. Indeed, the breadth

of the objectives of *Varieties* is indicated by its subtitle that often is overlooked: *A Study in Human Nature*. But none of this is found in his discussions of psychic phenomena, which are concerned with whether an extraordinary event happened.

How different from psychic phenomena did James see religion? Except for a passing casual comment, neither book mentions the topic of the other. The *Essays* has no discussion of religion and the *Varieties* has no discussion of psychics. This is consistent with 19th and 20th century Euro-American culture but ignores unindustrialized cultures where spirits form the basis or blend over into religiousness. Contemporary discussions would be hard pressed to consider possession without considering demon possession.

One objective not included in either volume is a concern with establishing the causes or roots of religious or psychic beliefs. These, to James, are irrelevant to his tasks and irrelevant to examining their truths. James held that people use causes only to explain away a position someone else holds but pay little attention to those beliefs one personally holds and, in keeping with his empirical pragmatist approach, "by their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots" is applied in both contexts (James, 1902, pp. 25, 20). In religion, it is the sense of hope and ethical idealism that is sought; in psychic phenomena, James writes of Hodges' changes to being a happy, more effective individual as he came to believe spiritualism was true: "When a man's pursuits gradually makes his face shine and grow handsome, you may be sure it is a worthy one" (James 1986, p. 370).

The use of the term "spiritual" is currently in flux. Some would define it just as religiousness; others would define it as a relationship to that which the person feels is ultimate (Gorsuch 2002a). Note that James's use of "spiritual" is the classical one of relating to the supernatural. It may be the mysticism of *Varieties* or the spirits called up by the mediums of *Essays*, but it is still a being independent of the person. Hence, we must be careful to avoid a contemporary interpretation of spirit and spiritual when we read James.

Method

James was a philosopher in an age when psychology was taught as an area within philosophy. He had no problem exploring from both the perspective of the sciences and the perspective of the humanities. James's philosophical method was of reasoned argument, utilizing human experiences. The most important human experiences to pursue are those that are the most dramatic, for if we explain these, then we can explain the less dramatic. This is seen clearly in *Varieties* with its detailed reports of the religious experiences of people such as George Fox and with his numerous case studies in the *Essays*. James places an emphasis on idiographic, unique events that is typical of the humanities but departs considerably from the nomothetic science as defined in the 20th century. To James, that is, these unique, personal events also have truth value, an approach anticipating more recent developments (Gorsuch 2002b).

Empirical science was strongly supported by James. Starbuck's *The Psychology of Religion*, as well as materials Starbuck shared, were carefully acknowledged in *Varieties* (Smith 1985). Coe's data are another set clearly used by James (James 1902, p. 240f). James, as reprinted in *Essays*, also participated in the empirical "census of hallucinations" (James 1986, pp. 56-78). As also recorded in *Essays*, however, one of James's disappointments was that psychic research was not able to develop experimentally (James 1986, pp. 90, 361).

But science plays a lesser role in *Essays* than in *Varieties*. Science is concerned with nomothetic, replicable events (Gorsuch 2002b). And if psychic phenomena have any major characteristic, it is that "they are inwardly as incoherent as they are outwardly wayward and fitful" (James 1986, p. 369). Thus science was particularly unhelpful in examining psychic phenomena. In part for this reason, it is not surprising to James that they are considered "bosh" but, for James, they provide idiographic truth with which science must ultimately deal. Perhaps one of the continually appealing features of James's works is that he refuses to restrict discussions to just the sciences or to just the humanities and personal experience. James attempted to bring both kinds of data to bear on both kinds of phenomena.

James mostly ignored philosophical and theological theories. His data were the idiographic experiences of individuals, as collected in personal accounts or as occurred in scientific studies. Indeed, only the first-hand experiences were deemed to be data, and so a strong individualism runs through each of these books. The impact of other people and cultures are conspicuous by their absence. Conspicuous by their presence are the experiences of people within the Euro-American culture. Little attention is given to spiritualism of other subcultures or of non-Protestant religions.

A point easy to overlook is James's involvement with hypnotism. He had read extensively of it—noting "the wonderful explorations of Binet, Janet, Breuer, Freud, Mason, Prince, and others" (James 1902, p. 234). He was using it in 1886 when a note in *Science* reported that James demonstrated a hypnotic suggestion that changed one perception but did not affect other perceptions (James 1986, p. 382). He used it to explore the nature of the medium-trance of Ms. Piper.

Because posthypnotic suggestion leads to perceptions and produces activities that need have no conscious involvement and are not consciously recallable, it provides strong evidence for the subconscious. Coming from experiences with hypnotism, including posthypnotic suggestions, which produced behaviors based in nonconscious processes (James 1986, pp. 204-211), James had a strong belief in the subconscious, which is vital background for understanding either book. For psychic phenomena, automatisms and extensive knowledge

when in a trance that otherwise seem unknown were suggested to be based in the unconscious (James 1902, pp. 116-126). For religion, the unconscious plays several roles. This ranged from self-surrendering conversion to revelation (James 1902, pp. 208, 481-484). But the strongest statement James made was that "whatever [religion] may be on its farther side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life" (James 1902, p. 512).

James by nature was sympathetic to other people and their views. He took seriously the reports of religious people and of psychic effects, even while he refused to endorse them. An example of that is his treatment of Eusapia Paladino, a psychic for whom "everyone agrees that she cheats in the most barefaced manner whenever she gets an opportunity" (James 1986, p. 362). "Yet her credit has steadily risen, and now her last converts" include "our own psychical researcher, Carrington, whose book on *The Psychical Phenomena of Spiritualism* (*against* them rather!) makes his conquest strategically important" (James 1986, p. 363). To offset the obvious cheating, James takes time to tell of a lecturer in physics who gave a demonstration in class to show that the center of gravity remains unmoved despite movement of the peripheral parts. The demonstration was successful because, unbeknown to the students, the professor had nailed down the center! As is clear in *Essays*, however, this is told in a "forgiving sense," for, James noted, the phenomenon is well known and for the apparatus to malfunction—as it did without the nail—would teach students the wrong lesson. One may need to act "for the *larger* truth" (James 1986, pp. 364-365). Therefore, he is willing to give some latitude to those who, despite the frequency of her cheating, still felt some of Paladino's sessions were valid.

Further, he was of the notion that ideas that continually reappeared probably had some underlying truth even if it were not addressable scientifically. The longevity of religion was probably impressive to him even as it has been to other psychologists, such as Leuba and Cattell, who were nonbelievers (Gorsuch 2002). Despite his investigations and other investigations that challenged the validity of psychism, believers in psychic phenomena continued and, in his time, included a number of sophisticated people James respected. "How often has 'Science' killed off all spook-philosophy, and laid ghosts and raps and 'telepathy' away underground as so much popular delusion. Yet never before were these things offered us so voluminously, and never in such authentic-seeming shape or with such good credentials" (James 1986, p. 363). But this seems to be a poor rationale. With it, for example, human sacrifice to the sun could be justified because that was, in terms of thousands of years, "offered up voluminously." And I am also skeptical of his occasional reliance on the rationale that the medium was too uneducated to report, for example, knowledge from classic writings.

In *Essays* James strongly emphasized methods, just as others have done in the years since. Too many examples of distortions were found to assume that reports of psychic phenomena were therefore true. An interesting facet of James's approach to psychic phenomena is the constant search for alternative explanations. Although he was not as systematic as Campbell and Stanley (1963) some 60 years later, the application of this type of thinking to actual data is impressive. For example, when evaluating spiritualists' messages reputed to be from his colleague R. Hodson after the latter's death, James lists the following as possible explanations for information seen to be supportive of a post-mortem communication from Hodson:

1. Lucky chance-hits.
2. Common gossip.
3. Indications unwarily furnished by the sitters.
4. Information received from R. H. during his lifetime, by the waking Mrs. P. and stored up, either supraliminally or subliminally, in her memory.
5. Information received from the living R. H., or others, at sittings, and kept in Mrs. Piper's trance-memory, but out of reach of her waking consciousness.
6. "Telepathy," *i.e.*, the tapping of the sitter's mind, or that of some distant living person, in an inexplicable way.
7. Access to some cosmic reservoir, where the memory of all mundane facts is stored and grouped around personal centres [sic] of association. (James 1986, p. 255)

In terms of psychic data, James reported finding some support for cross-correspondence, which is the reporting of materials that would have been only known to a very few people by the medium (who is assumed to have had no prior access to the knowledge). It goes beyond the medium's giving of information that seems arcane but actually is true of almost everyone. It may consist of special general knowledge, such as of classical literature, or specific knowledge only known by a few people. Revelations of cross-correspondence were almost the only case in which James felt that he found clear evidence of the existence of a psychic phenomena, but this was with primarily one medium, Mrs. Piper. Even then he had to assume that her low level of education meant that she was unacquainted with classical literature. This point may have been true during the first of the 12 to 15 years that people such as James followed her closely, but might not the interest of these learned people have stimulated her curiosity? And we must remember that the lack of formal education is only a general predictor of less exposure to classic literature, not a universal predictor.

Despite all the negative evidence James found against psychic phenomena, the widespread reports of it kept him convinced that there was something to it and it should continue to be investigated. In his last major paper, he suggests that the best mediums have "really

supernormal knowledge…. that cannot be traced to the ordinary sources of information" (James 1986, p. 372). To explain this, James postulates a "cosmic environment of *other consciousn*ess of some sort which is able to work upon them" (James 1986, p. 373). And in matters such as these, James felt it best to stay with the facts of personal reports wherever they may lead.

Implications and Conclusions

The major point in which we could expect James to differ from contemporary psychology of religion is in the inclusion of personal, idiographic experiences of an individual as prime data. Contemporary science is too concerned with seeking objective and replicable data to take one individual's personal experiences as a research approach. And this is rightfully so, but that does not mean that that such idiographic experiences are unimportant for the larger picture. It just means that they are not the area in which science can make a contribution (Gorsuch 2002a, 2002b).

Although it is inappropriate for psychology, being a science, to take idiographic data into account, we must remind ourselves that psychology (and science) are not the only ways of examining the human condition. The humanities also have a rightful role. The success of James was that he thoroughly understood the psychology of his time and also philosophical approaches to the human condition. The result was *Varieties*, which integrates both approaches, using both nomothetic and idiographic data. That dual approach is needed but difficult because it involves integrating science and humanities. The temptation is for us in one discipline to assume that we can do the other discipline's work as well as our own. But that comes from disciplinary egotism ("we can do it all") and leads to disciplinary imperialism ("who needs the humanities?"). Rather, bridges need to be built by which the unique contributions of both science and the humanities can be brought to bear on the human condition (Gorsuch 2002a). James was able to do this, but he had background and experience in both the discipline of philosophy and the budding discipline of psychology. His work was at a time when psychology held a very limited area. With the explosion of psychological knowledge of the past 100 years, it is difficult for anyone to encompass psychology by itself, let alone both relevant areas of psychology and philosophy. It is my experience that the major problem students have with *Varieties* is separating out what are psychological questions and what are philosophical ones; the necessary training in both areas is lacking.

An approach toward understanding the importance of psychic and religious phenomena for James is to consider James' behavior towards each. Although he spent more time investigating psychic phenomena than religious, he helped *dissolve* the American Society for Psychic Research while he devoted the Gifford lectures to religion. It was not that one was "truer" than the other for James, but rather that religion is a major force, whereas psychical phenomena remains at a relatively primitive state in terms both of their impact on individual lives and in terms of being able to systematically characterize how they function.

James approached both religious and psychic phenomena with similar questions in a similar manner and reached some similar conclusions. The basic question was whether they were true or helpful. The data included nomothetic and idiographic. One of James's conclusions was that both religion and psychic phenomena are worth pursuing scientifically because so many believe in each.

Other conclusions differed radically between religion and psychic phenomena, particularly the "bottom line" for a philosophy of pragmatism. For James, psychic phenomena are extremely difficult to prove and are boringly trivial (as trying to read the *Essays* validates). For James, religion changes people's lives, has a place in history, and is humankind's "most important function" (James's letter to Frances Morse in 1900, quoted in Smith 1985, p. xv; cf. James 1902, pp. 50-51).

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Book Reviews

Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited.* Harvard University Press, 2002, 116 pages, ISBN: 0674007603, $19.95.

Reviewed by Jacob Lynn Goodson

In revisiting William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Charles Taylor gives us a thorough sociological history and names that history as the problem of James's *Varieties.* Taylor says that James's *Varieties* is still a very important book for understanding religion even today. Taylor spends most of his time in his *Varieties of Religion Today* placing James's *Varieties* in a specific sociological history based upon Emile Durkheim.

It is the context of Durkheimianism that makes James's *Varieties* intelligible—according to Taylor. It is due to Durkheimianism that spirituality is divorced from politics and even from religion. James showed us how the religion of mere spirituality is experienced in solitude; that is, religion is experienced without community and without politics.

Another connection that Taylor makes to Durkheim is in another current of James's *Varieties*—its claim that individualism is primary and institutions are secondary in understanding religion. It is with this connection that Taylor explains how religious leaders can argue for an extreme individualism but are still able to uphold their churches, their political agendas, and other religious institutions. This Durkheimianism illustrates well James's definition of religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine" (James 1902, p. 31). The illustration continues with James making religious institutions as secondary by saying "theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow" (James 1902, p. 31). Hence James provides the justification that is needed for this Durkheimianism that is so rampant today, despite the paradox of believers with individualistic convictions who still find reason to meet at least every Sunday morning.

Taylor also shows that when James made theology, philosophy, and ecclesiology secondary, he never gave intelligibility to his discussion on the religious experiences of individuals. A very similar point is made in Stanley Hauerwas's Gifford lectures, but Taylor gets to it differently than Hauerwas does. Where Hauerwas criticizes James from a narrative approach to theology, Taylor criticizes James from a sociological approach to anthropology. That is to say that while both Hauerwas and Taylor criticize James for his extreme individualism, Hauerwas argues that James needs the story that is told through Israel, Jesus Christ, and the Church to make religious experiences intelligible; Taylor's critique is based upon more of a social anthropology of the human desire to be a part of a community. Taylor argues that people are not generally satisfied with what he calls a one-time experience of being "twice-born" (Taylor 2002, pp. 31-60). In fact, Taylor even exclaims: "Many people are not satisfied with a momentary sense of wow!" (Taylor, p. 116). It is what happens after the "wow" for which James does not account—namely, the continual political and social relations in community. Not only is it what happens after the "wow" that is unintelligible, it is also the "wow" itself that is unintelligible. It is this lack of intelligibility that takes place during and after the religious experience that summarizes James's "blind spots" in the *Varieties*—according to Taylor.

What Taylor does not do that Hauerwas at least tries to do is give us an alternative to this Jamesian model. Placing James's *Varieties* in the context of the impact it has had on Durkheimianism is important, and Taylor does a good job of that. But Taylor leaves his readers asking the question: so what do we do about this predicament? In Taylor's non-pragmatic last chapter called "So Was James Right?" (Taylor 2002, pp. 109-118), he answers the question negatively but never gives us a positive alternative. In his Gifford lectures, Hauerwas claims that the church's witness is a positive alternative to this unintelligible religious experience we find in James; Taylor, though, never gives us such an option. It is this lack of an alternative to James that made me think I simply read a report on how James's *Varieties* has forecast and influenced a Durkheimian society. This Durkheimian society only gives James's *Varieties* intelligibility to the extent that it is how society functions today, but society is obviously—to use Alasdair MacIntyre's language—fragmented and thus unintelligible itself. Taylor does not give us any construct that will deconstruct the fragmentation, but his Durkheimian framework provides some explanation about how we have arrived at these current states. Furthermore he does not give us any alternative to James that makes James intelligible even in a Durkheimian context except for bringing some attention to the continuation and unavoidability of community in understanding spiritual experiences. This exception is important, but it does not provide us with a positive alternative to James.

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Wesley Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought.* Vanderbilt University Press, 2002, 288 pages, ISBN: 0826513875, $39.95.

Reviewed by Lynn Bridgers

For many, true understanding of William James remains elusive. Readers looking for a simplistic or monistic framing of William James's thought have consistently been frustrated by the diversity of James's areas of exploration, teased by James's gentle chiding and mercurial wit. One consistent charge leveled against James is that his work lacks cohesiveness or unity, particularly in terms of his establishment of a philosophical system. Wesley Cooper takes on the challenge of defending unity in the thought of William James.

Previous examiners, Cooper suggests, have missed the consistency in James's thought because they have undervalued the role of the experiential at its most basic level. James's pragmatism, Cooper argues, is grounded in pure experience, and "the self is a construct out of pure experience; God is a pattern of good in the world of primal stuff; his celebrated and reviled will-to-believe doctrine explores the extent of our power to construct ourselves and the physical world; and his mysticism is both an attempt to get closer to God, the pattern of pure experiential good purpose in history, and to acquaint himself, so to speak, with the deeper preconceptual wells of everyday experience" (p. 32).

The idea of "construction" becomes a core thematic element in Cooper's study, taking into account both the construction of physical and mental reality out of pure experience at the individual level and the construction of social or moral reality through our efforts to "construct" the shape of the world. Cooper begins by giving attention to James's work in the *Principles*, especially his writings on sensation, but suggests a previously underrecognized consistency throughout his work.

Cooper's primary focus, and vehicle for his assertions, is the conception of two tiers in James thought—both empirical and the metaphysical levels. Cooper sees James as a realist at the metaphysical level, where he relies on radical empiricism and develops his doctrine of pure experience. At the empirical levels Cooper presents James as pragmatist, attending to conceptualization, and our conception of what is real. Human nature and cultural inheritance create the boundaries of our "pragmatic determination of belief," while empirical reality and pure experience yield our metaphysical reality.

Cooper is careful to place his perspective in relationship to other contemporary examiners of James's thought. He is explicitly critical of those that lionize only one period of James's thought without recognizing the full span of his development or those that only note diversity and inconsistency in James. He considers Gerald Myers "our ablest guide to James" and, while he does not always agree with Myers's observations, accedes "where he is wrong he is almost right" (p. 8). But Cooper's perspective brings him into a more contentious relationship with Richard Gale's *The Divided Self of William James* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). While Cooper sees Gales's contribution as "the most powerful critique that we have" (p. 8), he fundamentally disagrees with the conclusions Gales's use of depth psychology brings to the understanding of James and his thought. Gale's focus on the pathological or fragile is, according to Cooper, "less interesting to me than the prospect of the power of James's philosophical system" (p. 34).

Compared to other postmodern interpretations, Cooper recommends adoption of a certain restraint in his reconstruction. He examines themes that James has in common with a range of contemporary philosophers, including John Searle's Connection Principle, the Ramsey-sentence pattern of analysis defended by functionalists such as David Lewis, Alvin Goldman's notion of simultaneous nomic equivalence, and Robert Nozick's decision-value theory and Closest-Continuuer theory of personal identity. Cooper advocates greater value should be given to those writings in which James does his best philosophical work. He summarizes "I believe that building one's interpretive house on the foundations of the *Principles*, tracing its sensationalism to the doctrine of pure experience in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, and interpreting *Pragmatism*, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *The Will to Believe*, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, *Manuscript Essays and Notes*, and the rest by harking back to the psychological and metaphysical foundations is the best way to appreciate James's philosophical genius" (p. 35). In the course of the book, he does just that.

Scholars of religion may be intrigued with Cooper's reading of how James's pragmatism works in the context of religious belief and the contrast with dogmatism. But those interested in being introduced to an underlying unity in James's thought, or even coming to a better understanding of continuity in James's intellectual character may find Cooper's work most intriguing. Those who will find this sophisticated work most useful and challenging are those who come to the work already well grounded in the philosophical questions that have been brought into play of late in the ongoing and seemingly endless endeavor of understanding William James.

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